

The Downtown Presbyterian Church  
Session Meeting of June 26th, 2023 Minutes

A meeting of the Session of The Downtown Presbyterian Church was held via Zoom on June 26th, 2023 beginning at 6:30pm.

In Attendance: Erin Bell (Clerk), Debra VanDerveer, Ray Thomas, Samera Zavaro, Tom Wills, Tara Herbert, John Booth, Rachel Hayes (treasurer), and Rev. Larissa Romero (moderator)

The meeting was called to order by Rev. Larissa Romero at 6:38. An opening prayer was offered by Ms. Herbert.

Approval of the Agenda:

**Motion** to approve the agenda from Mr. Wills, second by Ms. Zavaro; the motion carried.

Approval of Minutes:

**Motion** to approve the minutes from the May meeting of the Session from Ms. Zavaro, second by Ms. Herbert; the motion carried.

Presbytery Updates from Ray Thomas & Debra VanDerveer:

Ray Thomas (Executive Presbyter for the Middle TN Presbytery) and Debra VanDerveer (Committee on Ministry liaison) joined the Session to discuss the upcoming pastoral transition.

Key notes from questions & answers:

- The Presbytery is aware of the upcoming transition and available for assistance.
- The Presbytery has designated a session moderator for DPC. Upon approval by the COM on July 11th, they will be appointed the Session moderator on August 1st.
- Mr. Thomas and Ms. VanDerveer voiced their appreciation for Rev. Romero's work with the Middle Tennessee Presbytery and with The Downtown Presbyterian Church. They each took a moment to wish her well in her next season of ministry.
- Ms. VanDerveer shared an update on the PNC, and the next steps for calling a pastor.
- A member of the congregation has been designated to assist Ms. Herbert in filling the pulpit during the interim between Rev. Romero & the incoming pastor.
- All present agreed that it is of great importance that congregational care be delegated appropriately during the pastoral transition. The community engagement committee has begun the process of identifying pastoral care roles and plans to transition responsibility for congregational care to DPC. Ms. VanDerveer noted a quick response can be as essential as the care provided. Mr. Wills offered to be of extra support if needed.
- Mr. Thomas recommended that the Personnel committee schedule an exit interview with Rev. Romero. The Session agreed, and will coordinate this interview.

- A meeting will be scheduled with the pastor and the community engagement leadership to ensure that current congregational needs receive continued care and attention.
- The Presbytery will share resources regarding the ethics of a pastoral separation. This will need to be communicated to the congregation. The pastor will sign the policy, as will members of the Session, agreeing to abide by the Presbytery's policies and procedures.

Moderator's Report:

Rev. Romero shared her insights on the upcoming pastoral transition, along with highlights from her work in the past month.

Treasurer/Business Management Report: see posted report

Ms. Hayes shared the treasurer's report and updates from the business management committee.

**Motion** from the business management committee that the budgeted \$9,000 draw be increased to \$15,000 to meet operating expenses, and to authorize an endowment draw of \$15,000 for operating expenses; the motion carried.

Ms. Hayes will be meeting with a volunteer, a nonprofit accountant, interested in assisting the treasurer. We are currently seeking a treasurer for 2024. Ms. Hayes will be transitioning out of this role next year, and would appreciate the opportunity to train the next person for the position.

Clerk's Report:

**Motion** from Ms. Zavaro, second by Mr. Booth to approve the baptism of Murray & Davis Douglas; the motion carried. Murray & Davis Douglas will be baptized by Rev. Romero on Sunday, July 23rd.

Committee Reports:

- Business Management - *see posted report*
- Communications - *see posted report*
- Community Engagement - *see posted report*
  - Committee co-chairs met with the pastor to evaluate care circles and check that leaders are properly supported.
- Faith Formation - *see posted report*
  - Highlights from the committee are noted within the personnel report.
- Missions - *see posted report*
  - The meal ministry resumed serving meals in the fellowship hall on June 10th. Volunteers have been prepping food for 100 people and, so far, around 100 people have been attending.
  - The next phase of planning will center on fundraising & connecting with community resources. A meeting is scheduled with the treasurer to evaluate expenses and adjust as needed for budgeting.
  - The local benevolence for June is Monroe Harding. A minute for missions is scheduled for July 2nd.

### Personnel Report:

Mr. Booth & Ms. Zavaro shared updates on the office manager position. The temporary employee resigned without notice. The committee's recommendation to Session is to continue to designate the position as temporary until the next pastor is installed. The Session renewed their authorization to hire a temporary office manager.

The previous vote by email, which was ratified in the January session meeting, authorized: *"Rev. Larissa Romero, Ms. Zavaro, & Ms. Skinner (administration committee co-chairs) to hire an interim office manager from a temp. agency with a start date as close to January 1st as possible. Emphasis will be given to the skills deemed most important by Rev. Romero, Ms. Zavaro, and Ms. Skinner. Additionally, the pay for the interim will be deemed commensurate with the position of interim office manager."*

The admin committee is currently co-chaired by Mr. Booth and Ms. Zavaro. As such, they are authorized by the Session to proceed in hiring a temporary office manager. Ms. Skinner is currently the co-chair of the Communications Committee. The Session supports her continued participation in the process of hiring a temporary office manager.

The church has received an applicant for the Director of Education position; an interview has been scheduled.

### Project Thrive Update:

The Session engaged in a follow-up discussion of the congregational Project Thrive meeting held in the fellowship hall on Sunday, June 25th. The elders expressed appreciation for the feedback received in the meeting, particularly regarding the letter of engagement with Wesley CDC. The Session agreed to designate a secretary for future meetings. **Motion** from Mr. Booth to request a Letter of Engagement (LOE) from Wesley CDC to pursue their guidance on Engineer, Architect, and Request for Proposal (RFP) processes, second by Ms. Zavaro; the motion carried.

The committee recently reviewed leadership roles, and will be adding members who have expressed interest in joining the committee. The current Project Thrive leaders are excited to continue serving, and have expressed feeling renewed energy around the committee's work.

### Summary of the June 25th Project Thrive meeting:

The meeting was not an official congregational meeting, and no official business was dispensed. A significant and diverse representation of the membership was present. A majority of the Artists-in-Residence were also present.

The purpose of the meeting was to have an open conversation with the congregation regarding the current condition of the Hibbs building and the work of the Hibbs building sub-committees. Members of the Project Thrive committee, along with the pastor, shared updates from Wesley CDC's initial report. It was stated that a congregational vote on the Hibbs building would take place before the Session would vote to accept any proposals received. Following ample time for

questions and answers, the pastor requested a show of hands of those who would support requesting a letter of engagement with Wesley CDC. While this was not an official vote, there was unanimous support for proceeding with a letter of engagement with Wesley CDC. As all questions had been addressed, the meeting ended with prayer.

Congregational Care & Life Issues:

Review of congregational care concerns and how best to care for our members.

Next meeting & Reminders:

- Next meeting: July 17th
- The meeting will be held in person with logistics to be determined.

**Reminder:** Please continue to email dates and times of upcoming committee meetings to [info@dpchurch.com](mailto:info@dpchurch.com). This will be of particular importance during the pastoral transition.

Volunteers for Promoting Trust & Connection:

- Lead the next opening prayer: Ms. Zavaro

**Motion** to adjourn from Mr. Wills, seconded by Ms. Zavaro; the motion carried.

Closing Prayer led by Rev. Romero.

Meeting adjourned at 8:53

Rev. Larissa Romero  
Moderator  
The Downtown Presbyterian Church

Erin Bell  
Clerk of Session  
The Downtown Presbyterian Church