

Session Meeting
First Presbyterian Church
Davenport, Iowa
April 25, 2022

The stated meeting of the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Davenport, Iowa was held on Monday, April 25, 2022. We continue to meet remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moderator Rev. Dr. Kathy Stoner-Lasala called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. A quorum was present. Elder Vicki Stegall opened the meeting with prayer.

Staff members:

	Class of 2022		Class of 2023		Class of 2024
E	Heather Calvert <i>Adult Christian Education</i>	P	David Bowles Edwards <i>Congregational Marketing & Growth</i>	P	Paula Burnett <i>Hospitality & Welcoming</i>
E	Jeff Ehrmann <i>CMGC</i>	E	Jim DeReus <i>Adult Christian Education</i>	A	Peter Bawden <i>Personnel</i>
P	Matt Kabel <i>Buildings & Grounds</i>	P	Patrick Downing <i>Stewardship</i>	E	Kirk Christie <i>Adult Christian Education</i>
P	Jeanne Sherwood <i>Hospitality & Welcoming</i>	P	Michael Ferris <i>Worship & Music</i>	P	Nancy Foster <i>Finance</i>
P	Tom Spitzfaden <i>Finance</i>	P	RuthAnn Tobey-Brown <i>Personnel</i>	A	Dawn Hickenbottom <i>Cong Fellowship & Development</i>
P	Vicki Stegall <i>Christian Ed. & Fellowship for Youth</i>	E	James Woods <i>Hospitality & Welcoming</i>	E	Bev Koos <i>Worship and Music</i>
				P	Diane Roebuck <i>Christian Ed & Fellowship for Youth</i>
				E	Karla Ruiter <i>Building & Grounds</i>
				P	Jay Williams <i>Cong Fellowship & Development</i>
P	Mark Jones <i>Clerk of Session, non-voting</i>	<i>P- present E-Excused A-Absent</i>			

P	Rev. Kathy Stoner-Lasala <i>Moderator</i>	P	Matthew Bishop <i>Director of Music</i>	P	Darren Long <i>Facilities & Custodial Supervisor</i>
P	Rev. Pat Halverson <i>Parish Associate</i>	P	Kristine Olson <i>Finance Manager</i>		

Guests:

- Deacon Ted Brown
- Mike Bawden and Craig Foster, members of PNC for Head of Staff

No changes in the agenda were requested. The Moderator declared the agenda was in order as published.

On motion and second, Ted Brown, Mike Bawden, and Craig Foster were admitted to the meeting with voice but no vote.

DEACONS' REPORT: Ted Brown, Chair of the Deacons

Ted reported the following items from the Deacons:

- **Outreach report:** Paula Hartmann reported
 - Community Easter Egg Hunt was Saturday April 16, 2022, from 11:30 to 1. The Deacons provided, cooked and wrapped 600 hot dogs; donated 2 bicycles, money for the eggs and the “Easter Bunny”.
 - 800 rolls of toilet paper were donated and delivered to Humility Homes and Services.
 - The Church picnic is being planned with tentative date of August 28.
 - The committee is working with Washington Schools to set up community partners programs which could include lunch buddies, teacher’s appreciation and field trips.
- **Mission Report:** John Gere reported
 - The committee is finalizing their list of missions to support. The missions must meet certain criteria which Ted will provide to John. The list will need to be submitted to the Deacons for a vote.
 - Glen Roebuck will be presenting to ACE what missions the church is supporting and gathering input on what the church’s appetite is for national and international mission
- **Pastoral Care:** Colleen Duenas reported
 - Gifts of fabric crosses on 8 by 10 boards were given In Touch church members prior to Easter
 - Planning for Homecoming continues and is scheduled for the 1st Sunday in October which is World Communion Sunday

On motion and second, the Deacon’s Report was accepted as presented.

Report from the Pastor Nominating Committee for Head of Staff – Mike Bawden and Craig Foster

The PNC presented the Mission Study portion of the Ministry Information Form (MIF). General comments from Craig and Mike included:

- The text of the document presented is near its final form. Some minor changes have been suggested recently from individuals asked to review the form for accuracy.
- Additional formatting will include a table of contents, page numbers, links to related documents, pictures, graphs, and sidebars.
- The approach by the PNC was to present an honest appraisal of the current church – both good and bad. Wanted this for the candidates so there would be no surprises and also for the congregation to see the openness of Mission Study.
- This document will be a major part of the Ministry Information Form (MIF) which the PNC will complete very soon.
- The Mission Study and MIF goes to the Ministers and Congregations Commission (MCC) at the Presbytery.

Mike and Craig responded to questions and comments.

- CEFY schedule is pre-pandemic; may want to be clear on current CEFY programming.
- Suggestions on terminology/word changes.
- Asked for clarification of the neighborhood description.
- Addition to timeline to indicate when we restarted worshipping in person.

- Following a question, the Moderator responded that Mission Study hits the targets a candidate would want to read.

On motion and second, the Session gave its approval to the Mission Study. A copy of the completed MIF will be placed on the church website. A copy will be found in the Appendix to the 2022 Bound Records.

Vision and Values Statement

Background: The PNC also asked to Session to consider the Vision and Values Statement used in the Mission Study just approved. This is a statement developed by the Congregational Growth and Marketing Committee and recently presented to the congregation. This is seen as a living document and it may not be in its final form as written but is has undergone several revisions and will be used in the Mission Study. The PNC has asked the Session to approve this Vision and Values Statement for FPC. A copy of the Vision and Values Statement is appended to these minutes.

On motion and second, the Session approves the Vision and Values Statement as it appears in the Mission Study with the expectation it will continue to evolve with continued input from the congregation and a new head pastor.

On motion and second, the Session approved removing the current Mission Statement from the website until such time as it can be reviewed and revised, referring this work to the Congregational Marketing and Growth Committee. **Background:** The current Mission Study can be seen as inconsistent with the language and tone in the new Vision and Values Statement just approved.

CEFY – Elder Diane Roebuck

Elder Diane Roebuck, on behalf of the Christian Education and Fellowship for Youth Committee, moved the approval of the Director of Christian Education job description and personal attributes as presented to the Session and the approval to initiate a search.

The motion was approved. Copies of the job description and personal attributes are appended to these minutes.

Active Membership Review

The Moderator and the Clerk reported that Elder Heather Calvert has indicated that all parties have reviewed the FPC membership list and have identified 156 names whose level of participation at FPC could not be determined.

Discussion on how to make a pastoral care contact with each of them led to the following plan. Work on this plan will begin as soon as possible.

- Each Elder will be asked to contact 6-7 names on the list.
- Elders will select the names they will contact to facilitate selection of people with whom they might have some connection.
- Contact should be as personal as possible – telephone call first; e-mail and letters if telephone contact is not possible.

- Pastors Stoner-Lasala and Halverson, based on their experience with pastoral calls, will assist by preparing a script or talking points that can be used.
- The goal is to invite them to church activities in the summer, determine if they have pastoral care needs, or assist them in finding a church if they are no longer able to attend FPC.

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion and second, the Session approved the following items in the Consent Agenda

- Minutes of the March 21, 2022 Session meeting as presented.
- Request for baptism for Charlotte Anne Hermiston, daughter of Patrick Charles Hermiston and Erin Elise Sodawasser-Hermiston, born on December 15, 2021, in Davenport Iowa, to be held on Sunday, June 26, 2022, 9:30 AM at First Presbyterian Church, Davenport, IA, Rev. Dr. Kathy Stoner-Lasala officiating.
- Report of the Clerk of Session for March 2022. A copy of the March 2022 Clerk's report can be found in the appendix to the 2022 FPC bound records.

REPORT OF THE CLERK OF SESSION **For the Month of [March 2022](#)**

I. [Request for approval:](#)

Baptism for Charlotte Anne Hermiston, daughter of Patrick Charles Hermiston and Erin Elise Sodawasser-Hermiston, born on December 15, 2021, in Davenport Iowa, to be held on Sunday, June 26, 2022, 9:30 AM at First Presbyterian Church, Davenport, IA, Rev. Dr. Kathy Stoner-Lasala officiating.

II. [Communion](#)

Communion was served on Wednesday, March 2, 2022 (Ash Wednesday) at 12 Noon (in-person and streaming) and 7 PM (on-line). Rev. Dr. Kathy Stoner-Lasala and Rev. Pat Halvorsen officiating.

Communion was served on Sunday, March 13, 2022 (in-person and on-line). Rev. Dr. Beth McCaw officiating.

III. [CHANGES TO THE REGISTERS, March 2022](#)

Baptism

Bennett Lane Downing, born August 29, 2021, Davenport, IA.
Son of Patrick Gary Downing and Kristena Annette (Easter) Downing.
Baptized on Sunday, March 20, 2022, Rev. Dr. Kathy Stoner-Lasala officiating.

Death

Lorraine "Lori" Carlson

Date

March 26, 2022

Service

Duluth, MN at a later date

Other Business of the Clerk

- **Reminder:** next meeting is May 16, 2022 – just 3 weeks from today.
- **Scheduled Committee Reports for May:** Finance and Heritage Committee.

- Correspondence: Received a Screening Questionnaire from the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego as a reference for Rev. Mark Galbraith. Also received was a signed release from Rev. Galbraith. The questionnaire primarily was asking about known legal issues, charges of misconduct, etc, rather than job performance. The questionnaire was completed with the assistance of Elder RuthAnn Tobey-Brown, Chair of the Personnel Committee and submitted on April 21, 2022.

On motion and second, the report from the Clerk was approved.

Finance Report – Elder Tom Spitzfaden

- Financial result for March
 - Expenses exceeded income for the month; now at a deficit YTD. This is not unexpected.
 - Donations YTD are lower than YTD last year.
- Still some concern at not meeting agreed upon deadlines in the finance office. We are behind on reviews and reconciliations
 - Hoped to catch-up starting last month; have not made as much progress as hoped; not catching up as I indicated we would be last month.
 - It's not as concerning as last year but it is not where we want to be.
- Still trying to figure out how to provide the Session better and more impactful information to help you make decisions.

	March 2022		March 2021	
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
General Fund Income	49,280	52,767	70,587	63,800
Custodial Accounts Income	5,135	-	2,976	-
Compensation Expenses	42,826	47,837	43,448	41,490
Non Compensation General Fund Expenses	19,665	22,024	19,974	29,026
Custodial Accounts Expenses	5,135	-	2,976	-
Surplus (Deficit)	(13,211)	(17,094)	7,165	(6,716)
	2022 Year-To-Date		2021 Year-To-Date	
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
General Fund Income	191,200	194,687	242,489	226,154
Custodial Accounts Income	6,476	-	3,957	-
Compensation Expenses	126,434	131,447	121,019	123,791
Non Compensation General Fund Expenses	49,305	51,664	50,618	58,055
Custodial Accounts Expenses	6,476	-	3,957	-
Surplus (Deficit)	15,461	11,576	70,852	44,308

All numbers are rounded.

On motion and second, the Finance Report was approved.

Staff Reports

Rev. Pat Halverson, Parish Associate

- Preaching regularly
- Doing visitations, particularly at Clarissa C. Cook Hospice House

Matt Bishop, Director of Music

- Holy Week was wonderful and busy for the adult & youth choirs, Vesper Bells & organist.
- The organ needs some repairs in near future; 1 repair (a sticky pedal) has been fixed.
- Chamber Chorale is leading worship next Sunday with Eastertide Lessons and Carols.
- Preparing for the spring Choir Concert, May 21, 2022.
- Nebraska Wesleyan University will be singing in our sanctuary on May 13th. The Sanctuary Choir will sing one piece; Church is assisting with home stays.
- Children choirs are off now through the summer; Musikgarten will continue on Zoom through the summer.
- Thanks for Linda Bengfort and Kathy Middleton for their hard work this past year.
- 2022-2023 PAS program is being finalized and will be reported soon.
- Working on final arrangements for the Ireland trip.
- Maintaining the church's social media postings.

Darren Long, Facilities Manager

- The roof-to-roof ladder needed will cost about \$1600.
- A boiler leak repair bid is \$5600.
- The outside LED lights are now ready to be installed.
- The big tree by the Kildalton Cross has some cracks; looking into what needs to be done.
- The Kildalton Cross needs some restoration work. Darren is contacting Mark who did a previous restoration to see if he might help again.

Kristine Olson, Finance Manager

- An offer has been extended for the part-time accounting assistant pending background screenings. This person may be starting next week.
- New Zoom phones are in place and seem to be working well.

Rev. Kathy Stoner-Lasala

- Recently reviewed church policy related to emergency responses. Will be recommending several changes primarily related to the order in which things should be done to emphasize employee safety. These changes will be presented in the near future.
- Some financial policies were left out of the Operations Manual. That is being remedied.
- Presented a request to assist a former member who has recently returned to Davenport. He has had some recent set-backs. He is able to afford an apartment but does not have the funds for the necessary deposit. Finance Committee has reviewed the request.
 - **On motion and second**, the Session approved \$900 from the Dannenfeldt Restricted Fund to be paid to the landlord for the rent/security deposit needed for

Earl Schaffer to obtain his housing. The purpose of the Dannenfeldt fund is to assist the less fortunate in the community.

- Church member Jim Hall died this past week. He has no known family other than his FPC family. A memorial service will be planned and his burial will be at the Arsenal cemetery. Halligan-McCabe-Devries Funeral Home has agreed to discount its usual cost for a funeral to \$5500.
 - **On motion and second**, the Session approved use of funds from the Dannenfeldt Restricted Fund and the Sesquicentennial Fund to conduct funeral and burial services for Jim Hall, if the way be clear after Finance Committee Review.
- The Moderator has previously indicated that following conclusion of the formal reconciliation process, she would hold meetings that would allow members to ask any remaining questions they had. She is proposing up to 8 meetings – 4 on Thursday evenings and 4 on Thursday afternoons. She will call them “Wrapping Up the Turmoil: Ask the Pastor Anything.” It was suggested that an alternate to Thursday be included in the options for those that might have a consistent conflict on Thursday.
- The Personnel Committee and the Moderator are making a recommendation **that Darren Long, Facilities and Custodial Manager, be moved from hourly wage to an exempt (salaried) status effective immediately**. Elder RuthAnn Tobey Brown, on behalf of the Personnel Committee placed that motion on the floor. **The motion was approved.**
- The Moderator announced a Called Meeting of Session for Sunday, May 1, 2022, at 10:35 AM in the Fireplace Room for the purpose of receiving the 2022 Confirmation Class as members of FPC. They will be welcomed by the congregation on May 8, 2022.
- The Moderator presented her current situation in regards to the care of her brother. He recently received a liver transplant and she will be part of his post-transplant care team for up to 12 weeks. This means she will be working remotely for considerable time during these 12 weeks. She will be arranging pulpit supply for the Sundays when she will be absent. She will be in Davenport as much as she can. The Moderator gave the Session the opportunity to discuss whether she should step aside as Bridging Pastor now under these new circumstances. The Session directed the Personnel Committee to work with the Moderator on an acceptable plan that will allow her to continue as our Bridging Pastor and meet her responsibilities on her brother’s care team.

The question arose about her participation in the Presbytery meeting hosted by FPC on June 18, 2022. She indicated she would be preaching at the worship service for the meeting. She did ask the Worship and Music Committee to take the lead in organizing the meeting.

On motion and second, all Staff Reports were approved.

Other Business:

Synod ARC Report / Reconciliation

- The final report (letter) from Rev. Dr. Beth McCaw was received on March 25, 2022 and forwarded to the Session.
- A copy of the letter is appended to these minutes.

Operations Manual: A discussion of proposed revisions to Operations Manual was deferred.

ADJOURNMENT

The agenda was completed. Moderator Stoner-Lasala requested new business items to be offered and nothing was brought to the floor. Moderator Stoner-Lasala declared the meeting adjourned and the meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Davenport, Iowa will be held on May 16, 2022 at 7:00 PM.

The Rev. Dr. Kathy Stoner-Lasala
Moderator

Mark Jones
Clerk of Session

Appendix #1 to FPC Session Minutes, April 2022

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1702 Iowa St.

Davenport, IA 52803

January 2022

Position Title: Director of Christian Education

Classification: Lay Professional Program Staff (Certified Christian Educator), Full-time

Primary Concentration: Children, Youth, and Family Ministries.

Reports to: Head of Staff

Summary of Position: The Director of Christian Education has primary responsibility to create and maintain an innovative program of education and fellowship that is grounded in the Christian faith, centered on relationship-building, and attractive to children, youth and their families.

I. Primary Responsibilities

A. Children and Youth Christian Education

- a. Serve on the hiring team to recruit, supervise and support the Nursery staff.
- b. Bring recommendations for curriculum and other resources for programs for Pre-K through high school, as well as special occasion multi-generational church fellowship activities and events, to the Children's Christian Education and Fellowship for Youth Committee (CEFY) for the Committee's review, selection and recommendation to the Session.
- c. Recruit, train, support and provide resources for volunteer teachers for church school.
- d. Plan and coordinate special church activities for all ages and families throughout the year; such as Vacation Bible Camp, an Easter Celebration, children and youth led worship, and other special events as needed and/or developed. In consultation with the Church Marketing and Growth Committee of Session, make it a point to encourage community youth (non-church members) involvement.
- e. Coordinate and implement youth, family and intergenerational mission trips, including fundraising for trips.
- f. Administer the confirmation program.
- g. Serve as a staff resource to other staff members and to the committee(s) for Children's, Youth and Family Christian Education and collaborate with pastor(s) to encourage the parents and significant adult figures of their children to be active in adult faith formation.

B. Children and Youth Fellowship Ministry

- a. Develop, implement, facilitate and administer children (Kirkwood Club – grades 1-5), Middle School (grades 6-8) and High School (grades 9-12) fellowship programs in conjunction with the CEFY.
- b. Organize and facilitate youth activities (PC(USA) Youth Triennium, retreats, trips and events), and encourage middle and high school youth to serve as volunteers at such special events.
- c. Train and equip lay volunteers involved in youth ministries.
- d. Provide vision for future growth of the youth ministries and further development of opportunities for youth in church activities, including through work and support of other committees within the church.
- e. Engage the youth relationally, spiritually, and socially such that each young person feels known and is involved to the level that they choose to be, demonstrating proficiency with technology and communication modalities utilized by children, youth, parents and young adults in accordance with the church's Child Protection Policy; examples (which will change over time) include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Spotify, Texting
- f. Develop a ministry of presence to children and youth, by attending activities outside the church; which may include school plays, music performances, sports activities, etc. Flex-time is available for presence at activities outside business hours. As our program rebuilds, our plan is to add a half-time youth worker reporting to the Christian Educator. The youth worker will take over this (by then developed) task.

II. Administrative Responsibilities

- A. Collaborate with the Christian Education, Family and Youth Committee in the ministry of Christian Education.
- B. Attend Session meetings and report during Session meeting as needed.
- C. Assist assigned committee(s) in developing a program budget and submit it to the Joint Budget meeting annually.
- D. Administer program budgets as directed by the Christian Education, Family and Youth committee (CEFY); includes purchasing (with approval by CEFY) of equipment, curriculum and supplies
- E. Maintain program supplies and supply rooms
 - a. Keep an inventory of needed Christian Education supplies and curriculum
 - b. Respond to volunteers' supply and curriculum needs in a timely manner

- i. Place Christian Education supply and curriculum orders with approval of Head of Staff and CEFY Committee
 - ii. Verify accuracy and cost of Christian Education supplies and curriculum received
- c. Maintain Christian Education supply and curriculum order files
- d. Design, maintain, nurture Christian Education spaces

III. Qualifications

- A. This ministry requires that the person in this position be a Certified Christian Educator, be engaged with (or willing to enter) the Certification Process
- B. Graduate degree in Christian Education is preferred; undergraduate degree with experience a possibility
- C. Compliance with church's Child Protection Policy
- D. Full vaccination against COVID-19 and masking are requirements.
- E. Additional required qualifications include:
 - a. Creative problem-solving skills
 - b. Clear communication skills in writing, in person, zoom and telephone

IV. General Terms of Employment and Benefits

- A. Market competitive minimum salary.
- B. Benefits as outlined in the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual of FPC including work related cell phone reimbursement. (Director of Christian Education)

Personal attributes and qualifications for our successful Christian Education Director

- Professional, post-secondary credentials in Christian Youth Ministry
 - Minimum MA or M.Div with Christian Ed and/or youth ministry concentration
 - Minimum 5 years successful experience as indicated in reference checks
- Excellent communication skills including electronic and social media
- Strong relationship building skills
 - Ability to attract, teach and mentor
- Relates easily across age groups
 - Demonstrates facility with the morays of Gen Z and Gen A, together with their Millennial and Gen X parents and Boomer grandparents
- Demonstrates, or is willing to acquire skills for, intercultural competency
- Team player
- Empathic
- Nurturing
- Demonstrates strong listening skills
- Demonstrates strong problem-solving skills

- Outgoing personality
- High energy engagement with children's and youth's daily lives
- Available for small group interactions with children and youth
- Self-actualized with good boundaries
- Creative and enjoys the creative process
- Experienced with design, prep, leading/classroom management, follow-up activities of discipleship and nurture

Appendix #2 to FPC Session Minutes, April 2022

Values and Vision Statement from the FPC Mission Study, April 19, 2020

Core Values

Legacy	First Church has a rich historical heritage in the community as one of the oldest and most influential churches in the Iowa Quad Cities.
Joyfulness	We are a congregation of good humor and expression; whether it's the joyful laugh of children during their worship message or applause at the end of a service's postlude, First Church expresses love and joy without reservation or remorse. Joy makes us ready to do good work and encourages us to do that work well.
Justice	As a congregation involved in the communities in which it lives, we have a long-standing reputation for volunteerism and principled activism, of leadership and fair-mindedness.
Loyalty	First Church has a reputation for honoring commitments made and sticking with them for the long haul. We understand that it is far better to do what is right rather than just doing what's easy or expedient, even if that's all that's asked.
Creativity	We are a creative place and a creative people. You can see it in how we solve problems and take on challenges in all forms (both artistic and practical).

Vision

First Presbyterian Church is a community of believers who are open and welcoming to everyone. As a congregation, we are dedicated to making practicing your faith fun and meaningful - and we do that by joyfully and creatively sharing stories of the promise found inside a loving relationship with God through Christ. We share our commitment to our faith by turning our words into actions and by staying resolute on matters of fairness, equality, and equity for all.

Some key phrases worth considering:

"a community of believers"	As members of this congregation, we're fully committed to the basic tenets of the Presbyterian tradition.
"open and welcoming to everyone"	As a Matthew 25 church, our congregation does not discriminate based on sexual orientation, preference, or identity.
"We are known"	We are public about what we do and share that information freely as part of our evangelical mission.
"joyfully and creatively sharing stories"	We celebrate and share the good news of not just our faith but of our faithful journey with our fellow members, and we do so in a way that is captivating and relevant.
"the promise found inside a loving relationship with God through Christ"	Every story should have, at its heart, a revealed truth about our relationship with God through Christ "turning words into

actions” We value “walking our talk” – doing what we say we’re going to do and keeping our promises.

“staying resolute on matters of fairness, equality, and equity for all”

The principles of the denomination and commitment to representation that underpin Presbyterianism reaffirm our position on social justice What we need First Church needs two things in order to fully realize its vision and live into its potential:

Appendix #3 to FPC Session Minutes, April 2022: Final Reconciliation Report from Rev. Dr. Beth McCaw
March 25, 2022

Susan Krummel, Stated Clerk, Presbytery of East Iowa
Mark Jones, Clerk of Session, First Presbyterian Church, Davenport

Dear Saints in Davenport and East Iowa,

Grace and peace to you in Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Savior. It is hard to improve upon these epistle words in our regard and prayers for one another. In that spirit here offered are final words in the reconciliation work I have shared with you. This month the Presbytery of East Iowa blessed the offering of covenants for healing and strong relational practices. In Lord's Day worship First Presbyterian Church had the same offering in the worship bulletin; communion was celebrated with servers from both parties. These covenants are the concluding guidance that has emerged from among you, they cannot be improved upon as a report. I have had the privilege of a unique vantage point across the relationship, and below is my account of your reconciliation journey that I celebrate with and commend to you.

A mandated reconciliation process is a peculiar exercise that requires an extra measure of grace, especially after other routes toward conflict resolution do not pan out. Your demonstration of faith over these months has continued to deepen my respect for you. For several months I ministered *between* you, holding pre-circle conversations with any individuals or small groups from each side of the relationship willing to meet. With a conflict that had been unfolding for several years (including threads that trace back yet further), the perseverance and willingness to trust *one more time* the stories of frustration, conflict, wounding and even trauma have been a sacrifice. Everyone should be honored for these laments – Deborah Hunsinger calls lament “the last refuge of hope” because with faith we insist on healing. In these conversations I bore witness to your diverse experiences, and also grew in understanding of complex and interlocking stories. This work has been demanding for you because the precipitating events were several and significant. These are detailed in my two status reports from the fall.

In late fall, key leaders at FPC together wrote a narrative of how the turmoil unfolded for them. This was an important articulation. It clarified what many people had experienced, but had felt prohibited in naming publicly. The telling allowed their experiences to be acknowledged and understood. This freely available document removes some of the dysfunction of confusing secrets (which is different from necessary confidentiality). Also in the fall a series of six zoom devotional times were held. In this I was seeking to move from ministering “between” presbytery and congregation, to be *beside* all as they met. Congregation and presbytery met face to face for prayer for one another, the process, and the world. Each devotional time included participants from both parties. In this, a new kind of muscle memory for the parts of the body started to be exercised. After years of an oppositional stance it takes deliberate effort to meet around a center other than the sources of conflict.

In December a giant step toward one another was taken. Individuals in four restoration circle conversations dared to describe among FPC and PEIA participants their wounds, and their concrete hopes for healing, individually and corporately. After each person shared, other participants confirmed what had been expressed; every person left assured that they had been understood. Notes were made of the needs named so that they might be honored in the future relationship.

Each evening I left those conversations reflecting that tremendous faith had been exercised, and God had been present in starting to mend wounds and ease relational barriers. Every night individuals said that they felt heard - and appreciated the hearing. The goodwill offering in the simple act of showing up was acknowledged. These restoration circles were fruitful in producing material for moving forward.

However, they had value in and of themselves as the relationship was inhabited with fresh trust. I hope that the process experienced will remain with participants as a practical way of engagement around difficult topics. You have added tools to your toolbox when you find the relationship frustrating or stuck.

In January, FPC elders selected by the session, and PEIA members selected by MCC, met in two work groups. They thoroughly reviewed key documents related to the conflict, including the notes from the restoration circles. They also read and reviewed *Healthy Disclosure* by Kibbie Simmons Ruth and Karen A. McClintock. At this point I was stepping back in my “beside” role and yielding the direction of the work to these small groups. The groups collaborated with respect, warmth, hope, and a great deal of agreement on what will make for a healthy relationship. Two covenants were produced. One describes the particular supports that the presbytery can provide the FPC PNC in calling a pastor who will be a good fit to the congregation. There was strong concurrence in this common goal. The second work group met for two sessions. In the first they noted where communication had failed among many parties, contributing significantly to dysfunction, wounding, and the generating of further problems. In the second session they used those insights to craft best practices to avoid repeating mistakes and grow in strength and support.

These covenants were not prescribed by an outside party, or handed down hierarchically. They are the fruit of hard and even courageous work on the part of many members and leaders. Individuals and groups dared to trust their wounds and needs and failings to the larger relationship in Christ. They joined together with deliberate grace and hope in articulating and agreeing upon what is needed. These covenants are not a set of rules, policies, or procedures by which to police others. They are a mutually owned description of the healthy relationship into which all have committed to grow. Please note the word “grow” – the practice and experience of reconciliation will be ongoing for months and even years. But you are in a much different place than you were last summer. You have not just planted some seeds – some of them are sprouting even now, and you understand at what you are looking; you are agreed on how to nurture this further. Be urged to not file the covenants away and check “reconciliation” off of the list. Rather, periodically review them in gatherings in which you are both present, and use them as a compass needle for remembering to where you have set out together, and adjust course as needed, with grace and hope.

At this conclusion I move from *between* and *beside* you to *be gone*! Prayers of thanksgiving and hope remain with you. The most important recommendation is that above: relying on the Spirit of Christ, continue to make something of the hard-won fruit God has brought from your work together. I also highlight a couple of the specific recommendations in the covenants. The work groups found *Healthy Disclosure* illuminating for pitfalls and best practices. Already one group has begun a study, and it is commended for consideration in both congregation and presbytery. Another recommendation is boundary training offered for FPC and other congregations and PEIA members by a third party. This will refresh everyone’s appreciation for healthy dynamics between pastors, presbytery, members, committees, congregation.

You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city on a hill, a royal priesthood. You have important kingdom work to accomplish together. In this, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Yours in Christ,

Beth McCaw

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Associate Professor; Glacier Presbytery Leader