

Minutes of the [Stated Business Meeting of the Session](#)
Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church
[September 27, 2011](#)

Members of the Session:

Rev. Dr. Peter Barnes	Rev. Dr. Carol Friesen	Rev. Dr. Peter Haas
Alex Allmann	Drew Beckley	Mike Douglas
Phil Haag	Betty Hood	Barbara Humphrey
Jim Johnson*	Laurence Ligon	Jim Little
Liza Martin	Ray Mashburn	Mary Mills
Rick Milvenan	Dennis Pauling	Julie Smith
Sheryl Streder-Becker	Mike Ussery	Mike Ward
Wally Warrenburg	Weldon Whiteside	Fred Wilder

*Excused and providentially prohibited from attending.

Guests: Rev. Dr. Jim Bankhead and Nancy Gray-Director of Communications

Call to Order and Opening Prayer and Devotion:

Rev. Dr. Carol Friesen opened the meeting with prayer and Elder Weldon Whiteside led the Session in a devotional.

Approval and Reception of Minutes

- A. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the Session as amended for the August 30, 2011 stated meeting. The motion carried.
- B. Additional motions were made, seconded and carried to accept and receive the minutes of the Session division and committee meetings.

Communications and Matters of Record:

- A. A motion was made, seconded and carried to receive and approve the Membership Report and the related information concerning membership, as follows:
 1. The motion regarding the baptism of Amelia Melynn Bender was rescinded as it has been delayed.
 2. The transfer of Johnny and Pam Stearns to Redeemer Presbyterian Church was approved.
- B. Wally Warrenburg presented the 2011 financial report for the period ending July 31, 2011. Wally reported that the revenues year to date are less than budgeted but expenditures year to date are also less than budgeted by a similar amount. The Finance Committee is concerned about the unusually low level of cash at the end of July. The Committee will be monitoring this closely and will exercise the line of credit at our bank if necessary.

New Business

Robin Green, the onsite event leader for the Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit, gave a report on the 2011 event. Our numbers for participation exceeded expectations. Robin outlined statistics from the event and showed a short video which was a summary of the event. Robin feels like it is a great privilege for WHPC to be a host church for this event as the lives of some attendees are changed every year. He recommended that WHPC continue as a host for the 2012 Leadership Summit. This was approved.

Old Business

- A. Denominational Relations Committee

1. Wally Warrenburg gave a report on the called meeting of Mission Presbytery held in San Antonio on September 17, 2011. Wally summarized the layout of the meeting starting with seating participants at tables for 10 people in discussion groups as in the Lausanne Conference attended by Rev. Dr. Peter Barnes last year. Next instructions were given by Kerry Pollard and Karl Slaikeu outlining the purpose and process of the meeting and ways to analyze the information presented. Then four selected pastors presented four different possible responses to the passage of Amendment 10A. After each presentation, the table groups individually discussed that presentation and developed questions for further clarification by the presenters at the end of the meeting. It was a very positive experience as the mood was respectful and mostly loving at each table as diverse viewpoints were discussed. No actions were taken at this meeting.
2. The Session received a letter from Mission Presbytery dated September 17, 2011 in which the National Mexican Presbyterian Church officially voted to sever the historic 139-year relationship with the PC(USA).
3. The Session also received new comments from the congregation regarding the recent changes to our constitution from the WHPC congregation to the Session.
4. The Session also received a revised draft letter by the ad hoc committee reflecting the Session's decisions regarding sexual ethics and standards for use by the nominating committees examining WHPC elders, deacons and pastors as well as our position on the several proposed organizational responses to changes in our constitution within the Presbytery and the denomination. After a lively and protracted discussion, the letter was amended. Then a motion was made, seconded and carried approving the amended letter. This letter will be mailed to each active member of WHPC within a few days. There will be congregational listening sessions after each service on October 9th to respond to the letter. (The letter is copied at the end of these minutes.)
5. A motion was made and seconded: That Session approve a facilities reserve project to replace the fire alarm panel at a cost of \$15,000 to accommodate the installation of additional smoke detectors which are required by the fire code and were previously approved by the Session. As there is only \$11,000 left in the facilities reserve fund, the Facilities Committee recommended the delay of a preapproved restroom maintenance project costing \$4,000 until next year. The motion carried.
6. Nancy Gray, Director of Communications, reported on the experiment this summer in which the order of worship was not printed in the bulletin for the 9:30am contemporary service. This provides more flexibility to the worship team, costs less to produce and was in keeping with the practices of other churches. Nancy stated that the experiment was a success and recommended that we continue this practice into the future. It was approved.

Pastors' Reports

Rev. Dr. Carol Friesen reported that her husband, Paul, has passed his final assessment with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and will be presented for examination and approval at the upcoming Presbytery meeting in Victoria at the end of October. There will be an ordination service at WHPC at a later date in November.

Rev. Dr. Peter Haas reported that there is a nifty 30 minute training video describing the iCare process which he recommends that everyone view.

Rev. Dr. Peter Barnes reported that Drew Beckley of Session and he were on the recent Pilgrimage staff. Becky Dickson was the moderator. God was present and lives were changed.

The Meeting Was Adjourned With Prayer

Wally Warrenburg
Acting Clerk of the Session

CONGREGATIONAL LETTER

September 29, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church,

As we have shared with you in previous communications, earlier this year our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), voted to amend our constitution regarding ordination standards. Among these standards was the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness. With the change in the constitution it is now up to each church Session and Presbytery to decide what its ordination standards will be. (The text of the amendment is provided on the Church's website at www.whpc.org/whpc/denominational_issues_communications_team.)

Your pastors and elders have been discussing this change to our constitution for several months, and we thank each of you who have been a part of our information and sharing sessions after worship as well as those who have sent communications to the Session. Your thoughts and suggestions have been heard and are very important to us. Clearly, we have a very diverse membership with differing views on the ordination issue, and on our understanding of scripture as it applies to these matters. At the same time, our congregation seems fully united in our love of Christ, each other, and the mission and vision of WHPC.

The Session has debated two issues. First, what sexual ethic should be provided to our nominating committees to use in nominating church officers and calling pastors? Second, what should be our position with regard to the several proposed organizational responses to changes in our constitution within the Presbytery and the denomination? Reaching decisions on these new challenges for our Session has been extraordinarily difficult. The Session has faithfully spent many hours together, and in personal prayer and fasting, in seeking to understand God's direction for us. And like the PC(USA) and our congregation itself, the Session remains divided on the fundamental question of whether persons in active same-sex relationships should be precluded for that reason alone from serving as officers of our church.

The Session recognizes with humility that it must make a decision to provide guidance to our officer nominating committees. As pastors and elders we continue to hold fast to the ordination vows we took years ago. We continue to believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word and the ultimate authority for the living of our lives. We also continue to hold to the historic creeds and confessions found in our Book of Confessions. For the present, the Session has decided to

maintain the traditional standards for ordination that have guided our church during the last several decades, thus continuing to require of all church officers and pastors fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness. The result of this decision is that WHPC will continue to operate as before when each of us joined this church.

We recognize that the Spirit of God calls and equips each person into spiritual leadership in God's larger story and in the local church, and we acknowledge our dependence upon God to help us overcome any preconceived ideas or beliefs that limit whom God can call to ministry. All people matter to God, and God's love unites diverse people through reconciliation in Christ, in whom there is neither *"male nor female, Jew or Greek, slave or free"* (Galatians 3.28). Therefore, we pledge to listen to each person's sense of call to ministry and discern together how God is calling them to serve at WHPC and in the wider church.

With regard to our relationship to the presbytery and the denomination, the Session has decided to take no action at this time. We believe that it is wisest to wait and see what approach Mission Presbytery will take as it adapts to the new provisions of our Book of Order. Many conversations are taking place across the country seeking to organize our denomination in a way that would provide "a place to stand" for people with differing views on these important issues. (For a list of options under consideration, please see the Church's website www.whpc.org/whpc/denominational_issues_communications_team.) We plan to be part of this dialogue about the future of the PC(USA), and we will study new developments as they arise.

As we have done with each other on Session, we encourage forbearance with one another in the midst of our differences. We are blessed to have a congregation with many views, and we celebrate our unity in our diversity. There is so much more that unites us than divides us, and we call on each member to practice what Ephesians 4:3 urges: *"Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace."* **Let's not allow these matters to sidetrack us from our primary mission of reaching out to a lost and broken world with the Good News of God's love in Jesus Christ. We are entering an exciting season at Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church when a new strategic plan will be implemented in 2012 that includes a new small group initiative, a clear path of discipleship, and new opportunities for missional engagement.** Let us stand together as we invite people into God's larger story and follow Christ as one family.

The Session of WHPC