

Session Notes – Nov 2023

Session met Tuesday, Nov 28. This report is late, last week was ramp-up to a full calendar of Advent music events for me, so the Session Notes languished. Apologies, but no promises for next year!

We reviewed the preliminary team and committee budgets for 2024, Outreach, Care & Fellowship, Educational Ministries, and Worship. These will be reviewed by the Finance Committee as they prepare a draft overall budget, which we review in early January. Ultimately, the congregation approves the budget at our Annual Congregational Meeting in 2024.

We are so grateful to God for our staff: Jannie, Nehemia, and Neena. The Personnel Committee has begun annual yearend staff reviews, consulting the staff themselves and various stakeholders. This too is input to the budget process.

Session is concerned that in recent years requests for assistance from the Benevolent Fund are trending significantly down. We don't think it's because there is less need. This year, some funds have been put towards emergent expenses related to the community meal that were brought forward by elders. Session is reviewing how to increase awareness and use of the Fund to better ensure that money goes out where it could help. Meanwhile we still look to your donations via retiring offerings at the end of Communion services or e-transfers. Speak to Curtis or Graeme if you know of a situation where the Benevolent Fund could make a difference; all conversations and benevolences are strictly confidential.

Our Educational Ministries Programmer, Nehemia Neuhisa, has his MDiv from a seminary in Jakarta, Indonesia, and desires to be a candidate for ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Due to his qualifications and experience here, and with a recommendation from RPC Session, the PCC has agreed to waive the usual 2-year waiting period for offshore students. He is currently taking a few remaining and required courses at VST specific to our denominational history and organisation. His ministry here has been a blessing to us.

As you read this, Advent will have arrived. The season was kicked off by our **O Holy Night** concert Friday evening Dec 1. Curtis's bible study on words in the Bible is looking at the Advent themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. The church is decorated. The Cantata, Pageant, and Christmas Eve services are just a Sunday or two away. We pray that this Advent and Christmas will be a time of renewal for your Christian walk and for celebrating relationships with family and friends.

Graeme Stager, Clerk

