

Transcript

00:00:08 Eliana Maxim

Welcome to the SeaPres Podcast, a podcast from the Presbytery of Seattle that invites you into conversations about issues and topics that are meaningful to the Church and its people.

00:00:20 Eliana Maxim

I'm Eliana Maxim and I'm here with Scott Lumsden were the Co-Executive presbyters for Seattle Presbytery and we thought we would take a little audio review of what's going on through the presbytery and share with all of our commissioners and any other interested parties instead of giving you a written report.

00:00:40 Eliana Maxim

You get to hear from our sonorous and mellifluous sounds of our voices.

How do you like those?

00:00:46 Scott Lumsden

Wow, those are some big words.

00:00:48 Eliana Maxim

Not bad for ESL.

I think the first thing Scott is, we've got some staff changes that maybe you want to share.

00:00:58 Scott Lumsden

Yeah, sure, I'll take a take a stab at this.

So first welcome to Paul Kim who joined our staff a couple months ago from SPU and he came on to help out with the Thriving Congregations initiative.

And we also and some property discernment questions that the presbytery has to wrestle with as we move forward.

And so those are two areas that he'll be working on, and another thing which is a teaser at the end.

We have a couple sabbaticals coming up, but we'll touch on those later, so he'll provide a little bit of coverage there too, but yeah, and so we're very excited about that.

And it's great to have him on board and we also have a new title for one of our staff members.

It's not just the reverend Tali Hairston, it's the Reverend Doctor Tali Hairston.

And so, we're super excited for Tali.

He completed his PhD defense.

In get this... in Colombia via Zoom and so we know he'd been working hard on the dissertation and we're just super excited for him and proud of him for accomplishing that huge feat.

00:02:16 Eliana Maxim

Absolutely, there was much celebrating.

Let me assure you, for those of us that were in Colombia with him when he was able to do that, so very happy and proud for our brother and colleague Tali.

00:02:29 Eliana Maxim

In the meantime, we are also working with several congregations that have embarked on their pastoral transitions.

We always welcome your prayers for those congregations, for their sessions for their PNCs as they search.

So, I'll just name them.

It's Japanese Presbyterian Church.

Newport Presbyterian Church.

Trinity Presbyterian Church and Sammamish.

They're all at different stages of the search process, but we know that you know it's an exciting and sometimes fearful time because it involves change and all that that entails.

But we're excited to see where God's spirit is leading these congregations, and what comes next.

00:03:16 Scott Lumsden

Those PNCs will be busy this summer, I'm sure.

00:03:19 Eliana Maxim

They will be busy, yes.

In the meantime, we also want to be able to recognize minister members in our Presbytery who took retirement in 2021 and so far here in 2022, and so we give thanks for these pastors. For Reverend Mark Snelling.

And Reverend Jan Dittmar, Reverend Sherry Edwards-Dalton, Reverend Tim Snow.

And the Reverend Dr Heidi Husted Armstrong.

Faithful servants... we are so grateful for their service and their leadership in Seattle Presbytery, and just a little bit jealous of their retirement adventures that they are all embarking on and hopefully enjoying.

00:04:13 Eliana Maxim

All the good stuff that they have sown.

They deserve all this.

All this stuff.

So anyway, we're really happy to celebrate them in their ministries.

00:04:25 Scott Lumsden

Yeah, having worked very closely with Heidi around Seattle First stuff.

It's very interesting now to give her a call and try to line up an appointment or some kind of Zoom and compete with her boating schedule.

So anyway, I'm glad.

00:04:40 Eliana Maxim

Priorities have changed.

00:04:41 Scott Lumsden

That's right, that's right.

Well, good for her.

00:04:44 Eliana Maxim

Yes, delighted.

00:04:45 Scott Lumsden

And for all those who retired this year, yes.

00:04:50 Eliana Maxim

And also, I know that you wanted to chat a little bit about something coming before the Presbytery at the meeting regarding Union Church.

00:05:00 Scott Lumsden

Yeah, so I mean there will be a video on the website and there will also be some written material.

00:05:10 Scott Lumsden

But the meeting, I think you and I will be joined by James B and Renee, and you and I will interview them very briefly in the meeting about the redevelopment of their property now, I think the thing that we need to keep in mind is that it was always the plan many years ago when they were in South Lake Union and had an opportunity to buy purchase that property.

00:05:41 Scott Lumsden

That it was always a plan to redevelop the property and to kind of take advantage of the big redevelopment boom in South Lake Union in order to secure a long term place in for their ministry in South Lake Union.

00:06:02 Scott Lumsden

And so, this is a really big deal that they're going to be embarking their congregation voted, I think, about three or four months ago, maybe longer to ask the Presbytery for its permission to redevelop its property, sell its property and redevelopment. And the plan is to sell to developer and then buy back a condominium interest in the property, usually on a development of that size you can buy is essentially the 1st floor of the redevelopment because there's always some kind of retail or business there.

The business would be essentially the Union and the and the cafe and the venue and so very excited about that.

It's a very big undertaking.

They've got a great team that's working on it.

Our Presbytery attorneys have been engaged on that.

The same ones that were working with us on Seattle First and they have a real estate team that's been working with them.

So, they're very well supported.

Also, a couple of the people on the Seattle First AC that had been responsible for overseeing the sale of Seattle First also did consult with the union team. So, it's a really big deal. The Presbytery did essentially loan them a couple \$1,000,000 as they started to work on this plan, and now we're coming to about the five year mark on that loan.

And so hopefully if this can be redeveloped in a couple to three years, we're on track for the payback of that loan, and at no interest and and Union having a new space.

Hopefully larger, we don't know quite how all the numbers will work out.

A new space for their ministry and mission there and hopefully the plan is that it will be debt free and that they will have secured a essentially their future down there in South Lake Union.

So very excited about that.

00:08:16 Eliana Maxim

I'm really looking forward to hearing more at the presbytery meeting from James B and Renee Notkin.

There have been some really solid conversations, both with Union leadership as well as with the Executive Board.

Relevant questions being asked, the impact to the community...

And the sort of conversations that we get excited about and are looking forward to engaging with, not just with the Union, but with all of our churches about their impact in their community.

So, looking forward to that.

00:08:50 Scott Lumsden

Yeah, I probably should touch on this...

I'm sure in the meeting and it'll be in the papers as well.

But the question that we'll get asked is why not develop for affordable housing?

And I just want to say very clearly that we looked at this.

They (Union) looked at this very hard and it just doesn't work out that they either can be there in that space or not, and what we need to do is we need to take a look at the presbytery properties around affordable housing because I think we have way more opportunity, there and I think the development for Union is really to be a congregation there.

So we'll talk about that a little bit more at the meeting.

00:09:33 Eliana Maxim

The other thing that we have coming up that I know you're very excited about Scott, is our denomination's General Assembly.

00:09:44 Scott Lumsden

Yes, we sure do.

00:09:45 Scott Lumsden

And we're both very involved and so why don't I turn the tables just a little bit?

And you are going to be there very shortly.

00:09:59 Eliana Maxim

Yes, so for those that have either participated or been aware of past General Assemblies, you'll know kind of a little bit about what that format has been historically. Last General Assembly we were in the middle of the COVID pandemic and so everything was done virtually, and I would say about 90% of the business before the nomination was tabled and pushed to this General Assembly. So now we're going into this General Assembly, the 225th...

Which will take place partially in Louisville, KY in the Presbyterian Center.

And rather than it being a six day event, it's going to take place over three weeks.

00:10:47 Eliana Maxim

Yes, wow is a good word.

So, the first two weeks will be all the committee work and those committees are going to be staggered in order to observe the recommended COVID protocols.

We can only have a certain number of people in the Center.

Everyone will be masked up, socially distanced and no eating together or any of those other social experiences that we always talk about.

General Assembly being kind of a family reunion, that's been mixed, so we're really there in person to discern and make decisions and recommendations to the plenary, which the plenary will happen in the third week, and that will all be online.

So, our commissioners for example here from Seattle, will be getting together with them for the plenary week and participating together from our computers.

00:11:50 Eliana Maxim

So, it's going to be a little bit different.

The format is going to be a little bit more challenging and we're going to need to both be flexible and maintain high stamina.

00:12:02 Scott Lumsden

Yeah, and you're going to be there as a representative of the Committee on General Assembly, and you're going to be serving those committees.

So, blessings to you on that.

00:12:14 Eliana Maxim

Thank you, yeah, should be interesting.

We have a couple of really interesting pieces of business that are going to be coming to the assembly, one of which you've been very intimately involved with...

You've been a member of the special committee.

00:12:29 Eliana Maxim

I know you're on financial sustainability and per capita and you're bringing a pretty heavy recommendation.

00:12:40 Scott Lumsden

Well, you know, it is, it is, and I yeah, I've served on that committee now for four years.

We thought it would be two, but of course because our motion was tabled like so many others or postponed.

So we have two major kind of motions that our committee's bringing and we spent a good amount of time looking at the finances of the denomination and its structure and its kind of fund raising through per capita process.

00:13:14 Scott Lumsden

The first motion is to unify the Office of General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency, which is no small recommendation and has gotten a lot of attention, but the reasons for that were, I helped draft the motion was because when we looked at the funds available to the national Church for its ministry that they seemed very sufficient. \$80 million for the for the mission of our national church seemed sufficient, it seems generous.

The problem is that there is such a bifurcation between the Office of General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and because there is... let's just say it...

Almost no collaboration between the two organizations.

It seemed unfair to us when we took a hard look at this, that PMA would receive most of the funds and OGA would be limited to per capita.

That just seemed on the face of it to be unfair.

Also, when we looked at it and we with that question in mind, we were like wait a second... there's really only one mission, the national church, and that's to serve the councils of the church and the larger, you know, mission as the assembly sees it.

We know that many of the funds from the Presbyterian Foundation are restricted and go to specific purposes, but that doesn't mean that PMA needs to control all of those purposes.

00:15:04 Scott Lumsden

And GA and PMA should be working together, and you know, sadly, to say they're not, and I don't want to sugarcoat.

00:15:11 Scott Lumsden

And so, we think that it would be best when you look at the sustainability of our national church and its mission that the two organizations be unified into one, and that would force the conversations that many commissions like yours that you served on some years ago and other committees that have reviewed this process have all recommended, but it hasn't happened and so that'll be before the General Assembly.

00:15:42 Eliana Maxim

So that's one big item that will be coming before General Assembly, and we expect there are going to be several other items and specially commissioner resolutions around gun violence and reproductive rights, so we expect it to be a very full two weeks of committee work and then the one week in plenary.

So that means I'll be out of the office for a couple of weeks.

Thank you for holding down the fort.

00:16:10 Scott Lumsden

We'll do our best.

00:16:11 Eliana Maxim

Yes, I know you.

You will excel far beyond my wildest dreams and then you've got some plans I believe.

00:16:21 Scott Lumsden

Well, I do. When you know COVID put us all in a certain mode and all of a sudden, we had a little bit of time.

You and I kind of looked at schedules and we realized, wait a second, we're close to sabbaticals for both of us.

So, it'll be basically this summer is my sabbatical summer.

So I've got some plans.

I'm going to do some hiking with my son Corin, and we're probably going to hike.

The entire Oregon PCT, about 400 miles.

We'll see how that goes.

But I'm excited about that.

00:17:01 Scott Lumsden

That should take us about four weeks and then I'll have a little bit of time in between to do some things around here in Seattle.

Hopefully the sun will come out and then I had planned to go to Yellowstone to do some fishing there with some friends, but looking at the latest reports, it looks like we need a Plan B, but we'll come up with a plan.

I'll do a road trip with some friends for two to three weeks and do some fishing and hiking and stuff like that so very much looking forward to it and it'll be a good break.

00:17:38 Eliana Maxim

Well earned, well deserved.

Looking forward to you coming back refreshed and energized by the time away.

00:17:45 Scott Lumsden

Well and you have one coming up next summer.

So, we've talked about this and so I'm hoping that you're working on your travel plans because I know it's not an actual break unless you get out of the country.

00:17:56 Eliana Maxim

Absolutely, so I will have the pace to think about that after General Assembly, which is pretty much become my mantra now for everything after recently.

00:18:05 Scott Lumsden

Yeah, fair enough.

00:18:09 Eliana Maxim

Well, I think that kind of touches on all the major points that we wanted to share with folks.

00:18:16 Eliana Maxim

As always, we'd love to hear from you.

Any questions or comments... you know this Presbytery is just doing some really exciting work.

You'll hear a lot about it at the at the General Assembly through various reports and updates, and we're just really proud of the congregations; how our congregations have really maintained their mission, and focus on serving their communities both inside their four walls and outside.

And we pray that they continue to feel strengthened and inspired to continue to do so.

00:18:58 Scott Lumsden

Amen.

00:18:59 Scott Lumsden

I mean we are all a little tired and we have to acknowledge that but the creativity and the way people have hung in there, together and been and have adapted and done new things and responded in new ways to the needs in their community and during this time, that's been really amazing.

00:19:21 Eliana Maxim

Absolutely, the Spirit is relentless and it seems that our leaders and churches are as well.

So, we give God thanks for that.

All right, that's it, so I'll see you at the presbytery meeting.

00:19:36 Scott Lumsden

See you there.