



# **Eliot Presbyterian Church**

A Diverse Family in Christ . . . *Come and See*

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Update from Session

## **Committing to Ministry**

April, 2023

### **Steps in the decision-making process**

#### **Coaching**

Session worked with coach Chip Low.

- from Compass Coaching
- cost offset by a grant from the Synod of the Northeast

They had four 1.5-hour meetings before the vote.

#### **Discernment**

Session's goal was "to discern together the will of God for Eliot and make a decision about what God is calling us to be and do in relation to our neighbors through the Day Center."

#### **Congregational survey**

The survey was distributed in person and online.

- 7 questions
- 3 Sundays
- 62 responses

#### **Vote**

Session met for the vote on April 5, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

Ten elders were present.

One elder, having lost electricity and internet service, prayed at home during this meeting.

# Results of the survey

## Benefits of homeless ministry (sample responses)

- connects Eliot with a very real need
- reduces illness and death
- connects neighbors to the congregation
- offers volunteer opportunities
- a manifestation of Jesus' call to serve
- helps us not to be self-serving

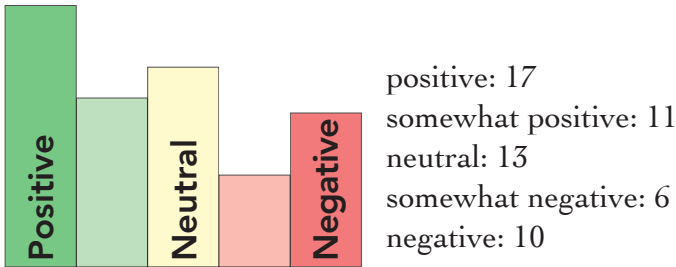
## Challenges of this ministry (sample responses)

- safety concerns
- needs that are too great for our resources
- wear and tear on our building
- dirt and filth around the church
- using 20% of our pastor's time
- loitering and rowdy behavior

*We know this ministry will be difficult*

*We have concerns about it*

## Feelings about the Day Center



## Should Eliot continue the Day Center?

Yes — 46                      No — 6  
No response — 10

*We believe God is calling us to this ministry*

## Do you want to be involved?

Yes — 36                      No — 18  
No response — 8

# Session's decision for Eliot's future

## Motion #1

Eliot Church commits to ministry with people in our neighborhood who are homeless. We will demonstrate God's love by alleviating the suffering of these neighbors, caring for both physical and spiritual needs. Whenever possible, we will welcome our neighbors to worship God with us as followers of Jesus. This ministry will not belong to one person or to a few; it will be the ministry of Eliot Church as a whole.

*We commit to ministry with people who are homeless*

*This is the ministry of the whole church*

Session and the pastor will engage the congregation in ongoing conversation about this ministry. They will honor a variety of perspectives and respond quickly to any issue that interferes with the life of the church. They will create a list of various ways church members can use their individual gifts to support this ministry and regularly share that information with the congregation.

*We will offer many ways to be involved*

We will carry out this ministry in our building, a sacred place dedicated to God. Because the degradation of Eliot's property adversely affects both the congregation and our neighbors, church leaders will work with the City of Lowell, other partner agencies, and the police to ensure that no one is living on or near Eliot's property; that no one is hanging out to drink alcohol or use drugs on or near Eliot's property; and that the church building, yard, and surrounding areas are clean, safe, and welcoming.

*We will care for our property*

*We will keep our yard clean and welcoming*

**Motion #1 passed with 9 in favor, 1 opposed**

## Motion #2

Eliot Church commits to operating a Day Center, welcoming all who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, five days a week, sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

*We commit to operating our Day Center*

The center will have as its first priority alleviating suffering long term by helping people become housed. Day Center staff will receive training to increase their ability to provide housing assistance, and connections will be made with other agencies to have their representatives on site to work with Day Center guests.

*Priority #1: helping people become housed*

The center will have as its second priority alleviating the day-to-day suffering of those who have no home. Understanding that this shift in priorities cannot happen overnight, Session asks the Day Center Director of Operations or Director of Social Services to report each month on progress toward this goal.

*Priority #2: meeting day-to-day needs*

**Motion #2 passed with 8 in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 abstention**

## Whom to contact

If you have a question or a concern, please speak to Pastor Heather or any member of Session:

Patience Awah

Lori Hoffman

Winnie Baddoo

Desiré Huckfeldt

Bernie Campbell

Khoeun Pring

Hov Chea

June Taing

Ruy Costa

Vera Tith

Mark Dayton