

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SESSION MEETING MINUTES
HOUSTON, TEXAS
September 15, 2020

MODERATOR
The Rev. Chris French

The Session of Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas met in a STATED MEETING on Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. Because of the current public health environment, the meeting was held via Zoom conference.

Attendance:

Pastors Present: The Rev. Chris French

Elders Present: Dath Collins, Bert Crump, Judy Dewey, Evan Ghazi, Debbie Kaplan, Debbie Lunn, Mike Mantel, Dan McElyea, Hardie Morgan, Nnenna Okoro, Wayne Parchman, Tom Prisk, Tanner Spears, Jim Tomforde, Ethan Tritt, Gindi Vincent

Excused: Karen Welton, Woody Woodruff

Absent: Francisco Garibay, Natalie McElroy

Others in attendance: Gina Axtel, Traci Baudin, Vic Condrey, Beth Craig, Lisa Henkel, Sharon High, Heather Kaemingk, Becky Morris, Angela Wade Simpson, Phil Warman, and Candy Clarke Aldridge

Call Meeting to Order – Chris French, Acting Moderator

Prayer for Session and a Time of Lamentation – during this time, Elders offered prayers and lamentations about the past few months.

Clerk's Report and Administrative Matters –Correspondence and Feedback from the Congregation

Approval of Consent Agenda – Candy Aldridge presented the Consent Agenda for approval. The minutes of the September 15, 2020 Session meeting were included. The agenda was approved by common consent.

Planning Team Updates

- **Transition Pastor Search Team** – Dath Collins and Gindi Vincent, co-chairs, updated the Session on the work of their team. The team is pursuing a *transition* pastor to bridge the time before a Senior Pastor comes on board, expected to be 12-18 months. Using guidance from Bill Enns, the team is focusing on a person who can help implement the Vision framework that the Session approved in February 2020. The transition pastor will help realign internal systems, programs and roles for optimal effectiveness in achieving the mission.
- **Discipleship Communities Proposal** – Chris French and Angela Wade-Simpson brought forth a proposal based on the Vision framework guided by consultant Auxano in February 2020. They proposed a two-phase model for creating disciples. Phase one will begin with experimental micro-groups of Elders meeting for 8 weeks. Chris, Hardie, Heather and Angela will lead the weekly meetings of 4-5 Elders using the booklet, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple*, meeting for an hour each week. Micro-groups are used because they are small, organic, local, easily equipped and are specialized. Phase two will be a Key Leader Forum which will serve as a think tank, develop a working

approach for the model, cultivate buy-in and momentum and will renew the leaders for the mission. It will be an investment in the future and will boost spiritual formation. After that, the leaders will present the model and the work of the think tank to the congregation for implementation.

- Engaging the Congregation - Evan Ghazi, Chair of the Connect Team, described efforts to keep the congregation engaged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Elders were assigned to call all church members in April-May. Also, about 75 people have attended two Kitchen Table Talks via Zoom, a State of Grace newsletter was developed and mailed to members, and additional micro-groups and Kitchen Table Talks are planned for October. The team is exploring mapping organic social connections to keep in touch and how to introduce/reinforce the Vision framework. The team will also engage church leaders (current and former Elders, current and former Deacons, and Sunday School leaders) to identify and assign members with whom to stay engaged. The goal is to engage every member in a group of some kind.

Strategy Team Updates

- Leadership Development Team - Nnenna Okoro, chair, reported on the initiative to engage member “consultants” to focus on developing and nurturing church leaders. A group of 20+ discussed the 6 goals of the team:
 - intentional development of current and future leaders
 - communicate the 5 values of Grace more effectively
 - develop a spiritual formation process
 - utilize the Margaret Jarboe Lecture Series to address reconciliation and restoration
 - address organizational development, evaluation and compensation for the staff
 - develop competencies, evaluation and accountability processes for the Senior PastorParticipants were assigned to one of these six groups to assist with the work already being done by the Team.
- Role of the Session - Chris French acknowledged that the role of the Session and the role of Elder need refreshment and reinforcement. In future Session meetings, we will delve deeper into the spiritual-leader aspect and the accountability duty. The role will be clearly defined for the new class of Elders.
- Church Officer Nominating Committee - Nnenna Okoro, chair, presented the team’s recommendation for the Elder and Deacon Class of 2023, as well as the congregational representatives to the CONC, as listed on the agenda. Elder nominees were approved via electronic vote on September 4, 2020. The Session accepted the team’s recommendations, which will move forward for approval by the congregation on October 4, 2020.

Ongoing or Old Business Updates

- Associate Pastor Nominating Committee - in the interest of time, Hardie Morgan will provide a written update offline.
- Reconciliation - in the interest of time, Chris French will provide a written update offline.
- Re-gathering - Heather Kaemingk updated the plan for re-gathering after encouraging Elders’ feedback regarding the two in-person worship services held this month. Elders had positive comments about being together again after six months’ absence, the post-worship discussion groups and the orchestration of guidelines and hygiene for worshippers’ safety. Mindful of Session’s approval of this format as a four-week trial, she presented a stepped-up plan for worship for the next 4-6 weeks. The “steps” include adding childcare, increasing the number of worshippers attending Sunday worship, convening student meetings on campus, and permitting congregational singing. After discussion, the plan was approved by common consent, and will be revisited in October.

The Session adjourned the STATED meeting, dismissed those who were not Elders and moved into Executive Session.

DATES:

Session - Tuesday, October 20, 2020 @ 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Candy Clarke Aldridge

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Clerk of Session