

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
SESSION MEETING MINUTES  
HOUSTON, TEXAS  
August 18, 2020

**MODERATOR**  
The Rev. Chris French

The Session of Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas met in a STATED MEETING on Tuesday, August 18, 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, Francisco Garibay, Debbie Kaplan, Debbie Lunn, Mike Mantel, Natalie McElroy, Dan McElyea, Hardie Morgan, Nnenna Okoro, Wayne Parchman, Tom Prisk, Tanner Spears, Jim Tomforde, Ethan Tritt, Gindi Vincent, Karen Welton, Woody Woodruff

**Excused:**

**Absent:** n/a

**Others in attendance:** Margaret Ellis, Ruth Weatherall, Jim Weatherall, Monica Frazelle, Andy Frazelle, Traci Baudin, Beth Craig, Sharon High, Heather Kaemingk, Angela Wade Simpson, Phil Warman, Narda Weierbach and Candy Clarke Aldridge.

**Call Meeting to Order** – Chris French, Acting Moderator

**Prayer for Grace, our Church Family, and our Leadership** – Rev. Alf Halvorsen from Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church opened the meeting with prayers for the Grace family and for the leadership.

**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 July 21, 2020 Session meeting were included. It was approved by common consent.

**Strategy Team Updates**

- **Leadership Development:** Church Officer Class of 2023 & Other Business – Nnenna Okoro, Chair, has invited several Elders and laypersons to become “consultants” for the Leadership Development Team to help achieve the Team’s 2020-2021 goals, as outlined in the Session packet. The first meeting will take place on August 26, with the goal of identifying 2-4 “consultants” to develop a framework for executing the plan for each goal. She also reported that the Church Officer Nominating Committee has identified 30 potential candidates for Elders, Class of 2023 and several for Deacon.
- **Financial Update** – Mike Mantel, Elder, and Hardie Morgan, Executive Director and Elder – Mike reported after a recent Ministry Support Team meeting that contributions are down since COVID came into our midst. We collected \$295K for July 2020, 21% less than last year. Expenses are down

9% from same period last year. The operating deficit was \$45K. Projecting that pattern through December yields a calendar year deficit of roughly \$1 million, primarily due to decreased contributions. Based on the current trend, the team recommends that we revise the 5-year plan agreed to in February to balance the budget, reducing it to 3 years. Hardie shared a draft letter to the congregation explaining the financial status. Elders agreed that the congregation should be informed, but suggested we delay sending a letter until the next Session meeting. Ministry Support will meet twice in the next month and will be better prepared to offer a more specific plan and revised timeline.

#### **Ongoing or Old Business – Evaluation and Accountability:**

- Re-gathering: Revisions/Update and Metrics – Heather Kaemingk announced that the Leadership Team has updated the plan for entering Phase 2 of the regathering plan, with a target of September 13 for in-person worship in the Sanctuary, if current public health trends allow.
- Re-gathering for Worship – Heather proposed new indoor and outdoor worship plans:
  - The first gathering of the congregation will be an outdoor worship service on the athletic field, Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 pm. The gathering is centered around singing, with a brief word from Chis French. Hula-hoops on the field will be spaced a safe distance apart, and worshippers will sit in/around the hula-hoops. This will be a model for additional outdoor worship opportunities.
  - Indoor worship will look different and is designed to glorify God, invite participation in the service, observe safe hygiene protocols, minimize aerosol droplet spread and encourage corporate worship for the Grace family. Heather recommended that congregational worship in the Sanctuary would last about 30 minutes, followed by 30 minutes in an Elder-led discussion group of 10. Groups will stay together for four weeks. Service elements will include prayer, responsive readings, a brief sermon and will not include any congregational singing. Online worship will be presented as long as it is feasible. Elders discussed logistics and details of both components. They asked that this format be transitional and temporary, and proposed this amendment to the recommendation: *We will regather in Phase 2 worship for 30 minutes of corporate worship followed by 30 minutes of Elder-led breakout group discussions around the church. Congregants will be asked to sign up in advance of worship, capped at 150 per service. This format will be evaluated by the Session after 4 weeks.* The amendment was seconded and was approved 17-2.
- Reconciliation Project Brief Update – Chris French reported that the Elders on the Arrabon call last month want to pursue working with Arrabon. Chris will contact David Bailey about specifics.
- Transition Team Update – the team has met twice and established an order of priorities of the remaining items: regathering, building small group communities for immediate engagement, identifying a Transitional Pastor and addressing the budget gap.
  - Transitional Pastor – Dath Collins and Gindi Vincent lead this team. Jim Tomforde and Heather Kaemingk are also on the team, which met tonight. They will meet with Bill Enns, an ECO transition resource, as a first step in developing a plan. At the next Session meeting, the team will present a plan for identifying the type of leader Grace needs now and for defining “what is good preaching.”

#### **New Business – Discernment:**

- Status of in-person Session Meetings – Chris reported that Sessions meetings will be conducted virtually until the public health danger subsides.

A motion was made to move into Executive Session, it was seconded and the guests departed.

#### **Executive Session**

**DATES:**

**Session** - Tuesday, September 15, 2020 @ 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Candy Clarke Aldridge*

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Clerk of Session

Minutes are recorded here in the order of the Session Meeting Agenda.