

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
SESSION MEETING MINUTES  
HOUSTON, TEXAS  
February 23, 2021

**MODERATOR**  
The Reverend Doctor Julia Leeth

The Session of Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas met in a STATED MEETING on Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Because of the current public health environment, the meeting was held via Zoom conference.

**Attendance:**

**Pastors Present:**

**Elders Present:** Dath Collins, Deb Castillo, Bert Crump, Judy Dewey, Tory Gunsolley, Dorothy Hobbs, Debbie Kaplan, Debbie Lunn, Mike Mantel, Abby Meade, Nnenna Okoro, Tom Prisk, Lisa Schwarz, Jim Tomforde, Ethan Tritt, and Karen Welton

**Excused:** Rev. Chris French

**Absent:** Natalie McElroy, Tanner Spears

**Others in attendance:** Margaret Ellis, Heather Kaemingk, Angela Wade Simpson, Sharon High, and Candy Clarke Aldridge

**Call Meeting to Order** – Rev. Julia Leeth

**Open with Prayer** – Julia opened with prayer.

**Moderator's Report** – In her first month at Grace, Julia is feeling loved and welcomed. She is focused this month on meeting and conversing with all the staff. There is sensing much love among the staff at Grace, but also the need for healing. In March, she plans to focus on the structure of the staff, learn about the history and plan for the future structure. Beginning in April, she will help align both components to achieve the mission. Discernment will occur over the next few months. In preparing for that, she asked the Elders if they would consider meeting twice a month to tackle the six strategic initiatives adopted by the Session in February – two Session meetings per month for three months. Elders approved an additional Session meeting in March, April, and May. Regular Session business will take place on the third Tuesday, and strategic initiatives will be discussed on the first Tuesday of the month. The goal is to develop action items and a responsible party for each initiative. On March, Elders will discuss the worship initiative.

After Easter, Julia plans to preach from Genesis. In the summer, she will focus on Jonah, followed by Romans.

The Session meeting began with a scriptural praying of each verse of Psalm 23.

**Clerk's Report, Administrative Matters and Approval of Consent Agenda** – Candy Aldridge presented the Consent Agenda for approval, including the minutes of the previous Session meeting. Those minutes will be amended for an attendance correction. A motion was made and seconded. The motion was approved.

### New Business – Discernment

- Strategic Initiative Evaluations – discussion of the evaluations from the January meeting was tabled until the March 27 Church Officers Retreat.

### Strategy Team Updates

- Ministry Support Team Update – Mike Mantel presented information update from Hardie Morgan, reporting that January 2021 revenue was \$151,841 versus \$352,278 from January 2020. Part of the difference was \$80,000 in one-time gifts in 2020. Additionally, Grace has engaged counsel jointly with Brookwood to pursue the bequest from a recently deceased church member, which is disputed by a few family members. Meetings will begin soon.
- Annual stewardship campaign – Case for Support – The campaign began January 31, with pledge cards turned in on February 14. We have received 106 cards committing to \$900,000 in pledges. In past years, 300-400 pledge cards were received in the initial weeks of the campaign. Last year, \$1.7 million was pledged by this time. Elders discussed reasons for the smaller number of pledges. Hardie expects there will be more non-pledged giving in 2021. Follow-up to the campaign includes two follow-up reminders in the next six weeks. Other ideas were discussed, and staff will work to implement some of them.
- Grace School – The school is doing well financially, even with 100 fewer students. Covid safety protocols are in place and are effective.
- Connect – Former Elder Evan Ghazi is creating a network of contacts to keep the members engaged with each other. He will join us at an upcoming Session meeting. Angela Wade Simpson is working on improving regular communication with the members.

After a motion to adjourn, a second and approval, Julia Leeth closed the meeting in prayer.

### **DATES:**

**Session** – Tuesday, March 2, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

**Session Retreat** – Saturday, March 27

Respectfully submitted,



Candy Clarke Aldridge

Clerk of Session