

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SESSION MEETING MINUTES
EXECUTIVE SESSION
HOUSTON, TEXAS
March 2, 2021

MODERATOR
The Reverend Doctor Julia Leeth

The Session of Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas met in a CALLED MEETING on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Because of the current public health environment, the meeting was held via Zoom conference.

Attendance:

Pastors Present: Rev. Julia Leeth, Rev. Chris French

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

Excused: Deb Castillo

Absent: Natalie McElroy

Others in attendance: Heather Kaemingk, Hardie Morgan, Angela Wade Simpson, Sharon High, and Candy Clarke Aldridge

Call Meeting to Order - Rev. Julia Leeth

Open with Prayer - Chris opened with prayer.

Update on COVID Protocol - Hardie Morgan presented Grace's response to the recent re-opening of the state by the Governor. Churches have been exempt from closure mandates and will continue to be. Grace will continue the practices of recent months, which include masking and social distancing.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - Karen Welton made a motion to go into Executive Session. It was seconded and approved.

The meeting began with a scriptural praying of each verse of Psalm 119:1-8.

Moderator's Report - The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the six Strategic Initiatives adopted by the Session at the February 2020 Church Officers retreat. Because the initiatives lacked specificity, little progress was made. Tonight's meeting addressed Worship Evolution. It currently reads:

Continue to move worship away from a performance orientation to a participatory one that reflects our value of "worshipping not observing."

Everyone agreed that the current wording is awkward, and that worship at Grace has not been performance focused. It should be less about liturgy and more about reaching the worshipper. Heather provided a handout addressing Grace's worship strategy and values. She proposed a revision, such as: *we want to participate in worship that glorifies God and forms disciples.* Elders offered many ideas of what is important to include in worship: learning to praise God, repentance, order and structure, music, thanksgiving.

Recent staff departures have created an opportunity to reconsider the structure of the Music Department. Potential staffing models were presented and discussed, landing on the Session's preference in the near-term for re-deploying existing resources and expanding a couple of roles, based on savings from Ryan Bell's resignation.

After vigorous discussion on worship evolution, Julia suggested the following action items:

1. We will continue worship in the present format for the near future.
2. We will revise the wording for the worship initiative for discussion at the Session Retreat.
3. The Leadership Team will address the redeploying of current resources in an affordable manner.

Additional attention will be given to this topic at the Session meeting during the Church Officers Retreat on March 27. At that time, we will prioritize the other five initiatives.

New Business

2021 Pledge Update – We have received pledges in the amount of \$1.1 million from 134 pledging units. In 2019 and 2020 we had received pledges from 357 and 294 pledging units, respectively.

Julia asked the Elders to pray for specific member and groups of people: those missing from Grace, people who are unhappy, people at the intersection of engagement/disengagement and new disciples. She exhorted Elders to be bold in calling those people we know who are not engaged.

A motion was made to move out of Executive Session. It was seconded and approved. After a motion to adjourn, a second and approval, Tanner Spears closed the meeting in prayer.

DATES:

Session Retreat – Saturday, March 27 in person

Respectfully submitted,



Candy Clarke Aldridge
Clerk of Session