

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
SESSION MEETING MINUTES  
HOUSTON, TEXAS  
October 20, 2020

**MODERATOR**  
The Rev. Chris French

The Session of Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas met in a STATED MEETING on Tuesday, October 20, 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, Mike Mantel, Natalie McElroy, Hardie Morgan, Nnenna Okoro, Tom Prisk, Tanner Spears, Ethan Tritt, Gindi Vincent, Karen Welton, Woody Woodruff

**Excused:** Debbie Lunn, Dan McElyea, Jim Tomforde

**Absent:** Francisco Garibay

**Others in attendance:** Margaret Ellis, Bill Enns, Kate Ghazi, Tory Gunsolley, Sharon High, Heather Kaemingk, Denise Phelps, Lisa Schwarz, Jo Swank, Taylor Tritt, Angela Wade Simpson, and Candy Clarke Aldridge

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

**Open with Prayer** – Rev. Jim Birchfield, First Presbyterian Church

**Moderator's Report** – Chris parsed the role of an Elder, asking how we cultivate respect and gentleness during this election season. Using Psalm 139 and Genesis 1, he encouraged each to examine their hearts, repent, be aware that we are God's work of art and to intentionally cultivate a convicted civility.

**Clerk's Report, Administrative Matters and Approval of Consent Agenda** – Candy Aldridge presented the Consent Agenda for approval. The minutes of multiple Session meetings were included. The agenda was approved by common consent.

**Ministry Support Update** – Hardie Morgan reported that revenue for FY Q1 was better than in the spring but is -24% compared to same period last year. Expenses are -47% compared to last year. Ten to twenty percent of our revenue is usually collected in December of each year. Staff reductions occurred earlier this month. Ten staff members took voluntary separation packages, resulting in gross savings of \$400,000. Severance costs were \$140,000, to be netted out of the savings. This presentation will be part of the upcoming Kitchen Table Talks.

**Planning Team Update**

- **Transition Pastor Search Team** – the Team invited Bill Enns, organizational consultant, who is a pastor and a consultant for churches in transition, to address the Session regarding the type of pastor we should consider bringing in. As we are a church in transition, he recommended that we consider

an intentional-transition pastor role as the next step. This type of pastor would lead us in navigating the path to a new Senior Pastor. Transitional pastors are trained for this type of role, can help us meet our stated goals and transition through the emotional process that follows a major change. The role is a combination of preaching and consulting and is regarded as a finite assignment on the journey to identifying a Senior Pastor. The ad hoc Pastor Search Team requested approval from the Session to fill the role of transitional pastor for approximately 18-24 months. A motion was made, seconded, and approved. The team expects to name a finalist quickly.

- Discipleship Communities Proposal - the first round of disciple-making study groups continue to meet and study the *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple*. After the eight-week study, participants will debrief.
- Engaging the Congregation - this is a work in progress. The team is gathering rosters.

**Strategy Team Updates** - The Leadership Development Team reported that Church Officer Training for incoming Elders and Deacons will take place on three evenings: October 27 for the combined group, November 2 for Elders and November 10 for the Deacons. Other Strategy Team reports are in the Session packet.

#### **Ongoing or Old Business Updates**

- Kitchen Table Talks - for the next three Kitchen Table Talks, the Leadership Team will present the current financial status of Grace, as well as the rest of the 2020 church schedule, the impact of COVID-19 on our church, five initiatives that we will pursue in 2021 and plan a positive focus for our future.
- Next Steps / Phases in Regathering Worship and Sunday Mornings - Heather Kaemingk and Denise Phelps addressed the progressive plan for regathering now and beginning in January 2021. Plans include a structured plan for equipping congregants to become disciple and disciple-makers. Logistics of gathering groups during the COVID restrictions and of training the leaders are still being finalized. For now, the worship format (one service, one education/equipping hour) will continue for the foreseeable future.

Chris French closed the meeting in prayer.

#### **DATES:**

**Session** - Tuesday, November 17, 2020 @ 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Candy Clarke Aldridge  
Clerk of Session