

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SESSION MEETING MINUTES
HOUSTON, TEXAS
SEPTEMBER 27, 2023

MODERATOR
The Reverend Chris French

The Session of Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas met in a STATED MEETING on Wednesday, September 27, 2023 during a regularly scheduled monthly meeting at 7:00 p.m. in Massey-Tucker Hall.

Attendance:

Pastors Present: Rev. Chris French

Elders Present: Earl Boudin, Deb Castillo, Ron Collins, Vic Condrey, Lisa Descant, Cathy Finck, Andy Frazelle, Jamie Horton, Martha Hunt, Tom Lee, and Jim Tomforde

Excused: Russ Chase, Bert Crump, Tory Gunsolley, Dorothy Hobbs, The Rev. Julia Leeth, Lisa Schwartz

Absent: Abby Meade

Others in attendance: Rev. Aaron Hansz, Rev. Denis Phelps, Pastor Felix Semarasi from Holy Nations Church, Shadrack Garapari, Tony Mahoro, Sharon High, Ivy Castle, and Traci Baudin

Call Meeting to Order - The Rev. Chris French

Open with Prayer - The meeting began with reflective prayer.

Introduction of Pastor Felix, Senior Pastor of Holy Nations by Rev Chris French
Pastor Felix addressed the Session through Tony, his interpreter. It was a brief conversation where Pastor Felix expressed Holy Nations desire to be a part of Grace Presbyterian Church. They are grateful for a place to worship and thankful for the love that Grace has shown to him and his parishioners. He asked for continued support and thanked the Session for the invitation to be there. The Rev Chris French prayed over Pastor Felix and Holy Nations Church.

Consent agenda and Clerk's Report - Andy Frazelle, serving as Acting Clerk of Session, presented the Consent Agenda, which included the minutes of the August 26 session retreat. A motion was made to accept the Consent Agenda and the motion was seconded and approved.

New Business

- There was a discussion about receiving Uzoma Obi-Nwankwo and Obinna Nwankwo into Grace as covenant partners. There had previously been a called Session meeting on a

Sunday morning to receive them into Grace. There is no current record of them being members, so to maintain the accuracy of the membership database, they were received into Grace membership as covenant partners.

- The Rev Chris French announced with sadness that Keeke Russon has resigned as an Elder. Below is the letter Keeke submitted:

After much prayerful discernment, I am submitting my resignation from current position as Elder. When I accepted this role, our family's dynamics were very different. I have since returned to work, the girls are much older and have lots of extracurricular commitments, Jack is working in the Woodlands (so not available to help in the evening), and my girls just need me home as much as possible. Something needed to shift off my plate, and I've decided to focus on my boots on the ground ministry like Grace Mom's Bible Study and a recent Young Marrieds' group we've started that meets in our home over administrative meetings.

*Thank you for understanding,
Grace and Peace,
Keeke Russo*

A motion to receive this request was made by Rev Chris French, the motion was seconded and Approved. This Elder position will not be filled at this time.

The decision was made to delay any discussion on the Think Tank Actions and Generosity Campaign until the November session meeting.

Team Updates:

Ministry Support

There was discussion around the budget numbers that were submitted in the financial report. The discussion was led by Lisa Descant, Ministry Support Team member. The summary of the conversation was that the current deficit is \$700,000, which is greater than what was presented by the Task Force at the August Session retreat. It was agreed that these figures needed to be reviewed and discussed by the Ministry Support Team. There was appreciation for the fact that the budget was being discussed, recognition that the Session owns the budget, and that an open and respectful conversation could be had.

Grace School

The Grace School report was included in the Session package and should be referred to for additional information. There was a request to provide an update on the Think Tank's recommendation No. 3, (on page 13 of the Session package) for immediately appointing a task force to begin clarifying how the church and school may inter-relate on all matters. There was no additional information that was presented. However, a request was made that this should be updated at a future Session meeting around how good will and trust between the entities is restored.

Leadership Development:

There is a detailed team report in the Session Package. Cathy Finck presented the work of the Church Officer Nominating Committee (CONC). Cathy presented the members of the CONC, nominees for Elder, Deacon and lay members of the next CONC. This presentation is attached to these minutes.

A discussion was held pertaining to filling the non-Session members of the strategy teams. The Session operating manual states that the Session approves all members of the various Strategy Teams, however this has not always happened. Additional discussion needs to be held on this topic. Cathy discussed some of the issues with getting candidates for primarily Elders and a discussion and plan for increasing the visibility and importance of the Elder's role, time commitment and responsibilities needs to be formulated prior to kicking off the next CONC to clarify the nominating process.

Worship Team:

Update included in the Session package.

Serve Strategy Team:

Andy Frazelle, as Strategy Team Chair, provided the following update:

- The team is working to develop a process to help mission team members discern what's next after returning from a short-term mission trip. Most people come back on a "spiritual high," but then come back down when returning back to normal life. We want to work towards engaging team members in maintaining this enthusiasm.
- Friends of Westchase has a strategic planning meeting scheduled for Saturday, October 28 where the direction of FOW will be discussed. Mentoring is restarting at three schools and an after-school program is starting up in October at the Belmont apartments.
- Strategy Team's partnership team, which evaluates financial grants and funding, has been meeting and will finalize results in mid-October.
- The Serve team is working to partner and include Grace School more. We are expanding Christmas for the City to include 1 or 2 off campus projects and to do a Bears and Beds family build day in March 2024.

Prayer requests were solicited and numerous requests for health and safety were made for staff, covenant partners and family members of covenant partners.

The Rev Chris French closed in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Frazelle
Acting Clerk of Session