

## Session Meeting Highlights September 17, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm, earlier than usual to accommodate a full agenda, and began with prayer and a devotional by pastor Jim Birchfield.

He spoke of his recent time in Israel, and meeting with our ministry partner, Musalaha, which deals with reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians. Through it he was reminded that reconciliation does not begin with a committee, but with our own personal willingness to be self-critical of our own narrative: Where can I be more forgiving? More self-aware? More self-sacrificial?

Key items of business were:

1. The revised budget for the 2014-15 fiscal year was presented, reviewed, discussed and approved. We rejoiced to see that the portion and amount of the budget going to missions has increased year-on-year. An overview of the budget will be provided to the congregation during the Annual Congregational Meeting.
2. An interim presentation was received from Kevin Ford, of TAG Consulting. Session has engaged Kevin to assist it and the staff to assess organizational needs in support of Vision 2020 implementation. The goal is to become a congregation more focused in the areas of Christian conversion, missions, and church planting (which experts have shown to be one of the greatest catalysts towards conversion). Session is excited to be moving forward in this area and will be sharing details with the congregation as this effort moves forward over the coming months.
3. A routine report was received from the Property Protection Team on progress in the property lawsuit. The judge approved our request for a temporary injunction and allowed the case to proceed toward trial. This was communicated to the congregation by E-weekly.
4. Lesley Lilly provided materials and a challenge to the Session to deepen their walk through spiritual disciplines (lectio divino, fasting, and silence). Each elder was asked to invite another member of the church to join them in exploring these disciplines.
5. Jeremiah Morris reported on the expansion of church-wide prayer opportunity and a new training course for sharing the Gospel based on a simple study of the book of John. The aim is to fuse prayer and witness together to see adults in our spheres of influence come to know Christ and be baptized. He also reported that the new Houston Church Planting Network has launched its first class of eight interns coming from Edinburgh, Denver, Cleveland, Austin, and Houston. These

developments are tremendously exciting and challenging!

6. A report was received from the Reconciliation Team on progress to-date. The team has begun an assessment of specific needs for healing and reconciliation within the congregation. This will inform its development of reconciliation activities and process recommendations to Session. Session is grateful for the ongoing work of this team and has already begun to act on early recommendations from the Team. One result is the starting of this report for greater transparency on Session actions.

7. The Session approved a letter of dissent to be sent to the Office of General Assembly of the PC(USA) expressing its keen disappointment with certain actions of the 221st GA this summer. A copy will be placed on the FPC website Denominations page.

8. The Session developed and approved a pastoral "going forward" letter to be sent to the congregation later this month. We are excited about the opportunities ahead as we focus on Christ's work to carry the gospel to Houston and the world.

The meeting closed with prayer for various blessings and concerns of the congregation followed by communion led by associate pastor Bill Heston.

Formal minutes of the meeting are available [here](#). The members of Session look forward to your questions and comments. For more information on church leadership, click [here](#).