

Minutes in Seconds – August 2015 Session Update

The Session is the governing body elected by the congregation to lead and guide the church. Here is a summary of what was a very busy August, 2015 Session meeting:

An FPC Summer filled with Activities

Over 200 FPC members were in attendance to see the Chancel choir sing the National Anthem at a recent Astros game, 350 attended Mo Ranch in July, members from 18 to 80 participated in a special Sunday school class on Effective Prayer, and an overflow crowd has packed the Fellowship Hall on Sundays in August for our combined Sunday school class engaging each other on what it means to actively implement Vision 2020. The Session is grateful for the efforts of leaders and members to use these opportunities to reach out to others – FPC is coming together as Christ’s Church to spread the Gospel to Houston and the world.

Presbytery Meeting

Twelve commissioners from FPC attended the July meeting of the Presbytery of New Covenant, actively participating in and making a difference in denominational decision-making. A [report](#) of the meeting is posted on the Denomination page of the FPC website. Further information can be found on the Presbytery [website](#).

Reaffirmation of the Session Statement of Faith

Presented annually for review, the Session read and affirmed the FPC Statement of Faith to guide its work in leading and nurturing the congregation.

Property Opportunity

An ongoing aim of FPC has been to acquire properties adjacent to our campus when they come up for sale. Session is pleased to present just such an opportunity to the congregation in an upcoming called Congregational Meeting on Sunday, Aug 30.

Vision 2020 Objective: Planting Churches

As a part of Vision 2020, FPC set a goal to plant churches throughout greater Houston. Planting new churches has proven to be highly effective at reaching the unchurched. The Houston Church Planting Network (HCPN) is a highly successful association of churches focused on starting new churches to reach the greater Houston area for Christ. The Session agreed in 2014 to partner with leading churches in HCPN to establish a Residency Program to provide intense training for church planters who are called to our area. FPC entered into this cooperative ecumenical effort to learn from our successful neighbors and develop our capability for future church planting efforts.

The majority of the churches leading the Program and affiliated with HCPN are “complementarian,” which do not allow women in spiritual leadership roles. As a

PC(USA) church, FPC has long embraced “egalitarian” government – full inclusion of female teaching and ruling elders – and will plant churches on this basis along with other denominational requirements. While the Program does not specify the form of government of the Christian churches to be planted by the residents, it was originally set up and designed for only male candidates. Based on FPC member concerns about this limitation and out of our desire to use the gifts and talents of all of those who feel called to plant churches, the Session has written a [letter](#) asking the Board of the Residency Program to modify its admission policies. We look forward to their response. The Residency Program is entering its second year of operation with a new class of residents, two of which intend to plant egalitarian churches.

The Church Planting Team established earlier by Session has been charged with learning from our partners in the Residency Program, from leaders in our denomination’s New Worshipping Communities efforts, and from other Reformed bodies. We are listening and praying about the best way to accomplish these church planting goals.

Theology and Policy Review

The Session has established a Theology review team and a Policy review team to update FPC positions of doctrine and practice on matters of sexuality and marriage. The Session affirmed overwhelmingly that all are welcome at our church and we challenged each other to always lead with love for all. The Session endorsed moving forward with our ministry partner, Lead Them Home, to present a Posture Shift Seminar in October for interested members and leaders to help us learn to love, first and foremost, in all we do. It also endorsed providing an opportunity for members with questions to meet with the leader of the organization. We will continue to prayerfully seek God’s guidance diligently as we move ahead.

Loving our Neighbor as Ourselves

We are called to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. FPC will sponsor a neighborhood outreach initiative this fall to reach out to our neighborhoods, encouraging our members to get to know their neighbors better as we respond to Christ’s call to spread the gospel to our city and beyond. The Session also affirmed the importance of loving our neighbors within our church community and encouraging members to do the same through respectful interactions with the diversity of opinions expressed as we meet and work together.