

First Presbyterian Church of Houston
March Agenda – March 17, 2020
6:00 PM Fellowship Hall

Opening Prayer

Omnibus Resolution

Approve Minutes of February Session Meeting
Additional Consent Motions

Jim Birchfield

Committee Reports

Finance Report

Matt Malinsky

New business

FPC COVID-19 response

Jim Birchfield
Robert Moore

Pastor's Report

Here to Serve Dashboard Introduction
Personnel report

Jim Birchfield

Clerk's Report

Focused prayer – “Our certain hope”

Robert Moore

Prayer and Praise

Doxology

Motion to Adjourn

Jim Birchfield

2019-20 Session Meetings & Important Dates

April 20, 2020 – Session meeting (Monday)
State of the City – April 17-18, 2020
May 3, 2020 – MAG meeting at MDPC, 3:30 – 5:00 PM
May 19, 2020 – Session meeting

2020	Communion	Baptism
January	1/5/2020	1/12
February		2/9
March	3/1 (1st Sun of Lent)	3/8
April	4/9 (Maundy Thurs.)	4/5th (Palm Sun.)
May	5/31 (Pentecost)	5/10 (Mother's Day)
June		6/21 (Father's Day)
July	7/12 (Mo Ranch)	
August	8/2	
September	9/6	9/13
October	10/4 (World Comm. Sun)	10/11
November	11/1 (All Saints)	11/8
December	12/6	

MINUTES OF THE SESSION
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOUSTON, TEXAS
February 18, 2020

The February Stated Meeting of the Session began at 5:50pm in the LC181 with a quorum present. Dr. Jim Birchfield called the meeting to order and Gordon Marcum opened the meeting with prayer.

Attendance: See the attached Session Attendance Record for attendance to date this year.

Omnibus Motions:

The following omnibus motions, provided to Session in advance of the meeting, were passed unanimously without discussion:

- Moved that the minutes of the January Stated Meeting of the Session be approved.
- Moved that the January Membership Report be approved.
- Moved that the minutes of the January Annual Congregational Meeting be approved.

COMMITTEE/TASK FORCE REPORTS

Committee Reports:

- Finance Report – Matt Malinsky reported that there was a somewhat disappointing end to calendar year vs. budget, however, the first giving of Here to Serve from members also was made in December. There remains some debate about the significance of these numbers and thus we need to proceed with caution. January giving was good and on budget for Year to Date. A line of Credit and Permanent Funds are available if needed.
- Paul Seifert reported for the Equipping and Sending Ministry. The Bethlehem Bible College Awareness and Fundraising Dinner will be on Friday, March 6, 2020. President Jack Sara will be the guest preacher on Sunday, March 8. Street Grace will be featured at State of the City in April. There will be a Lenten brochure, as there was for Advent, which will feature a journal format. Young Adults are having a retreat at the Barnes' Ranch.
- Jenn Rustay reported for Marriage and Family that more volunteers are needed to work with the Jr/Sr high students. The Women's Ministry Retreat will be Feb 21-23. The reservations were filled a month ahead of the conference date.
- Bob Shimp reported for Operations that the Windows 7 computers are being replaced and there will be a second internet line for back up. A motion was made and approved that \$32,000 be spent for organ repairs to be expensed from the Music Equipment and Maintenance Fund.
- Jan Smith reported for the Worship and Prayer Ministry. Plans are being made to how best organize the committee. More volunteers are needed. The list of elders willing to serve communion is being updated. Jimmy Myers and Dorian Benn had a very successful Prayer Walk around the church with 45 individuals participating. FPC participates the third Sunday of each month in the worship service at Holly Hall. The children's choir was very well received. The Sanctuary Singers and the Chancel Choir will be participating this spring also.
- Gordon Marcum reported for Mission Innovation Ministry. Emmanuel Paulpeter is starting a new Alpha class April 14 for 8 weeks. Applications are being taken for Main Street Fellows Class for 2021. The decision of the Project Flourish Judges will be released on March 10. The Project Flourish Congregational Celebration Day will be March 29.

Old Business:

- Tom Brents reported that contracts, pricing and designs are being reviewed. A motion was made and approved that the Building Committee be authorized to spend up to \$4.2M on the following projects: 1) CE Basement, 2) CE 1st Floor and sanctuary bottleneck, 3) CE 2nd Floor music library and media/communications area.

- A motion was made by the Operations Committee and approved that the session re-designate the Gueymard Church Facility Maintenance Fund at Texas Presbyterian Foundation to be under the oversight of the Facilities Ministry Team instead of Permanent Funds in Ministry.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Following discussion, a motion from the Advisory Council was made and approved for a change in the annualization pastoral compensation retroactive to January 1, 2020, for Senior Pastor Jim Birchfield, Executive Pastor Andrew Stepp, and Associate Pastors Jon Crantz and Matt Lee as follows:
 - Jim Birchfield - from \$218,934 to \$239,000 which is a 9% increase;
 - Andrew Stepp - from \$118,000 to \$136,000, which is a 15% increase;
 - Jon Crantz - from 102,300 to \$108,000, which is a 5.5% increase;
 - Matt Lee - from \$99,200 to \$104,600, which is a 5.5% increase.

PASTOR'S REPORT:

- Social Media, Face Book and Instagram are a great way to communicate.
- Jim led a theological discussion.
- The feedback on the use of the screen in the sanctuary was mixed. The congregation is not ready for a permanent fixture, but it is okay to be used on special occasions.

CLERK'S REPORT

- The follow-up conversation on the Session Retreat was excellent.
- The ECO Gathering was an enriching experience. The tone of the event, worship, and singing were very uplifting.

There was a period of prayer focused on "Holy Priesthood", living out the gospel where you live.

Prayers were raised for the church, member concerns, ministry partners, and the city and neighbors. Communion was served by intinction by elders Tanner Sykes and Martha Lawler.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm with a prayer by Rev. Jim Birchfield and the singing of the Doxology.

Rev. Jim Birchfield, Moderator

Robert Moore, Clerk of Session

**MINUTES OF THE LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD OF TRUSTEES
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOUSTON, TEXAS**

February 12, 2020

Members Present: Tom Brents, Ken Humphries, Sean Keenan, Steve King, Janet Lionberger, Doug Meikle, Fred Robertson, Russ Schulze, Debbie Thompson, Chris Winters

Staff and Ex-Officio Present: Kay DuPont, Secretary, Andrew Stepp

Members and Ex-officio Absent: Jim Birchfield,

Fred Robertson called the meeting to order at 11:40am in the Living Room and opened the meeting with prayer.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2020 meeting.

Committee Updates:

- Risk Committee: Steve King reported that the committee will be meeting next week. The insurance policy is up for renewal in April.
- Church Growth Committee: Janet Lionberger reported that Andrew Stepp has met with the committee and discussed how to use the information that is available for attendance in worship, Sunday School, events etc. and to develop plans for welcoming visitors and new members into the life of the church. *If we do well, growth will come.*
- Building Committee: Tom Brents distributed a handout listing Schedule of Changes for April through August and discussed the need to communicate the needs and progress to the congregation.

Reports from Members:

- Session representative Fred Robertson suggested it would be more productive for the chair of the Board of Trustees to attend the Advisory Council meeting rather than the session meeting except when needed. Responsibilities divisions between the Session and the Church Growth Committee need to be identified. Who we are and are going to be needs to be communicated to the congregation. There is a need for maintaining a modern document “vault” containing all material FPC contracts and agreements and documentation of our facilities and major projects on the campus. Fred also reported that the three members of the Board’s Class of 2023 have participated in orientation and are invited to attend meetings between now and when their term starts in June.
- Facilities Committee Representative Tom Brents reported that the facilities are in good condition considering the age of the buildings. The Main Street Ministries building and First Presbyterian Church have been assessed by the Facilities Committee. The plans will be presented to the session for approval.
- One Fund Steering Committee Representative Janet Lionberger reported that it is time to change from “One fund” to “Here to Serve”. The focus will be how to do ministry and no longer how to raise money.
- Parking Representative Debbie Thompson expressed the need to communicate with the congregation on the changes in parking availability as we go into the stages of construction.
- MFAH – No report
- Presbyterian School Representative Tom Brents reassures that everything will be ready in the fall.

- Main Street Ministry Representative Steve King reported that the agreement and insurance for the coming year are being reviewed.
- Dale Avenue Properties Representative Chris Winters reported that there is now 100% occupancy of the Dale Ave properties. A new management agreement is being reviewed. The tax appraisal is being considered for protest.
- Manvel Property representative reported that the agricultural exemption is being studied.
- Bonner Property – No report

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm.

**MINUTES OF THE LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD OF TRUSTEES
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOUSTON, TEXAS**

March 11, 2020

Members Present: Tom Brents, Steve King, Fred Robertson, Russ Schulze, Debbie Thompson,
Staff and Ex-Officio Present: Jim Birchfield, Kay DuPont, Secretary, Andrew Stepp,
John Crane

Members and Ex-officio Absent: Ken Humphries, Sean Keenan, Janet Lionberger, Doug Meikle,
Chris Winters

Fred Robertson called the meeting to order at 11:40am in the Living Room and opened the meeting with prayer.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2020 meeting.

Committee Updates:

- Risk Committee: Steve King reported that the committee will be meeting next week.
 - FPC's insurance policies are being reviewed.
 - Andrew Stepp has been researching the policies of other large churches regarding how they are handling the coronavirus. The Advisory Council is studying what steps FPC should take.
 - The fire alarm system is being evaluated as to updates and improvements that could reduce the cost of insurance.
- Church Growth Committee: No Report
- Building Committee: Tom Brents reported that the construction documents for the interior projects are being reviewed and ways are being considered to reduce portions of the cost. Permits still need to be submitted and then feedback from the city. The presence of hazardous materials is being reviewed only for the areas to be worked in. This would be the basement, elevator, north end of the first floor and the changes on the second floor. The Session will reaffirm the priorities of all the projects under Here To Serve. Prices are being reviewed for the demolition of 10 Oakdale. The project is complicated because some of the structure is on the property line and against the brick wall which requires manual removal. The time frame is approximately 4 weeks and estimated to be finished by August. Designs are being worked on for the south lot and the playground which will be submitted to session for approval.

Reports from Members:

- Session representative Fred Robertson is now attending the Advisory Council meetings rather than the session meeting.
- Facilities Committee Representative Tom Brents is meeting with and Kelli Lawless to coordinate facilities projects.
- Parking Representative Debbie Thompson is researching sandwich boards to inform the congregation of the parking opportunities for Easter Sunday.
- MFAH – No report
- Presbyterian School Representative Tom Brents reported that the playground, food service equipment, space usage and rental rates are being reviewed. The punch list for the facilities has been approved and completed.
- Main Street Ministry Representative Steve King reported that the agreement and insurance for the coming year have been completed.
- Dale Avenue Properties – there will be an annual meeting, efforts to protest taxes and a renewed agreement with our property manager.
- Manvel Property representative reported that the agricultural exemption is being applied for. Intent is to list the property in whole with other owners rather than divide it.
- Bonner Property – No Report

It was suggested and agreed that there be a separate Board project to study the retention of documents process and policies.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30pm.

Consent Motions:

Permanent Funds Committee request the following:

Request from Generation One; \$28,000 for used passenger van.

Request from Mo Ranch; \$35,000 for building of new youth plaza

Request from Plant with Purpose; \$25,000 to construct cisterns in Oaxaca & Chiapas, Mexico

Request from Treasures in Clay; \$25,000 for building funds for completion of conference hall, chapel, children's park.

Reports

Permanent Funds

Monday, March 2, 2020, 12:15 p.m. in FH 251

Members Present: Chris Athon, Jane Champion, Sam Murray, Julie Harris, James Melchers, Gabriel Zamora, Jamie Hampton, Sharon Henry, Andrew Stepp, Erin Varnell, Absent: Josh Kirklin

Discussion and action taken

- PFM Team minutes of February 11, 2019 (sent to Operations Committee) approved as written. Motioned by Chris Athon, Seconded by Julie Harris. All approved.
- Reviewed nine ministry grants.
Grants (approved or denied) see below - Motion: Julie Harris and second by Gabriel Zamora. All in favor.

Grant Applicant	NEED	REQUEST	Grant \$
Amazing Place	Amazing Place Connection Project	\$25,000	\$10,000
Arrow Child and Family Ministries	therapy and counseling for victims	\$13,000	\$0
Can Care	expansion of a continuing education program for volunteers	\$5,000	\$0
Generation One	Used van for afterschool program	\$28,000	\$28,000
Mo-Ranch	new youth plaza	\$65,000	\$35,000
Open Door Mission	HVAC needs	\$25,000	\$0
Plant with Purpose	25 new cisterns	\$25,000	\$25,000
SEARCH	supplies and materials for HTT	\$5,000	\$0
Treasures In Clay	Building funds for a conference hall, chapel and children's park	\$25,000	\$25,000

Consent Motions for Session (\$10,000 or more)

Request from Generation One; \$28,000 for used passenger van.

Request from Mo Ranch; \$35,000 for building of new youth plaza

Request from Plant with Purpose; \$25,000 to construct cisterns in Oaxaca & Chiapas, Mexico

Request from Treasures in Clay; \$25,000 for building funds for completion of conference hall, chapel, children's park.

New Topics Discussed:

- Updates to past scholarship and grant award winners.
- Discussed updating the grant application to reflect a more concise description of appropriate funding requests.
- Discussed requiring follow-up from grant awards recipients to determine usage of funds.

Next Meeting, week of April 11 or 18th – e-mail
Sam Murray, chair

Equipping & Sending

Date: March 12, 2020
Time: 12:00-1:00 P.M.
Location: via conference call
Present: Martha Adams, Mary-Floye Federer, Jimmy Myers, Caitlin Rhodes, Paul Seifert (Chair), Catie Smith, Tanner Sykes
Absent: None

MINUTES

- I. **Opening prayer:** Paul opened the meeting in prayer.
- II. **Discussion:**
 - a. MFAH – The Committee discussed updates on FPC/MFAH relationship-building efforts:
 - Paul has been discussing with Merrill Athon the most effective way to engage with Gary Tinterow. Merrill is reaching out to a current MFAH board member (Jack Blanton) for possible assistance.
 - Tanner reported that the Southside Renovation, including the screen/sound wall requested by MFAH, would be part of the second phase of FPC's building work. That will serve as further means for FPC to show hospitality to MFAH as our neighbor.
 - b. Ministry Partnerships & Engagement: The Committee discussed the following:
 - Paul noted the recent successes with certain local ministries detailed in Mary-Floye's written update circulated in advance of the meeting (e.g., work with Cullen; Friends of Northside; Bethlehem Bible College Awareness and Fundraising Dinner – approx. \$25K raised).
 - *Street Grace: Human Trafficking Awareness Night:* Due to FPC calendar/bandwidth and COVID-19, we are now targeting a Fall date for the Awareness Night.

- *State of the City (April 17-18)*: Mary-Floye has been working with Communications on promotional materials, including email blasts and social media content, which will be ready the week of March 16. She encouraged the Committee to spread the word to ministries and other groups that Committee members are involved in both within and outside the church. Volunteers will be needed for SoC; volunteer registration to be launched March 16.
 - Caitlin debriefed the Committee on the time she, Mary-Floye and Lea spent off-site on February 13 with consultant Kate Thomas.
- c. Discipleship: The Committee discussed the following:
- *Lent Devotional*:
 - Paul commented that the repetitive format is allowing space for deeper reflection and contemplation.
 - Jimmy agreed the repetition and simplicity, as opposed to heavy content, opens up significant time and space to be with God. Jimmy compared the Lent Devotional's format to the approach taken at the February 21-23 Young Adults Retreat which focused on prayer practices (Examen, Listening Prayer, Lectio Divina) and allowed for a deeply restorative time and avoided an overload of content and teaching that can often leave you feeling more tired after the retreat than when you arrived.
 - Tanner commented that the Lent Devotional's Examen format is new to him and very refreshing; the supplemental podcast has been helpful as well.
 - Caitlin encouraged the Committee to ask others around FPC how they are experiencing the Devotional. She remarked that the focus on simplicity feels like something the Lord is leading the church in, as a fresh way of relating with God that can be truly transformative.
 - *Summer Discipleship*: Catie asked the Committee to consider and pray over what FPC's summertime discipleship offerings should look like. How can we leverage the slower summer months? Possible topics: something related to COVID-19 and fear and hope; something related to the Mo Ranch talks (How Do Christians Grow: Identity in Christ, Value of the Kingdom, Attitudes of the Beloved, Behaviors that Intrigue the World).
 - *All Church Sunday School*: Catie asked the Committee to consider and pray over plans for All Church SS in August. Should the lessons serve as a follow-up to the Mo Ranch talks or introduce the Fall sermons? Jimmy suggested we consider a focus on listening/guided prayer; people seem to desire more peace and rest in the presence of God, less content and programming. Catie agreed that introducing a new form of listening prayer through All Church SS may be fruitful.
 - *Discipleship Groups*: Catie to sit down with Caitlin next week to discuss where we go with D-Groups. Several Committee members remarked that

their D-Groups are still meeting regularly and, in some cases, have added new members. Caitlin suggested we consider the model of growth by “addition” (detailed in Dana Allin’s book Simple Discipleship) as an alternative to growth by “multiplication.”

- *Small Groups*: Catie asked the Committee to consider what is the purpose of Small Groups at FPC. Are they accomplishing what we want them to accomplish? Are they leading to spiritual formation of people?
- *Neighborhood Connect*: Cheryl Christie is partnering with Catie on the next Neighborhood Connect gatherings. Emphasis will be on community and togetherness. COVID-19 may affect these plans.

d. Young Adults: The Committee discussed the following:

- Paul commented on Jimmy and his family’s profound impact on the Young Adults community and FPC as a whole over the last 2.5 years.
- Regarding transition plans between now and July, Jimmy shared that his desire is to continue moving toward people in relationship during his last 4 months. Abigail will provide continuity for the YAs, as will core YA leaders (e.g., the YA musicians). Caitlin will be interviewing YA Director candidates. Jimmy is excited about the Summer Fellowship program with the YAs (will be reading Dwell with God by Barry Jones), going to Mo Ranch with a YA group and the YA Retreat at the Barnes’ Ranch at the end of July.

III. **Action Items:**

- a. Paul to request that State of the City be listed in the Important Dates in next week’s Session Packet.
- b. Committee to be in prayer over the items noted above, particularly in the area of Discipleship.

IV. **Prayer**: Paul closed the meeting in prayer.

See below Ministry Updates circulated to Committee in advance of meeting.

FPC Equipping & Sending Committee

Ministry Update – March 2020

MINISTRY PARTNERSHIPS & ENGAGEMENT

1. *Here to Serve* – Mission service opportunities

- We continue to work with Communications to promote awareness of our service opportunities. Upcoming include Attack Poverty 5K April 4 for runner and volunteers, Houston Welcomes Refugees’ volunteer opportunities, Nehemiah Gala March 12, etc. Women’s Ministry is promoting Houston Welcomes Refugees as their local mission this spring.

2. *Cullen Middle School*

- Teacher Appreciation Breakfast on the third Wed. of the month; special date of March 25 is the next scheduled breakfast due to spring break the third Wed.
- Cullen Prayer Walk on the second Wed. of the month at 6 p.m.
- Love at Cullen last month was a wonderful event honoring volunteers, families and community members. They unveiled the new murals on campus, alumnus Dwight Boykins spoke, Ramsay's spoke, FPC was recognized, Cullen Honor Roll students were recognized, Worthing High School band and drill team performed, local community partners were present and had booths to talk to guests, parents, and 8th graders about mentorship, and various programs.

3. Friends of Northside

- The January 16 event was a huge success. You can officially say it was Twitter now. They helped revamp the patio area, and make it a welcoming space for community events. Built raised garden beds and outdoor seating.
- April 4 is their huge community Easter Egg Hunt! Volunteers and attendees from FPC are encouraged.
- Praises: They just got a donation of 3500 easter eggs! Wow. And they also just hired a YouCan Academy coordinator. Counseling sessions are going great and are really helpful. Ashley is being promoted to help at Attack Poverty HQ. Kim is serving as the interim Director of Friends of Northside.
- Continued prayers as they continue to heal and work following the tragedy with their CEO. Brandon Baca has taken over the CEO position.

4. Engaging the Muslim World Prayer Gatherings

- Prayer for Muslims to know the love of Christ is one of our priorities. The prayer time is the third Thursday of the month from 12:00 – 12:45 p.m. in the FPC Bride's Room. March 19 is the next gathering.
- Ramadan Prayer Guides have been ordered and will be available to Covenant Partners who have an interest.

5. Middle East Partnerships

- Bethlehem Bible College Awareness and Fundraising Dinner at FPC on Friday, March 6, 2020
 - i. The dinner was a wonderful evening of fellowship and awareness building.
 - ii. Jack Sara preached all four services. He returned to Israel to be faced with two week quarantine due to new policy in Israel.
- The Birchfields and Mary-Floye attended the BlueMed Conference and SRG briefings in Malta Feb. 24- March 1. Many of FPC partners and friends attended as well. We were all reconvinced how blessed FPC is to partner with such amazing and strategic ministries.
- Holy Land Pilgrimage and Encouragement trip May 3-15, 2020 and Oct. 4-16, 2020. Because of the COVID-19 virus and the recent new policies in Israel, we are closely monitoring the situation and determining how to proceed.
- Christ at the Checkpoint Conference and pilgrimage trip June 3 – 14, 2020. Again, all depends on the status of things with COVID-19. BBC is monitoring and will make a decision on the conference in late April. FPC has two teams heading over for the conference – a Young Adults group led by Austin Hermann and another team lead by Mary-Floye.

6. Equipping and Mobilizing Opportunities

- State of the City (April 17-18, 2020);
 - i. Communications will roll out the promotions for SoC beginning Sun. March 15, promoting internally as well as reaching out to other churches, ministries and community publications.
 - ii. Volunteers needed for the event.
 - iii. Speakers include Steve Klineberg/Fri; Dr. Spann/UH medical School, Kathy McGibbon with Street Grace, Molly Raney with Houston Welcomes Refugees and Elliott Witney with Good Reason Houston on public education will speak on Sat.
 - Mobilizing Medical Missions Conference/M3 (Feb. 21-22, 2020) at Lakewood Church
 - i. Many FPC medical professionals attended this year's M3 which continues to be an excellent mobilizing venue
7. **Mission and Vision Trips** (see others in Middle East Partnerships section) – We are holding on these trips lightly as we are aware that due to the COVID-19 virus that it is an ever changing scenario. We are monitoring and aware that we may need to postpone/reschedule trips. Taking it one day at a time.
- Young Adults Micah Project Mission Trip – Tegucigalpa, Honduras April 24-27, 2020
 - Micah Project Mission Trip – Tegucigalpa, Honduras June 11-15, 2020
 - ARM and IJM Vision Trip – Kampala and Namutamba, Uganda June 26 – July 8, 2020
 - IJM Vision Trip to Uganda Sept. 14-19, 2020 (through IJM)
 - Micah Project Graduation and 20th Anniversary Celebration trip – Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Nov. 13 – 16, 2020

DISCIPLESHIP

1. **Small Groups:** Continuing to meet- we are encouraging them to use the Lenten Examen journal and/or podcast. Our Curriculum Writing Team is continuing to write guides, which we provide weekly to the leaders.
2. **D-Groups:** Hopefully Caitlin and I can take this month to begin discussing this.
3. **Sunday Schools:** Rotation series has begun on the work of the Holy Spirit and how He empowers us to live into God's Kingdom Values. Teachers include Caitlin, Abigail, Doug Meikle, Emmanuel, and me (Joshua Smith and Robert Gunn are substitute teachers).
4. **All Church SS Explanation on March 1st:** We received great feedback about this offering- people were grateful to learn more about the series and how to use the podcast.
5. **On the Agenda for brainstorming:** Summer Discipleship offering, All Church SS in August, D-Groups, Small Groups

YOUNG ADULTS

1. **ECO National Gathering:** We had a good showing in the E&S department at the ECO National Gathering that took place Feb. 4-6 in Dallas, TX at the Gaylord Opry: Caitlin, Abigail, Lea, and myself were all there. It was an excellent gathering, in my opinion, the best I've been to (this was my third). Especially significant was hearing from the plenary speakers, as well as the ECO pastor who preached the final night, and participating in a time of prayer led by

the alpha director at Highland Park. Ruth Haley Barton urged us take care of our souls in relation to God as we steward the souls of others toward relationship with God (this is, in my estimation, the most significant pastoral task that is missing from the modern American church). Sameh Maurice challenged us to concretely practice incarnate ministry among our neighbors who are our enemies, telling story after story of how his church loves muslims in their midst and, in doing so, shows the love of God for all people. The pastor who preached, not our Caitlin but also named Caitlin, proclaimed a good word that drew us to consider the need for both unearthing and reearthing in our work -- what weeds and earth and rock do we need to tear out that is keeping our gardens from flourishing? What earth and soil and fertilizer do we need to put in in order to galvanize spiritual growth in our churches? And finally, partnering in prayer together as a whole body on Wednesday night was an extraordinary gift. We prayed for the world, for those far off from Christ, for those near, for those afflicted, for our churches, for our pastors. It was excellent.

2. **Prayer Walk:** The young adults led a church-wide prayer walk on February 16th to sanctify the space our church inhabits at this crossroads of Main, Bissonet, and Montrose. We began at 2pm in the sanctuary with worship and scripture and prayer (Michelle Spicer, Emily Searles, and Randy Lazard led us in the liturgy, while Zach Goodrick, Jeremy Glass, Mike Nichols, Peter Brewton, Kevin Murphy, and myself led in the singing) and then we walked the four corners of the campus grounds praying for our church, our neighborhood, and God's kingdom to come to our plot of earth. Excellent stuff.
3. **Retreat:** We had our annual spring retreat the weekend of February 21-23 in Caldwell, TX at the Barnes's home. We had 21 young adults there, including the leaders. Caitlin Rhodes led us through three different practices of prayer in three sessions, respectively: the Examen, Listening Prayer, and Lectio Divina. She did an excellent job. Abigail and I led the worship portion of the retreat, which was deeply restorative as well. It was the best retreat I've ever been on. Often retreats are full of content and teaching time, and I, as well as others, often leave tired and fatigued -- sometimes more tired and fatigued than when we arrived. But being led in these prayer exercises by Caitlin was like taking off a heavy load. We left restored and rejuvenated -- precisely how you're supposed to leave a retreat. Zach Goodrick actually said after the retreat, "After we did those prayer exercises together, I felt like I had slept for 2 days straight." That was my experience precisely. So, many thanks to Caitlin and Abigail for their work to curate a restful encounter with the living God.
4. **Myers's departure:** On March 8th we shared the sad news that we'll be leaving at the end of July. We had lunch with the young adults after church and shared in more depth the reasons for our leaving, and our heartfelt love for the community and the people. It was a meaningful gathering. One of the things I articulated to the community was my thanks for their partnership in the good news and the life it generates, as well as my hope to end this season well. That means, among other things, moving toward people in relationship. So I'm looking forward to continuing to cultivate and build up the community in these last four months, which will involve, again among other things, practicing the summer fellowship this summer again, going to Mo Ranch in July, and doing one final retreat with the young adults at the end of July to say goodbye.

Church Planting Update (3-16-20)

1. General:

- Gave church planting seminar at HCPN for new residents
- Taught church planting class at Gordon-Conwell Seminary
- Met with two potential residents for FPC planting; scheduled to meet two more in next two weeks.

2. The Plants:

a. Kingdom Story Fellowship:

- Though KSF is still quite small (~20-30 adults) and still developing their core team, they are doing great outreach at Stevens Elementary, formed partnership with World Vision, and started Women's Group.
- They are doing great relational evangelism and hope to see fruits in the near future.
- The hope is that by end of year three there will be: 1) Critical mass (i.e. 70-80 Sunday Attenders; 40-50 Core Team); 2) Defined leadership team (Session if possible), and 3) Self-sustaining financially (i.e. able to pay for overhead and at least one full-time pastor).
- These three criteria "generally" determine if a conventional plant is "successful."

b. Jericho Road Renewal:

- A Second Jericho House has been purchased. They have grown from 5 men to 15 men in Jericho House Ministries.
- Cullen Middle School outreach is also going strong.

c. Montrose Missional Community:

- Emmanuel continues to serve at FPC directing Alpha and is doing a great job of growing evangelism at FPC.
- He continues to meet with non-believers through coffee shop evangelism, movie and theology night, and TED talks held at FPC.
- A missional community has been started for those who have been a part of Alpha but not ready to attend a traditional church. Approximately 10-12 people attend.

Marriage and Family

Marriage and Family met via teleconference on Thursday, March 12. Jenn Rustay opened the meeting in prayer.

The committee was joined by Stacey Rockwell, who provided insight into the plans the Children's ministry has for the spring and summer, and potential contingency plans. The Children's ministry plans to:

- host a Teacher Appreciation event at Good Dog,
- prepare students to participate in Palm Sunday,
- host a communion workshop,
- host a family picnic on Good Friday, and
- provide a "thank you" for teachers by providing an evening of three hours of child care for volunteers.

Stacey also discussed the plans for children during the State of the City event, which include substantive teaching as well as child care.

Stacey and the committee then spent time discussing the challenges and opportunities provided by Vacation Bible School. This year, the high school and choir volunteers should be available, so a wider group of volunteers may be able to help. Last year, the Children's Ministry waitlisted children if volunteers were not available at the time the children registered (even though additional volunteers ultimately participated and children were taken off wait lists). There was a strong negative reaction to this process. Additionally, families commented that this process discouraged new families from sending their children to VBS because of the uncertainty. This year the Children's Ministry plans to extend registration (without a wait list) to many more children. The committee also discussed whether it still made sense for children from the Nehemiah Center to attend the FPC VBS, and whether having a Nehemiah VBS might provide a way to have an in town mission trip for those who are not able to travel for mission work. Since VBS is a cathedral event for the Children's Ministry, we also discussed the need for greater FPC staff participation.

The committee then discussed ideas about how better to reach children and family if Covid-19 concerns limited (or cancelled) future ministry plans. Stacey discussed potential online resources and plans to build online community for children and their caregivers. We also discussed online Sunday School and children's worship.

COVID-19

Our world began to rapidly change on 3/11-12:

- Clerks, Jim & Andrew on 3/12
- COVID-19 Medical Advisory Group (Moore, Thomas, Shah & Mallory)
- Conference call with Houston Greater Partnership & Houston Religious Leaders
- From two service to one “live-streamed” service within a few hours
- Restrictions on building hours and on-campus meetings
- Our position – not from fear but from love
 - Help to protect our most vulnerable
 - Help to “flatten the curve” and slow down transmission rate

Live Stream Service on 3/15

- Created in two days (worship team, media & communications, connections)
- 685 unique visits on website
- 775 total views on FaceBook
- 97 Livestream “Connect Cards” & 5 on-line prayer requests (follow-up)

Our Current Environment

- Medically (Robert Moore)
- Politically (No more than 10+ people for up to 8 weeks)
- FPC Campus
 - Building Hours (Public) – 8:00am to 4pm
 - Building Hours (Staff) – 6:00am to 4pm
 - Restriction on rooms being used (Fellowship Hall, staff, Sanctuary & GH)
 - Weddings, memorials, other meetings & events
 - Project Flourish, State of the City, Fernando Ortega, James Choung
 - Youth Trips
 - Israel trip, Micah (two), CATC & Uganda
 - Essential staff on site – Pastoral, Security, Communications, Operations
 - Staff instructed to stay home – if uncomfortable, at risk, others at risk
 - Phone system
 - Simplify website
 - Mass texting option
 - Zoom Call capabilities (Session)
- FPC Ministry
 - How can do we worship and nurture the body of Christ?
 - How do we build/keep community in this season?
 - How do we provide on-going care and serve where we can?

FPC Ministry

- Worship & Nurture (Discipleship)
 - Livestream on 3/22, 3/29 and 4/5 – Easter?
 - Moving off of Matthew/Clash Of Cultures for now
 - Learning as we go (comfort, connection – interaction?)
 - What other options do we have? From small groups to “house churches”?
 - Prioritizing the highest and best use of resources:
 - Lenten Podcast (Lenten services)
 - Video & social media communication & devotions (spiritual formation)
 - Resources for “zoom based” small group meetings
 - Creative opportunities for corporate prayer
- Building & Keeping Community
 - “Constant contact” using the tools at our disposal
 - Ministries/departments “reaching out” and finding ways to serve their people
 - Children & Families; Youth; MSF
 - Zoom-based small group resources
 - Phone trees – multiple touches – checking in and determining need
- Caring & Serving
 - System for matching those with needs with those who can serve
 - Partnership with MSM for financial assistance (FPC and others)
 - Seniors of several designations (home, shut-in, retirement communities)

Going Forward

- Stewarding our staff
- Financial impact (Here To Serve)
- New campus hours/restrictions
- Easter
- Other