First Presbyterian Church of Houston
April Agenda – April 28, 2020
7:00 PM, via Zoom

Opening Prayer

Omnibus Resolution — Jim Birchfield
Approve Minutes of March Session Meeting
Additional Consent Motions

COVID-19 Update — Robert Moore

New business
Worship Report — Jim Birchfield, Andrew Stepp

Budget Report — Andrew Stepp, Matt Malinsky

Pastor's Report — Jim Birchfield
Ministry update — Andrew Stepp

Clerk's Report — Robert Moore
Election, Clerk of Session Class of 2023
Election, Congregational member at large, 2020-21
Note: Nominations from the floor require confirmation of willingness of nominee to serve.

Prayer and Praise — Jim Birchfield
Doxology
Motion to Adjourn

2019-20 Session Meetings & Important Dates

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
March 17, 2020

The March Stated Meeting of the Session began at 6:00pm by telephone conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic with a quorum present. Dr. Jim Birchfield called the meeting to order and Doug Meikle 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 February Stated Meeting of the Session be approved.
- Moved that the February Membership Report be approved.

COMMITTEE/TASK FORCE REPORTS
Committee Reports:

- Finance Report – Matt Malinsky reported that has not been a significant dropoff in giving at this point and that we have cash on hand thanks to early Here to Serve giving. A line of Credit and Permanent Funds are available if needed.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Jim Birchfield and Andrew Stepp discussed the FPC response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including suspension of in person worship and a telephone tree being organized by Lija Shah to reach out to vulnerable members and healthcare workers and first responders. Jim also reported that Stacey Rockwell and her team are providing regular worship materials and updates to FPC children and youth.
- Robert Moore offered an update of the current data regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

PASTOR'S REPORT:

- Jim Birchfield provided an overview of a Here To Serve dashboard being developed to allow better tracking of priorities, costs, and progress in completing projects.
- Jim Birchfield and Andrew Stepp provided a personnel report that Jimmy Myers will be leaving FPC this summer to pursue a doctorate degree at Duke University.

CLERK'S REPORT

- There was no additional report other than the COVID-19 update.

There was a period of prayer focused on "Our Certain Hope".

Prayers were raised for the church, member concerns, ministry partners, and the city and neighbors.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm 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 SESSION
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOUSTON, TEXAS
March 26, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Session began at 7:00pm by Zoom conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic with a quorum present. Dr. Jim Birchfield called the meeting to order and Robert Moore opened the meeting with prayer.

COVID-19 UPDATE

- Robert Moore provided an update on current COVID-19 models and projections for Houston and the surrounding areas.
- Jim Birchfield discussed the county's new Stay Home/Work Safe order. The FPC campus will be closed with only a skeleton crew of security and staff in the building. One pastor will be available daily for pastoral concerns and staff will work from home.

FINANCE UPDATE

- Finance Report – Matt Malinsky reported that although giving was down that the church has plenty of cash on hand due to Here to Serve giving. A line of Credit and Permanent Funds are available if needed.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MOTIONS:
The Session discussed and unanimously approved the following motions:

- *The Advisory Council moves that the Session authorize Jim and Andrew to inform the staff that salaries will be covered through the end of May with reevaluation at the end of April.*

- *The Advisory Council moves that the Session authorize Jim and Andrew to begin contingency planning with respect to both short term and longer term decreases in giving and the potential that we may need to restrict in-person worship for an additional 6-8 weeks.*

MINISTRY UPDATE

- Andrew Stepp provided an update on the many ministry opportunities that the pastors and staff are developing to maintain and support the spiritual health and well-being of our members as well as to help meet their physical needs.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm with a prayer by Rev. Jim Birchfield.

_____ _____
Rev. Jim Birchfield, Moderator Robert Moore, Clerk of Session

Consent Motions:
None

Reports

Permanent Funds
April 27, 2020 email meeting

Members: Chris Athon, Jane Champion, Sam Murray (chair), Julie Harris, James Melchers, Gabriel Zamora, Jamie Hampton, Sharon Henry, Josh Kirklin, Andrew Stepp, Erin Varnell (Staff Support).
Sam Murray called the meeting to order by email at 1:02pm on Thursday, April 23, 2020.

Items discussed/reviewed/motions:

1) Minutes: Motion to approve minutes from meeting on March 2, 2020.
   Motion: Sam Murray; Second: Jamie Hampton; team approved
2) Seminary application: Approve application of Austin Hermann in the amount of $1779.00 from King Fund.
   Motion: Sam Murray; Second: Jamie Hampton; team approved
3) Carry Forward of 2019-2020 unused balances per list.
   Motion: Sam Murray; Second; Jamie Hampton; team approved.
   a. Ricks Fund (benevolence) – remaining balance $19,586
   b. Other Fund (benevolence) – remaining balance $15,725
   c. Jordan Fund (seminary scholarships) – remaining balance $5700
   d. Bentsen Fund (seminary scholarships) – remaining balance $20,056
   e. Lancaster Fund (undergraduate scholarships) – remaining balance $15,927
   f. Arts/Music (6) – remaining balance $2,798
   g. Music: Maintenance or expansion (3) – remaining balance $18,453
   h. Music Equipment Maintenance (4) – remaining balance $34,919
   i. Bruyere (17) – remaining balance $2,975
   j. Bonner (22) – remaining balance $32,495
   k. Library (18) – remaining balance $1,321

Votes were received from all members present.
Many thanks to outgoing (May 2020) team members: Sam Murray, Chris Athon, and Jane Champion.
Next Meeting, July 2020 – TBA
Sam Murray, Team Chair

COVID-19 Response
FPC Opportunities to Serve Our Church and City
as of 4-27-20

FPC Covenant Partner Serve Opportunities and Updates

Touchtree Volunteer: Volunteers are assigned to contact our FPC covenant partners either by phone call or email. The effort started with reaching anyone 60 and older to check in and ask for prayer requests or help for errands. We are now starting our second group of calls focusing on 75 and older to call again and let them know we're praying for them and to ask if they need prayers or help with errands as social distancing is continuing to be encouraged. During round 1 of calls, the caring ministry assigned 48 volunteers to reach out to 887 covenant partners. We heard back on 643 covenant partners. We had 19 covenant partners that needed follow-up following the initial calls. Most covenant partners were taken care of and did not request any help with errands. The overall sentiment was appreciation that the church was checking in during this time. We will continue to stay in touch with our at-risk elderly and homebound covenant partners during this time.

Outreach to FPC healthcare workers: Update

Volunteers were assigned to reach out to 45 healthcare workers that attend FPC. Volunteers made phone calls, sent emails and mailed handwritten cards. The goal was to reach out and ask if they needed any practical assistance or prayers in this time. Currently there are only two requests for assistance with meals and we have received prayer requests on how to pray for our healthcare workers. For more information on signing up to help or if you know someone in need of assistance: https://fpchouston.org/covid-19-serve-and-be-served/

FPC Opportunities to Serve our City

FPC's *Feeding Houston's Heroes*

Feeding Houston's Heroes is an opportunity for Houstonians to say "Thank You!", and give back to those who sacrifice so much for this city we love. We are raising funds to purchase meals, snacks, and coffee from local restaurants and businesses to be delivered to Houston's first responders, and others on the front line as well as support local restaurants who are struggling to stay afloat during this time of uncertainty. This is a volunteer-run effort and 100% of the funds collected will be used for purchasing and delivering meals. Recipients include quarantined HPD family, TIRR, Memorial

Hermann, and Houston Fire Department. Our lay leader Joni Calkins is working with HFD chaplain and developing relationships with Fire Stations 16/Montrose, 33/Medical Center, 8/Downtown and 46/Near Cullen MS. Our hope is that we develop lasting relationships. Restaurant providers have included Little Matt's, Java Pura, Pappas Bar-B-Q, Burger IM and Relish. Future food providers include McHugh's Tea, Candelarie's Pizzeria, Silver Stone Food Shop, and Tree Beard's Market Square. As of 5/5, 156 meals will have been provided. *Feeding Houston's Heroes* will continue as long as funding continues.
https://fpchouston.org/feeding-houstons-heroes/

Houston Responds' *Masks for All*

Houston Responds, a collaboration of Houston area churches formed during Hurricane Harvey. Uniting to meet the needs of families in their communities, Houston Responds continues their mission today to "unite, empower and mobilize churches across Greater Houston to expedite long-term recovery and respond to future disasters." Recently asked by city officials to help with the need for non-surgical masks, Houston Responds launched *Masks for All*, to help ensure there are **MASKS FOR ALL** as we transition out of quarantine, especially for those in under-resourced areas. FPC is joining the effort in two ways:

1) serving as a drop off location for our Covenant Partners as well as other area churches to bring their made/sewn masks or materials to designated containers outside the Welcome Center from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
2) encouraging our Covenant Partners and ministries within the church including Women's Ministry and Adults Plus to either sew cloth masks or make masks according to instructions on the Houston Responds website. Mayor Turner challenged the city to have 1000 churches provide 1000 masks each!

For more information about making the masks, see
www.houstonresponds.org/MasksForAll

ATTACK POVERTY - Friends of Northside

Attack Poverty is FPC's priority partner for serving locally during the COVID-19 pandemic because of their proven record of transformative and holistic ministry in times of crisis, as they did following Harvey. The Friends of Northside location is an active distribution site on Tuesdays and Thursdays, needing volunteers to deliver food packages to the elderly and at-risk individuals. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, they need help contacting members of the community to assess their needs, calling people to ask if there is any way we can pray for them, and making more kids activity kits. Note: Individuals can make these calls to the Northside community members from home! They are happy to send you a script, and names and phone numbers. Contact Lea Byrd at lbyrd@fpchouston.org if you are interested in serving locally with Attack Poverty's Friends of Northside location. Please note that Attack Poverty's efforts are considered "essential" by the City of Houston, and therefore are allowed to continue

serving amidst the Stay Home, Work Safe order. They are adhering to strict CDC Guidelines by having a limit of 10 people working during each shift, six feet apart, and dropping off food packages at door steps.

Main Street Ministries and The Forge - Giving Opportunities

There are two ministries to which covenant partners can donate. The Forge is accepting donated supplies, and Main Street Ministries is accepting monetary donations.

The Forge has prayerfully decided to re-open to provide child care for parents working the front lines. Would you consider donating the following items to them?
Lysol Spray, Disinfectant Wipes, Non-Latex Gloves, Hand Soap, Rubbing Alcohol, and Thermometer Sleeves. Items can be dropped off at 3435 Dixie Drive outside of the Administration Building. Please call them ahead of time to make sure someone is there to recieve the donation. You may also contact Lea Byrd at lbyrd@fpchouston.org if you would like to leave your donations on your doorstep and have someone pick them up and deliver them to The Forge.

Main Street Ministries is FPC's other local priority partner. As MSM is mobilizing their own COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Response, their most urgent need is for financial support and prayer. No matter what the government COVID-19 relief package provides, it will be weeks before this gets to families and may not be enough to cover the gaps caused by this crisis. Based on this estimated need per household and the number of households that have been through MSM's Life Empowerment programs, MSM anticipates needing $360,000 to cover these immediate gaps. This action plan and needed funding is only phase one of the work that will be done as Main Street Ministries and the community as a whole respond to the COVID-19 crisis.
https://www.msmhouston.org/give.

Helping with Food Needs

The Houston Food Bank Doubles its Output and Volunteers Are Needed at Distribution Centers "This is not a local disaster that the rest of the country can help. This is basically a national disaster. So the resources are spread out. In addition to that, the mass buying at the supermarkets really killed a normal source of supply for us." - Brian Greene, CEO and President of Houston Food Bank, shares how they have doubled their normal output during COVID-19. Their biggest need is for additional volunteers at partnership locations to help with drive-through and no-contact drop off models.
Link:https://www.houstonfoodbank.org/

Emergency Aid Coalition needs volunteers urgently so the Sack Lunch and Grocery Programs can continue at this critical time of need by so many. They are in need of food donations of bread and fresh fruit and individual fruit snack items. They also need volunteers to come and help make the sandwiches. Please note they are adhering to CDC guidelines by wearing masks, gloves, and distancing by working 10 feet apart. If you are able to help them with donations or volunteering, please call Marian Bryant at 832-859-1065 or Lydia Smyth at 713-240-9992.

Prayer and Encouragement for FPC Mission Partners

Coming alongside to encourage and pray for our partners, missionaries and friends is paramount during these difficult times. Receiving a phone call, email, WhatsApp message, or text can lift people's spirits. If you have a heart for a specific ministry—whether local or global—and you already have their contact information, please reach out to them directly, though we would love to hear what you learn. If you would like to pray for a region or ministry and need contact information, contact Mary-Floye Federer mffederer@fpchouston.org.

Evangelism in Times of COVID-19

4/25/2020

With Evangelism work, we have had 2 types of groups – Outward Facing and Inward Facing. Even after COVID restrictions are over we will continue to engage through Zoom in many ways. We have noticed a dip in attendance, however some of the groups (Creo Christ, Movie & Theology group) are meeting more frequently. We are also learning lots of new things, one of which is that even after we return back to the "normal" world, we will still continue to engage through Zoom.

Outward Facing (Pre-Evangelism & Evangelism Groups):

1.Creo Christ (Seeker Friendly Bible Study) – Weekly: (pic below)

*We have moved this from every other week to weekly because people need this community. We have 8 to 10 people.

2.Movie & Theology Group – Weekly: (pic below)

*We are having people watch the movie on their own then come and discuss with the group on Zoom. We used to do it monthly, but now as people have more time to watch movies, they want to do this weekly. We have 8 to 12 people.

3.Ted Talk Group – Monthly:

*Meets monthly. Had low attendance just 8 people for March. But one new person who came to the Ted Talk group then hopped over to the movie and theology group (this kind of cross pollination is what we are looking for). Attendance for April dropped to just 3.

4.Lord of the Rings book club - Monthly:
*Meets monthly, the April meeting was on Zoom. We had 6 people.

5.Life Long Learners book club - Monthly:
*Meets monthly, the April meeting was on Zoom. Live group used to get 10 to 12 people. Zoom group went down to 2.

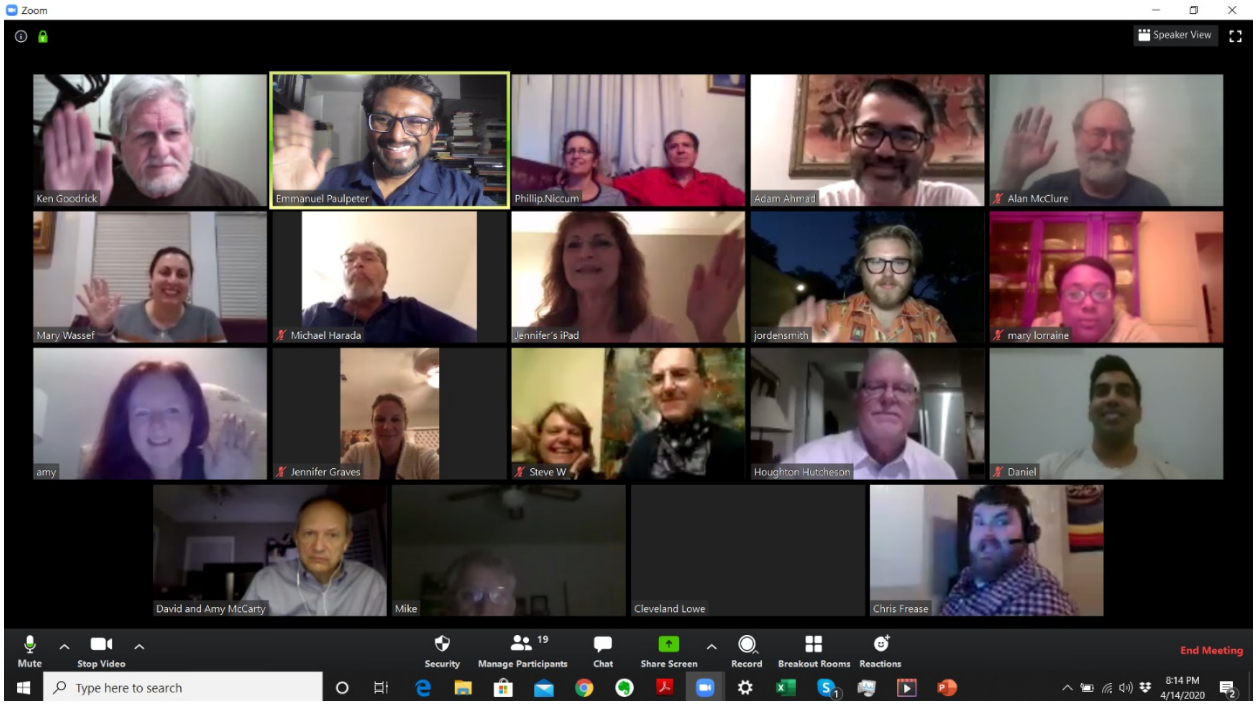
6.Alpha - Weekly: (pic below)
*Meets Weekly. Live YMCA Alpha got 48 people come through in the Fall. Zoom Alpha has had about 26 people. 2 non-Christians, 6 Christians with questions.

Inward Facing (Prayer, Strategy & Training Groups):
1.Evangelism Training Group (pic below)
*We started this on the 22nd. We have had good participation. March 22nd, we had 22 people on this. We are meeting weekly on Sundays at 1pm. (pic attached).

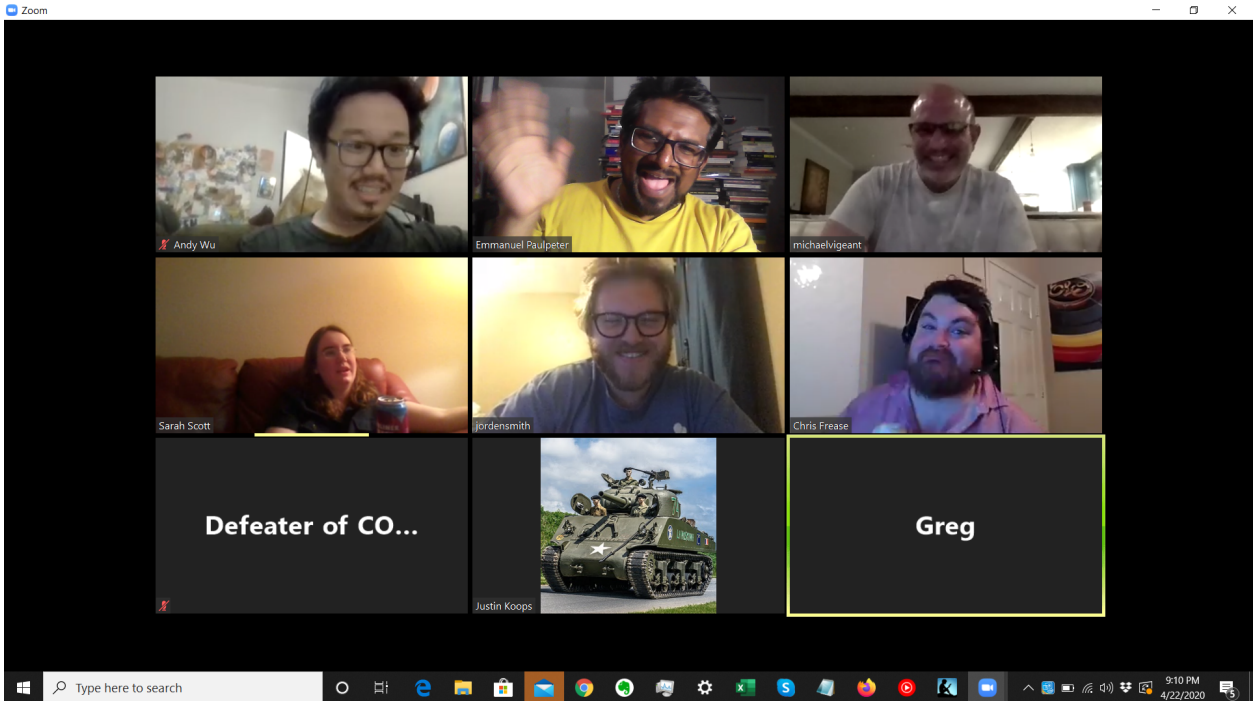
2.Evangelism Advisory Council
*This is a group meeting weekly to plan and mobilize for Alpha. Used to meet monthly, now it is meeting weekly.

3.Aplha Lead Team:
*Meets Weekly to meet and review the Alpha meetings once the prior week, make adjustments and pray.
4.Sunday Prayer team:
*Meets Sunday morning to pray for your online services.

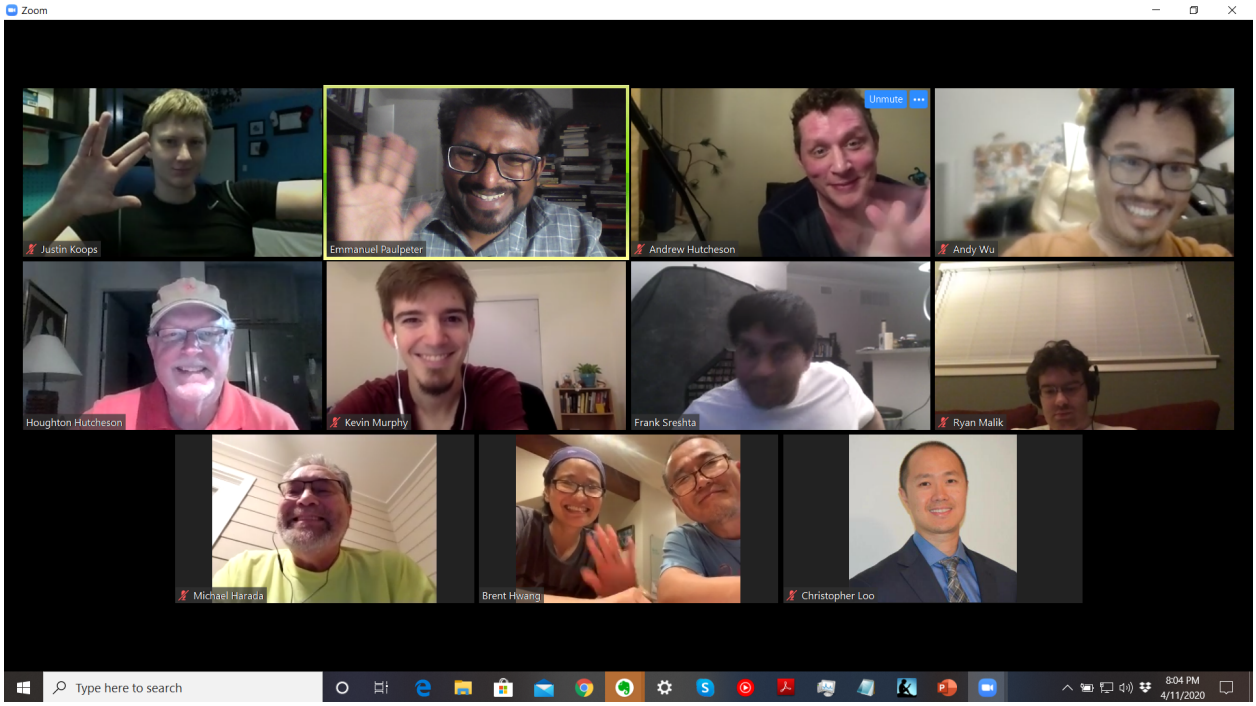
Alpha:



Creo Christ (seeker friendly Bible Study):



Movie Group:



Lord of the Rings:

Church Planting Update

April 26th, 2020

I. Current Plants/Planters:

1. *Kingdom Story:*
   - Tough beginning of church plant (Harvey, 7 Mile impact, & Coronavirus)
   - But persevering.
   - Finding creative online ministries.
   - 50 Households via online streaming Easter; 20 households post-Easter
   - Can't use Stevens Elementary School for awhile. Re-thinking space and model of planting (e.g. house church)

2. *Jericho Road Renewal:*
   - Difficult time: Ministry as well as personal
   - Loss of child (Josephine)
   - Part-time jobs drying up
   - Not able to do Cullen Middle School Outreach

3. *Creo Christ:*
   - Completely online now
   - Meeting weekly (~ 8 people)

II. Potential Plants/Planters:

1. *Luke Samuelson:* (Prior to Covid-19 was in interview process)
    - Texas A&M; MDiv Southwestern Seminary.
    - Has solid pastoral ministry experience but called to plant a church in Kingwood.
    - He is also open to pursuing ECO ordination and possibly becoming an ECO plant.
    - He already has about 30 adults in his core team and wants to launch possibly this Fall.
    - Assessed by Stadia and successfully finished HCPN residency.

III. Other:

1. *HCPN:*
    - Continue to support and help HCPN via seminars, coaching, and consulting
    - Serving as Resident Advisor

2. *ECO/Gordon-Conwell:*
    - Assisting ECO denomination by teaching Gordon-Conwell class (Summer 2020)

Equipping & Sending

Date: April 15, 2020

Time: 12:15-1:00 P.M.

Location: via Zoom

Present: Lea Byrd, Jimmy Myers, Caitlin Rhodes, Paul Seifert (Chair), Catie Smith, Tanner Sykes

Absent: Martha Adams, Mary-Floye Federer

MINUTES

I. **Opening prayer**: Paul opened the meeting in prayer.

II. **Discussion**:

a. Young Adults: Jimmy shared the following and the Committee discussed:

- The YAs are working to cultivate community despite this time of social distancing.
- Jimmy is leading times of midday prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays. He is leading compline prayer with Andrew Herbert on Wednesday and Sunday evenings.
- The Table continues to meet on Sunday mornings via Zoom. The YAs will participate in Cover to Cover in 100 Days starting April 20.

- At least one YA has lost his job due to the economic slowdown.
- Jimmy and Mary Lynn's plans to move in July have not been affected by COVID-19 as of now. The search process for a new YA Director has been postponed for the time being.

b. Discipleship: Catie shared the following and the Committee discussed:

- *Small Groups*:
  - SGs are continuing to meet via Zoom. FPC has purchased 35 Zoom accounts.
  - Catie and Abigail are writing the SG guides to be less textually heavy and more relationally focused. This comports with the idea Catie and the Committee have been thinking through of transitioning SGs from study-focused groups to groups with a primary purpose of forming deep relationships and community.
  - Current plan is that SGs will continue to meet through the summer since travel restrictions may still be in place.
  - We are encouraging SGs to join Cover to Cover in 100 Days, particularly because Sunday School classes are not meeting.
- *Sunday School*: SS classes are on hold.
- *Discipleship Groups*: Strategic work around direction of D-Groups has also been put on hold until things normalize.

c. Ministry Partnerships & Engagement: Lea shared the following and the Committee discussed:

- Mary-Floye is keeping in close contact with our global partners. Lea's focus has been on local partners.
- Caitlin commented that she has been very impressed with Mary-Floye's and Lea's ability to adapt through this time. The amount of lay leadership that has come forward to assist with missions partners has been encouraging as well.
- *Feeding Houston's Heroes*: This is a new lay-led initiative to raise funds to purchase meals, snacks and coffee from local restaurants to be delivered to Houston's healthcare workers, first responders and others on the front line of COVID-19. Idea is to support both our EMS workers and local restaurants. This is a volunteer-run effort and 100% of the funds collected will be used for the purchase and delivery of meals and snacks. The Committee discussed and fully endorsed the effort.

III. **Prayer Requests**: The following prayer requests were shared:

a. That people would hear about Cover to Cover in 100 Days, whether through email, the FPC website or word of mouth, and that people would have an urge to participate.

b. For the mental, emotional and spiritual health of the YAs and the broader FPC community.

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

ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES

Wednesday, March 25th, 2020
Meeting Conducted via Zoom
4:00 p.m.

Attending: Jim Birchfield, Andrew Stepp, Robert Moore, Chris Wolfe, Douglas Meikle, Marilyn MacDonald

Opening Prayer and Devotional were led by Jim Birchfield.

Discussion Topics:

Finance Report: Andrew Stepp gave the report. At this point giving has remained reasonably strong, however, given the current circumstances caution is appropriate. Giving will be closely monitored as we go forward. Short discussion on the giving decline during the last economic downturn vs. expectations in the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Here to Serve Dashboard: Discussion of proposed dashboard content. Agreed on the desire and need for such a tool. Noted also that care going forward is important as we do not know the extent to which the giving towards the one campaign will be affected by Covid-19 outcome.

Pastor's Report:

FPC and the Stay Home/Work Safe order: Jim Birchfield led the discussion of various elements of our response to the Covid-19 work safe order issued by state and city officials.

a) Discussed worship organization going forward. Discussion of creating the right support to the staff in making the best-informed decisions.
b) Congregational communication plan discussed with a focus on clear and concise and consistent communication.
c) W.r.t staff, largely business as usual currently other than the strains of remote working for pastoral staff.
d) Holy land trip in May will be cancelled

Personnel Report: Jim Birchfield shared with the AC the desire of Michael Homan to renounce the jurisdiction of Presbytery. Further, Jimmy Myers has communicated his desire to return to Duke to pursue a Th.D. in New Testament. Search for a COO for operations continues to make progress.

Clerk's report:

New Elder Training: New elder training progresses well with an engaged and committed slate of elders.

Clerk of Session Class of 2023: Short discussion on potential candidates.

Board of Trustees: Discussed the board's continuing role vis a vis evangelism and management of buildings and plant.

2019 Upcoming Session Meetings & Important Dates

Session meeting (Zoom) – Thursday, March 26th, 2020
AC meeting – Tuesday, April 14, 2020
Session meeting – Monday, April 20, 2020
AC meeting – Tuesday, May 12, 2020
Session meeting – Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Closing Prayer: The meeting was closed with prayer.

As the FPC Coronavirus Advisory Committee, we are writing you with best wishes and our latest perspectives on the current worldwide COVID-19 crisis. In this update, we share some of the data and observations that those of us in the medical community have been reviewing. There remain areas of uncertainty but also some good news to share.

As of April 27, there have been over 25,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Texas and over 5700 in Harris County alone. Compared to New York, we have been spared the magnitude of disease spread and have largely avoided overwhelming the resources of our health care system in evaluating and treating patients as was feared in the early stages. Nonetheless, our health care providers are working very hard under difficult and vulnerable circumstances in every hospital in Houston. They deserve our love, support and prayers.

To date, over 660 Texans have died of COVID-19, and additional Texans are at potentially at risk based on projections from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, available at: https://covid19.healthdata.org/projections. This means that our local community will continue to experience more cases and hospitalizations, albeit at a decreasing rate, over the next few weeks, even if current social distancing measures are maintained through May. Yes, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and it seems that the curve is flattening from the joint efforts of our community.

When we first learned of COVID-19, it was believed to be mainly a disease of older adults, particularly those with significant other diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and chronic heart or lung diseases. We now know that younger adults between 20-45 years of age account for at least one-third of hospital admissions. Fortunately, infants and children appear to be at lower risk of severe disease. However, children are more likely to be asymptomatic when infected and therefore have increased potential to spread the disease. Thus, we need to continue to do all we can to protect everyone by continuing to physically distance ourselves from people outside our households, even from our grandchildren.

COVID-19 is transmitted both by droplets that are released with coughing or sneezing and/or by the transfer of the virus from hands to nose, mouth, or eyes after touching a contaminated object. Unfortunately, the people most likely to spread the disease are those with the mildest symptoms because they may not even be aware that they are infected. At this time, our best defense against COVID-19 is to maintain physical distancing, including avoiding all gatherings such as in-person worship, and by practicing rigorous hygiene by frequently washing our hands and avoiding touching our faces. Now in Houston, our county judge and mayor have also recommended wearing a mask over one's mouth and nose to prevent the spread of the disease.

We applaud everyone's desire to once again come together in our church building to

worship together and to sing praise to the Lord. On April 21, Governor Abbott released updated guidance for houses of worship and defined essential services to include "religious services conducted in churches, congregations, and houses of worship." In his guidance though, he advised places of worship to conduct as many activities as possible remotely and offered practical recommendations on how to reimplement in-person worship, including maintaining physical distancing, encouraging remote worship for vulnerable groups, disinfection of facilities, and face masks for all in attendance.

We agree with Governor Abbott when he said, "Texas is a big state and the transmission rate of COVID-19 varies in different communities. Texans also have big hearts and should love their neighbors by evaluating the rate of local community spread to determine the appropriate level of mitigation strategies to implement." Given that Harris County accounts for a significant portion of all confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Texas, we believe the best course of action continues to be staying at home, to gather in worship via live stream, to join the church-wide Cover-to-Cover Bible reading initiative, and to utilize online technologies for other church-related group gatherings. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to go deeper into your faith and explore prayer like never before. In the meantime, please know that we are evaluating data as it becomes available and guidance from our state and local leaders to be judicious in when and how we safely resume in-person worship.

So is there any basis for hope? Although there is no way to know when a vaccine or effective medications will be available to prevent and treat this infection, the marshalling of resources and brilliant minds nationally and internationally in this effort is unprecedented. We also do not know if and how strong immunity derived from having had COVID-19 will occur and for how long. Our long-standing clinical experience with other viruses gives the expectation that some immune protection is likely. Vaccine development is occurring at record speed, and we have to be cautiously optimistic about its availability in the future. Let us continue to pray for wisdom and unity for our political leaders and a renewed desire to work together to do best by the citizens.

Thank you for your continued support and perseverance during this time.

Robert Moore, M.D.

Clerk of Session

FPC Coronavirus Advisory Team

Drs. Gene Alford, George Mallory, Manish Shah, and Eric Thomas

Guidance for Houses of Worship During the COVID-19 Crisis

During these challenging times, government and faith communities throughout Texas need to work together to love our neighbors and slow the spread of Coronavirus. To facilitate this collaboration, State and local governments must clearly articulate their directives aimed at mitigating spread of the virus. This updated joint guidance from the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Governor is the official guidance regarding the effect of Executive Order GA 16 on religious services conducted in churches, congregations, and houses of worship.

The government must give special consideration to houses of worship when issuing orders related to the COVID-19 crisis.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article I of the Texas Constitution protect the right of Texans to worship and freely exercise their religion according to the dictates of their own consciences. In addition, the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act ("RFRA") provides additional protections to faith communities, and government must ensure that it complies with RFRA when it acts, even during a disaster.

Thus, when state or local governments issue orders prohibiting people from providing or obtaining certain services, they must ensure that these orders do not violate these constitutional and statutory rights.

Houses of worship provide "essential services."

By executive order, Governor Abbott has defined essential services to include "religious services conducted in churches, congregations, and houses of worship."[1] Institutions providing these essential services can provide them under certain conditions described in Executive Order GA 16 and local orders by counties or municipalities that are consistent with GA 16. To the extent there is conflict between the Governor's Executive Order GA 16 and local orders, GA 16 controls. Local governments may not order houses of worship to close.

Houses of worship should conduct as many activities as possible remotely, and should follow federal guidelines when providing services in person.

Houses of worship should conduct as many of their activities as possible remotely. Services that houses of worship cannot conduct remotely should be conducted in accordance with guidance from the White House and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC").[2] For example:

[1] Exec. Order No. GA 16 at 3 (Apr. 17, 2020); *see also* Exec. Order No. GA 14 at 2 (Mar. 31, 2020) (superseded by GA 16). [2] Ctr. for Disease Control, Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Apr. 9, 2020), https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/

- Instruct sick employees, volunteers, and guests to stay home;

- Practice social distancing by maintaining appropriate distance between people;

- Maintain good hygiene by washing your hands frequently, using hand sanitizer, using your elbow to cover coughs, and not touching your face;

- Implement environmental cleanliness and sanitization practices; and

- Clean and disinfect work areas frequently. Houses of worship, like providers of other essential services, are to follow additional guidance from the White House and CDC whenever possible.[3] **Houses of worship should help slow the spread of the virus.** Texas is a big state and the transmission rate of COVID-19 varies in different communities. Texans also have big hearts and should love their neighbors by evaluating the rate of local community spread to determine the appropriate level of mitigation strategies to implement.[4] Houses of worship play an important role in this effort, and can use their creativity to help slow the spread of the virus. For example, a church could hold "drive-in" style services. Or because Executive Order GA 16 permits drive-thrus to provide goods and services, a house of worship may, according to their faith practices, provide communion or a blessing through a similar drive-up service. When conducting services,

houses of worship may consider implementing the following practices:

- Encourage all attendees who are 65 and above to stay home and watch the services online, or provide a "senior service" exclusively for attendees 65 and above to attend in person.

- Ask all attendees who have an underlying at-risk health condition to stay home and watch the services online.

- Equip ushers and greeters with gloves and masks.

- Consider keeping child care closed, unless the house of worship can comply with CDC guidelines for child care facilities.[5] community/guidance-business-response.html; Tex. Dep't of State Health Servs., Prevention of COVID- 19 (Apr. 17. 2020), https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/#prevent; The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America, 30 Days to Slow the Spread (Mar. 31, 2020), https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf. [3] CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html. Texas DSHS: https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/#prevent. CDC, People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness (Apr. 15, 2020), https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html; *see also* CDC, Interim Guidance for Administrators and Leaders of Community- and Faith-Based Organizations to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Mar. 23,

2020), https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-

ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community- faith-organizations.html.

[5] CDC, Guidance for Childcare Programs that Remain Open (Apr. 12, 2020), https:// www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html.

- _____

[4]

- _____

2 April 21, 2020

- Ensure all attendees sanitize their hands and put on a mask before entering the building.

- Ensure attendees sit with their family unit, use social distancing between each unit, and, if necessary, add more service times to facilitate distancing.

- Clergy should dismiss attendees by family unit, maintaining social distancing.

- Staff should sanitize seats and frequently touched surfaces between services.

- Consider refraining from passing collection plates and instead provide a central collection box in the building or encourage online giving.

- Consider how the sacraments can be administered without attendees having to touch the same surfaces and objects. **These guidelines do not**

violate the religious liberty of houses of worship. Under the extraordinary circumstances in which we temporarily live, these guidelines provide that houses of worship may remain open. The guidelines make only recommendations to houses of worship. They do not violate the religious liberty of houses of worship because the government has a compelling interest in recommending this guidance (stopping contagion) and the guidance is the least restrictive means of serving that compelling interest (allowing houses of worship to stay open for ministry, but suggesting ways that help slow the spread of COVID-19).

CENTER FOR FAITH + WORK + INNOVATION

FPC Session Update | April 26, 2020 | Submitted by Austin Hermann, Director CFWI

Mission Reminder: The Center for Faith, Work, and Innovation **forms** followers of Jesus Christ for vocational leadership and **grows** redemptive ventures for the good of Houston and the world.

Program Updates:

PROJECT FLOURISH 2019-2020

- Out of 14 semi-finalists, our judges chose 6 winners, totaling $250,000 in prize funding in early March, 2020
- Memorandums of Understanding have been finalized and signed for 4/6 of those teams as of 4/22/2020
- 2/6 MOU's still being developed and agreed upon
- Award Payouts to be disbursed via schedule through December 2020
- Formal Report to be submitted to Session for MAY 2020

Above (Left): Project Flourish Judges: Doug Meikle, JD Thomas, Dade Dowdle, Claudia Stewart, Rebecca Herbold. Above (Right): Winning team, Small Places, pitch to the Judges

1

Project Flourish Award Winners

Project One Day $75,000

Jennifer Johnson

Creating free, Christ-centered childcare for economically at-risk infants and toddlers through the use of a Single Parent Cooperative. Parents volunteer one day a week to receive 44 hours of FREE child-care weekly to facilitate work or furtherance of their education.

Eight Million Stories $35,000

Marvin Pierre

We seek to transform the lives of vulnerable youth, 14 to 18 years old, through education, skills training, employment, and authentic relationships.

Small Places $75,000

Daniel Garcia-Prats

Small Places utilizes urban agriculture to develop a culture of health in our communities by renewing the bond between people, places, and food. We believe that farming can become the focal point from which we alter how the various aspects of our communities interact to establish health at the center of our Human Ecosystem.

2

Belong Bakery $20,000

Kim Brown

The mission of Belong Bakery is to certify, train and create dignified,

meaningful, paid employment for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Employment will provide them the opportunity to develop, foster and nurture essential social developmental and genuine relationships which, although necessary, are grossly lacking for the IDD population.

GoBU $25,000

CC Achilefu

No matter how accessible music is today, there seems to be a music monopoly and a scarcity of transformative music. GoBU wants to disrupt this by providing a whole generation with quality Christian Hip Hop and R&B, but we're more than just music; we're a movement that aims to entertain, educate and evangelize a culture longing for purpose.

A 2nd Cup - Brazen Table $20,000

Kaylen Simpson and Erica Raggett

A 2nd Cup - Brazen Table trains survivors of human trafficking in the hospitality industry, empowering them to reclaim their personal identities and their futures.

A full Project Flourish report will be submitted to the Session in May 2020.

Program Updates (cont.)

Main Street Fellows 2019-2020

- MSF has moved to 100% zoom meetings—while sub-optimal, this is still an effective means to conduct our work
- 19 Fellows Graduate on May 18th. We are still seeking to have an in person, socially-distant graduation experience. TBD.
- I am so proud of each person and extremely thankful for their flexibility in this time of COVID-19
- Recruitment must begin in earnest immediately with our new website as the principal tool.
- We plan to offer the same cohort options for Fall/Spring 2020-2021
- Doug Meikle will take Monday Nights. Jim Birchfield will take Tuesday Mornings.

Above: screenshot of MSF Monday night class

Left: screenshot of our last in person class—discussing the finer points of infra vs supra-lapsariansism.... Riveting as you can imagine!

“Looking forward” Program Planning including CFWI COVID-19 Response **“Design –> Prototype –> Iterate”**

These three words are the process by which I am evaluating ongoing ministry development and planning for the next 6 mo – 1 yr timeline. I believe that in order to address the challenge of COVID-19, we must be as responsive and flexible as possible

One of the strategies that has emerged from the last few weeks is the delivery of highly relevant, actionable content designed for very specific audiences as they go through the shock and challenges of COVID-19 disruption. **The CFWI is uniquely positioned to provide and develop this content as the “public-theology” arm of FPC** able to make unique partnerships and host conversations relevant to an external and more public audience.

Webinar 1: To that end, we have already hosted one webinar conversation in partnership with FPC’s Caring Ministry on 4/21 that we entitled: **“Navigating the CARES Act”** designed to come alongside small business owners and independent contractors trying to figure out how to get resourcing from the recently passed emergency legislation. The recording of that conversation can be found here. Jeff Judah was the moderator and I thank the Caring team for their support and partnership in this first Webinar.

Webinar 2: We are hosting another Webinar/workshop specifically for healthcare workers as they battle **“Compassion Fatigue.”** The link for that event has been sent out by communications and will be posted on the new CFWI website as well. Please see below for more information.

Our goal in these conversations is not to provide “general” information. But instead information **focused specifically and intensely on small, contextualized, populations of working professionals** going through

acute issues pertinent to their own field / workplace. I have a whole list of ideas and the schedule of those webinars will be published in the near term.

Our secondary goal in these conversations is to use the skills, networks, and expertise of our covenant partners. Specifically, I am reaching into the pool of the Main Street Fellows graduates who are content experts in their own rights as the principal drivers of these webinars. This is to fulfill our Vision 2020 mandate of "being the church." We will not run a webinar we ourselves cannot staff with content experts from within our own congregation. FPC is uniquely equipped in this regard.

The updated schedule of future webinars will be published in the next week or two.

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FPC HOUSTON CFWI CENTER FOR FAITH • WORK • INNOVATION

Administrative Updates:

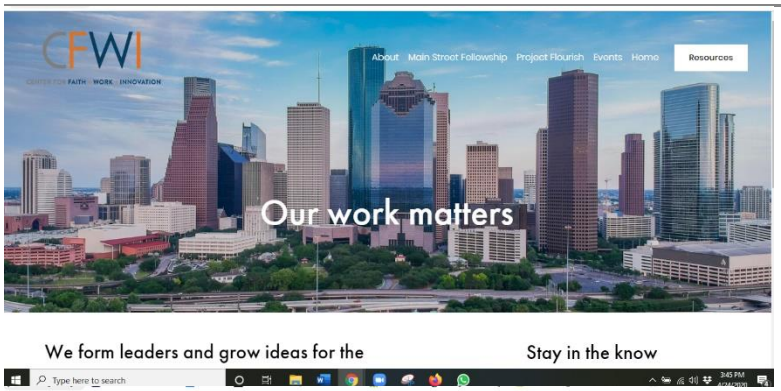
Item 1: CFWI Website Development

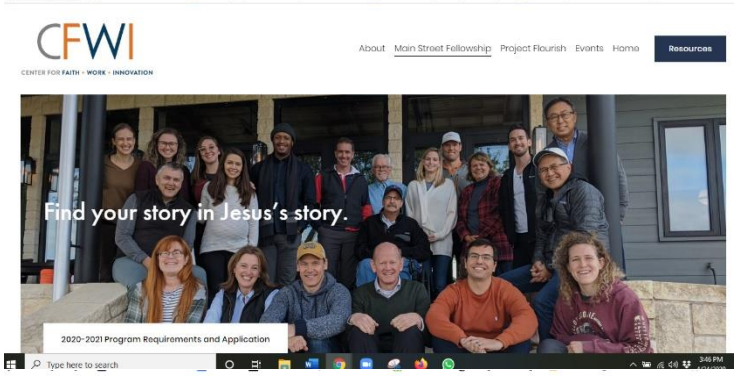
Over the last three months, I have been working on finalizing a formal CFWI Website. This is pending final review and approval from Andrew Stepp.

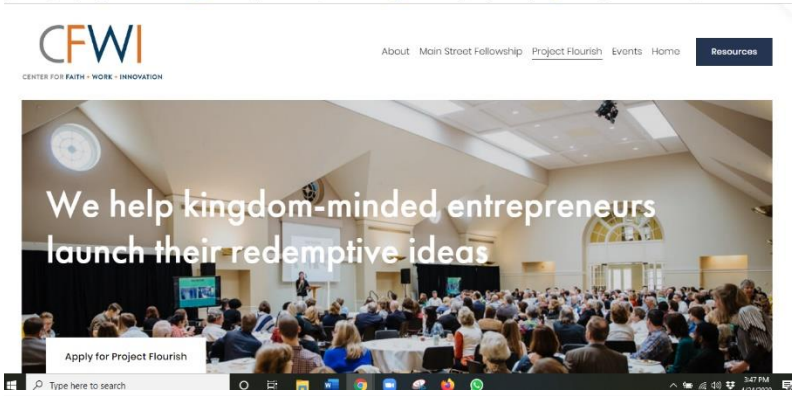
The Center for Faith, Work, and Innovation has taken the step of ensuring we have proper ownership of the needed URL's and has since acquired the following: Faithandworkhou.org, Faithandworkhou.com

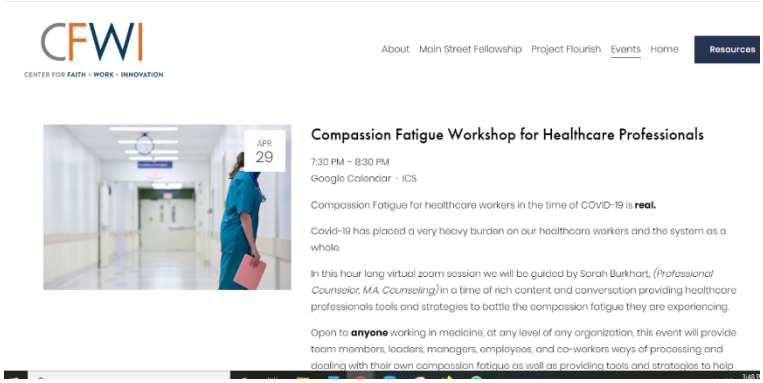
We are attempting to also get the domain: **cfwi.org** This website will host all of our current and future programming opportunities. I've attached some

screen shots of the current design as a fun enticement of things to come:









Item 2: Project Flourish Publicity and Update to the Congregation

An outstanding area of concern I have shared with Matt Lee and Andrew Stepp is the timing of our announcement regarding the winners of Project Flourish. Due to the timing of COVID-19 and the shutdown, we had to cancel our planned, "Award Celebration Day" which was supposed to be March 29th. **This has been indefinitely postponed.** In addition, we have not yet sent out an update regarding the final status of Project Flourish due to over-messaging and concerns related to financial perception/insensitivity. Per my discussion with Andrew, we target August as the new date of communicating who the Award winners are to the congregation.

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FPC HOUSTON CFWI CENTER FOR FAITH • WORK • INNOVATION

Needs / Prayer Requests / Personal:

Need 1: We need to recruit for Main Street Fellowship Class of 2021. Please pray that we can fill at least one cohort. Our goal is two, but we are aware that this time of Covid may challenge our ability to recruit two full cohorts.

Personal: I must commend Lyndsey Knight, (CFWI Coordinator), for doing a simply excellent job in helping manage, run, and conduct Project Flourish 2019-2020. I am so thankful for her help and I look forward to our expanded ministry footprint this coming fall.

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