

First Presbyterian Church of Houston
May Agenda – May 19, 2020
7:00 PM, via Zoom

Opening Prayer	Matt Lee
Omnibus Resolution Approve Minutes of April Session Meeting Additional Consent Motions	Jim Birchfield
New business Board of Trustee report	Fred Robertson
Reopening Task Force Report	Mark Potter Manish Shah
Finance Report a. Finances b. 2020 budget proposal c. Long-term planning update	Andrew Stepp Matt Malinsky
Pastor’s Report Ministry update Update on summer activities	Jim Birchfield Andrew Stepp
Clerk’s Report Approval of Elder class of 2023 Class of 2023 Committee assignments Class of 2020 celebration/farewell	Robert Moore Chris Wolfe
Prayer and Praise Doxology Motion to Adjourn	Jim Birchfield
2020 Session Meetings & Important Dates Ordination Sunday Session meeting	Sunday, June 7, 2020 Tuesday, June 16, 2020

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
April 28, 2020

The April Stated Meeting of the Session began at 7:00pm by a zoom conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic with a quorum present. Dr. Jim Birchfield called the meeting to order and Jim Birchfield 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 March 17, 2020 Stated Meeting of the Session be approved.
- Moved that the minutes of the March 26, 2020 Called Meeting of the Session be approved.

COVID-19 UPDATE

- Robert Moore, representative of the COVID-19 Task Force, provided an update on current COVID-19 models and projections for Houston and the surrounding areas. The virus appears to have peaked and recommendations were made as to how we could begin to relax restrictions slowly, safely and carefully.
- From the Advisory Council a motion was made and approved to begin to make plans for a careful opening of church activities and that May 31, Pentecost Sunday, be considered as the possible opportunity for the congregation to meet in person for worship.

Committee Reports:

- Finance Report – Matt Malinsky reported that March was a favorable month. April numbers are good. First Presbyterian Church has received funds through the Payroll Protection Loan Program. The church has 60 days to spend the funds on payroll and eligible cost.
- Andrew Stepp made recommendations for moving forward –
 - In a time of uncertainty and ever-changing conditions, we would be wise to make decisions on a month-by month basis.
 - Develop contingency plans to respond to a phased re-opening of FPC's worship spaces while also continuing to innovate in the area of "on-line worship and discipleship".
 - Prepare for a 10% reduction in operating and ministry expenses at the beginning of the new fiscal on June 1, 2020 (\$400k).
 - Jim and Andrew make plans for different scenarios for budget reductions in personnel based on recommendation from long term strategy TF.
 - Pre designate \$1.1 M from existing TR and TPF accounts to fund portions of our Here to Serve strategy for 2020 Crisis.
- Andrew Stepp presented Here to Serve Strategy -
 - Care for Our Congregation
 - Oversight: Caring; Source – Redesignate \$100k
 - Care for our Missionaries and Ministry Partners
 - Oversight: MIT and E&S; Source – existing E&S Missions' Budget
 - Care for our City
 - Oversight: Session appointed TF; Source – Redesignate based on TF recommendation
 - Care for the Lost
 - Oversight: Church Planting & Innovation: Source – existing evangelism, mission innovation, and church planting budget.

A motion was made and approved that staff prepare for a \$400,000 reduction of our ministry and operating budgets for 2020-21.

A motion was made and approved that Jim Birchfield and Andrew Stepp be authorized to prepare recommendations for personnel reductions to be presented and voted on in the May session meeting.

A motion was made and approved to redesignate \$100,000 from TPF or TR funds for a "Caring for our Congregation" fund. Andrew Stepp and Matt Malinsky will work with the finance ministry team to identify the specific funds that will be redesignated.

A motion was made and approved to empower a task force to work on the "caring for the city" strategy, preparing a recommendation for amount of funding, potential sources, and potential places to invest to help Houston recover.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Jim Birchfield reported that the staff is looking at what they are learning about worship.

- How to do worship in this environment.
- Pre-recording provides more creative opportunities.
- It is difficult to track attendance.
- What have we started doing that we want to continue doing?

Caitlin Rhodes reported on lay led volunteer opportunities.

- Support distribution centers for delivering food packages to the elderly and at-risk individuals.
- Feeding local first responders.
- Mask for All – FPC is a collection center and distributor center for mask... they may be brought to the Welcome Center.

Andrew Stepp reported that 350 people have signed up for Cover to Cover.

CLERK'S REPORT

April 2, 2020 - A motion was made by the Advisory Council and approved by electronic vote, given current data and modeling with respect to the virus in our area, that we continue our current policy of keeping the building closed to all but essential staff and that we continue with live-stream worship only until at least April 30.

April 2, 2020 - A motion was made by the Finance Team and approved by electronic vote, to ratify as an act of Session the form borrowing resolution and the borrowing transactions authorized by the resolution. No liens are required, the interest rate is commercial prime, there is no origination fee and there are no borrowed amounts outstanding.

April 6, 2020 - A motion was made by the Nomination Committee and approved by electronic vote, that the following people be elected as trustees for Presbyterian School as required under the Presbyterian School bylaws: Tom Kennedy, Tiffany Melchers, Sandi Worley and Nathan Allen.

The Advisory Council made a motion which was approved to elect Tom Reiser as Clerk of Session for the Elder Class of 2023.

The Advisory Council made a motion which was approved to elect Jenn Rustay as Member-at-Large for 2020-2021.

The MAG Meeting at MDPC has been postponed.

The next Session Meeting will be May 19, 2020.

There was a period of praise and prayer. Prayers were raised for the church, member concerns, ministry partners, and the city and neighbors.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm with prayer by Paula Paine.

Rev. Jim Birchfield, Moderator

Robert Moore, Clerk of Session

Consent Motions:

Motion for Session to Approve the Elders-Elect for Ordination

From Doug Meikle, Junior Clerk of Session, on behalf of Advisory Council

Resolved, that having completed a course of study on the role and responsibility of elders, including the Essential Tenets of ECO, and having been examined by the clerks, the following elders-elect of the Class of 2023 are approved for ordination as elders in the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians: ECO and all are approved for installation as members of the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Houston in a service of public worship on Ordination Sunday or on a later date, if necessary:

For ordination and installation:

Elder-elect
Melaney Derden
David Quan
Sarah Robertson
Amy Winstead

For installation, having previously been ordained to the office of elder:

Elder-elect
Martha Barnes
Tom Reiser (Clerk)

Reports

Equipping & Sending

Date: May 13, 2020
Time: 12:45-1:20 P.M.
Location: via Zoom
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. Paul shared reflections on the Committee's work over the past year and offered words of admiration for Mary-Floye, Catie, Jimmy and Caitlin. The Committee offered kind words to Paul as well.

- b. Paul then asked Mary-Floye, Catie, Jimmy and Caitlin to provide any updates on their ministry areas since the last Committee meeting and to share how they are handling the stresses of this time personally in the midst of their ministry work.
- c. Young Adults: Jimmy shared the following:
- As Jimmy and Mary Lynn's July departure date approaches, they and the YAs are grieving the lack of an opportunity to say goodbye to one another in person.
 - Jimmy and Abigail have continued to brainstorm how to care for people during this time. There has been much improvisation and the YAs have taken this season and its challenges and run with it. Jimmy has been very impressed with the E&S team members' creativity in cultivating meaningful conversations and encouraging spiritual practices that involve communal elements despite the social distancing restrictions.
- d. Ministry Partnerships & Engagement: Mary-Floye shared the following:
- This has been such a weird season but Mary-Floye's time with the Lord has been sweet; He has been faithful.
 - We have been grieving the inability to put on State of the City and the cancellation of five mission trips to date.
 - We are concerned for our local ministry partners located in the most vulnerable areas of Houston (Friends of Northside in N/NE Houston; Cullen MS and Agape in SE Houston). We are also concerned for our global partners.
 - This has been a time for discerning where the Lord is calling us to focus as we evaluate our budget.
 - Good things have grown out of this time (e.g., Feeding Houston's Heroes).
- e. Discipleship: Catie shared the following:
- Joshua recently finished his last semester of classes; Eliana had her 6 month check-up. For Catie this has been a time of learning the new normal of working full time while being a new full time mom.
 - The reaction to Cover to Cover in 100 Days has been exciting.
 - Catie has been praying that her heart is focused on other people during this time, that her heart would be broken for those who are most vulnerable.
- f. Caitlin shared the following:
- Caitlin has been aware that we as E&S are moving toward a time when we will need a new/renewed vision for our ministry. The process for developing this vision has not yet been clear. She has been thinking about ways to invite the church into Equipping & Sending: what are the spiritual practices we should be inviting people into; how best to engage people? Caitlin is working to focus on trusting in the Lord through this uncertainty.

- Her primary prayer requests are for discernment during this time and for a true abiding in God.

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

ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES
Tuesday, April 21st, 2020
Meeting Conducted via Zoom
3:00 p.m.

Attending: Jim Birchfield, Andrew Stepp, Matt Malinsky, Robert Moore, Chris Wolfe, Douglas Meikle, Marilyn MacDonald, Fred Robertson

Opening Prayer was led by Doug Meikle.

Discussion Topics:

COVID-19 Update: Robert Moore led the discussion which considered the recommendations from local officials and the guidance from our own medical task force. Based on the discussion the AC recommended that restrictions remain in place for the time being.

Finance/Giving Monitor: Matt Malinsky summarized the current position re. giving. Liquidity is strong and giving positive YTD. This has been helped by receiving PPP funds. As the situation develops FPC has some flexibility in accounts whose use can be redirected by session. With respect to Here to Serve there is a realization among donors that new circumstances will drive new priorities.

- a. PPP funds have now been received.
- b. Decision flow: tighter decision flow was discussed with many Senior Pastor and Exec Pastor now engaged as decision makers in spending and planning.
- c. Budget planning: a series of income scenarios for the coming year (2020) and the response to them are being developed. In addition, a more thorough review of long term planning is also now underway.

Worship Update: we continue to meet online and the response to the content has been positive.

Deferred Maintenance: moving forward with a few sanctuary maintenance items taking advantage of good pricing currently available.

Trustee Report: No report at this time.

Pastor's Report:

Personnel: Jim Birchfield and Andrew Stepp reported that morale is high amongst staff and also work output excellent. We note that "Cover to Cover" has 300+ people signed up to read through the bible together.

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 candidates and a recommendation made for the session to approve.

Session Member at Large: Short discussion candidates and a recommendation made for the session to approve.

2019 Upcoming Session Meetings & Important Dates

Session meeting – Tuesday, April 28, 2020

AC meeting – Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Session meeting – Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Closing Prayer: The meeting was closed with prayer led by Andrew Stepp.