

**First Presbyterian Church of Houston**  
**June Agenda – June 16, 2020**  
**7:00 PM, via Zoom**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Opening Prayer</b>  | Jim Birchfield                               |
| <b>Omnibus Resolution</b><br>Approve Minutes of May Session Meeting<br>Additional Consent Motions                                  | Jim Birchfield                               |
| <b>Reports</b>   |  |
| <b>Clerk’s Report (1)</b><br>Installation of the Class of 2023<br>Elder Resignation  | Chris Wolfe                                  |
| <b>Board of Trustee Report</b>   | Tom Brents                                   |
| <b>Finance Report</b><br>a. Finances<br>b. Long-term planning update   | Matt Malinsky<br>Doug Meikle<br>Andrew Stepp |
| <b>Reopening Task Force Report</b>   | Mark Potter                                  |
| <b>Committee Reports</b>   | Committee Chairs                             |
| <b>New Business</b>  |  |
| <b>Old Business</b>  |  |
| <b>Pastor’s Report</b><br>Personnel & Ministry update  | Jim Birchfield<br>Andrew Stepp               |
| <b>Clerk’s Report (2)</b><br>Conflict of Interest Statement<br>Affirmation of Service<br>Session Retreat<br>Congregational Meeting | Chris Wolfe                                  |
| <b>Prayer and Praise</b>   | Jim Birchfield                               |
| <b>Motion to Adjourn</b>   |  |

## **2020 Session Meetings & Important Dates**

**Sabbatical - No Meeting in July**

**Session meeting - Tuesday, August 11, 2020 (Date Change)**

Session meeting - Tuesday, September 15, 2020

**Session Retreat (TBD)**

Session meeting - Tuesday, October 20, 2020

**Congregational Meeting (TBD/Sunday, November 1 or 8)**

Session meeting - Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Session meeting - Tuesday, December 15, 2020

**MINUTES OF THE SESSION**  
**THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOUSTON, TEXAS**  
**May 19, 2020**

The May 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 Matt Lee 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 April 28, 2020 Stated Meeting of the Session be approved.
- A motion from the Advisory Council was made and approved 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  
Sara Robertson  
Amy Winstead

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

Elder-elect  
Martha Barnes  
Tom Reiser (Clerk)

Board of Trustee Report:

- Fred Robertson reported they have received proposals for the demolition of the Oakdale building by midsummer. There will be modifications on the second floor to move the printers from Oakdale to the second floor of the church. The estimates are \$270,000 for remodeling of the second floor and \$60,000 for the demolition of the Oakdale buildings. A motion was made and approved to remove these projects from the postponed projects list and to proceed with the projects this summer.

Committee Reports:

- Finance Report – Matt Malinsky reported that the fiscal year 2019-2020 will finish in the black.
- Andrew Stepp presented the proposed budget for 2020-2021. There is a 10% reduction from the budget of 2019-2020. A motion from the Advisory Council to approve the Budget 2020-2021 was approved.

Reopening Task Force Report:

Manish Shah presented a power point “Reopening Task Force Update” and “FPC Reopening Task Force (RTF) Plan for Session”. Guidance from many entities were considered as well as a survey that was taken from the congregation as to how comfortable and when would they be willing to return to worshipping in person.

A motion was made and approved for the start/stop triggers for worship and large gatherings and for relaxing of infection control measures.

A motion was made and approved of target dates for screening current staff, having all staff/visitors on site, and logistical readiness for worship with June 14 as a suggested first Sunday for worship in the sanctuary.

A motion was made and approved to approve the phased implementation for number and style of worship services. To begin there will be one live, blended style service at 10:45 (sanctuary based) and one prerecorded and streamed service (not in person).

A motion was made and approved for general events plan for baptisms, memorials, and weddings.

PASTOR'S REPORT – no report

CLERK'S REPORT

May 1, 2020 - A motion was made and approved by electronic vote, Session hereby approves the cancellation of construction projects planned for summer of 2020.

Chris Wolfe announced the following committee assignments for 2020-2021:

*Church Planting & Innovation*

Paula Paine - Chair  
Jordan Benningfield  
David Quan

*Marriage & Family*

Mark Potter - Chair  
Stephanie Zamora  
Melaney Derden

*Worship*

Callie Paterson- Chair  
Kent Woodard  
Martha Barnes

*Equipping and Sending*

Martha Lawler - Chair  
Tanner Sykes  
Sara Robertson

*Operations*

Tiffany Melchers - Chair  
Al Dupont  
Amy Winstead

There was a celebration and farewell tribute to the outgoing Elder Class of 2020.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10pm with prayer by Chris Wolfe.

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Rev. Jim Birchfield, Moderator

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Robert Moore, Clerk of Session

RESOLUTIONS PROPOSED BY ADVISORY COUNCIL TO SESSION

JUNE 16, 2020

RESOLVED, that Session notes the COVID social distancing challenges to customary practices regarding the incoming Elder Class of 2023.

RESOLVED, that Session extends all rights and privileges as if Members of Session to the Elders Elect of the Class of 2023 effective as of June 1, 2020 but delays the ceremony of formal installation and ordination until we can joyously gather in public religious service.

RESOLVED, that Session notes the resignation of Tom Reiser from Session effective June 9, 2020.

RESOLVED, that Martha Barnes be and hereby is elected Clerk for the Elder Class of 2023, effective immediately.

RESOLVED, that the Officer Nominating Committee is charged with discerning, before the next Congregational Meeting, six Elder candidates for the Class of 2024 and one Elder candidate to complete the now vacant position in the Class of 2023.

## **Consent Motions:**

None

## **Reports**

### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

June 10, 2020

**Members Present:** Tom Brents, John Crane, Brock Hudson, Sean Keenan, Steve King, Randy Schorre, Russ Schultz, Debbie Thompson, Chris Winters

**Staff and Ex-Officio Present:** Kay DuPont - Secretary

**Members and Ex-officio Absent:** Jim Birchfield, Andrew Stepp

Tom Brents called the meeting to order at 11:40am in LC 181 and opened the meeting with prayer.

A motion was made and passed to approve the Minutes of the Board of Trustees May 20, 2020.

### **Committee Reports**

- Session Action Committee- Tom Brents reported that Sunday, June 14 will be the first in person worship service and there will be a Town Hall Meeting Wednesday night to explain to the congregation what to expect when they attend Sunday morning. Financial contributions have been above budget and expenses are down.
- Facilities Committee - Tom Brents reported that the architects are going forward with acquiring permits. The interior renovations will proceed as planned for the first and second floor. There will be no exterior renovations at this time. The logistics for taking down the Oakdale Building are being reviewed. The demolition should be completed by the middle of August. Henry Humphries is spearheading the project.
- Building Committee- Tom Brents reported that the sanctuary has been refreshed. The fire protection system is being updated to a state-of-the-art system. The windows outside the KDO area will be cleaned and repainted.
- Risk Committee- Steve King – no new report

## **Neighbors**

- MFAH Representative - Sean Keenan – no new report
- Presbyterian School – Tom Brents has been in communications with Presbyterian School about the razing of the Oakdale building and the need for the school to remove their property from within. There are discussions about new signage for the school and how to co-ordinate them with the church signage. Plans are being made for securing the second floor for security purposes.
- Main Street Ministry - Steve King reported that there are no new projects planned for now and that the large meeting room has been updated.

## **Properties**

- Dale Avenue Properties – Chris Winters reported that the tax protest has been filed and they are waiting for a date. They are in the process of renewing the leases for the units and do not plan to increase the rates at this time.
- Manvel Property – Sean Keenan reported that they have acquired an agricultural exemption for the property. The attorneys are setting up a meeting to discuss the future of the property.
- Bonner Property – Russ Schulze – no new report

## **Church**

- Parking - Debbie Thompson recommended reassigning the parking responsibilities to the Facilities Committee.
- Children & Youth (New Committee Focus)- KDO would like to renovate and increase their area in order to expand their program.
- Community Outreach (New Committee Focus)- – no new report

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 with a prayer by Chris Winters.

## OPERATIONS

June 15, 2020

**Members present:** Tiffany Melchers, Al DuPont, Amy Winstead, Andrew Stepp, Steve King, Henry Humphries, Jaime Hampton, Merry Davis.

**Members absent:** Kelli Lawless.

**Staff & Others present:** None.

*WELCOME to Amy Winstead (Elder Class 2023) & Jaime Hampton (Permanent Funds)*

**Call to Order, Devotional and Prayer / (Jesus Calling, June 15, 2020) & Opening Prayer / Al DuPont**

**Facilities Ministry Team Report / Henry Humphries**

- Completed painting and refinishing in the Sanctuary, which includes Chancel ceiling, Nave, pew caps & wainscot
- Refinished wood in Chancel
- Added smoke detectors in Sanctuary
- Obtaining quotes to repair the wood around the windows
- Working on plans to demolish 10 Oakdale (need concession from neighbor since Oakdale building abuts property line)
- IT Ministry Team has been formed
- Comcast has installed a new internet line. A second fiber-optics line is also being installed as a backup. Also, work is ongoing to separate FPC lines from Presbyterian School lines.
- Continue to store unneeded pews...working on passing on to organizations in need
- Media Room updates in CE building continuing
- Question: How do these repair items fit into FPC ongoing maintenance? Are current repairs being done in a way to reduce ongoing maintenance?
- Comment from Andrew: Repairs have improved the looks and durability of property.

**Permanent Funds Ministry Team Report / Jaime Hampton**

- Approved to Austin Herman for seminary
- Approximately \$170K going forward
- Team will be meeting next month

**Treasurer's Report / Andrew Stepp**

- For May / Budgeted Income ~\$580K, Actual Income ~\$1.1M / Budgeted Expense ~\$662K, Actual Expense ~\$1M [Property Insurance was updated and finances allowed payment IN Full...this resulted in an annual savings of \$10K in monthly fees][Also includes a few media upgrades including some lights in the Chancel]
  - Current Year (CY) Comparison to Budget and Prior Year (PY) – Month
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**Current Year Comparison to Budget and Prior Year - Month**

|                   | May<br>Actual | May<br>Budget | Budget<br>Var | PY<br>Actual | PY<br>Var |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| Income            | \$ 1,093      | \$ 580        | \$ 513        | \$ 485       | \$ 608    |
| Expenses          | (1,040)       | (662)         | (378)         | (474)        | (566)     |
| Surplus/(Deficit) | \$ 53         | \$ (82)       | \$ 135        | \$ 11        | \$ 42     |

- Current Year (CY) Comparison to Budget and Prior Year (PY) for Year-To-Date (through May 2020)

**Current Year Comparison to Budget and Prior Year - Year-To-Date**

|                   | CY<br>Actual | CY<br>Budget | Budget<br>Var | PY<br>Actual | PY<br>Var |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| Income            | \$ 8,992     | \$ 7,975     | \$ 1,017      | \$ 7,202     | \$ 1,790  |
| Expenses          | (8,091)      | (7,975)      | (116)         | (7,324)      | (767)     |
| Surplus/(Deficit) | \$ 901       | \$ -         | \$ 901        | \$ (122)     | \$ 1,023  |

- Liquidity – Cash Balances

**Liquidity - Cash Balances**

|  |          |    |
|--|----------|----|
| General Fund Balance                       | \$ 5,947 | *  |
| Designated/Temporarily Restricted Accounts | (1,962)  | ** |
| Unrestricted General Fund Balance          | \$ 3,985 |    |
| Capital Fund Cash Balance                  | \$ 2,162 |    |

\* GF Cash \$2,891+PPP loan Cash \$894+CF Cash \$2,162]

\*\* Designated Funds+Memorial Wall+PPP Loan Unearned

- FY2019 End-of-Year accounting numbers are being finalized and will be presented at June Session meeting...QUICK INCOME REVIEW: March ~\$630K / April ~\$1.2M / May ~\$1.1M
- PPP Loan Assessment / FPC obtained a loan of ~\$900K. We will have used this for approved expenses prior to the extended deadline and will not have to repay the loan.

**Open Discussion:**

- Plans are underway with PS/KDO/Childcare to be prepared for the reopening of these areas.

**Equipping & Sending**

Date: June 10, 2020

Time: 12:30-1:30 P.M. Location: via Zoom conference

Present: Mary-Floye Federer, Martha Lawler (chair), Jimmy Myers, Caitlin Rhodes, Catie Smith, Tanner Sykes

Absent: Sara Robertson

MINUTES

I. **Opening prayer:** Martha opened the meeting in prayer and a devotion derived from Rev. Al Sharpton’s eulogy of George Floyd; specifically, his oration of the Good Samaritan. We can no longer be *passers-by* of those in need of our care and concern. It’s time for us to stop, listen, and act.

II. **Introductions:**

Abigail MacDougal as incoming director of YA introduced herself to the committee and Martha explained the role of the elders and how we are to report to the Session the work of our collective committee. Incoming elder, Sara Robertson, was unable to attend due to a previously scheduled retreat.

III. **Discussion:**

Our initial meeting was one of introductions and brief thoughts about our work over the summer and into the remainder of the year. Martha asked Caitlin for some recommended reading on spiritual formation (specifically, discipleship) and asked for thoughts on a summer book review. Caitlin recommended Dana Allin’s *Simple Discipleship* and *The Great Omission*, by Dallas Willard.

We welcomed Abigail as the new YA director and thanked Jimmy for his inspiring work over the last two years. We will miss him but are excited for his new journey and the opportunities that await him and his family. Catie reported that Jim Singleton would be the August Small Group and SS speaker (pre-recorded “Ted Talks” with questions). She is also working to help create a landing page on our website for Racial Reconciliation to go live (hopefully) sometime this month. Each Ministry’s update is attached below.

Caitlin Rhodes Update: Regarding reconciliation, one of the discipleship resources Caitlin recommended going forward for our church was: The Repentance Project's An American Lent. It came out of an Anglican church in DC; it's a 40-day devotional that though designed for Lent is very fitting in this season of lament. She went through it with a group of students at Gordon-Conwell, and it came to her mind as she’s seen many people in FPC trying to figure out what they should do and how they can begin to respond to this injustice. We can't change what we don't understand; learning and lamenting is a great place to start reform.

The Repentance Project exists to encourage racial healing by communicating the systemic legacies of slavery, building relationships, and creating opportunities—through formation, repentance, and repair—for a just future.

Caitlin also suggested the Bible Project’s video on “justice”. Jimmy referred us to an excellent article on the relation between the gospel and social justice: <https://mereorthodoxy.com/an-evangelical-response-to-the-statement-on-social-justice-and-the-gospel>

The five FPC pastors and Emanuel Paul Peter have been and will continue meeting weekly to consider the ministry shifts and challenges, along and how best to engage/respond to the need to address racism. More conversation to follow.

- IV. Housekeeping: We decided to continue meeting on the second Wednesday of the month over the lunch hour. Our next meeting will be Wednesday, August 5, 2020, 12-12:45 pm via Zoom.
- V. Prayer: All members prayed and the meeting was adjourned.

**Ministry Partnerships and Engagement**  
**FPC Opportunities to Serve**  
**6-9-2020**

**Main Street Ministries**

Join MSM for an online interactive workshop, *Bridges Out of Poverty*, that explores how all community members can join together to prevent and reduce poverty. Participants will analyze poverty research, theories of change, hidden class rules, resources, family structure, and language. This is an eight-week Zoom series beginning June 17 from 11:30am-12:30pm. Email Kathie Hartzog at [khartzog@msmhouston.org](mailto:khartzog@msmhouston.org) if you would like to join.

**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 to be delivered to Houston's healthcare workers, 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. You can donate via the GoFundMe page or if you would like to receive a tax receipt for your giving, you may make a gift on the FPC "Feeding Houston's Heroes" page.

<https://fpchouston.org/feeding-houstons-heroes/>

**Restoring Justice**

FPC is blessed to have recently joined in partnership with Restoring Justice. Restoring Justice is dedicated to loving and fighting for the people the system has forgotten. Established on faith-based principles, Restoring Justice provides excellent legal, social, and counseling services to people accused of crimes who cannot afford to hire attorneys themselves. Our mission is to pursue Christ's justice. Our vision is that the criminal justice system acknowledges, respects and upholds Constitutional rights and dignity for every human.

For opportunities to support and serve with Restoring Justice, go to [restoringjustice.org](http://restoringjustice.org)

**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. The goal is to have 500 to 1000 congregations mobilized to create 100 to 200 masks per week, with one million masks being made in 10 weeks. FPC is joining the effort in two ways:

\* 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.

\* 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](http://www.houstonresponds.org/MasksForAll)

### **Prayer and Encouragement**

Coming alongside to encourage and pray for our partners, missionaries and friends is paramount during these difficult times. Three months into the pandemic, encouragement and prayer is needed more than ever. 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 know who is being contacted and hear updates. We are happy to provide information about ministries and their contact information as well. This is a wonderful opportunity for a small group, Sunday School or even a few friends to do together. Our Local priority partners include Attack Poverty/Friends of Northside, Nehemiah Center, Street Grace, Main Street Ministries, Open Door Mission, and Houston Welcomes Refugees. Our Global priority or focus area partners include The Micah Project/Honduras, Jossour-Bridges of Hope/Middle East, Hillcrest AIDS Centre/South Africa, Africa Renewal Ministries/Uganda, Palestinian Bible Society/Israel Palestine, Bethlehem Bible College/Middle East, Plant With Purpose/Mexico, and International Justice Mission/Worldwide. For more information, contact Mary-Floye Federer at [mffederer@fpchouston.org](mailto:mffederer@fpchouston.org).

**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](mailto: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.

### **The Forge**

#TakeUsToYourTable is a campaign Mayor, Sylvester Turner has established to help support Houston restaurants through this difficult time. However, The Forge would like to take it one step further by asking you when ordering take out from your favorite restaurant, to also purchase a gift card from them and pass it along to the FORGE! The gift cards will allow them to order curbside for their families who are experiencing financial hardship during COVID-19.

Gift cards may be mailed to The Forge campus at 3435 Dixie Drive, 77021, or dropped off any day of the week, Monday-Thursday from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Please feel free to contact Beth Lee for any questions at 713-660-1871 or at [bethwlee@forgeforfamilies.org](mailto:bethwlee@forgeforfamilies.org).

**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/>

**Plant With Purpose:** The United Nations warns the coronavirus could double the number of people suffering from acute hunger globally. FPC partners with Plant With Purpose in Oaxaca, Mexico to empower rural farming families to grow out of poverty and reverse deforestation. Farmers' resilience will be tested by the economic impacts of COVID-19. To help Plant With Purpose respond and ensure food security, visit [plantwithpurpose.org/readinessandresilience](http://plantwithpurpose.org/readinessandresilience). To learn more about our ongoing partnership with Plant With Purpose, visit [plantwithpurpose.org/coatecas](http://plantwithpurpose.org/coatecas) or email [jenny.sommer2@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.sommer2@gmail.com).

### **Discipleship Report - June 2020**

Cover to Cover is going great. We are now asking participants to write the daily devos based on their journey thus far in their reading plan.

- We are encouraging SG's to take a break over the summer (or at least be more social over zoom) - we are providing reading resources but not guides
- Jim Singleton is going to be our August SG and SS speaker (pre-recorded "Ted Talks" with small group break out questions)

- Creating a landing page on our website for Racial Reconciliation to go live (hopefully) sometime this month.

### **YA Update – June 2020**

**1. Abigail MacDougall** is the new director of young adults! Whoohooo! This is an excellent development for the department as a whole and especially for the young adult community. Abigail has served faithfully as the YA/Discipleship Coordinator this past year. She loves God and his way deeply, loves this local church community, especially these young adults. She is a gifted speaker/teacher, musician, relational discipler, and, above all, exemplifies the character of Christ. Please join me in welcoming her, as well as praying for her and supporting her in this role!

**2. Sunday morning Table community:** the young adults have continued to meet together on Sunday morning via Zoom. We are participating in the larger church's pilgrimage through scripture. It has been a formative time that has been marked by thoughtful engagement and reading endurance through difficult texts. I'm proud of the group of 15 or so YA who are on this scripture reading journey together.

**3. Wednesday Evening Prayer.** We have also continued to pray together as a community every Wednesday evening at 9pm. We've done this in participation with Andrew Hebert, the director of contemporary worship, and it has been a restorative time. When the virus broke in mid-March this was an important avenue for the community to come together and pray for God's healing of the world. Recently, we have framed the time as a time to pray and lament over the racial injustice that we've encountered in past weeks. The first week--the week George Floyd was killed-- Mike Nichols shared a bit of his experience as a black man as well as a biblical reflection on the need to pursue justice in our relationships and the social order. I wish I had recorded the time, because it was important and powerful--formative and constructive in all the right ways.

**4. Thursday Noon Study of the Lord's Prayer with N.T. Wright.** We've also continued to study the Lord's Prayer at noon on Thursdays together. We watch a video of N.T. Wright lecturing on a particular article in the Lord's Prayer, and then we discuss its significance for us as Christians in this time. These conversations have gone really, really deep, which has been wonderful to experience. The young adults participating offer honest reflection and engagement in a way that is formative for life-transformation.

**5. People care and sharing.** Finally, Abigail and I have begun a new practice in our endeavor both to care for people well in this time and also continue to cultivate community. We've been conducting "Zoom interviews" with community members to check in on how they are doing, and we record the time so that it can be shared

more broadly with the young adult community at large. These interviews have proved to be a viable pathway to allow community participants to connect in an honest and generative way in a time when we're unable to meet in person.

## **Worship, Music and Prayer**

June 14, 2020

During the Worship, Music, and Prayer Ministry Committee (WMP) meeting held on February 2, 2020, a new organizational chart for the ministry was presented which created four teams (Caring, Connections, Prayer, and Worship) under the WMP. Pastor Andrew Stepp, Cheryl Christie (Director of Connections), Lija Shah (Director of Caring), Andrew Hebert (Director of Contemporary Worship), Shepherding Elder Jan Smith, and Elders Kent Woodard and Callie Paterson will serve on the WMP. The process has begun to recruit covenant partners to populate those teams for the new fiscal year.

### **Caring Report** (Lija Shah, Director of Caring):

**Grief Support:** The 13-week GriefShare group concluded the end of April. Lija Shah, along with Susan and Tom Egolf (FPC covenant partners), led the five-member group. The plan is to host another group beginning mid-August either online or in person.

**Dementia/Alzheimer's Support:** Amazing Place is one of our caring ministry partners. They provide care to those diagnosed with dementia as well as caregiver support and educational seminars on brain health. Amazing Place and FPC hosted a caregiver support class right before the shutdown caused by COVID 19. Now efforts are focused on educating covenant partners, especially for those who may need support during this time, about the virtual offerings available.

**Memorials:** Due to COVID-19, all memorial services have been postponed. Under the newly approved guidelines, memorial services should resume this summer.

**Congregational care prayer list:** A prayer list of those in our congregation who are in need of prayer is emailed once a week to a group committed to praying. Session members who would like to receive the prayer list should email [caring@fpchouston.org](mailto:caring@fpchouston.org) and request to be added to the list.

### **Connections Report** (Cheryl Christie, Director of Connections):

In addition to shouldering major responsibility for the resumption of in-person worship services, Cheryl and her team have been active in other arenas.



During the quarantine, Cheryl served those who joined FPC online by responding to the live chats and praying virtually with individuals. During the Livestream services, an individual could request prayer, which would create a private chat room where Cheryl and the person could dialog and pray.

When the Cover to Cover opportunity was presented, a number of individuals who are not covenant partners and not residents of Texas wanted to participate. Some of the individuals were not regularly attending church; some are members of smaller churches which did not offer online services. The Connections Ministries organized these individuals into a small group to read through the Word. Cheryl emails the group weekly.

The Connections Ministry solicits prayer requests on the online platform during the worship service, distributes those requests to a team committed to praying, and follows up with emails or phone calls if requested.

First Friends: First Friends is a program that Cheryl revived last year that matches new covenant partners (CP) with involved covenant partners. The purpose of the program is to aid in the assimilation of the new CP by providing ongoing contact with someone involved in church. The First Friend is asked to meet individually with the new CP and connect regularly for six months. Significant effort is exerted to match people with a natural connection. For example, pairing a new CP couple who has twin infants with a couple with pre-school twins. Not surprisingly, these connections often turn into friendships. Seventy-five CP have been recruited to serve as First Friends.

### **Prayer Report:**

The goal of the Prayer Team this year will be to determine a way to highlight prayer to a greater degree at FPC. The process will be to first determine the current status of prayer at FPC, dream about what we would like to see happen, and then plan implementation. Interviews of over 15 covenant partners and seven others outside the church were conducted during the months before the pandemic shutdown. A summary of those interviews along with suggestions to highlight prayer at FPC will be presented at a later date.

### **Worship Report:**

In-person worship services successfully and smoothly resumed on June 14, 2020 thanks to the hard work of Manish Shah, Mark Potter, Cheryl Christie, Celeste Lanier, Kelli Lawless, all the pastors, and many others!

A comment for someone who attended the June 14 service:

The service was FABULOUS!! The acoustics were amazing for singing, the organ, and piano! I teared up during the first song— which isn't the best thing to do while wearing a mask! All those missing cushions really made a huge difference! I felt VERY safe as far as COVID is concerned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Callie Paterson  
Chair of Worship, Music and Prayer

## **Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**

**June 9, 2020 - Via Zoom and Conference Room**

The meeting began at approximately 3:00 PM.

In attendance: Jim Birchfield, Andrew Stepp, Chris Wolfe, Doug Meikle, Jenn Rustay and Tom Brent.

OPENING PRAYER was led by Jim Birchfield.

### RESIGNATION

The meeting began with a report from Jim Birchfield on the resignation from Session of Tom Reiser. A discussion followed concerning an immediate nomination of a replacement Clerk for the Class of 2023 and the replacement of an Elder in the Class of 2023. After discussion, the Advisory Council recommended that Martha Barnes be nominated as the replacement Clerk for the Class of 2023 and that the Officer Nominating Committee be charged with nominating a replacement Elder for the Class of 2023 to stand for election at the next Congregational Meeting.

### DISCUSSION TOPICS

A financial report was given by Andrew Stepp. An update on the reopening of FPC was given by Jim Birchfield. A report on forward planning was given by Andrew Stepp and Doug Meikle. Tom Brent delivered a report on the Trustees' activities. After discussion, the Advisory Council voted to schedule the next Congregational Meeting in early November of 2020.

### PASTORS' REPORT

Andrew Stepp and Jim Birchfield delivered the Pastors' Report on personnel.

### CLERK'S REPORT

Chris Wolfe delivered a report on the Fall Session Retreat.

CLOSING PRAYER was led by Chris Wolfe and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Chris Wolfe, Senior Clerk

Stacey,

I know how much you care about our families so I want to share that last week was a TOUGH week for the families because of George Floyd. The pandemic has already put a tremendous strain on our families and the tragic passing of George has been difficult on the whole Nehemiah community. George was from 3rd Ward Houston, the same neighborhood many of our kids live in. It really hit home for us and it's devastating to think what happened on that sidewalk in Minneapolis could of happened to one of my babies. To be honest, I get emotional just thinking about it. It's been tough for Nehemiah families to absorb the enormity of what's happening but they realize due to their own experiences with systemic racism that another black life has been unnecessarily lost. Over the years, I've spent so much time talking to Nehemiah kids about police brutality. Teaching them the same lessons, taught to me as a young child by my parents on how to interact with police so they make it home alive. I pray one day, we don't have to teach and train minority kids on this. The Nehemiah team is committed to helping our families get through this because our kids needs to know that we'll stand up for them to ensure the great futures they deserve. We owe our families this. Please continue praying over this. I pray we can all speak up to express ourselves and continue having the difficult conversations about racism and injustices. Together, as Christians we can accomplish what others deem impossible, equality for all!

I want to personally let you know this week has been a time of transformation and healing for the children thanks to FPC's virtual VBS. VBS has provided our children with joy and a sense of calm through praising God in song and in prayer. It has warmed my heart to see the kids smiling and being comforted with everything being taught in the videos. VBS happening this week is no mistake and is truly God's timing. He knew what WE needed and how important it would be to spiritually feed the kids. I stand witness to the healing happening in each child. I'm full of gratitude for what you and your team do to glorify His name and how effectively you share His message with mission partners like Nehemiah. We're so grateful for this partnership. I'm not sure what the future holds but I know for sure God is good and He is on the move!

PS: I love what Brené Brown says about empathy. "Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It's simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of 'You're not alone.'"

Thank you for putting together an amazing week of VBS and reminding Nehemiah children that even during the most challenging of times, they're not alone.

In Gratitude,  
Tonia

**Tonia Labbé**  
**Executive Director**

