



**MARCH SESSION MINUTES – MARCH 18, 2025 6:15PM**

**MODERATOR: TIM MCCONNELL**

**Present:** Rev. Tim McConnell (Moderator), Rev. Dave Steane, Rev. Greg Hartnett, , Randy Case (Virtual), Kappy Stewart, Lindy Keffer, Dorothy Alvarez, Mark Albers, Shelly Busby, Dave Dillard, Megan Nilsen, Susan Pattee, Kris Bauman, Elizabeth Roth, Kirk Cherry, Bryan Frame, Rev. Michael Thornton, Kathy Freyschlag, Mike Hodges, Mike Albright, Pam Moore, Bonnie Ortivez, Ken Laura, Aaron Zimmerman, Bryan Frame

**Excused:**, Rev. John Goodale, Mary Frieg, Jim Martin, Wendy Buckler

**Guests:** Scott Berry, John Moe, Bill Rhea

1. Call to Order Tim McConnell
2. Roll Call and Quorum Kathy Freyschlag
  - a. Introduced Scott Berry, Wendy Buckler (absent), John Moe, Bill Rhea, (Mary Frieg, Megan Nilsen, Susan Pattee) as the next class of elders. Scott Berry, John Moe and Bill Rhea were present as guest to the meeting with a **motion to include with voice and not vote – motion approved.**
3. Devotional Shelly Busby
  - a. 1 Peter 4: 7 - – Love and clinging to the holy spirit because when we go through hard times it is easy to get discouraged. Love is the strength to do all things. Discussed.
4. Reports
  - a. Clerks Reports & Minutes Kathy Freyschlag
    - i. **Reviewed Clerks Report and Minutes. Motion to approve reports and minutes approved.**
  - b. Treasurer's Report Randy Case
    - i. No edits to share over what was included in the session packet report. Tim McConnell advised that we need to be praying for a tough January, we budget for a dip in giving but we are still quite a bit behind.
5. Lead Pastor Report Tim McConnell
  - a. Gather 25 – Thank you to those who came out to be a part of that. This was a Global prayer movement and was an exciting affair. Appreciated the staff and the elder/volunteers for being part of it.
  - b. On March 1 we held the CosiLoveYou City Summit with a lot of people here. There were a lot of connections made at that platform to continue to do work with the city. It was heavy for the staff on Ash Wednesday but had a nice service after that. Ellen Dawson led the way, and the teamwork was really inspiring for that.



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- c. Open Forum Feedback – This was held last Tuesday evening with the college of elders and current elders. Susan Pattee reviewed what we talked about and how it came about.
  - i. This meeting came about to be the tag end of First Pres Forward although it didn't start that way. The last 10% - this felt like there was still 10% hanging out with some frustration and items. These were all people who have been elders or people who were engaged. This was really meant to be by invitation only, and it was last minute. People got to say what they needed to say, and people heard what they needed to say.
  - ii. It came about because people knew her and people didn't feel like they knew who to take it to. People are upset with session because they want to know what session responsibility is for different things. The desired outcome was hope and Susan thinks we did come out with that.
  - iii. We should make something like this part of our rhythms. But we felt strongly that it wasn't just a few people since 80 people showed up.
  - iv. Tim McConnell stated we wanted to meet with these folks who had been meeting on their own for about a year. We wanted them to meet in a place where it can be constructive and be heard. The conversation might be difficult, but this starts the conversation. This not a precedent we want to set where a group can call a meeting like this.
  - v. Kathy Freyschlag – Sat a table that did not feel heard because they did not have enough time. They might not have gotten resolution.
  - vi. Megan Nilsen – the choir stood out to her as the one that stood out for some deep hurt there. Has there been any resolution?
  - vii. Mark Albers – there was a choir member that was reeling from Jamal. Susan Pattee doesn't think that everything got fixed but it demonstrated the need for opportunities for people to know their elders and find someone to talk to.
  - viii. Kirk Cherry – The session meeting is open but none of these people have come here. Should we invite them to the next session meeting? It would be a sitting and observing. Is there a place where we can carve out space for people to ask questions or make remarks. Dorothy stated that Elizabeth stated that they have not reached out to her to set meetings with Tim or Dave within the recent past except for Ray Wallender.
  - ix. Kris Bauman – At his table the core issues was staff turnovers – 20 people leaving since 2023. They think we as session have not helped with the turnover. They are asking What, Why, and When is leadership doing things? Susan Pattee mentioned that the abruptness of people leaving without notice and without a goodbye.
  - x. Mike Albright – Different tables saw different things. He heard people say that they have not been an active elder for 10 year and now no one wants to talk to them and I don't know who to go to about this. The other theme was talking about First Pres of old. The theme seems to be how to stay connected with First Pres, with elders, with each other. How do we create the avenues to share the news, create a way to feedback?
  - xi. Lindy Keffer – has three takeaways. Strategic – a strong impression was there are some strategic people – we said that four years ago we had a problem but we have not seen more progress. We don't know



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what all the layers are but here are the first two and the progress we are making. The key is that we can say it. The best conversation after the meeting was that those who have left staff but those that have stayed around – could they help with healing toward those who left staff. The most important is spiritual leadership, what would begin to heal the lack of trust and the brokenness of the trust.

- xii. Susan is going to write a response to the group that called the meeting so think about what you would like them to hear.
- xiii. Mike Hodges because of the words he said people came up to him with some thoughts. It would be unwise to think that everything was solved, but also unwise to think that everything was heard and said. One person said the elephant in the room still has not been pointed out but did not say what it was. I think that it is important that is not a one and done deal, but this is a tough precedent to set but how can we continue to get at the core issues. The presentations given were so vague and required us to dig deep into the lines. What do session members do with the information we are given? Where is this forum to engage these conversations.
- xiv. Kappy Stewart – there were some things were said clearly but we just keep talking about it but what if we come up with an action plan and we said that to the congregation.
- xv. Tim McConnell Motioned to stop the Zoom recording, multiple people second the motion. Motion approved. Recording stopped.
- xvi. Kris Bauman motion to stop the Otter recording as there was not consent to record. Mike Albright seconded the motion. Motion approved. Recording stopped
- xvii. Susan said that we need to look at using ECO resources that will help with issues like what is our role, governance and important conversations. This is a serious group that wants to roll up our sleeves, but what are we doing in here to do the work.
- xviii. Dorothy Alvarez – the session did hard work 13 years ago to leave one denomination. We spent a year praying. We met on Tuesday nights and as small groups, but we didn't just sit there, and when we voted we were unanimous, and not one was pushed there. We can do that, and the more session does it and not staff we do better.
- xix. Kris Bauman – Let's make quarterly "how are we doing?" meetings to let them see and speak into that. This would be open to the congregation but making sure that group is invited to check in with a personal invite. Give the congregation a handle to grab on to, which is what FPF is doing, ministry teams etc.
- xx. Mike Albright – give open invitation to that group to be an at large member in one of the ministry team.
- xxi. Ken Laura – can we send the college of elders a copy of the minutes to help them feel more connected?
- xxii. Greg Hartnett thoughts on the meeting – The question of why I am here tonight was answered with... I love my church, and I was asked to be here, I want to pray for my church and be here. There were multiple bodies represented. I want to see my church thrive was a constant theme. One the constant questions, serving as a staff member, associate pastor etc. – what the specific roles of the teams are, staff



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members etc. We are continuing to live into this new format so there is still challenges to try to work together and figure it out. He was expected to walk into a small group of people that were grabbing session by the throat to say that you are doing terrible, and we can do better. There is traction to be had and started with all the FPF stuff going on.

- xxiii. Pam Moore – it feels like a small, disgruntled minority of people that are having issues. The concern is that there are lots of people who feel good about the church but might not know a lot of the ins and outs, but with FPF did we hear a lot of frustration about a church. The other question is are they aware of the time and energy of the team – a lot is happening- but are they not seeing it. The podcast that Tim shared stated it took 6 years to fix it, and it will take us a long time.
- xxiv. Kris Bauman -the key is we need to start communicating out what we have done. And get that out to the congregation. Bring it in the sermons so people can see overtime how it is moving. Connect it into our worship as that is where most people are.
- xxv. Kathy Freyshlag – what are the next steps? Kirk Cherry – is there anything that session or smaller subgroup that need to address the concern about staff turnover. What should we be doing different then we are doing now? Are there ways where an incremental approach that we can take or are there things we can do differently in communicating when people leave? Mike Hodges – You bring up a good point, What policies have been made or enacted in regards to staff turnover and what communication in that regards?
- xxvi. Dave Steane – recently Dave drafted a document that put each person in a category – voluntary, involuntary, and termination for cause. That has been given to HR for review. Kris Bauman – We are looking at what the deal is – are we bad at hiring; are we bad a managing or what is going on? We need to get to the place where we are losing two people every 5 years not 20 people in two years. We need to use Giselle more than what we are using her for. Mike Albright – every ministry team has a cascading objective and then each team member has a job with the objectives, and they can say how they are contributing to the mission, vision and strategy within in Frist Pres. How do we discuss it and begin to cascade it to the congregation?
- xxvii. Aaron Zimmerman – Do staff know who is on the HR Committee? Your own staff doesn't know who is on it. We hire people with no coaching, no mentoring and then they are hauled in front of the HR committee. Kris Bauman stated that no one has ever been in front of the HR committee. Kappy Stewart said that people at her table stated when they were on staff, they had mentors, and we need to make sure that is still happening.
- xxviii. Mike Hodges – None of this is new. We assume that people own or know they own these things but is there a policy that someone owns. We are talking about creating policies for pip, for mentorship. Where does this fall? HR Committee? Dave Steane? Kirk Cherry – is it the business of session vs. an individual committee as it is a larger issue? Mike Albright – We have to unravel what is not happening in onboarding and use staff to figure out what they are not getting trained on when they



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come in. Then that goes hand in hand with what we are training to, what we are hiring.

- xxix. Lindy Keffer – Is there a quick solution to say to the employees that this is who you go to when you have a concern about your employment. Per Dave Steane it is in the employee handbook – if you have an issue with another employee you go to your supervisor, if it is with your supervisor you would go to executive pastor or HR director.
- xxx. Dorothy Alvarez – We are all on ministry teams with staff members so who are the staff members that don't know elders. Dave Dillard – with larger groups it is harder to connect with some of that staff. Mike Hodges – there is only so much we can do with loving on and caring for them without address systemic problems. We do need to be in deep meaningful relationship with our staff, but it is important to acknowledge that we need to have structural conversations and address the systemic things are staff are dealing with.
- xxxi. Tim McConnell – Susan Pattee has heard (and notes taken) so she can go back to the group that was gathered on Tuesday. We need to make decisions, document and then take action to do them.
- xxxii. Mike Albright asked us to pray.

## 6. Transitional Pastor Report

Dave Steane

- a. The performance reviews are complete, raises have been given and people are happy. Got a lot of feedback from staff that the process was good.
- b. Tim, Michael and Dave met yesterday followed up with a meeting by discipleship elders and I&E elders. The ask was what do we do with I&E moving forward? So, we are going to take components of the I&E will be split among different ministry teams with most of the evangelical parts staying in discipleship and then sent out from there. In April we will have a motion to move to 9 teams, to get people on the right ministry teams.
- c. Dave shared some heart-felt thoughts on the earlier discussion about HR issues and noted that he is directly and intimately involved with all staff departures, HR policies and practices, and issues regarding the staff. His observation was that some of the earlier discussion was not entirely accurate and was based on perception and second-hand information. Dave offered that if anyone wants to discuss HR matters, they should come directly to him, and he will try to answer as candidly as he can.

## 7. Farewell to Graduating Elders

- a. Mike Albright – we are body responding to God's called and we are uniquely gifted to work together to do God's plans. God brings him to the table to get his cup filled in service to other. We are to abandon ourselves for Jesus so we can love and serve people by his Holy Spirit. We are not alone in the leadership journey, be joyful and love each other dearly. When we step out in faith, we may experience a spiritual battle. God will overcome anything that attempt to drive a wedge between us and his love. We pray for thanksgiving for all he is doing in our elder service. Be strong and courageous in what we do.
- b. Kathy Freyschlag – Looking back on the last six years it has been quite a season not only globally, for our church and for our family. Romans 5. We must keep going as a church, we have had suffering, we have guidance, we



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have a lot of things that can be done but I believe in our persevering and the staff persevering in our church and we will have hope. Make sure you can take off your sweater in this room as it gets hot. Ask questions of your elders, ask the questions in the meeting that is in your head. Don't wait to ask your questions, you are here for a reason. The beauty, wonder and expertise around you is amazing. Be hopeful, be curious, be grateful, be humble, be willing and be ready. It has been an honor to serve.

- c. Jim Martin - Seek Jesus... Walk humbly with God... Follow the Spirit moving in your life... trust one another and GO!
- d. Aaron Zimmerman – Will miss the HVAC issues and the chairs in this room. The HR policies have done a number on his small group. For the new folks thank you for coming into service, you need to speak clearly and loudly in hard conversation. The Greek word for good is Tov – what would it look like us to create this culture at Frist Pres. Wouldn't it be Tov if the elders saw it as an extension of worship with communion, replace the reliance on meeting with a spirit led passion, culture with a congregation where when people are not there they were missed, shepherding people with grace, staff would be allowed to creative and innovate, if we made hard decision quickly and then adapt if outcome didn't turn out, what if we created a church of goodness based on Tov, what are we scared of?

## 8. Old Business

- a. First Pres Forward Progress – we are going forward. Tim just cut a video that will go out Thursday which says we know the 5 initiatives and have been accepted by all ministry teams with tears in some case. It has been a lot of work. We as a session are looking at the 23 sub initiatives but they have not all been adopted by teams, so we are continuing to look at those which is why it has not been published yet. Keep moving forward between now and the June meeting, where we can disband that team, and we take fully over as a session.
- b. At the Tuesday meeting, it was mentioned that some of the stuff in the glossy first edition that the EPNC did not know. What are we doing to keep that group informed? Pam Moore mentioned that it is important that they are kept in the loop, but we are waiting on Agora representative to be available to move forward in a lot of things.

## 9. Close in Prayer at 9 pm.

Tim McConnell