

GPC Governing Board
Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2021

Via hybrid live & Zoom conference call: Rev. Dr. Douglas Cederberg, Dennis Christo, Kim Paré, David Raphael, Charles Whittall, Robert Converse, Nancy White
MIT guests: Anne Kruse, Karen Allen, Janet Whittall

This Zoom conference meeting commenced at 6:34 p.m.

Pastor Doug offered a prayer for this day and the faithfulness of these participants and our congregation.

VOTE: The GB meeting minutes from 7/27/21 had been previously distributed and reviewed. Bob moved to accept the minutes with two minor semantic corrections. Charlie seconded. Unanimously approved. No opposition and no abstentions.

There's been positive feedback for the combined service. There's been nice fellowship prior to and following the service. There were four new people in the chapel on Sunday. Karen asked if there was outreach to the congregation if their needs were being met about retaining one service at Homecoming. She suggested adding a note to the e-blast about recruiting their feedback at the 8/22 service with an end date for their feedback by 8/29. Anne suggested soliciting feedback via email, phone call, etc. People may respond about having weekly communion. Doug thinks it needs to be spelled out that it will remain at 9:30, alternating in the chapel and the sanctuary, with weekly communion. Janet said if we're alternating between the chapel and the sanctuary then we can't offer a space to either CANA or the new interested church. Their group is bigger than ours and would need the sanctuary. Anne said she thought CANA wanted to return but wanted to be able to start earlier. Their musicians don't want to come back here because they don't want to have to set up and break down. They've lost some families due to COVID. Dennis said GPC's congregational needs come first before what CANA or the other GPC is requesting.

The Virtual Service is going along well. Dennis said we need to expand the Communications Team so it doesn't fall on Carolina's shoulders. The challenge is to have more than 3-4 people. We've asked for volunteers. Nancy asked if this is beyond Carolina's regular hours. Dennis said it's above her routine duties and her expectations of her job. Kim said it's twofold – recording the service for live FaceBook feed and manning the laptop for the projection of the service on the screens.

Annie's vacation was covered by Jay Chandler. Bob said Loyall Allen recruited Jay for suggesting Jay. She has another vacation coming up.

Dennis shared the note he published regarding the most recent MA guidance regarding wearing face masks.

“In light of the information from the CDC and Mass. DPH, the governor has issued some revised mask guidance to maximize protection of vulnerable individuals from the COVID-D variant. The DPH now advises that fully vaccinated people should wear a mask, or face covering, when indoors if you have a weakened immune system, or if you are at risk for severe disease or have some

underlying medical condition, or if someone in your household has a weakened immune system, or is at increased risk of severe disease, or is unvaccinated, or if someone you live with someone who is vulnerable to COVID – someone with a significant medical condition, then be careful and wear a mask if you believe it is the right thing to do for unvaccinated adults, or for any vaccinated person who has an unvaccinated adult in their household. Thus, **our bottom line is this:** Wear a mask if you feel comfortable doing so, whether vaccinated or not, or have immunity from having COVID, to protect yourself or loved one. You are not required to wear a mask, but you may wear a mask if you wish to do so. Your choice is right for you and us.”

Dennis thanked Anne, Karen, and Janet for representing the Mission Implementation Team. He shared the culmination of the 17 pages returned to the Governing Board. Anne said Karen spent considerable time compiling all the thoughts of all the MIT members because the 3 Talking Points from each member was varied. Karen added that the MIT was thwarted by the GB determining the continued closure of GPC to external groups. Dennis said he appreciates that this wasn't an easy process since everyone has their own thoughts and doesn't all agree. Tonight's meeting was to formalize that feedback. What does our mission mean? The church has been going through soul searching for a lengthy period of time. The congregation wants to stay the same but we have limited resources. Team TLC worked for 2 3/4s years to synthesize the mission, vision, values. How do we implement that mission, vision, values when there's no volunteers to maintain the programming? How do we move forward as a congregation given where we are? How do we define the future?

Anne said Team TLC was gathered to answer some pretty big questions. They were trying to unify the church. Team TLC made a point of including everyone who could be included. There's no action in "...feeding the heart, mind, and spirit of the community." The feelgood feeling was wonderful in building consensus among the congregation. Dennis said before we can serve the outside community, we need to serve the inside community. Karen said we need to slowly open the doors to invite groups back for bible study and existing programs for the good of everybody. Karen said the GB served the instructions then took away viable input because their hands were tied. Anne said, "How is Christ calling us today?" The people in the building are not the mission. The community is outside the building. If the question to the MIT committee was to answer how to improve the mission. We all want to grow. We could be doing more. Just going out to find worthy causes is not what the MIT was going to come up with. An aging congregation is not going to add volunteers. Maybe we don't do anything more? Karen added there are activities that people have done in the past that maybe they want to volunteer for again. Janet suggested having a church wide meeting to ask the congregation what they want to do so it's not just the GB or MIT deciding. If they want to do more, then they have to volunteer. We have an aging congregation. We need to ask them, what else can we be doing, and will you be helping to do it. Doug said we need a list of objectives and presented. Leaving it wide open is what's been done for a long time. Dennis said we want a course and a direction. Anne said people want to have input and they would have said something by now.

The Way Forward, (August 8, 2021, R4) - A Summary of the MIT Input Summary and GB Conclusions was reviewed and edited for publication to the congregation in the immediate future.

1. Continue Religious Education:

a. Our Basis for the future is being a church delivering God's Word serving existing congregation and collaborating with "elder" population. Invite community to our Sunday service, our bible studies (Women at the Well, etc.), continue virtual services.

b. Stay Christ Centered! Continue with best possible Christian worship services for our attendees and virtual congregants.

c. Continue the Sunday service at 9:30 year-round. Holding 2 church services doesn't seem wise or productive. Continue with one service at 9:30 on Sundays, perhaps with communion every Sunday, alternating between Chapel and Sanctuary, except for religious holidays in the Sanctuary. We need to maintain the comfort of the members who continue to participate in our unified service.

2. GPC Building Status.

a. Open our building for community meeting/support when reasonable, prudent, and supportable.

b. Consider to open church to outside users who request return. Evaluate each request within the context of safety for all, for a fair market rental price.

c. Continue our Hunger Action activities, such as, Mustard Seed, Worcester Fellowship, QCC student dinners, and Food Pantry, if we have the volunteers and funds to support.

d. Be aware we may not have enough volunteers to resume all activities given our dwindling congregation, evidenced in the past 5-7 years, and comprised of aging members with limitations.

3. Communications Efforts.

a. Continue sending out the Newsletter via email and making the Newsletter and other important information available to those members without email who request the hardcopy.

b. Continue our Social Media Outreach with our Virtual Church Service.

c. Continue the Social Media (SM) Focus Group Team led by Russ Vickstrom to work with Carolina Mata to support church and our groups on various SM platforms, such as, Facebook.

d. The Next Generation Y & Z will come to church when they are individually inspired. We will welcome them when they do.

4. Finances and Facilities:

a. The lack of attendees/census, high maintenance costs, and reduced giving levels have led to lack of revenue and draw down of investment funds.

b. There needs to be a clear assessment by the Finance Team of how long the current finite amount in the investment fund will last given the continued draw down of the account.

c. The evaluation and cost effectiveness of the church building and properties requires congregational input.

Doug said according to our bylaws, legally we say our purpose is to provide religious services. The mission statement is nice and gives a brand but the purpose of the congregation is to provide God's word and religious education. Nancy said if we're talking about serving the community, we need to talk about how we allow other groups to use the building. Anne said if we're thinking about our future, the more we say about the past, the less people are looking forward.

This joint statement of the Way Forward will be presented for congregational consensus regarding the Sunday services, the Finance Team's assessment of fiscal resources, review the Property Management Task Force (PMTF) determinations regarding all assets, continue existing programming as long as economically feasible and staffed, and be who we are while supporting the community as best we can.

Green Pasture's Church requested using GPC for worship service space for their 200+ congregation. Doug set up an appointment with the pastor and she didn't show. We have no answer for them as we have not determined the future of our own service.

Bob made a motion to adjourn. Kim seconded. Unanimous agreement. The meeting ended at 8:31 p.m.

The next regular Governing Board meeting is a hybrid in-person & Zoom meeting scheduled for Tuesday, August 24, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Paré, Clerk