

Stated Session Meeting

North Decatur Presbyterian Church

April 27, 2019

The Session of NDPC met for a stated meeting/retreat on **Saturday, April 27, 2019, at approximately 9:00 a.m.** in the Church Parlor.

Elders present: Charles Bonner, Wendy Cromwell, Jarvis Ellis, Nancy Gathany, Audra Grace, Ellen Herbert, Jill Jacques, Janet Jasper, Mike Johnson, Carol Morgan, Deedee Murphy, Gabriel Ramirez, Marion Reeves, David Root, Macon Sandifer, Thom Schreck, Carol Tveit, David Wilkes, Holly Williams

Elders excused: Jill Jacques, Ike Veal

Elders absent: None

Pastors and Staff present: Co-Pastors David Lewicki & Beth Waltemath

Guests: None

The meeting was called to order in the Parlor by Rev. David Lewicki; a quorum was declared present by the Clerk and the agenda adopted as submitted.

Devotional: Rev. Waltemath led the Session in an opening devotional and prayer focused on John 15: 1-8, *God prunes so all may flourish. To flourish we must Abide in God.* She further discussed the theme of Abiding in Christ along the following lines:

Personal Growth

Abide in Christ: Do you have a way of centering spiritually? Does your service connect you to Christ?

Body: Are you showing up and being present?

Initiative: Do you have the energy for the work and relationships?

Dedication/Duty: What is your commitment? Sustained energy or obedience?

End: Do you have a vision or purpose for your service and spiritual growth?

Ministry Areas

Abide in Christ: Focus on spiritual growth, connect to Christ in the world. Are we faithful to being the body of Christ?

Body: Are people showing up?

Initiative: Are people energized and bringing fresh ideas?

Dedication/Duty: Are people invested? Do you have the \$ needed to grow or the donors, fundraiser planners to help?

End: Do you have a vision that is clear to those you serve? Do you have an end goal that is easy to state? Do people know it?

Approval of March Session Minutes: Minutes from the prior March Session meeting were approved unanimously, with no changes.

A Global View of “Where we are”: Rev. Lewicki summarized the plan for the day then began by leading a discussion of data, demographics, and metrics associated with the neighborhood around the church as well as related information regarding NDPC statistics. Comparing the church versus the community identified a lack of racial diversity, steady but not growing membership and attendance relative to a growing community, etc. Questions were raised based on this review, for example: should NDPC be intentional about race/ethnic diversity? intentional about getting younger? among numerous other discussion topics.

A revisit of the 4 Pillars of our Strategic Plan: Session reviewed a presentation prepared and summarized by Rev. Waltemath, who walked through each of the 4 pillars of the strategic plan and actions taken to date under each area. As a reminder, the plan is focused on the following 4 pillars:

1. Enriching Ministry Opportunities for the People of NDPC
2. Elevating Fellowship Among the People of NDPC
3. Engaging the People who Share our Neighborhood
4. Providing Affordable Housing in our Community

The discussion was wide ranging with comments and feedback on the various activities and progress to date as well as areas that need further attention.

Meetings in Councils: After a short break, the Session divided up into Councils to discuss areas to exit and prune, share goals and opportunities for collaboration, calendar coordination opportunities, and finances. The following is a summary of the Council discussions.

Administration: The Administration Council met with Mike Johnson (Clerk of Session), facilitating the discussion along with Wendy Cromwell (Personnel), Jarvis Ellis (Property), Gabriel Ramirez (Finance), and David Root (Administration). The meeting began with a go around discussion of goals, priorities and challenges in each area. Despite what on its surface appears to be a collection of discrete areas and support activities, the council was pleasantly surprised that there are significant connection points and areas of mutual interest that impact property, finance, personnel and general administrative support. Examples include insurance, tenant leases, contract employee matters, and building capacity for the future. The Council

concluded that more frequent conversations and better coordination across these various activities is an important new initiative.

Community Life: The Community Life Council met with Rev. Waltemath serving as facilitator and Charles Bonner, Audra Grace, Thom Schreck, Carol Tveit, and Holly Williams participating.

Congregational Care: Identified an energy in deepening connections between people. Audra would like to connect with the group on discipleship plan incorporating how care for each other is integral to discipleship. Needs support from Engagement and discipleship plan to complete. Area with low energy is cohesiveness of various teams. How do we get individuals who sign up for work through sign-up genius to feel part of a care ministry?

Community Fellowship:

Fellowship Hour: People not signing up to host though sign-up genius is online every week.

Events: Low energy and slowness on planning events. Currently this effects the Retreat planners but also the case with Pride and Hunger Walk.

Communications: Energy drags through the management of existing internal needs. Energy grows around growing our platform such as the podcast and listening to Macon's idea of a person to person, teen to teen pipeline. Can offer support by engaging other's ideas more and help prioritizing communications solutions.

Engagement: High energy in outreach groups using space, slideshow featuring our ministries, and greeters. Needs support cultivating new leaders.

Mission: The Mission Council met with Nancy Gathany (Community Ministry), Deedee Murphy (Global Mission), and Carol Tveit (Peace and Justice) in attendance. Carol Morgan (Planning and Leader Support) facilitated the discussion. The Mission Council evaluated programs that currently have active, energetic participation by members; programs that currently have little or no active participation but are worthy of our support in other ways, including financial support; programs that may no longer need or require our support; and programs where ministry areas may have overlapping interests. Based on this discussion, the group considered the following:

- 1) Most of the Community Ministry programs have active participation with systems in place that allow them to continue on a sustainable basis. A few of the programs do not currently have active participation but are supported through publicity or on an as needed basis.
- 2) Global Mission currently has a couple of programs with active participation, other programs that do not currently have active participation but receive financial support, and one program that needs to be evaluated for future support.
- 3) Peace and Justice is currently actively focusing on four (out of nine) areas of interest.
- 4) An area of overlap is immigration and refugees; both Community Ministry and Peace and Justice support programs in this area (e.g., El Refugio and Memorial Drive/Shalom/Inspire).

Worship and Education: The Worship and Education Council met with Elders David Wilkes, Marion Reeves, Macon Sandifer, and Janet Jasper and Rev. David Lewicki were present.
Children's Education

- a "stuck" place is figuring out how to prepare for Sundays; who can help with preparation of lessons and supplies midweek to avoid leaving it all to Saturday or Sunday mornings?
- a "stuck" place is youth planning--trying to get a schedule in advance that aligns with what actually happens
- "energy" is coming from parents who are finding each other and wanting to create a Sunday-morning space for relationships
- "energy" is going toward re-imagining our high school program to combine fellowship and learning on Sunday nights (moving away from Sunday mornings) create a Sunday-morning space for relationships
- "energy" is going toward re-imagining our high school program to combine fellowship and learning on Sunday nights (moving away from Sunday mornings)
- "support" is coming from a new staff person who we hope will be hired this summer

Adult Education

- A "stuck" place is addressing declining Sunday morning attendance; there is a loyal core who regularly attend, but this core has been shrinking in recent years in spite of high-quality course offerings
- "energy" is going toward creating adult education spaces where caring and sharing takes place, not just learning; classes are design to function with the emotional quality of small groups
- "support" is coming from a grant NDPC received to strengthen the relationship between education and worship in our congregation; Ellen Gadberry is leading this initiative, which begins the fall of 2019

Worship

- a "stuck" place is addressing flat worship attendance; why has it stopped growing after several years of regular growth?
- a "stuck" place is committee leadership--it's mostly older white women... can that change?
- "energy" is coming from the liturgical arts team and its contributions to worship
- "energy" is coming from a new music committee that is committed to increasing the profile of diverse and excellent music in the life of our congregation
- "Support" is coming from the music committee's plan to visit other thriving churches to see what they are doing in worship

Following the Council meetings, Session reconvened as a group to share their collective thoughts and ideas related to pruning and growing, and focused energy and effort. Ideas included embracing person to person connections such as new member sponsorship and follow up and invitational leadership; having representatives for neighborhood list services; small group sharing and community building through Adult Ed; and a high school focus on evening experiences.

Additional goals and ideas coming out of this discussion included the following:

- A Big Community Event - Beg our, Sustainability
- Progressive Theology
 - Queering the Faith
 - Non-Dual
 - Lecture Series - Guests
- Mental Health - Healing Church, Church School
- Race and Income Diversity vs Educated Culture
- Get Younger without Neglecting Elders
- Zero Carbon Footprint

Lunch and Examination of the 2019 Confirmands

At the conclusion of the retreat portion of the meeting, Session moved to Fellowship Hall for lunch with the 2019 Confirmand class and their parents. This included an examination, congratulations and welcome of the following confirmands.

- Parker Condon
- Sam Fisher
- Frederick Kane
- Ben Markham
- Freeman Mosley
- Carmen Ramirez

Upcoming Meetings:

The next Stated Session Meeting will be held on **Sunday, May 19, 2019, at 12:30 p.m. in the Parlor.**

After a closing prayer led by moderator Rev. Beth Waltemath, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Johnson, Clerk of Session