

## March 2021 Session in Review

Session of Grace Commons Church, Boulder, Colorado met March 9, 2021 with Daniel Susenbach as moderator.

This was the first Session meeting since the resignation of Pastor Erik Hanson had been announced. Elders reflected on the words and music of the song *Nothing to Fear* and participated in a liturgical prayer.

Daniel welcomed several visitors and reminded them of the expectations of being an observer.

Session approved the minutes and ministry reports of Session from 7 meetings held in February and early March, Deacons, Trustees, Grace Commons Foundation, Kids and Missions. Session received the February Covenant Partnership report which indicates 1104 covenant partners.

There will be a final meeting of the Spring 2021 Covenant Partner class on March 14. Greg Parr, Mike Scott, Jim Remnant and Jenny Fox will meet with the Covenant Partner class members on Sunday to hear their faith stories.

### Session Discussions:

The Governance Chair and the Clerk of Session positions are currently open on Session due to the retirement of Sam Oltmans and the move of Chuck Stees and his wife to California. As the moderator of the TED team, Deb DuPont and Braden Mark interviewed candidates for these positions and recommended Debi Tucker as the new Clerk and Dean Stull as the next Governance Chair. Deb also recommended Craig Rahenkamp for a role in leadership training as Craig has participated in ECO's leadership training programs and can be a great resource to the TED team. Thank you to Braden and Deb for their work in interviewing and presenting these candidates.

Kha Le announced his resignation from Session in February and the March meeting is his last meeting. In addition to his time on Session, Kha's time on the Personnel Committee and the COVID Regathering Team were much appreciated. Session prayed for Kha and thanked him for his service.

Alan Williams provided a report from Trustees. The church's audit is complete and accepted with no findings. Grace Commons has received a large estate bequeath from out of state. Trustees has made a revision to the housing assistance loan policy adding an equity share provision to make the program more sustainable. Trustees are also updating our investment policy considering our new Foundation. They are investigating how funds are invested including 2-3 yr fund investments with the plan to invest more short-term funds.

Alan included significant detail on the Preschool construction and opening costs. The current cost estimate exceeds the original budget by almost 50%. The cost of modifications to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to accommodate mid-day children's programming for Grace Commons, perimeter fencing, and new playground equipment are the primary causes for the change in budget scope. The fencing and playground equipment do not meet current licensing requirements for ages of children in the preschool program. Alan reviewed the income projections based on the new construction and FFE costs and expects the project to break even in year 4. Despite COVID,

demand for preschool remains high. Doug Scheetz and Doug Smith are meeting to determine additional oversight and controls for the main campus and Annex projects. Alan recommended that BVP should become a subcommittee of Trustees as the project proceeds.

**Congregational Meeting:** Daniel Susenbach

Session discussed the options for both a Congregational Meeting and Q & A sessions to help answer as many questions as they can. Q & A sessions with elders similar to the BVP town hall gatherings should take place prior to the Congregational Meeting.

Session also reviewed the requirement to vote to accept a resignation. A pastor has the right to resign. The vote of the congregation does not change that. Session does not vote to accept a resignation but “receives the resignation”. Once Erik signed the agreement, he severed his contract with the church. However, the church legal system requires a vote.

Session voted to hold the Congregation Meeting on April 11 to accept the resignation of Rev Erik Hanson. In addition, Session decided to hold a Town Hall meeting Sun, Mar 21 at 11am via zoom. A 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting will follow at a yet to be determined day and time.

**The Pastoral Task Force team** of Jenny Fox, Greg Parr and Deb DuPont gave a brief report on their progress. The met with Nate Dreesman, Nate is the Executive Director of Ecclesiastical Support in ECO. Nate focused Session on 3 principles:

- Love the congregation well
- Communicate well
- Take good care of the department heads and pastors

Nate also communicated the value and importance of interim pastoral presence to lead the congregation as they process their pain, frustration, grief and to set us up for the next steps. Process: is to create a search team of 5 elders, create a job description, with the hope to have a candidate in place in 30-60 days for 12-month renewable term. The team can look beyond ECO for an interim.

In addition, there is a need to find short term guest preachers. Dana Allin, ECO Synod Executive will be coming and Mike Clark are 2 near term possibilities. The team also provided some grief tools and plans which is included in the Session packet which will be considered and implemented. Finally the team will work to encourage ways to celebrate Erik’s good work.

The Transitional Pastor search committee is made up of elders but can include reserve elders. Session will have oversight of the process. Session vote to form a team of 5 elders, current or reserve elders to find a transition pastor. The team will consist of Deb DuPont, Jenny Fox, Greg Parr, and Jonathon Anderson. Greg will ask Warner Andrews (currently serving Trustee and a reserve elder).

The remainder of the Session meeting was held in executive session to discuss the communications parameters surrounding Erik’s resignation.

Following Executive Session, Kha closed the meeting in prayer.