

April 2023 Session in Review

Session of Grace Commons Church, Boulder, Colorado, met April 20, 2023. Rev Randy Bare was the moderator.

Rich Bledsoe led communion for the elders after sharing some thoughts about communion and its connection to the Tree of Life which is seen in the bread broken and the Tree of Good and Evil represented by the juice. He described communion as a spirit-filled sacrament.

Session approved the minutes and ministry reports from Session, Deacons, Trustees, Governance, Racial Justice Ministry, MESH, Finance, and the Pastor Support Team. In addition, Session received the March Covenant Partnership report which records 831 covenant partners. As part of the consent agenda, Debbie Carosella and Kathy Baker were elected as delegates to the Presbytery of the West meeting.

Boulder Vision Project update:

Randy shared the plan to provide additional opportunities for the congregation to ask questions and discuss the 1603 Walnut Project. On Apr 30, Lindsay Waymire and Warner Andrews will host round table discussions. Elders are to serve as table hosts. Dean Stull, Jenny Fox, Jonathon Anderson, Randy Bare, and Steve Rice volunteered to be hosts.

The Trustees will bring a motion to Session to set a congregational meeting date. To continue to be in step with the Trustees regarding 1603 Walnut, Session approved the following motion.

To support the following process laid out by the Trustees which will be put to the congregation for approval as required to move the Project forward.

- 1. Approval to continue all action items associated with the Project (as defined in the BVP report dated 4-15-23.)*
- 2. Approval to incur the debt that will be required to support the financing of the Project.*
- 3. Approval to start the demolition of the current 1603 Walnut (Annex) building to prevent Project delays or additional costs due to a delay in demolition work.*
- 4. Approval to start construction of the Project upon completion of the proposed financing.*

Trustees are working through an issue with the city regarding the church name change on our property deed.

Budget Update:

Session discussed aspects of the proposed budget, presented at \$2.97mil. Kathy Baker shared that at this time, we have received 55% of the pledges needed for the budget. The stewardship team is meeting to talk about the different ways stewardship can be part of a year round conversation instead of a seasonal push.

T.E.D. Update:

The T.E.D. team has started to interview potential officers. They have 16+ candidates to interview. Shirley Berg and Kathy added that the process of interviewing and working with candidates has been encouraging.

Facility Update:

Larry Drees brought to Session an update on a proposal to modify the church's hours of operation. A review of our current staffing and facility usage led to the conclusion that we do not have the team to sustain a 7-day a week operating schedule. The building and the facilities team need a Sabbath. The primary members of our facilities team have been impacted by the stress of overtime hours. The proposal

is to close on Fridays and Saturdays to ministry programs. Most of our current events on Fri/Sat are outside events that pay a fee to use our space which funds a contractor to support the event.

Session had mixed reactions to the proposal as they see the need for a plan that is sustainable with our current staffing in addition to the desire to see the church open as much as possible. The elders continue to consider how to engage the congregation in providing the volunteer teams needed to offset the changes required with fewer paid staff.

This proposal was for information only and did not need a vote of Session.

Communion update:

As the COVID emergency order is being lifted, it is time to consider discontinuing the use of prepackaged communion elements. Maundy Thursday was the first service to share “post-pandemic” communion, which included using juice and matzah around meal tables.

Randy is proposing that we serve communion at 7-8 round tables around the sanctuary—serving bread and juice separately. A team of pastors or elders could bring communion to the walking disabled. Elders and Deacons can host the tables. Randy anticipates that serving communion in this way will take 10-15 minutes. Session will vote on the changes to communion at the May meeting with the intent to begin a new communion process on the first Sunday in June.

Deacons Closet/Mercy Ministry Update:

After much reading and review of the previously presented materials, MESH is proposing 3 possible motions for consideration.

Motion 1: *Session endorses the “Deacons’ Closet ‘Go Forward’ Plan” dated March 2, 2023 as included in the March 2023 Session packet; directs staff and ministry leadership to secure interim accommodations for the Deacons’ Closet ministry prior to the closure of the “Annex” facility; and directs staff and ministry leadership to develop a long-term plan for the continuance or succession of the Deacons’ Closet ministry in partnership with other churches and the City of Boulder.*

Motion 2 (supplementary): *Session directs staff and ministry leadership empower the people of Grace Commons Church to become Gospel Neighbors to Boulder and spread the message of Jesus by developing a holistic plan for “Good Samaritan” mercy and justice ministries at Grace Commons Church, including (but not limited to) the activities currently implemented by Deacons’ Closet, Lamb’s Lunch, Prison Ministry, and Kids Hope; to coordinate with such ministries and services at other churches; to coordinate with such services available and in development at the City of Boulder; and to nominate a leader for this holistic ministry effort.*

Motion 3 (alternate): *Session moves that the Deacons’ Closet ministry continue to be hosted and implemented on Grace Commons Church property throughout and after reconstruction at the site of the “Annex” facility, and directs staff and ministry leadership to ensure continuity of the ministry on-site.*

Session discussed these 3 motions and heard updates on recent activity in our Mercy Ministry.

1. The City of Boulder leased a building for its proposed Day Center and secured a manager for the Day Center.
2. Trinity Lutheran has agreed to host the Deacons’ Closet until it can be moved near the Day Center.
3. Session wants to consider expanding mercy ministries beyond the homeless.

MESH will continue to revise the motions and bring a new version to Session at their May meeting.

Pastor Support Team:

Session passed a motion to create a permanent committee of Session, the Pastor Support Committee. The establishment of the committee is guided by the charter approved at that same meeting and is put in place to provide support for our Pastor/Head of Staff and healthy communication between our pastors and Session.

Marshal Fire Update:

Jonathon Anderson and Debbi Tucker reported that there is approximately \$66K remaining from donations given in response to the Marshall Fire. The Marshall Fire Response team members have been contacting those the church previously supported to find out what needs are remaining. They are developing a draft as to how to disperse the remaining funds. The desire of the team is to distribute money now as there are other agencies who have funds should more needs arise.

Randy adjourned the meeting at 9:30pm with the singing of the Doxology.