

Minutes of the Jeremiah 29:11 Task Force of Christ United Methodist Church August 2, 2022

Present:

Bill Stoltz, chair	Bob Ayers, vice chair	Barbara Burnham
Sunday Coffman	Ken Crouch	Sue Fredrickson
Sarah Jowell	Gail McClendon	Liz Williams
Tom Young		

Absent: Joey Moreland

Ex officio members present:

Jim Rose, Lay Leader Jeff Thomas, Church Council chair
Chappell Temple, lead pastor

Agenda item 1: Chair Bill Stoltz opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m. with a prayer.

Agenda Item 2 G moved up: Congregational email/postal letter and Website (see addendum)

These were moved up because approval was needed before 5 p.m. in order to send this evening. Congregational letter #1, introduces the Jeremiah 29 Task Force, its purpose and activities, and will be sent simultaneous with the launch of the J29 website.

Sue Fredrickson reviewed the letter and the webpage draft. New from the previously approved layout are the additions of subheads to break up the copy; when users click on a link, it should open in a new window.

Pastor Temple explained the hard copy has become complicated due to 2,600 households with no email address. The current goal is to stuff envelopes on 8/4 and mail immediately. It will be sent first class to ensure quick delivery, so the cost will be 60 cents per letter, or estimated \$1,560.00.

Sue will get analytics on the web pages for future meetings.

The Task Force approved sending the email and going live with the webpage.

Agenda item 2: Update on action items

A). Voting process for 9/25 Church Council Meeting

Jeff Thomas reported on the second letter he sent to the Church Council members asking for a vote regarding if the voting at the Sept. 25 meeting of the Church Council should be open to all church members present. Of the 67 members on the Church Council (see addendum):

- 34 voted to expand the vote to all present
- 11 voted to not expand
- 22 no responses, mainly staff/pastors, bringing it to ~10 missing votes

Jeff noted that if 9 more voted against expanding the vote, it would tally 34 in favor or expansion; 20 against. He also reminded the Task Force that the results of the first letter that went to the Church Council, plus going to 30-40 non-members, had results two-to-one in favor of opening the vote.

Discussion:

- Bill Stoltz asked if the information regarding the vote was to be kept quiet until further notice?
- Pastor Temple said the Council has voted, and the meeting will be, as is our custom, open to anyone who would like to come, and any church member who is present will be able to vote.
- Pastor Temple explained a Church Conference can be requested by the Church Council, by the pastor, or by 10% of the membership. So even if 90% voted against moving forward to Oct 13, if 10% voted for it, a Church Conference could still proceed. Therefore, he believes we should tamp down expectations; and say this is a procedural vote, not a substantive vote.
- Several members expressed concern that there could be a negative reaction from the congregation to discover their vote was not being recognized as such, and that this idea went against being transparent and forthright.
- Jeff Thomas added to his comments regarding the recent letter that a prevailing attitude, based on additional written comments back to him, was that the Sept 25 vote needed to include all that want to vote.
- A question was raised, what is the point of a Sept 25 vote if it could be negated?
- Pastor Temple responded that we don't actually need a Sept 25 vote, but he believes there would be a backlash if we don't conduct it.
- Sunday Coffman asked about the process for voting, noting many people did not want to do so publicly; Jeff Thomas was in favor of raised hands or standing for transparency. No decision was reached on the method for voting on Sept. 25.
- Oct. 13 will definitely be by written ballot
- Sue Fredrickson asked what would be the process if someone made a motion from the floor to change the date of the disaffiliation vote? Jeff Thomas said anyone could make a motion.
- Pastor Temple pointed out that procedurally, a change of date has to come from the District Superintendent and does not think the Church Council can amend the chosen date.

B) Judicial Council ruling on ¶2553/2548.2

Pastor Temple reported:

- The Judicial Council had postponed its meeting, so at the moment ¶2548.2 is still constitutional.
- Churches that have already used ¶2548.2 are ahead of the game and it won't be a retroactive ruling. However, because it is under review, many churches are not using ¶2548.2.
- It (¶2548.2) has been in the Discipline for 76 years, a congregation could use it in good faith and there's no reason to think it should be overturned.
- It was clarified that which provision to be used is not the decision of Jeremiah 29, but the Church Council.

- Sue Fredrickson read the statement from the July 14 minutes that Jeremiah 29 agreed on: “The Texas Annual Conference principles of disaffiliation outline pathways for both (Paragraphs) 2548.2 and 2553. We will utilize one of these two.”

C) Timeline for Christ Church process

The date to send the first congregational email letter should be updated from Aug. 3 to today (Aug. 2). All other dates remain the same.

Pastor Temple has added to the Timeline the numbers of churches in the discernment process (see addendum).

D) Talking points for small group gatherings

Barbara Burnham looked at the 14 questions posted by the District Future Discernment Task Force and annotated with her questions and suggestions. (see addendum)

We should think about the questions that we are going to use, and what ways and places we want them posted. These will be included in communication from Pastor Dan Conway that will go out to all small group leaders.

E) Format for town hall meetings

Bill Stoltz asked if there was an outline for the Town Hall meetings, and asked if we would have an outside speaker to ensure we are being totally transparent.

Discussion:

- Jeff Thomas said there are videos planned that represent the two options and feels that is similar to an outside perspective.
- Joey Moreland pointed out an in-person speaker could answer questions.
- Pastor Temple said we could invite the District Superintendent, but he’s likely too busy for Town Halls.
 - a. He added there are enough people in the church with strong views that we will hear from, if we have a respectful open meeting allowing everyone to speak, as they need to.
- Bill Stoltz envisions hearing not more facts but opinions from outside speakers that address why they may personally be staying UMC or moving to the GMC.
- Barbara Burnham felt that to have fidelity in responses, we should have the same people at both meetings.
- Several felt it was important to have knowledgeable speakers from outside that could address information beyond the District videos, which skim the surface in information, plus many will have already viewed.

- Pastor Temple commented that as a UMC pastor for 37 years, he felt he could adequately represent the UMC position, as well as the GMC position.
- Jim Rose has viewed several town halls from other churches and he believes people want to be heard, not talked to.

Barbara will set an Agenda for the town halls and distribute.

F) FAQs

Tom Young reported the document is getting closer to completion. The piece is more a primer than a FAQ. Several more reviews are needed, and he will route a draft soon.

Bill Stoltz suggested that we might consider excerpting some of the FAQs from the District meetings as a separate document for shorter questions and responses.

G) Website – covered earlier

H) August 15 joint meeting Trustees/Finance

Pastor Temple explained the purpose of the meeting is to bring up to speed those two committees on the financial numbers and property issues, and to have them be able to weigh in.

Bill Stoltz will attend as chair of Jeremiah 29; Pastor Temple, Jeff Thomas and Jim Rose will be present as ex officio to those groups.

I) Other business

Barbara Burnham will be meeting with the youth leaders on Aug. 3. She has a document from the UMC about how to talk with youth and will share with them. She is conscious that Eric and Madeline have a lot to do and does not want to over-burden them.

Pastor Temple asked if we are continuing the questions in the Bulletin and posed could we ask something like “what are your biggest questions” in preparation for the Town Halls.

Gail McClendon has prepared a summary of responses to date on the previous questions and that will be posted on the webpage.

The Communications subtask force will develop some more questions.

Agenda Item 3. New Business

Bill Stoltz addressed responding to email questions that call for a more-informed response than he and Bob Ayers, who are designated as the ones to respond to the

emails, are able to address. Bill will distribute to task force members as he sees appropriate.

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Pastor Temple offered to look at particular emails and send suggested answers to Bill Stoltz for response inclusion.

Agenda Item 4. Break into sub committees if needed

It was decided that we would not reconvene (Agenda Item 5) after the sub committees meet.

Agenda Item 6. Schedule next meeting

Set for August 9, at 4:30 p.m. Pastor Marquice Hobbs will join us.

Agenda Item 7. Close

The meeting was adjourned by Bill Stoltz at 6 p.m. with a closing prayer from Pastor Temple.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Fredrickson, recording secretary, Jeremiah 29:11 Task Force

Addendum to Aug. 2, 2022 Minutes

Materials listed in minutes; hard copies available on request

Congregational Letter 1

Jeremiah 29 website: <https://www.christchurchsl.org/future-of-our-church/>

Copy email letter dated July 27 from Jeff Thomas to members of Church Council

Time line

Notes on the FDTF questions