

**Minutes of the Jeremiah 29:11 Task Force of Christ United Methodist Church
August 9, 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
Guest: Marquice Hobbs, pastor of contemporary worship

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

Agenda item 2: Minutes from the July 14 meeting were approved by acclamation.

Agenda Item 3: Pastor Marquice Hobbs shared his thoughts with the Task Force.

Agenda Item 4: Update on action items

A) Web page

Sue Fredrickson distributed the planned content for the UMC and GMC information tabs (see addendum), noting there was an equal amount of content for each. She requested comments if anyone see problems.

Analytics from the first week (see addendum), show as of Sunday, 8/7, there have been 483 views, 389 were unique. The first bounce was on the day of the email congregational letter (8/2), then another bounce on Sunday (8/7) with the video announcement.

The two items with the most clicks are the Comparison Chart between the doctrines of the UMC and GMC, followed by a link to the Ask the UMC article.

This week the results from the J29 bulletin questions will be added to webpage. Everything new is marked in red and dated.

It was agreed to move Pastor Temple's and Tom Pace's Pastoral Conversation to our General Information page.

Bob Ayers noted that the average time on the page is 10 minutes, which is quite good.

B) Voting Process for 9/25 Church Council Meeting

No new information since the meeting Aug. 2.

C) Judicial Council ruling on ¶2553/2548.2

No update at this time.

D) Timeline for Christ Church process

Pastor Temple distributed an update to the Timeline with notations regarding churches that have voted to disaffiliate (see addendum). Notably The Woodlands, which likely will join the GMC, and Faithbridge will be independent. Of the 9 smaller churches that have voted, 4 are going independent.

Approximately 235 churches are in some place in discernment, and he noted not all will make the Nov. 10 deadline for filing paperwork for formal disaffiliation. Some will vote not to, some will not have 2/3 majority. He expects 150-160 on Dec. 3 at the called Annual Conference.

E) Talking points for small group gatherings

Barbara Burnham distributed an update to the Discipleship Group Denomination Discernment Resource document (see addendum). She requested feedback and edits during the meeting, so that she can pass to Pastor Conway as soon as possible.

Discussion:

- Clarified an individual's membership goes with the affiliation decision of the congregation. Those disagreeing will need to initiate a change to another church.
- Suggested to add the definitions of Doctrine, Discipline and the Social Principals to assure all reading the document have same understandings.
- Jeff Thomas noted, based input from the District meeting, we need to be listening.
- How will we know what people are thinking or how leaning was raised. The District meeting recommended straw votes, but Pastor Temple said few churches are using that process.
- Barbara Burnham noted that some groups may not want us inserted into their sacred space, but just provide information.
- Bill Stoltz suggested when we go out to visit with groups, we need to have conversations, not presentations.
- We need to encourage people to ask for members of our group to visit; make clear we're available and not forcing ourselves on groups.

The letter also explains the sign up opportunities for the 40 Days of Prayer, encouragement to review the information on the webpage, members of the task force will be available to meet with. Plus town halls, coffees and desserts are opportunities to listen and learn.

The target send date is before September 1 to help small groups with planning their fall calendars.

F) August 15 joint meeting of Trustees/Finance

Bill Stoltz and Bob Ayers will be attending the joint meeting. Pastor Temple reiterated from our last meeting that the purpose is to educate those groups on the financial and property issues of changing affiliation.

New item: more on Town Hall

Pastor Temple said he is aware that some people have been requesting specifically for someone to speak to the UMC side. He asked Morris Mathis, who declined; the District Superintendent, Tony Vinson, also declined saying he needs to be more neutral. He asked Reggie Clemmons, a pastor at First Pearland, who knows our church through past UM Armies. Pastor Clemmons has accepted.

Discussion:

- Sue Fredrickson asked about Keith Whitaker as a possibility. Pastor Temple said that because he, and Tom Pace, are not on the Future Discernment Task Force, they have not been in the conversations about discernment process.
- Tom Young asked the purpose of inviting an outside person. Pastor Temple replied that some people may not feel that he is unbiased. Tom followed up asking why not have other opinions, to which Pastor Temple responded that all the other pastors will share. It is unknown what Pastor Hall would say; from our meeting today we know how Pastor Hobbs stands and Pastor Conway is in a similar place to Pastor Temple.
- Gail McClendon said a purpose is to present information in an unbiased manner, so that those attending don't feel they've heard one viewpoint.
- Pastor Temple said there will be videos for GMC and UMC, Q&A and maybe more than one person should answer questions to give two points of view.
- Several opinions were expressed that passing out index cards worked well at the District meetings for collecting questions.
- Time spent answering questions should be kept to a minimum so that as many questions as possible are read/answered.
- Referring to our website or another document should be done only when the answer is going to be long or detailed.
- Others expressed concern that using only written questions would keep people from being heard.
- If open comments are to be held, Jeff Thomas said he would prefer those to happen in a Town Hall format, rather than at the Church Council.
- Should we also show the Other Options video since questions are beginning to come in about that?
- Questions from the Town Hall meetings should be gathered and placed in a document on our webpage.

Based on input, Barbara will make adjustment to the schedule for the Town Hall and redistribute.

New item: Charge Conference process

Discussion moved to the Charge Conference process on Oct. 13, if voted to occur. Pastor Temple stated:

- The DS has a preference that there is no discussion at the Charge Conference.
- He proposes to send out ballots in advance so people know the question.
- At the meeting the ballots will be numbered.

- People will be invited to preregister so that membership can be checked in advance to speed up check in.

- However, if not pre-registered, there will be an area to confirm membership.
- Possibly print ballots in two colors in anticipation there could be a re-vote.

Questions:

- Is it possible to allow discussion; people will feel shut down.
- Will the results be announced that night?
- Could we bring in outside tellers to reduce questions of interference?

Agreed that most discussion of process was premature.

Agenda Item 5: New Business

A) Responding to invitations from various groups to have a J29 Task Force member meet with them. Invitation from the choir.

- Bill Stoltz expressed a concern at waiting until Sept 24, when Pastor Temple returns, to respond to the Choir's request.
- Pastor Temple offered to return for one night from his sabbatical to attend; several asked if other pastors could attend in his place.
- He clarified that he hoped to attend as many meetings as possible when requests were received.
- Decided that Barbara Burnham and Gail McClendon would go as Task Force representatives.

B) Questions from the youth

After Barbara Burnham met with the Youth leaders, she received a list of questions the leaders had collected over the last weeks. The leaders plan a Town Hall for the Youth, but no date has been set. They would like to have representatives from the Task Force. However, at a point, the Youth may prefer to have discussions without outsiders present.

C) Comments on work group's draft of "Background on the Question of Affiliation" (distributed by Tom Young on 8/4/22)

- There are questions as to how the document will be used; not sure where it best serves providing Information.
- It is much more detailed than one would expect in a basic FAQ document.
- There has been concern that the document is opinionated, and reflects a bias.
- Communications sub-committee offered to help edit the document

D) Response to questions if options other than the GMC are being considered (Will resolution for disaffiliation vote also include resolution to join GMC?)

1. Bill Stoltz noted that questions have begun asking about Other Options. His response has been that those are not under consideration at this time.

Sue Fredrickson offered that it would be easy to add a tab to the webpage for Other Options, with the video from the District meetings and links to other denominations. Sarah Schwab has begun to collect information for that possibility.

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The Task Force approved adding the Other Options tab.

2. Bill Stoltz asked about the wording for the Oct. 13 resolution, noting there was a sample from the District meeting that combines the vote to disaffiliate and a motion to join another denomination into one statement.

Pastor Temple believes it should be two motions. He added that some churches were not making a second motion as to affiliation, but instead turning over the process to the Board of Trustees to make a decision.

Further discussion was tabled for the time being.

Agenda Item 6: Other Business

There was nothing additional at this point.

Agenda Item 7: Schedule next meeting

The next meeting will be at 4:30, August 16.

Agenda Item 8: Close with prayer

Bob Ayers offered the closing prayer. Bill Stoltz adjourned the meeting at 6:35.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Addendum items for Aug 9 meeting

Planned content for the UMC and GMC information tabs (see webpages)

Analytics showing webpage interest for the first week of release

Timeline for Process with Churches updated

Discipleship Group Denomination Discernment Resource document

Email Aug 8 from Barbara Burnham: Process sub-group documents for review