

**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**October 2021 Fall Board Meeting Minutes**  
**October 21-22 2021**  
**Zoom**

**October 21, 2021**

***Board Meeting***  
***Zoom***

**Board members present:** Tex Sample, Lee Myane, Dustin Petz, Linda Shipman, Arden Borden, Andy Bryan, Rogers Strickland, Dana Aldridge, Jabari Wamble, Tino Herrera, Jennifer Ahren-Simms

**Guests:** Leanna Walkowiak, Jeanne Hoeft, Neil Blair, Fritz Mutti, Israel Kamudzandu, Shannon Hancock, Jennifer Smith, Matt Mills, Richard Liantonio, Jack Gregory, Jay Simmons, Casey Sigmon, Nancy Howell, Debbie Bruzzard

**Call to Order: 1:00pm by Tex Sample**

Devotional by Rogers Strickland

Spirit of Community vs Capitalism, Nationalism, Politics

Introductions:

Debbie Bruzzard and Tino Herrera

**Presidents Report: President Blair**

Jay Simmons updated the situation with the Lily Grant. Received a \$50,000 planning grant to focus on goals 2 and 5 relating to diversity, intercultural competency and develop capabilities to reach out to minority students. Sharon Tan was hired as the grant writer.

President Blair continued after Jay. He met with Sharon Tan and added the needful attention to small churches. This became a broader perspective to process with Lily. Communication with Dr. Tan was probably not the best. Timing with the Lily Foundation became difficult with a larger proposal. Ultimately it was decided to not pursue the grant at this time.

Dana Aldridge question: Did we get any of the \$50,000 to approach the grant?

President Blair: Yes, it was used to pay Sharon Tan and any not utilized was returned.

Dana Aldridge question: Have we thought through how we would avoid this in the future?

President Blair: Yes, but a move was needed. The timing was difficult and we can do a better assessment of what went wrong.

Linda Shipman question? Do we have a plan for the future?

President Blair: Yes, we have a future with Lily. We need planning and leadership and put our time and energy into it or in 15 years we will be out of business if we continue to do what war are doing now. We need focus and energy on Mdiv which needs to be maintained but will probably be smaller in the future. There will be a greater opportunity to get this right in the future.

**OKC Update: President Blair**

Waiting on the individual who has been selected as executive director. They are excited but waiting on UM discipline and conference. They will begin full time in January and part time till then. Jeanne Hoeft covered some new technology on campus and meeting with students while waiting on more staff for OKC campus.

**Admissions and Communications, Shannon Hancock**

Spring semester application deadline is November 1. Seven students currently admitted for Spring semester, could go as high as 15. Currently have 12 Or 13 applications for Fall 2022. Excited about the upward trajectory. Neil and Nancy Howell complimented Shannon on her persistence and quality of students. President Blair encouraged trustees to make use of our contacts to reach students. President Blair continued that SPST has worked to improve finances and those that give \$1000 or more. All these things have happened since the move from Truman road. Excited about Jay joining the team and his expertise as a president and dean. Extraordinary executive leadership team.

Discussion of President Blair's report encouraged him to reduce the time of presidential videos from 5 minutes to 90 seconds. Questions were asked about Jay's role changes that moved more time for development to President Blair. The changes in Jay's role seem different than originally planned. Jay was hired originally to take more of a development role to allow President Blair more time on campus for communications. Discussion moved to understand the changes. Are these changes reflective of changing goals or changing processes. Board members expressed concerns about Presidential goals being met and when they could be accomplished.

President Blair expressed that things were still a work in progress, including his executive leadership team and his learning to be a president. His leadership coach has been a great help. The board expressed the importance of transparency and taking this conversation to the governance committee to build trust and communication.

President Blair concluded the report with his excitement over the accomplishments of the last 5 years and looking forward to the next 10 years.

Tex invited the governance committee to have a conversation about President Blair's report and report back to the board. President Blair indicated he would like the governance committee to meet with his executive leadership team. Mark agreed that governance could meet with the leadership team. Tex confirmed that there was a consensus for the governance team to meet within the next 10 days.

Break

**President Blair asked for 5 minutes of personal privilege time.**

President Blair spoke about the incredibly positive things happening at SPST. Financially in good shape, ATS report was great, everything is positive, new processes with the board, institution is in great shape, excited about where things are going.

Shannon Hancock gave a short bio.

Dr. Hal Knight gave a personal introduction.

Tex led a discussion about Vision. His question for the board. What is the most serious challenge in theological education?

Topics from the conversation included.

Differing visions of ATS and seminary, what is required to be accomplished vs what is required for ministry, some requirements are restrictive, Methodist University Senate also has restrictive definitions.

Decline of the the church, closing churches, losing members

hybrid congregations

Rumors of church death and new expressions of church being born, metrics used by conference

Anti-intellectualism, education questions as a value, anti-critical thinking

Anti-institution

Connecting desires to do good works with a faith walk

cost of education, language barriers

DRAFT 10.24.2021

Collection of entanglements of the church with racism, LGBTQ  
Relevance of the church  
Community organizing  
Faculty challenge/reduction of hours, seminary to become a beacon support for pastors and lay people  
Interfaith and inter-religious work  
course of study  
church split

Closing prayer by Lee Myane

Day 2 of Fall board meeting  
October 22, 2021

Members in attendance:

Jennifer Ahren-Simms, Lee Myane, Tex Sample, Bishop Tindall, Dana Aldridge, Linda Shipman, Andy Bryan, Mark Faulkner, David Wiggs, Rogers Strickland, Arden Borgen, Jabari Womble, Tino Herrera

Visitors in attendance:

Jeanne Hoeft, Leanna Walkowiak, Debbie Bruzzard, Kris Kwam, Bishop Mutti, Bishop Farr, Jim Brandt, Neal Blair, Jay Simmons, Matt Mills, Jennifer Smith, Jack Gregory, Richard Liantonio, Shannon Hancock, Matt Mills, Tiana Gatewood.

Day 2 of the Fall board meeting began with prayer by Debbie Bruzzard.

Guest presentation by Bishop Farr of the Missouri Annual Conference.

Bishop Farr spoke about his appreciation of Lucas Endicott and course of study. Course of Study pushed with goals to be more accessible, flexible, economical. Bishop Farr described the decline of number of churches and membership in the Missouri Annual Conference. He also described the lack of full time and part time pastors. He continued with the lack of people in worship due to Covid and the lack of their potential return. Bishop Farr talked about his needs for part time pastors and a missionary mindset, church disaffiliation and lay peoples general dissatisfaction with the system and pastors received. He described pastors as not good communicators Monday - Saturday, not teaching Wesleyan theology, pastors doing their own thing making it easy to disaffiliate and not preaching Methodist Polity. As a denomination we are separating, and losing churches every week. Expecting to lose 150-250 churches and drop from 9 districts to 5.

**Approval of Summer Board minutes:**

Motion by David and second by Dana. Minutes approved unanimously.

**VPAAD Search Update: Jim Brandt**

Currently have 8 strong candidates who have applied, expecting one more. Will have zoom interviews in November and December, from those 3 or 4 will be requested for in-person interviews. The goal will be to have an agreement with a new VPAAD by the end of March for the April board meeting.

Kris Kwam asked for prayer about the search.

**Trust and Collaboration Task Force, Dana Aldridge**

Work is a slow process. The second meeting will be next week.

**ATS Update, Jeanne Hoeft**

Jeanne thanked everyone for their hard work. It was a very positive and encouraging time with the review team. The first draft of the report will go to ATS Board of Commissioners. They will have the final word. The final draft will be public in February. Summary, very positive, encouraging to move forward with all work done in the last 5 years.

**Academic Report, Lee Myane**

Utilizing the Dashboard, no action items

**Governance Report, Mark Faulkner**

No actions needed by the board

**Resource Committee Report, Linda and Matt**

Wrapping up the audit, all reports are good, no action items, revenue has surpassed budget, Expenditures below budget, Annual fundraising goal of \$500,000 exceeded. All done without a significant increase in tuition, all students receive at least a 50% discount

**Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee, Matt Mills for Amy Hogan**

Established processes and procedures, 4.5% of operation budget unencumbered for cycle of planning, KPI have been updated for goals 2,3,5. Committee is working ahead of the timeline to get engagement.

**Executive Committee**

Nothing to come before the board.

The final time for the board was a vision and dreams conversation. This was superseded by a conversation about Bishop Farr's presentation. This was a long conversation primarily disappointed in the presentation and Bishop Farr's comments about the decline and death of ministry, lack of passion by pastors and lack of Wesleyan theology. Most of the board expressed their frustration with the Bishop and how his viewpoint was skewed and not the fault of SPST.

**Vision and Dreams Conversation**

Tex introduced the conversation with his concerns about rural and country churches, black and brown folks, the division in our country, rural vs urban, how cultural traditionalists vote against their personal interest, how the practices of life and church are different than people with 4 years of college and 3 years of seminary.

Questions: How do we train people to utilize best practices in relation to how cultural traditionalists think and feel? How do we do Wesleyan theology with indigenous practices?

Comments from the board circled back and forth with ideas and continued frustration with Bishop Farr.

Meeting concluded with prayer from Dana Aldridge.