

Saint Paul School of Theology

Via Zoom

July 11, 2024 – Board of Trustees Meeting – MINUTES – approved 10/18/24

- Board Members Present: Roger Drake, Mark Faulkner, Dana Aldridge, Linda Shipman, David Wiggs, Jabari Wamble, Arden Borgan, Jennifer Ahrens-Sims, Sharon Cleaver, Shannon Dyer, Rogers Strickland, Tino Herrera.
- Board Members Absent: Amy Hogan, Laura Murphy.
- Faculty and Staff Present: Jennifer Smith, Elaine Robinson, Kris Kvam, Nancy Howell, Casey Sigmon, Margaretta Narcise, Michelle Hatcher, Tammi Allensworth, Matt Mills, Jay Simmons, Sharon Betsworth.

11:30am

- **Call to Order** – Board Chair Dana Aldridge
- **Review and Approve July 2023 Minutes previously misplaced** – Ms. Aldridge
 - o **Motion** – Jennifer Ahrens-Sims, 2nd Arden Borgen, Motion approved.
- **Review and Approve April 2024 Minutes** – Ms. Aldridge
 - o **Motion** – David Wiggs, 2nd Jennifer Ahrens-Sims, Motion approved.

11:35am

- **Opening Devotion** – Rev. Tino Herrera
 - o Rev. Herrera addressed how new signage and inclusion flags were vandalized at his church, Trinity UMC in Kansas City. He spoke of the need to emphasize love and community and to be accepting and supportive.

11:40am

- **President's Report** – Dr. Jay Simmons
President Simmons announced various institutional updates and personnel changes, including Sharon's update on Saint Paul at the South Central Jurisdiction Conference, his upcoming international recruiting trip, and the appointment of Mr. Tom Cochran as Development Officer. He also reported an impressive endowment draw of 2.11 percent for the fiscal year ending 2024, a draw well less than half the amount authorized by the Board. Dr. Simmons thanked Sharon Cleaver and Dana Aldridge for their contributions as Board Chairs.

The focus of the meeting was the presentation and discussion of the draft strategic plan for St. Paul, with Dr. Simmons emphasizing the plan's goals and objectives. Trustees asked about the plan's details and tracking measures for the plan. Dr. Simmons responded that Trustees will receive regular updates with key performance indicators as they do with the current strategic plan.

Rev. Ahrens-Sims then led a prayer for the Saint Paul School of Theology community, emphasizing faith during times of transition.

Mr. Arden Borgen offered a motion to adopt the strategic plan, a motion seconded by Rev. Ahrens-Sims. The motion was adopted by the Board.

In relation to the new strategic plan's first goal on belonging, advocacy, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, Rev. Ahrens-Sims asked about the status of the Trust and Collaboration Task Force, which requires annual renewal by the Board if it is to continue. The Board unanimously vote in favor of renewing the Trust and Collaboration Task Force for the 2024-2025 academic year.

12:50pm – Committee Reports

12:50pm - Academic Committee – Rev. Jennifer Ahrens-Sims

The Committee met on June 12, 2024, and received thorough, goal-oriented reports from Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean Dr. Sharon Betsworth. The reports included briefings on academic program assessment, including the ongoing five-year rolling schedule for assessing all degree programs, an update on the work of the faculty, and reports on the Library and Student Affairs. The Committee also approved several changes to the faculty handbook.

12:57pm - Resource Committee – Ms. Linda Shipman, who was suffering from laryngitis, asked CFO Matt Mills to report. Mr. Mills noted that Saint Paul enjoys a strong financial position with no debt, a responsible endowment draw target of four to five percent, an endowment approximately ten times the annual operating budget, a six-month cash reserve for operations, four diversified revenue streams, and a strategic planning initiatives fund amounting to 4.5% of the operating budget. Mr. Mills further noted that his office is closing accounts for FY2024 in preparation for the audit. In FY 2023, net assets increased by \$1.4 million and the expectation is that net assets increased by a greater amount in FY 2024. The draw in FY2024 was \$736,132 against a budgeted authorization of \$1,736,132, or a rate of approximately 2.11% versus board approved. 5.10%. Saint Paul is currently earning over five percent in a daily sweep of our cash accounts, a factor making possible unbudgeted revenues of \$150,000 to support operations. Rubin Brown will begin work on our FY2024 audit, which should be available in November.

1:03pm - Governance Committee – Chair Laura Murphy could not attend today's meeting, so Ms. Aldridge reported for the Committee. As of July 1, Rev. Murphy began service as chair of the Governance Committee and will also join the Resource Committee. Dr. Roger Drake will begin assignments on the Academic Committee and the Governance Committee.

The Governance Committee recommended that the Rev. Dr. Tex Sample be elected as a life member of the Board of Trustees. **The Board unanimously approved the recommendation.**

The Governance Committee proposed two changes to the Board Policies Handbooks.

BP6.0 – Standing Committees. The Committee proposed that the Chairs of the Board's standing committees be allowed the prerogative to appoint advisory members to their committees, with the approval of the members of the committee. The advisors will have voice but no vote. **The Board unanimously approved the recommendation.**

BP6.1 – Governance Committee. The Committee proposed that the Governance Committee be given responsibility to prepare an annual slate of nominees to serve as Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Board of Trustees. Preparation of this slate does not prohibit nominations from the floor at the annual election of Board Officers. **The Board unanimously approved the recommendation.**

1:11pm - Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee – Rev. David Wiggs

Rev. Wiggs report continued success with the now retired 2017 – 2025 Strategic Plan, including the budget provision of reserving 4.5% of the annual operating budget for strategic planning initiatives. The plan also featured a yearly planning and reporting cycle, regularly updated Key Performance Indicators, and routine review of strategic priorities. These reporting and monitoring procedures will be continued for the new strategic plan approved earlier today. The Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee will also resume its regular meeting schedule this fall.

1:20pm - Faculty and Staff Open Comments

Dr. Nancy Howell introduced the upcoming Smithsonian exhibit 'Human Origins' coming to Saint Paul, and she invited volunteers, particularly from the clergy and teachers, to participate in its educational seminars and workshops. The exhibit's theme encourages open dialogue about what it means to be human. Dr. Casey Sigmon suggested incorporating the exhibit's theme into sermons and community outreach at churches. Additionally, Dr. Kris Kvam announced a project commemorating the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Ms. Jennifer Smith reported a positive response to online learning registration trends for the Course of Study program. Concerns were raised about non-United Methodist students struggling financially. Dr. Elaine Robinson shared news of her certification to administer an emotional intelligence instrument to help students develop their leadership skills.

1:30pm – Ms. Aldridge declared a fifteen-minute break.

1:47pm - Faculty Presentation by Dr. Casey Sigmon

Dr. Sigmon presented on the Pause Play Center for Preachers at Saint Paul School of Theology, an initiative developed with slightly more than one million dollars in grant support from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. The center aims to help preachers engage in more effective ministry by supporting their self-awareness and reclaiming their preaching voice, with a cohort of twelve pastors from diverse backgrounds selected to participate in a five-year program. The program includes spiritual direction, coaching, and workshops, designed to increase self-awareness, manage stress, build resilience, and foster stronger community support. Applications for next year's cohort will open in March 2025.

Dr. Sigmon described the annual gathering for clergy creativity funded by the grant. The annual gathering is a three-day event intended to help clergy rejuvenate their creativity and imagination through improvisational games, ritual arts, and other fun activities. The event, which is expected to attract fifty attendees from thirteen states, will feature workshops and a podcast on burnout, free play, and rest, with scholarships and sponsorships provided by key partners. Dr. Sigmon also discussed the timeline for the Lily Grant, the center's mission of integrating pause play with Saint Paul's curriculum, and the evaluation process.

2:35pm – Dr. Sigmon offered the concluding prayer, after which Ms. Aldridge invited Trustees to move to an executive session.