

**Ministry Council Meeting Minutes
July 26, 2021**

Attending: Rev. Jason Valendy, Judy Belter, Melanie Grice, Diane Whetson, Bob Whetson, Emie Stewart, Dave Burke, Mike Miller, Keith Bierley, Sara Howard, Julie Sizemore, Dave Burke

Guests: Rev. Lauren Christenberry, Kristin Springer, Ali Beckwith, Dan Hernandez, John Ballard, Laurie Ballard, Cristie King, Danielle Carpenter

Agenda:

Opening Scripture/Prayer	Jason	10 minutes
SPR Update	Keith	5 minutes
Survey Action Team Proposals & Discussion:		
Small Groups	Lauren	20 minutes
Youth/Children	Kristin	20 minutes
Involvement	Jason	20 minutes
Summary/Next Steps	Judy	15 minutes
Closing Prayer	All	

Judy called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Jason asked for examples of how attendees see orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthocardia in their own lives, as discussed in the sermon yesterday. After some sharing, he explained how the ripple effect and choosing to be with people who exemplify orthocardia can change us for the better.

SPR Update

Keith reported that we have filled the open custodian position. Marc Shaw started today. Another custodian is on Family Medical Leave. We hope he will return in early September. We are also actively searching for a Children’s Ministry and Nursery Coordinator. A new hire in that position would bring us to fully staffed. SPR continues to be on target to meet its budget goals and is beginning to plan for 2022.

Survey Action Team Proposals and Discussion

Small Groups – Appendix A

Lauren introduced Cristie King and John and Laurie Ballard. Bob Whetson also participated in the small group task force. Peter Sensenbrenner also participated, but is not at the meeting tonight. The members participate in different ways and have been at the church varied lengths of time, so they were able to offer different perspectives.

The group started with the survey and proposals from the scheduling team. John highlighted the 40% of people who responded to the survey who were not involved in small groups. The task force decided to focus on that rather than on scheduling.

The task force has been researching and brainstorming and sending their ideas to Lauren. They are thinking about ways to provide opportunities and communicate those opportunities to the congregation. She was shocked to find out how many people said they did not know how to join a small group. The task force is looking for new and creative ways to convey information.

The first recommendation is to change the name of all small groups to connection groups, rather than Sunday School, studies, etc.

John Ballard said he appreciated the invitation and is excited about participating. He recommended doing surveys more often to find out the needs in the congregation. He talked about selling new ideas rather than just starting new programming, such as starting a cooking class that eventually leads to resuming Wednesday night meals.

Judy asked if he was suggesting that the task force should be ongoing. Lauren said the group was passionate about the topic and did want to continue meeting.

Lauren also said that allowing adults to meet at different times would allow adults to volunteer for children and youth activities, so that adults would not have to choose between a connection group and volunteering.

Bob said we should look at what we already offer first and what the existing connection groups provide and focus on. If people don't know what we have, they don't know how to connect. Looking at what we have already could also identify gaps where new groups are needed.

Ali asked if the group discussed breaking through the boundary of hesitation to join a group. John said he believes the pulpit is an important part of this process, or asking a connection group to speak in worship, rather than relying entirely on print and digital communication.

Lauren said our current methods rely on some action by the congregant, but she sees the need for more face-to-face communication.

Julie said there used to be Ministry Moments in worship. She enjoyed hearing about various groups during those times.

Lauren said she and Kristin plan to speak in worship soon about Yes! Day. UMW is also scheduled to present information in worship in September.

Julie suggested giving groups the opportunity to set up tables or take a spot at the Welcome Desk on Sundays. She also suggested following up with some of the people who said they didn't know how to join a group to get more details.

Judy said she asked a few people and found that some were taking a break, others just hadn't found anything interesting. She suggested highlighting individually the various small group opportunities available through United Methodist Women.

Judy also said there seems to be a negative connotation to "shopping" different small groups. It's a challenge to connect without committing for a long term.

Keith remembered Celebrate the Opportunities, a connection fair in the Family Life Center. He didn't know how effective it was, but thought it would be a good way to show all the ways to connect.

Cristie said she feels comfortable trying things out, but thought more introverted people might welcome an easy way to visit tables and check out connection opportunities in a non-threatening way.

Ali talked about her experience in Busy Moms, which is mostly women in their 30's and 40's. An older woman visited and started to leave early because she thought she didn't fit in. She ended up staying and has become an active and treasured member.

Judy summarized to seek consensus:

1. Change names of adult groups to connection groups
2. Not assign mandated meeting times for adult connection groups
3. Change how we communicate about adult connection groups

There was a reluctance among the group to rush into other ideas, but instead to continue discussing them.

Dave and Jason both spoke about the recommendations from the task force that discussed scheduling. There has not yet been a decision made, but when it is made, it will need to be communicated and implemented.

Children/Youth – Appendix B

Kristin said the group looked at key learnings from the survey. They noted that our congregation longs to get to know one another. They either don't have the space to do that or don't know how. The task force was concerned about the fact that everything in the survey said "children" and did not separately identify youth. One suggestion moving forward is to specify youth or children in all future communications.

The task force discussed how and when to bring back Sunday morning programming. They were hopeful that the scheduling proposal would be adopted to allow for children and youth to participate in worship and also in small groups. They feel strongly that it is a disservice to children to send them somewhere else when worship is happening.

The task force spent a lot of time discussing timing. They came up with a plan to have events four Sundays in a row. The events would be a draw to get families back in the door. Sunday morning connection groups would start after these events, on September 12.

Judy noted that according to the survey, older adults were very supportive of children being in worship.

Ali said that she always felt welcome, but that her son often chose to go to his small group rather than to worship.

Jason said it is usually the parents who are reluctant to worship with the kids for fear the kids will misbehave. He feels the lack of choices will result in more people attending worship with their kids.

Kristin said some local churches only allow children in certain areas. Newer families coming to worship may not realize their kids are welcome. We are coming off a season when families have been worshipping together, often at home, so it's a good time to make a change.

Judy said there was a minority group that responded to the survey that did not want change. Julie agreed and wondered if that was due to not liking change at all rather than not wanting more children in worship.

Kristin said the group plans to meet again to set action items for both short term and long term.

Ali said one thing the task force talked about a lot was offering more inter-generational activities. John agreed with this sentiment and feels that those types of activities have been lost over the years. There was discussion at the golf tournament about helping fund activities for youth and children. Kristin said there are children whose grandparents do not live close and older adults whose grandchildren do not live close. She hopes to facilitate more connections between these groups.

Judy summarized to seek consensus:

1. Open the door for children to participate in worship – open, overt invitation
2. Congregation wide oriented events for four weeks
3. Connection classes starting in September, meeting from 10 to 11am, with children's church also available during part of worship for 3-5 year olds
4. Continue meeting to make more plans

Kristin anticipates having less trouble recruiting volunteers when these new ideas and the new schedule are implemented.

Involvement/Participation – Appendix C

Jason said they were all over the map with initial discussion, but then homed in on the 10am timeframe. An activity at 10am might be compelling enough for someone to stay who was in worship at 9, but it's a bigger ask to ask someone worshipping at 11 to come at 10 instead.

They also discussed having too many options, potentially resulting in less participation. Narrowing worship to two services rather than four is creating growth rather than dilution.

They highlighted two barriers to meaningful involvement: not knowing others and not knowing the time commitment involved. The task force discussed how to break through these barriers.

One idea was exploiting the 10:30 to 11am time for very short opportunities with low entry points.

They also discussed getting granular with asks, very specific ways to ask someone to participate.

Dan said they discussed inter-generational opportunities, looking for chances to create events that attract lots of people. They are not necessarily to replace connection groups, just opportunities to get to know more people. These opportunities would make the granular asks easier because people are at least somewhat familiar with one another.

Bob asked what the plan is for adults that are not part of a group. Danielle said the vision is to have a simple fellowship time in the Narthex, not necessarily to have a formal group for everyone.

There was some concern in the group about change management, and possibly taking away from existing groups with a new schedule and lots of new events. Jason said this issue was addressed, and the intention is to start slow, perhaps once a month, and focus on those who are new and not already connected. He is still meeting people each week who are just starting to attend again since the beginning of COVID.

Julie asked about beginning classes on Wednesday nights again. Jason said the focus at this point is Sunday morning, but they are open to other opportunities in the future.

Keith said that if children are in the building before or after worship to attend their groups, we should leverage that to entice adults to also participate in something besides worship.

Jason said the task force really wanted to utilize the 10:30 time to introduce new opportunities.

Judy said she liked the idea of parents being able to meet one another after they drop off their kids. It's a great time to facilitate new opportunities for fellowship.

Dave noted that the schedule doesn't change everything. People who worshipped previously at the later time always showed up early if they wanted to be involved with something else.

Jason said that the task force recommends that when training is offered to staff or lay leadership, that the information about granular asks be part of it. He shared a program he used in a previous church that listed discipleship opportunities.

Mike said there was similar hand-out available when KUMC used to do the ministry fair.

Judy summarized to gain consensus:

1. 10:30 – 11 timeframe for new opportunities

There was some discussion about being flexible with 10:30 to 11 time, perhaps longer or starting at a different time depending on the opportunity.

Jason talked about the energy created by critical mass, encouraging participation by only having two worship services.

Julie said the feedback she received from her class regarding potential time changes was that they would prefer having the modern service later and the traditional service earlier, swapping the two times. They were also concerned about anything being scheduled to go past noon.

Dave said the task force did consider that possibility and found that anything they considered had drawbacks. There is no perfect solution.

Jason said our modern worship time is always longer because the songs are longer. He recommended living with the recommendations for a season and then making changes slowly. Dave said swapping the two services would be a very dramatic change.

Lauren said having traditional worship at 11 (or around 11) seems to be an embedded idea and in her opinion has led to new members.

Judy noted that nothing we decide today is locked in forever. If we find in the future that people would prefer a different schedule, adjustments can be made. She noted that KUMC can conduct future surveys. Julie said the previous survey was very vague, but she believes future surveys should be more specific. She heard from people who prefer to worship on Saturday nights and were upset that agreeing to change meant that their service might go away.

Jason said that moving in a direction is not an attempt to silence voices. It's good to bring what we hear in small groups and other places because sometimes people will only say things to people they trust.

Laurie asked if the plan was to put together a communication to explain why the church is going in a particular direction. Jason said it was important to talk about what is going to happen, the history of the decisions, and the theological underpinnings.

Judy said it is important to explain the process to show that the decisions were not made lightly, but with lots of input from lots of people.

Dave said the intention is to be transparent. We will try to communicate in a way that is as transparent as possible. Julie noted that tons of information is available in the minutes and we can point people in that direction when they have questions about how decisions were made.

Summary and Next Steps

Dave said we have the scheduling proposal, but if the Council believes it needs further discussion, we can do that.

Judy noted that Kristin is on a time limit and needs an answer soon.

Emie asked if something would be available for children at 9:30 if small groups choose to meet at that time. Kristin said she could not guarantee that. Lauren said special accommodations were made for the

summer, but they don't plan to continue at this time. Kristin said before COVID that children were often dropped off too early. She needs to be able to put a system in place to keep that from happening. Julie said her class was concerned about losing a full hour of class time, and also being open to people from both services.

Dave moved that the Council go ahead with the scheduling proposal to have services at 9 and 11:15. Jason asked that the staff have time to look at the larger picture and thoughtfully set the start date, probably sometime in August. The activities Kristin has planned will work regardless of 11 or 11:15 worship times.

Dave amended his motion to allow the staff to set the start date.

Judy said the activities will create a lot of energy and she would like to leverage that.

Sara said she doesn't think the structure isn't changing much just moving the 11am service to 11:15.

Dave said the current schedule was always intended to be temporary as we came back from COVID. Now we are trying to end the temporary arrangement and formalize what we are doing going forward. Bob noted that two services are going away, and that is the big change.

Kristin said this is a change that needs to be communicated very well. She recommended starting September 5 with the three lead-up events before then limited to an hour.

Jason and Lauren said we need to vote or arrive at a consensus, with the start date to be determined later. Judy asked if we were ready to arrive at a consensus.

Bob noted that there are still lots of unanswered questions. Lauren said the solidified schedule will help us move forward and start answering the questions.

Dave said the task force realized that whatever solution they came up with, that the schedule could not possibly solve every problem or question. One example was volunteers for children's ministry. Having children's classes at one time might help that problem, but it created a new problem having enough space for all the groups to meet at the same time. Every potential solution created new problems. Mike said the original explanation was clear. Judy suggested that Dave write an article about how the new schedule was decided.

Judy asked for consensus regarding not defining times for adult groups to meet. Each group can make their own decisions.

Judy asked for consensus for the proposal from Kristin.

Judy asked for consensus for the general idea of events to facilitate fellowship and connection for the 10:30 to 11am timeframe.

Judy asked for Dave, Lauren, Kristin and Jason to draft communication.

Jason said the earliest it could go out would be Quick News on August 3. There could be additional follow-up, such as FAQ and/or videos. Julie suggested the pastor email on August 6 instead. Judy asked that a draft go to Council members. Bob said the communication process must be ongoing, not a one-time message.

Jason said he would send a draft in a Google document to allow people to make comments.

Judy closed with the Ministry Council prayer at 8:52pm.

Small Group Task Force Proposal

Ministry Council Meeting

July 26, 2021

The Small Group Task Force met on Thursday July 15th at 6:30pm. This group consisted of Cristie King, Peter Sensebrenner, Laurie and John Ballard, Bob Whetson, and Pastor Lauren Christenberry.

The meeting began by Pastor Lauren explaining how we got here. Pastor Lauren shared about the Scheduling Committee and the recommendation which was presented to the Ministry Council of 9:00 am Modern Worship, 10:00 am Sunday School, and 11:15 am Traditional Worship. As the group began discussing the 10:00am Sunday School hour each person immediately began to express some concern with this one hour time slot. Concerns such as space, band and choir conflict, and so on. The question was then raised if this committee is creating a proposal in response to the survey results then it feels irresponsible to talk about Sunday morning scheduling for small groups, as this was not a major topic of the survey results. We began to use the phrase, "Don't fix what isn't broken." Instead as a task force we found ourselves pulled to the fact that the survey revealed 40% of the people who participated in the survey do not know how to join a small group. This is where we believe the small group ministry of Keller UMC needs to be focusing for the time being.

The task force is now in a brainstorming phase. The goal is to get more individuals and families connected into a small group while also identifying people who are willing to lead a group. In the Fall Pastor Lauren and Kristin Springer are putting together a day that focuses on volunteers and involvement. This day will be crucial to connecting with the 40% that represent those at Keller UMC that are not yet connected with a group. We would also like to change the name of all small groups and Sunday School classes to be called Connection Groups. The push to encourage individuals and families to join Connection Groups will need to come from many places. We will need to be sharing stories from the pulpit, from the staff, and from the congregation. The church of Keller UMC is clearly growing in every way right now. This task force is hopeful these conversations will begin to bridge the gap from casual attenders to being deeply invested.

Children's and Youth Spiritual Formation Taskforce
Proposal to the Ministry Council

The Children's and Youth Spiritual Formation Taskforce was created to design a plan to relaunch Sunday morning in-person spiritual formation opportunities and use the key learnings from the congregational survey to set short and long term goals for other opportunities within each area of ministry. The Taskforce had our first meeting on July 20 with Elizabeth Bass, Ali Beckwith, Danielle Carpenter, Lisa Ham, Abigail Herrington, Sara Howard, and Kristin Springer in attendance.

The meeting opened with prayer and introductions followed by a time for taskforce members to review the "It's Your Church" survey results. We noticed within the key learnings a desire for congregation members to get to know one another better. Children participating in worship with their families was also a high priority. We also noted concern about the low number of families with children and youth who participated in the survey. A concern was also voiced regarding the lack of distinction between youth and children within the survey, which might have been a source of confusion.

Taskforce members then reviewed the recommendation for the Sunday morning schedule from the Scheduling and Worship Taskforce. Each taskforce member was excited about the opportunities this would provide for our families. We believe that by opening the door for children to participate in worship, we begin a lifelong routine of discipleship. We hope to stand out as a congregation who not only welcomes but also encourages families to bring their children with them to actively participate in worship.

The taskforce worked to design a relaunch plan for Sunday morning Children's and Youth Spiritual formation groups. We recommend that we begin with a series of family oriented events beginning with the Back to School blessing and family style breakfast on Sunday, August 15. Following this event, we will have a backpack ministry event on the morning of the 22, Yes! Day (you will hear more about this from Pastor Lauren) on August 29, and wrapping up with outdoor games and fun following outdoor worship on September 5. Classes for children and youth will kick off the following week on Sunday, September 12. The taskforce believes this approach will stir up excitement for our families who have yet to come back to in-person worship, provide an opportunity for families to reconnect with one another, allow time to hold pre-registration for classes, and secure enough class facilitators.

The taskforce spent the remaining time together focused on brainstorming beyond Sunday morning. Considering the applicable survey results, each taskforce member proposed ideas and took into consideration which events and/or practices we would like to maintain, reinvent or say goodbye to. The taskforce will continue to brainstorm independently and plans to meet again. The objective of the second meeting will be a time to review and prioritize future opportunities and create short range and long range goals for implementing said opportunities for children's and youth spiritual formation. We concluded the meeting with prayer and a word of appreciation.

Conversation Flow

Ministry Council Meeting minutes for May and June were distributed as background information

Prayer and basic introductions were offered

Initial conversation was a bit scattered as we attempted to get our arms around the task at hand and the intended goal of the task force. This initial conversation included but was not limited to:

- Sunday small group time for adults
- There used to be “one hour” families who would come for middle worship while kids were in Sunday school
 - This proposed schedule seems to address the potential of adults dropping off their kids while they went to get coffee at Starbucks.
 - This line of conversation led to these questions raised:
 - What would people be doing between 10am and 11am if not in SS class?
 - What can we do to engage those who come for one hour and then leave?
 - It is easy to be in our “little groups” and so how do we add people into our little groups?

Feeling like we were getting too far away from the requested task, there was a recalibration toward the proposed 9am, 10am, 11:15am Sunday schedule and how might people grow in their involvement and participation with this proposed schedule.

The recalibration led to the insight that this proposed schedule might lead to two different psychological mindsets on Sunday mornings. These two different mindsets might impact what is proposed, generated or implemented on Sunday mornings.

Sunday Mindset Assumptions

If a ministry or opportunity is offered at 10am on Sunday, then the people who attend 9am and those who attend 11:15 might approach that 10am ministry/opportunity differently. Specifically, since those who attend 9am have gone through the work to get up to the physical property, if they do not stay for the 10am ministry/opportunity they are choosing to “opt out” of it. Conversely, if an 11:15am worshiper participates in a 10am ministry/opportunity, this person is “opting in”.

The point being that anything offered at 10am might be compelling for someone to stay a bit later but not compelling enough to arrive early. Therefore it might be important to consider these different mindsets when setting anything at 10am on Sunday.

Involvement/Participation lags relationships

The conversation turned to consider the question, “Beyond Sunday school, what other options might KUMC offer to address the opt in/out mindset and encourage involvement/participation?” Some of the points that came up in conversation were:

- Food is attractive for people in both mindsets
- Is it possible to create a culture that gives “permission to loiter”?
 - Jason noted that Sunday mornings are seeing people “loiter” after each worship service more than pre-COVID.
 - It was also noted that life for many people are also less hurried and more intentional than pre-COVID. Weekends are not as overscheduled as they used to be and this may give margin in people’s schedules to “loiter” at church.
 - It was noted that what seems to be working at the present moment is that KUMC is not overscheduled on Sundays. Perhaps there is an inverse relationship between having so many opportunities and involvement/participation - the paradox of having more opportunities to get involved leads to less involvement. And if we take involvement/participation seriously, then maybe KUMC will need to embrace limits.
 - The example of limiting VBS participants lead to greater depth of involvement/participation of KUMC membership.

The conversation began to turn toward the idea that task force members feel that it is less likely they will get involved at KUMC unless they know people and/or expectations. Suggesting that involvement/participation lags relationships. If we are going to consider involvement/participation we may need to address the barriers. Specifically getting people to know others and being very specific when we “ask”.

Identifying Barriers

The two barriers identified to meaningful involvement/participation were:

1. Not knowing others in the group
2. Not knowing the time involved

Addressing Barriers/Recommendations

There were two suggestions to address these barriers. The first recommendation is Sunday schedule specific and the second recommendation is more universal.

1. Utilize a Sunday morning 10:30am - 11:00am time - (discussed for the rest of the night as “Third Space”)
 - a. Use the 10:30am - 11:00am time for opportunities for relationship building.

- b. Once a month, as every week may contribute to the overscheduling problem
 - i. Examples
 - 1. [“Tiny desk concerts”](#)
 - 2. Small meal/food
 - 3. On site mission/service
 - 4. Lecture series
 - 5. State of Church sharing
 - 6. Upcoming months’ needs for service (“service inventory”)
 - 7. Q&A with pastors or staff
 - 8. Petting zoos
 - 9. Short films
 - 10. Coffee with pastors
 - 11. Orientation for new members or inquiring guests
 - 12. Introduction to spiritual formation practices (lectio, discernment, prayer beads, centering prayer, breath prayer, etc)
 - 13. “Spirituality of” series (...of darkness, of architecture, of meals, of daily office/time, etc.)
 - 14. Local non-profit sharing, voting, and supporting (variation of [Fort Worth Dish Out](#) as example)
- 2. Granular asks
 - a. Every ask of someone to participate or be involved is made more potent if it has as many of the following characteristics as possible:
 - i. Asked by someone who the receiver is in relationship with
 - ii. Clear on time frame involved
 - iii. A clear sense that you, specifically, are being asked - not a blanket ask
 - iv. Know someone else who is being asked and maybe even have a buddy to do this work with
 - v. Has a clear “exit ramp” that lacks shame or guilt
 - vi. Phone calls over text/email requests