

Check-In from Your Executive Committee/Diaconate

By Harriet Platts, President, and Jim Ginn, Vice President

It is all there... excitement, sadness, weariness, hopefulness... as we take next steps to discern prayerfully where we go from here. Dear Members and Friends: We're writing to provide some highlights of recent Diaconate work and to continue to extend our thanks for your many expressions of engagement over the last many months. We are working hard to continue to listen with you to your guidance, wisdom, concerns and questions as we discern the Spirit's leading in our next steps.

The Diaconate aims to move forward in a thoughtful, appropriately paced manner in response to the findings and recommendations shared by our Long-Range Planning (LRP) team in late summer. While grief is an implicit response to loss in our lives as humans, it is difficult when it feels accumulative. We realize some of the findings and recommendations in the Long-Range Planning document are causing people to feel additional grief about anticipated changes in the future, particularly with Pastor Tim's retirement in 2022. The prospect of change that can feel overwhelming in normal times can feel even more daunting in this unsettling time of COVID-19 disruption. Even so, we are also hearing a swell of enthusiasm and curiosity around LRP work and the desire to participate and contribute in a recognition that transition times such as these can provide opportunities for looking ahead. It is all there... excitement, sadness, weariness, hopefulness... as we take next steps to discern prayerfully where we go from here. The Executive Committee commits to working hard to be available to connect with you and to listen with you individually and in group settings. We also commit to regular communications, in multiple forms, as the work proceeds.

Late September, the Diaconate voted through consensus to appoint 6 Task Force teams recommended in the LRP document as well as through ongoing feedback conversations with you through the Congregation Conversations in September.

The Task Force areas include:

- Small Group Ministry
- Senior Ministry
- Becoming an Anti-Racist Church
- Pastoral Transition
- Facilities

- Governance

It's not too late if you have interest in being involved in any of this work to let us know by reaching out to Harriet Platts at president@seattlefirstbaptist.org.

In addition, the Diaconate voted to stream-line our governance structure for one year. We are clear that the work of the Task Force Groups will take priority in the next year. We also know there's work to be done in the church that Commissions have taken care of in the past. In the coming year, we'll have opportunity as a congregation to elect and support a Diaconate made up of individuals, designated as Stewards, who will represent existing Commission ministry areas. These individuals will have an assigned pastor or staff member to partner with them in determining 'essential' work and projects for next year. Also, these individuals will serve on the Diaconate to help oversee the work of the Task Force groups and other business of the church in the coming year.

We realize that coordinating the work of new task force groups as well as supporting the continuing the work of our church, requires help from people who can assist in seeing the big picture, asking good questions along the way as well as shepherding communications across all the task force groups with YOU the congregation. Generously, Jim Segaar and Joyce Phillips have volunteered to serve as Program Managers to draft task force charters and statements of work, facilitate overall communication, facilitate cross-taskforce collaboration, provide task force coaching as requested, provide guidance on the process of change, and track the work of all task forces. For more information about Joyce and Jim's work, please refer to their accompanying Spire article.

We focus on the horizon with eyes and minds open and with the assurance of guidance by The Spirit through both challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. This is our journey to travel together.