

Gainesville First United Methodist Church
Church Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 7, 2023

Laity in Attendance: Mark Alexander, David Barnett, Kimberly Barnett, Amy Britt, Amanda Bruner, Robert Bruner, Pam Cameron, Doug Carter, Tom Cole, Susan Daniell, Sally Darden, Cathy Dyches, Leslie Frierson, Nat Hancock, Ron Stowe, Frank Waggoner, Mary Wall, Robbie Westbrooks, Susan Wright

Clergy and Staff in Attendance: Michelle Alexander, Ric Clark, Carolyn Clifton, Joshua Hudson, Mark Klein, Misty Leach, Mary Lina Pardue, Jamey Prickett, Jim Reavis, Brad Shumake

Guest in Attendance: Carol Stowe

Welcome

Church Council Chair Susan Daniell welcomed all to the meeting. She introduced members new to Church Council in 2023: Mark Alexander, Amanda Bruner, Sally Darden, Jenny Floyd, Ron Stowe, Mary Wall, and Robbie Westbrooks.

Opening Prayer & Missional Focus

Joshua Hudson opened the meeting with a message of gratitude and celebration - thanking generous GFUMC members and supporters for providing \$44,661 in Christmas Eve offering to support Mike and Karen Madsen's ministry at Orphanage Emmanuel in Honduras. The funds will be put to immediate use – hiring skilled teachers, building feeding centers, and supporting other mission initiatives undertaken by the Madsens. He then offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the huge Christmas Eve offering response; he also prayed for the discernment of Church Council members in the work they undertake.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Daniell asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2022 meeting. **Motion:** Doug Carter moved to approve the minutes. Tom Cole seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

Finance Committee Report

Finance Committee Chair David Barnett reported that 2022 ended with a balanced budget, Generous gifts and tithes in 2022 resulted in an end-of-year positive position of \$1800. Chair Barnett also reported that GFUMC's four reserve funds are fully funded with a total of approximately \$1,000,000 in the four reserve funds. The budget for 2023 was also again shared. **Motion:** Robert Bruner moved to approve the Finance Committee report. Robbie Westbrooks seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

Trustees Report

Trustees Chair Tom Cole reported that all HVAC work is complete. He also reported the Trustees are currently addressing roof leak problems in the Children's Area; repair options are being considered and repair quotes are being gathered; a recommendation on repairs is forthcoming. Mark Klein reported on three stained glass window projects: 1) installation of the last large stained-glass window (from the Green Street church location) in the Children's Area; 2) installation of a new stained-glass window for the new Tech Center area (a condition of the donor gift); and 3) repair and restoration of some stained-glass windows in the Chapel. Funds for all the projects are provided by the Chrisner Fund, of which GFUMC is the sole beneficiary. Work on the three stained glass projects begins in April with completion anticipated in the summer.

SPRC Report

SPRC Chair Frank Waggoner reported that there has been no need for SPRC to meet thus far in 2023; therefore, there is no report.

Other Administrative Reports

Columbarium and Memorial Garden Committee

Chair Nat Hancock reported that all nameplates in the Columbarium are being refinished so they will be tarnish-resistant; an improved adhesive will also be used to reset the nameplates. Completion of the work is anticipated by the end of February.

Boy Scouts

Boy Scouts representative Robert Bruner reported that Troop 16 is doing well. Though the troop lost members during the pandemic the number of participants is now increasing. Scouts provided support for the recent Food Drive. Scout Sunday is February 16, 2023. Troop 16 alums, leaders, scouts, and other supporters have launched a financial campaign to fund improvements to the Scout Cabin, including electrical improvements. GFUMC Trustees are working with the Troop on this initiative.

Ministries and Missions Reports

(Celebrations, Challenges, Engagement Opportunities)

GFUMC Pre-School and Children's Ministry

Mary Lina Pardue reported that 96 families recently participated in the two Pre-School Christmas programs. Pre-School registration for the 2023-2024 school year is underway – in only two days 94 currently enrolled children have already registered, capacity for the Pre-School is 200. Registration will soon open for GFUMC members and then to the community. Mary Lina expressed the need for donations for the Pre-School Auction that will be held on April 21st. In 2022 the auction raised \$18,000 for student scholarships.

Mary Lina reported that the Children's Ministry is averaging 65 children on Sunday mornings, attendance exceeded 80 children on one recent Sunday. Many Pre-School children and families are now participating on Sunday. There are now five children's classrooms on Sundays. A new sound system has been installed in the Children's Worship Center; Mary Lina expressed appreciation for the improvement. The annual GFUMC Easter Egg Hunt is March 26th. There is a great need for both candy and plastic eggs, as well as help stuffing the eggs. Volunteers are also needed at the hunt.

Hospitality, Outreach, Evangelism

Joshua Hudson expressed appreciation to Lucy Link and friends for the beautiful "Home for the Holiday" decorations in the Gathering Room through the Advent season. Thanks were also expressed for Beth Weikle's efforts with GFUMC's float in the Green Street Christmas Parade. Over 100 children and adults represented GFUMC in the parade and 1500 plastic cups with the GFUMC logo were distributed along the parade route. Joshua again expressed appreciation for the generous Christmas Eve offering to support the Madsen's ministry in Honduras; over \$44,000 was given. GFUMC and other area UMCs will provide "Ashes to Go" on Ash Wednesday on the Gainesville Square on February 22nd. Outreach representatives are also collecting information and data as a part of a community assessment to better inform outreach needs and to better focus outreach resources.

Joshua also reported that 98 individuals joined GFUMC in 2022! Plans are underway to enhance Visitor experiences at GFUMC. As well, initiatives are in process to fully acclimate new members into the life and ministries at GFUMC, especially discipleship involvement. Volunteers are central to visitors' and new members' experiences and are always needed. Volunteers serve in a variety of roles - providing hospitality, ushering, greeting, etc.

Student Ministry

Ric Clark reported that 82 students and 23 adult volunteers participated in "Reindeer Games" in December. The program included games, food, and a message. There are 14 students participating in Confirmation, the majority are seventh graders. Laura Sumner and Amy Britt are leading the classes. Prayer cards for the Confirmands were distributed after recent worship services – Ric asked all to pray daily for the students. March 3rd-5th GFUMC students will participate in "United Weekend" along with many other local church youth groups. The program will be held at Lakewood Baptist Church. Overnight hospitality will be provided; students will participate in a service project at Good Samaritan Food Pantry. Middle-school students will participate in a Mission Trip to Memphis, TN in July. Ric asked for prayers that students and their parents prioritize church attendance. Volunteers are always needed to interact and engage with students.

Young Adults Ministry

Jamey Prickett reported for Ginnie Highsmith. The number of young adults participating in young adult ministries is increasing. A variety of activities and engagement opportunities are offered both on- and off-campus. The Prayer Walking ministry continues, and collaborations with Breanu University are planned. During Lent, an intergenerational Wednesday night program will be offered. The six-week program aligns with the "Into the Wild" Lent sermon series. A \$40,000 Beat Grant request for financial support of Young Adult Ministries has been submitted to the North Georgia Annual Conference.

Adult Discipleship

Jamey Prickett reported for Sandy Skinner. Thus far in 2023, Adult Sunday School attendance is up by 80 participants per week over the same time period in 2022. A Lent discipleship study, "The Case for Easter" by Lee Strobel will be on Wednesday evenings. Sandy will be leading the class. The same study is also offered to Adult Sunday School Classes. During Lent, "Chapel Connect," a limited Sunday School series will be held after Chapel worship from 10:45-11:45. Lay volunteers are needed to serve on the Adult Discipleship Committee.

Worship Arts

Michelle Alexander reported that the Chancel Choir welcomed many new members in January. Two new Acolytes are also serving in Classic Worship. Mary and Rick Wall are now leading the Worship Committee. Coordinators are needed for various Worship Committee responsibilities, including Advent Coordinator and Communion Coordinator.

There are two Sounds of Faith events in March: Lanier Chamber Singers Concert "Songs of Hope and Rest," (featuring the Southeastern premiere of Requiem by Michael Trotta) on March 5th, and the "Gospel of Mark: LIVE," A dramatic performance of the gospel by Rev. Joseph Morris on March 19th. Those interested in being Sounds of Faith patrons may complete that process via the GFUMC webpage.

Michelle also recognized the Children's Music Ministry. The Pre-School and First Grade choirs will be in worship on March 19th.

The new, recently completed, Production Suite is greatly enhancing all worship experiences as well as the GFUMC online presence. Michelle shared several video clips from “Together What If,” one of GFUMC’s online worship experiences. She asked that those using social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, share and comment on GFUMC’s online posts and worship opportunities.

Gainesville First Creative

Brad Shumake announced that “Gainesville First Creative” is the rebranded name for Production Arts. Gainesville First Creative is responsible for live productions (Sunday worship, special programs, etc.), online media (live streaming of worship, Together What If, etc.), and church communications. The team is currently working on the renovation of A/V systems in the Children’s Worship area, addressing sound issues in the Sanctuary Choir Loft area, and Lakeside enhancements.

Congregational Care and Senior Adults Ministry

Jim Reavis celebrated the expansion of GFUMC’s ministry to residents in personal care and assisted living facilities. In January 2022, The Phoenix was the first location for devotions, music, and communion provided by GFUMC lay and clergy. The program is now expanded to six locations (and nine different services): The Phoenix, Lanier Village Estates (three services), The Lakes of Gainesville, The Gardens of Gainesville (two services), Smokey Springs, and Manor Lake. Many volunteers are needed to lead devotions, provide music, and serve communion.

Carolyn Clifton praised Jim for his work in the senior adult community. She also recognized Mildred Smith for her efforts to help those contacting the church for financial support and other assistance – she does an excellent job managing difficult requests.

Carolyn reported that senior adults will receive Easter baskets, delivered by volunteers. The baskets and cards made by GFUMC children will be available on March 19th. Volunteers are needed to visit senior adults and deliver baskets between March 19th and Easter Sunday. Carolyn also expressed the need for Sunday morning bus drivers to provide transportation to/from some assisted living facilities and the church. While driving the large bus does require a Class One license, the smaller buses do not – a regular license suffices.

Pastoral Reflection and Vision Casting

Jamey Prickett reported that he is receiving thanks from people throughout the community, including many non-members, for GFUMC’s online worship opportunities. Many assisted living facilities are livestreaming the GFUMC worship service each Sunday morning for their residents. Kimberly Barnett thanked Jamey for the recent support provided by GFUMC members to the family of one of her students. Jamey provided the opportunity for GFUMC members to support the family, whose home was destroyed by a fire,

Jamey shared the following devotional to close the Church Council Meeting:

According to a Barna Research poll, there are currently no major US denominations where the majority is under 45 years old! This means much of Protestant Christianity will die off in the next three decades unless we do something radically different.

What you have heard tonight in these reports is our attempt to break the mold of the current state of the church. We are reaching new people, and engaging with young families, while providing excellent pastoral care to older adults in our congregation and those living in our community who may or may not be part of this congregation.

I came across a quote recently that I love. The author said, "I refuse to live in a world where gardeners guard their flowers."

The author points out that flowers are meant to be shared, and the beauty enjoyed. A flower bed is not supposed to be hidden away from others to experience.

I envision Gainesville First as a beautiful flower garden planted by God's grace. Our role as staff and leaders is to nurture and water the garden and rest in the confidence that the Lord will bring growth. And as the author says, "I refuse to live in a world where gardeners guard their flowers."

The epistle of John is clear in how we do this: "The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also" (I John 4: 21).

We love God as we love one another.

How well do you love others? And how do we love well?

My cousin is an officer in the Navy. He once shared that the best advice he got from one of his commanding officers that translates to how we love one another is:

1. Be patient - be patient with yourself, with the process, and with others.
2. Be present - stay focused on the moment
3. Be deliberate - intentional with your actions and clarity in your speech.

If we do these three things in this congregational season, the Lord will bless us with a beautiful garden many years from now. Let's stay faithful.

Closing Prayer

Rev. Prickett expressed his appreciation to all for their commitment to GFUMC's ministries, missions, and programs. He closed the meeting with prayer.

Adjournment

Chair Daniell thanked all for their attendance and reminded all about future meeting dates. The meeting was adjourned.

Next Church Council Meeting
Tuesday, April 11, 2023
at 7:00 p.m.

Future Church Council Meeting Dates
at 7:00 p.m.
June 13, 2023
August 8, 2023
October 10, 2023
December 12, 2023