

**Gainesville First United Methodist Church**  
**Church Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, August 8, 2023**

**Laity in Attendance:** Mark Alexander, David Barnett, Kimberly Barnett, Amy Britt, Amanda Bruner, Robert Bruner, Pam Cameron, Doug Carter, Shannon Casas, Heather Chandler, Tom Cole, Susan Daniell, Sally Darden, Jimmy DeFoor, Jenny Floyd, Nat Hancock, Nancy Story, Ron Stowe, Frank Waggoner, Robbie Westbrooks, Susan Wright

**Clergy and Staff in Attendance:** Michelle Alexander, Joshua Hudson, Mark Klein, Misty Leach, Mary Lina Pardue, Jamey Prickett, Jim Reavis, Brad Shumake, Sandy Skinner

**Guest in Attendance:** None

### **Welcome**

Church Council Chair Susan Daniell welcomed all to the meeting and expressed thanks for attending. The fall season is off to an exciting start. God is on the move across all the ministry areas at GFUMC!

### **Opening Prayer**

Michelle Alexander offered the opening prayer.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Daniell asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 13, 2023 meeting. **Motion:** Tom Cole moved to approve the minutes. Robbie Westbrooks seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

### **Finance Committee Report**

The financial report was distributed with the minutes of the August Church Council Meeting. Finance Committee Chair David Barnett reported that the operating budget (revenues and expenditures) is as projected for this point of the year. Revenues are \$183,000 under budget; however, that is anticipated to correct in November and December with end-of-year giving. All expense categories are within normal ranges for our 2023 budget for this time of year. Reserve funds remain strong with just under \$1,000,000 total in the three funds (Operating, Restricted, and Employee Tax Credit). **Motion:** Doug Carter moved to approve the Finance Committee report. Ron Stowe seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

### **Trustees Report**

Trustees Chair Tom Cole reported that the Trustees met in July and addressed several items. The Corp of Engineers lease has been renewed for another 10 years. The stained-glass project continues (repair and replacement in various locations).

Tom and Brad Shumake then presented information and illustrations on the Sanctuary Project. The project involves the installation of two large screens (10.5' x 6') in the front of the Sanctuary. The screens will be trimmed in wood compatible with the wood features in the Sanctuary. The metal components supporting the screens will resemble the metal chains suspending the existing larger lights in the Sanctuary. The screens will enhance traditional worship services, special events, concerts, weddings, baptisms, etc. It was asked if the utilization of the screens would replace hymnals in the pews – hymnals and pew Bibles will remain in the pews. Costs associated with the installation of the screens will be covered by a donation specifically for the purpose of Sanctuary enhancements. Opportunities for conversations about the project will be provided, and

Jamey indicated he is available for individual and/or group conversations about the project. Additional details of the project will be provided to the Church Council for another discussion before the project begins.

### **SPRC Report**

SPRC Chair Frank Waggoner reported on the recent changes in leadership in the Student Ministries area. Ginnie Highsmith and Joshua Hudson are providing leadership on an interim basis until the position of Director of Student Ministries is filled. Michelle Alexander and Johnny Summers are assisting with youth worship services. Jamey reported that there is good energy and renewed enthusiasm in the program from students, as well as their parents.

### **Bridge Builders Initiative**

Revs. Joshua Hudson and Sandy Skinner provided a detailed presentation on the Bridge Builders Initiative launching at GFUMC. The program is an outgrowth of a 16-week Fresh Expressions program Joshua and Sandy participated in. The program is a collaboration across Evangelism, Hospitality, and Adult Discipleship ministry areas. There are three components of the program that build upon each other:

- 1) the “first touch” with visitors as they start their relationship with GFUMC and our members; various activities and opportunities underlie this phase (Meet the Pastor, Navigators, QR Codes, Children’s Ministry, etc.).
- 2) Bridge Builders 1.0, a three-week program to provide further information on GFUMC and the United Methodist Church; and
- 3) Bridge Builders 2.0 and 3.0, two multi-week Adult Discipleship programs open to all in the church, designed to launch participants’ “Journey of Discipleship” which includes the discovery of their gifts and talents, fully acclimating individuals in the life of the church, develop future church leaders, etc.

**Other Ministry Reports** (NOTE: to provide extended time for the Bridge Builders Initiative the following reports were submitted in writing for inclusion in the minutes.)

#### **Visitation** (Jim Reavis)

Volunteers are always needed to assist with music, communion, and devotion our 12 monthly opportunities at assisted living facilities in the community.

#### **Adult Discipleship** (Rev. Sandy Skinner)

There is great excitement about Fall Kick-off of Bible Studies and Wednesday Night Meals. Our 2nd Annual Women's Event, “Woven,” is Friday, September 15th, registration is open, and it will be a special evening. Please Pray for good weather! I am meeting with Sandy is meeting with a team of men to possibly plan a Men's Event this Fall.

#### **Outreach and Hospitality** (Rev. Joshua Hudson)

Outreach is in a season of reviewing and awarding grants to local and global organizations. Outreach is going to be working on creating alignment around service projects and sermon series. Hospitality is launching the Navigator team and launching a new process for visitor assimilation.

#### **Congregational Care and Senior Adult Ministry** (Rev. Carolyn Clifton)

Worship at the Ashton begins this month bringing our total to 11 assisted living worship services each month. Coming up this Fall: “Forget Me Not” card ministry packet distribution on August 27, Grief group begins September 5<sup>th</sup> and Centering Prayer begins September 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **Foster Care Ministry** (Misty Leach)

The recent Back to School Bash, a partnership with Jockey (\$3,000 grant for this event) was a great success. Twelve volunteers and over 175 kids attended this free event to receive school supplies, bookbags, homemade casseroles, and Kona Ice. Over 2,900 diapers were donated to Wellroot and DFCS for foster families. A Foster Care Lunch and Learn is scheduled for Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **Modern Worship and Chapel Worship** (Michelle Alexander)

Some individual members along with Johnny Summers from the Chapel Team will help Student Ministries worship on Sunday evenings. The Chapel and Production Team Fall Picnic is scheduled for October 1<sup>st</sup> at Butler Park from 12:00-2:00 p.m.

### **Preschool and Children's Ministry** (Mary Lina Pardue)

The preschool staff is preparing for the new year! 185 students are registered, and the classrooms are fully staffed with 35 teachers. Preplanning begins August 15<sup>th</sup> and students begin August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Wednesday Night Bridges begins on August 16<sup>th</sup> with a water party. The first service project is on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. We'll be painting bowls for the Empty Bowl Luncheon. The program continues to grow – children are divided into smaller groups by age in order to be effective in caring for and teaching all ages.

### **Student Ministry & Young Adults Ministry** (Ginnie Highsmith)

Sunday night 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade worship and fellowship, called 527, starts on Sunday, August 13<sup>th</sup>. Tuesday morning breakfast and devotional at Longstreet Cafe, Jumpstart, starts on August 15<sup>th</sup>, and Wednesday nights start on August 16<sup>th</sup>. Off The Grid, a retreat of rest, recreation, and community, is planned for October 20<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> for all 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> graders. Young Adults will help with move-in of students at Brenau in August. Life Hacks and Deep Dive start this Fall.

### **Pastoral Update, Reflection and Vision Casting**

Rev. Jamey Prickett provided a membership update since January 2023: 1) transferred out (death, moved out-of-town, joined another church) - 118 individuals; 2) received into membership - 49 individuals; 3) professions of faith – 18 (goal is 20 by the end of 2023).

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

May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. - Matthew 6:10

My son had someone pull out in front of him this week, which caused him to jerk the steering wheel hard to the right and run off the road. Luckily, there was no damage to his truck, but he called me and said, "Dad, the truck doesn't seem to want to drive in a straight line. I have to turn it to keep it on the road."

His truck was out of alignment.

Vehicles are not the only thing that gets out of alignment. Our lives can be quick to get out of alignment. Decisions we make or decisions someone makes for us can get us out of alignment.

An airplane set for a certain destination moves slightly off-course and will end up far away from its destination. And it might be an almost unnoticeable degree, but as it flies along it becomes more obvious and the destination is lost.

We pray in the Lord's Prayer, "May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In the prayer, we are praying for our earthly purpose to be aligned with God's heavenly will.

Just like vehicles and personal lives can steer off-course, so can organizations. As senior pastor, one of the things I am stressing to our staff is the value of alignment. I am grateful that we are a staff committed to doing God's will and doing it side-by-side. We have a staff alignment that is working toward ensuring our church stays on course with the direction the Lord is leading us.

How do we, as a congregation, focus on alignment? Here are some questions I have been asking myself:

1. How can what we do as a church tip the scales of society away from more fear and division and toward the love of neighbor and love of God?
2. How do we focus on solutions instead of adding to more problems that the world doesn't need?
3. Healing is not found in the running back to the place in your past that created the pain, so how do we help people move forward to finding purpose in God's kingdom?

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. - Proverbs 3: 5 - 6 NLT*

Jamey closed 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, October 10, 2023**  
**at 7:00 p.m.**

**Future Church Council Meeting Dates**  
**at 7:00 p.m.**  
December 12, 2023

**NOTE:** After the August 8, 2023 Church Council Meeting the date for the Northeast District Charge Conference was announced as October 8, 2023. As a result, the next Church Council Meeting date was changed from October 10, 2023 to September 26, 2023 in order to complete and approve necessary reports for Charge Conference.