

Gainesville First United Methodist Church
Church Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 26, 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, Cathy Dyches, Headen Embry, Nat Hancock, Nancy Story, Frank Waggoner, Mary Wall, Susan Wright

Clergy and Staff in Attendance: Michelle Alexander, Carolyn Clifton, Ginnie Highsmith, Joshua Hudson, Mark Klein, Misty Leach, Mary Lina Pardue, Jamey Prickett, Sandy Skinner

Guest in Attendance: Anna Pardue

WELCOME

Church Council Chair Susan Daniell welcomed all to the meeting. There is great excitement around GFUMC from the youngest to oldest, across preferred worship styles, and across all perspectives. God is on indeed staying “on the move” at GFUMC. We are being presented with many ministry, outreach, and hospitality opportunities. Thank you to all who are responding as Bridge Builders inside our walls, in our community, and far beyond.

OPENING PRAYER

Sally Darden, chair of the Outreach Committee, offered the opening prayer.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Daniell asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2023 meeting. **Motion:** Doug Carter moved to approve the minutes. David Barnett seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Lay Leadership/Nominations

Lay Leadership Chair, Doug Carter presented the recommendations of the Lay Leadership Committee regarding the laity serving on committees and teams at GFUMC in 2024. He expressed thanks to Lay Leadership Committee members, and GFUMC clergy and staff for their efforts to review nominations and contact those nominated to secure commitments. Jamey noted that many members responded to the call for nominations, indicating an excitement and willingness to serve. **Motion:** Doug Carter moved to approve the Lay Leadership Committee recommendations. Robert Bruner seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

Finance Committee

The financial report was distributed as a part of the meeting packet. Finance Committee Chair David Barnett reported that as of August 31, 2023 revenues are \$110,000 less than the same point in 2022 and expenditures are \$60,000 more than the same point in 2022, resulting in a \$357,000 operating loss. However, several major expenses reflected in the operating budget will be paid by designated restricted funds in December as planned. Reserve funds remain strong with just under \$1,000,000 total in the three funds (Operating, Restricted, and Employee Tax Credit). Chair Barnett expressed the opinion that we will finish 2023 on a positive note.

In place of an audit of 2022 finances, GFUMC contracted with Tillman, Bailey, Samples, LLC to conduct an “agreed upon procedures” and “internal controls” review of several business processes – cash management, giving receipts, and credit card transactions. Kathy Tillman presented the findings and recommendations of the review. She recommended several “best practices” to improve outcomes. Mark Klein reported that all recommended practices have already or soon will be fully implemented.

Motion: Susan Wright moved to approve the Finance Committee report. Headen Embry seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

Trustees

Trustees Chair Tom Cole reminded all that Omar Hernandez, maintenance supervisor at GFUMC, has taken care of many projects in the church and around the church campus that we previously paid outside businesses to address. Tom said the Trustees are very pleased with Omar’s performance. Tom reported that the stained-glass project continues; though progress is slow, projects are being worked on. The only report on the sanctuary improvement project is that Scroggs and Grizzle are working on structural design drawings for consideration by the Trustees.

Staff Parish Relations Committee

SPRC Chair Frank Waggoner reported that SPRC has recently completed individual meetings with each of our four clergy. All received excellent reviews. The SPRC expressed appreciation for our outstanding clergy and the way they lead the ministries and missions of GFUMC. The SPRC is recommending a 4% salary increase for each clergy member. This figure is pending based on the Finance Committee’s budget preparation and recommendations for the 2024 budget. **Motion:** Frank Waggoner moved to approve the SPRC recommendation. Doug Carter seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

Columbarium and Memorial Garden Committee

Nat Hancock reported there has been a 5-6 week delay in receipt of new plaques for the Columbarium due to broken equipment at the foundry that produces the plaques. It is anticipated that all will be current very soon. Nat also reported that the renewal of the landscape contract for maintenance of the memorial garden is being negotiated. He noted that of the 144 spaces in the Columbarium, about half are already in use or reserved.

Memorial Fund

Jimmy DeFoor distributed the recently revised Memorial Fund brochure which details the work of the committee and the projects funded. He reiterated that the Memorial Fund is completely funded by contributions and that the fund considers requests for needs not a part of the church budget. The committee meets quarterly to consider requests. Examples of recently funded projects include partial funding of sound equipment for the modern worship space, new carpet in the church office, partial funding for new furniture for the church office, and reconfiguring several chairs with arms (the need) for the sanctuary.

Endowment Trust Fund

Heather Chandler reported that the Endowment Fund Committee will receive requests for funding for 2024 during October. The fund provides support for unbudgeted requests and needs both internal to GFUMC and in the community and beyond. Examples of recently designated support include Pre-School scholarships, partial funding for an inclusive playground at Wauka Mountain Elementary, operating budget support for the Wesley Foundation at UNG, and enhancements for the Children’s Worship area.

Boy Scouts

Robert Bruner reported that Troop 16 is growing and spirits are high among troop members and leaders. The annual Chicken Que is November 5th; tickets will be available from Scouts on Sundays throughout October.

APPROVAL OF LAY SERVANT

Church Council Chair, Susan Daniell recommended the approval of Jim Reavis as a Lay Servant in the UMC for 2024. **Motion:** Susan Wright moved to approve the recommendation. Frank Waggoner seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

MINISTRIES AND MISSIONS REPORTS

Adult Discipleship

Rev. Sandy Skinner celebrated the wonderful success of the 2nd Annual Women's Ministry event, "Woven." The event featured a wonderful message from Rev. Mary Hemmer, special music by Vanessa Ellison, Bella Scarlett, and Michelle Alexander, and a delicious meal. A generationally, ethnically, and ecumenically diverse group of 186 women enjoyed the inspiring event. Sand also recognized and thanked the Woven planning committee. A Men's Ministry event, "Welded," is planned for November 30th, featuring a low country boil and oyster roast.

Outreach and Hospitality

Rev. Joshua Hudson celebrated the training and recent launch of the Navigators ministry. Things are going well and feedback is positive. The Outreach Committee recently completed a detailed process of reviewing outreach grant applications for 2024. Joshua commended the Outreach Committee for their hard work and prayerful consideration resulting in decisions on Outreach funding for 2024 to both local and global partners. The Hospitality Committee is excited about the upcoming Advent and Christmas season, leaning into the theme of JOY.

Worship Arts

Michelle Alexander reported on the celebration of Keith Jeffcoat's 30-year ministry at GFUMC. On October 15th a ticketed concert, "Songs of Appalachia," featuring the Chuck Nation Band, the Lanier Chamber Singers, and the GFUMC Chancel Choir will be presented at GFUMC. Michelle also mentioned the upcoming "coffee shop" style worship planned for Modern Worship, and the annual Christmas Festival Concert on December 17th. Michelle acknowledged the energy and enthusiasm of the various music teams and the production teams.

Pre-School and Children's Ministry

Mary Lina Pardue reported that the start of the pre-school year went very well with record enrollment. Four classes were added this year (over the 2022-2023 school year). Most growth has been in the younger classroom groups. Children's Ministry is also experiencing growth. Each month the kids will have a service project such as painting bowls for the Empty Bowl Luncheon and packing Backpacks for Love. Looking forward the kids will participate in the Faithology Retreat, Truck or Treat, First Bibles, and the annual Christmas program.

Caring Council and Senior Adult Ministries

Carolyn Clifton celebrated the longstanding Gadabouts Program. Gadabouts provides meaningful connections every week, year-round. In addition to participation by many GFUMC senior adults, participants come from

throughout the community. Caring Council will again coordinate the Longest Night Service, a meaningful and beautiful service providing calm and comfort in the midst of the busy Christmas season.

MINISTRY CELEBRATION (STUDENT AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES)

Ginnie Highsmith is serving as Interim Director of Student Ministries, in addition to her responsibilities as Director of Young Adult Ministries. Ginnie reports there is new life, energy, and excitement in the Student Ministries program. The school year kicked-off with a Pool Party attended by more than 50 students. The Student Ministries program components are Sunday Brunch Bunch on Sunday mornings, 527 on Sunday evenings, Jumpstart at Longstreet Café on Tuesday mornings, and Midweek Bible Study on Wednesday evenings. 527 provides fellowship, supper, games, and worship.

527 and all of the Student Ministry programs are designed to intentionally provide for connections among students, leaders, and the larger church community. Ginnie and other leaders meet students on “their turf” by attending school and community events that students participate in outside of church. Ginnie reported on many upcoming Student Ministry opportunities, including “Off the Grid” retreat in October, NHHS and CHS Tailgate Party, Friendsgiving Dinner, 527 Halloween event, and Confirmation Retreat. A Student Min parent team is being developed. Ginnie asked for help in identifying 6th – 12th grade students who have disengaged from the program; she is interested in reaching out to these students and their parents to try to reengage them with Student Ministries. Ginnie expressed appreciation for the volunteer leaders and also for Joshua and Carolyn who are assisting with Midweek Bible Study and small groups on Wednesday evenings. Young Adult Ministry programs are also going very well. Many members of Church Council expressed their appreciation for the GFUMC staff, clergy, and program volunteers who are working so intentionally and diligently to reinvigorate the GFUMC Student Ministry program.

PASTORAL UPDATES AND VISION CASTING

Rev. Jamey Prickett reported that 93 individuals have removed their membership from GFUMC since the start of 2023. In the same time period, GFUMC has received 52 new members, which includes 32 individuals who have joined and 20 professions of faith (14 confirmands and 6 others). The 2023 professions of faith goal of 20 has been reached, and hopefully will be exceeded by the end of the year! So far in 2023 there have been 27 deaths of GFUMC members.

The Stewardship sermon series theme “The How To Be Rich,” will cover four Sundays in October. Jamey explained that in a world that often measures being rich in material possessions, this sermon series seeks to redirect our focus towards a different kind of richness - one built on the foundations of joy, love, and care for others. Inspired by the teachings of Jesus and the wisdom found in the Scriptures, this series will guide us on a transformative journey to discover the true treasures of the heart.

Jamey concluded his report by vision casting for 2024 that GFUMC be an Andrew Church.” One of the coolest characters of scripture is an early disciple named Andrew. He doesn’t get much press time because he simply doesn’t stand out like some others. But every time we read about Andrew in scripture, he invites someone to Jesus. He starts out as a disciple of John the Baptist. After John baptized Jesus, Andrew began to follow Jesus. The first thing he does is bring his brother, Peter, to come and see Jesus. Peter becomes a follower. Later, we have the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand on a hillside with five loaves of bread and two fish. Guess who brought the boy to Jesus? Yep, Andrew. Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus had some Greeks who came wanting to see him. They find Philip, who then finds Andrew, and together, they take the Greeks to see Jesus. This guy cannot stop bringing people to Jesus. He keeps telling people about Jesus and offering them a

simple invitation to come and see, to come and experience, to come and be a part of something that will change your life. His faith is contagious. It is something that he cannot keep to himself. He has to share it. He has to tell others.

The church is lacking in Andrew's today. Less than 2% of those who profess to be followers of Jesus have shared their faith. On the other side of that coin, only 3% of all missionary work is devoted to reaching the unreached people groups – those who have never heard the story of Jesus. The story of Jesus cannot be Good News if we keep it to ourselves. It is only Good News if we invite others to “come and see.”

As we plan for 2024, we will position ourselves to be an Andrew Church – a culture where we intentionally invite people to encounter Jesus!

CLOSING PRAYER

Jamey ended by closing the meeting with prayer.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Daniell thanked all for their attendance and reminded all about the December 12th meeting date. (There is not a Church Council Meeting in October.) The meeting was adjourned.

Next Church Council Meeting

December 12, 2023

at 7:00 p.m.