

## Gainesville First United Methodist Church

Tuesday, April 11, 2023

### Church Council Meeting Minutes

**Laity in Attendance:** Mark Alexander, David Barnett, Kimberly Barnett, Amy Britt, Amanda Bruner, Robert Bruner, Pam Cameron, Shannon Casas, Tom Cole, Susan Daniell, Sally Darden, Jimmy DeFoor, Headen Embry, Jenny Floyd, Leslie Frierson, Nat Hancock, Lee Highsmith, Nancy Story, Ron Stowe, Frank Waggoner, Mary Wall, Robbie Westbrooks, Susan Wright

**Clergy and Staff in Attendance:** Michelle Alexander, Ric Clark, Carolyn Clifton, Ginnie Highsmith, Joshua Hudson, Mark Klein, Misty Leach, MaryLina Pardue, Chase Porter, Jamey Prickett, Jim Reavis

**Guests in Attendance:** None

### **Welcome**

Church Council Chair Susan Daniell welcomed all to the meeting. She introduced members attending their first Church Council Meeting: Shannon Casas and Jenny Floyd. She thanked all for their attendance at the meeting. Chair Daniell further expressed gratitude for all the clergy, staff, and laity working together to assure such a meaningful Lent and Easter season at GFUMC. It is clear that “God is on the move” at GFUMC.

### **Missional Focus & Opening Prayer**

MaryLina Pardue opened the meeting with a message of gratitude and celebration for the generous volunteer and financial support the Children’s Ministry (First Kids) and the GFUMC Pre-School receive. She reported that participation in First Kids programs on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights continues to grow, with about 70 children participating on those days. GFUMC recently hosted the annual Easter Egg Hunt, welcoming the community to our campus. Lunch was served to 300 church families before the hunt. Children hunted over 7000 eggs. It was also reported that Pre-School registration for the 2023-2024 school year is going well – several classes are already full. The annual Pre-School Auction is upcoming with hopes of raising \$15,000 for Pre-School scholarships.

MaryLina then communicated that First Kids and Pre-School participation, and activities are certainly worthy of celebration, yet there is a bigger “something” woven through the successes we celebrate – that is the teamwork and collaboration between and among the ministries at GFUMC. Intentional outreach is made to families expressing interest in GFUMC on Pre-School registration forms. Pre-School families receive consistent communications and invitations to First Kids and other GFUMC ministry programs, such as Back to School Blessing, Parenting Hacks, Woven, Trunk of Treat, VBS, Lent Studies, Adult Discipleship programs, and more. Likewise, GFUMC families receive information and communications about Pre-School opportunities. There are now 40 children and their families involved in both Pre-School and First Kids programs. Mary pointed out that kids do not bring themselves to church – parents bring them. Parents are much more likely to bring their children to church if there are meaningful and engaging activities for the parents to participate in. Intentional collaboration across the various ministries at GFUMC makes these opportunities possible and the result is growth in families with young children at GFUMC! MaryLina then offered the opening prayer.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Daniell asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 7, 2023, meeting. **Motion:** Lee Highsmith moved to approve the minutes. Ron Stowe seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

## **Finance Committee Report**

Finance Committee Chair David Barnett reported that GFUMC member, Michael Floyd, has graciously accepted the position of Church Treasurer.

As of February 28, 2023 revenues for 2023 are \$543,139 and expenditures are \$522,910, yielding a positive position of \$20,229 through the first two months of 2023. Chair Barnett also reported that results of the 2021 Audit have been received from CRI, with an unmodified opinion and no findings of material weakness. The Finance Committee is exploring the option of conducting an Agreed Upon Procedures and Review of Internal Controls for the 2022 fiscal year. Doing so will reduce the cost and time involved in a full audit. **Motion:** Ron Stowe moved to accept the Finance Committee Report as presented. Hayden Embry seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

## **Trustees Report**

Trustee Chair Tom Cole reported the Trustees met in March 2023. He provided updates on several projects: 1) repairs on the South Wing flat roof are almost complete, North Wing repairs will be done between the end of the pre-school year and the start of Vacation Bible School; 2) carpeting in the entry area of the Office Suite is complete; 3) no updates on Scout Cabin repairs; 4) the Mother's Room is undergoing updating; 5) the three stained glass window projects are scheduled for completion by the end of May (installation of window in Children's Area, installation of small window in Technical Suite, and repair of Chapel window); and 6) the trailer used by Student Ministries was stolen from the upper parking lot, though it is not known when this occurred, a new trailer has been purchased and is secured in the front parking lot

Chair Cole also announced that Omar Hernandez has been hired as the full-time Director of Operations at GFUMC.

## **SPRC**

SPRC Chair Frank Waggoner shared there is no report from SPRC.

## **Other Administrative Reports**

### **Boy Scouts**

Robert Bruner reported the Scouts continue to volunteer with many programs and projects at GFUMC. He asked Church Council members to continue to share information about the Scouting program. He also commended Will Britt for recently obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout.

### **Columbarium and Memorial Garden Committee**

Committee Chair Nat Hancock reported the nameplate refurbishing project is complete. He encouraged Church Council members to take a moment to visit the Columbarium to see the outcome of the project.

### **Ministries and Missions Reports**

#### **(Celebrations, Challenges, and Engagement Opportunities)**

#### **Gainesville First Creative**

Chase Porter shared information on the weekly "Together What If" video ministry and encouraged all to view the weekly segments released each Sunday.

## **Worship Arts**

Michelle Alexander reported that the Modern Worship team is collaborating with Ginnie Highsmith and Young Adults Ministry to develop and further involve young adults in Modern Worship and as worship leaders. Michelle is also actively making connections with clergy and members at Saint Paul Summit Street.

Michelle also reported on several recent concerts and programs hosted by Worship Arts, including two Sounds of Faith concerts, Mark's Gospel LIVE, and the UGA British Brass band. Coming up are concerts by The Lanier Chamber Singers and the Believers Concert Band. More information may be found on the Worship Arts events page on the GFUMC website. Michelle encouraged all to invite friends, coworkers, and neighbors to Worship Arts events as these events often lead attendees to connect with worship and fellowship opportunities.

GFUMC Children's Choirs have sung in Classic and Modern worship recently. The Chancel Choir was commended for providing beautiful music throughout Lent, including the Maundy Thursday and Easter worship services.

## **Outreach, Evangelism, Hospitality**

Joshua Hudson reported that the Evangelism initiative "Ashes to Go" on the Square on Ash Wednesday was well-attended and appreciated by those receiving ashes and prayers from GFUMC clergy, alongside Saint Paul Summit Street, Saint Paul Washington Street, and Antioch United Methodist Churches.

Recent Outreach activities and work includes providing lunch for teachers and staff at Riverbend Elementary School, collecting supplies for the Uvilla, Honduras mission trip, and participating in the dedication and blessing of two new Habitat for Humanity homes. The Outreach Committee has also been conducting a needs assessment with many of the community agencies and programs in the Gainesville-Hall County area. Client mental health challenges consistently emerge as the primary concern and need across the agencies. The six questions asked of all agencies and programs are: 1) What is the greatest need facing your organization, post pandemic? 2) In what ways does mental health affect the population that you serve? 3) When you encounter mental health issues what resources have you found to be available and effective in Hall County? 4) When you think about the needs of the people of Hall County in a general sense, what gaps in services are you noticing? 5) Where are people and various needs falling through the cracks? 6) How might Gainesville First UMC better support your organization?

Joshua reported the following activities and opportunities are ahead in the next couple of months: 1) Honduras Mission trip sign ups; 2) Cook out for after April 16<sup>th</sup> to launch the Lakeside season; 3) Cook out on Memorial Day Sunday, May 28<sup>th</sup>; 4) Bridge Builders Luncheon on April 30<sup>th</sup> for new members from last quarter and visitors; 5) Feeding Enota Elementary (April 18<sup>th</sup>) and Centennial (April 20<sup>th</sup>) Elementary Schools; 6) Path end-of-year parties on May 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>; 7) hiking with "Luke 5 Adventures," providing a day hike for hikers in wheelchairs on May 8<sup>th</sup>; 8) Red Cross Blood Drive on May 8<sup>th</sup>; and 9) Path Project Five-Year Celebration on June 4<sup>th</sup>.

## **Congregational Care and Senior Adult Ministries**

Jim Reavis reported that two additional senior living-personal care locations were recently added to our

visitation sites. GFUMC now provides devotionals, music, and communion in nine sites in our community. Thirty-four individuals are now involved in the ministry. In March 2023 approximately 190 residents attended the devotional times.

Carolyn Clifton reported that GFUMC members delivered Easter Baskets to 70 church members who are not frequently in worship or who are unable to worship in person. The baskets contained treats plus a clay cross made by the children in Kids Ministry. Another 15 members who live further away received a card signed by the pastors with an Easter note and a picture of the chancel decorated for Easter. Gadabouts continue to meet weekly on Wednesdays with improved attendance. Carolyn also reported that GFUMC is partnering with Legacy Link to provide a 10-week Bingocize class, an evidence-based program exercise and educational program for disease prevention that also offers fun and fellowship (April 17th – June 23<sup>rd</sup>).

GFUMC will host the Parkinson's Foundation for half-day workshop on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Carolyn recognized and thanked ministry servants who assembled the Easter baskets and who delivered them, those who assist with communion ministries, individuals who knit prayer shawls and stitch prayer quilts, those who work hard to keep the Memorial Garden and Columbarium maintained and beautiful, Stephen Ministers who serve quietly in confidential relationships walking with those experiencing difficult times, and Doug and BJ Jensen and their ministry with the grief support group.

### **Adult Discipleship**

Sandy Skinner detailed Adult Discipleship offerings recently happening at GFUMC, including 1) Chapel Connect offered for the Lenten Season where the Chapel worshippers met after the service and had discussion around the Chape's service and sermon series. We will launch Chapel Connect in the fall, starting on September 10<sup>th</sup>. There was great involvement with Winter/Spring Wednesday Night programs, including Parenting Hacks 2.0, Deep Dive into the Wilderness led by Jamey and Ginnie, and The Case for Easter during Lent.

Over the Summer Joshua and Sandy plan on revamping and creating a program that will help members (new and current) find their place in serving the church and community while achieving personal spiritual growth. In the Fall, in addition to launching our Discipleship Studies, Sunday School Classes will be "showcased" to promote classes to those who do not belong to one yet.

### **Young Adults**

Ginnie Highsmith reported that Tuesday Night Young Adult gatherings continue, providing those in their 20s a small group connection. Many young adults participated in "Into the Wild Deep Dive." The Young Adult Spring Mixer will be May 3<sup>rd</sup> at GFMUC. Summer movie nights are being planned and other fellowship opportunities are being explored.

### **Student Ministry**

Ric Clark celebrated the 2023 Confirmation Class which met weekly from January 29<sup>th</sup> to March 26<sup>th</sup>. At the Confirmation Service on April 16<sup>th</sup> fourteen students will be confirmed, four are being baptized. In March 19

students and six adults attended United Weekend alongside other youth groups from eleven Gainesville area churches. On May 21st, High School Graduates will be recognized and celebrated in all services.

Student Ministries plans a “Summer of Service” including a Mission Trip to Memphis, TN in July. Other summer activities and opportunities include participating in GAP (Gainesville Adi Project) June 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, and serving the homeless on June 29th and July 12th.

### **Pastoral Reflection and Vision Casting**

Jamey Prickett provided a membership update since January 2023: 1) transferred out (death, moved out-of-town, joined another church) – 66 individuals; 2) received info membership – 18 individuals; 3) professions of faith – 4 individuals. The weekly attendance average has increased from 507 in January 2023 to 617 in March 2023. Jamey further explained that our year-end goal is to average 800 per week by December 2023. This is possible as our people continue to invite and encourage others to attend and with a commitment to excellence from the worship staff. We give glory to God for growth. We simply plant the seeds. He asked all on Church Council to commit to pray weekly for and personally invite one person to worship with you.

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

The Gospel of John ends by saying, *“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (John 20: 30 - 31)* and, *“There are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21: 25).*

Two lessons I learn from this statement:

1. When life is over, all someone has of us is a story to tell.
2. The people telling our life stories will be the ones we choose to invest in personally.

When someone looks back on your life, and there is nothing but a story to tell, what story do you want to be told?

Someone recently asked me that question, and if I am honest, it has forced me to self-reflect. The choices we make in the present will determine what is shared about us in the future.

The story I want to be shared involves risk-taking, loving deeply, and being grace-filled. I don't want there to be said at the end of my life; he always played it safe, had a critical spirit, and made a point to judge every decision.

What about you? What story do you want to be told about yourself?

The people you choose to invest in will be the ones who will be telling it. So, invest wisely.

As we move into the future, I think about this for our church. How do we want people who reflect on Gainesville First United Methodist Church? For me, it is to tell the story that this is where their family was loved into the kingdom of God, where they encountered God's grace, and where they met Jesus through an invitation to be present.

### **Adjournment**

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

#### **Next Church Council Meeting**

June 13, 2023

at 7:00 p.m.

#### **Future Church Council Meetings**

August 8, 2023

October 10, 2023

December 12, 2023