

Gainesville First United Methodist Church
Church Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Laity in Attendance: Mark Alexander, David Barnett, Amy Britt, Amanda Bruner, Robert Bruner, Shannon Casas, Nathan Crumley, Susan Daniell, Sally Darden, Jimmy DeFoor, Mary Hamilton Erickson, Leslie Frierson, Jake Gailey, Lee Highsmith, Tim Mooney, Anna Pardue, Ron Stowe, Laura Sumner, Frank Waggoner, Janet Walden, Mary Wall, Laura Williams

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

Guest in Attendance:

OPENING PRAYER

Amy Britt, Lay Leader, offered the opening prayer.

WELCOME & RECOGNITION OF NEW CHURCH MEMBERS

Church Council Chair Susan Daniell welcomed all to the meeting. Chair Daniell recognized and welcomed the 14 new 2024 Church Council Members: David Barnett (returning – now as Generosity Team chair), Nathan Crumley (Lay Leader), Beth Curry (Member At-Large), David Dye (Finance Committee Chair), Mary Hamilton Erickson (Young Adult Team Representative), Jake Gailey (Trustee Chair), Barb Mistarz (Member At-Large), Tim Mooney (Member At-Large), Anna Pardue (Member At-Large, Student Ministry Representative), Helen Perdue (Church Council Secretary), Laura Sumner (Endowment Trust Fund Chair), Tracy Vardeman (Lay Leader), Janey Walden (Lay Delegate to Annual Conference), Jerry Ward (Columbarium and Memorial Gardens Care Committee Chair). These 14 join the 20 lay members continuing their service on Church Council.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Daniell asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2023 meeting. **Motion:** Robert Bruner moved to approve the minutes. Leslie Frierson seconded. All in favor, none opposed. **Motion carried.**

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Finance Committee Report

There was not a formal Finance Committee report. However, in Finance Chair David Dye's absence, Susan Daniell gave three updates:

2023 EOY status: Ended the year with giving revenue \$85,985 under budget, other income (interest) of \$47,282 over budget, yielding total revenue under budget of \$38,703 for the year. The cash position of the church remains very strong. At the end of the year there was over \$1,800,000 in unrestricted, restricted, and reserve accounts.

2024 Budget: The \$2,964,000 budget is \$176,000 less than the 2023 budget (5.6% less). It was noted that the budget reductions do not impact any ministries, programs, and outreach of the church. Most reductions are from the Trustees budget line.

2024 status (through January 31, 2024): \$391,543 in revenue received, this is 13.2% of the annual budget. Expenses total \$284,521, which is 10.6% of the annual budget. Some individuals have paid their entire 2024 pledge in January. Though only one month into 2024, this is an excellent start.

Trustees Report

Trustee Chair, Jake Gailey, reported that refurbishing of the front entrance area (front door area) is complete, the cost of which was underwritten by an anonymous donor. The exterior trim of the Chapel stained glass windows has been repaired/replaced. The stained-glass project for the Creative Suite is complete, and the remaining stained glass (from the downtown building) is scheduled for installation in the Children's Area this spring.

Projects planned for 2024 include painting of the exterior wood trim on the front of the church and the front doors, gutter repairs, and installation of confidence monitors at the back of the sanctuary. The Trustees continue to review and explore options for necessary repairs to the Scout Cabin.

SPRC Report

There was no report from the SPRC.

Columbarium and Memorial Garden Committee

Rev. Prickett reported for the Columbarium and Memorial Garden Committee. The plaque replacement/refurbishing project is complete, though deliver of new plaques (when needed) is very slow. In 2023 six columbarium niches were sold, and refunds issued for two niches.

Endowment Trust Fund

There was no report from the Endowment Trust Committee (their first meeting is February 27, 2024).

Memorial Fund Committee

Chair Jimmy DeFoor reported that donations to the Memorial Fund in 2023 totaled \$15,233. During the year, a new brochure was completed, and funds provided new carpeting and furniture for the front office.

Boy Scouts

Boy Scouts' liaison, Robert Bruner, reported the Scouts continue their volunteer involvement with many ministries at GFUMC. Enthusiasm and participation remain high. He also expressed appreciation to GFUMC leadership for their longstanding and continued support of the Scouting ministry.

MINISTRIES AND MISSIONS REPORTS

Worship Committee

Mary Wall, Worship Committee Chair, reported that gluten-free communion elements will be used in all worship services beginning April 7, 2024.

Congregational Care, Senior Adults, Visitation

Jim Reavis reported that The Bee Hive and New Horizons are additional new sites of worship (music, devotional, communion) provided by GFUMC volunteers.

Rev. Carolyn Clifton reported that attendance at The Longest Night Service exceeded 65. Ten Stephen Ministers assisted with the service, which was enhanced by special music before the service and during communion.

Carolyn also detailed the Labyrinth classes and activities planned during the Lent season. Small groups will meet at four different times, for five weeks, to learn about and experience the Labyrinth. The Labyrinth will

also be available for many open times during Lent. Individuals and groups may contact Carolyn to schedule. Ten Centering Prayer participants will assist Carolyn in making the Labyrinth available throughout Lent.

Visitation Ministries needs volunteers to help purchase and plant flowers in small pots for distribution to homebound members. Volunteers are also needed to deliver the gifts the week of March 24th.

Adult Discipleship

Rev. Sandy Skinner that the first session of Bridge Builders 1.0 is wrapping up with good participation. Topics included: United Methodist History and Characteristics, Sacraments and God's Divine Grace, and Membership Vows and Ministry Highlights. Bridge Builders 2.0, a time of discovery to serve God, the church, and the community, begins in April. Navigators continue to do a wonderful job engaging with visitors. Eighteen prospective members attend "Meet the Pastor" in January. These programs and initiatives are a collaboration between Adult Discipleship and Outreach Ministries

Sandy shared information on the upcoming Lent Study, Philip Yancy's "Prayer, Does It Make Any Difference," a five-week study on Wednesday evenings. Open enrollment for participation in new Soul Connections groups continues; new groups begin in March.

Outreach and Hospitality

Rev. Joshua Hudson reported that GFUCM (and other churches in the community) are providing some financial support to the Gainesville Police Department Mental Health Clinicians for their work. There is great interest in the upcoming mental health seminar on Sunday, March 10th at GFUMC. Rev. Ron Greer will present "Staying Together When the Topic is Divisive." A time of questions and discussion follows his presentation.

Throughout April the Outreach Committee will provide many opportunities for GFUMC members to "Love Our City," via service and outreach projects in the community. Specific details are forthcoming.

Joshua also reported there was an excellent response to the recent hospitality training and 18 new volunteers will be involved with Percolators, Navigators, and Greeters. Additional volunteers are needed to serve in hospitality, and as ushers in Classic worship. Volunteer opportunities also exist with Family Promise, Path Project, and feeding in local schools.

Worship Arts

Michelle Alexander reported that more than 2,000 individuals attended Worship Arts concerts in the fall, including the annual Christmas Festival Concert. There were two Sounds of Faith Concerts recently: Appalachian Music featuring the Chuck Nation Band, Chancel Choir, and Lanier Chambers Singers; and the Believer's Band Veterans' Day Concert. Michelle also reported that participation in Children's music programs continues to grow – there are more than 80 students involved in four different choirs. Five new student volunteers were recently added to the Acolyte team in Classic Worship.

Sounds of Faith Concert Series for 2024 begins on Palm Sunday, March 24th, with a performance by the Lanier Chamber Singers of the Easter portion of Handel's Messiah. Lakeside worship kicks off on May 5th with one church-wide service at 11:00. Bluegrass music will be featured in Chapel, Modern, and Lakeside services in May.

Volunteers are needed on Wednesday evenings with Children's music programs. Communion servers are also needed for Classic worship services.

Michelle Alexandre was co-chair of the organizing committee of the recent community King Day Celebration and March at the Butler Center. GFUCM members Sam Couvillion and Jeff Stowe were featured speakers at the event.

Children's Ministry and Pre-School

MaryLina Pardue reported that participation in Children's Ministry programs continues to grow across all age groups. Children are bringing their friends and siblings to Bridges and Sunday morning programs. Program focus is on spending time in the Bible. Children are studying and memorizing verses about God's love for them and others.

The Pre-School is currently conducting pre-registration for the 2024 school year. Currently enrolled families have pre-registered with the majority returning for next school year. Pre-registration soon opens for GFUMC families (not currently enrolled), then others on a space-available basis. The Pre-School Spring Auction is April 17th.

Student and Young Adult Ministries

Ginnie Highsmith and Anna Pardue reported that 30 students and six adults recently participated in the 527 Winter Road Trip. March 1st-3rd, eleven students will participate in the North Georgia Annual Conference Confirmation Retreat at Camp Glisson. March 15th-17th, thirty 6th-12th graders will attend the Conference's Spiritual Life Retreat at Camp Glisson. Students from churches all across the North Georgia Annual Conference will be participating in both retreats. Ginnie is one of the preachers at the Confirmation Retreat.

As the student ministry program continues to grow there is a need for more disciple-makers to invest one day a week into the next generation. Volunteers are needed to teach Sunday School, help with Sunday evening 527 programs, and Wednesday evening small group leaders. Ginnie recognized and thanked Michelle Alexander and Johnny Summers for their enthusiastic leadership of music at 527. She also thanked Amy Britt, Laura Sumner, and James Perdue for their leadership (past and present) with Confirmation Classes.

The Young Adult Committee recently met to celebrate and plan. Celebrations include the fall Parenting Hacks program, growth in attendance in young adult programs, and the creation of the 20-Somethings small group. On February 25th Young Adult Ministries is hosting an interest meeting for those wanting to help persons of all abilities experience the great outdoors through hiking (inclusive hiking). A hiking chair to facilitate inclusive hiking has recently been purchased.

Foster Care

GFUMC members provided many Christmas gifts to the "Hall is Home for Kids Christmas Project 2023." GFUMC is providing 25 Easter Baskets to Forster Children supported by Wellroot. A Care Community Training is scheduled for Sunday, March 10th Volunteers are needed for the May 4th Foster Parent Prom.

"AROUND THE TABLE" DISCUSSION

In advance of the Church Council Meeting members were asked to consider the question: ***How do we continue to build bridges to Jesus in our local community?*** The group engaged in a time of discussion and opportunity was given to provide written responses at the meeting, as well as via email after the meeting. Responses were compiled and distributed to all Church Council members. This feedback will be used in planning new community engagement initiatives and in evaluating existing programs and opportunities.

SENIOR PASTOR'S COMMENTS

Rev. Jamey Prickett shared that in the church we sometimes look through the wrong lens. He cited Luke 7:36-50. A woman who was a sinner went to see Jesus in one of the Pharisees' houses. She anointed Jesus' feet with expensive oil. This was an "encounter moment." Simon questioned her actions and Jesus's response to her actions. Turning toward the woman Jesus addressed Simon asking, "Simon, do you see this woman?" This story reminds us that we are to be people of grace! We must intentionally keep putting on the lens of grace, pay attention, and truly see all whom we encounter!

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and took his place at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "What is it, Teacher?" 41 "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

CLOSING PRAYER

Rev. Prickett closed the meeting with prayer.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Daniell thanked all for their attendance. The meeting was adjourned.

2024 Church Council Meeting Dates **(7:00 p.m. – GFUMC Reception Hall)**

June 25, 2024
August 13, 2024
October 8, 2024
December 10, 2024

Please put these dates on your calendar.
Should changes become necessary notification will be sent ASAP.