



1st United Methodist Church

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*As members, we promise to be loyal to the Church and uphold it with our presence,
our prayers, our gifts, our witness and our service.*

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

June 22, 2010

Welcome by Chair, Mary Kilgour

Devotion

Minutes: approval of May 25, 2010 Minutes distributed by e-mail June 18, 2010

Staff Reports – Please make special note of progress in the new priority ministries under your supervision, if any

1. Pre-School Director – Amy Watson
2. Report on Helping Hands Clinics – Randy Stacey
3. Robert Jackson – Director of Music
4. Rachael Jordan – Youth Leader
5. Carl Romey – Assistant Pastor
6. Bill Yeager – Assistant Pastor
7. Harold Henderson – Senior Pastor

Old Business

1. Committee Highlights – Please be sure to cover progress in the new priority ministries under the charge of your committee as well as key ongoing and future happenings.
 - a. Staff Parrish – Tim Leslie (submitted earlier, to be read by Chair)
 - b. Finance – Jeff Cheek
 - c. Other Committees
2. Discussion of future priority ministries not covered by committee or staff reports
3. Discussion of fundraising opportunities, continued from previous meetings
 - a. Periodic social events with fundraising element
 - b. Other approaches? Coordination with or piggybacking on existing FUMC fundraising?
4. Pew Comments Received since last meeting - Chair

New Business - Open to floor.

Closing Prayer

Next Meeting: July 27, 2010



Church Council Meeting June 22, 2010, 7:00pm

Minutes

Persons Present: Jeff Cheek, Trish Eccles, Jim Emerson, JoAnna Emerson, Muffet Emmanuel, Harold Henderson, Rachael Jordan, Mary Kilgour, Jim Nation, Randy Stacey, Joanie Thompson, Jill Wagstaff, Joe Willcox.

Chairperson Mary Kilgour welcomed participants and opened the meeting with a brief devotion. The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted as presented with one typo corrected.

Staff Reports:

Director of Preschool, Amy Watson– Printed report attached.

Helping Hands Clinic, Randy Stacey - Printed report attached.

Director of Music Ministry, Bob Jackson – BJ was at a music conference in Lake Junaluska, NC, and made no report.

Youth Leader, Rachael Jordan - Printed report attached.

Children's Leader, Jill Wagstaff - Printed report attached.

Assistant Pastor, Carl Romey –Not present, but Harold Henderson said that Carl was continuing with his regular duties.

Assistant Pastor, Bill Yeager – Not present, not feeling well earlier in the day according to Harold Henderson.

Senior Pastor, Harold Henderson - Printed report attached.

Old Business – Committee Highlights

Staff Parish, Tim Leslie – Tim was not present, but he sent a short E-mail to Mary Kilgour listing recent activities of the Committee.

Finance Committee, Jeff Cheek – Jeff made a brief verbal report outlining some plans for fund raising.

Nominations Committee, Harold Henderson – present a committee motion nominating Jim Knight as Chairman of the Education Committee, and adding to Education Committee Kevin Tate and Molly Howard. The second to the motion from the Nominations Committee was made by JoAnna Emerson, and the vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

A brief statement that the Worship Committee, chaired by Margaret Steptoe, would receive two new suggestions made on the “Voice It” forms (green) now in the holders on the backs of pews.

Harold Henderson closed the meeting with prayer.

Minutes prepared by Jim Nation, acting secretary.

Report from Tim Leslie, Chair Staff Parrish Relations Committee

On Jun 19, 2010, at 10:49 AM, Leslie, Timothy H wrote:

1. All vacant staff positions are now filled with the hire of Rachael Jordan, Jill Wagstaff, and Barbara Jimenez.
2. We continue to work updating the Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual.
3. A new hire checklist and packet are being developed to streamline the hiring process .
4. The Child/Youth Protection Policy training continues to be developed with target for implementation before year end.
5. The background screens are ongoing for those staff/volunteers that work with youth/children.
6. We are doing a preliminary study of what it would entail to offer short-term and long-term disability insurance to employees

Making Sense of First Church, Gainesville.

This report comes as I approach the midpoint of my fourth year as Senior Pastor and the beginning of the additional Conference year for which I have been appointed. Because four years is the norm for the length of Senior Pastorates in this church over many years, and since my appointment has always been at the discretion of the Bishop, I have seen this juncture as a time for careful reflection on where we have been, where we are, and where we think we are going as a congregation.

This report is a distillation of those reflections, and is an expansion of a presentation I made to the combined Wednesday night class on May 26, 2010, entitled *Making Sense of First Church, Gainesville*. It was the fourth in a series of presentations on the general theme of *Making Sense of...* The other three were *Making Sense of the Bible*, *Making Sense of The Sacraments*, and *Making Sense of The Master's Plan, Phase 11* (this presentation by Ole Nelson, Chair of The Master's Plan Committee)

It goes without saying that this is a strategic and historic church, established as a congregation in 1857. It is the Mother Church of the Methodist movement in Gainesville. It retains its place in the historic downtown neighborhood where it has long since decided to remain, notwithstanding the challenges and difficulties of doing so. It is unthinkable to envision downtown Gainesville minus First United Methodist Church. Even its impressive architecture and landscaping are an enduring symbol of the Divine Presence at the heart of the city's life without which the city would be infinitely poorer.

The strategic significance of the church arises both from the role it has played over the years, and from the nature of the ministry it needs to exercise on account of its downtown location. In terms of the latter, its ministry constituency includes the homeless population that populates the downtown area, the workforce in surrounding offices, businesses and local government agencies, the population in downtown residential re-development accommodation and in the historic Duck Pond district, and the wider population in what is primarily a university and college community.

In terms of the former, First Church has an impressive record of involvement in and facilitation of the planting of other United Methodist congregations – University United Methodist Church, Trinity United Methodist Church, Wesley United Methodist Church, Southwest United Methodist Church, and Grace United Methodist Church. What it did not do was to address in any sustained way the question of what it means to remain downtown as the demographics change and the residential population moves outward.

As a consequence, First Church experienced a sustained numerical downturn probably over a quarter of a century. During the last ten years of that period (1995-2005), average Sunday worship attendance declined from 354 to 239, bottoming out in 2006 at 238. During the same period, membership declined sharply as well but the actual decline is more difficult to track because the rolls were seriously updated in 2005/6, leading to a sharp reduction in the actual membership to 528 in 2006.

From 2007 onwards, there has been a steady increase in both membership and average Sunday worship attendance. Membership has increased to 579 at present – new members received being 125 and losses being 74 (including 59 deaths). Average Sunday worship attendances have been 247 (2007), 252 (2008), 256 (2009) and 277 so far this year against 274 for the same period last year.

These are small but significant increases that should be sustainable, although still tenuous. They are important because First Church must grow to survive. There is no static remain-as-we-are option. Unless the growth is sustained and (hopefully) accelerated, with an accompanying increase in income in all categories, First Church will be unable over the long term to cope with the increasing cost of maintaining this wonderful property as a basis for continuing effective ministry in this community.

It is important, therefore, to try to understand how the growth we have experienced has come about?

Some folks are kind enough to say that it's because I was appointed Senior Pastor from January 1, 2007. I am not naïve enough to imagine that my appointment is unrelated to the turn around. I hope that is the case because I know that's what the District Superintendent (Dr. Geraldine McClellan) hoped for when she proposed my appointment to the Bishop, and why he found a way to alter my ministerial status and has kept extending my appointment beyond the initial six months interim at least until June 30, 2011.

Whether or not my appointment is the sole explanation for the turn around - and it isn't - I have been following certain guidelines in the leadership I have tried to provide and I think this is a helpful time to begin sharing some of these.

The first is that continuing decline is not inevitable. Neither is growth. Which it is depends on attitudes we adopt, decisions we make or don't make, and actions we take or don't take as a congregation of God's people.

The second is to clarify our understanding of who we are as a community of faith. We are an historic church offering traditional worship centered in Word and Sacrament in a traditional sanctuary that lends itself to that worship form and style. At the same time, we are liberal in attitude and outlook, the term "liberal" used not so much as a political or theological term but meaning "open" and "welcoming" to all-comers as human beings made in the image of God. We are at different places on the political, theological, educational and socio-economic spectrums, accepting and respectful of each other, committed to supporting and caring for each other in a meaningful expression of Christian community.

The third is to keep us rooted in the Wesleyan tradition in which the revelation of God comes through Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Whilst we regard the Scriptures as primary, we take seriously the role of tradition in creating and passing on

the Scriptures, the importance of reason and scholarship in illumining our understanding of them, and the need for them to come alive in our lived experience.

Recognizing that the Wesleyan tradition was “born in song,” we are committed to experiencing and sharing the faith in many forms of high quality musical expression.

In summary, we have placed strong emphasis on inspirational worship, continued learning and growth, comprehensive pastoral care and outgoing service and witness.

Some have expressed concern that we are over staffed especially in the pastoral area. I understand and respect that concern and I have four responses: the first is to advise caution in attempting to compare us with the “average” church. Our location and our existential circumstances are far from “average.” The second is in terms of a growth principle. You have to be prepared to invest in future growth, especially in church growth and especially in a situation where the challenge is to turn around decline. The third is by way of observation. As one of the three trying to cope with the current workload, to say nothing of the challenging new ventures we need to undertake, I don’t notice much “down time.” The fourth is a plea. In a time of budget challenge, please think carefully so that we don’t do anything that will undermine or eliminate the tender shoots of growth before they have a chance to solidify. Our future is at stake.

There are other aspects of our recent and future growth patterns that I will address at a later time.

Harold Henderson,
Senior Pastor.
June 22, 2010.