

Church Council Meeting

**Meeting Date:** Sunday Sept. 10th

**Meeting Start Time:** 12:22pm

**Meeting Place:** In Person, Wesley Hall

**Mission - Love God and Neighbor, Build Community - - No Limits**

**Call to Order** – Dick Eisenbarth

**Opening Prayer** - Dick Eisenbarth, 5 min.

**Approval of May 23rd Council Meeting Minutes (see attachment):**

- Rich Clark moved to accept the minutes and Jim Clark seconded the motion. The minutes were then voted in.

**Building Community, results from our exercise on May 23rd -Dick Eisenbarth,**

**5 min. (See attachment)**

- Dick summarized the results of the exercise from May 23<sup>rd</sup> and asked everyone to send any suggestions to the [suggestions@mumc.net](mailto:suggestions@mumc.net) email. He also encouraged everyone to do the Spiritual Gifts Inventory and send them to Andrea Vrtikapa.

**Youth, with special presentation of Summer Camp proposal, Angie and Paula 15**

**min (see attached presentation)**

- Rich Clark asked what kind of staffing would be needed for the summer camp program.
- Paula answered Rich's questions with 20 staff per 100 children and 50 adults per 300 kids.
- Don Carter asked if the schedule was accurate with the school calendars.
- Angie said they looked at the school calendar...the only thing that would change it is weather days.
- Don Carter asked what the anticipated hours would be.
- Paula answered 8:00am-5:00pm, with possible extended day hours for an extra fee.
- Don Carter thinks summer camps are a money maker. People use summer camps as childcare.
- Paula said we are doing a middle school camp as part of the summer camp.
- Angie said that Kristie O'Keefe, the director of Learning Ladders already has her license to run a summer camp. The accreditation company came onto our property and was impressed with our facilities.
- Don Carter said we may need to incorporate earlier start times.
- Angie said we don't need 20 staff here for 5 children for the early hours. The additional staff would come on as the number of kids increases.
- Linda Armstrong thinks there should be a later end time. You can cut your staff down as children leave for the day.
- Paula and Angie agreed with that idea.

- Jeff Hayes made a motion for the council to consider moving forward with the summer camp program. Gene Strouse seconded the motion. The council voted for Angie and Paula to continue to move forward with the summer camp program.

**Worship Survey report highlights and considerations – Jeff Hayes to present results, 10 min.**

- Great response. 195 responses over all worship services.
- Music was one of the topics: ¾ said music is important in worship. Type of music – half responded traditional hymns, 74 blended, 28 contemporary modern. Several comments affirmed the church continuing to offer multiple music styles. Music sets the mood for worship. Music helps to feel uplifted.
- Worship times: equal number preferred 9:00am or earlier and 11:00am. Others indicated other times in between or were flexible. Some that attend 11:00 preferred earlier. Valued most about worship: 106 comments affirmed the value of the sermons and teachings, 19 valued prayer and liturgy. People appreciate things they can take with them, sermons that apply scripture to life.
- Improvement: Traditional Service: involving various members of all ages to lead worship. Connection: the atmosphere is too dark and is now maintaining a low level of lighting. Congregational prayers could start to be added.

**Committee reports received are included with the agenda.**

**Committee chairs, 15 min.**

- Finance –2024 budget is going to be difficult. We are going to start with a deficit of \$300,000. We need a balanced budget next year. All grants and conference money is gone. Possibility of leasing space – we found some. We have already started to lease space. Letter of Speaking The Truth In Love about finances, people have been informed. We have inquired with conference to see if there is going to be ongoing support. We talked about refinancing the mortgage which will lower the monthly payment and stretch it out longer but more money monthly. The first 6 months of year, Church Fund had a deficit \$150,000, there were \$85,000 in contributions, Mortgage Reduction – the money going in isn't covering monthly payments. Learning Ladders is growing and helpful but we still have a deficit. We have money in the bank and we are covering our expenses. We are pursuing options like summer camp. We are going to have to cut expenses next year and you will hear more about that.
- Generosity – Dick Eisenbarth stated the campaign will be Ripples of Generosity. Meeting on Sept 18 to solidify some of the ideas. This will take place throughout the month of October, pledges in by end of October. We should have an idea of the number of pledges for November's Council Meeting. We would like to challenge the council to take a leadership role and invest in the church by submitting your pledges early and increase if you can.
- Trustees – John Hougendobler talked about the gazebo renovations moving ahead despite delays in materials. The gazebo should be finished in the next 30 days. A few HV/AC issues – Learning Ladders has been delayed – will have by end of year. Finding a time when kids are not there to put it in. We have one unit to repair that takes care of the narthex in the sanctuary. We will try

to repair rather than replace – next 30-60 days. UMM have done multiple campus work days, pressure washing, removed items, etc. Continue to actively seek income through leasing of facility. Limited scope because of conflicts in time. We are leasing to a Brazilian church on Sunday nights, they are wonderful partners. Looked at a home school group that was not a good match – they didn't have a good plan or child protection policy. Looking into Weight Watchers – checking on the nonprofit/for-profit leasing taxes - \$23,000 for one room 4 times a month. \$7,000 sales/income tax. If we lose exemption another \$3,000. BOT is looking at it. If BOT passes, then Church Council will approve.

- Staff Parish – Britt Gilmore – Scott Maynard, SPR Chair, let us know that because of a significant change in work commitments he was unable to continue as SPR Chair. Nominations and Leadership Committee approved and Mike Overton agreed to be Interim Chair of SPR through remainder of this year. SPR report, increase of hours for Pastor Missy – from 20 to 25 hours. Charge conference for that item.
- Mike Overton – Learning Ladders Director resigned and Kristie O'Keefe took over. Angie recommended that Kristie O'Keefe be Director and SPR decided to promote Kristie to Director and we will not be replacing the Assistant Director position.  
John Hougendobler asked about not replacing Assistant position. Jeff St. Clair said we do not need it at this time – past 3 months enrollment has decreased.  
John Hougendobler asked about Kris' expertise in grants – does Kristie have that? Jeff St. Clair responded that Kristie is looking through Kris' past work on the grants and working on getting grants.

**Charge Conference for the sole purpose of considering an increase of Pastor Missys  
hours from 20 to 25 per week.**

- Pastor Missy needs an additional 5 hours per week. SPR agreed to increase her hours to 25 hours per week.
- Jim Clark moved to accept Missy's hours. John Hougendobler seconded. The hours were approved by church council.

**Pastors Report's - Current Status, timeline, church vitality, Pastors Missy, Britt  
and Jeff, 30 min.**

- Missy Hart – Journey to the Common Good. Follow up on Speaking The Truth In Love announcement. Give perspectives on where we are now, and where we've been, and where we might go. We want to come together to do good. Binds us all in a common destiny for the common good. MUMC/Longleaf have found us in a time of exile. Will God lead us back home? What does that look like?
- Hilton Family in 1984 from Spring Glen UMC transferred to Mandarin UMC. Came because MUMC had vibrant children & youth ministry. The Hiltons immersed themselves into the life of the church. 1984 average worship attendance **381** under Rev. Larry Cook.

- 2009 Barbara married to Ed York and baptized their second child at MUMC. Family worshipped faithfully and watched both children acolyte and participate in the children's and youth ministries.
- 2009, One month before Emma's baptism the church celebrated dedication of Family Life Center in the gym. Average worship attendance was **992**.
- 2019 Longleaf is launched on Easter Sunday.
- Then a hard period of exile. Twin Pandemics – we could not come together to try to resolve the exile.
- Return from Exile 2022 – in person worship and came together to resolve essential differences.
- Ron Hilton's health declined. Community of faith surrounded them with care and support. Ron passed away and is now in God's eternal care. Ron's colleagues attended the funeral and one person told Missy she wanted to be a part of this community because we are such a vital presence.
- 2023 Longleaf **70**, Connection **75**, Traditional **185** total average is **329**. We continue to see robust participation in new member classes. Added **12** new members and their children. 360 worship attendance since school started.
- 4 classes and 1 small group – **67** average attendance. 2022 averaged **30**, 2019 averaged **19**.
- August 23<sup>rd</sup> over **40** youth and **13** children in choirs and that number has increased. Youth choir begins soon. Wednesday night dinners well attended and run by a volunteer team led by Warren Couch.
- Sunday School & other classes – **6** classes including Longleaf, another Sunday School class is going to start soon. Average attendance is **66**.
- Throughout the week through May 2023 average of **106** per week in adult discipleship.
- Missions are doing well, strengthening bonds with existing mission partners. Mary Jenkins leads food bank drive, and Longleaf does one with St. Johns. Homeless Coalition. Monthly Cup of Love for homeless and working poor. Crown Point Elementary Arrowhead program, staff lunch on Friday before school start to make a relationship with teachers. Similar effort of Longleaf and MUMC volunteers for staff and teachers at FCA in the Spring.
- This year we have giving the following to Missions:
 

UMCOR -	\$2,289
Mandarin Food Bank -	\$920
Campus to City Wesley -	\$429
Rise Against Hunger -	\$5,656
UM Florida Children's Home -	\$4,441
Branches -	\$668
Crown Point -	\$1,726
Water Pump -	\$2 051
Overall Mission Financial Support through July 2023 -	\$21,378
- We are making a difference.
- UMW coming back strong with 2 brunches with speakers, craft fair, creating new circles.
- UMM relaunched with a strong lay led team, hosted work days, hosting a Steak & Spuds on 9/22, bringing back a cherished tradition.
- Nurture & Care, card ministry grew to 70 homebound people, 4 pastor/volunteer teams to reach out quarterly to homebound, monthly support groups for caregivers and receivers, and parents

of kids with special needs, Stephen Ministers provide one-on-one care. Launched a 55+ ministry called Young At Heart.

- Britt Gilmore – we have the question of how is this possible that we're seeing signs of growth and the return of joy and increase of attendance, at the same time with wrestling with a financial situation. We know the 2024 budget is going to be a challenge. Looking at a broad range of things to help us, but we realize it may be necessary to cut expenses. One fact we remember, we are growing now, but if we look back 5 years, we were a smaller church. Because of that we have lost contributions from some that are no longer involved after the twin pandemics. Church has been supported by various grants that we have been relying on, as well as reserves, but we cannot rely on forever. We see a story of faithfulness of people being involved, worshiping, volunteering and responding to God's grace. We also are seeing that people are faithful in giving. When we look at the giving of the congregation and compare to 4-7 years ago, they are very similar percentages. If you look at total giving, there's a slight increase in 2023 over 2016. As we go through the challenge of forming a budget of 2024, we wanted to share the challenge so if people wanted to give more they could, but we recognize that people are already giving. Pastor Missy's presentation gives us confidence that these trends will not continue and have even turned around. New people are engaged and returning after some time away. We experience this journey differently depending on when we joined this community. Pastor Britt's family joined 2 years ago and has experienced great blessings through community, worship, bible studies, staff. Gilmores have witnessed growth in those 2 years. Many others have seen decreases and a sense of exile. The Hilton/York family came when church was about the same size as now and enjoyed vital ministries. It's important to hear the experiences and perspectives of the participants at Longleaf.
- Jeff St. Clair – Britt's experience that he faced a challenging first year. Coming here in 2013 (11<sup>th</sup> year here) came when Mandarin was averaging **1,100** people on a Sunday, and to be able to see the many different seasons as a church community. We have seen multiple layers that have been a part of who we are and it does make us stronger. People here have been resilient through the obstacles. What resiliency do we need in this season of life at both MUMC and Longleaf? A word that Jeff uses often is resilience. What is resilience? Balancing back after facing traumatic events, enables a person to maintain functionality in the face of stress. Doesn't mean being unaffected by these difficulties, but to navigate through challenges and emerge much stronger. Seen most recently – resilient group of committed followers living into mission statement. Events after church every Sunday. Potlucks, lunch fellowships, pool parties, etc. to build community. Our hope is to see the Kingdom of God grow both at MUMC/Longleaf. Longleaf is aware of financial challenges. Starting in September Jeff did a sermon series called A Shepherd's Prayer for Strenuous Times. With the recent announcement, Longleaf campus experiencing some angst about the future of the church. It's our hope that this series will remind us that whatever we face, God is our shepherd. Thank God for the faithfulness of our people at both campuses. The people at Longleaf carry that MUMC resiliency to Longleaf. Ashley Williams is a pioneer to Longleaf – left the comforts of the church at MUMC, God called them to expand the ministry of MUMC. In the last year, I've done baptisms of adults. Their only church they've known is Longleaf. These statements bring anxiety to their souls. Pray for the

pioneers of Longleaf. Missy reported our numbers have climbed, but the numbers were down today – I think they were tailgating. Positive spirit. Remember the care and love for each other. Decisions will have to be made in the upcoming months.

- Reflection questions/scripture passage passed out. How can you personally envelope that resilient spirit and be contagious with the resilient spirit.

**Next Council meeting: Sunday Nov. 5th 7:00PM -Update on Plans for rightsizing  
our Finances and October Generosity Campaign results.**

**Adjournment** – Dick Eisenbarth

**Closing Prayer** - Prayer concerns and joys, Pastor Jeff

Prayer for our pastors

Joy to see \_\_\_\_\_?

Thankful for the presentations today

Learning Ladders Director and rest of staff

Joy for the summer camp opportunity

Pumpkin Patch

Multiple church families going through difficult times

Craft Fair

**Meeting ended at 1:56pm**