Mandarin United Methodist

LONGLEAF CHURCH

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

Church Council Meeting Minutes
Meeting Date: May 5th - 7:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: In-Person, Wesley Hall

- **Call meeting to order – Mike Overton**

- **Opening Devotion – Mike Overton**

  Mike led with a short devotional focused on knowing God's love, drawing from Ephesians 3:17–19. The devotion emphasized:

  God's love is multidimensional—with width, length, depth, and height:

  - Width: It covers all sin and circumstances (John 3:16).
  - Length: It is eternal, having no beginning or end (Jeremiah 31:3).
  - Depth: It reaches the lowest places, demonstrated by Jesus' death on the cross (Philippians 2:8).
  - Height: It lifts believers to heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6).

  The message concluded that to grasp God's love, one must look to the cross, which symbolically points in all directions—signifying the universal, eternal, and transformative nature of divine love.

  The devotional closed with a prayer, asking for God's guidance over the meeting and the church council's work.

- **Approval of the Council Meeting Minutes (1-28-25)**

  One correction to the finance report had been submitted via email earlier in the day. No additional corrections were made during the meeting. A vote was taken, and with no opposition, the minutes were officially approved.

- **Committee Reports**

  - **Staff Parish Relations – Linda Hurley**

    - It was announced that Pastors Britt, Kevin, and Missy will all be returning to Mandarin + Longleaf for the upcoming year. Their leadership is credited with inspiring renewed commitment within the church.

- The church council's approved budget (January) allowed for staff pay increases, which took effect on March 1, 2025—a significant step after no increases were possible in 2024.
- The SPR also recommends similar increases for clergy, but these require approval through a charge conference. The plan is to hold the next church council meeting in July as a charge conference to approve clergy pay adjustments, also retroactive to March 1.
- The committee approved the hiring of an audio/video assistant and summer camp counselors, with those hires either completed or expected imminently.
- No questions were raised following the report.

- **Trustees – Andrea Wheeler**

  Learning Ladders Updates:

  - Approved installation of a new fence and expandable keypad system.

    - Fence cost: $3,800 (Phase 1 only – entryway).
    - Keypad cost: ~$5,000 with a $45/month service fee.
    - United Methodist Men contributed $5,000 toward the project.
    - Trustees will cover the monthly fee through the end of the year; Learning Ladders will assume responsibility after that.
    - Some electrical work will be needed, anticipated to cost an additional ~$5,000.

  . Sanctuary Projection System Discussion:

  - Current projector system is failing due to worn wiring and poor signal quality.
  - Two upgrade options are being considered:

    - Option 1: Replace current projector system with new projector and updated wiring. Estimated cost: $9,000
    - Option 2: Install two large 86-inch monitors (TVs) on either side of the choir loft, eliminating the projector entirely. Estimated cost: $15,000, including commercial-grade TVs, HDMI-over-CAT wiring, signal splitting equipment, and installation. This option preserves visibility of the cross, addressing concerns from some congregants.
    - No decision has been made; trustees are gauging congregational interest and possible donations before moving forward.

Additional Notes:

- Past wiring in the roof (from a previous roof project) could support HDMI upgrades.
- Commercial TVs are more costly than consumer models; wiring and equipment costs are significant.
- Trustees emphasized the importance of evaluating the need for a projection system, especially for use during services, presentations, or mission trip slideshows.

- **Generosity – Jennifer Holmes**

Contribution Update (as of April 30, 2025):

- Budgeted contributions: $433,350
- Actual received: $404,000
- Shortfall: ~$29,000
- The committee remains committed to providing quarterly updates to the congregation, including expressions of gratitude and ministry impact stories.
- Special thanks were given to Nieke Oglesby for creating the visual presentations.
- Past updates were presented in January and March; the next is scheduled for after the second quarter, likely in July.

2025 Generosity Campaign:

- Early planning has begun; the proposed theme is “Every Gift Tells a Story,” building on the church’s 150th anniversary theme, “Our Story Still Unfolding.”

Endowment Distribution:

- The committee, after consulting the trustees, approved a 5% withdrawal from the permanent endowment, based on the 12-quarter rolling average.

  - Average market value: $559,242
  - Approved distribution: $27,962

- A motion was made and unanimously approved by the church council to accept this distribution.

No additional questions were raised, and the report concluded.

- **Finance – Wayne Crowell (on behalf of Alex O’Connor)**

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First Quarter Financial Summary:

- The church experienced a slow start in January and February, partially due to three payroll periods and higher electricity costs.
- March showed significant improvement, helping offset early deficits.
- As of end of March:
    - Deficit: ~$35,258
    - Budget had projected a surplus of ~$9,300
    - Receipts: ~$48,000 below budget
    - Expenses: ~$4,000 below budget
    - Some shortfall is attributed to lower contributions and underperformance of the Learning Center.
- April contributions were strong, and there is optimism for a continued upward trend.

Mortgage Update:

- As of March, the mortgage balance was down to ~$1.2 million, with a reduction of $53,000.
- In April, the mortgage was reduced by another $38,000.
- The 150th Anniversary Fund has been used to cover the mortgage payments so far this year, with enough funds for at least two more payments.
- If these funds had not been used, the church's deficit would have been significantly higher.

Bank and Investment Accounts:

- The church has enough in the bank to cover liabilities and designated funds, with a $30,000 shortfall.
- Additional funds from the sale of the parsonage are held in Fidelity investment accounts, currently totaling ~$316,000, with only a 3% decline from the start of the year due to market volatility.

Pledges vs. Non-Pledged Giving:

- Pledged contributions are being collected reliably.
- Non-pledged giving is more variable and came in lower this year compared to a significant non-pledged donation early last year.

Use of 150th Anniversary Funds – Discussion:

- Some concern was raised over how funds were used—monthly mortgage payments vs. extra principal payments.
- Wayne clarified that contributors were given the option to specify how their gifts should be used.

- About $20,000 in April was applied specifically toward extra principal reduction based on donor requests.

Mortgage Outlook:

- Current monthly principal payments are ~$18,000, with a total payment of ~$21,000 including interest.
- Estimated 5 years remaining on the mortgage, potentially less if extra payments continue.
- Interest portion of monthly payments is now under $4,000.

No further questions were raised, and the report concluded.

- **Nominations - Britt Gilmore**

Pastor's Health Update:

- Pastor Britt shared that he is recovering well from surgery.
- His first week was complete rest, the second week was light work from home, and this week he returned to the office part time and worked from home part time.

2025 Leadership Slate Updates:

- Document Distributed: Copies of the updated "Mandarin Longleaf Leadership for 2025" were provided.
- Correction: The title should reflect both campuses—Mandarin and Longleaf.

Annual Conference Representation:

- The slate now includes six lay and district representatives:
    - Janson and Suellen Kinsley, Jeff and Tami Hayes, Rick and Marti Thompson.
- Originally, Rick and Pat Smith were listed, but due to health concerns, they stepped down.
- Jeff and Tami Hayes and Rick and Marti Thompson stepped in to fill those roles.
- Representation now includes attendees from all three worship communities (Traditional, Longleaf, and Connection), which helps in sharing updates from the conference.

Generosity Chair Appointment:

- Jennifer Holmes has been appointed as the new Chair of the Generosity Committee.
- She has been an active member in the class of 2026 and has shown consistent involvement.

Approval Motion:

- Motion made to approve the new representatives and Jennifer's appointment.
- Motion was carried with no objections.

Vacancies Noted:

- SPR Committee has a vacancy in the class of 2026 due to Alex Wann's relocation to Washington, D.C. with the Navy.
- The leadership and nominations team will address this and other minor gaps at a future meeting.

- Knowing God's Love – Kevin & Paula

  Theme Introduction:

  - Over the next few meetings, the council will focus on the church's discipleship framework: Knowing, Growing, and Going in God's love.
  - This meeting centered on "Knowing God's Love."

  Cross-Campus Strategy:

  - A new cross-campus "Knowing God" team has been formed with members from both Mandarin and Longleaf campuses.
  - Longleaf has historically integrated "Knowing God" practices since its launch; this is now being expanded and unified across both sites.

  Focus of the "Knowing God" Team:

  - Outward-facing, hospitality-driven ministry.
  - Purpose is to connect new people to the church and guide them toward a relationship with Jesus and the faith community.

- Emphasis on intentional, welcoming events and non-judgmental invitations.

Examples of “Knowing God” Ministries:

- Upward Sports: A community-focused sports ministry that invites families into the church through friendly engagement and Christian values.
- Holiday Worship Services (Easter/Christmas Eve): Framed as outreach opportunities—designed for guests, not just church regulars.
- Journey Through Bethlehem: A highly engaging and welcoming event for the community.
- Craft Fair, Pumpkin Patch, and Tree Lot: These events are key touchpoints where community members associate the church with hospitality and fun.

Summer Camp Ministry:

- Camp is structured similarly to all-day VBS with five core stations: Bible, Expressions (music/dance), Arts & Crafts, Gym Games, and Character Counts (weekly traits like respect, trustworthiness).
- Also includes a Peace Room and Playroom led by crew leaders.
- Significant community engagement:
  - 100+ families expected to participate across 8 weeks.
  - One week already has 58 children enrolled.
  - Returning families and children recognize Paula and associate her with church events.

Community Visibility and Promotion:

- The church is recognized through Paula and popular events (“pumpkin lady”).
- Promotion efforts include Facebook advertising and physical flyers.
- Flyers are available for anyone wanting to help distribute and invite others.

- **Other Business**

- No additional business was raised before closing.
- The meeting transitioned into a time of joys and concerns followed by prayer.

- **Joys & Concerns**

- **Closing Prayer**
- **Next Council Meetings:**

  July 29th, September 30th, December 2nd.