Mandarin United Methodist

LONGLEAF CHURCH

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

Church Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Tuesday July 23, 2024, 7:00-8:30

Meeting Place: In Person, Wesley Hall

- **Opening Devotion and thoughts for tonight's meeting- Dick Eisenbarth**
  - Meeting started at 7:03pm
  - We will be discussing our core values and mission tonight.
  - How do the membership vows reflect our core values?

- **Council Meeting call to order- Dick Eisenbarth**

- **Approval of the Council Meeting notes April 23, 2024**
  - 4/23/24 Church Council meeting minutes were approved.

- **Charge conference update**

  - This District will be a cluster charge conference. Saturday morning Sept 28 – UMC Jacksonville or Oct 12 TBD at 9:15am.

- **Committee Reports**
  - No committee reports since none of the committees met in July.

- **Announcements and updates:**
  150th Anniversary preparation update- Linda Hurley (sick) Dick Eisenbarth
  - Celebration on 11/17/2024 at both services with lunch and program to follow. Historical tidbits will continue at all church services until Nov. 17. 150th banner is on display. Brick buying campaign begins on Aug 21st. Asking for church memorabilia to add to display. Will be soliciting help on the committee.

  - Doug Cuthbert wonders if there will be a handout/brochure of the historical tidbits. Need to check with committee.

  150th Anniversary celebration extra gift- Jim Clark
  - Council approved us to develop a program to ask for an extra gift in honor of 150th anniversary. You should have received a letter from the committee to participate in making an early contribution before we send it out to the congregation. We think it's important to get as many people out of the leadership teams involved early. When the announcement goes out that asks if people would like to contribute, we can share the figure we already

have in place. We would like to get that returned by Aug 15th because our committee meets on the 19th. Whoever didn't get a letter tonight, we will send the letter to them.

- Mike Overton asked if we want a commitment prior to Aug 15th? Yes.

- There are many ways to contribute to the church, you can use any of those to contribute and Yvonne will make sure it all gets to the right place.

- Annual Stewardship Campaign will begin on Sept 15 and continue to Oct 10. Stewardship commitment card will also include a place where you can make your commitment if you haven't done that before, you can do it on the same card. That is in the process of being put together now. We're not asking what can you do for the church? We want to reach out and understand what does the church want to do?

Annual Conference Report to Council- Jim Clark

- What I saw this year was a peaceful, productive annual conference. Everyone seemed to be pulling together. That was the part that was most important to me. I will share some of the impact: Remember you had an annual conference offering recently? That is going to have the resources to be provided to other churches or entities to feed hungry children primarily.

- 257 churches gave 100% of their apportionments. Maybe less churches in the conference, but more funding was coming in. The conference expenses were a little more than compared with 2022. Nine people were licensed as local pastors, 2 commissioned as provisional elders, 9 commissioned as ordained elders. We made a listing of those churches celebrating milestones. Tallahassee is 200 years. We were the second longest at 150 years. We did approve the disaffiliation of 4 churches. We were one of the churches with 100% participation, which means you get a banner to wear on your name tag.

Summer Camp Update -Rachel Archuleta

- I wanted to talk you a little bit about what happened, what our expectations were, what changed and what our hopes are for next year. We provided the students with a bunch of stations/activities to do, learned about God, Sports, Arts & Crafts, Games, Peace, Expressions, Character Counts and Bible. We focused on the Old Testament this time. We did a lot of Bible activities. Every day we had a praise time to sing songs and worship. Extra fun activity on Fridays (fun day Fridays) messy day, waterslide, etc. We are

hopeful we are going to see continued growth in the future. What went well? Registration wasn't meeting our expectations. We were saying we wanted to cap at 125. Reality was 10 kids signed up. We never had that low showing up. Lowest was 14, highest was 42. 60 kids throughout the whole time. Registration went up as the kids came and had a good time. Even older kids in the SALT program that were earning volunteer hours, middle school 13-17 years old, signed up for extra weeks. Some of those kids were not youth kids. Some didn't go to church at all, and they said they wanted to come be a part and go to youth. Parents were happy asking if they can register first next year? We were introducing some kids to God. Some had no exposure to Christ, some were scholarship kids. One of my favorite experiences was listening to them pray. Overall, I think people were really happy. I'm kind of happy we didn't have 125 kids because we learned a lot that we will take into next year.

- Next year we hope to double in size (60 kids). Do more advertising. Not sure if we're really ready to have over 100 kids. I want to get the church more involved. I would love it if we could have some church members volunteer and spend time with the kids – positive role models from the church. A lot of the people they were bonding to were the college kids, would be nice to have some church members. Checking into the laws to get an after school program – will help get people in the door. We will let you know about volunteer opportunities next year – open to books and toys donations. We are hoping for a toy room instead of games with balls. Scholarships – I want to impress upon you how amazing seeing those scholarship kids coming to the church was. Most scholarship kids were from the school or people we heard needed help. They were consistent in hearing about God.

Mandarin - Longleaf 2nd Quarter Review Update-Dick Eisenbarth

- Nieke Oglesby did a fantastic job on the presentation. When I presented, I talked a little bit about where do we go from here? I mentioned Mandarin/Longleaf's mission is Love God and Neighbor, Build Community No Limits. At the next council meeting we were going to review our church core values and how it connects to our mission. We can build our vision going forward for the next 150 years. I was thinking about the ripples of generosity and what the mission was 150 years ago. Start Mandarin UMC, start a family life center, start a preschool, grow in Saint Johns County. What's next? In December we are hoping to be defining our vision more clearly. This year we had 333 family giving units and last year we had 325. This year we had 523 families worshipping with us and last year we had 517. We budgeted $577,039 for this year and currently we've received $607,395.

- **Pastor Kevin Griffin introduction**
  - I'm the campus pastor at Longleaf in Saint Johns County. Loving it. I was sitting where Gabrielle is sitting and I was at a table with Rachel and the summer camp staff. It was infectious hearing the summer camp tell the stories of hearing God work through the kids. I was part of our 11:00am Traditional service on Sunday, got to meet some of you then. I'm originally from Fort Lauderdale and I journeyed to Kentucky for college. I wanted to bring a holy relic tonight – official University of Kentucky tumbler. Ashley is from a small town in Kentucky, met in college, been married for 23 years. Oldest is going to college in New York, daughter Abby. Jacob will be at junior Creekside HS, Nathan an 8th grader at Fruit Cove Middle. I've served in several appointments, been ordained for a while. I've been blessed to serve 2 appointments, this is my third, in the Florida Conference. Bishop Berlin had a clergy retreat in Lakeland. I was serving a church that disaffiliated and returning from a leave of absence, and I taught 11th grade English. It was awesome. I took a day off and rode with Jeff St. Clair and Britt Gilmore to Lakeland. This was before any of us knew what God had in store. I was thinking about that, the way God's grace works in our lives and our churches in ways we're not even aware. It's been a blessing for me to start to get to know Pastors Missy and Britt. The staff – I'm still meeting, you have a phenomenal staff of gifted leaders and I'm thrilled to be a part of that.

Core Values, Mission and Vision – Britt Gilmore

  - We have our mission statement, Love God and Neighbor, Build Community, No Limits. We have journeyed as a church with that statement for 4 years. A number of groups have been talking: pastors, SPR, staff gathering, lay leaders; thinking about what does this look like and a little more detail for our next steps. Handout to summarize this.

  - I want to share a couple updates from General Conference that met in May. The General Conference dealt with a lot of business including budget, a large possible change called regionalization - how it would be structured around the world. One of the changes most notable is removal of language in the book of disciple that related to marriage and participation in ministry of gay people. LGBT clergy can be ordained. Same sex weddings are no longer prohibited in the UMC. What does that mean for our church? The appointment of clergy: The change in the next couple years is not going to affect us with the arrival of Pastor Kevin. When a pastoral appointment does change, the process is collaborative with SPR and the superintendent, that would be the time when the pastoral committee will have conversations with the DS about what pastor will be appointed here. The DS wants to appoint pastors to where they will thrive. I share this saying that this is not something that is forced on congregations, there is a collaborative process. We are not dealing with it at

the present time. Same sex weddings – no longer prohibited in the UMC. The conference and denomination acknowledged that each church through their Board of Trustees can determine what kind of gatherings take place on the church property. This will be a discussion for us to engage in at the right time. Bishop Berlin has advised not to jump into that discussion or debate immediately. We don't have a lot of weddings at the church. I have not presided at a wedding here yet. Pastor Missy presided over one. Pastor Jeff presided over one before he left. We don't have a lot of weddings in the books. Usually weddings are planned well in advance. I share this in the sense that it's not an immediately urgent question for us, but not something we want to kick down the road for a while. It felt the right thing to stay focused on our next steps and vision and let that unfold and then come to that discussion when we feel it is right.

- Since the last church council meeting, groups have participated in conversation, how would we describe this in more detail. Here are a couple things I heard. Feedback was affirming. What if we adopted the discipleship path that Longleaf has, Know, Grow Go across both campuses. That in a couple of conversations has been affirmed in church leaders and staff. Reflecting on our core values, what are the values behind what we do. That led me to look at our personnel manual that has core values, I began asking around how long has that been there, what groups put it in place. Christ in the community, being centered on the word of God, compassionate outreach. As I was talking about those values with a couple groups, we went to annual conference, part of that conference is that every church is encouraged to do a sermon series on how we are rooted in our Wesleyan history. To grow deeply, lead faithfully, love actively, serve impactfully, embrace widely. Yesterday speaking with Pastors Missy and Kevin, these have a lot of overlap with the values in the personnel manual. I want to share with you a way to put this together. Thinking about Know, Grow and Go have some overlapping circles. Like in summer camp the kids that are learning for the first time about God. Church is about going. It's not like different ministries need to be affixed to any of these, they can be overlapping. As we grow in God's love, two phrases from the Wesleyan stand out – grow deeply, lead faithfully, The journey of our discipleship is our whole life. God has more depth for us to discover. One of the values was the word of God, but by remembering to read faithfully, tells you what to do for God and points to a value and a commitment that relates to growing in God's love. The language on the sheet is not a final vision statement.

- Two other phrases relate to going in God's love. Love actively, serve impactfully. We are called to go out. We see this in the Bible. They were going out two by two. In the Methodist movement some churches were founded by doctrinal disagreements. People were going and growing deeper in their lives. Compassion and outreach were values in the personnel handbook. Different ministries reaching

out to others with care, school partnerships in the community, raising money for local partnerships in the community. In this season of tension, our community is still going through a season of tension (election year) we would seek to deepen connections and partnerships in the community. The word friendship and connection point to something as god works in us and others by the spirit. There's a sense of mutuality and partnership.

- Knowing God's love, final phrase, connected to Wesleyan rooted, has always been connected with community events and fresh expressions, inviting people to be part of the church and know the love of God. As I reflect on the history of this community, I'm amazed at the lengths this church has gone to share the love of God. At Longleaf, not only did the people go, but there were years of meetings, thoughts and prayers so that people of North Saint Johns would know God's love. Upward sports, preschool, summer camp, are all examples of how we're reaching ministries to reach into the community. We are a church that has embraced widely in this sense. A bulletin from 1986 has a phrase at the bottom. I don't know how long this phrase was on the bulletins. To all who need comfort…to all who need friendship… to those who are lonely and need companionship…to all who want sheltering love…to those who sin and need a Savior…and whosoever will…this Church opens wide its door, and in the name of our Lord says, "WELCOME."

- We are a church that has people continuing to seek the love of God together who sees themselves as traditional, moderate, and progressive. Our hope moving forward is that we can continue to embrace one another and others among us in that spirit. The hope is that this sheet can give us a little more direction as we reflect on ministries together. As we love God and neighbor, build community, no limits, what does that look like while reflecting the core values that the church has held?

- At this time, ask around the table, what ways have you seen these commitments lived out? Where do you see us falling short? Where do you see us needing to focus on? Talk around your table for 12 minutes.

- I invite you at this time to share feedback. One table liked the long phrase on the bulletin.
  Introducing yourself to people you don't know.
  When we built the Family Life Center, we talked about using this building to give back to the community.
  We see that lived out in different ministries.
  110 new people have come to play pickleball this year.
  Equipping the youth for their future lives with summer camp and all the trips the youth do.

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Getting adults more involved in our events – follow up with new people and people who haven't been here in a while.
Thank you for giving us a chance to pass the peace in worship.

- Think about the next steps, further reflections or thoughts from tonight, please reach out and share that. One possibility in each of those three areas, you can have some intentional conversations about where are we and what are some things we need to develop and work on before our next church council meeting.

- **Adjournment – Dick Eisenbarth**
  Meeting adjourned at 8:29pm

- **Next Council Meetings: September 24th and December 3rd**

- **Prayers of Praises and Concerns – Pastor Kevin**
  Praise for summer camp
  Youth on mission trip this week
  Praise for closing on a building for John Lewis' business
  Polly's mother in hospice care