

FAIRHOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BOARD OF STEWARDS

REGULAR MEETING

February 18, 2021

A regular meeting of the Board of Stewards of the Fairhope United Methodist Church was held on February 18, 2021 on the Zoom APP. Mike Lockwood thanked all for their church service and in particular Gene Lammers.

Attendance: Need help here!

Minutes: The minutes of the last meeting were approved online.

Introduction:

Rev. Darren McClellan opened a thought challenge to the Board: “What do we love about FHUMC” and “What do we want to create together”?

What we love: caring church, serve our community, generous people, and a great staff.

What do we want to create? : Rev. Darren provided guidance in that we “do not need to reinvent ourselves—we need to build on our solid foundation”. We are at a unique time in the life of our church which presents unique challenges. We need to clearly articulate: “Who we are as a church”. He asked the Board for their thoughts and help on “What are the conversations we should be having to answer that question”

The Annual Conference is scheduled for June 6-9. The General Conference will probably be postponed again August 29 – September 7. We are faced with unique challenges and frustration. The rumor mill is active with lots of speculation. This presents a narrative of a wedge with further speculation on how it will affect our church. This underscores the importance of addressing the question above.

Staff Reports:

Nuture, Outreach, and Witness Ministries

Michelle Graham—Children’s Ministry (Written Report Attached)

Rachael Waldhour – Student Ministry

Ann Pearson – Caring Ministries (Written Report Attached)

Jennifer Myrick—Missions

From Tape:
New Business

- Shepherds Place—Susie Hamilton—Going to re-open and will submit protocols
- Worship Protocols - (Moving forward Reopening Church)
 - Changing protocols too early at this time. Things will change rapidly as people obtain vaccinations. Decision taken to hold off until more data is obtained from medical community. Current community infection rate is around 10%. This rate needs to come down to somewhere in the 5%-3% range before major changes made.
 - Discussion moved to the importance of having a top-notch internet broadcast of our church services. The current offering is not of the best quality and is too unreliable in real time. Efforts are underway to address and improve our worship service broadcasts.
- Associate Pastor's Remarks
 - Rev. Laura: This new environment has created real challenges. Many of the good things we started with people have come to a halt. Everything joyful has been shaken. One of the strengths of our church is helping create small group communities where people can come together and help each other change. Not being able to facilitate this has been frustrating and a little disorienting. I am looking forward to things gradually returning to normal in the months ahead.
 - Rev. Antonio: I completely echo what Laura has stated. I'm looking forward to being in a mode where we can help people without our hands being tied. I must say I am very proud to be on staff. I will say this has been a very interesting year to become a pastor!
 - Rev. Darren: Thank you to the staff for doing a great job under very difficult conditions. We have a great staff here at FHUMC. In the coming weeks we will be starting a new study series on praying. A new way of praying facilitated by Mona Pineda, MDIV. The series will be held in the sanctuary at 5:45pm on Wednesdays. Antonio and Laura will be starting new Wednesday evening study classes. This is one of our first steps to begin returning to normal activities at church.

Rev. Darren also advised of his meeting with Dr. Jeff Spiller and Rev. Rob Haynes on their efforts to start a new Church on the Eastern Shore. This effort came to my attention as several members told me they were not submitting pledge cards because they were committing to join this new entity. It will not be a United Methodist entity; the new entity affiliation has not been finalized. They both expressed the intent is not to pilfer or poach members from FUMC. I am sure there will be people who will be intrigued by this new effort. This makes it all the more important we do what we say we will do and lead with integrity. They obviously will be looking for ways to fund this new effort. They have expressed they have 30 families committed to this new effort. They are looking at a launch date in October with a payroll starting July 1st. Their budget will be in the \$350K range. Dr. Spiller has a good reputation in the area and he stated he has 160

families that will be targeted. The location of the church will be in the Fairhope area and they will let us know once the property is finalized. This just highlights the discussion in our church about the eventual split in the United Methodist Church. A recruitment tool of being absorbed by an ultraprogressive wing in the global church body. I have spoken with Christ UMC and this is not an effort of that church to "plant a flag" on the Eastern Shore. The new church will be named Christ Wesleyan. This underscores the importance of staying committed to the things that make our church the strong church it is. We must intensify our efforts to answer the question "Where do we go from here and what do we want to create together"?

- The meeting was closed with a word of prayer.

Board of Stewards
February 18, 2021
Caring Ministries

Reality

It can't be overstated how tough it has been navigating the challenges of Covid and the social distancing that has occurred during this past year in all areas of ministry. We have experienced times like no other and it has been difficult on being separated and at times isolated from connecting face to face with our church family.

Grief

FUMC is family and not being able to be with family has been heartbreaking for many of us. I personally have grieved not being able to go to make visits in the hospital, nursing facilities and home visits. Our members have become depressed and lonely in this separation time. The struggle has been our lack of our in person connection and how to navigate coming back together in a safe way. We cannot overstate how much we have missed the face to face support.

Hope

We have found new ways to reach out and connect with our membership. Our support groups have continued by Zoom as well as Stephen Ministry care for our community and church family. Many of the ministries have seen a significant increase during Covid in providing needs: Prayer Ministry, Lords Pantry, Durable Medical Loan Closet Ministry, Tough Dogs Cancer and Knit and Crochet Ministries. Caring Ministries has sent cards every 2 months or made contact through home deliveries to our membership to let them know we are still here offering support to them. We have had more new volunteers in 2020 than ever before. People have needed ways to serve and that was demonstrated through the deliveries to our member's home last spring and summer. Caring Ministries is planning on making another round of deliveries to member's homes in April. We are continuing to look for new ways of opportunities to bless our membership and reach out in connection with one another.

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Submitted by Michelle Graham

REALITY

I've made a list of a few things we accomplished in children's ministries in January and February of 2020:

- we participated in our first, multi-generational Epiphany service in the FH and it was a wonderful time filled with lots of laughter
- we were back in full swing with Sunday School and Wednesday night programs following the Christmas/New Year break
- we completed a successful Wonderfully Made program for our 5th & 6th graders and their parents
- we took a huge group of 3rd – 6th graders to Blue Lake for Winter Retreat (our church actually had the most attendees!)
- we had a mission night for our 3rd & 4th graders where they spent the night at the church to see what it feels like to be a participant in Family Promise

2020 was off to an amazing start! And then we started hearing words like pandemic - Coronavirus – covid 19 – and all that went with it. Reality set in as worship was online only, no Sunday school, no Wednesday night programs, no anything in-person. Over time, grief had definitely set in.

GRIEF

I missed the kids and their families. I missed the adults who serve in children's ministries. I missed the way things used to be. I grieved no Easter Egg Hunts. No VBS. No Blue Lake Summer Camp. The list goes on and on.

If you know anything about me, you know I'm a planner. I prefer to know what's going to happen, when it's going to happen and how it's going to happen. I may look calm on the outside when things don't go as planned but I assure you on the inside I'm a complete mess. I so grieved for the way it used to be. And the grief was real and to be honest it still is to some degree. I worry if I've done enough for our children and their families. Could I have done more to stay connected with them? Could I have done more to help them stay connected to Christ and our church? The wonder can be consuming and certainly causes more grief.

HOPE

But as I look back on the reality and the grief, I am reminded that there's always hope! I know that many of our children's programs will likely not go back to exactly the way they were. But there's hope that they'll be even bigger and better!

There are new families with young children visiting the church. There's hope they'll plug in and become part of our church family.

There's hope that the vaccine will allow more and more families to come back to in-person worship and Sunday School.

With hope, we're making plans to go to Blue Lake in a couple weeks for a one-day winter retreat, making plans for our Easter egg hunts, VBS and more!

I don't know about you but I just need to keep reminding myself that as long as I keep my eyes on Christ, there is always hope! And I am hopeful that Kristin, Martha, Tina and I will continue to do the best we can to reach and serve as many children and their families as we can!