

**Gulf Cove United Methodist Church**  
*Helping Everyone Meet, Know, and Serve Jesus*  
**DNA Meeting**  
**April 28, 2014 – 7:00 PM**

Attendees:

Rev. Dr. Don Nations (via Skype)	Rev. Dr. Bill Fisackerly Scott Folsom	John McGuire Joan Priest
Rick Starck (Church Council Chairman)	Betty Hansell Carol McGuire	Holly Woods Dana Hanson

The meeting was opened with the lighting of the candle representing Jesus Christ, followed by a prayer by Rick Starck.

**Young Adults**

The first topic discussed involved the not-too-distant future of our church when our current youth and young adults will be running the church. Rick questioned whether establishing a separate service now for our young adults and maybe even a young adult church council would be a good way to encourage the future leadership of GCUMC. Rev. Don said that one reason reaching young adults would be so difficult is because they are three cultural jumps away – two generations away, plus churched to unchurched – a jump next to impossible for a church to make. Rick pointed out that not only do we not understand their “language,” we do not even understand what their requirements are. He mentioned that one reason missionaries to Korea were successful was because they learned to speak Korean.

There are a few young adults who attend our church regularly, but only a handful. It was mentioned that giving them their own autonomy might help them establish themselves as leaders of a smaller, but separate church within our church, and help them reach out to others their own age. We could provide initial support and financing, with a promise not to impose our “older” and “traditional” standards, as long as they followed the Methodist guidelines.

Rev. Don said one question we would have to ask is how similar are those young adults who currently attend our church to others of their generation who do not attend any church. If they are of their grandparents’ way of thinking, they might relate more to how GCUMC operates today than would their peers. Holly (one of our young adults) said she enjoys coming to church, and although she has tried, even she does not know how to convince her peers that coming to church is worth their time.

Rev. Don also pointed out that many of the churches which are successfully reaching young adults are actually new church starts. They don’t have the “baggage” that many older churches have – set ways of doing things, the committee structure, etc. Instead, they typically have a younger pastor and have not been around very long.

He opined that one thing GCUMC would probably have to do is provide a salary for a young-adult associate pastor, who is charged with trying to start a service targeting younger generations. With regard to associate pastors, realistically, the financial outlay would total \$100,000 to

\$120,000, including housing, insurance, salary, etc. An associate pastor would get to know the unchurched, nearby community for 6-12 months and then launch something brand new. Rev. Don didn't know if the Conference would help fund that activity. Holly pointed out that two of her northern relatives attend an extremely large church, and the very situation that Rev. Don mentioned is in place and extremely successful, with the service being conducted on Saturday evening.

Rev. Don advised that quite often, when a church's current young adults start a separate worship program, it's generally three people in the band and twelve people who show up to listen to them. However, by using a church model we would target a minimum of 100 for attendance at the first service. We would need a launch team, comprised of people who do NOT attend our church. Their hands-on service would include advertising, marketing, campaigns, conducting preview services, and finally the launch itself. In actuality, it would be a new church start. He indicated that creating a church plant is much less challenging than doing it within an existing church.

Rick believes our current track will continue to be successful because baby boomers are still retiring. But he does not see how the church can survive if we do not address the younger generation. A new church plant addressing the young adults would be one way to survive. If we give young adults an opportunity to grow, we've done our job enabling them to go forward. Rick said he is happy with where GCUMC is today; he doesn't need padded seats or a dedicated sanctuary. If we are building the next generation up and helping them to develop the same relationship with Jesus that we have, then we are accomplishing our mission. The young adults he has spoken with have indicated they want to join something that makes a difference in the world. Looking at that criteria, are we supporting the right programs?

Rev. Bill opined that our definition of "making a difference in the world" is likely different. We would say it is helping people meet Jesus. Today's youth would say it is being humanitarians involved with problems such as AIDS, healthcare, human trafficking, slavery, and sex trade; the International Justice Mission is all over college campuses. When he worked with the Lemon Bay High School theater department, he learned that those youth are very much into the Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS charity.

Holly felt that instead of addressing the 18-35 year olds, we should address the 40-55 year olds since many of them still have children at home; it will then be the 40-55 year olds' responsibility to address the 18-40 year olds. Rev. Bill said it might be necessary to establish a bus-ministry, where the church uses a bus or van to pick up all the children who do not drive or have no way to get to church. Betty pointed out that it helps dramatically if you live near a college; busses are sent to those campuses and the college kids ride the bus to church; GCUMC does not have this option. Holly suggested bussing could be done with area high school students. Scott pointed out that in order for growth to occur, children and youth activities need to be a family ministry, including siblings and parents; Scott makes it his priority to meet the parents of any new youth that comes to GCUMC, and he informs them of opportunities that are available here.

Rev. Don mentioned that Edgewater is currently reaching the younger age group we are talking about. They have doubled their attendance in the past several years with emphasis on programs such as Celebrate Recovery and Financial Peace University. [An internet search reveals that only three churches within a 25-mile radius of GCUMC offer Celebrate Recovery: Edgewater UMC and First Alliance Church in Port Charlotte, and New Life Community Center in Venice.]

Betty suggested that we seriously consider our advertising program.

### **Zero-Debt Position**

Rick advised that GCUMC is very close to paying off its mortgage in full. However, which is the better way to go -- pushing a huge capital campaign and self-financing everything debt-free, or taking on a new mortgage? Capital items we could use include more kitchen space, more serving space, and another sanctuary (our current one is a multi-use building). Rough, initial estimates to achieve these three things came in at close to \$2 million. Some felt another larger education wing would be best because it would allow more activities (even exercise classes or a computer laboratory). Our most urgent problem is that all four of our portables are literally falling apart. Right now three house the Closet of Hope, the Music Program, and the Youth, and one is used as a meeting room.

Rev. Don pointed out that if you don't know who you want to reach, you don't know what you want to do or build. By way of example, he mentioned that churches which offer 4:00pm after-school sessions for children will be reaching single-parent families or those in which both parents work. At this point in time, rapidly growing churches do have debt.

One option is, instead of holding a capital campaign to raise money over three years for a new building, to have a ministry campaign for some very specific programs. One way to please more people, however, is to split the campaign, with the funds raised being used in specific amounts for specific purposes. By way of example:

Conduct a \$600,000 campaign over three years. Up to half will be put into fixing up our current building. The balance will be used for hiring an associate, working out a partnership with another church, helping a new church start, or merging with another large-growing close-by Methodist church to create a multi-campus church.

Rev. Don said that partnering with a church such as Edgewater in creating a younger adult-oriented worship might be a possibility. They have the style and experience we do not have, while we have a large facility. Rev. Bill added that the former EJ's Family Diner might be a perfect joint venture location for such a ministry. Rev. Don said he believed Conference might even be willing to help fund such a venture.

An internet search made after the meeting revealed the following information. EJ's is just across the Myakka River and within the past few days went up for sale. The address is 4104 El Jobean Road, Port Charlotte, FL 33953. The building contains 5,094 square feet on a 1.27 acre lot. In June 2007, it sold for \$880,000; and in April 2012, it sold for \$162,900. Its current asking price is \$395,000. The Charlotte County Property Appraiser's website indicates the current owner is Acme Investment Group, LLC. Rick believed this location and building would have excellent potential as a joint project with Edgewater. Shirley Smith, a GCUMC clergy candidate, has also been thinking about and praying with regard to this property.

<http://www.loopnet.com/Listing/18675967/4104-El-Jobean-Rd-Port-Charlotte-FL>. <http://commercial-properties.findthebest.com/1/3248603/4104-El-Jobean-Rd-Port-Charlotte-FL-33953>. [http://www.ccapraiser.com/Show\\_parcel.asp?acct=402128231004%20%20&gen=T&tax=T&bld=T&oth=T&sal=T&ind=T&leg=T](http://www.ccapraiser.com/Show_parcel.asp?acct=402128231004%20%20&gen=T&tax=T&bld=T&oth=T&sal=T&ind=T&leg=T).

### **GCUMC Communications**

Rick advised that in any large organization, the bigger you get, the worse the communication gets. He believes we do a reasonable job with inter-committee communication, but passing that information on to the congregation leaves something to be desired. He and Rev. Bill recently discussed establishing a blog. It would have to be updated at least two or three times a week, and ideally posts would be made by several different individuals. Blogging also helps website ratings go up. Of necessity, this would only apply to people who use the internet. [It is noted that there are currently 157 members in the Gulf Cove UMC Facebook group.]

Scott recently polled his youth to find out what the best way is to communicate with them: Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc. He discovered the only way they would respond to him faithfully is through text messaging. He recently learned about a program called One Call Now [[www.onecallnow.com/religious/overview](http://www.onecallnow.com/religious/overview)]. You enter cell phone numbers into a system, and you can then send one SMS text, voice, or email message to everyone in the system. [The Pew Research Center recently issued poll results which indicate that as of January 2014, 90% of all adults have a cell phone and 58% of all adults have a smartphone. In addition, as of May 2013, 81% of all cell phone users used their cell phone to send or receive text messages. <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/mobile-technology-fact-sheet/>.]

With regard to Facebook versus Twitter, most youth and young adults use Twitter; those from 40 to 60 probably use Facebook; and those older either blog or use email if anything. Putting a hashtag on a Facebook post does not necessarily put it on Twitter.

It was mentioned that we seem to especially have problems communicating internally on topics related to worship. Part of that problem lies in the fact that there is currently no coordinator over the three worship services. While there are representatives for the 8:00 and the 11:00 services, there is no one who looks down the road to future events for the entire church. Recently, what was going to happen during Holy Week was not effectively conveyed to those who had a "need to know," and as a result, those in charge of preparing the sanctuary did not know what they were supposed to be doing.

**Methodists United in Prayer**  
**(Formerly the Cuba/Florida Ministry)**

Dan Christopherson, Southwest District Cuba Coordinator, recently made a presentation to the Crafty Ladies (and anyone else who wished to attend) regarding sponsoring a church in Cuba. Rick advised that he initially leaned solely toward local ministries, allowing only our apportionments to be used internationally. However, after Dan's presentation, Rick has made a 180-degree turn and fully supports the idea of a Cuban sister church. Pastors and many professional people in Cuba are paid only \$22 a month; and for only \$1200 to \$1500 a year, both a pastor and his church can be supported. Dan advised that the Cuban people often run out of food mid-month and go to the church for additional food. The church is forced with its funds to purchase food on the black market so that the children can be fed; additional funds (over and above the \$1500 a year) would be needed if we wanted to help with regard to this problem. Betty said that, if information and updates are effectively conveyed, she believes that our congregation would get more joy and satisfaction out of the relationship than would the church in Cuba which we would support.

Scott was asked to go to Cuba from July 22-29 with other representatives from the Southwest District. He has already applied for his visa and said there is a lot of red tape. Those going were told to take only cash. In addition, they have been given lists as to what they can do, and what they cannot do, and not to joke about it. Dan and his wife have been going to Cuba four or five times a year for the past ten years. Several of those present voiced a desire to have Dan make a presentation to our whole congregation.

Joan advised that Dave Noren, when he attended GCUMC, visited Cuba as part of a Methodist group. She said Dave came back with glowing reports, and he seemed to be on fire when he returned. GCUMC did not adopt a sister church at that time.

Rev. Don said he has used Skype during a Sunday worship service to speak with church members who were in Nicaragua. Each person was allowed to address briefly the congregation with whatever story or information they wished to pass on. The congregation here in the United States became so involved with the Nicaraguan sponsorship that the church members now embrace the visitations as one of their missions. Unfortunately, it is believed that Skyping from Cuba is probably not possible. If that is the case, Rev. Don suggests that extensive video be taken while there – what's happening, interview those on the trip, use interpreters. In addition, take video and pictures from GCUMC to Cuba.

One idea is to have everyone gather together near the altar at GCUMC after a service and place their hands on a huge map of Cuba, praying for their sister church in Cuba. Scott should take both the pictures and the map of Cuba with him. He can use it as a general promotional vehicle at each church at which he stops, as well as giving it to our sister church if it is adopted prior to Scott's visit.

Rev. Don advised that when the Cuba Covenant was established, it was envisioned that each Cuban Methodist church would be sponsored by one or two Florida Methodist churches. Dan Christopherson said there currently are available for adoption six Cuban churches in eastern Holguin province (known as Holguin Norte in the Cuba Covenant), in which the Southwest District's sister churches are located. Once he has GCUMC's profile, it would take about a month or so to match us up with one of those six Cuban churches. Assuming that a sister church is assigned to GCUMC prior to the trip to Cuba in July, the trip's itinerary would definitely include a stop at that church, and Scott would be asked to preach at the church.

Once we become sisters with a Cuban church, the local community could be informed through newspaper articles. This would become another favorable outreach to the community.

### **Local Outreach**

Joan reminded us that at our Vision Retreat in February, we discussed reaching out to area schools in an attempt to ascertain which children were in need. The teachers could inform us what size the child wears or what items are needed, and we could purchase those items for that specific child. This type of outreach would get the church's name spread among the teachers and the community. In addition, if we successfully reach the children, their families might follow.

As with the Cuban publicity, this type of outreach could be conveyed to the local community via newspaper articles – another favorable outreach.

### **Vacation Bible School**

Holly explained we are mixing things up this year for VBS. Instead of five days in one week, we will be offering VBS every Wednesday evening for five weeks. In addition, special adult classes will be formed and offered during the time that the children are in VBS. A press release about the new format been distributed to several newspapers, radio stations, and online organizations. In addition, we would like to contact area YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and elementary schools and if allowed, distribute or post flyers at those facilities. Our current children will be encouraged to invite their friends. It is hoped that families will enjoy coming to GCUMC on Wednesday evenings, and they will continue to come after VBS is over.

Rev. Don stated that offering prizes to the child who brings the most guests to VBS might be an incentive to increase attendance. He said Dan Durrenberger at North Naples UMC operates a summer program in which youth earn points which are put into a drawing for some really good prizes.

Our Food for the Soul Wednesday light dinner is usually cancelled during the 5-day VBS week. However, we are contemplating offering it during this year's VBS program, so that parents and

guardians will see what is actually available if they continue to come to GCUMC on Wednesday evenings.

One major consideration will be not cancelling the ECHO youth program for five weeks; that could be devastating to its continuity. It was mentioned that possibly the youth could attend the opening and closing sessions of VBS (basically 6:00 to 6:15, and 8:15 to 8:30), and still conduct their usual ECHO program in between.

Another consideration is ensuring that everyone who helps at VBS has the required background check and child protection training. Youth still in high school generally do not have background checks, but are required to be under an individual who has had a background check.

Rev. Bill said perhaps we could contact the Lutheran church across the street or Edgewater UMC and see if they had any volunteers who could cover our nursery during VBS. Then if the other church needed assistance during their offering of VBS, some of our members could assist them. It is unknown whether a background check will have to be conducted by GCUMC if the person had a background check conducted by the same parent Methodist church.

### **Adjourning**

Although subject to change, the next scheduled DNA meeting is Monday, June 23, 2014, at 7:00pm. Rev. Don will attend in person at what will be our last DNA meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm with a prayer by Rev. Bill.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dana Hanson