

**Gulf Cove United Methodist Church**  
*Helping Everyone Meet, Know, and Serve Jesus*  
**Church Council Meeting**  
**January 26, 2015 – 7:00 PM**

**Attendees:**

Doreen Alvarez (Church Council Chairman)	Scott Folsom	Irv Hopkins	Ken Priest
Rev. Dr. Bill Fisackerly	John Furtado	Jo Ann Hopkins	Jeanne Shrout
Alfred Current	Betty Hansell	Carol McGuire	Rick Starck
Sandy Doty	Charles Hilton	John McGuire	Bonnie Wollmacher
	Mary Hilton	Joan Priest	Dana Hanson

The meeting was opened with the lighting of the candle representing Jesus Christ, followed by a prayer by Rev. Dr. Bill Fisackerly.

**Corrections To Previous Minutes** – The recording secretary was not notified of any necessary corrections to the November or December 2014 minutes.

**PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

During the evening’s discussions, our scheduled events were referred to often:

Fri., Feb. 6	Pig Pickin’ & Cookie Dash
<del>Sat., Feb. 14</del>	<del>Senior Prom</del> [On 2/1/2015, this event was cancelled.]
Wed., Feb. 18	Ash Wednesday
Sat., Feb. 21	Thrive Leadership Training in Punta Gorda
Sat., Feb. 28	CROP Walk
Sat., Feb. 28	*** Vision Retreat *** being postponed
Thur.-Fri., Mar. 5-6	Real Ideas Conference 2015 in Tampa
Sat., Mar. 7	Alpha Day Apart
Sun., Mar. 8	Celebrate our Adoption of Nicaro, our Sister Church
March 10-19	Trip to Israel for the Fisackerlys and several church members
Sat., Mar. 28	Easter Egg Hunt (10-noon)
Sat., Mar. 28	Relay for Life (11am-11pm)
Mar. 30 – Apr. 4	Holy Week
Sun., Apr. 5	Easter
During May	Celebrate the 30 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gulf Cove UMC church charter on May 12, 1985 (first worship service held on Oct. 7, 1984, at L.A. Ainger Middle School)

**VISION RETREAT**

Rev. Bill explained the purpose of our Vision Retreat. It has evolved into a time of silence and prayer, followed by looking at where our church is, where we want to go, and what our dreams are. It is a time when our leaders get to know each other better so that they can lead the church better. It is usually held on a Saturday at an off-campus location.

Because of the plethora of planned weekend activities, the Vision Retreat will be rescheduled. Rev. Bill would like to form an ad hoc committee to work on the program. John Furtado and Doreen Alvarez volunteered to work with him and the office. The consensus was that we should try to establish the new date when our northern members are still here. After discussion, a tentative date was chosen – Saturday, April 11. The committee will meet to discuss the program further.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Doreen Alvarez is our new Church Council Chairman. She informed us that she plans to follow the Methodist Church's recommendations when conducting church council meetings. According to the Book of Discipline ¶ 252.2:

2. *Mission and Ministry*--Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities include:
  - a) The nurturing ministries of the congregation shall give attention to but not be limited to education, worship, Christian formation, membership care, small groups, and stewardship. Attention must be given to the needs of individuals and families of all ages.
  - b) The outreach ministries of the church shall give attention to local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy. These ministries include church and society, global ministries, higher education and campus ministry, health and welfare, Christian unity and interreligious concerns, religion and race, and the status and role of women.
  - c) The witness ministries of the church shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing of personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; Lay Servant Ministries; and other means that give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ.

### **NURTURE**

Children's Hour: Jo Ann Hopkins advised that starting on February 8, a place for children will be available during the 11:00 worship service and the 10:45 Discussion Sunday School. Since most children will have already attended Children's Church and Sunday School, the children will meet in room 109/110 for fun activities (crafts, stories, and games), while their parents or guardians attend the worship service or Sunday school. Holly Woods and Bea Penszki will supervise the children. *Thank you, Holly & Bea!*

Children's Church: Jo Ann advised that attendance is generally somewhere between 8 and 20. Joan Priest has indicated she would like to be present with the older children full-time to give them a sense of stability. Kathy Wohlleb is prayerfully considering doing the same with the younger children. The children are almost finished with their Heifer project. Jo Ann hopes to move them into the Imagine No Malaria program.

Scams Program: Jo Ann is planning this program for some time in February. Doreen advised that any scam “valued” at less than \$3,000 is not investigated by the FBI, and often the scammers will aim for an amount just less than that amount. Scammers are getting smarter: a cover email/letter and logos make them look like well-known businesses of some type, such as Microsoft or CenturyLink; viruses attach themselves to a browser’s toolbar; individuals claim to be a software or hardware representative and you grant them remote access to your computer.

End-of-Life Matters & Issues: Jo Ann found online a detailed package which addresses these concerns. Joan and Ken Priest’s nephew may be willing to address members of our congregation regarding Florida requirements in this area. Individuals should be reminded about the church’s Endowment program. Jo Ann hopes to put together a program which covers these items and more, and present it to those who are interested sometime in March.

Easter Egg Hunt: Jo Ann advised that this event will occur on Saturday, March 28, from 10am to noon. Like last year, the baskets will be empty except for a small Easter book for which Holly, Jo Ann, and Scott are looking. Some suggestions were made:

- A trivia game, similar to what was done at Trunk of Treat, be played.
- The Easter story in a diorama with costumes; some examples mentioned were the garden setting; the last supper could be a snack area; the stone rolling away could be a game area using sticks to roll away hula hoops (the stone).
- Present a puppet program, which the kids at VBS always enjoy.
- Insert Bible verses inside eggs. In the past, about 1,500 eggs which were prefilled with a piece of candy or a trinket were purchased.

Vacation Bible School: Jo Ann informed the group that this year, VBS will be held on five Wednesday evenings starting on July 8 and ending on August 5.

Sunday School Superintendent: Jo Ann would like to establish this volunteer position which would handle mostly paperwork: make sure all adults are background checked when necessary; obtain registration forms for the children at the beginning of the year to ensure that we have current information from the parents; and other paper-intensive matters. Since Jo Ann prepares the Sunday school curriculum, this proposed job would not require a lot of time.

Alpha: Sandy Doty informed the group that the first, 10-week Alpha program that was offered began in October and ended in December with 32 people participating. All comments that were heard were positive in nature, indicating that it was a great program and should be continued. The second offering of Alpha started on January 15 and will end on March 26. This time, it is being offered at both 3:30 in the afternoon and 6:00 in the evening, with a joint light dinner at 5:30. About 65 people are participating in this two-prong, second offering of Alpha.

Small Groups: Sandy Doty has not yet had a chance to meet with the small group leaders, but one of her goals is to hold regular meetings of the leaders at least quarterly. They can exchange

ideas, suggest courses, learn what each is doing, etc. She has been asked by many, “After Alpha, what is next?” Alpha offers several programs after the initial Alpha series which are ideal for small groups. She would like to see all small groups included on the church’s website, not just a few of them.

## OUTREACH

This year, Alfred Current is the Outreach Chairman, with Irv Hopkins and Jim Choate being “Deputy Chairmen” so to speak. Alfred emphasized that he wants everyone to think outside the box when it comes to reaching out to our community.

Imagine No Malaria: Irv Hopkins explained how the program was started in 2006 under the name Nothing But Nets and was operated jointly by the Methodist Church, the National Basketball Association, and other national organizations. This program primarily entailed sending mosquito netting to Africa to stop mosquitoes from biting. From 2006 to 2012, the number of deaths from malaria dropped from 1 million a year to 627,000. It was discovered, however, that often the package that contained the net was never opened. Hence, education is necessary regarding what the risk is and how it can be reduced.

The Methodist’s new program is called Imagine No Malaria, with the ultimate goal of completely eradicating malaria. So far, they have raised \$64 million of their \$75 million goal. Each Methodist Church is encouraged to make a commitment to the program during 2015. GCUMC has made a \$2,500 commitment, and part of the Pig Pickin’ proceeds will be used for this purpose. In addition, Irv is planning a fun activity which will help our congregation raise even more money.

Other Outreach Programs: Alfred Current explained that many of our projects cross over between outreach and nurture. Some activities which are ongoing or planned include the following:

- We have “adopted” *Myakka River Elementary School*. This will pull young folks to the church and encourage them to become involved. Our members also assist the school at their functions and in the classrooms. Tervis Tumblers with the school’s logo are available for purchase, with the funds going to further the school’s activities. We will take 65 Pig Pickin’ meals on February 6 to the teachers and the rest of the school’s employees, and are looking for congregation members to purchase those meals. So far, about 40 meals have been purchased, and Jeanne Shrout said there were more teacher ticket payments received yesterday which have not yet been counted.
- *Girl Scouts* hold meetings here.
- *Boy Scout Troop 776* holds meetings here. In the near future, boys lower on the scouting rung will rise to the Boy Scout level, and Troop 776 should increase in size. Part of the

Pig Pickin' proceeds will be used to purchase the scouts a trailer which can be used to haul their equipment.

- Ken Priest is leading our involvement in *Relay for Life*, which will be held on Saturday, March 28, from 11am to 11pm. He needs more team members and more donations.
- We can encourage involvement in *other children's activities and programs* such as the backpack program, Kids' Needs, Closet of Hope, Trunk or Treat, and VBS.
- Our congregants donate to the *Blood Mobile*.
- *Alpha* helps people to meet and know Jesus, and once they come in, we help them serve him as well.

Cuba Sister Church: Betty gave a quick summary of the SW District meeting held at Christ United Methodist Church in Venice on January 22. Dan Christopherson, the Southwest District Cuba Coordinator, will be going to Cuba in February and will be taking our donated over-the-counter medications to Nicaro. When he returns, he will be accompanied by Pastor Jose Ramon, from the new Sancti Spiritus District of Cuba. Pastor Ramon will be speaking at the Punta Gorda UMC on Tuesday February 24 and at the Englewood UMC on Wednesday February 25. For additional information obtained at the Venice meeting, please see the postings on the church website: Serve > Global Mission > Newsletters. Betty advised that on Sunday March 8, we will celebrate the adoption of Nicaro, our sister church. Dan Christopherson will address all three of our services that morning. Scott Folsom advised the group that he will be returning to Cuba in July as the Southwest District chaperone/coordinator for the youth.

"Outside" Small Groups & Worship: Irv Hopkins said he is interested in meeting with Sandy Doty about establishing a small group off-campus, such as in a café, coffee shop, or Denny's. John Dorotics has talked with Rev. Bill about establishing a worship service at the VFW, which has meeting rooms separated from the bar. In both instances, the goal is to meet people who are disinclined to attend a church.

### SUPPORT

Finance: John Furtado advised that during 2014, spendable income (i.e., amounts used to pay general fund expenses) reached \$391,849, the highest in the church's history. At the same time, while \$30,000 was added to the Reserve Fund, \$18,500 was withdrawn to pay expenses. The balance in the Reserve Fund at the end of 2014 was just over \$16,600. The year 2015 will be a challenge in that this year's budget totals \$457,385, requiring that average monthly, spendable donations exceed \$38,000.

Trustees: Jo Ann Hopkins, the new Board of Trustees Chairman, plans to keep all board members apprised of developments as they occur, and will delegate various actions and activities for handling. One of the first things she will address is a perceived decline in custodial care. Hopefully, all are aware that there are basic things which should be handled by the custodian, but anything over and above the contract requires a work order to be prepared and delivered to the

trustees. They will decide whether the custodian should perform the work for an additional fee, or if the work should be performed by an outside company. In addition, Jo Ann asked everyone to advise her in writing if they hear a complaint so she can determine if it is something the custodian should be doing on a regular basis, or if it requires attention over and above the contract.

At the last meeting of the trustees, a discussion was had about the easement being sought by the utility company. The company was consulted and, although the size of the easement was not made smaller, a paragraph was included to ensure that the property is not used as a general staging area or for storage of equipment. The only time the equipment will be present is if they are working on pipes on GCUMC property. Jo Ann has signed the document as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. We already have recycled water available to us.

Staff-Parish: Joan Priest advised that the new part-time audio-visual technician position has been posted with Conference and the District. So far, one application has been received.

Rev. Bill informed the group that he spoke with the District about the required annual church profile. He was told that Gulf Cove UMC was the ONLY church who had submitted their report. *Yay!*

Nominations: Rev. Bill reported that no meetings have been held yet. He would like the committee to work with spiritual gift classes so they can ascertain which gifts people possess and for which activities they would be best suited.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Doreen explained that one of the things we need to do is determine under which category all our activities fall – under nurture, outreach, witness, or support – and how we can make sure that everything we do follows our mission of Helping Everyone Meet, Know, and Serve Jesus.

Arts & Crafts Fair: Mostly positive comments were heard, and at least on Friday, vendors were extremely pleased with their sales. With regard to the availability of the chapel, some vendors indicated a desire to go there, but they had no one to cover their booth while they were gone. As a result, Ula Christopher visited each booth at least twice and asked if they needed prayer or to discuss anything. There were a few incidents. Harold Grafe was bitten by a small dog on a long leash; he's okay. One lady had to be taken by ambulance to the hospital; she later said she was glad she was here when it happened, as her husband was out of town at the time, and she probably would have died if she had been at home. One tent collapsed during the Friday night/Saturday morning storm. They ran out of food on Friday. On the other hand, turnout was fantastic! The Explorers who directed traffic counted 6,111; we assume this was a head-count, not a car-count. Several individuals asked where the pulled pork was; last year Alfred Current handed out over 1,000 samples in support of the Pig Pickin' which was held the following weekend. Numerous vendors pre-registered for next year. *Another yay!*

Pig Pickin' & Cookie Dash: Alfred advised everything is under control for the big day on Friday, February 6. He is consulting with Cisco in an attempt to obtain groceries at a cheaper rate. One issue arose: the information GCUMC submits to the state still reflects Irv Hopkins as trustee; no problem, but the change should be made. Suggestions and comments included:

- Roughly 880 tickets have been distributed.
- Myakka River will get 65 meals.
- Sign-up sheets are out and people are volunteering for everything, including baked cookies.
- The business cards which included information on the Pig Pickin' were distributed by the golf cart drivers who gave rides between the parking lot and the main building during the Arts & Crafts Fair.
- Individuals should go table-to-table or otherwise greet & welcome visitors.
- Post our next events on the small marquee-sign in the narthex.
- Run the overhead projector.
- Include the small insert which contains church information in the food boxes, as was done last year.
- The Englewood SUN has asked for photos and a more extensive press release to be run prior to the Pig Pickin'.
- Park Alfred's grill in front of the church now instead of waiting until February 5.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Directories: Jeanne Shrout advised us that the office no longer prints the church directory for distribution. As soon as she touches the print button, someone calls with a change. If you would like a "current" copy, ask the church office to email you an electronic PDF file of the directory. She suggested a new copy be requested every three or four months because of the frequency of additions and changes.

Flyers & Other Distributed Items: Make sure that an electronic copy (Word, Excel, etc.) is given to the office so that it is available in the future. The office can ensure that information it conveys is always current.

Dogs & Animals on Church Property: There were several dogs at the Arts & Crafts Fair; most were smaller dogs. Jo Ann said that the church policy book says that dogs are NOT allowed inside any church buildings; she is unsure whether it covers animals outside. However, if dogs are on church property, it may cause complications with insurance. Rick advised that Englewood UMC allows dogs at their Farmers Market, but they must be on a leash. The Trustees will look into this issue.

Personal Nurturing: Joan Priest commented that she has heard from some older members of our church that some of their personal needs are not being met. Sometimes they need transportation to church or to a doctor's appointment; shut-ins are forgotten; yard care gets out of control; they

might need groceries picked up one week. It was pointed out that we need some way of learning when those needs are not met. In some instances, it might be simply a phone call to find out if everything is okay. Doreen commented that this is definitely something we need to address.

Thematic Sermon Series: Rev. Bill would like a new month-long theme which could be incorporated into the Sunday morning worship services. The more people who are involved, the better the whole experience becomes. After the discussion on baptisms, several suggested that baptism may be a good theme.

Baptisms: While doing year-end reports, Rev. Bill discovered that only one baptism (a baby) was performed during 2014. He was concerned that no new Christians professed their faith through our church. Although we have had quite a few people join the church, everyone was apparently a believer before coming to GCUMC – we seem to be better at pulling lapsed Christians back into the fold than at making new Christians. Some expressed the idea that baptism may be becoming less common, that the change in an individual's actions, heart, and soul are what is important. As was pointed out, we are *trying* to reach people who might not know Jesus (Myakka, Scouts, Pig Pickin', etc.), and some of these attempts will take time. Rev. Bill said we have had a net increase of 20 members, but the actual attendance has gone up quite a bit more than that.

QR Codes: Irv presented a brochure he received recently from another church which has that church's QR Code ("Quick Response Code") on it. Rev. Bill spoke to another church's representative over the weekend who indicated that after the QR Code was added to their printed materials, their donations went up – primarily because many of today's youth and young adults do not carry any cash, but they always have their smartphone on hand. GCUMC already has on its website a page where donations can be made; the QR Code in printed materials would enable a donor to get there more quickly and directly. [More information on QR Codes can be found at <http://www.whatisaqr.com/>.]

Senior Prom: ~~[On 2/1/2015, this event was cancelled.] This idea came up when some people said they never attended their senior prom, and/or their spouse is now gone but they'd still like to celebrate Valentine's Day. A little brainstorming resulted in the Senior Prom, which will be held on Saturday, February 14, from 2pm to 4pm. Tidal Wave (the band to which Smitty Smith belongs) will provide the dance music. In addition, there will be light refreshments.~~

Thrive Leadership Training: This year's training will be held Saturday, February 21, from 8:30am to 3:00pm at First UMC in Punta Gorda. The cost is \$5, payable at door. This year's break-out sessions include finance, youth ministry, trustees, visitor system, acquiring the evangelistic passion, fresh expressions, and reaching people. Detailed information on the schedule and classes is above the online registration form at <https://florida-reg.brapp.com/SWDistrictLocalChurchLeadershipTraining-Feb21201578>.



Real Ideas Conference: This internationally-known conference will be held on Thursday, March 5, from 9:00am to 7:30pm and on Friday, March 6, from 9:00am to 3:30pm, at Van Dyke Church in Lutz, Florida (about 10 miles north of the Tampa airport). The Thursday *morning* program is actually a “Pre-Conference” session with a separate cost. February 6 is the deadline to receive the early bird rates for the Pre-Conference session (\$39 versus \$49 regular) and the Main Conference session (\$99 versus \$139 regular); scholarships are available. In order to take advantage of the early bird rates, the office is asking that they be notified no later than noon on Wednesday, February 4, if you would like to attend this two-day conference. See <http://realideasconference.com/> for available sessions and more information. We will be using the church van and commuting daily instead of staying overnight. Scott has attended this conference before and was amazed at the extent of offerings available over the two days. A suggestion was made to attend this conference instead of holding a separate Vision Retreat.

Gulf Cove UMC’s 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: We’ll be celebrating this marvelous achievement during May. May 12, 1985, was the date on which GCUMC received its charter and became an “official” church. Prior to then, it held its first worship service at L.A. Ainger Middle School on October 7, 1984, with 90 people in attendance. *We’ve come a long way, baby – and yes, it’s already been 5 years since we celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup>!*

### **ADJOURNING**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm with communion and a prayer by Rev. Bill. The next Church Council meeting will be held on Monday, February 23, 2015, at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dana Hanson  
Recording Secretary