

**Gulf Cove United Methodist Church**  
*Helping Everyone Meet, Know, and Serve Jesus*  
**Church Council Meeting**  
**December 5, 2016 – 7:00 PM**

**Attendees:**

Doreen Alvarez (Church  
Council Chairman)  
Pastor Mike Weaver  
Alfred Current

John Furtado  
Gretchen Leppla  
Joan Priest  
Ken Priest

Jeanne Shrout  
Rick Starck  
Donna Wallace  
Dana Hanson

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

**Corrections to Previous Minutes:** There were no proposed changes to the minutes of the October 24, 2016 meeting.

**TEAM CONCERNS**

**Witness:** The December letter for the Christmas season has been mailed. Christmas Eve services are at 6:30pm, 8:00pm, and 11:30pm. A single Christmas Day service will be held at 10:00am. The usual three morning services will be held on January 1.

**Outreach:** We received a *Thank You* card from Myakka River Elementary School for the support we have provided to them; the card was posted on the Volunteer bulletin board. Everyone should take time to read it. In case anyone has not yet heard, at our free community Thanksgiving Dinner, there were about 750 dinners served, delivered, or picked up for take-out; the remaining food was taken to the Homeless Coalition where it fed about another 125 individuals.

**Support:** Regarding Finance, John reported that we ended November with a little over \$31,000 in spendable donations. Dawn had to transfer \$6,000 to pay bills. Our year-to-date spendable income is a little over \$404,000. If the \$24,000 in transfers are backed out, we are at \$380,249 – which exceeds last year at this time by \$16,000. This past Sunday we exceeded \$14,000 in spendable income, with about 391 in attendance. The Reserve Fund currently has about \$16,800 in it.

Regarding upgrades to the parsonage, the donor family has given us \$20,000. Almost \$16,000 of that amount went into the Facility Up Keep fund, and the balance went into the Reserve Fund. After the first of the year, the donor family plans to give the church another \$15,000.

Alliance of Charlotte County Taxpayers: John reported that the meeting led by Bill Bigelow and Bob Starr went well. The meeting was concerned with the non-ad valorem taxation of churches. According to the relevant Charlotte County webpage:

The Real Estate tax bill is a combined notice of ad valorem taxes and non-ad valorem assessments.

Ad Valorem Taxes are based on the value of real property and are collected in arrears on an annual basis....

Non-ad Valorem assessments are based on factors other than the property value such as square footage or number of units. Levying authorities, such as stormwater utilities,

fire and rescue, and solid waste are responsible for setting the non-ad valorem assessments.

[\[http://taxcollector.charlottecountyfl.gov/realestate.html\]](http://taxcollector.charlottecountyfl.gov/realestate.html)

Highlights from the meeting include the following:

- Charlotte County has a budget equal to Jacksonville, \$1.3 Billion dollars. It is the fourth largest county budget in the state.
- If three of our five commissioners say “yes,” an item becomes a non-ad valorem tax to be funded.
- The tax liability of GCUMC is about \$4,700, all of which is non-ad valorem. Of that amount, \$4,300 is for fire and rescue, which is based on the size of the building.
- The Alliance is looking to receive support from people who are residents of Charlotte County by signing the necessary paperwork, which will be submitted to the Florida Legislature. Their goal is two-fold: to have all non-ad valorem taxes against churches eliminated or greatly reduced, and to have people who are impacted by projects of Charlotte County vote on the item instead of having it decided by five commissioners.
- After the meeting, Bill Bigelow advised John that he had personally contacted 40 of the 67 counties, and none of those 40 counties impose a non-ad valorem tax on churches.
- It is actually a situation of double-taxation. Individuals pay the non-ad valorem tax as part of their residence property tax bill. They pay for it a second time when their donations are used to pay the same taxes imposed against the church.

Doreen summarized that although signing the paperwork is not a church endeavor, the results do impact our church and other churches in the county. Those in attendance agreed that, while the church itself should not take a position on the issue, it is worthwhile to pursue as taxpayers of Charlotte County. A table could be set up in the narthex and information provided to enable parishioners to make up their own minds. John agreed to make a short presentation to the congregation.

Regarding Staff Parish, Joan advised that Holly Tozer has agreed to help with the ECHO youth on Sunday evenings until a new Youth Director is hired. SPR will consult with Conference initially and then a hiring committee will be formed. There is a training session for SPR members in Sarasota on December 13 at St. John’s UMC.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

**Facility Expansion:** Rick said there is nothing new to report. We really need to decide what we are doing as a church before we can decide how to expand our facilities. Doreen noted that she has had difficulty finding a parking spot the last couple weeks. Pastor Mike suggested we start using the golf cart. It was opined that there are likely a lot of solo drivers.

**Fresh Expressions:** Doreen attended Spark Day, and advised it will be the focus of our 2017 Vision Retreat; i.e., bringing the church to the community as opposed to drawing the community into the church.

**Apostles Build:** Jerry Spurgeon is leading this ministry. He is already accepting donations. There is currently \$1,489 in our Apostles Build account which can be used as part of our pledge.

On January 21, GCUMC will provide volunteers who will physically help construct the house. Our pledge can be paid later in the year.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Health Department Request:** Cheryl Adams from the Health Department spoke with Pastor Mike and Dawn Tesauro. They would like us to consider having our church as a hub for HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention services -- for education and for confidential testing. Since the Health Department is so far away, and we are somewhat in the middle geographically, they believe our church would be a good central location. They would need a room and the use of our restrooms when they do testing and prevention, both of which they would clean thoroughly after each use. We would be responsible solely for providing the facilities. They have the required insurance coverage. We would determine the hours they can be here. If any person who attends our church has any concern or question about the program, they should contact the office and someone will address their concerns. After discussion, it was agreed we should look further into the potential partnership.

**Lay Nominations:** Pastor Mike advised that our leaders for 2017 have been selected. They are now looking at where to go from here and are excited about developing a stronger discipleship track, and easier points of entry into our church community.

**2017 Budget:** John advised that we still have not received the final figure for property insurance from Conference; Dawn had added 10% to the 2016 amount. All present approved the proposed budget, with the caveat that after the final insurance figure is received, the 2017 budget will be revised accordingly.

**Pig Pickin':** Our next event is scheduled for January 27, 2017. A question was raised as to distribution of the proceeds from the 2016 event. The only answer Dana Hanson could locate was in the minutes of Council's 1/25/2016 meeting, which state: "... some of the proceeds will be allocated for a new stove for the kitchen. Other monies will be donated to fund a wrap for the Boy Scout's trailer, and some identification for the outside of the church van." A replacement stove was never purchased because certain repairs were made instead. Regarding what the 2017 proceeds will be used for, it was decided that they would be used for missions and outreach. Last year, congregation members purchased dinners for the Myakka River Elementary teachers. Would we want to do something similar this year – maybe complimentary tickets for the Sheriff's Department or the Fire Department, so they can pick up their own meals when they are nearby?

**Kitchen:** A discussion ensued about the kitchen and the stove, which is around 25 years old. We need to verify that someone is responsible for ordering kitchen supplies. One difficulty we are encountering is due to the fact that several groups use the kitchen and storage room, and each group tries to avoid using items purchased by one of the other groups. As a result, there is considerable duplication of items being stored in different locations of that room. Another potential problem that was noted involves the storage of chemical items.

It was pointed out that just a few years ago, individuals had to take a training course on proper kitchen procedures in order to work in the kitchen. That regulation was changed, and churches are now exempt from the training requirement. However, common sense mandates that many

precautions still must be considered. After the meeting, Pastor Mike checked Conference and Discipline information; they provide no specific kitchen guidelines, just general “due diligence” type statements. Someone mentioned that during the Thanksgiving Dinner, not everybody who was working in the kitchen and serving room was wearing gloves. Concern was also expressed regarding the storage of food when we are serving over 700 people. We need to review both our processes and the kitchen facilities to ensure safety for everyone involved, and to ascertain ways by which things can be done better.

**Chamber of Commerce:** Alfred asked if the church had thought about joining the Englewood Chamber of Commerce. He brought it up because there is no formal welcome center in Englewood, and the Chamber is used as a visitor’s center. The first benefit is exposure via business cards (and/or other informational material) for the church. A second benefit is called Two-Minute Tuesday: an email is sent out every Tuesday which contains information submitted by members about what is happening in their business or organization. After the meeting, it was learned that the annual membership as a non-profit in the Englewood Chamber costs \$127, in the North Port Chamber costs \$125, and in the Charlotte County Chamber costs \$197.

**Old Laptops:** Ken said a program about which he is currently interested involves refurbishing old laptops for schoolchildren in Costa Rica. Ken’s friends in Costa Rica (a computer specialist and his wife, and Ken’s sister-in-law) are able to erase and clean up old laptops, and reformat them to be used by students. He said if anyone is upgrading their computer and needs to get rid of a laptop (only laptops, because they must be portable), he can be contacted about the donation.

### **ADJOURNING**

Since this is our last Church Council meeting for the year, Doreen thanked for their service those who have been part of Council but who are making way for new Council members.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35pm with prayer by Pastor Mike. The next Church Council meeting will be held on Monday, January 23, 2017, at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dana Hanson  
Recording Secretary