

**Minutes of the Visioning Committee  
Front Street United Methodist Church  
July 24, 2025**

The Visioning Committee met at 7:00 p.m. in Room 402 with the following persons in attendance:

Jim Roberson, Chair	Ray Warren	Sean Hardy
Marianna Harris	Stephan Margeson	Curtis Price
Gary Harris	Melissa Miller	Dexter Peach
Tom Sineath	Scott Self	Marti Strickland
Carol Sineath	William Inabnit	Betty Massey

**OPENING**

Jim opened the meeting with prayer. A motion to accept the May minutes was made and passed unanimously. There had not been a meeting held during June.

**MEN'S BREAKFAST BIBLE STUDY**

Dex reported that the Men's Breakfast Bible Study will start up on the first Tuesday following Labor Day. Dr. Jim Pace will continue to lead for another year and will move away from the lectionary to begin a study of the Book of Isaiah.

**UNITED WOMEN IN MINISTRY**

Carol stated that the United Women in Ministry groups will also restart in September. No news has been shared yet regarding the Women's Build for Habitat for Humanity that is coming up soon.

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Carol and Tom both shared that they attended and the conference was amazing! They highly recommend others to attend. Tom shared that in his opinion United Methodist Church was doing great Jesus work in North Carolina, including work on several equality platforms.

**STAFF PARISH RELATIONS**

Scott reported that the hiring process for the new music position (organist/choir director/handbells) was moving forward. They received over twenty applications and conducted eight Zoom calls over a two week period, narrowing down to three candidates to interview in person. However, two of the three already have accepted other employment offers, so we will

proceed with the single interview to meet with the choir, bells and SPRC next Tuesday, July 29. The position is continuing to be posted to attract additional candidates, in case this one does not meet our needs. There is no rush to fill the position as we have Tim Baker for the interim and we want to hire the right person for the position. Marti added that the candidates brought several good ideas to SPRC which we can use in the future.

Now that Pastor Stephan has been appointed to another church and will be leaving in late August, SPRC will be meeting with Pastor Ray, the District Superintendent and the Bishop for thoughts on what Front Street UMC needs as a replacement. Again, there is no rush as we wish for the Holy Spirit to direct and lead the right person to us. In the interim, Rev. Marshall Old has offered his services on a part-time basis (roughly ten hours per week) to assist with pastoral care and leading worship services.

Also, SPRC will be re-establishing an advisory Board from the Church to oversee the Playschool for policy and procedures, which was in place prior to COVID. This will be a separate group from the current teacher-parent advisory board which will continue.

## TRUSTEES

Gary provided an update on the ongoing efforts by the Trustees to resolve the property issues across the street, including the parking lot and the area behind the Ministry Center. Tom Steele discovered another area to be corrected in that when Front Street UMC was incorporated in 2000, the property acquired in 1997 did not get put into the assets of the corporation. We are now in the process of including this property into the assets. Once completed, we can move forward with the parking lot agreement with Duncan Exxon. Pastor Ray added that we also are working to add the denomination to the corporation filings as the United Methodist Church denomination affiliation was also not completed. Hopefully, all will be corrected with the legal documents soon.

Gary will speak with Chris Huneycutt, Youth Minister, to discuss which of the three church vehicles (two vans and a bus) should be sold and which kept. Previously, the Vision Committee approved the sale of two vehicles with the idea that if additional transportation was necessary, we could look into renting an appropriate vehicle for the event rather than continue to insure and maintain multiple vehicles. Melissa stated that all three vehicles were used to transport children to Camp Chestnut Ridge last week as each experienced issues on different days.

## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

No report, other than Pastor Ray stated that during the recent deluge of rain, the flat roof did not leak! The repair fix seems to have worked!

Gary asked Jim if the money pledged for the Memorial Garden items (such as benches, planters, etc.) had been received, and yes, funds have been received. We are only waiting for a

couple of items to be completed (cap on a bench and two planters) and then Pastor Ray will move forward with dedication of the columbarium and garden.

#### GENEROSITY/STEWARDSHP

No report, but Pastor Ray wanted the Committee to know that the Stewardship/Generosity Team was working diligently. A letter was included in the congregation's quarterly statement of giving which was mailed this week, which thanked givers for supporting various ministries highlighted in the letter. More to come!

#### FINANCE

Curtis reported that the June financial statement began with a deficit of \$186,773 and ended with a deficit of \$232,822. This is not unusual for this time of year, summer is slower, and expenses are approximately \$28,000 more, mostly related to increased costs of insurance. However, year-to-date, contributions are ahead of last year (approximately \$40,000 more). We are just beginning to see the financial effect of recent staff changes. Curtis will be holding two informational sessions for members of the congregation to understand church finances, including why some funds are designated for specific purposes and cannot be used to meet budget items. Currently, approximately forty people have registered.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

Betty asked if the Church had reviewed the age categories of the families within the Church, since last Sunday at the 11:00 am worship service she noticed very few younger families (summer vacations playing a part). The answer was that yes, ages had been part of the Horizons generosity questionnaire and that our church was in line with most mainstream Protestant denominations in that most members are older and less young people attend church in person. Pastor Stephan stated that the median age in Burlington, NC is 39, which implies that there are a lot of younger families transitioning into the area. Research indicates that Millennials and Gen-X attend religious services 1.6 Sundays per month. Many younger people are connected to church, but may not wish to join as members, not being "subscribers" but still engaged. Attendance in Aldersgate has tipped to 80 per Sunday.

More volunteer opportunities:

- Tom noted that Wheelchair Ramp #415 will be built this coming Saturday and encouraged all to assist or drop by to see the amazing work being done. More volunteers are needed.
- Stephan added that the Community Medical Closet is growing and volunteers are needed to clean, organize and distribute items.

- Due to summer vacations, more volunteers are also needed to assist in distributing food for the Fresh Mobile Market, held once a month. Please pass the word.
- Market for Missions is already in the works – more to come.

## CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

Melissa reported the following:

- Vacation Bible School—was SUCH FUN! We had 85 children participate. Children were invited to share songs the following Sunday in both Aldersgate and 11:00 worship services. Twenty kids joined us in the 11:00 service and even more during the Aldersgate service. Great opportunity for parents and grandparents to attend services and see their kids perform! Great time and provided another church connection!
- Blessing of the Backpacks – Fall kickoff on August 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Sunday School kick off – September 7<sup>th</sup>, after Labor Day.
- Acolytes—will return during the 11:00 worship but with a slight change as they will be younger than normal, including 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders and older kids willing to serve.
- Playschool—Melissa has met several times with Becca, several new ideas and enrollment is up! Added another classroom! Fantastic!
- Camp Chestnut Ridge—several children from Front Street attended during the Front Street Week, transported from the church while Pastor Stephan was the pastor in residence along with his wife, Sierra, who was the nurse on duty! Thanks to the Margeson family for sharing in a great weekday experience for the kids!! Lots of great comments!

## YOUTH MINISTRY

No report, but Pastor Stephan shared that Aldersgate service will continue to be led by Josh. Clay Thomas who has been assisting with the media will be leaving for college. Luke Andress has been engaging in some interesting conversations about church, which is positive.

Jim added that Chris commented to him regarding ASP (Appalachian Service Project, youth summer mission trip), that the change in kids from when they leave the church to when they return from the trip is powerful! The bonding and experience are amazing! We need to make a concerted effort to sustain this service opportunity.

## PASTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP

Pastor Stephan shared the following:

- He had the privilege to be the pastor in residence at Camp Chestnut Ridge for a week.

- The visioning team he started will continue their work after he leaves, to come up with a vision statement and being in the community and spreading the word about Front Street UMC.

## SENIOR PASTOR

Pastor Ray shared that the church received a letter in the mail with a check for \$1,000 designated as a contribution to the *At the Table* video series and a pledge to continue to contribute \$1,000 a month for the costs of producing this video series so long as we continue to this video ministry. The question now is what do we do with it, since we had previously decided not to continue the *At the Table* series after July 31<sup>st</sup>? The contributors are not members of Front Street, but they watch the *At the Table* videos.

Tom reminded us that a couple of years ago, when we were looking into how we utilize our building, property, assets and Pastor Ray said we need a clear vision to make sure that our vision meets our ministry goals – who we are, what we do and what we think God is calling us to do.

Discussions included asking Jay (our current videographer, who is a theologian and producer, part of the process, not just technical), what could he do with a budget of \$12,000 per year vs. current \$25,000? (Note: Jay is compensated approximately 1/3 – 1/2 of what someone with his experience and time devoted to this production would normally charge.) Could we engage someone from Elon? Could we post shorter segments, film multiple segments in a single filming, perhaps only post twice a month vs. every week? (Note: Short-form video reels (approximately 90 seconds each) are already being posted multiple times a week on YouTube and Facebook.) Also, with Stephan leaving, Ray may have less time to film until another associate pastor is on board.

Curtis reminded us that when he spoke with the Sunday School class in May regarding cutting expenses, members expressed concern not just for the amount of money spent on producing the *At the Table* series but also the amount of pastoral time the pastors spent in travel and filming.

Tom mentioned that as many points of contact as we can make with people to the Church are all good in our goal of reaching out to people to share Christ. Worship, Sunday School, social media all have impact. Carol noted that social media is a big item, especially with younger people. On a related note, Pastor Ray shared that someone recognized him in a store from the video, so people are watching.

Scott added that SPRC had received some comments regarding proposed budget cuts involving the time pastors spent in filming, and that if we decide to proceed with extending the *At the Table* series, we need to communicate very clearly to the congregation that money has been gifted specifically to continue this video ministry. Perhaps shoot once a month and produce two episodes.

Decision was made to postpone a vote to extend the *At the Table* series until the August meeting so that the donator can be asked if he would still make the monthly contribution if the series format was changed, such as, if the videos did not air each week, were shorter in length and advise that Stephan will no longer be involved. Pastor Ray will speak with Jay on how we might address some *At the Table* videos during August since his contract ends July 31, and whether Jay would continue, if approved, for half the compensation and other options until the necessary conversations have been held and the Visioning Committee can meet for more discussion and vote.

Pastoral concerns:

- Coy Clayton, now at Twin Lakes on a long recovery road.
- Jim Pace to have hip replacement.
- Martha Brannock to have knee replacement.
- John Black.
- Susanne Conlon

#### CLOSING COMMENTS

Pastor Ray asked that we hold SPRC in our prayers as they continue to address the numerous staff changes and congregation feedback.

Scott shared that SPRC asked applicants for the music position why they were interested, and the response from many was that they visited our website and our church seems to have so many active ministries, they wanted to be a part! This strengthens why we need to continue to show our presence online and in the community!

The meeting was closed with a prayer offered by Pastor Ray.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betty Massey  
Recording Secretary