

Minutes of the Visioning Committee
Front Street United Methodist Church
August 28, 2025

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

Jim Roberson, Chair	Pastor Ray Warren	Lee Conner
Marianna Harris	Curtis Price	Betty Huneycutt
Gary Harris	William Inabnit	Julia Huneycutt
Tom Sineath	Scott Self	Marty Strickland
Carol Sineath	Dexter Peach	Kathy Roberson
Tom Steele	Betty Massey	

OPENING

Jim opened the meeting with prayer that God would guide us to do His Will.

MINUTE APPROVAL

A discussion was held regarding the need for a clarification to the July minutes regarding the *At the Table* video ministry. The committee agreed to add a note regarding the July meeting intent to extend the *At the Table* through August 31, 2025 and to revisit during the August meeting. A motion was made to amend the July minutes to clarify that “During the July meeting, while further evaluation was conducted, it was the intent of the committee to extend the production of the *At the Table* video series through August 31st.” The motion was seconded and following additional discussion, passed. A motion to accept the July minutes as so amended was made, seconded and passed.

STATEMENT READ

Tom Steele, acting in his official capacity as church attorney, read a prepared statement to update the committee regarding Rebecca Hurdle’s resignation as Director of Playschool.

MEN’S BREAKFAST BIBLE STUDY

Dex reported that the Men’s Breakfast Bible Study will restart on the first Tuesday following Labor Day, September 9th. Dr. Jim Pace will begin a study of the Book of Isaiah, exploring its message and placing the prophets in perspective.

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Kathy shared unofficially that the United Women circles will restart the second Monday in September on the 8th. All women will be assisting Suzie Lambeth with the Market for Missions this Fall. There will not be Fall speakers, but rather the circles plan to make 60 casseroles to freeze and sell for \$25 each on the day of the Market. Pre-sales are not anticipated. All ingredients will be donated by the women in support of this mission project.

STAFF PARISH RELATIONS

Scott reported that SPRC met last night and had the following to share:

- 1) Matt Estes has formally accepted our offer to become our Minister of Music. He will start on October 1, 2025. He comes from Clearwater, FL where he has been serving Ascension Episcopal Church.
- 2) Regarding the Associate Pastor, the Bishop and District Superintendent (DS) made us aware of a potential candidate and is giving our church the first opportunity prior to sharing his availability with other churches. Pastor Ray met with this person, who has completed his Masters of Divinity and will be seeking to become a deacon (takes around 4 years to complete). He is coming to the Durham/Chapel Hill area because his wife is beginning her Ph.D. program on breast cancer (takes 4-6 years to complete). Pastor Ray was extremely impressed by this person. SPRC intends to interview this candidate because of the high recommendations from Pastor Ray, the Bishop and the DS, while SPRC continues to consider what we may need in this position.
 - Curtis reminded us that Chris will be stepping away from leading Youth after June 2026 and could this position also take over the Youth ministry? Carol added that finding another part-time youth minister may be difficult.
 - Lee stated that procedurally, if SPRC were to change the roles of a staff position, then the Vision Committee would need to vote on such changes. Discussion identified that Mission and Program emphasis is handled by Visioning, and the Human Resources component is part of SPRC. Pastor Ray reminded us that Stephan was appointed by the Conference and that we did not have an actual job description because it was not needed for an appointment. Now that we are possibly considering a person which may or may not come through an appointment, SPRC is drafting a job description as we look closely at what our needs are and may be in the future.
 - Scott added that in the past, historically, pastors have been “appointed clergy” and we have been sent a replacement. Lee stated that Visioning and SPRC would be crossing-paths if we are seeking to change the role of an “associate

pastor.” Ray did not disagree, however when this church has had an associate pastor, it was by appointment. Stephan was the Pastor of Discipleship.

- Marty asked for the definition of “discipleship” – Julia answered that churches used to have Directors of Christian Education (DCE), whose responsibilities included heading up missions, adult Sunday School, small groups etc., but those positions no longer exist, causing people to sometimes be spread too broad and/or too thin.
- Additional comments suggested that we not jump too quickly to fill the void left by Stephan, not necessarily replace 1-to-1, remain fluid to needs and talents, but at the same time, not lose a potential candidate who may be sent to us (through answers to our prayers and the leading of the Holy Spirit).
- Pastor Ray stated that drafting the job description should include 2 main focuses: 1) design and lead worship and 2) oversee discipleship, missions and youth. Pastor Ray will continue to preach both services (he used to preach 4 at a prior church), and the new hire will lead worship and only occasionally preach (reminding us that planning and leading worship starts before Sunday).
- Scott reminded us that as stated last month, we are not in a hurry to fill the vacancy left by Stephan having been appointed elsewhere. We are going to seriously look at the unique individual that the Bishop recommended and if any Visioning people are interested in joining SPRC to consider job description, roles, budgeting, etc. their input is welcome, understanding that all HR items remain highly confidential.
- Marty asked about Josh, who originally was hired full-time and is now part-time. He leads our music and worship in Aldersgate and also still works with our middle school youth and confirmation. Perhaps now is a good time to update his title from “family minister,” since he has been serving as an appointed part-time pastor at Emmanuel UMC over the past year.

A potential motion was discussed and withdrawn as having been unnecessary. SPRC is tasked with reviewing candidates and so long as no radical or controversial changes are contemplated with regard to roles/positions, no further input is required. Lee offered an example that would require Vision approval: As Chris is currently leading Youth at 20 hours per week, if his replacement would only work 10 hours per week, that would be a material ministry change requiring the pre-approval of the Visioning committee.

- 3) A retirement celebration for Jackie Long as Building Superintendent will be held on Sunday, September 21 following the 11:00 am worship.
- 4) Playschool—Kathy Roberson, Amy Chandler and Margaret Purdue will head up a committee along with Melissa Miller to search for a new director. This position may become a full-time position. The emphasis is to put forth effort to stabilize the program and get a steady foundation. Playschool is full and all teachers are returning. We hosted a breakfast and lunch for the teachers to show our appreciation and

support. Currently working on 5th draft of a job description. Also, a governing board from the church will be re-established to oversee the program (not sure whether will be called an oversight board or collective, or some other name). This will be in addition to the current parent/teacher board.

TRUSTEES

Gary began by officially thanking Tom Steele for serving as our attorney representing this church! This is a very important designation as legal counsel, even though Tom says it may only be temporary, he has been doing a lot on behalf of our church! Tom has drawn up a Deed of Easement covering a triangle area of the parking lot across the street (the parking lot has now been incorporated into the church corporation, correcting a prior oversight). We don't own our entranceway, but hopefully this will provide us with legal access (Vilane, owned by the Jim Smith family, owns the area). Once this is completed, we can then move forward with finalizing a parking lot agreement with Spencer Trollinger of Duncan Exxon.

Also, the Trustees are proceeding with selling one of the three vans. Since it is hard to get passenger vans now, it was decided to retain two vehicles for the present time.

Finally, Jim advised that the Trustees are working on the annual report that is to be submitted to the District.

Since there was no report by Buildings and Grounds, Pastor Ray shared that dedication of the new Memorial Garden and relocation of the Columbarium is still waiting on the completion of the final item—one bench cap which is still back-ordered but hopefully will arrive soon!

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Kathy shared for Melissa who was not present, that Melissa has really been busy!

- Blessing of the Backpacks and Fall kickoff held on August 24th.
- Sunday School kick off went well – classes begin September 7th.
- Acolytes returned August 24th during the 11:00 Worship. Open to 4th and 5th graders now, as well as older youth!
- Children's Choir practice has been moved to Sundays at 9:30 am prior to Sunday School.

FINANCE

Curtis reported that the last meeting was pretty lengthy. The financial statement ending July 31st showed a deficit of \$255,000, which is up \$20,000 over last year, however expenses were up \$28,000, but actually \$9,000 less than current budget.

Although the Finance Committee has not been active in the budget preparation in the past, going forward, Finance wants to be more involved in the planning process and to go to each committee and ask for a 50% reduction in each budget. We are taking a careful and thorough

look at the budget and what amount is really needed, not just to look at last year's budget numbers and increase it. Then if a committee requests more than the targeted 50%, the committee can meet with Finance and explain/discuss the need.

Proceeds from fundraisers in the past have not been funneled through our budget. Finance believes that the funds received from fundraisers should be recorded as income and then shown that such funds were "passed through" our budget for visibility. This is important because we need to see how much money is coming in and going out. The monies will still be going out for the purposes received, but we need to know how much was received first. (Example: the former Buckner Triathlon funds and Market for Missions—money was raised for missions and distributed but not accounted for as having been received. Similarly, Sunday Schools take in money donations and fund projects, but none is recorded or tracked). Gary asked if monies received for fundraisers might affect the church's apportionment, and the answer was no—because the same amount received is also given out as missions, but this will show the District how much we are actually giving out – important to be transparent). All designated contributions are held in the designated categories (example, such as donations to the wheelchair ministry) and Tammy lists the funds in each appropriate bucket.

The Finance committee recommends that unless we can fund 100% of the costs, the *At the Table* video ministry should not be continued. Discussion included concern not over costs, but also the time and energy pastors spent to film the videos, and whether such time could be used elsewhere, such as used for person-to-person engagement, visits to shut-ins, etc. [Discussion continued under the Lead Pastor Report.]

YOUTH MINISTRY

Jim read a report from Chris who was not present:

Service will be a big focus for this year! More involvement with Senior High and Junior High together to build up the pipeline for the future. More adult volunteers this year!

- 16 youth attended first Breakfast club with 2 new faces!
- Smitty's Ice Cream – 11 attended a cool treat!
- Parents and Youth kickoff meeting to be held Sunday, September 7th with a snack supper and tour of the church youth facilities!
- September 14th – heading to Greensboro's Breakout Games and escape room outing in Greensboro! Supper at Moe's – bring money for supper.
- First Service project—Pack blessing bags for the unhoused in our community on 9/21 and 9/28.
- Feed the Hunger -November 9th – goal this year is packaging 17,200 meals!!

GENERAL COMMENTS

Tom Sineath shared that Wheelchair Ramp #416 was built this past Saturday with 6 new faces! Lee shared that his 12-year-old said that helping build the ramp was FUN! More people are invited to join this very special ministry.

Tom and Carol Sineath will be leading a new small group – 6 sessions on Monday evenings to hear what God says about Himself in the Bible.

Carol Sineath shared that she heard several comments about how nice it was to have Stephan's reception during the Sunday School hour so that people who attend both the early worship service in Aldersgate and those who attend the 11:00 traditional worship service could meet together and mingle! She proposed that we continue this mid-service gathering on the 5th Sundays during the Sunday School hour (only 4 times a year) and include all people and Sunday School classes, adult and children, so that everyone could mingle and share fellowship together.

A motion was made by Lee, seconded and unanimously passed that we move the fellowship gathering which normally follows the 11:00 am worship service on the 5th Sundays to the Sunday School time slot between services. This will be run by Marshall and Carol Old as they coordinate the fellowship refreshments.

LEAD PASTOR

Pastor Ray provided a follow up to last month's deferral of the *At the Table* video ministry continuance. We recently received a generous check from someone outside our community of faith—someone who, to our knowledge, has never even attended worship at our church. This gift was given specifically to cover the expenses of producing the *At the Table* video ministry, because it is so important to him that Christ's presence be maintained on our social media platforms. Through this ministry, we are reaching far beyond our own congregation and blessing countless people who engage with us online, both within and outside of our church. Pastor Ray spoke with our videographer, Jay, who suggested that the ministry costs could be managed within the donor's gift. He recommended reducing staff time and production expenses by filming only once a month for 4–6 hours and producing 4–5 videos in a single session of shorter segments, lasting 10 minutes instead of 15.

Comments discussed included agreement that there is a real advantage to Front Street's digital presence. Filming locations are not limited to Alamance County; instead, they are selected to complement each individual video message and provide variety. Additionally, since our pastor already works in excess of 50 hours per week, the time engaged in preparing a video message to air once a week on Fridays—that aligns with the upcoming Sunday sermon—should not be considered an impairment to other ministry.

A motion was made by Tom Sineath to continue the *At the Table* video ministry through the end of the year by filming roughly half-a-day once a month to produce 4-5 segments, because a single person saw value in the videos, stepped up and donated the funds to expressly cover the

costs. The motion was seconded and was unanimously passed. We are grateful to our benefactor, pastor and videographer.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Betty Huneycutt thanked SPRC for their hard work and for making lots of hard decisions. The SPRC team is well deserving of appreciation. Jim also thanked the Finance committee, Trustees, and Building and Grounds.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Betty Massey
Recording Secretary