

**First United Methodist Church  
Board of Stewards Special Session  
June 3, 2021, 7:30 pm**

**Nita Hyatt called the meeting to order with Prayer.**

**Jennifer Campbell gave a brief overview of reason for meeting and expectations.**

The purpose of this special session is to present concerns that have been expressed by church members to the Board of Stewards (BOS) and to Reverend Wanda Bess, District Superintendent. By Reverend Bess' request, the board will discuss each issue with Reverend Bobbie Maltas (Pastor Bobbie), provide/receive feedback, and determine a path forward, resulting in an growth/accountability plan for Pastor Bobbie.

The growth/accountability plan will be shared with Rev. Bess and will provide a term of three months for improvement. After three months, Rev. Bess will ask for feedback from the BOS and will use the results of the plan in her discussions/decisions with Pastor Bobbie.

**1. Lack of Response by Congregational Leadership to Address Church Issues**

We (the Board of Stewards) consider our efforts with the Mission/Vision to be our best and highest response to the decline we have seen at First UMC. We have engaged wholeheartedly in a process that we, as a board, feel has "legs" to benefit the entire church and move things in a positive direction. Pastor Bobbie has been part of this process, contributing not only time and effort, but her own money to engage Scott Moore who has helped us immensely in directing the future of the church. As with (seemingly) everything in a church, there are endless varying opinions about the changes/ideas. For everyone that is happy with a change, there is someone who is not; however, we have been entrusted with this responsibility and must continue making sound decisions, in community, that will lead this church forward.

Pastor Bobbie acknowledged that much has changed over the past year, some due to COVID, some due to changes that have happened within our church and everyone is having to recalibrate. Change is always hard, but the BOS and Pastor Bobbie are working together diligently to navigate the changes and bring the church out on the other side stronger and prepared for the future.

**Growth/Accountability:** Continue working closely with the BOS to implement our mission/vision statements and align ministries to that common direction. This will be measured more specifically by looking at tangible ways that we have aligned our ministries with the mission/vision now that we are free to meet in person and restart ministries.

**2. Inadequate Pastoral Care**

This item was brought before our BOS in our February meeting both by Pastor Bobbie and by Board Members who had received comments. It was discussed thoroughly in Pastor Bobbie's presence and

with her input. Pastor Bobbie responded that she was going to reach out to people who she knows are dissatisfied with the pastoral care to attempt to biblically resolve the conflict. This issue is of utmost importance to our congregation. We have received feedback from congregants is that there is no acceptable alternative to direct pastoral care from the Senior Pastor. We have been told that Matt Hulon has provided a great deal of pastoral care to choir members, but the congregational expectation is that this will be provided by the Senior Pastor.

Pastor Bobbie provided copious notes showing where she has reached out to members who she learned needed pastoral care and other members who were hurt by the lack of pastoral care. She reported that in many instances she has reached out multiple times with no response. Other times there has been miscommunication, including incorrect contact information. Additionally, we are just now getting back to where pastoral care can be conducted in person. The entire nature of pastoral care over the past year has been very different, as much of the pastoral care has not been able to be conducted in person because of COVID.

Pastor Bobbie understands the importance of this aspect of ministry and desires to do it well.

### **Growth/Accountability**

1. Engage in better, more loving communications. Not transactional, but relational. This will simply be measured by observing more congregational satisfaction with the pastoral care (i.e., fewer/no complaints).
2. BOS/Pastor Bobbie will come up with a “procedure” that will help congregants communicate with the church when they need pastoral care. The church can’t know what is not communicated, and this will help ensure that we are reaching all members who need care. This plan will cover a range of needs, including those who wish to remain confidential. This will be measured by the completion of the plan.
3. Pastor Bobbie follows a schedule for pastoral care of people who are homebound or in nursing homes. She will continue to use this process. Without an associate pastor, the number of designated days for home visits will need to increase on Pastor Bobbie’s schedule. We believe Delores (church secretary) could help Pastor Bobbie maintain this schedule and that Caring Ministries (which is currently re-starting under the direction of Jody Tyson) could help with this. The schedule will determine what is a reasonable time response and frequency for administering pastoral care depending upon the situation (i.e., emergency vs. long-term illness). This will be measured by the implementation of a revised scheduling plan to account for the absence of an associate pastor and documentation showing that the plan was followed.

### **3. Defensiveness and Lack of Accountability**

Members of the BOS have received reports from staff and other congregants of several instances of concerning leadership patterns such as micromanagement/lack of delegation (direct complaints from staff members); a tone/demeanor that is lacking in kindness/respect. Kind/respectful behavior

is of utmost importance to the job of a Senior Pastor. Although we are all human and will sometimes struggle in this area, the position of Senior Pastor is held to a higher standard of conduct and interpersonal interaction. Additionally, it is of concern that the absence of an Associate Pastor does not bode well for accountability.

**Growth/Accountability:** This area is difficult to measure, but we expect that improvement in this area will be indicated by the absence/lessening of congregational dissatisfaction. Our conversation on this topic centered around techniques for navigating difficult interpersonal situations (i.e., pause before speaking, approach criticism with an attitude of opportunity vs. defensiveness).

#### 4. **Disruption During Worship**

The BOS has received multiple comments about Alice's (Pastor Bobbie's granddaughter) behavior during worship services. Some members feel that she is posing a distraction to the worship service by getting up and running to the front while Pastor Bobbie is preaching/leading the services. The BOS has observed and appreciates that Alice is an enthusiastic worshipper – she loves to joyfully sing and dance during worship music – and the general consensus is that we would never want to extinguish that enthusiasm. She is five years old, and understandably hasn't matured to the point that she can sit through a worship service. Additionally, Pastor Bobbie is a single parent, solely responsible for raising Alice. At the same time, we respect the position of those who feel distracted by her actions.

**Growth/Accountability:** While Alice grows and matures, we believe that direct adult supervision during the worship service would be beneficial both to Alice and to Pastor Bobbie, allowing her to perform her Sunday morning duties without worry. Pastor Bobbie indicated that she has "go-to" families in each service who are willing to help with that. The children's minister has begun taking the smallest children out during the sermon for a quick lesson, which gives Alice a chance to interact with other children while Pastor Bobbie delivers the sermon. This will be measured by the continuation of these measures and the observation of fewer inappropriate disruptions. We encourage Alice to continue worshipping the Lord with her signature joy and enthusiasm during the active portions of worship.

#### 5. **Lack of Accountability with Respect to Policy**

Our church rather recently converted to the BOS model. We have identified areas where we are not following procedure as outlined in our organizing documents. The effort to rectify this is included in our work with the ministry alignment. Specifically mentioned were the process of bringing on new board members and the establishment of a dedicated SPR representative. We discussed that we have followed procedure with regard to board members. All have been voted on during a charge conference, with exception of Howard Tomlinson who is currently a non-voting member of the BOS until he is voted in at the next charge conference. Pastor Bobbie and the BOS have made every effort to be transparent in our actions by posting board meeting minutes to the church website and meeting with church members and readily answering questions. We will continue to communicate openly with church members, and we welcome anyone who would be willing to volunteer their time

and talents to serve the church.

**Growth/Accountability:**

1. The BOS will establish officers (secretary – not the Pastor), SPR, Trustees, Finance. We will rely on the organizing documents/book of discipline and carefully follow protocol as we bring on new members and perform our Board duties. Measured by the installment of said officers.
2. We will establish a Leadership Development and Nominations committee that will bring nominations to the board; upon BOS approval, the nomination will go to Charge Conference for approval. Measured by the establishment of said committee.

**6. Lack of Unity and Declining Membership**

This is a critical issue for our church right now, and we feel that our work to align the ministries of the church will lead to repair in this area. We have faced a variety of difficult circumstances, including COVID and a severely damaged Activity Center (where we typically hold our contemporary service). The lack of unity between the contemporary and traditional service has been an issue for some time as have problems with finances/budget.

**Growth/Accountability:**

1. We have effectively addressed/are addressing all facility needs – activity center, sanctuary renovations, windows, etc. These have been detailed in our meeting minutes each month and posted on the website. We will continue to do this.
2. Reserve funds have been accessed for years – this is not new. Our ministry alignment work has focused heavily on aligning the budget with the ministries in a way that our resources are maximized and we are heading in a direction of financial health. We will continue with these efforts.
3. We will have a town hall meeting to discuss issues, share plans for the future, discuss status of each area of concern, and answer questions. We are dedicated to openly communicating with the congregation, and incorporating member feedback into all plans for the church. We believe this town hall meeting will be effective in informing the congregation and unifying the members in common goals.

**Outreach to Members Who Have Left the Church**

We have received complaints that there has been no effort to reach out to members who have left the church. Pastor Bobbie provided data to show that she has contacted the people who she knows have left the church. Recent data includes:

69 new members

46 have died

37 have left – 22 because they moved; 15 have chosen to leave

Where she is able, Pastor Bobbie is utilizing the principles of the Conflict Resolution Policy of the United Methodist Church to repair relationships and bring members back to the church as they are willing.

**Growth/Accountability:** Pastor Bobbie will regularly evaluate the church membership and identify members who are no longer attending worship. She will keep an account of attempts to reach out to members who have stopped attending First UMC. This will be measured by the data she provides and a decrease in members who are leaving the church by choice.

**Nita Hyatt closed the meeting with Prayer.**