

**BELMONT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
CHARGE CONFERENCE MEETING MINUTES  
October 2, 2016**

**Welcome & Introduction:** Nancy Northington, Administrative Board Chair

**Report on the Present & Future State of Mission & Ministry:** Bill Cooper, Lay Leader

- Full report included at the end of the minutes
- Ministry focus area highlights
  - Welcome
    - Inviting ministry team growth
    - Relationship with Belmont Wesley Fellowship
    - Belmonters for Inclusion
  - Nurture
    - Children's music ministry
    - Youth meals on Sunday night
    - Midweek at Belmont
    - Senior adult ministry
  - Mission
    - Room in the Inn
    - Open Table Nashville
    - Habitat for Humanity build
    - Volunteer in Mission team to Mexico
  - Diversity
    - Development of ministry with Golden Triangle Fellowship
- Continued discernment on journey to inclusion
  - Awaiting the news from Commission on the Way Forward
  - Living into 2013 Welcome Statement
  - Work of the special task force
  - Nominations committee working on discernment team

**Pastors' Report and Membership Report:** Rev. Ken Edwards

- Lost members both first and second readings approved unanimously

**Nominations and Leadership Development:** Bill Cooper, Lay Leader

- Full report approved unanimously

**Staff Parish Relations Committee Report:** Donna Harrison, SPRC Committee Representative

- 2% pay increase for staff 2016 (1.5% in 2014 and 0.5% 2015).
- Expecting ~2% increase in associate pastor minimum salary each year from district
- Investigation and implementation of experience and job structure based associate pastor pay scale with SPRC policy guidance by Jan 2017
- 50% child care tuition cost benefit for BUMC employees with children at WDS
- 40 work day paternity/maternity leave benefit

**Lay Speaker Certification and Candidates for Ordination:** Rev. Ken Edwards

- Sarah McWhirt-Toler (deacon) and Keller Hawkins, Darren Wright and Linda Furtado (elder) unanimously recommended for continuation as candidates for ordained ministry
- June Batsel reaffirmed as Lay Speaker

**Stewardship Update:** John Pearce, Finance Committee Chair

- Major Fund Highlights
  - Trust Fund
    - Maintaining active role in ministry
  - Week Day School Fund
    - Continued careful monitoring and success after difficulties last year
  - Operating Fund
    - Behind on loose change offerings
    - Pledges are behind
    - Continued goal of paying 100% of apportionments
- 2017 Operating Fund Campaign
  - From Gratitude to Generosity
  - John Davis Campaign Chair
  - Kicks Off October 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - Goal \$1,310,000 of Pledges or 5% (\$61,071) over prior year
  - John Davis and Ryan Holt working on Under age 40 and New Members

**Charge and Sending Forth:** Rev. Harriet Bryan, District Superintendent

- Encouragement in vital ministries of the church
- Blessings over continued discernment in mission of Belmont

**Lay Leader Report  
Belmont UMC  
October 2, 2016**

My name is Bill Cooper and I have served as Lay Leader for Belmont during 2016. I am delighted to present this report on the present and future state of ministries for Belmont UMC. As we have done in previous recent reports since we adopted our strategic plan in 2013, we will describe our missions and ministries across our four priority areas - welcome, nurturing, missions, and diversity.

In 2016, we have experienced great growth in our **welcoming efforts**. 2015 saw more new members to Belmont than any previous year in recent memory; 2016 has seen continued growth in new families as well. Our Inviting Team has put in place several efforts to welcome new persons to our church, including welcome stations in our entry ways and Belmonters committed to helping with engagement of those who are regular visitors and new members. We've continued our efforts to engage students from area colleges and this fall has seen many new college students joining us. We have close ties to Belmont University's Wesley Foundation, which facilitates opportunities to engage those students. In the spring, Belmonters for Inclusion hosted an alternative prom for LGBTQ youth in our community center which resulted in at least two young persons joining in activities with our youth group. Ken Edwards has been leading a young adult Sunday school class which has seen consistent growth throughout the year. For 2017, we plan to implement additional efforts recommended by the Inviting Team, particularly in terms of helping to connect existing members to new members.

Our **nurturing efforts** are multigenerational and have resulted in many exciting new developments in 2016. For example, this summer, 70 children from Belmont and West End UMC joined together on our campus for a combined music camp, which strengthened our connectional relationship and brought great energy to Belmont. If you come through the Community Center on a Sunday evening, be prepared to fend for yourself in terms of finding anything to eat. We've been regularly having 50+ youth on Sunday nights and 20 or more youth return on Wednesdays for additional fellowship. Wednesday nights have also been reinvigorated with various multigenerational offerings and time for fellowship. Our senior adult ministry continues to thrive and is being used as an example by other local churches interested in strengthening their ministries to senior adults - as one church who contacted us recently said, "Jim and Starr Strickland are doing something right - we want to figure that out."

We have been hard at work on our local, national, and international **mission field** also. Our Room in the Inn team was hard at work throughout last winter, hosting guests for many additional nights during especially cold spells. We also opened our Community Center for Open Table Nashville on several occasions. On October 14-15, we will be participating in a Habitat for Humanity build, which will provide great opportunities for local mission. We will be sending a team to Mexico in 2017 and continuing to find ways to offer opportunities for mission for all of our members.

In terms of recognizing and supporting the **diverse gifts** of our congregation, we have continued to experience maturation of our ministry with our brothers and sisters in the Golden Triangle Fellowship. In 2016, we have focused on leadership development from within the fellowship and have been delighted to offer opportunities for continued growth, which we plan to continue in 2017.

I would summarize then, that the present and future state of ministries of our church reflect energy, growth, and commitment. Having said that, however, it is important to recognize that in some ways we are also struggling as a church, like many other congregations in our denomination, as we try to hear God's call for inclusion of all persons in our church.

As you know, Belmont has been on a journey towards how we can be inclusive of all for some number of years. Our welcoming statement in 2013 embodied our belief that all are created in God's image and that we commit to Jesus' example of inclusive love, care, and intentional hospitality with persons of every race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, faith story, physical or mental ability, economic status, or political perspective.

Since 2013, we have continued to strive to live into our welcoming statement. In anticipation of the 2016 General Conference, a multigenerational group of Belmonsters with a range of opinions related to our church's journey drafted and submitted 8 petitions related to several crucial areas of inclusion, which were placed on the agenda for General Conference. Therefore, many of us watched the events in Portland with great interest. While we view many of the steps forward as positive, to be honest, many of our church family now find themselves discouraged, disillusioned, and tired. Our members are looking to our leadership for how we plan to proceed.

Earlier this summer, this board commissioned a group to explore the implications of the General Conference actions and options that we might explore as well as the risks and benefits of each option. The Task Force presented its report at our last meeting and identified four main areas where we have opportunities for ministries related to same sex weddings in our church and/or performed by our clergy, support for persons from the LGTQI community who feel a call to ministry within the United Methodist church, and whether we should publicly declare our welcoming intentions through alignment with Reconciling Ministries Network.

We recognize that one important option is to continue our efforts of advocacy within the church while awaiting the Commission's recommendations. We plan to do that. However, for many of our church family, waiting two years for the Bishop's Commission to complete its work and for any subsequent action to be taken at the denomination level is simply not acceptable. At the same time, there are many in our church family who are concerned about making decisions that place us in conflict with the denomination's rules and policies.

At the September board meeting, the board unanimously accepted the report of the Task Force and agreed to enter a brief period of prayer and discernment so we could disseminate the Task Force's information to the rest of our church family and give them a chance to have their voices heard on how we might best proceed. The Nominations Committee met recently to identify persons to guide the discernment process. We've reached out to individuals to lead and they will be following up with us in the next 2-3 days.

As a church family, we don't take these steps lightly and recognize there are risks and benefits to anything we do. Therefore we look forward to this period of prayer and discernment to allow us to strive for unity among our church body.

We are in the planning process for a called meeting of the Administrative Board so that we can reflect on our options guided by what we hear as God's call for our church as we join together in prayer and discernment. We ask for your prayers as our District Superintendent as we continue this journey and remain in prayer for you, Bishop McAlilly and all of our church leaders.