

Asbury First United Methodist Town Hall

March 2, 2025

Called to order: Chuck Hanrahan at 12:25 PM

Opened with prayer: Rev. Dr. Michelle Bogue-Trost

Financial Update | Tim Mahan

Financial update provided for year ending 2024 and road ahead for 2025. Tim noted that the summary of 2024 income / expenses came out in email, and that John Ormsbee added notes for some of the larger variances to shed light on the reasons for the variances. Tim offered that if anyone wants a detailed discussion to feel free to reach out.

Slides were shared depicting the 2024 net revenue and expenses. Budgeted for a \$3k surplus, and actuals came in very close (actually better than budgeted). There was a variance on the forecasted expenses. Some highlights:

- Received 99% of 2024 pledges (better than typical at 95-97%)
- Community Outreach Center (COC) exceeded fundraising budget
- Payroll expense was favorable compared to budget
- Utilities, property care, and maintenance expenses were unfavorable to budget
- Unpledged giving was down

Elements to celebrate:

- Improved transparency in providing financial statements
- COC has sustainable budget
- Designated memorials are being put to appropriate use
- Actual 2025 pledges are on pace to meet planned budget
- 2025 pledges are up 14%

Opportunities to improve:

Work toward financial sustainability, where our income exceeds expenses, we build cash reserve commensurate with our size and complexity to address the unexpected expenses, less dependence on one-time sources of income (bequests, pleas to the congregation), account for asset depreciation and replacement (i.e. preparedness for roof repair or audio equipment updates, etc).

Summary:

We have some great momentum, we've had a successful transition of our senior leadership, and programs at the COC are strong.

Dream Team Update | Pastor Michelle & Christina Kirivong

Pastor Michelle welcomed applause and appreciation for the Dream Team in all they held together while senior ministry transitioned. The aim is to live into dreams that had been voiced previously, and add to it the new dreams voiced through our co-dreaming process.

A total of 250 dreams were posted to the dream boards and shared digitally! Hopes, thoughts, and wishes for AFUMC. The team synthesized the 2015 report and the new dreams and found themes, which evolved into a dynamic strategic framework for vision making.

We know things can change in a blink of an eye (COVID, Sr pastor departs). A strategic plan is rigid with actions and resources aligned and accountability, and it may be too limiting at a time when we need to be adaptable and flexible. A rigid plan can be a setup for not meeting objectives.

The idea of a strategic framework was brought to the team through Ms. Kirivong, and along the way we have reaffirmed the values of AFUMC. They still hold! This is not a rigid blueprint but a guide for us to live into as God's church.

Christina Kirivong thanked the Dream Team by name for all their work:

Kimberly Jones, David Allen, Nancy Behnk, Patrick Fulford, David Kennedy, John Messenger, Dawn Riedy, Beth Wilkens, David Strong, Pastor Michelle Bogue-Trost

She read through the 2024 Values Statements and reaffirmed the alignment to the goals of the 2017 dreamscape. The identification of common themes across both dream-scape exercises was reassuring. Christina invited various members of the Dream Team to speak about different aspects of the work and the final report.

Beth Wilkens spoke to the reimagined values and goals – she noted that the value statement in the new dream statement is not new, but tweaked. We identified our 6 values (listed below) faith formation, service & justice, generosity & vitality, caring community,) around love in the center matching our rose window in the sanctuary. The values are all equally important:

1. Being Open to All became *Embracing All* – this invites full participation with no exceptions – we are better together.
2. Worship became *Worship & Arts* – expecting excellence in preaching, prayer, music *and* the arts.

3. Community became *Caring Community* – we mirror God’s love when we care in all stages and in all ways (in fellowship, joy, support, and fun).
4. Outreach became *Service & Justice* – in addition to acts of mercy through the COC, we also work for justice in our community, everyone deserves hope and fullness of life.
5. Discipleship became *Faith Formation* – we walk together on our spiritual journeys.
6. Generosity and stewardship became *Generosity & Vitality* – provide resources necessary to sustain all we do (inclusive of time, talent, resources).

David Allen covered the Guiding Questions of the framework. Myriad questions go into the framework so there is a basis for decision-making at AFUMC. You should use the framework and the guiding questions if you have an idea and want to present it at a committee, and if you are on a committee and need to make decisions about ideas. From the framework:

1. In what ways have you sought God’s vision for this?
2. Is this idea or current activity consistent with Asbury First’s mission and vision?
3. Which values does this support? Which Asbury First goal/priority does this meet?
4. Whom does this serve?
5. How does this align with the congregation’s dreams?
6. Are we doing this because we always have? Should we continue?
7. What existing and new resources does this require?
 - a. Is there a grant or external funding that supports this idea?
 - b. What could this replace?
 - c. Can this be accomplished without paid staff or general budget funds?
8. How will you measure your success?
 - a. What is your timetable for assessing this?
 - b. How will you determine if you continue?
9. Has this been discussed outside your group:
 - a. With other potentially affected teams, committees, or work areas?
 - b. With the appropriate staff or governing board liaison?
10. In your area of ministry, how high a priority is this?
 - a. Where would you prioritize this among your other ministries?

David also highlighted the priorities of the framework:

1. Grow our community, be intentional about engaging new members.
2. Develop a sustainable financial plan. Assures dreams don’t just stay dreams but become a reality.
3. Preserve our facilities.
4. Expand social justice ministries – this came through a lot of the dreams.
5. Develop a new priority focused on youth and families; foster an intergenerational community.
6. Develop an expansive marketing and communications plan – use new channels to attract new members.
7. Examine worship and use of sacred space.
8. Address level of added expectations of staff, re-engage volunteers,

John Messenger covered a table in the report: the 2017 value, goal, 2019 planned actions to accomplish goal, status update in 2020, and status update in April of 2024. In some cases the goal was accomplished, in some there was added work or attention needed, in some the decision was made that the prior dream was perhaps no longer relevant. Final column in the table provides that summary decision.

Dawn Riedy covered the actual dreams. There were 250 dreams that were posted to the boards, all transcribed word-for-word. We first mapped these to old values, and they told us that they were still our values today! Social justice, mental health, children and family, environmental sustainability are all new to our dream scape. All of these are available on the website with the materials for today's town hall.

Pastor Michelle summarized that the framework is the result of all the work – a culmination of passion for this church, for people, for our community. She asks the question, "Now what?" This is an invitation to individuals, committees, the [governing] board to discern what is next. If you struggle to wrap your work for the church around this or vice versa, we are here to help you figure out your "what's next?"

Questions:

Q: Concern about something raised in financial report, maybe missing in dream document: energy bills are so high, what are we doing to be more sustainable? Both in our use or what alternatives are we exploring?

Dawn: There are dreams with very specific ideas, such as the formation of social concerns committee, and environmental sustainability will be part of the work of that committee.

Tim: There is a cross-functional workgroup coming together to eye financial sustainability this spring to tackle the financial side of this.

Q: We know all the lightbulbs have gone LED, so is the utility bill just a result of the increase in expense?

Tim: I believe we were basing our electric budget on an estimate reading, and actuals were behind.

Comment: As a resident of the city, RG&E raised rates significantly due to needs for power elsewhere, so this is actually a social justice issue for the city.

Q: Though there was an increase in pledges, will we still be behind budget?

Tim: We have an adequately funded budget for this year, but expenses are still going up.

Comment: This was the most transparent presentation on finances in 20 years, it's credible, great news on last year's results, what is the [governing] board doing about accumulated debts?

Dawn: We're doing a look-back over last 10 years, how'd we get to where we are now? Next opportunity is for all of us to have an understanding of the resources we have. We're spending more than we're taking in, while costs are going up. We don't have an answer yet but we are working on it together. The sustainability task force, financial committee, investment committee, governing board. And Mr. Mahan will head the sustainability task force.

Q: As we look to save money so we can spend it in other places, how do we charge the congregation / members that when they are here, they contribute not only as a participant but that they put their chair away, dishes away, etc. So it's not just the staff doing the work.

Comment: Moment for mission or someone from the congregation talk about the small ways everyone can pitch in after meetings, gatherings. It should also be coming from leaders on committees.

Meeting closed: 1:24 PM by Chuck Hanrahan

Respectfully submitted,
Christy Leshner
Governing Board secretary