

AFUMC Town Hall

June 22, 2025

Called to order at 12:19 PM | Adjourned at 1:28 PM

Rev. Dr. Michelle Bogue-Trost: Opened the Town Hall and talked about making the work of the ministry at Asbury open and transparent.

She shared the agenda:

- 2025 budget
- Close the deficit
- Introduction to the Financial Sustainability Task Force
- How can we help as a congregation?
- Questions

Tim Mahan and Dawn Riedy were introduced to lead us through the agenda.

Michelle led those present in prayer.

Tim Mahan: A member for over 20 years, served as chair of Outreach Committee, volunteered at Storehouse, kids when through the youth program, serving on Governing Board, and served as the Treasurer of the Finance Committee for several years, and as the Acting Chair for the first few months of 2025.

Covered the 2025 budget – identified that we have challenges and opportunities to discuss. Dawn will talk about process improvements to managing financials going forward.

Materials were sent ahead of Town Hall for review, including answers to FAQs. Looking to provide greater transparency in financials thanks to the work of John (Ormsbee) and Dawn.

What we've referred to as the AOP (annual operating plan) we'll begin calling the General Budget, with the Community Outreach Center (COC) Budget maintains the same name.

The good news with the COC Budget, which at this time last year had a lot of questions and some uncertainty, thanks to the effort from Diana (Carter) and Dawn, the COC Budget is balanced and sustainable thanks to member generosity.

We were open that the 2025 General Budget was "fragile" and didn't have any room for surprises, and it leveraged a revenue source we can't access going forward. The reforecast budget has deficit of \$246,000.

The deficit is a result of:

- Income:
 - Reallocation of a bequest due to newly discovered donor intent

- Fell short on pledge numbers as we pivoted to an early timing for pledges
- Reforecast (down) the percent of pledges we expect to receive
- Expenses:
 - Facilities expense that exceeded budget by \$116,000 (includes *facilities* – electricity, gas, water expenses higher than forecast and *custodial* – contracts and supplies)
 - Carryover expenses from 2024
 - Cost of electricity is up (from RG&E) coupled with increased facility usage
 - Major one-time unexpected expense with boiler repair
 - Overage of \$6,000 in communications budget

A note of recognition to Dawn! We are benefitting from her energy, expertise, willingness to dive in to address and facilitate tough conversations. She's driving us to a better place through a lot of hard work.

Dawn Riedy: Serves for love of this church! Serving as chair of Finance Committee, prior service on Outreach Committee, learned a lot from John Ormsbee, worked on the COC Budget last year, extending that knowledge to the General Budget. Noted that we are all learning and in this together. Dawn brings strong organizational skills and notes no magical thinking when it comes to budgets.

What are we doing as a committee:

- Reinvigorated the committee with representation from all other committees, keeping each other updated, improving how we're looking at financials. Not just looking at last month, looking at YTD, YTD compared to last year, etc.
- Looking at what percent of our budget expense have already been spent. This revealed the areas where we were already at 75-80% spend for the year in Q1.
- Strengthen the budgeting process – facilities and custodial is the most challenging year over year. Forming a team to focus specifically on this area of the budget. Jim Connell is leading this team.
- Face structural deficit head-on: did a comparative 10-year lookback over all budgets. We've been spending about \$200,000 more a year than our regular income (pledge, plate giving, endowments, property use).
- Commitment with Finance Committee and Financial Sustainability Task Force that we'll present a balanced, sustainable budget. Likely by end of January, and involving work areas and committees in the budget process. In order for the budget to be an accurate story of what each committee wants to drive, there needs to be this level of involvement.

- What adjustment are we making to the current budget expenses, balanced against need to keep campus safe, and where is there a rapid return on investment (RROI).
 - Capital Improvement Fund – returned \$30,000 to General Budget for this year only (not sustainable).
 - COC had \$11,000 allocated to support off campus ministries, and gave back \$5,000 for this year.
 - \$3,000 in admin expenses pared down.
 - **Michelle:** Personnel – with David Strong’s retirement, Deb Bullock-Smith has accepted his position, Holly Temming steps into Deb’s position. Yields us some room in our budget for 2025, and looking at entire staffing structure in case there are some adjustments to make. This may yield a reduction in budget, but still working with PPRC on this, so no specific number at this time.
- How will we address the income side of the General Budget, recall in scripture when asked to go a mile, go a second mile:
 - Recalling the COC call to give in summer of 2024 and how successful that was.
 - We need to be honest about how much it costs to run AFUMC. We run on a \$2.5m budget. It costs us \$7.5k a day to run the entire Asbury campus. This is a request for a generous gift to meet a common need.
 - At the start of this review we had a \$264,000 gap. With the above expense reduction we now have a \$225,000 gap. For the last two weeks through calls from the Governing Board, Task Force, committee chairs, and church leadership we raised \$104,000 in second mile giving (above current pledges).
 - **Michelle:** We’re a long way down the path. Thanks to John for the work, and Dawn and Tim. \$121,000 remains as a General Budget deficit. It’s up to us! Communication from the Generosity Team will go out in the coming week over email, consider what you can do to help. The ask is in hand with work underway to not have to do this again – the work the Finance Committee and Financial Sustainability Task Force are doing will reduce the need to ask again early in next year’s budget. And the ask is that this becomes the baseline for 2026 pledges to address the systemic shortfall.

Tim: Task Force consists of Tim (chair), Michelle, Dawn, Chuck Hanrahan, Pat DuPont, Patrick Fulford, David Allen, Rick Phillips, and with Deb Bullock-Smith’s new position, also Deb. The team brings a wide array of talents and perspectives. Working with Finance Committee to close this gap. As we go ahead we’re looking at longer range issues or questions:

- How do we help the legacy team grow the endowment
- Energy usage, other more sustainable options
- Generate more income – bring new people to the congregation, foster current members sense of engagement

Michelle: How you can help:

- Pray for our church, the people doing this work to craft a sustainable future!
- How is the spirit leading you to support our community?
- Give a second mile gift.
- Plan for 2026 giving,
- Participate by staying informed, ask questions, give your ideas!

Dawn: On the “participate” side, the Finance Committee is making sure you have access to meeting minutes, materials will be openly shared, charters shared for full transparency on the Asbury website. Print copies are also available.

Email finance@asburyfirst.org for questions or inputs for the Finance Committee or Financial Sustainability Task Force.

Q1

Will we receive an email, what is the timeline?

Yes, all will get an email. Can give now so we can wrap Second Mile giving up as quickly as possible. This is all about closing the gap quickly.

Q2

How many pledging units do we have, how many are in a position to step up?

- 374 pledging units, maybe 200 more avail who don't pledge
- Difficult to get at second question. Looking at average incomes in MC and average pledge per person is ~2-3% of avg. income. So hoping there is room.

Q3

Do you need workers? Can I help in any way.

Will connect this person with folks to plug in!

Q4

Thanks to Michelle for her honesty and openness. It's greatly appreciated!

Q5

Is it \$125,000 we're making up only in the General Budget?

Yes, the deficit on COC was related to custodial and facilities cost, so the committee agreed on staffing changes that resolved that gap.

Q6

Note the COC Budget is not resolved going forward. Some gifts in 2025 may not be repeatable, so we can't ignore it.

Already have a gap analysis in place for next year. And we know what we need to raise to add 1 meal per week. Also creating an opportunity for non-church members to pledge to the COC.

Q7

Lost several members in my age group. Are we working on attracting these folks back?

We all have an opportunity and responsibility to reach out to them. It's our work, as the church body!

Q8

Thanks to Tim, Dawn, Michelle! This takes a lot of leadership. Been members for 40 years, seen lots of challenges presented in this sanctuary, and we'll rise to the challenge.

Q9

Is there a plan for to how we encourage individuals who come regularly to give regularly?

That is ongoing effort – helping folks live into who they want to be in our church. That's a work of time and a culture I'm working to grow here.

Q10

Request to the Task Force: there's a demographic cliff, far fewer people born ~20 years ago. Challenge is to believe that we can do this and we can grow in a healthy way, but also think about the fact that there are fewer people to draw on.

Back to '80's at this church, the number of pledgers, giving, programs were very different. Changes in culture, their involvement in church, demographics, it's part of what the Task Force will help surface, to see what the future financial structure will look like.

Q11

Current administration's calling to have all churches taxed. Is anyone working against that?

This is a conference matter not a local church matter.