

UMM Minutes – May 7, 2011

Breakfast began at 8:00 a.m. after President John Christian opened us with prayer. Dean and Amy Mabry, assisted by Aria and Isabella, cooked buttermilk pancakes and bacon, and John brought a bowl of fruit. Attendees included Mike Bishop, secretary, & Warren Aldrich, Terry Cobb, Pastor Martha Dye, Jim Dye, Lamar Hamric, Ronnie Mears, Ronny Roberts, Jessie Saint, Mark Smith, Harold Tarpley, Tim Turco (guest and new resident of Longleaf), and John Y. Willis. Tim Turco distinguished himself by serving folks coffee as we finished eating and as John welcome us all to the meeting and introduced member Ronnie Mears as our speaker, with a message about Square Foot Ministry, an organization with which he, John Y., and the Dyes at their last church have all been long involved.

Ronnie passed out photocopied booklets titled “Thomason Mill Village: Square Foot Ministry,” about an area in Griffin, Ga., transformed “from a dead, crack- and crime-infested area into a living vibrant testimony to the changing power of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Ronnie explained that SFM’s objective is “to make a difference in our world and our communities” by “building decent affordable housing” for homeless and struggling families in need of compassionate support. He quoted Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, who said, “If you’re not sitting on the edge of your seat, you’re taking up too much room,” but pointed out that SFM, unlike Habitat, consists solely of volunteers and has no salaried positions. He expressed the excitement and the sense of accomplishment and service that SFM provides and noted that he and John Y. have been involved in its projects for years—in Griffin, West Point, and the Gulf Coast area—and that John Christian has also taken an active role in framing houses, etc. The typical SFM home costs some \$65,000, although sometimes groups can do the work for \$45,000 or \$40,000, with donated land, materials, and of course labor, which is almost always free except for some professional contract workers like electricians. Ronnie stressed that SFM emphasizes hands-on involvement and encouraging everyone to work—men, women, and children—and that hammers outnumber pneumatic tools at many of its projects, just to make sure that everyone can contribute.

Martha noted that at her previous church different units or persons within that body would sponsor, say, a wall, and that afterward the volunteers would look at one another and say, or think, “Gosh, we didn’t know we could do that.” Martha praised SFM for encouraging fellowship among its volunteers even as they built homes for homeless persons or families. Jim also stressed the involvement of women and children and having suppliers such as Home Depot and Lowe’s place bids for providing construction materials. After a project, those who have built or paid for a particular wall of the house get to sign it. (Martha and Jim had differing recollections about a couple of these projects, but departed still speaking to each other.) John C. asked if families in Pine Mountain Methodist could devote four to eight hours of one day, out of all the days in an entire year, performing this service for the needy. Dean assured us that the youth of the church are already on board, and others at our breakfast consented to committing to such a project.

Other business, after Dean and Amy volunteered to cook again, included continuing our meetings through the summer in our own Family Life Center and bringing in speakers with personal faith testimonies. Dean asked for prayers for members of his family, and Martha’s closing prayer noted that SFM’s mission embodies the scriptural assurance that, with God’s help, even small groups can accomplish extraordinary feats.

Faithfully submitted,

Michael Bishop, Secretary