

**First United Methodist Church of Oak Ridge TN
Church Council February 3, 2026 Summary
Tuesday 6:30 PM Meeting in Room 207**

February 3, 2026 Council Summary Feb 5 SF0 version for Council Review

1. Call to Order / Opening Prayer	S Page 2	Keys Fillauer/ Ken Sauer
2a. Approval of Oct 28, 2025 Summary [10/30 SF0]	2	Same as review version
<i>[2b. Approval of Agenda.</i>	2	<i>Keys Fillauer]</i>
<i>[2c. Introduction and Other Topics</i>	2	<i>Keys Fillauer]</i>
3. Co-Lead Pastors Report	2	Revs Ken & Clair Sauer [R]
4. Finance Committee Report [addition]	3	Debbie Buchanan [R]
5. Staff Parish Report	4	Chris Lee [R]
6. Trustees Report	4	Janet Townsend+GR [R]
7. Additional Reports or Comments		<i>Ex Officio Members and Others</i>
7a. Missions Comments	5	TJ Ball [R]
7b. Associate Pastor's Report	5	Rev Denna Hornby [R]
7c. Next Gen Ministries Remarks [Children, Youth]	6	Billy Price [R]
7d. Social Concerns	6	Greg & Becky Smith [R]
7e. United Women in Faith	7	Cara Weigel [R]
7f. Music and Worship	7	Josh Sumter [R]
7g. Recovery Ministry [Staff M]	8	Matt Holder [R]
7h. Enduring Gifts	9	Sid Garland [none]
7i. Lay Leader	9	Linda Morel
7j. Holston Annual Conference [TBD]	9	JSmith, LMorel, JSumter
7k. Contemporary Worship [Staff M]		Paul Davis
8. Prior Business Topic [if any]	10	Keys Fillauer
9. New Business Topic	10	Keys Fillauer
9a Future Meeting [Tue 6:30 PM Date ??]	10	Keys Fillauer
10. Other Topics [if any]	10	Keys Fillauer
11. Additional Comments [if any]	10	Keys Fillauer
12. Adjournment	10	Keys Fillauer

Reference for Agenda

A1. 2026 Council Members List

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[HH Proposed Agenda Feb 3 version for Feb 3 Summary File AG1Rc]

[R] = Reports received to date.

Summary of February 3, 2026 Church Council Meeting
Tuesday 6:30 PM in Room 207
February 3, 2026 Council Summary Feb 5 SF0 Version for Council Review

Persons Present Names are in bold letters; (I) = In person for all. TJ Ball – V, Fiona Boyd – V, Debbie Buchanan – V, Joe Craven – V, Paul Davis, Keys Fillauer – V, Pam Fleming – V, , Sid Garland – V, Scott Gillenwaters – V, Harold Hartman – V, Matt Holder, Rev Denna Hornby – V&P&AC, Chris Lee – V, Debbie Mcfarland – V, Evelyn McKamey-V, Linda Morel – V, Billy Price, Gielda Reese -V, Rev Ken Sauer – V &P& -, Rev Clair Sauer – V&P&AC, Becky Smith-V, Greg Smith – V, Judy Smith V, Josh Sumter, Janet Townsend— V, Cara Weigel – V. There were 18 of 25 Council Members present. There are V = 22 Noted Council Voting Member Designations including P = 3 Appointed Pastors who are also AC Annual Conference Representatives. Three Non-Voting Designations include S=3 Staff. There were 16 of 22 Council Voting Members present.

A list of 2026 Council Members on February 3 is shown in Attachment 1 [A1].

1. Call to Order/Prayer - Council Chair Keys Fillauer called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Co-Lead Pastor Rev Ken Sauer led an opening prayer. Council members had name cards.

2a. Approval of Summary. A Summary of the October 28, 2025 Council Meeting was approved as distributed by Council Secretary Harold Hartman dated October 30 SF0 version. There were no changes to the Oct 30 version sent for Council review.

[Information and Actions taken text that was added to reports for, at, or after the February 3, 2026 Council meeting is shown in italic letters and within brackets.]

[2b. Approval of Agenda. This topic was suggested by Keys Fillauer for Future Meetings. An Agenda would be developed before the Meeting.]

[2c. Introduction and Other- Topics suggested by Keys Fillauer were mentioned and discussed briefly. Included were Purpose, Mission, Council Attendance, Council Input to Support Committees, Council Input to Congregation, Report Emphasis on Key Activities, Council Decisions, and Later the Meeting Types and Schedules, Follow up to Financial Planning.]

3. Co-Lead Pastors' Report by Rev Ken Sauer and Rev Clair Sauer.

An E-mail report was provided on January 26.

[A Feb 18 Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper will occur with RSVPs needed Feb 13.]

We are thankful for the servant hearts of so many in the First Church congregation. As we turn the page to 2026, we give thanks for all our committee members and chairs who are continuing their leadership work for another year or beginning in a new role. The Nominations Committee's work preparing for 2026 was very successful, with many positive responses from our congregation and all open positions filled.

Likewise, intentional and successful searches to fill open staff positions have resulted in the hiring of Billy Price as our Next Gen Ministries Director (Children, Youth, and Families) and Prisca Gomes-Brant as our Finance Director. They have both jumped right in and taken the reins of their respective areas. It is exciting to see their energy and passion to learn and to do!

Prisca has been leading the search for a new Finance Assistant since Kathy Halligan's retirement in mid-December. An offer has been extended, and we hope to have a new Assistant in place by early next week. Church member Shannon Blijlevens served as Interim Children's Coordinator while we worked to fill the role of Next Gen Ministries Director. Her work coordinating volunteers has been invaluable as she and Denna have also helped Billy transition into his new role. Shannon is now stepping away, Denna is already fully immersed in visitation responsibilities, and conversations are beginning with Billy to hire a part-time Next Gen Ministries Assistant. Again, the willingness of so many in this congregation to step in and serve, filling the various needs of the church and community, is so deeply appreciated.

The Stewardship Campaign for 2026 was not as successful as for 2025; however, pledges for 2026 exceed those for every year from 2021 through 2024, and so we celebrate the generosity of this congregation. We would like to see First Church paying our tithe apportionment in full and providing more support for First Recovery and ministries serving families with children and youth. Our work together as the Church Council remains important as we find ways to sustain the ministries of First Church and serve the needs of our community.

Most important for our work this year is grounding our work in prayer. We will launch this initiative this coming Sunday, February 1, with the Dynamite Prayer worship series and 28-day prayer experience. Our hope is that, beginning with this 28-day experience, every member of First Church will commit to praying daily for God's power to break through our lives and our church, guiding us where we need to go to fulfill God's vision for Christ's church in this place. In addition to the already existing prayer groups, some new prayer groups and offerings will be available in the coming weeks and months. From this foundation of prayer, where we will, hopefully, begin to discern God's work and movement in this place, we will enter a visioning process that will help shape our mission and ministry in the coming years.

This congregation does so much to share Christ's love and serve our community, our region, and around the world. We think it's possible that as we connect more deeply with God's power through intentional prayer, we will see God leading us to new places and new people. It can be far too easy, at times, to get distracted, to lose focus, and get pulled away from God's path, or to get stuck in our ways. This is why faith is so important. We look forward to growing with this church in prayer, in faith, and in love in the coming year.

4. Finance Committee (Debbie Buchanan)

[An E-mail report was prepared on January 14 and forwarded to the Secretary on February 3. A copy was provided near the end of the Council meeting when Debbie was available after a training event.. The following Church Council motion from the Finance Committee was received. After discussion a motion to approve the Finance Committee report was approved.]

Whereas •

- Expenses for December 2025 are still being finalized, and the balance sheet for the 2025 calendar year is incomplete.
- The initial budget estimate for 2026 is \$1,525,826, and the projected income with no withdrawals from reserves is \$1,375,402, giving a projected deficit of \$150,424.
- The church has \$108,796 in its operating reserves and additional monies in designated, restricted, temporary and permanent funds. Use of the operating reserve to offset likely deficits has been planned in the past. Typically, the amount needed from the reserve is less than the need projected at the beginning of the year.
- Established practices for the management of designated, restricted, temporary and permanent funds are being reviewed to assess the availability of additional funds.

Motion

The church shall adopt an initial budget for 2026 that reflects a budget estimate of \$1,525,826 with the intent to use operating reserves to offset its deficit. The balance between income and expenses will be monitored and reported monthly. Additional steps to address the deficit will be pursued. A revised, balanced budget, including the projected withdrawal from the operating reserve, will be submitted no later than the June Church Council meeting.

[During the discussion we learned that a full audit was being planned and that some persons who had not provided an estimate of giving were being contacted . A four page summary of proposed 2026 budget figures was available from Rev Clair Sauer.]

5. Staff Parish (Chris Lee)

An E-mail report was provided on January 25.

The Staff Parish Committee resumed activities on January 17, 2026, welcoming new members and organizing our work for 2026.

We are pleased that staff members Prisca Gomes-Brant (Business and Finance Director) and Billy Price (Next Gen Ministries Director) are settling into their roles, helping us move forward with innovative ideas and initiatives. The search for the Finance Assistant position is ongoing, and we remain hopeful of finding someone to help Prisca very soon. Billy and others are working on developing job criteria for the Next Gen Assistant.

The committee continues to work with Team Foster Strategy this year to improve organizational and leadership effectiveness. At present, we are collaborating with the consultant to refine our organizational structure for clarity and creating SMART goals for staff. Measurable goals will hopefully make it easier for staff to have focus and direction for all their hard work.

Plans are also underway for a February staff appreciation event.

6. Trustees (Janet Townsend & for Gielda Reese)

An E-mail report was provided on January 25.

Road Signs on Front Lawn

Road signs need some LED lights replaced and skins need to be replaced because of fading. The green background color will be replaced with blue. Mike will schedule the work to be done.

Safety Improvements

Recent safety improvements to the building include a convex mirror outside the Welcome Center doors, a monitor in Room 207 so that late night workers can check the area before they exit the building, and a light installed in the loading zone.

Church Grounds Maintenance

A plan is in place for maintaining the church grounds. Shrubbery around the building has been trimmed. Wayne Lawless will be in charge of keeping the lawns mowed. Janet Townsend will be in charge of regular weeding and other garden cleanup. Volunteer helpers are still needed.

Space Usage Inventory

Trustees are considering space usage in the building and the warehouse space. Gielda Reese has been working on an inventory of storage spaces and Ted Wilgrubs is organizing the warehouse space. Volunteer helpers are still needed.

Entry Door Replacement

Entry doors at the Welcome Center and the original big wood doors at the Narthex entry have become warped and can no longer be repaired. Mike is working on obtaining quotes for new steel doors with embossed woodgrain finish. Funds for this work will come from Account 9.9416 - Capital Improvements/Contingency Fund.

7. Reports by Ex-Officio Members and Others

7a. Missions Committee (TJ Ball).

An E-mail report was provided on January 25.

In November, we held our last meeting for the year. We decided to use some of our remaining funds to help out the Community Meal program, Community Assistance Fund and Clean water for Honduras.

Our goal as a committee this year was to focus more on church programs. I feel like we accomplished this agenda by being able to help out several different organizations and committees within our church.

Our first meeting for 2026 will be held on Monday, February 2nd. I look forward to working with our new committee members and see where God leads us for this year.

7b. Associate Pastor (Rev. Denna Hornby).

An E-mail report was provided on January 26.

I am looking forward to what the new year brings us and am grateful for your leadership as we begin 2026 together!

I ended 2025 by sending personal invitations to every visitor who had signed in to worship for the previous six months. Each person was contacted via the information that they provided to us: physical mailing address, email address, or phone number.

I have begun 2026 by onboarding our newest staff person, Billy Price. Billy is doing an excellent job learning all of the nuances of youth and children's ministry at FUMC—everything from filling out a charge form to meeting the families! I am excited for his ministry here.

I have also built a new team for homebound ministry visitation with nine people who are taking part in visiting our homebound disciples. We currently have 56 people on our homebound list.

Coming into 2026, I am now the staff liaison for Keystone and the Stephen Ministry. Please keep in mind and on your calendar the annual fundraiser for Keystone, Keystone Karaoke, February 7. This event is instrumental in providing revenue for Keystone. Also, we have begun a new Stephen Ministry training class which meets each Tuesday evening.

The library committee is being intentional about the use and ministry of the library. We are learning that there are few books being circulated. Many books in our collection have not been checked out in the past 10 years. We are removing those books. This is time-consuming work being completed by our faithful servants who care deeply about our library ministry. I am grateful for their willingness to examine the use of that space. We are working with Gielda Reese, the incoming Co-chair of Trustees, in this effort. You will notice a selection of books in children's classrooms and in both welcome and recovery spaces which will hopefully encourage our parishioners to use the library.

I enjoy nurturing leaders and equipping people for ministry—building strong ministries for discipleship and service. I was excited when our newest member, Aaron Johnson, expressed a call to ministry and asked me to mentor him through his discernment period.

Plans for 2026 include a Lenten Visio Divina class in March, 1st Church 101 meeting on March 29, Group Membership on April 26, and "Christmas at Calamity's" on December 1.

Lastly, I am enjoying some quiet time during these snow days to write my next Bible study, "The Prayers of the Christ." I enjoy writing my own studies as opposed to buying curriculum written by others (no shade to Adam Hamilton!). I hope you will join me in March for those classes on Sunday March 8, 15, 22 at 10AM in the Fellowship Hall.

[Support was requested for Keystone Event and Library Circulation encouragement.]

7c. Next Gen Ministries (Children, Youth and Family) (Billy Price).

An E-mail report was provided on February 2.

I am excited to have settled in and to have begun creating, planning, and establishing relationships! I have spent my first month mostly getting acquainted with the rhythm and operation of things as they are.

I am looking forward to the hiring of a second Next Gen Ministries person, so we can add a little more structure to the vision, share in the ideas and responsibilities, and collaborate in planning and dreaming together.

I look forward to continuing getting to know our young people and families more, as well as those who volunteer with them. I'm hopeful that our Parents Night Out [scheduled for Feb 13] will not only be a benefit to parents in need of a night out, but will also be a benefit to those in attendance who share some fellowship and relationship building together.

7d. Social Concerns (Greg & Becky Smith).

An E-mail report was provided on January 24.

The Social Concerns Committee is pleased to present this report summarizing our activities and initiatives for January 2026. We have continued to focus on community outreach, support for

vulnerable populations, and raising awareness around key social issues affecting our congregation and the broader community.

Social Concerns made three year-end donations at the end of 2025 that went to the Reconciling Ministries Network, The Tennessee Justice Center, and to FUMCOR's Community Assistance fund.

We had our first meeting of the year on January 15 and welcomed the team for 2026.

We have a Social Concerns liaison that works with the Oak Ridge chapter of PFLAG (formerly known as Parents and Friends of Gay and Lesbian children). PFLAG is growing in numbers and continues to present opportunities for FUMCOR to support the LGBTQ community and to help fulfill our commitment as a Reconciling Ministry. FUMCOR hosted the November PFLAG meeting at our church.

We are planning a FUMCOR RMN/Pride Celebration perhaps in June.

We are planning the next Coffee and Difficult Conversations on the topic of immigration.

We invite all members of the Church Council to share ideas and participate in future initiatives.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

7e. United Women in Faith (Cara Weigel).

An E-mail report was provided on January 27.

Two members attended the annual Tennessee Valley District UWF Annual Meeting held at Lennon-Seney UMC in Knoxville on November 8. We enjoyed hearing Mike Feely, Chair of the Committee of History and Archives for the Holston Conference and donated bath soap, paper towels and canned meat to the Morgan-Scott Project.

United Women in Faith closed their year by distributing Christmas bags & visiting with our home bound and nursing facility members from our church. Our "Christmas bags" contained notepads & pens, hand sanitizers, hand lotions, Kleenex, combs, socks, chap sticks, Little Debbie Christmas trees, sugar free chocolate candy and peppermints along with Christmas cards. Seeing and visiting with our previous attending members is gratifying to United Women in Faith! We have fulfilled our commitment to our end of year donations to various organizations and thank everyone for their contributions to help make this possible. Looking forward to an exciting 2026!

7f. Music and Worship (Josh Sumter)

An E-mail report was provided on January 26.

I apologize for my absence at this Church Council meeting. I regret to say that I will not be able to attend any Church Council meetings scheduled this Spring as I have a class online each Tuesday at 6:00 p.m.

Speaking of classes, I successfully completed my "first semester" at Candler via online classes. I use quotation marks because I am only half-time there and completed only two courses: Interpretation of the Old Testament (OT 500) and Public Worship (W 501). I also completed Bridging Cultures: Leadership in Diverse Contexts (LA 565) during an in-person intensive earlier this January. LA 565 was a deep and meaningful class that emphasized the critical importance

of church leaders to embrace the diversity around them in ways that allow the Holy Spirit to move. It was a time of self-reflection and impressed upon those in the class the need for flexibility and openness that is often lacking in church leadership that can result in (un)intentional homogeneity. The final paper for this course is due this week. Additionally, the Spring semester began two weeks ago and I am currently enrolled in Interpretation of the New Testament (NT 501) as well as Leadership, Meaning, & Vocation (LA 550).

All ensembles have now begun rehearsals again after a brief Winter break following Christmas Eve.

The adult choir has some gorgeous anthems upcoming. I am also working with the director of the Roane Choral Society (RCS) to plan a potential collaboration in Spring 2027 that would include RCS, our adult choir, and the Oak Ridge Chorus. It would feature a short, commissioned piece based on our organ and the acoustic properties of our sanctuary.

The Carillons are working on pieces so that they can help lead us in worship this Spring. One of our ringers, Connie, had to move due to her husband taking a new job in Texas. We could use a new ringer or two. Please spread the word! That said, the beginning handbell event last Fall was a success and those involved said they would be interested in more events like that going forward to improve their skill.

The Children's Choir had its first rehearsal, and we were glad to be joined by Billy Price and his two sons! I am in the midst of planning a collaboration between our children's choir and the ORHS Masquers to produce a small-scale musical sometime this Spring.

7g. First Recovery Ministry (Matthew Holder).

An E-mail report was provided on January 21.

Attendance & Small Groups

Wednesday night meetings remain steady, with average attendance ranging between 35 and 60 people. Our weekly Men's and Women's Open Share groups consistently host between 15 and 20 attendees each. Additionally, our Family Support small group maintains a small but dedicated number of participants each week.

Leadership & Committee Updates

The Recovery Committee has welcomed three new members for 2026: Jeff Kile, Jan Melcher, and former Women's Coordinator Cassidy Newman. We are excited for the perspective they bring to our leadership team.

Our Women's Coordinator, Brandi Pedigo, continues to do a fantastic job. She is building deep relationships within the First Recovery community through peer support and Bible studies, and she has been highly effective in scheduling impactful speakers.

Financials & Community Support

The Fall Recovery Endowment fundraiser was a resounding success, raising over \$100,000. Additionally, we submitted a grant request to the Anderson County Commission across two categories, totaling \$85,000 for the coming year. Our application is bolstered by endorsements from several community partners, including TORCH, Ridgeview, ASAP of Anderson, Anderson County Drug Court, and Hope of East Tennessee.

Community Impact & Media

First Recovery was recently featured in an article in the *Knoxville News Sentinel*.

[Secretary's note: A Knox News article link was included in the original report and might not have been reached from the original message. A later message containing the Knox News article was received from Matt Holder and was forwarded to Council Members.]

I am also representing our ministry on the newly formed Opioid Community Committee, which advises local government on best practices for allocating opioid response funds. Furthermore, I have continued leading nursing residencies for Covenant Health, training over 300 nurses across the region. This accredited program provides valuable data that demonstrates an immediate reduction in the stigma surrounding recovery.

Special Event: April 2026

We are thrilled to host a special guest speaker in April: Tom Farley—author, national advocate, and brother of the late Chris Farley. During this event, attendees will have the opportunity to purchase Tom's book, *The Chris Farley Show*, as well as Caroline Beidler's new book.

Ministry Moments

Beyond the numbers, we continue to walk alongside church and community members as they navigate treatment options for loved ones. This remains one of our most impactful services. We recently celebrated several milestones, including sobriety anniversaries, regained child custody, new jobs, reinstated driver's licenses, and first apartments. A particular highlight occurred last week when a 15-year-old girl introduced her stepmother as our keynote speaker. It was one of the most touching moments of the past four years; there wasn't a dry eye in the Fellowship Hall.

[Matt Holder provided a handout that presented favorable training results for nurses opinions before and after training.]

7h. Enduring Gifts (Sid Garland)

An E-mail report was not available for Feb 3.

[Committee members are reviewing data and planning their actions for 2026.]

7i. Lay Leader (Linda Morel).

An E-mail report was not available for February 3.

7j. Member of Annual Conference (L Morel, J Sumter. J. Smith)

An E-mail report was not available for February 3.

7k. Contemporary Worship (Paul Davis)

An E-mail report was not available for February 3.

8. Prior Business Topics

9. New Business Topics [There were none]

a. Future Meeting.

[The next Council meeting will be at Tuesday 6:30 PM March 24 when advance reports will not be requested and agenda planning will be featured such as selecting topics in Section 2c. The March 24 report will provide guidance for a following Tuesday 6:30 PM April 28 meeting in the Fellowship Hall where advance reports will be requested.]

0. Other Topics [there were none]

11. Pastor/Staff/Other Additional Comments. *[there were none]*

12. Adjournment. The Meeting was adjourned about 8:25 PM by Keys Fillauer.

Keys Fillauer, Council Chair

Harold Hartman, Secretary.

A1. Attachment 1

FUMCOR Feb 2026 Church Council

Church Council January 2026

Church Council Chair – Keys Fillauer
Church Council Vice Chair – Scott Gillenwaters [N]
Church Council Secretary - Harold Hartman

Church Council FUMCOR Staff Representatives in 2026

Ken Sauer
Clair Sauer
Denna Hornby
Paul Davis
Matt Holder
Josh Sumter

Church Council Members Panel of 2026

Fiona Boyd
Joe Craven

Church Council Panel of 2027

Debbi McFarland

Church Council Panel of 2028

Evelyn McKamy [N]

Church Council Ex-Officio Members

Enduring Gifts – Sid Garland
Finance – Debbie Buchanan [N]
Lay Leader – Linda Morel
Lay Members of Annual Conference – Judy Smith [N] *[plus Linda Morel, Josh Sumter]*
Missions – TJ Ball
Social Concerns - Greg Smith, Becky Smith
Staff Parish –Chris Lee [N]
Treasurer – Pam Fleming
Trustees – Janet Townsend and Gielda Reese[N], Co-Chairs
United Women In Faith – Cara Weigel

Council Executive Committee

Keys Fillauer, Chair, Church Council
Debbie Buchanan, Chair, Finance [N]
Linda Morel, Lay Leader
Chris Lee, Chair, Staff Parish [N]
Ken Sauer and Clair Sauer, Lead Co Pastors
Janet Townsend and Gielda Reese [N], Co-Chairs Trustees

[N] = New Council Member in 2026.