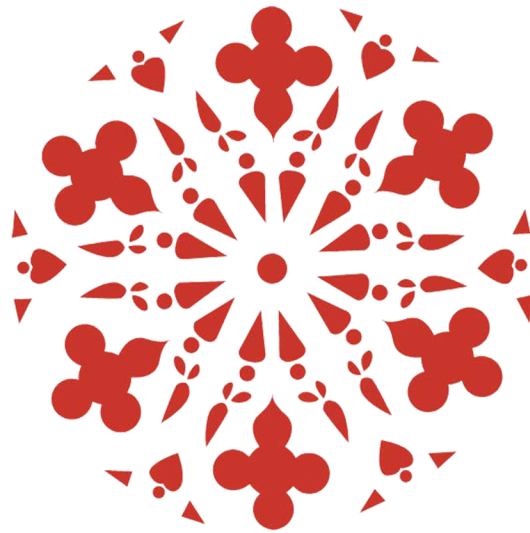


**Annual Reports
and
Financial Statements
of the
First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Columbus, Ohio
For the Year 2024**



**Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Church
Sunday, January 26, 2025 at Eleven o' clock**

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First Congregational Church 2024 Statistics

Births – 4

Aurelia Ivy Stadie	5/22
Caroline May Deliman	6/15
Holden James Deliman	6/15
Nalani Este Panahon	7/21

Baptisms – 6

Malcolm James Blanks	2/25
Thompson Scott Bukach	3/10
Adeline Jane Swartz	4/21
Caroline May Deliman	9/29
Holden James Deliman	9/29
Aurelia Ivy Stadie	10/20

Deaths – 9

James A. (Jim) Monsul	1/23
James Borling	2/9
Barbara Jane Sterrett	3/23
John D. Firebaugh	6/5
Tim Holt	8/1
G. Dene Barnard	8/10
Richard M. (Rick) Sayre	8/25
James E. (Jim) Kyle	9/21
Rupert D. (Twink) Starr	11/4

Memorial Services / Funerals – 5

James Borling	2/29
John D. Firebaugh	6/24
G. Dene Barnard	10/6
Rupert D. (Twink) Starr	11/4
Robert Rideout	12/21

Transfers – 7

Janette Hoffman	1/17
Randy Hoffman	1/17
Matthrew Emery	8/11
Lauren Emery	8/11
Michael Koscher	11/26
Stephanie Koscher	11/26
Carol Woodard	11/26

Termination of Membership – 2

Hank Gleissner	3/22
Melinda Gleissner	3/22

Weddings –

Kalyn McGraw and Marc Dannenberger*	6/1
Audrey Barrett and Marc Matteson	6/8
Kayla Rhea Bouscher and Nikola Popovich	7/5
Melissa Murphy and Connor Hilton	8/17
Abigail Ebert and Nathaniel Tipul	9/6
Catie Woods and Hank Schaab*	10/26
* Member wedding	

New Members – 19

Stefan Duga	1/21
Ronald Botts	3/25
David Buzzee	4/21
Lucy Hadley Buzzee	4/21
Shawn Castle	4/21
Madeline Graham	4/21
Beverly Halbe	4/21
Robert Moreen	4/21
Sheri Moreen	4/21
Bradford Myers	4/21
Naomi Holt*	5/19
Miguel Gonzalez*	5/19
Aarav Peter*	5/19
Donna Vogt*	5/19
Jack Drake	9/15
Michael Russell	9/15
Vicki Lyden	12/8
Alicia Meckstroth	12/8
Brian Towns	12/8
* <i>Confirmand</i>	

Beginning Membership.....	1,185
Additions.....	+19
Transfers/Termination of Membership..	-9
Deaths.....	-9
Ending Membership	1,186

Staff Reports

Designated Minister 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Rev. Joanna Samuelson, Designated Minister

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.
Isaiah 43:18-19*

The theme of “transition” certainly has been central in our life together as First Church during this past year! In July, we enthusiastically welcomed Leslie Fulford as our part-time interim Director of Faith Formation. In October, we blessed and released Rev. Dr. Timothy Ahrens as our senior minister after nearly 25 years of spirited ministry. Our dedicated custodial team is now fully staffed by Alexis Wayne, Bill McCabe, Bob O’Brien, supervised by Annette McCormick, and Building Supervisor Mike Sharrock. And we are absolutely delighted to welcome Rev. Becky David to guide us along this intentional interim journey that we are now on as a congregation.

It is hard for me to believe but it has been two and a half years already that I have been serving alongside you in a pastoral role, here, at First Church. My title has changed a few times but my commitment to our shared ministries has only deepened with each conversation, group discussion, and opportunity to discern and collaborate with you as the members and friends of First Congregational United Church of Christ.

At the heart of all that we do, as a congregation, are our shared worship experiences (in-person and online) which continue to inspire us, affirm us, challenge us and unite us to do the work of the church -- together. In my ministerial role, I continue to participate in the weekly worship planning meetings which are facilitated by Amy Wagner and are comprised of staff members and church leaders who reflect different perspectives and roles in worship.

I also find deep meaning through the pastoral care that I offer our members and friends, including those who are hospitalized and homebound. Our congregation is blessed with church members who care for one another in times of need, transition, illness and loss. It truly has been a gift to offer pastoral support to our Stephen Ministry team during the past year-and-a-half. Under the faithful leadership of Gary Glover, Wendy Kennedy and Susie Loik, we are hoping to offer another Stephen Ministry training course later this year.

During this past year, I offered pastoral support to various commissions and ministries including Justice & Mercy, Faith Formation, Church Vitality, Stewardship & Growth, Budget & Finance, the Executive Committee, Church Council, the Good Samaritan team, Laundry Love, the Transition Team, our New Member Classes, and Bethlehem on Broad Street. I also continue to supervise our committed and caring nursery staff and officiate/host the weddings that are held at First Church.

This past year, our congregation had the opportunity to engage Murray Bowen’s family systems theory regarding organizational change/transition through our four Healthy Congregations workshops led by Rev. Dr. Emlyn Ott. I organized our leadership team which included Jackie Dean, Rev. Sarah Reed, Martha Wilson, Amy Wagner, Joshua Stafford, Greg Halbe, Steve Sterrett, Rev. Ahrens and me.

Throughout the “bridge time” (the time between Rev. Ahrens’ last Sunday and the arrival of Rev. David), I coordinated a team of First Church clergy members to assist with worship leadership including Rev. Ron Botts, Rev. Amanda Conley and Rev. Dr. Bill Nirote. Their preaching/leadership styles and contributions were well-received by the congregation.

In November, I had the privilege of participating, along with Sharon Ferguson and Tom Worley, in the National Fund for Sacred Places training in Philadelphia which was required of our congregation as a recipient of the \$250,000 grant for building repairs (Stay tuned for more details.). And, also in November, I made a commitment to serve B.R.E.A.D. (Building Responsibility Equality and Dignity) as a co-president for a second term.

As we step into this new calendar year and a new season of shared ministry, may we remain closely connected, deeply committed, and receptive “to the new thing” that God is doing among us, with us, and for us. Thanks be to God!

Minister of Music 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Joshua Stafford, Minister of Music

The past year has been one of both growth and reconnection for the music program here at First Congregational Church. This was a year in which we both celebrated and mourned our beloved Organist and Choirmaster Emeritus, G. Dene Barnard. Dene served this church for thirty years as Organist and Choirmaster, and for more than twenty years in his emeritus role. His time here cemented our music program as a cornerstone both of this church and of the Columbus arts community. It was an honor to celebrate his Golden Jubilee in June, welcoming back numerous alumni to the choir. In October, we said farewell with a dignified service of Choral Evensong led by all four of Dene's successors: Timothy Smith, James E. Bobb, Kevin Jones, and me. He will be greatly missed.

Thanks to the generosity of our members, we welcomed and dedicated a new five-octave set of Malmark handbells as well as an expanded and restored set of choirchimes in September. The First Church Ringers are thriving under the direction of Jennifer Fry. With a full roster and more interest in ringing, we have launched a second group of ringers, the First Church Campanelle. This group of new ringers have been eagerly learning technique from Jennifer, and will play in worship for the first time in the coming months.

We have also welcomed a third (much smaller!) pipe organ to the church. This instrument, an Orgelkids Kit, is designed to teach children and adults how pipe organs work. Consisting of 24 pipes, the organ can be assembled almost like a Lego kit in less than an hour. We look forward to its debut at Family Organ Day! The acquisition of this instrument was made possible by gifts in memory of Ben Bechtel and by the Columbus Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, Kegg, Muller, Peebles-Herzog, and Schantz organ builders and will be available for use by other churches and organizations.

The First Church Choir has offered steady and excellent leadership in worship, not only on Sunday mornings, but numerous services of Choral Evensong, an Interfaith Service, and Christmas Lessons and Carols. The First Church Choristers have been a small but faithful group, rehearsing weekly and singing regularly at our 9 a.m. service.

First Church Arts has continued to welcome great artists to play on our concert series. Highlights of 2024 included Richard Elliott, organist of the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square, Ahreum Han, two silent films, Organized Rhythm organ and percussion duo, numerous artists at our midday series, and our first Family Organ Day.

We look forward to a great year ahead!

Interim Director of Faith Formation 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Leslie Fulford, Interim Director of Faith Formation

What a blessing it has been to join the First Church staff as Interim Director of Faith Formation this year! After a yearlong vacancy of this role, I was delighted to come aboard in August in a part time capacity. There has been much to learn, people to meet and programming to plan and grow, but with the support and generosity of the staff, the Faith Formation committee members, church leadership and volunteers, I am learning the ropes and am excited to grow in faith and friendship with our members of all ages.

Times have changed since my parent involvement years ago when I taught Sunday school and served on the Children's Education committee and council. The children's programs are not as well attended as they were, but that was a different, pre-covid and pre-seven day a week sports schedule era. We have amazing children and families and adults who choose to come to First Church. How do we bring them together so they can grow in faith and friendship with other young people in a healthy, meaningful way? My hope for 2025 is to find what resonates with members and be the church that is present and meets them where they are in the best way we can. I hope you will help pave the way for this new era by sharing your wishes and needs, and if able, your time and talents. Nothing is carved in stone; let's look at 2025 with fresh eyes and open hearts.

Accomplishments

In a year without a dedicated staff member for much of the time, there are many positive outcomes to share thanks to the Faith Formation leaders, commissioner Mariner Taft and commissioner elect, Cami Curren, the committee, and staff members Joanna Samuelson and Melissa Kulwicki who, knowing the importance of these programs, added many of these tasks to their already full plates. Some highlights are:

- Children's Time: Sunday stories and the children's sermons were a bright light during both the 9 and 11 a.m. services. Led by Melissa Kulwicki, they saw strong child participation in the early service.
- Sunday Faith Formation Classes: The adult bible study, led by Rev. Larry Miller, Rev. Nancy Livingston and Rev. Margot Connor, continued its popularity with a full class each week. Godly Play, a Montessori play-based children's curriculum, was joyfully led by Melissa Kulwicki and Todd Cunningham. Stacie and Mark Sholl took over leading the middle school class and the high school class was led by Matt Myers, Cami Curren and Thom Smith. We invested in a new middle school curriculum this year, an animated video series called Re:Form from Sparkhouse, to engage youth with humor and discussion. In December, a parent discussion group was started with hopes for growth in 2025. Thank you to all our teacher leaders for giving of your time and talent!
- Teacher Recognition: In June, Jackie Dean, Rev. Tim Ahrens, and Bill and Susan Rhoads were honored for their decades of teaching service. Tim and Jackie taught confirmation and the Rhoades led middle school.
- Various faith formation programs were offered this year including a TransOhio program on transgender issues, Lenten small study groups in several locations, and Ukrainian Easter egg making workshops.
- Off-site programming: Adults and children alike enjoyed a final spring retreat and summer camp at Temple Hills, which closed after decades of First Church enjoyment. We will be looking at new venues for 2025.

- Christmas was celebrated with a potluck dinner and ugly sweater contest, complete with a sing along and “fashion” awards. The teen nativity pageant tradition was beautifully upheld thanks to the volunteer tech team, costumers and of course, the middle and high schoolers who brought it all to life. The new tradition of story reading to the children in the children’s Christmas service captured everyone’s attention and our hearts were bursting seeing so many children in our sanctuary.



- Mission Trip: It has been years since an overnight mission trip has been offered so we are researching opportunities for a 2025 trip.
- Fundraising: We tested the waters of a HoneyBaked Ham gift card sale at Christmas time, raising \$370 for the youth mission trip in the month of December with minimal effort. Running the sale at Easter and Christmas provides a stress-free way to earn funds while providing a product members enjoy purchasing for holiday entertaining.
- First Serves intergenerational outreach projects continued to be a meaningful joint effort between Faith Formation and Justice and Mercy, bringing members ages 3-90 together to assemble products, donate, or wrap gifts for our neighbors in need, and forming new friendships in the community. Ten projects were done in 2024.
- Bible Sunday returned presenting new bibles to students 4th through 8th grades who may have missed receiving their “4th grade bibles” during the pandemic.
- Rev. Tim’s October retirement was a focal point of the fall schedule, providing opportunities for youth to have special time with him, including his leading a combined Sunday School class where he presented beautiful olive wood crosses to each child.
- Church safety: Our committee has been working to update the 2014 safe church policy and training and moved the middle and high school classrooms to the education wing for better security.
- Melissa and Rev. Joanna led a variety of youth group activities January through spring.
- We have a dedicated group of Faith Formation leaders who volunteer their time and talents to the commission. Thank you to commissioner Mariner Taft, commissioner elect, Cami Curren, and members Todd Cunningham, Greg Duncan, Melissa Kulwicki, Matt Myers, Joanna Samuelson, Stacie Sholl, Janice Taft, Amy Wagner, Alli Woods, and Terri Young for your dedication to our programs!

Items not accomplished in 2024

- Teen program participation is at a very concerning low, with the exception of the nativity pageant. With low interest and participation, there was no mission trip or mission week for teens this year.
- Youth group was also suspended in the spring when planned activities failed to gain attendance.
- While the confirmation class of 2023 had several confirmands in the spring of 2024, low interest had confirmation class for the 2024-25 school year deferred to 2025.
- The Safe Church Policy update was not completed this year, though we started the process of modernizing the language and policies for consideration.

What have we learned this year?

Families today have more demands on their time than ever. Sports are seven days a week and more competitive at an earlier age, leaving little time for Sunday school. Academics and social pressures can add a heavy emotional load for teens. Kids and families are spread thin and stressed out leaving little time, and perhaps interest, for worship and fellowship. The 10 a.m. children's education hour and teen programs may not meet families where they are and should be re-evaluated for maximum reach and effectiveness.

Looking ahead

I would like to see a revitalization of youth and children's programs as well as volunteer recruitment to lead, read and interact with the children, which grows relationships and community. To that end, we have invested in more curriculum props for Godly Play to delight and engage our youngest members, purchased a ping pong table for the youth room, a pampering coffee bar for tired parents and are looking at new ways to provide teen and family support in the coming year. We hope to offer fresh ways to meet members where they are and welcome ideas and feedback on how and where we can lift people up and bring them together. My door is open and my coffee bar is stocked. Come have a chat – I'd love to hear from you.

Administrative Manager 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Amy Wagner, Administrative Manager

Accomplishments

- Participated in weekly Worship Planning meetings, preparing bulletins for both 9 and 11 a.m. worship services and arranging for Sunday Stories readers, crucifers, liturgists, and sponsors for flowers.
- Served as a *Healthy Congregations* team member, attending monthly meetings and participating in planning and facilitating our five workshops held in January, April, June, August, and November.
- Led First Church Care Ministry monthly meetings and utilized Realm to record First Church Care Ministry monthly activities and generate monthly reports for the Senior Deacon.
- Continued to lead the Schumacher Awards committee, responsible for distributing applications to churches and schools within a five county area, collecting the completed nominations, and distributing them to committee members for scoring.
- Served on the Stewardship Committee, providing strategic planning and coordinating the initial mailing and thank you note writing sessions.
- Served on the Celebration Committee to plan, organize, and execute activities to host Rev. Ahren's retirement celebration, including managing the registrations and payments. Thank you to Jenny Provenzano for your steadfast leadership.
- Helped lead the Hanging and Unhanging of the Greens work sessions. Thank you to Lori Stafford for her vision and creativity.
- Worked with wedding couples to provide facility tours, schedule their weddings, and assign staff. Served as one of two lead wedding coordinators and managed the wedding coordinator team.

Items still to be accomplished

- In 2025, I hope to establish new volunteer opportunities so that members can continue to engage in the life of First Church.
- I am excited to support the newly formed Congregational Care Ministry team as they develop and implement strategies to better provide care to our congregation.
- I plan to work with staff and commissions / committees to develop better documentation of our best practices and help implement them accordingly.

I am deeply grateful for Mark Brown, Bev Cook, Barb Clapham, Mary Day Fewlass, Carol Gallagher, and Pat Liebchen for their unwaivering willingness to support staff and the congregation by volunteering in numerous ways throughout the church. Likewise, I truly appreciate Ruth Decker, Ron Jenkins, and Margaret Cipriani for using their time and talents to review the various worship materials each week. I am grateful to all of you and all those who have said "yes!" to volunteering for leadership, committees, and other volunteer activities.

I am grateful to the staff, lay leaders, commission and committee members, and the congregation for their continued support of the ministry and missions of First Church and I look forward to the opportunities which will come throughout 2025 to us.

Church Budget and Finance 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Annette McCormick, Business Administrator

Accomplishments

- During 2024 the church parking lot, which is subject to property tax, was reassessed by over \$16,000 in new taxes. We had to pay the increased taxes at the time, but through successful appeal, we have been awarded a refund of the over payment. We will see the funds refunded in early 2025.
- As a response to having our checking account hacked in 2023, we are now paying several vendors through on-line direct payments. This also ensures that timely payment is received by vendors.
- We will receive a rebate on our health insurance of just over \$1,000 in addition to an estimated \$17,000 savings. This is due to staff utilization of in-network services, and overall controlled utilization. We should receive this early in 2025 March or April.
- We continued to monitor our interest rate in 2024 (currently 5%) and received \$24,774 in passive income for the year. This is an increase over 2023 of \$9,367. Dollars are shifted from our checking account to our money market account as possible to maximize interest returns.
- Automated payroll processing implemented through ADP. This simplifies processing and reduces errors through direct clock in for staff.
- Finance systems strengthened through a new double check process along with backup/cross training for additional staff and volunteers to perform essential functions (i.e., payroll, check processing, etc.).
- Participated in Engagement Fair. We still need to recruit new committee members and 2025 Treasurer elect.

Items still to be accomplished

- We are still working on reducing the number of general ledger accounts for financial reporting. This will simplify reports moving forward.
- Financial procedures manual
- Monthly balance sheet
- CCAD West lot new rental agreement
- Review and update rental rates for all types of building rentals including miscellaneous and wedding rentals.

What this commission/area of ministry “learned” this year

- Transparency of information is key to the congregation regarding our financial status. We publicized pledge contribution status graphically on site and in *Connections*. This significantly assisted in achieving the 2024 goal and will be continued in the coming year.
- The need for a sustainable budget is key to continuing good business practices.

Communications Manager 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Melissa Kulwicki, Communications Manager

The simplest description of what I do as the Communications Manager is that I tell the church's story. It becomes more complex as the audience and storytelling platform changes, and in communications, it is constantly changing. In 2024 a lot of positive progress was made in maintaining and furthering a solid branding and communications plan. There is so much more left to be done to reach more people and further the mission and ministry of our church. As I enter my sixth year of communications work here at First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, my mission remains the same as when I began: to always use my given platform to "do" ministry and not simply "promote" ministry. May the information I collect and share serve as a useful tool for people along their spiritual journey. I hope that it helps people to find ways to grow, serve, learn, connect with God, and form meaningful friendships with their church family and others. After all, our own prophet of the social gospel, Washington Gladden, said it best; *I am fain to believe that the time is drawing near when the Christian Church will be able to discern and declare the simple truth that religion is nothing but Friendship, friendship with God and with all people...*

Thank you for the opportunity over this past year to serve God through this church and to serve you all, my friends. Thanks be to God!

Things accomplished in Communications in 2024

- Oversaw and maintained First Church Social Media accounts and the church website.
- Created and distributed weekly emails including *Connections*, *First Reflections*, Saturday Worship Reminder, and Sermon, as well as the majority of "stand alone" emails.
- In June 2024, First Church celebrated five years of *First Reflections*. Since its creation, I have served as the editor, recruited writers, at times writing myself, formatting the layout and images.
- Continued to write and format the weekly Depart to Serve newsletter for the printed bulletin, as well as deliver the weekly Depart to Serve announcements.
- Served as staff liaison to the newly formed Communications and Technology Commission.
- Worked closely with Church Growth to expand church marketing efforts through print and social media, including Lent and Advent campaigns.
- Assisted the Stewardship committee with the messaging of this year's Annual Stewardship Campaign by designing the campaign graphic, printed materials, and creating update graphics and large signs.
- Designed worship bulletin covers.
- Continued to collaborate with other commissions to promote events and assist with special projects.
- Continued to support the Sunday Stories program by picking books each week that reflects the mission and message of First Church, as well as providing an opportunity to focus on topics and events that are happening in our church life and beyond.
- Assisted with "Children's Time" during worship.
- Planned and facilitated the 2024 Spring Family Retreat "One Last Time in the Hills."
- Created, planned, and promoted five Godly Play lessons for Black History Month 2024 that focused on inspiring people of color with local and personal connections. Invited individuals to speak about Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Senator John Lewis, Elijah Pierce, Aminah Robinson, and Bill Willis Sr.
- Assisted the "First Serves" program with projects by providing printed materials and promotional efforts.

- Led the March 2024 First Serves Period Pack project.
- Collaborated with members of the Congregational Care Committee to establish Social Media policies for First Church Private Facebook groups.
- Served on the Rev. Tim Ahrens Retirement Committee. Created materials, gathered photos, and produced the memory slide show.
- Recorded life at First Church by photographing worship services and special events.
- Joined the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park “Tell the Story” committee to help support and cross promote the park and its events.
- Joined the Grant team as the Communications Representative.
- Help plan and coordinate two Pysanky Egg workshops during Lent here at First Church to benefit the Ukrainian Cultural Association.
- Continued to help cost-cutting efforts and reduced environmental impact by sourcing materials, equipment, and resources that were already in-house. If materials needed to be purchased, I researched to find the most cost-effective solutions.

Plans for 2025

- Continue to establish and strengthen unified First Church branding across all programs and platforms.
- Finish creating a new marketing plan that is in the planning stages, and see it launched.
- Help implement migration from the church server to the cloud.
- Help establish a written policy for all digital communications including the use of social media, websites, and photo release forms.
- Update and expand the website to include more information about specific commissions and programs.
- Help individual commissions and committees create branding and materials.
- Continue to find new and innovative ways to use social media as an outreach tool to help not only in the growth of the church but also to help those in need. Explore new social media platforms if necessary. Over the next six months I believe social media is going to drastically change, and we as a church will need to find ways to adapt and adjust to ensure we use it in the most positive ways.
- Update and expand bulletin boards and signage to reflect unified First Church branding.
- Find new exciting ways way to tell the church’s story through community and media connections and help First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ expand it’s message in this exciting time of transition.

Officer and Commissioner Reports

Moderator's 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Gregory Halbe, Moderator

Nothing characterizes the past year more than change. As we bid farewell to our Senior Minister, we also hired a new Interim Director of Faith Formation, a new Building Manager, and our Interim Senior Minister, Rev. Rebecca David. Our reconfigured Church Council took its first steps with the elevation of Personnel from committee to commission status, the addition of Stewardship to our Church Growth Commission, and the new Communication and Technology Commission. Finally, our Stephen Ministry leadership team brought us an answer to decades of prayers with the formation of a Congregational Care Ministry team. Much has been accomplished in each of these areas, lessons have been learned, and new challenges and opportunities await in the coming year.

Leading us into this time of transition was our partnership with Healthy Congregations. A consultancy based in Bowen Family Systems Theory, and led by Rev. Emlyn Ott, this work began with the training of a leadership team of laity and staff in 2023. We then conducted a series of workshops in 2024, aiming to contextualize the often-stressful dynamics of change by reflecting on our history as a faith community and on our individual family and personal experiences. As we continue to move forward, this leadership team is equipped to work with lay leaders, staff, and church members to better understand and communicate our emotional responses to this dynamic time of transition. This initiative has been a cornerstone of Rev. Joanna's ministry with us, but it in no way encompasses the many gifts of calm insight and gracious leadership she has brought to us.

The Transition Team, led by Moderator Elect Sarah Reed, is one of the most deeply caring and thoughtful groups I have ever worked with. As Sarah takes over as Moderator, Jackie Dean and Nancy Loy will be taking over leadership of this team, along with Rev. Becky. This team will continue to manage the various processes of change, and will eventually help form search committee(s) for our future called ministers.

Congregational care, our mutual care and support for each other, is at the core of our Christian identity, and a measure of our strength as a faith community. Finding the most effective ways to coordinate and manage our caring ministries is a challenge that has vexed us for most of the past two decades if not longer. Our Stephen Ministry leadership team is guiding us in a promising direction, connecting and coordinating our many ministries, and communicating with Council, staff and members.

Looking back on the past year, I see several challenges and opportunities that will continue to shape our journey forward.

- Our Personnel Commission has done a remarkable job of discerning best practices for staff support and supervision. They are ready to take the next step, codifying those practices in a new Personnel Policy Manual.
- Our Stewardship and Growth Commission has led several successful new member classes, and pioneered an Engagement Fair to promote members' investment of their time and talent in the life of our church. Fully realizing that engagement is very much a work in progress.
- For the first time in three years, we will have an Immediate Past Moderator serving on Council. That bodes well for a full and active Nominating Committee, which is properly the Immediate Past Moderator's job. The sad truth of the last two years is that this committee has been a heavy burden for the Moderator and Moderator Elect. As Sarah has already effectively stepped into the Moderator role, my job now is to fill all the gaps in our lay leadership team.

- Our Unsheltered Ministry team has been carrying an enormous burden with far too few helping hands. Sadly, several incidents on church property forced us to prohibit overnight stays on our property. This prudent and necessary decision came with painful consequences for our unhoused neighbors. I believe we can and must do better, but finding the best way forward will not be easy.

Most important, our church needs your prayers. Assured as we are of God's abundance, we must also recognize that we are God's hands, feet and pocketbooks. After two years as your Moderator, I can assure you that no investment of your time, talent and energy is more deeply rewarding than service to your church. I have been repaid sevenfold, and God's place in my life has never been clearer. Trust that God will find a place in your busy life for service to our church. Trust that your financial investment in the ministries of our church will reveal the importance of those ministries in your life and the life of this community. Give all you can, and you will marvel at the abundance your generosity will unleash.

Thank you all for your love, support and prayers over the last two years. I ask that you turn all that love, support and prayer to Rev. Sarah Reed. An incomparably generous, wise and gracious Moderator Elect, she will certainly lead us to a future beyond our imagining. And through all and in all, may God bless us all and our beloved church.

Board of Deacons 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Thomas Kiesel, Senior Deacon

Article IX BOARD OF DEACONS Fifteen deacons are elected from the active membership of the church, five of whom are elected at each annual meeting to serve a term of three years. The Deacons select a chairperson who is the Senior Deacon, as well as the Senior Deacon Elect who will serve as representatives to Council. The Deacons assist the ministers in the spiritual formation of the church, including member care and spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, scripture study, celebration of the sacraments, other special services, and oversight of ushers. The Deacons have additional duties specified under Article IV Membership.

This Year: On behalf of the Board of Deacons (hereafter, the “Deacons”), First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, (hereafter, “First Church” or “FCC”), I am pleased to submit the 2024 Annual Report. As is detailed below, the Deacons have had another busy, fulfilling year serving the Congregation diligently and being in relationship with one another.

The First Church constitution requires that the Board of Deacons be comprised of 15 members who serve in three distinct three year rotations. Past years have demonstrated that this number works well for the Deacons and congregation. It gives us the number we need to support two services each Sunday, special events during Holy Week, Advent, and memorial services throughout the year. Furthermore, it allows the scheduling flexibility to give each deacon time off throughout the year which is critically important to allow Deacons to meet personal, professional and familial obligations while also serving the congregation. We must continue to ensure this flexibility for the Diaconate Board.

Unfortunately, this past year we have not been able to recruit enough Deacons to fill our roster in accordance with the Constitutional mandate. As a result, we began the service year (February 2024) with 12 active deacons and due to unforeseen circumstances, have ended the service year in January 2025 with only 10 schedule deacons – only 66% of what we need. That said, we do have a team of loyal substitutes who have been very supportive and have covered schedule gaps when we needed them, and often on short notice. Thank you to all of you who have served as substitute Deacons to support our congregation. We are so thankful to have worked alongside each of you this year. As those who attend 11 a.m. worship may have noticed, many weeks we did not have enough Deacons for each service and we have had to find creative ways to work around this, like serving communion with just three stations rather than four. Similarly, the collection of offerings has been managed by seven rather than eight and on Christmas Eve one service was managed by just four. These changes do slow the services, but we have managed, with the dedication of our team and the extra support from our substitute deacons. If we cannot fill the roster in the future, we will need to continue to investigate ways to do more with less.

It is important that we operate with a full roster of Deacons, doing so allows us to continue the many ways we serve the congregation, before, during and after worship services as we have in the past; this service enhances the life of our congregation as a whole and at the individual level as well. You will see described later in this report that the duties of the deacons have expanded over the years, often beyond what is seen on Sundays, and we need additional people to share in this labor of love. Please consider discussing with any of the current Deacons whether our ministry might be a good fit for you.

Acolytes: Deacons assist the youth who sign up to be acolytes to light and extinguish the altar candles at the beginning and end of services, and we maintain the equipment the acolytes use. For much of the year, we did not have a fully active team of acolytes, so deacons added lighting and extinguishing candles to our responsibilities. We encourage parents to consider whether their youth might serve as acolytes during the worship services. It is inspiring and enjoyable to see our youth participate in the life and worship of our Church.

Flowers: Since the end of the pandemic, Deacons have assumed the flower ministry following Sunday services. Each Sunday, one of the Deacons divides the sanctuary flowers into three to four bouquets to be distributed. Recipients typically include members who may be celebrating an anniversary, recuperating from surgery, illness or injury, have suffered a loss, or may just not be able to physically attend church in person. Deacons present them in person at church or deliver them to their residence along with a note card. These are delivered each week, with an estimated 180 deliveries by the end of this term. We have universally received positive feedback from this ministry and would like to see it continue.

At-Home Communion: A ministry that was started nearly 10 years ago, with deacons in collaboration with Rev. Ahrens, was the delivery of communion at home to individuals who wanted to have communion but were not able to come to services in person. In years prior to the pandemic this program lost momentum. Deacons and the Congregational Care Ministry have begun conversations considering ways to re-implement this program, what the service would look like and identifying individuals wanting to receive the service of communion in their home. You will likely see more of this coming in 2025. And as ALWAYS, we welcome volunteers like YOU, should this be a ministry in which you feel called to participate.

Assisting With Other Service-Related Ministries:

Vergers: Greg Duncan has taken on the task of going to Verger training and bringing back a wealth of knowledge about the work of vergers within the church. Did you know that the role of Verger originates in the early days of the Church of England and dates back to the Middle Ages? The Vergers serve the church through a ministry of service and welcome. You may recall that Mark Williams served as Verger in years past for special services, ushering guest speakers from their seats to the chancel and back to their seats during the service. This was quite helpful to guests as they could rely on being delivered and returned to the right place at the right time. You will see the role of Vergers expand in our services, you may have noticed that Vergers have been assisting Deacons by releasing rows for communion, in addition to leading the procession at the beginning of the service and recession at the end of the service. The work of this team does not fall under the Deacons but much of their work has been very helpful to the Deacons in the months since they have assembled, and we look forward to continued collaboration with this group. You will likely soon see some additional new faces in those positions.

We have been blessed with several new crucifers that are trained and have increased the size of the team of current crucifers, both youth and adult. Crucifers have recently become more regular participants in our services.

In Conclusion: It has been our great pleasure to serve the congregation of First Church this past year. I, personally, have enjoyed greeting many of you at the Ed Wing doors as you enter each week. I feel that I can speak for the team when I say that we love the work we do and cherish the relationships we have built with one another over the years that we have worked together, these are bonds that will last a lifetime. We do hope that you will consider joining our team in the future.

2024 -2027 First Church Board of Deacons

Heather Jones (2025)	Allison Lowery Palmer (2026)	Allen Baker (2027)
Lynn Wallich (2025)	Matthew Myers (2026)	Brian Kemp (2027)
Nan Kreimer (2025)	Marty Worth (2026)	Thom Smith (2027)
Tom Kiesel (2025)	Dayna McCrary (2026)	Vacant
Vacant	Fran Panek (2026)	Vacant

Additional Services: Deacons support memorial services and funeral services in addition to regular worship services. Services in 2024 since February include:

- James Borling – February 29
- John Firebaugh – June 24
- G. Dene Barnard – October 6
- Rupert (Twink) Starr – November 14
- Rob Rideout – December 21

Report of the Verger Ministry

Submitted by Greg Duncan, Head Verger

Accomplishments

On November 19, 2024, the Church Council unanimously approved the establishment of a Verger Ministry at First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Columbus, Ohio. For many years, vergers have contributed to services such as Lessons and Carols and Choral Evensong at First Church. Over the past year, their role has grown to include occasional Sunday morning worship, where vergers have organized and guided processions and helped speakers feel at ease transitioning between the pews and the lectern. The 2024 authorization by Council provides for a more expanded role by vergers in the life of First Church.

Typically, a verger ministry is a servant ministry that fulfills two basic and important functions in the life of a church: (1) it provides greater lay support in planning, organizing, and executing worship experience; and (2) it enhances the welcome and hospitality already extended by clergy and deacons to parishioners and visitors. These two functions are the heart and soul of the mission for First Church's Verger Ministry. The vergers work closely with the ministerial staff and deacons to determine specific needs of service.

Two vergers are present at each 11 a.m. service to support worship and to welcome and extend hospitality to those attending the service. Depending on the size of the service, additional vergers may be present (e.g., Lessons and Carols, Christmas Eve, Easter). Additionally, vergers played a major role in supporting the large memorial service of Robert Rideout, husband of Marti Rideout (twice interim organist and director of music for First Church) on December 21, 2024.

At the writing of this report, six vergers now serve the congregation through this ministry: Camille Bendick, Matthew Bendick, William Davis, Gregory Duncan, Gary Glover, and Dayna McCrary.

Items Not Accomplished in 2024

In its brief two-month existence in 2024, the ministry achieved more than expected. Starting with only one verger in early November and growing to six by the end of December suggests a remarkably strong beginning.

What has the ministry learned from this year?

The ministry discovered that the congregation is deeply interested in understanding the role and responsibilities of vergers, with many members eager to provide encouragement and tangible support for this new ministry. Vergers have also received heartfelt appreciation from both members and visitors for their efforts in extending welcome and hospitality. One notable instance of gratitude came from the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, who played a leadership role in the Rideout memorial service. While retrieving an item from her car, she found herself locked out of the church, but an observant verger noticed the situation and promptly came to her aid, for which she was exceedingly grateful.

What areas has the ministry identified as needing additional work/improvement?

The vergers and the crucifers (who function under the direction of the vergers) need more adequate and more secure space for vesting and storing vestments. As additional vergers join the ministry there will be the need for additional vestments, and aging crucifer vestments need replacing. Some members of the congregation have expressed interest in reviving the presence of acolytes within the 11 a.m. service, and that topic will be under investigation by the vergers throughout 2025.

Board of Trustees 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Frank Cook, Chair of Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees, First Congregational Church, UCC, Columbus, Ohio, have had an active year during 2024. We were involved in a variety of activities. Our main objective is to oversee the growth, protection, and administration of restricted and unrestricted endowment funds in support of activity, life, and ministry of the Church.

Members of the 2024 Board of Trustees were: Frank Cook, chairman; Greg Halbe, moderator; Judy Smith, secretary; Melody Leidheiser; Victor John; Hugh Schultz; Todd Jacobson; Eric Klintworth; Janet Miller; Elizabeth Iannarino; and Jim Velo. Interim Treasurer was Tom Worley. David Holt will be Treasurer in 2025. The Rev. Tim Ahrens and the Rev. Joanna Samuelson were non-voting members of the Trustees.

A list of some of the Board of Trustees activities during 2024 include:

- Church Safety – A meeting with Stephen Flowers, Director Community-wide Services, Jewish Columbus, was held to discuss how to improve security in and around the Church's property.
- Financial Review – A review of endowment funds administered by the Trustees for 2018-2023 was completed by David Holt and Tom Worley. The review confirmed that all gifts, bequests, and expenses were recorded accurately and that there were no funds missing. The review identified the need to adjust all fund balances to more accurately reflect the proportionate application of investment fees and earnings from 2018-2023. The recommendations were adopted by the Board.
- Successful Tax Complaint – The Franklin County Board of Revision rendered a decision in favor of the Church regarding property values of two parcels. The new tax rates for the two parcels represent only a 1% increase in property values, compared to the 250%-310% increase identified in the County Auditor's Office original reappraisal.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Columbus Public Library – A MOU with the Columbus Public Library is being created by Greg Duncan and the Trustees to provide a digital collection service at the Library of Church historical documents and making them available online for customers to use.
- Records Retention Policy – Under the guidance of Stephen Sterrett, the Trustees are creating a records retention policy of documents received by the Trustee Board.
- Preservation Grant – A Preservation Grant Team has been formed to seek grants, administer grants, conduct fundraising, organize publicity, and coordinate the construction project involving the restoration of the South facade of the church and related components, with partial funding by the National Fund for Sacred Places.
- Trustee Sub-Committees – Trustees are forming sub-committees in the areas of House and Grounds; Justice and Education; Legacy and Church Support; Worship, Heritage, and Arts.
- Activity Participation – Trustees participated in the Legacy Sunday Picnic and the Engagement Fair.
- Endowment Distributions – Based upon requests of church commissions and boards, \$320,159.39 was distributed to provide for insurance, church budget support, program activities, mission grants, pastoral support, mortgage payments, park maintenance, and building repairs and improvements.
- Endowment Gifts and Bequests – The total of gifts and bequests was \$78,389.30 for 2024. Bequest distributions were received by the trust of Mel Davis and his wife Lola (Davis) Edwards and by the estate of Pat Groseck.

YEAR 2024	1/1/2024	2024	2024	12/31/2024
CHURCH ENDOWMENT FUNDS	Revised Balance	Income	Expense	Balance
UNRESTRICTED PURPOSE				
Legacy Fund	1,563,410.74	65,822.30	47,771.60	1,581,663.74
(includes Gladden, Comstock, Schumacher)	150,000.00			150,000.00
Project 2020 Reserve	52,260.00		51,952.50	307.50 *
Emergency Repairs Reserve	30,000.00		26,663.79	3,336.21 *
Restore, Repair, Enhance Reserve	45,390.00		9,478.29	35,911.71 *
Total Unrestricted	1,713,410.74	65,822.30	135,866.18	1,731,663.74
RESTRICTED PURPOSE				
Music, Art and Heritage				
Barnard Music Fund (25Kmin.)	79,701.87	6,849.00	3,923.98	86,950.60
Jackie Owen Fund	210,742.35		10,596.48	210,936.85
Organ Preserv. Endow. Fund	218,385.95	2,225.00	11,060.91	220,807.35
Martin/MacNevin Fund	177,496.08	674.00	8,989.90	178,290.02
Music/Arts/Heritage Endowment	47,689.78		2,415.00	47,716.10
Flower Fund	32,522.70		1,648.09	32,539.47
Building and Grounds				
Building Endowment	97,795.98	150.00	4,955.00	98,002.46
Starr-Wingfield Furnishings	20,902.65		726.00	21,258.33
Gordon Playground Fund	22,509.19		142.00	23,554.42
Johannes Landscape Maintenance	45,059.84	1,000.00	2,024.13	46,386.41
Church Acquisition, Exp, Devel	9,895.57			10,419.70
Washington Gladden Social Justice Park	490,523.26	-	24,857.27	490,776.09
West Lot Fund	604,126.66		30,000.00	605,073.72
Stained Glass Preservation	47,889.30	500.00	940.00	49,970.41
Faith Formation				
Endowment- Education	14,138.09		527.19	14,341.28
White Youth Endowment	74,939.87		1,456.13	77,402.02
Keeler Youth (67000min)	155,357.17		5,205.48	158,198.00
Adult Guild Library	26,861.43		1,300.00	26,938.66
Justice and Mercy				
Good Samaritan Fund	450,780.36		13,327.64	460,861.35
Knight-Perry Fund (2100min.)	10,226.79	1,169.00	4,250.00	7,579.62
Social Concerns Endowment	43,325.25		2,195.00	43,348.10
Missions Endowment	216,092.59		10,950.00	216,204.47
Gladden Lecture Endowment	313.12			329.71
Church Support				
McElroy Wright Fund	135,944.31		6,888.98	136,014.36
Church Support Endowment	119,468.47		6,054.06	119,530.04
Leidheiser Fund	42,359.06		2,146.55	42,380.88
Buel Family Fund	44,899.94		2,275.30	44,923.09
Stewardship Continuity	151,499.55		7,677.24	151,577.64
Gearhart Remembrance Fund	91,155.40		5,000.00	90,808.51
Pastor's Fund	252,724.95		12,760.88	252,902.75
Total Restricted	3,935,327.53	12,567.00	184,293.21	3,966,022.40
Total All	5,648,738.27	78,389.30	320,159.39	5,697,686.14

Note: 12/31/24 Fund Balances reflect income, expenses, fees, and realized & unrealized gains on investments.

* Reserve amounts are included in the \$1,581,663.74 total of the Legacy Fund listed above.

Church Growth Commission 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Steve Sterrett, Commissioner

Church members at the special congregational meeting on October 8, 2023, approved a number of amendments to the church constitution, including the establishment of a new Stewardship and Growth Commission. The constitution's charge to the commission is to "promote the growth and development of the church as a faith community and invite members to share resources of time, talent and treasure to support the ministries of the local church and denomination."

Janice Taft was elected commissioner at the annual meeting in January 2024. The commission held its first meeting in February 2024 and has met at least monthly since then. The commission also established the Church Growth Committee, chaired by Steve Sterrett, which has met almost monthly. Ms. Taft stepped down as commissioner for personal reasons in August. A new commissioner has not yet been identified, and the commissioner-elect position is vacant. Mr. Sterrett has temporarily chaired the commission meetings.

Stewardship

- "Living Generously in Community," the stewardship campaign for the church's 2024 budget, began in autumn 2023 and successfully raised the number of giving units (households) that pledged from 157 for 2023 to 220 for 2024. By the end of 2024, the church had received 102% of the funds pledged for the year. For that, we are grateful to our church members.
- In late October 2024, the commission launched our 2025 stewardship campaign, "Growing Our Future Together," for the church's 2025 budget. The commission set a goal of 250 pledging units. Commission members and office volunteers assisted church staff in preparing and mailing stewardship letters to more than 325 households. In addition, speakers addressed stewardship and pledging at worship services, and weekly stewardship messages appeared in *Connections*. Church staff, office volunteers and commission members prepared and mailed hand-written thank-you notes to all who pledged.
- Commission members will work throughout January 2025 to contact and to encourage church members, who have not yet pledged, to prayerfully consider doing so. Our pledges determine the church's budget for 2025.
- Apart from the annual stewardship campaign, the commission is considering ways to promote year-round giving and engagement. We also are reviewing our congregation's demographic and giving data to better understand philanthropic trends here. For example, church members 60 to 79 years of age have the highest percentage of people who pledge. Church members 80 years of age and older pledge the largest dollar amount.

New members

- The Church Growth Committee worked with the ministers to hold new member classes in April, August and November. A total of 13 new members joined the church in 2024.
- We have worked closely with the church office to keep track of visitors to the church and others who may be interested in joining our faith community and to notify them regarding upcoming new member classes.

Engagement

- The commission sponsored the Spiritual Gifts Workshop for church members led by Jackie Dean, commissioned minister for spiritual formation and direction, on September 7.
- The Church Growth Committee organized our church's first Engagement Fair on September 8 to share with church members the many programs, activities and projects that our church offers. We thank Kathy Reed for organizing the event and the commissioners and other church leaders who staffed tables and assisted with the fair.

Outreach

- With support and advice from the Church Growth Committee, Melissa Kulwicki designed an attractive postcard promoting our church's Holy Week and Easter services. We engaged a service business that mailed the postcard in March to 462 persons who have moved into an area within a one-mile radius of our church. Ms. Kulwicki also prepared a short paid video "reel" for Facebook that featured a message from Rev. Ahrens inviting people to the Easter services. The message had 10,600 views.
- Ms. Kulwicki designed an attractive postcard promoting our church's Advent and Christmas programs that was mailed in December to approximately 700 persons who have moved into an area within a one-mile radius of the church.
- The commission purchased a listing in Stonewall Columbus's Lavender Listings to promote our congregation's open and affirming policy.
- The commission will continue to encourage church members to wear nametags as a way to enhance connection and communication among members and to be more welcoming of visitors.

Church Vitality Commission 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Pat Patterson, Commissioner

Our commission works to promote fellowship with the aim of developing a sense of belonging and community within this faith family, and nurturing fellowship and service.

We welcome new ideas and new members from all of First Church. Members of Church Vitality (CV) are Cindy Adcock, Greg Duncan, Wendy Kennedy, Susie Loik, and Vicki Lyden.

Highlights from 2024 include:

- Church Vitality started 2024 off with a lunch bunch at East Market, with one more lunch bunch held at J Liu's in Worthington. There were four Time Out dinners throughout the year. Almost 70 people came together to share a meal and get to know each other.
- In February we launched the Neighborhood Care Circles. Over 100 people attended the luncheon and took leadership in nine groups. CV members have brought group leaders together so they can share their activities. Church Vitality is also working to find leaders for an additional five groups.
- Neighborhood Care Circles have taken on the role of hosting coffee hours. Coffee hours coincide with coffee sale Sundays which are the first and third Sunday in each month.
- In March we worked with Faith Formation to have a fun Easter morning with an Easter egg hunt. We provided donuts, coffee and juices for the children and children-at-heart between the 8:45 and 11 a.m. services.
- With assistance from Annette McCormick and Melissa Kulwicki, First Church marched in the Pride Parade in June. We had 25 walkers. For First Church to continue walking as a single group, Church Vitality will need more involvement from church members in the planning and coordination of this event.
- Also in June, Jim Griffin led a walking tour of Green Lawn Cemetery, highlighting the famous Ohioans buried there. Jim had a nice turnout for this tour and will be offering another tour later this spring.
- In July, members of First Church headed to Huntington Park for a baseball game. The Columbus Clippers played the Memphis Redbirds. It was not a large turnout, but the evening proved to be a fun and relaxing evening in the ballpark.
- Church Vitality participated in the Engagement Fair and gained a new member for that effort. Additionally, in November as requested by the Council, Church Vitality provided a Policy Retention Plan.

Events and opportunities for upcoming engagement include:

- An evening of hymns and pies
- An evening of games
- A tour of Kelton House
- A tour of Green Lawn Cemetery with Jim Griffin
- Wednesday Lunch Bunches and Time Out dinners

Faith Formation 2024 Annual Report
Submitted by Mariner Taft, Commissioner

Accomplishments

- Hiring Leslie Fulford in August as interim Faith Formation Director.
- Designing and teaching Sunday school classes for elementary, middle school and high school youth. The elementary children attended the Godly Play program based on concepts from the Montessori curriculum. A new animated curriculum was chosen for middle school students, RE:FORM through Sparkhouse. High school youth have no set curriculum and follow a free-form discussion guided by the teacher about what is on the minds of the youth attending the classes each Sunday.
- The commission purchased more materials and teaching aids for Godly Play at the end of 2024 to help Melissa Kulwicki, Stacy Scholl and Todd Cunningham in teaching these classes. Bill and Susan Rhodes, long-running teachers for the middle school classes, chose to step back from teaching this class and were recognized in church for their service in this role. Matt Myers continues to teach the high school classes. Jackie Dean and Rev. Tim Ahrens were also recognized for teaching confirmation classes.
- The adult bible study continued with solid attendance in their study of the New Testament. This class has paused in the beginning of 2025.
- Sunday stories continues to have solid attendance at the 9 a.m. service, though there is a need for readers for this activity during both the 9 and 11 a.m. services.
- The Christmas pageant that reenacted the birth of Jesus was held Christmas Eve. Also, the second annual Christmas carol sing along and ugly sweater contest was held. The HoneyBaked ham fund raiser for youth mission trips in 2025 was rolled out by the interim Faith Formation director and \$370 was raised in December 2024.
- First Serves continued on the fourth Sunday of each month. This intergenerational activity has Faith Formation and the Justice and Mercy Commissions work together to identify a particular group or mission to donate funds or items. These groups led: a diaper drive for the Little Bottoms free store in January, the SOAP project for human trafficking prevention in February, and period packs led by Melissa Kulwicki with assistance through Church World Services in March for Women's History Month. In April, Justice and Mercy helped assemble disaster hygiene kits and planted flowers at and around the church in May by other church members. June saw donations to Laundry Love, and supplies were gathered for school bookbags for July and August with no activity in September. Collections of Halloween candy for Gladden Community House were taken in October while food donations were taken for Thanksgiving for the food pantries at Gladden Community House and the Broad Street Presbyterian Church food pantry. December ended 2024 with contributions for Christmas gifts to the staff and families at Childcare Wonderland.
- In late July, there was a presentation by TransOhio about transgender issues. There was also a workshop on how to make Ukrainian Easter eggs.
- Lenten small study groups were held in members' homes and at the church during Lent and the Easter season.
- Due to the sale of Temple Hills, the Spring Retreat held April 2024 was the last at this facility. Also, youth attended summer camp.
- The commission continues to work on the records retention plan. Cami Curren has worked on this document and will be referring the commission's recommendations to Steve Sterrett.

Items not accomplished

- Bringing more youth - elementary, high school and especially middle school youth - into the above-mentioned classes.
- Recruiting more volunteers to teach these classes.
- No confirmation class this year. Though a class was confirmed in 2024, there was not one started in 2024 due to lack of signups.
- Organizing a youth mission trip and other youth activities. Though there was initial interest for monthly activities for the high school youth such as bonfires at commission members' homes and outings at putt-putt golf facilities, these events were not well attended and thus were cancelled. Also, though there was some interest for an out-of-town mission trip, it was cancelled this year due to lack of interest. The commission will work with the youth for various options and see what the level of interest is for the coming year with the hope to organize a mission trip for 2025.
- Work continues on revising the safe church policy and Faith Formation's role in this document outlining how the church makes their spaces safe for members. Commission members have attended webinars provided by the UCC that have been helpful, but no revisions have been made in the previous document that was initially drawn up about a decade ago.

What areas can the commission learn from and where can the commission improve?

- The Faith Formation Commission has encountered several challenges. The greatest amongst those challenges is bringing more youth to the classes such as Godly Play, and other opportunities for middle school and high school youth. How does Sunday school successfully compete with soccer and other myriad options provided on Sunday mornings? One way is to show the parents and children how they are loved by the church community and expose them to the lessons and stories in the Bible. The commission will continue to bounce ideas off our members to build bonds throughout the community that is the young membership of the church.

House and Grounds Commission 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Eric Klintworth, Commissioner

This has been a very busy year for House and Grounds. During the year we welcomed a few new associate (non-voting) members, but also bade farewell to longtime members Rick Sayre and Jim Kyle, who passed away.

Quang Pham served as our Building Superintendent until late July when he left for Viet Nam. In August, Annette McCormick assumed supervision of the custodians, an arrangement that has worked well. Mike Sharrock joined us as Building Superintendent in mid-October, working three days per week. Mike has a broad range of skills, completing a lot of work that would have otherwise required a contractor.

This spring, we negotiated new fixed-price contracts for natural gas and electricity until summer 2026. We completed several projects on the exterior of the building:

- The overgrown plants in the North Lot islands were removed. They required more frequent trimming than we could accomplish. We installed new lower growing plants that won't scrape cars. Fran Panek organized a small army of volunteers to water these young plants.
- Vast quantities of leaves were removed from the Ed Wing gutters and the overhanging locust trees were trimmed back.
- The four window air conditioners were removed from the Ed Wing and the stored windows were refurbished by Blind Eye Restoration and reinstalled.
- The Sr. Minister's office fireplace chimney was repointed to stop the persistent water intrusion. The mortar was missing several inches deep.
- Repairs were made in December to the sanctuary roof gutter on the east side, just south of the transept, and to the copper roof under the fleche, to stop persistent roof leaks. Additional work remains for 2025—the copper fleche is supported with steel, but these metals are galvanically incompatible (like the Statue of Liberty), so the steel is severely deteriorated. It will be repaired once we identify appropriate materials.

We refurbished many areas and equipment this year:

- We repaired plaster, painted, and installed a new hardwood floor in the music minister's office, mostly while Josh was away for the summer. The office was built with no electrical outlets at all, so new receptacles were finally installed a few weeks after he returned.
- After Rev. Ahren's retirement, we repaired plaster, painted, added electrical outlets, cleaned and re-shellaced the extensive woodwork, and refinished the 1931 hardwood floor in the Sr. Minister's office, finishing in January 2025.
- We repaired the peeling paint over the Kimball organ console, repainted, and installed new, high color-rendering LED track lighting for the area.
- The west narthex doors, below the new Social Justice window, were removed, rebuilt, and refinished. Rebuilt door closers and new magnetic locking hardware were installed and the entire door frame was refinished inside and out. The access control wiring was hidden and rerouted, which turned out to be a significant undertaking. The repair of the plaster channel cut for the access control wiring remains to be completed in 2025, as does painting of the area.
- In the spring, the restoration of all the ground-level windows below the sanctuary was completed, a project begun in 2023. Every window was removed, repaired, and repainted with all damaged glass replaced. New drain grates were fabricated to replace the corroded and missing ones in the window wells.
- The bell room closets were cleaned and painted, though some follow-up work remains.

- All of the fluorescent lamps in the Ed Wing, around 180, were replaced with LED tubes by Mark Brown. They use half the energy of the fluorescents.
- We purchased commercial LED light strings for the sanctuary Christmas tree, with financial support from Sacred Earth. The LEDs use around 1/7th of the energy of the incandescent bulbs and last much longer.
- The steam table in the Servedy was replaced with a new electric steam table, purchased by BOBS. We removed the water and gas lines to the old table, which was not serviceable, and installed electric to power the new unit.
- A new water fountain with bottle filler was installed on the second floor, by the choir room. Things turned ugly when the 1931 vintage water pipe broke off inside the wall. Parts of the building had no water for several days, but the piping was eventually repaired and the choir's thirst sated.
- We implemented automatic control of the steam boiler to avoid overheating the building, particularly when the nights are cool, but the days are mild, saving energy, too.

Repair of our 1931 building and 1964 Ed Wing is an ongoing task. Some repairs of note this year include:

- The failing combustion air blower motor on the low-pressure steam boiler that heats the entire building was replaced in February. (There is no furnace—we've got steam heat!)
- The sanitary sewer line from the Ed Wing was jetted out in January to eliminate the quite unpleasant backups.
- Several compressed air leaks were repaired. The compressed air operates the heating valves and air dampers throughout the building.
- A failed steam heating valve was replaced in the choir room.
- After considerable sleuthing, we replaced a clogged steam trap in the tunnel below the library in late February. It was preventing Joanna's or Annette's offices from getting any heat.
- We continue to deal with lime scale in some cold-water pipes. It clogs the supply tubes and filters for the toilets, preventing them from working.

Justice and Mercy Commission 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Jan Miller, Commissioner

Accomplishments

- **We grew:** David Nassau, Jim and Gail Lowe and Tom Brownfield joined with Kris Brant, Debi Cunningham, Sue Johnson, Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen and Janet Miller to serve on the commission, with Rev. Joanna Samuelson as our staff liaison. **New members are always welcome.**
- **We worked at diversifying offerings:** We tried to include more “justice” offerings and more international offerings, with partial success.
- **With Council’s approval we were able to support with grants some recipients who work for justice and some who extend help to people in need:**

Mission Endowment Fund grants:

BREAD:	\$4440.00	For training of members
Riverview International Center:	\$3000.00	To assist immigrant agency
Refugee Committee for Reda Family	\$960.00	For childcare for mother to study English
Mid-Ohio Workers Association	\$2000.00	For utilities and property tax
Laundry Love	\$445.00	To support this FCC mission
Social Concerns Fund	\$105.00	To repay overdraft

Social Concerns Fund grants:

Gladden Lecture	\$750.00	Toward 6/23/24 lecture
Sanctuary Night	\$1550.00	To remove or cover tattoos

What we didn’t accomplish: We didn’t do as much advertising and interpretation of Justice and Mercy as we hoped to.

What we have learned this year: As the needs in our community have increased, we will have to devote more offerings to our congregation’s missions, such as Good Samaritan, First Serves, The Largest Table, Laundry Love and Faith Mission, and not quite as many offerings to other missions.

Carrying out First Serves projects every month is more than Justice and Mercy (J&M) and Faith Formation (FF) can manage at this time, and some of the events were not well attended. We expect to continue First Serves, but less frequently. J&M will meet with FF and staff to make plans for First Serves activities in the summer and fall.

Issues needing additional work: With the change in pastoral staff, J&M needs to be more active in arranging for speakers to introduce offerings and in keeping office staff informed.

Committees and Work Groups: We stay in touch with, schedule offerings, and are liaison to Council for these groups:

- Bethlehem on Broad Street: See Jim Lowe's report on page 40.
- BREAD: See Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen's report presented below.
- Faith Mission: See Fran Panek's report on page 31.
- First Serves: Many activities were carried out with cooperation between Justice and Mercy and Faith Formation commissions. They included a diaper drive, SOAP Project for human trafficking prevention, period packs for women's history month via Church World Services, disaster hygiene kits, flower planting at First Church, Laundry Love donations, filling book-bags, Halloween candy for Gladden Community House, Thanksgiving pantry donations for the Broad Street Presbyterian and Gladden Community House pantries, and Christmas gifts for Childcare Wonderland families and staff. Kris Brant, Leslie Fulford and Melissa Kulwicki supported First Serves.
- Good Samaritan: Kris Brant and Melody Leidheiser work tirelessly taking hundreds of phone calls and responding to needs that other agencies do not fill. This past year they dispensed \$30,668 to utility companies to help clients who could not pay their bills, \$21,320 on gift cards to meet various needs, \$2380 on bus passes and \$5680 on other kinds of assistance. Altogether, Good Sam gave out \$60,053 to help 782 local people.
- Largest Table: A small group of volunteers led by Jim Velo meets every third Wednesday to make and pack 64 sandwich lunches for The Largest Table, which is sponsored by St. John's U.C.C. Church and meets at Trinity Episcopal Church. Costs run approximately \$300 a month.
- Laundry Love: Kris and Rick Brant have headed this up. They go once a month to a local laundromat and have spent nearly four thousand dollars helping pay for use of washers and dryers for local people, including unsheltered people. Volunteers are needed for January – March when the Brants are away.
- Sacred Earth: See Pat Patterson's report, page 31.
- Unsheltered: See Jim Lowe's report, page 45.

BREAD 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen, BREAD Team Member

The B.R.E.A.D. Network of First Congregational Church is slowly recovering from the Covid shut-down, and raised about \$15,000 in Network investments. We were less successful in attracting new Network Members and need more Team members so that we can host more house meetings. An additional \$3,000 in Congregational offerings was collected, so financially speaking it was a very successful B.R.E.A.D. year.

We held a Network Meeting on August 26 and celebrated the Rev. Tim Ahrens for his many contributions to the organisation, and especially for his leadership in our own Network. It was a festive event.

Total number of house meetings held: 5

Total number of people attending (including hosts): 32

Total number who committed to be network members (including hosts): 28

Total number who committed to attend the Annual Assembly (including hosts): 25

Date of Network Meeting: August 26

Total number of people attending the Nehemiah Action: 68 registered. An additional 12 members of First Church reportedly attended, raising our total attendance to 80.

Faith Mission 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Fran Panek, Team Member

In 2024, the Faith Mission Group prepared 10 meals for the residents of our Neighbor on N. Grant Street. We made a total of 6 Friday night hot dinners in the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November. We did four Saturday lunches in the months of February, April, June, and October. We served a total of 1,111 men and women at the kitchen of Faith Mission.

Typical dinners included main courses of Beef Tips and Noodles, Fish Plaki with Rice Pilaf, "Crack" Ham with Sweet Potatoes and Succotash, Creamed Chicken and Rice, Ropa Viejo with Rice, and Bowties with Tomato Sauce and Cheese. Lunches consisted of lighter fare...often we did Hot Dogs with Coleslaw or Pasta Salad and a hot vegetable, or on a cold day we made Hot Chicken Noodle soup with sides. During the Pandemic we built up a team of bakers to provide cookies for dessert, and the tradition was set for the "Cookie Ladies" (Cindy Krause, Gail Lowe and her friend Shalini, Pat Patterson, Chris Farquhar, Nancy Loy, and Fran Panek) who have continued the process and even gained a couple of new folks to help.

Church members and friends who assisted in the preparation, delivery, and serving of the 10 meals included: Paul Leidheiser; Sara Reed and Sandra Geronimo; Thom Smith; Dawn George; Nate, Denise, and Donna Vogt; Sue Johnson; Chutney Anderson; Bill Wirsching and his cousin "Tall" Paul; and Fran and Bruce Panek. Servers of the meals included: Linda Gieseke; Nikki Nwosu; Nancy Braverman; Dean Hafey; Nate and Donna Vogt; Carol Hydinger; Stella and Fubara Braide; Jim and Gail Lowe; Greg Halbe; Carol Ernst King; and Jon Anderson and Margot Connor. All in all, making a meal, delivering the meal, serving the meal, and cleaning up the workspace accounts for about 15-18 hours of time from Church volunteers each month.

If you are interested in becoming involved with this group, please feel free contact Bruce or Fran for further information.

Sacred Earth Committee 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Pat Patterson, Chair

Members are Bev Cook, Dawn George, Sarah Giffen, Jim Griffin, and Lynn Wallich.

In 2024, Sacred Earth (SE) worked to encourage environmental stewardship at our church, in our community, and in our homes.

Sacred Earth recommended an offering for Green Columbus. The offering was April 21 in honor of Earth Day and \$1089 was collected.

Twice each month, Sacred Earth sells Fair Trade coffee, tea, and cocoa during coffee hours. The profits go to support small-scale farmers.

Sacred Earth plans to offer eco-tips in *Connections* during the coming year. Our commitment continues to be to educate members of First Church in the care of our planet. We continue our support of the House and Grounds Commission, and the Archives Committee. We invite new members to join us this coming year.

2024 Mission Support of First Congregational Church, UCC

Mission Offerings 2024	Amount Received
B.R.E.A.D. (January 7, May 7, October 27)	\$7,303.25
MLK Kitchen for the Poor (January 14)	\$1,010.00
Immokalee Workers (January 21)	\$1,242.10
Knight Perry Fund - Trustees (January 28)	\$2,114.00
Largest Table (February 4, December 1)	\$1,813.00
National Alliance on Mental Illness NAMI (February 11)	\$654.00
Good Samaritan (February 14, February 18, April 28, August 4, September 8, November 24, December 24)	\$23,815.28
Equal Justice Initiative (February 25)	\$1,501.00
Sanctuary Night (March 3)	\$1,635.00
First Serves (March 10, November 10)	\$3,585.22
Columbus Relief (March 17)	\$1,084.87
Give Power (March 24)	\$1,784.16
Amethyst House (March 29)	\$152.00
One Great Hour of Sharing (March 31)	\$4,582.80
Freedom a la Cart (April 7)	\$1,591.00
Community Refugee and Immigration Services CRIS (April 14)	\$1,349.00
Green Columbus (April 21)	\$1,079.00
Celebrate One (May 12)	\$1,141.11
Bearing Hope (May 19)	\$1,077.00
Deep Griha (May 26)	\$1,339.25
Barnard Music Fund - Trustees (June 2)	\$6,839.00
Kaleidoscope (June 9)	\$1,694.00
Bikes for All People (June 16)	\$641.00
Strengthen the Church (June 23)	\$944.00
Horizon Prison Ministry (June 30)	\$1,077.00
Gladden Food Pantry (July 7)	\$1,404.00
Laundry Love (July 14, December 15)	\$3,740.27
Broad Street Presbyterian Food Pantry (July 21)	\$1,115.00
Faith in Public Life (July 28)	\$936.00
Ohio Council of Churches Anti-Racism Ministry (August 11)	\$1,151.00
Pathway Clubhouse (August 18)	\$1,067.02
Equitas (August 25)	\$976.73
Mid-Ohio Workers Association (September 1)	\$1,148.00
Unsheltered Ministry (September 15)	\$3,183.50
Neighbors in Need (September 22)	\$1,617.00
Legacy Fund - Trustees (September 29)	\$4,912.23
Church World Service CWS Emergency Response (October 6)	\$2,568.57
Children's Defense Fund (October 13)	\$1,313.00
Jewish Family Services (October 20)	\$2,103.67

Misson Offerings 2024	Amount Received
World Central Kitchen (November 3)	\$1,998.00
UCC Christmas Fund (November 17)	\$1,914.00
Bethlehem on Broad Street (December 8)	\$8,988.00
YWCA Family Center (December 15)	\$1,263.17
Huckleberry House (December 22)	\$1,367.00
Sandy Hook Promise (December 29)	\$452.00
Total Missions	\$114,266.20

Personnel Commission 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by David Hogrefe, Chairperson

Committee Members: David Hogrefe, Chair; Sandra Mathias, Chair-Elect; Tom Worley, Secretary; Mike Kennedy; Jim Griffin; Eric Klintworth; Scott Graham; Margaret Graham; Greg Halbe; Sarah Reed; Andrea Bruckelmeyer; and Tim Ahrens and Annette McCormick, Staff Liaisons.

2024 Accomplishments:

In 2024, we completed our first full year as a commission as we transitioned from a committee to a commission under the new commission structure at the end of 2023. We are grateful for the contributions and the tremendous work of this committee during another year of transitions and growth. As we are at a pivotal time in the life of our church, we look forward to working with Rev. Becky David as our new Interim Senior Minister, and partner with the Transition Team to continue to develop our strategic plans. In some ways, 2024 felt like 12 months of transitions – dealing with all the issues that arose as we transitioned out Rev. Dr. Tim Ahrens, our Senior Minister of 25 years, onboarded new people into open positions, and coached several others out of roles in our church staff. Our key achievements were as follows:

1. The execution of Rev. Dr. Tim Ahrens' end of called ministry plan; we worked closely with him throughout the year to plan for his departure and transition into retirement. These efforts included one-on-one coaching and listening sessions to provide guidance and support in his efforts to lead our ministry team and our staff. We helped celebrate his remarkable ministry to First Congregational Church throughout 2024.
2. We supported the efforts of the Transition Team to identify and retain Rev. Becky David as our Interim Senior Minister.
3. We worked to support the efforts of staff led by Rev. Joanna Samuelson during the final months of 2024 allowing for consistency of leadership. We are grateful for her commitment and dedicated service to our congregation and her leadership on a wide variety of ministries.
4. We supported Quang Pham as our Building and Grounds Superintendent and his travel to and from Vietnam on two multi-month engagements for personal leave; ultimately, we realized the need to coach him into new opportunities.
5. We re-structured our building and grounds and custodial staff to best meet the daily needs of the church, and are grateful for the work of this team to divide and conquer in keeping our 95-year-old building and our grounds in good condition.
6. The Search Committee for a new Director of Faith Formation took a break at the end of 2023 so we could better assess the role and the needs of the congregation. We realized Leslie Fulford, one of our church members who had been very active in leading Christian Education in the early 2000s, had a desire to serve in this role in a part-time capacity. After meeting with staff, the Faith Formation Commission, Council, and the Personnel Commission, we revised the position description and brought Leslie on board in August. We are grateful for her energy, passion, and committed leadership to build our faith formation work for those in every stage of life.
7. We have been working to strategize solutions for areas of our church ministry that need paid support and solutions. We have a need for better IT support and are working to creatively support the hiring of independent contractors as needs arise.
8. While the leadership of key areas of our church staff was in a period of disruption and transition, our office staff, Director of Communications, the child-care staff, the Director of Music and the music department staff, and custodians held down the fort and were the glue that kept us operating on all fronts. We are indebted to them for their commitment and fortitude!

Key Learnings from 2024

1. We must better demonstrate our appreciation for our passionate and dedicated staff.
2. We need to bring on a new generation of commission members – please volunteer! We have current team who would like to serve in other areas of church ministries, and we welcome fresh thinking.
3. We can't take anything or anyone for granted – ever. The role of Personnel is to develop a culture of trust, cooperation, teamwork, and excellence amongst all staff and lay leader liaisons as we carry out our church's mission. It matters how we make people feel and all must feel valued. We are in a time of transition and growth, and we need to be patient with each other as we change our culture and leadership tone.
4. Consistent communication is critical. Feedback, intent listening, and open-minded conversations should always be encouraged.
5. The Personnel Commission can help set the optimistic tone and the active problem-solving nature of human resource issues.
6. A strong committee is vital, and our church is blessed with remarkable, committed Christians who serve and engage.
7. We must remember that each person has the best of intentions. When we have an issue with a neighbor, it is our duty of care to go to that neighbor and share one's concerns.
8. As a congregation, we are blessed with an abundance of talent, goodness, generosity, integrity, and willingness to serve. We have much great work to do together.

Key Priority Focus Areas for 2025

1. Work closely with our Interim Senior Minister and with the Transition Team to develop and execute our transition plan to discern what First Congregational church will look like in the future.
2. Institute a structured annual performance review process with clear goals and objectives.
3. Help produce an effective staff retreat.
4. Revisit position descriptions, and make sure each person feels supported.
5. Demonstrate staff appreciation – dinners, events, trainings, and engagements.
6. Serve the Church administration team to ensure we have the tools we need for continued operational excellence.

Music, Art, and Heritage Commission 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Jim Griffin, Commissioner

Music Committee, Jim Gallagher, Chair

- Music Committee met quarterly to discuss plans and programming for the First Church Music Program.
- Minister of Music Joshua Stafford provided exceptional leadership in leading the multi-faceted Music program - our choirs, the Music/Arts Concert series, Family Organ Day and our annual Lessons and Carols and Easter services.
- Jennifer Fry provided leadership and mentoring to the First Church Ringers, our bell choir; Jennifer began a program for individuals interested in learning to play the bells on Monday evenings.
- On June 2, 2024, First Church held a Golden Jubilee celebration to honor Organist/Minister of Music Emeritus G. Dene Barnard's fifty years of service. This event included the return of many alumni from our Adult Choir and all former Ministers of Music: Tim Smith, Marti Rideout, James Bobb, and Kevin Jones.
- We held a successful Give-A-Bell campaign for a new set of Malmark handbells.
- An anonymous donor provided the funding to purchase the Steinway piano for First Church.

Art Committee, Rebecca Taft, Chair

The Art Committee, under the leadership of Becky Taft, showcased our stained glass windows and the Liturgical Banner collection for the First Church Engagement Fair, held on Sunday, September 8, 2024

Heritage Committee

- Our Heritage Committee (Archives) was led by Greg Duncan and David Mailer.
- The Heritage Committee is working with Sacred Earth and Building and Grounds to add archival exhibit space and a new home for the Washington Gladden Collection in the Library.
- Negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with the Columbus Metropolitan Library to provide free, unlimited storage First Church digitized archival records.
- The Heritage Committee showcased photographic history of the building of First Church's campus, completed in 1931 at the Engagement Fair in September.
- Purchased archival boxes and other materials necessary to maintain our historical records safely.
- Volunteer work days were held to continue the ongoing maintenance of our Archives.
- The digitizing of First Church records by David Mailer.

Communications and Technology Commission 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Michael Kennedy, Commissioner

Livestream

- We continued to broadcast services as well as special events for 2024.
- Discussed idea of launching a “digital deacon / verger” for 2025 to create more real time interaction with the live stream participants.
- Discussed adding a digital “depart to serve” as part of the stream.

Technology

- Cleaned out a lot of old equipment that wasn’t ever going to be used.
- Took over administration of windows network and phone system for the church. Able to provide basic support without having to pull in outside contractors.
- Provided AV services for church services and special events.
- Experimented with features in realm, allowing checking, name badge printing and others.
- We are investigating upgrading video conferencing capabilities in several rooms.

Communications

- Had several brain storms on improving our communications. How can our website be more of a digital front door? Can we create a digital bulletin board?

***Committee Reports and
Additional Reports***

Transition Team 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Sarah Reed, Chair of the Transition Team

In February, a Transition Team was formed to monitor and guide the path of the congregation from the retirement of Rev. Dr. Timothy Ahrens to the call of new settled pastors to lead the spiritual life of First Congregational Church into the future. The Transition Team, comprised of members Todd Cunningham, Jackie Dean, Scott Graham, Greg Halbe, Nancy Loy, Allison Lowery Palmer, Pavan Peter, Sarah Reed, Rev. Joanna Samuelson, and Joshua Stafford, defines their purpose: Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Transition Team a) will oversee a practical plan for celebrating the retirement of Rev. Dr. Timothy Ahrens; b) create an interim ministry plan; c) envision ministry that moves First Congregational Church into the future; d) create a long-term plan for professional leadership. The process to envision our future will also reenergize the congregation and strengthen our connections to the denomination.

Listening Circles were conducted to give voice to affirmations and concerns related to Rev. Tim's ministry and departure, as well as to consider the future needs and ministries of the church. In 2024, there were fourteen listening sessions, with more than one hundred people participating. Themes developed from these conversations outlined the importance of the ministries of music, social justice, and congregational care. Concerns related to family and youth ministry, the aging of the congregation, and preservation of our historic building.

A profile was developed and posted to hire an Interim Senior Minister. Reviews and interviews were conducted, and in November, the church hired Rev. Rebecca David as Interim Senior Minister. She joined Designated Minister Rev. Joanna Samuelson for spiritual leadership. In addition, she offers her counsel and guidance through our time of transition.

The Transition Team will continue to lead this multi-year process to become a healthier congregation that continues to offer vital and justice minded ministries in Columbus and Central Ohio. This means ongoing engagement with members to discern our future ministry, with the goal that we will begin our search and call processes in 2025 and 2026.

Bethlehem on Broad Street (BOBS) 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Gail and Jim Lowe, Coordinators

BOBS has been a positive tradition of service for First Church members for 42 years, partnering with an array of other faith and community organizations. In 2024 it included five major components:

- In early December, BOBS partner, Project Help Clothing Ministries, made large clothing and gift distributions through four allied social service agencies.
- In mid-December, BOBS partner Broad Street United Methodist Church, served a light lunch to adults and children, then distributed backpacks filled with toiletries, hygiene kits, and other essentials.
- A busy Christmas Day event at First Church, serving hundreds of people who are unsheltered, housing insecure, or simply alone at the holidays. We offered: a worship service; a hot, sit-down meal; live holiday sing-alongs; fellowship; counseling and empathy; referral services; and gifts of winterwear, toiletries, hygiene kits, blankets, toys, gift cards, COTA passes, and poinsettias.
- Post-Christmas pick-ups of undistributed BOBS gifts to partner agencies that serve our target population: BBlessed 2, Central Community House, Church for all People, Faith Mission, Gladden House, Kaleidoscope, Open Shelter, Project Connect (homeless minors), New Life Community Outreach, and Star House.
- Financial donations in March to ally charities with common goals, chosen by the BOBS Board, after our other financial commitments are satisfied.

Accomplishments

- We succeeded in filling most new co-leader positions, helping assure back-up coverage in all our program areas.
- Veteran and new program leaders worked and communicated well together.
- We continue to make progress in building Board diversity.
- Our website, hijacked by hackers demanding ransom in 2023, was fully operational.
- More Greeter/Security volunteers helped reduce guest confusion and potential conflicts.
- The purchase of a new steam table improved food quality and eliminated repeated re-heating.
- We continued our partnerships with Kroger, Church World Services, Straders Nursery, Oakland Nursery, Timbuk Farms, Santa's Silent Helpers, and other suppliers, and developed new partnerships that resulted in substantial donations from COTA, Bombas Socks, Upper Arlington Library Friends, and an anonymous charitable group.
- We increased the number of Listeners, so we had more volunteers to offer a friendly ear and a "shoulder to lean on."
- In addition to serving 330 hot, sit-down meals to our appreciative neighbors, we also provided take-home boxes.
- We delivered all our leftover main and side dishes, breads, and desserts to Star House, to serve their youth clientele.
- We continued to reduce exposure to airborne illnesses with open spaces and reduced crowding.
- Once again, we met pre-Christmas volunteer goals, this year with more prep help than we've had in over five years,
- First Church members and others delivered more than enough donations of cooked turkeys, hams, breads, and desserts. Volunteer bakers donated breakfast pastries that saved on the cost of donuts for the Welcome Tent.
- We were blessed and thankful for the help of First Church clergy and staff on Christmas Day and in the months beforehand.
- Advance planning by our Board and lead volunteers started in September and resulted in successful events.

Not Yet Accomplished

- Our communications between the dining room and sanctuary need to be more synchronized, so we can serve guests in a more timely way.
- Our system for handing out children's gifts should be reviewed and revised to reduce stress for our volunteers.
- We need to fine-tune our website to continue improving coordination with our database.
- We need to communicate with volunteers and donors throughout the year.
- We should do more to expand outreach to invite more prospective guests.
- We should seek a "communicator" and/or a database coordinator to help with volunteer recruitment and organization.

What BOBS Has Learned

- We will always need to build in redundancy to be prepared for illnesses and other impacts on our volunteer staffing.
- Our promotion of BOBS through social service agencies and non-profits still needs development.
- Regardless of our food source, our efforts to assure vegetarian options and desserts without nuts are appreciated and necessary.

Areas Needing Improvement

- On-line registrations need to be organized in a way that more closely aligns with our database format.
- Efforts to diversify the Board must continue.
- Our volunteer and supporter thank-you notes and communications need more organization.
- Our efforts to identify and recruit back-up leaders or co-leaders must continue.
- Our outreach to guests through agencies unfamiliar with BOBS should start in early Autumn.

Nominating Committee 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Sarah Reed, Moderator Elect

Officers

Moderator: Sarah Reed

Moderator Elect:

Treasurer: Ramona Moenter

Treasurer Elect:

Secretary: Amanda Butler

Secretary Elect:

Commissioners

Church Stewardship and Growth Commissioner:

Church Stewardship and Growth Commissioner Elect:

Church Vitality Commissioner: Pat Patterson

Church Vitality Commissioner Elect:

Communications and Technology Commissioner: Mike Kennedy

Communications and Technology Commissioner Elect: Stefan Duga

Faith Formation Commissioner: Cami Curren

Faith Formation Commissioner Elect: Mariner Taft

House & Grounds Commissioner: Eric Klintworth

House & Grounds Commissioner Elect:

Justice & Mercy Commissioner: James Lowe

Justice & Mercy Commissioner Elect: Janice Taft

Music, Arts, & Heritage Commissioner: Jim Griffen

Music, Arts, & Heritage Commissioner Elect: Cheryl Hoskinson

Personnel Commissioner: Sandra Mathias

Personnel Commissioner Elect:

At-Large Members

Adult Member At-Large: Martha Wilson

Youth Member At-Large: Sebastian Kulwicki

Trustees

Chair: Frank Cook (selected by Trustees)

2-year term: Melody Leidheiser

4-Year term:

Deacons

Senior Deacon: Martha Worth (elected by Deacons)

Senior Deacon Elect: elected by Deacons

3-year term:

3-year term:

3-year term:

3 year term:

3-year term:

Nominating Chair

Sarah Reed

Thank you to members of the Nominating Committee: Greg Halbe, Cheryl Hoskinson, Mike Kennedy, Victor John, and Fran Panek, and to all those who assisted in the discernment and recruitment of our church leaders. I especially thank each of the candidates for their dedication to First Church.

Congregational Care Ministry 2024 Annual Report

Written by Susie Loik, Gary Glover, and Wendy Kennedy

Submitted by Susie Loik



Building a Healthy Tomorrow through Caring for One Another Today

Congregational Care Ministries (CCM)

2024 Accomplishments

- September 17, 2024 Established the Congregational Care Ministry as a non-voting member of First Church Council as an umbrella to represent established, emerging and future congregational care ministry groups. Current ministries include: Bereavement Team, First Church Care Ministry - card and prayer shawl, Care & Share Kitchen, Full Circle Connections, and Stephen Ministry.
- Identified and contacted leaders of above groups
- September 17, 2024 Presented a CCM communication flow chart to Council
- October 2024 Created a Private Social Media Page Rules of Conduct document which was approved by Council
- October 2024 Created a bulletin board in the education wing to promote and inform members and visitors about our Congregational Care Ministries
- October 2024 Requested moving the current Stephen Ministry room to a larger space which would meet the needs of those with mobility challenges (near the elevator) and maintain confidentiality; approved by Council
- October 11, 2024 Presented the CCM's organization model to Council
- Collaborated with Melissa Kulwicki to begin building the design of the CCM webpage @ <https://www.first-church.org/congregational-care-ministry/>
- December 2024 Purchased and installed a freezer for use by the Care & Share Kitchen

2025 Objectives

- Establish a set date in early 2025 when the CCM will become the Congregational Care Commission (CCC), as approved by Council in 2024. The Congregational Care Commission will continue to develop and build a blanket of care for our congregation.
- Refine and develop the content on the CCM webpage, a page sharing the stories of the congregational care ministries for people who want to learn more about what First Church offers.
- Model healthy communication in order to support the work and goals of the Congregational Care Ministry, its ministries and our church.
- Find ways to connect more frequently with the congregation and visitors.
- Design and develop means by which to communicate CCM's and it's ministries groups to the congregation and visitors.
- Research and collaborate with church members ways to design a visitation ministry and possible transportation ministry.

Bereavement Ministry Team (BMT) est. 2013 Chairperson: Jan Wade

(data represents October through December 2024; prior information provided in Deacon's report)

Accomplishments

- hosted three major events: (Dene Barnard, Twink Starr, Rob Rideout)

First Church Care Ministry (FCCM) est. prior to 2014 Chairperson: Amy Wagner
Card Ministry (October through December 2024; prior information provided in Deacon's report)

Accomplishments

- 10/24 11 cards mailed
- 11/24 16 cards mailed
- 12/24 16 cards mailed

Prayer Shawl Ministry Accomplishments

- Shawls provided 0
- Shawls available 8

Care & Share Kitchen est. prior to 2014 Chairperson: Amy Wagner

Accomplishments

- Obtained a freezer for prepared meals to be available promptly
- Explored annual budget needs and fundraising options for DoorDash gift cards, ingredients and
- Supplies necessary to prepare and freeze meals
- Explored options for recipes to use in-home or at church group preparation of meals
- Meals provided: October 4, November 4, December 0

Full Circle Connections (FCC) est. 2024 Group Facilitator: Jan Hamilton

Accomplishments

- Jan Hamilton set-up the Realm Group for use with attendees to share announcements and
- Communication within the group
- Jan Hamilton prepared a mission statement for the group's Realm and CCM sites
- In process: designing poster to communicate meeting information to congregation

Stephen Ministry (SM) re-est. 2023 Leaders: Wendy Kennedy, Susie Loik, Gary Glover 2024

Accomplishments (information reflects January through December 2024)

- In October, completed first year of an active SM program
- Current Stephen Leaders = 3; active Stephen Ministers = 5; inactive Stephen Ministers = 2
- Current and former Stephen Ministry Care Receivers = 6
- Created SM bulletin board to introduce SM Team and offer books recommendations to support spiritual, mental, and physical health and growth
- Invited three speakers to conduct three separate educational and resource offerings at the SM continuing education meetings
- Established a resource library in the SM office to support SM's, care receivers and our congregation, offering books, pamphlets and community resources related to life challenges
- Utilized special projects funding to:
 - order all resource materials for a 2025 Stephen Minister training class
 - procure educational / instructional materials needed to conduct three independent education and learning sessions for the congregation
 - pay for advance registration for one person to attend the Stephen Leader training course

A Journey Through Grief (a four book series designed to support individual members and families within our congregation during their first year of loss)

- Individual congregation members contacted = 22
- Mailed or currently mailing book sets (4/set) = 17

Unsheltered Ministry 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Gail Lowe, Tom Worley, and Jim Lowe, Facilitators

This ministry began in 2022 as an outgrowth of extensive dialogue among church leaders and members about the interactions First Church and our members have with unsheltered people in our community, especially those visiting our property. The focus of the ministry and our interaction with unsheltered people changed dramatically in 2024. This summary speaks to the group's activities before and after the moment of change.

Accomplishments

- We have built a very strong partnership with the Discovery Special Improvement District (SID), and have worked closely with their ambassador patrol staff and outreach counselors to assist unsheltered visitors.
- Direct contributions and a dedicated offering allowed us to begin a fund that helps cover costs of moving unsheltered neighbors into long-term housing, assisting with rent costs, and providing for essential needs.
- We've collected and delivered household furnishings, housewares, cleaning supplies, etc., from First Church members and others who've donated them for unsheltered people who are new home dwellers.
- With funding given as gifts in honor of a former moderator and support from dedicated offerings, we maintain a Port-a-John in the parking lot for unsheltered visitors and other guests. Volunteers and a church custodian help with supplies and light cleaning two to three times weekly.
- Until September, we served hot evening meals to unsheltered visitors weekly, donated by church members. Begun in February 2022 with a handful of visitors, this service rose to as many as 16 guests per night by August 2024. The increased number of guests enabled us to reach and help more neighbors. Some came only for a meal and conversation, but most stayed for the night. Our volunteers provided advice, referrals to local service agencies, and compassionate fellowship.
- Monday night church member visits were supplemented with check-ins during the week, to confirm the well-being of guests, follow-up agency referrals, and pre-empt security issues. We maintain a log of unsheltered visitors, to organize our help for them.
- In nearly three years of service, we've fed, counseled, and/or otherwise helped over 80 unsheltered neighbors.
- We have helped four of our guests gain and keep housing, and three more are "in the pipeline" for a home. We have assisted four others to travel elsewhere to live with family/friends.
- In addition to our weekly hot dinner, we provided:
 - Material goods such as ground cloths, blankets and bedrolls, ponchos, bottled water, hot or cold drinks, and COTA passes;
 - Assistance in replacing lost IDs and documents, submitting medical forms, and applying for services;
 - Transportation needed for food and prescriptions, medical and social service appointments, attendance at family memorial services, and visits with family members.
 - Emergency lodging due to severe weather or security threats.
- To help create a feeling of normalcy for unsheltered visitors, we occasionally treated longer term visitors with a casual lunch or a birthday dinner at a local restaurant.
- In September 2024, our Ministry's helping role was significantly reduced due to a change in church policy that prohibited visitors from sleeping on the grounds. Subsequently our role and our volunteers' efforts shifted to a larger responsibility for communicating and enforcing rules on access to the church property.

Not Yet Accomplished

- Despite the increase in visitors, by June 2024, a relative sense of safety was achieved by frequent volunteer visits, increased contact with visitors, and closer coordination with SID staff. But, in August, two violent incidents raised serious concerns among church leaders, and the decision was made to suspend the decades-old practice of allowing unsheltered visitors to sleep on the grounds. A number of church members have commented on the possibility of re-instituting this practice, but the Unsheltered Ministry has not yet solicited church leader input on the idea. Seeking wide input was a foundation of creating the Unsheltered Ministry, and this step should be accomplished before any action is taken to make new plans and set new goals for the Ministry.
- Since the summer of 2024, we have taken methodical steps to enforce our policy of deterring visitors from leaving personal belongings unattended on the First Church and Social Justice Park properties. As of the end of 2024, we believe we've succeeded in reaching this goal, but we will have to be watchful.
- We have begun communications with downtown churches and non-profits to organize a network among the organizations that serve unsheltered people, but we have not yet set an initial meeting.

What We Have Learned

- Regardless of the caution we observe and the steps we take, we cannot assure complete safety and security for members and guests, not to mention unsheltered visitors.
- It is extremely difficult to turn visitors away after decades of allowing them to stay on our property.
- Enforcing our policies requires ongoing attention, persistence, and significant diplomacy.
- Decisions affecting others, especially vulnerable groups, deserve consultation and collaboration.

Areas Needing Improvement

- We need to address where unsheltered people can store their belongings temporarily.
- We need to be more proactive in engaging area churches, organizations, and city agencies.
- We need to identify and recruit supportive volunteers to help with this ministry.

Washington Gladden Social Justice Park

2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Tom Worley



Park Governance

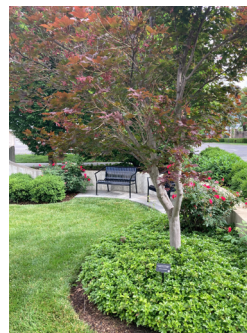
Our church is the official sponsor of the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park. We offer leadership and allow use of the land for this community-funded park as a mission of the church. The members of the Park's Advisory Board are appointed by church council. For 2025, a new governance model is being implemented that combines two prior park boards and allows for expansion for up to 25 board members. The board has established an executive committee and four working committees as part of intended restructuring via a new strategic plan.

Park Advisory Board Members include:

Allen Baker - Principal of Baker Designs Ltd.; Miranda Kridler – VP for Planning and Operations, CCAD; Michael Curtin – former Vice-Chair of Dispatch Printing Co.; Tracy Ross – Director of Community Engagement, Broad Street Presbyterian Church; Caitlin Graham – Sr. Vice-President of Operations and Patient Care, AndHealth; Anne Jeffrey Wright – Nemours Children's Health (retired); Barbara Poppe – Founder and Principal of Barbara Poppe and Associates; Archie Griffin – former President and CEO of The Ohio State University Alumni Association; Rabbi Harold Berman – Rabbi Emeritus, Congregation Tifereth Israel; Tom Brownfield – Commissioned Minister of Social Justice, First Congregational, UCC; Alejandro Rodriguez – Executive Director, The Spirituality Network; Imran Malik – Director of the Noor Islamic Cultural Center; Taimur Chaudry – Head of Insurance Sales, Arbor; Lynn Wallich – Community Leader; Katharine Moore – Executive Director of the Jefferson Avenue Center; Tom Worley – Park Director (ex officio-non-voting); Joshua Stafford – Church Staff Member (ex officio-non-voting).

2024 Park Events

- Sunrise Easter Service 3/31/24
- Tree Dedication Earth Day Event 4/28/24 – Honoring sponsorships and tributes for over 40 trees in the park.
- Gladden Lecture 6/23/24 – Rev. Yvonne Delk
- Day of Remembrance of Traffic Victims 11/17/24 - Honoring Traffic Victims and Advocating for Safer Traffic Laws



Tree Dedication Earth Day Event – Presenters 4/28/24. Tree Dedication Markers Installed Throughout the Park

Park Funding

The total of park gifts and grants since its origin is \$2,100,500. The \$1,408,000 spent from the beginning of the park's development until the end of 2024 includes administration, maintenance, programs, art projects, construction, and infrastructure improvements (funded by City of Columbus). The park's maintenance and art project endowments have a combined balance of \$520,000. The park added sidewalk extensions in 2024 and will conduct a community fundraising campaign in 2025 for a permanent art feature for main screen of the park.

West Lot 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by Tom Worley



The land that we know as the West Lot was once part of William A. Platt estate that took form in 1852. Three generations had lived on the land until their home was demolished in 1928. For over 60 years, the Platt household had family gardens located north of its home. During World War I, President Wilson encouraged all homeowners to develop or expand gardens wherever they could to help increase the source for fresh grown produce. To show their patriotism, the Platt family developed a Victory Garden in its front lawn along East Broad Street where the park is located today.

[Photo from a book written by David D. Platt]

Victory Garden at the Platt Estate - 1917

Ohio Victory Garden Today

Just as Rutherford H. Platt contacted The Ohio State University for advice as to what to plant in his family's 1917 victory garden, the Ohio Department of Agriculture has partnered with Ohio State University Extension to revive the Ohio Victory Garden initiative in 2020. For more information about the program, please use the following website link: <https://cfaes.osu.edu/features/ohio-state-university-extension>.

Purchase and Mortgage

Our church purchased the West Lot from the Platt family in 2010 for \$2.75 million as part of a capital campaign: "Our Future's Broadening Way". The West Lot is composed of three parcels that collectively include the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park, the west parking lot, a gravel lot, the carriage house, and the small area developed as the Sam Gordon Playground. In 2015, the church refinanced the mortgage with an interest rate of 4.0% guaranteed for 10 years. 2025 is the last year of the guaranteed low interest rate. The monthly mortgage payment is \$8,568.17. The church has made \$1,526,959.86 in principal payments and \$1,182,260.96 in interest payments since 2010. As of 12/31/24, the church owes \$1,223,041.

Tax Exemption Case and Restrictions

Because of a favorable tax exemption decision, the church can forgo paying \$70,000 for the annual West Lot property taxes since 2011. To date, this amounts to a savings of \$1 million. The ruling came with some restrictions. Lot income can only be applied to lot expenses including site improvements, maintenance, repairs, utilities, security, insurance, landscaping, and mortgage interest. 100% of the income is applied to current and past accrued expenses. Under tax exemption, lot income cannot be used for church operations.

Lease

CCAD currently provides \$95,760 in annual offset payments for its secondary use of 133 parking spaces and partial use of the carriage house. The church is recognized as the primary user of the West Lot via the lease.

West Lot Fund

The West Lot Fund was created in 2015 with the remaining capital campaign funds (\$570,000) that were designated for the acquisition of the West Lot. Church Trustees oversee the investment of the fund. In most years, the requested fund distribution is \$30,000. The fund is used to retire the lot's initial debt and to provide for its maintenance. The fund with a balance of \$605,000 primarily supports mortgage **principal** payments.

Thanks to the donors of the 2010 capital campaign and to CCAD's need for parking, it is possible to make mortgage payments and to provide for maintenance of the lot through various church funds while complying with tax exemption standards for the lot.

National Fund for Sacred Spaces Grant

Submitted by Tom Worley

Church is Winner in National Preservation Grant Contest

In February, our church sent a letter of interest seeking a \$250,000 building repairs grant **In October, we learned that the National Fund for Sacred Places has selected our church as one of the 24 winners from a group of nearly 500 submissions.** The National Fund is a program of the Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Fund provides grants for urgent capital projects at historic religious buildings that are valued for their cultural importance as well as their role in providing human services, strengthening communities, and revitalizing neighborhoods. For more information, see: fundforsacredplaces.org.

Council has authorized our moderator to sign a grant program covenant to confirm our church's willingness to accept the \$250,000 grant and to comply with all grant program requirements. The approved grant project involves the renovation of the front of the church (replacement of the front steps, restoration of the Rose Window, and tuckpointing of the south facade). It is estimated that the total renovation cost will be \$750,000. All construction must meet standards of the U.S. Department of Interior for historical buildings.

For proposed repairs, there are logistical issues. Scaffolding is needed to repair the stone tracery and stained glass of the Rose Window. The same scaffolding is needed for extensive tuckpointing repairs. Only once those repairs are complete would work begin on renovating front doors, restoring outdoor light fixtures, and replacing front steps. Even though it would be best to replace the Broad Street plaza and front landscaping at the same time, these features are not eligible for grant funding. For that reason, they will be addressed as a separate project as other funding is identified.

Council has appointed the following individuals to serve as the Preservation Grant Team: Tom Worley, Sharon Ferguson, Rev. Joanna Samuelson, Melissa Kulwicki, Janine White, Eric Klintworth, Becky Taft, Victor John, Becky Taft, Brian Kemp, Anne Jeffrey Wright, and Mark Brown. Each team member brings a special expertise to assist with the project. The grant team in partnership with a historical preservation architect is to coordinate all facets of this project including communications, construction management, and fundraising.

The National Fund is prepared to provide a \$10,000 supplemental grant to conduct a building conditions assessment prior to embarking on the proposed grant project. Following the building assessment and subsequent construction bids, a final recommendation will be made as to the scope and cost of the project. Because church fundraising is needed to raise the match dollars for the grant, the recommendation will be voted upon by the congregation at a special congregational meeting to be held sometime in 2025. To meet grant conditions, the project is to be completed by October 2026 unless an extension is given.

As we begin a period of transition of church leadership, it is wonderful to know that an 18-member interfaith advisory panel of an esteemed grant fund recognizes our church as a national landmark for its architecture, its ministries, and its service to the community - all were important factors in our selection for this honor. As a faith community, we must meet the challenge as to how we will respond to this opportunity to help preserve our sacred place of worship and continue our tradition of social justice and community outreach. With your support, we look forward to our new partnership with the National Fund for Sacred Places.

Financial Reports

Treasurer 2024 Annual Report

Submitted by James Velo, Treasurer

2024 continued to be a very active year for our financial team of Business Administrator, Treasurer, Treasurer-elect, and the rest of the Budget and Finance Committee. Accomplishments included continued ongoing monitoring of interest received from Money Market account, and participating in successful appeal of Property Tax assessment. These are detailed in Business Manager Report.

The final 2024 Statement of Activities spreadsheet shows an actual deficit of \$16,366.77 compared to the budgeted deficit of \$79,456.32. This was accomplished by exceeding Pledge/Non-Pledge projections by \$17,000, and final Expenses finishing almost \$55,000 under budget. While this was the second year of a deficit budget, the results are quite positive as we will not have to draw upon the Sustainable Reserve Grant as previously thought. The entire deficit will be accounted for using funds from prior years' accrued surplus. This leaves \$43,031.89 in the Prior Year Surplus account for future use. It should also be noted that property tax increase accounted for basically the entire deficit, and without that 2024 would have essentially been a breakeven year.

Bank fees associated with giving continue to be a bit of a challenge. Although we have made efforts to educate the membership regarding these fees (processing fees associated with using credit cards on Realm, EasyTithe, or PayPal for pledges and donations), we still ended up incurring fees of \$7,438.44 in 2024. That was higher than the budgeted amount of \$7,000.00. We are very thankful that many members have covered the fees, saving the church money! However, it would be nice not to spend this amount of money on processing fees. We encourage members to write checks to the church or possibly start using other methods of payment such as direct deposit from pay checks.

In last year's report, we highlighted the importance of continuity for our Finance Team. The Treasurer and Treasurer-elect agreed to serve an additional year to help address continuity issues. Unfortunately, as we move into 2025, we are without a Treasurer-elect, as the current person in that position will move into the role of Treasurer. The Budget and Finance Committee participated in the church Engagement Fair in September, but we were not able to recruit anyone to serve as Treasurer-elect. We believe that a structure of two years as Treasurer-elect, followed by two years as Treasurer, is a good model for the church. So, if there is anyone out there interested, please let us know!

Now, on to the 2025 Budget. As of January 14, the total pledged amount is \$689,718.00. This is a decrease of \$69,672.24 from the 2024 Budget and a decrease of \$86,793.79 from the actual amount of pledges received in 2024. Despite the great work of the Stewardship Committee, we are still waiting to hear from a number of households regarding their pledge contributions for 2025. Not having the information makes it extremely challenging to create an accurate budget, but we must go forward with the information we have at the current time. We still have an excess of \$43,031.89 in the Prior Year Surplus account and we have not yet had to touch the Sustainable Reserve Grant amount of \$135,714. If you intend to pledge and have not yet done so, please submit this information as soon as possible.

We always discount the pledge amount by 2% to account for the fact that not all pledged dollars actually make it to the church. So, it is typical to use the amount of 98% of the pledged amount to create the budget. As of January 14, the discounted amount is \$675,923.64, which makes the projected deficit even larger.

I would like to thank Annette McCormick and Ramona Moenter. It has been a pleasure to work with them over the past couple of years. Also, special thanks to Tom Worley for his dedication and expertise and to Bev Cook and Barb Clapham for all of their diligent work on behalf of our finance team. Thanks to the rest of the Budget and Finance Committee as well!

PROPOSED 2025 BUDGET GUIDESHEET

REVENUES

Current Year Pledges

2024 – \$784,839 pledge amount, 221 households; \$759,390 budget amount at 96%; \$776,512 received at 102%.

2025 – \$690,018 pledge amount as of 1/17/25, we included half of the amount still outstanding in potential incoming pledges for 2025 which equals \$68,480. We've had 165 households pledge towards our 2025 campaign: \$743,328.04 budget amount at 98%. Our goal for 2025 is \$877,854 in pledged income with a goal of 250 households pledging.

We gained 16 households who did not pledge in 2024 or are NEW households in 2025. 65 households increased their pledge from 2024 to 2025, and 68 households stayed the same. We also had 16 households who decreased their pledge giving from 2024 to 2024. 8 households were unable to pledge for any number of reasons and 55 households have not responded to our stewardship/annual giving campaign, which represents just over \$136,000.

Prior Year Pledges

2024 - \$2,000 prior year pledge budget amount, \$6,187 received at 309% increase over budget. We based the original budget amount on confirmations we received from several members who were intending to finish their 2023 pledge balance.

2025 - \$2,000 prior year pledge budget amount –this is based historical numbers from the past. We typically receive approximately \$2,000 in most years.

Unpledged Receipts

2024 – \$60,000 unpledged support budget amount, \$55,696 received at 93% of budget.

2025 - \$45,000 unpledged receipts budget amount. With several families returning to pledging in 2025 we moved those households from unpledged to current year pledge. The proposed unpledged support total includes two forms of projections. The traditional projection includes continued support from giving households who do not regularly pledge, and from family, friends, visitors, foundation support, etc. The second assumption is known families that prefer to give without a pledge.

Use of Building and Weddings

The church still is impacted by the Covid pandemic in that several groups have not fully reactivated their use of our church for gatherings and events. The regular tenants that use our building have faced challenges of their own. For that reason, no increase in rent is being proposed this year other than for use of the parking lot. Wedding income came in higher than projected in 2024, a slight increase in wedding income has been proposed for 2025. We are projecting \$6,000 for 2025. We have added a new regular rental to our building in 2025, it is Willow Grove Home School Group. They will be renting a classroom Monday-Friday starting in August-May of the following year. The amount shown is the prorated amount for August-December 2025. The group is hoping to double in 2026.

Miscellaneous outside rental was disappointing in 2024, we only hit 52% of our projection for the year. We are anticipating growth for 2025 but will decrease the growth from 2024 in 2025 by \$3,000, providing a slight increase to \$4,000 for 2025. We will look for ways to increase this revenue stream during 2025.

Other Regular Income

The major funding source for this category is received from the Columbus Foundation each year. It is an annual gift from the Herb and Elizabeth Cook Fund. The amount varies based upon investment earnings associated with the fund. Because of the recent market conditions within the stock market, it is projected that the gift will continue at the same rate as 2024, we are not projecting an increase with these funds. We will keep our projections at \$20,000 for 2025. The church will not know the exact amount until March. A new revenue for the church is interest income. In 2024 we budgeted \$12,000 and received \$24,774 for the year. Since this is a highly variable number, we are increasing the funds to \$20,000 for budget purposes. Anything over that will continue to be a nice return to our budget.

Trustee Support and Assigned Funding

The Trustees provide support for the costs of the property and liability insurance policy for the church. As the costs increase, so does the amount provided by the Trustees from the Legacy Fund. Also, the Trustees by a standard formula transfer each year about 5% of the value of the Church Support and Stewardship Continuity Funds in the endowment portfolio.

Separately, the Trustees reserve \$30,000 each year to cover the costs of emergency repairs to the building. In any given year, all or none of the emergency funds might be used. In years where all or part of emergency funds are not used, the unspent amount is transferred to a Reserve, Restore, Enhance Reserve that is used to maintain the building as approved by the Trustees.

The church receives an annual distribution from an anonymous Columbus Foundation fund to support "major projects" of the church. Expenditures from the Major Projects Fund are approved by Council. For years when major project grants have been approved by the Council in advance, the grants are included as revenues and offset expenses in the proposed budget. For 2024, there are two grants that are included: 33,700 for the transition of the communication's position to full time and converted to our operating budget by 2025, and \$8,460 associated with the Stephen Ministry and Healthy Congregations ministry. For these categories, the proposed 2025 budget does not have any anticipated expenses as of January 17, 2025.

Total Revenues

After considering the proposed changes in all funding categories, the 2025 budget reflects a \$66,639 decrease in revenues vs. the 2024 budget amount. This could change with additional pledged income.

EXPENSES

Staff Compensation

During 2024, 50% of our communications position was covered by a major projects-grant. This saved our budget approximately \$32,000. We also had a vacant faith formation position for much of the year. Our building superintendent took several months off with unpaid leave due to a family situation. We then hired a part-time maintenance person to help with the building. Our senior minister retired, and we hired an interim replacement. The combination of these events saved our budget \$51,000 during the year. In 2025, our budget will absorb all of these costs fully. At this point in time, we are fully staffed with a part-time maintenance position, part-time faith formation director, full-time communication manager and three part-time custodians. During the preparation of this budget, we became aware that our associate minister and faith formation director needed medical insurance. Both have been added to our policy for 2025. We also saw a slight rate increase in one of our medical policies and our dental policy. We also added our interim senior minister to our policy. Over all staff compensation is being maintained at the same "pay" level as 2024, the difference between 2024 and

2025 is the cost of adding additional staff to our insurance policy and filling vacancies during 2024. With everything listed we are only expecting approximately \$700 in additional costs for our budget. This will change if the committee authorizes a staff pay increase.

Program and Building Expenses

Office expenses have increased due to the rising costs of technology. Over the last several years we have seen these items increase due to several reasons. We had to purchase computers for staff who did not have the basic tools to do their jobs. We will have to continue to update computers etc. in 2025. While adding hardware and software for staff is costly, the maintenance of the equipment is equally costly. Thus for 2025 we are projecting an increase in these costs. Computer hardware is projected to increase to \$6,000 in 2025 up from 2024 by \$2,000. Computer hardware will be budgeted as zero. Due to our budget constraints any computer hardware will be addressed through a Major Projects grant. During 2024 we had a budget of \$19,000 and that was an increase from 2023; however these costs continue to rise and if we need to go over the budgeted amount we will cover it with a Major Projects grant. Telephone costs have increased due to an annual contract for maintenance and software updates to the system. In general, office supplies increased due to the rising cost of paper and basic supplies. These costs are projected at the actual cost of 2024 supplies. Payroll costs have increased due to a new implementation of clocking in and out of all hourly staff, plus the automation of tracking staff time off and balances.

Building and maintenance expenses for 2025 were budgeted at the same level as budgeted for 2024. Individual line items may vary, but the overall expense totals are mostly the same level. Operating supplies have a slight increase due to the costs of products needed. Contract Services and Licenses has a slight increase for 2025. If there is any need for additional spending, we will look at endowment grants to help cover those costs during the year.

Music operating expenses will show a decrease due to offset a slight increase in music personnel costs in 2025.

Justice and Mercy is expected to maintain at close to the same level as 2024. The unknown is related to denominational support for Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM). Based upon the established OCWM formula of 6% of current year pledges, the budgeted amount increases or decreases each year dependent upon the projected amount for current year pledges.

Faith Formation is expected to maintain at the same level as 2024 with no increases.

Church Vitality also has a slight decrease due to cutting a "block party" allocation of \$400 for 2025.

Church Growth will be maintained at the same rate as 2024. Any additional increases for spending will be covered by Major Projects grants as needed.

Deacons overall will have a decrease over 2024, due to honorariums for worship being reduced by \$900. We've also reduced the cost for baptisms and communions by \$1,000. We have had a request for funding for a new line-item Congregational Care at \$2,500 for 2025. This was not added to the 2025 budget, but will be addressed through a Major Projects grant for 2025.

Assigned Spending

These are expenses that are related to property and liability insurance along with emergency repairs to the building. Due to receiving funding from the trustees annually, the net effect on our budget is zero. In any given year, all or none of the emergency funds might be used. In years where all or part of emergency funds are not used, the unspent amount is transferred to a Reserve, Restore, Enhance Reserve that is used to maintain the building as approved by the Trustees. Major projects also have a net effect of zero on the budget, these are funds that are approved by the Trustees for specific expenses. The church incurs the expense and is then reimbursed for the expense up to the amount approved by Trustees.

Total Expenses

After reviewing 2024 and following up with committees/commissions, we are proposing the attached budget for 2025. This will be a tight year with the proposed spending for 2025. As a result, there are no staff increases included in the proposed budget.

Deficit

Considering all sources of funding and all anticipated expenses, the initial projected deficit is \$100,138 as of January 17, 2025. The deficit will decrease assuming we receive additional pledges for 2025. We currently have a prior year surplus of \$43,032 which will be used first to help cover our projected deficit for 2025. We also have a sustainable budget reserve of \$135,000 which is held in a non-budget account. We anticipate using \$57,106 to help cover the other portion of our deficit projected in 2025. It was established in 2021 because of the funding support provided to the church through the Paycheck Protection Program following COVID. The council established the reserve and oversees its use.

**First Congregational Church
2025 DRAFT Budget 1/15/2025 v3**

CONFIDENTIAL

	Actuals Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Budget Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Proposed Budget Jan 01, 2025 - Dec 31, 2025 No increase
Revenues			
Current pledge total as of 1/15/2025			\$690,018 less 2%
PLEDGES AND GIFTS			
Pledges-Current,Prior,New,Misc			
40000 Current Year Pledges	\$ 776,511.79	\$ 759,390.24	\$ 743,328.04
40005 Prior Year Pledges	\$ 6,186.80	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Total Pledges-Current,Prior,New,Misc	\$ 782,698.59	\$ 761,390.24	\$ 745,328.04
Unpledged and Other			
40010 Unpledged Church Support	\$ 55,695.89	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 45,000.00
Total Unpledged and Other	\$ 55,695.89	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 45,000.00
Total PLEDGES AND GIFTS	\$ 838,394.48	\$ 821,390.24	\$ 790,328.04
USE OF BUILDING & FACILITIES			
Contracted Tenants&MiscRentals			
40105 The Spirituality Network, Inc.	\$ 8,400.00	\$ 8,400.00	\$ 8,400.00
40111 Mosaic Program	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 6,500.00
40120 Miscellaneous Outside Rentals	\$ 3,665.00	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
New code Home school group	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,500.00
Total Contracted Tenants&MiscRentals	\$ 18,565.00	\$ 21,900.00	\$ 22,400.00
Weddings			
40125 Weddings	\$ 7,850.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
40127 Less: Weddings Expenses-Coord./ Ads	\$ (2,168.48)	\$ (3,000.00)	\$ (3,000.00)
Total Weddings	\$ 5,681.52	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
North Parking Lot			
40250 Parking Lot	\$ 74,304.00	\$ 74,304.00	\$ 75,456.00
40252 Less: Real Estate Property Taxes	\$ (23,065.64)	\$ (6,800.00)	\$ (7,000.00)
Total North Parking Lot	\$ 51,238.36	\$ 67,504.00	\$ 68,456.00
Total USE OF BUILDING & FACILITIES	\$ 75,484.88	\$ 91,404.00	\$ 93,856.00
OTHER REGULAR INCOME			
40255 Interest	\$ 24,774.15	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
40286 Gifts via The Columbus Foundation	\$ 21,491.64	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 21,500.00
40301 Fundraising Income	\$ 342.69	\$ 500.00	\$ -
Total OTHER REGULAR INCOME	\$ 46,608.48	\$ 32,500.00	\$ 41,500.00
TRUSTEES GENERAL SUPPORT			
40220 Trustees-Restricted Funds Pledge	\$ 25,042.13	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 24,000.00
Total TRUSTEES GENERAL SUPPORT	\$ 25,042.13	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 24,000.00
ASSIGNED FUNDING			
Trustees Assigned Funding			
40200 Trustees-Insurance Contribution	\$ 47,079.00	\$ 47,369.00	\$ 48,000.00
40225 Trustees-Emergency Repair Contribution	\$ 26,663.79	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Total Trustees Assigned Funding	\$ 73,742.79	\$ 77,369.00	\$ 78,000.00
Major Projects Funds			
40314 Major Projects-Office	\$ 32,090.59	\$ 33,700.00	\$ -
40316 Major Projects- Deacons	\$ 10,195.53	\$ 8,459.89	\$ -
Total Major Projects Funds	\$ 42,286.12	\$ 42,159.89	\$ -
Total ASSIGNED FUNDING	\$ 116,028.91	\$ 119,528.89	\$ 78,000.00
EXTRAORDINARY INCOME			
40260 Other Miscellaneous Income	\$ 1,006.99	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -
Total EXTRAORDINARY INCOME	\$ 1,006.99	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -
Total Revenues	\$ 1,102,565.87	\$ 1,094,323.13	\$ 1,027,684.04

**First Congregational Church
2025 DRAFT Budget 1/15/2025 v3**

CONFIDENTIAL

	Actuals Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Budget Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Proposed Budget Jan 01, 2025 - Dec 31, 2025 No increase
Expenses			
ADMINISTRATION			
STAFF COMPENSATION			
MINISTERS			
50200 Compensation-Ministers	\$ 163,308.39	\$ 162,273.63	\$ 146,959.92
50210 Business & Prof-Sr Minister	\$ 3,853.02	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
50211 Business & Prof-Assoc. Minister	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50215 Mileage Reimbursement-SrMin	\$ 3,005.54	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
50216 Mileage Reimbursement-AssocMin	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50217 Worker's Compensation-Ministers	\$ 439.90	\$ 460.69	\$ 417.22
50220 Insurance-Ministers	\$ 10,117.28	\$ 10,220.26	\$ 41,364.24
50225 Pension-Ministers	\$ 23,625.32	\$ 22,718.31	\$ 20,574.39
50230 FICA/Medicare-Ministers Offset	\$ 12,493.07	\$ 12,413.93	\$ 11,242.43
Total MINISTERS	\$ 216,842.52	\$ 217,586.82	\$ 227,058.20
STAFF - Interim/Intern/Sabbat			
50592 Pension-Interim/Intern/Sabbatical	\$ 328.13	\$ 2,692.32	\$ -
50950 Compensation-Interim/Intern/Sabbat	\$ 9,251.36	\$ 19,230.77	\$ -
50955 FICA/Medicare-Interim/Intern/Sabbat	\$ 179.30	\$ 1,471.15	\$ -
50960 Mileage Reimbursement-Interim/Intern	\$ 90.45	\$ 700.00	\$ -
50965 Worker's Compens.-Interim/Intern	\$ -	\$ 54.60	\$ -
50970 Insurance - Interim	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00	\$ -
50966 Bus. Prof.Business Expenses - Interim	\$ 3,591.69	\$ -	\$ -
Total STAFF - Interim/Intern/Sabbat	\$ 13,440.93	\$ 26,648.84	\$ -
STAFF - Office			
50235 Compensation-Office	\$ 167,255.05	\$ 163,906.16	\$ 179,826.32
50240 FICA/Medicare-Office	\$ 9,048.84	\$ 9,259.34	\$ 13,006.32
50245 Business Professional-Office Mgr	\$ -	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
50246 Business Professional-Business Adm	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 200.00
Business Professional-Communication			\$ 200.00
50250 Mileage Reimb-Office	\$ 230.70	\$ 200.00	\$ 300.00
50255 Workers' Compensation-Office	\$ 545.10	\$ 363.02	\$ 510.53
50260 Insurance-Office	\$ 32,803.65	\$ 34,196.02	\$ 50,767.70
50265 Pension-Office	\$ 7,666.31	\$ 8,519.85	\$ 11,113.02
Total STAFF - Office	\$ 217,549.65	\$ 217,144.39	\$ 256,123.89
STAFF - House & Grounds			
50000 Compensation-H & G	\$ 84,028.49	\$ 90,311.25	\$ 98,988.48
50010 FICA/Medicare-H & G	\$ 6,266.46	\$ 6,559.05	\$ 7,572.62
50013 Mileage Reimbursement-H & G	\$ 229.64	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50015 Business Professional-H & G	\$ 250.00	\$ 850.00	\$ -
50020 Workers' Compensation-H & G	\$ 697.85	\$ 1,363.16	\$ 1,494.13
50025 Insurance-H & G	\$ 22,675.89	\$ 22,084.41	\$ -
50030 Pension-H & G	\$ 2,800.64	\$ 4,645.64	\$ 3,278.35
Total STAFF - House & Grounds	\$ 116,948.97	\$ 126,313.51	\$ 111,833.58
STAFF - Music			
50385 Compensation Music	\$ 116,434.66	\$ 117,427.02	\$ 117,596.00
50390 FICA/Medicare-Music	\$ 8,519.32	\$ 8,983.17	\$ 8,996.09
50395 Business Professional-Music	\$ -	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
50400 Mileage Reimbursements-Music	\$ -	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00
50405 Workers' Comp-Music	\$ 224.86	\$ 333.36	\$ 333.84
50410 Insurance-Music	\$ 11,777.89	\$ 12,053.63	\$ 12,738.12

**First Congregational Church
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	Actuals Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Budget Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Proposed Budget Jan 01, 2025 - Dec 31, 2025 No increase
50415 Pension-Music	\$ 6,712.49	\$ 7,398.00	\$ 7,416.00
Total STAFF - Music	\$ 143,669.22	\$ 147,795.18	\$ 148,680.05
STAFF -Faith Formation			
50530 Compensation-Faith Formation	\$ 19,382.00	\$ 40,013.08	\$ 38,731.36
50535 FICA/Medicare-Faith Formation	\$ 1,456.15	\$ 3,061.00	\$ 2,512.53
50540 Business Professional-Faith Formation	\$ 10.15	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
50550 Mileage Reimbursements-Faith Formation	\$ 21.44	\$ -	\$ -
50555 Workers' Comp-Faith Formation	\$ 31.28	\$ 113.60	\$ 109.96
50560 Insurance-Faith Formation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,887.86
50565 Pension-Faith Formation	\$ -	\$ 1,625.00	\$ 1,560.00
Total STAFF -Faith Formation	\$ 20,901.02	\$ 45,112.68	\$ 49,101.71
STAFF - Bonus			
50980 Staff Bonus	\$ 11,441.80	\$ 11,460.73	\$ -
Total STAFF - Bonus	\$ 11,441.80	\$ 11,460.73	\$ -
Total STAFF COMPENSATION	\$ 740,794.11	\$ 792,062.15	\$ 792,797.43
OFFICE			
Equipment And Service			
50275 Computer Hardware	\$ 3,539.97	\$ 4,000.00	\$ -
50276 Computer Maintenance & Software	\$ 22,908.70	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 19,000.00
50290 Office Service Contract	\$ 8,787.25	\$ 10,900.00	\$ 9,000.00
50305 Postage	\$ 2,155.79	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 2,200.00
50310 Telephone	\$ 4,525.26	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 4,600.00
50315 Internet	\$ 2,449.78	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,500.00
50839 Website Maintenance	\$ 140.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 500.00
Total Equipment And Service	\$ 44,506.75	\$ 43,200.00	\$ 37,800.00
Office Supplies			
50294 Paper-Office	\$ 4,274.40	\$ 3,700.00	\$ 4,300.00
50296 Miscellaneous Supplies	\$ 2,108.20	\$ 750.00	\$ 1,000.00
50297 Toner	\$ 1,718.17	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,700.00
Total Office Supplies	\$ 8,100.77	\$ 4,950.00	\$ 7,000.00
Other Expenses			
50355 Payroll Service	\$ 2,586.76	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 3,000.00
50360 Bank/Broker Charges & Fees	\$ 7,438.44	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 7,500.00
50365 Dues & Subscriptions	\$ 834.90	\$ 500.00	\$ 800.00
50374 Staff Retreat	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
New Number Staff Recognitions			\$ 1,000.00
50375 Misc. /Volunteer Expens	\$ 13.42	\$ -	\$ -
50771 Meetings/Committee Costs	\$ 155.50	\$ 650.00	\$ 500.00
Total Other Expenses	\$ 11,529.02	\$ 10,750.00	\$ 13,300.00
Total OFFICE	\$ 64,136.54	\$ 58,900.00	\$ 58,100.00
Total ADMINISTRATION	\$ 804,930.65	\$ 850,962.15	\$ 850,897.43
HOUSE & GROUNDS			
Utilities			
50040 Electric	\$ 31,549.07	\$ 34,000.00	\$ 33,800.00
50045 Gas	\$ 18,207.95	\$ 23,000.00	\$ 23,000.00
50050 Water & Sewer	\$ 7,385.36	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 7,200.00
Total Utilities	\$ 57,142.38	\$ 64,000.00	\$ 64,000.00
Maintenance & Repairs			
50058 Parts & Supplies - Electric	\$ 3,183.69	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50060 Parts & Supplies - Grounds	\$ 340.94	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00

**First Congregational Church
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	Actuals Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Budget Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Proposed Budget Jan 01, 2025 - Dec 31, 2025 No increase
50061 Parts & Supplies - HVAC	\$ 1,199.40	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
50062 Parts & Supplies - Plumbing	\$ 1,313.08	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50065 Parts & Supplies - Other	\$ 986.97	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00
50066 Outside Vendors - Electric	\$ 1,789.99	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50067 Outside Vendors - Elevator	\$ -	\$ 900.00	\$ 900.00
50068 Parts & Supplies - Paint	\$ 41.58	\$ -	\$ -
50069 Outside Vendors - HVAC	\$ 1,809.18	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,400.00
50070 Outside Vendors - M & R Other	\$ 2,593.46	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
50071 Outside Vendors - Plumbing	\$ 465.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50072 Outside Vendors - Roof/Gutters	\$ 2,435.66	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
50073 Outside Vendors-Painting	\$ 7,831.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
50074 Outside Vendors - Cleaning	\$ 1,706.00	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 1,700.00
50075 Miscellaneous	\$ (163.76)	\$ -	\$ -
New account plastering	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Maintenance & Repairs	\$ 25,532.19	\$ 18,200.00	\$ 18,200.00
Operating Supplies			
50090 Paper Towels & Bathroom Supplies	\$ 1,324.63	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00
50092 Light Bulbs	\$ 1,021.82	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50093 Trash Bags	\$ 859.13	\$ 300.00	\$ 500.00
50094 Kitchen Supplies	\$ 170.13	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
50095 Soap & Chemicals	\$ 1,390.12	\$ 850.00	\$ 850.00
50105 Gas & Oil	\$ 144.27	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
50117 Floor Finishing	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
50120 Others	\$ 538.02	\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00
Total Operating Supplies	\$ 6,948.12	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,200.00
Contract Services & Licenses			
50125 Security	\$ 9,255.00	\$ 5,200.00	\$ 5,200.00
50126 Security-Discovery District	\$ 6,496.00	\$ 6,800.00	\$ 6,800.00
50127 Alarm, Access & Fire Services	\$ 1,182.12	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
50128 Kitchen Hood Services	\$ 635.68	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50130 Snow Removal	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
50135 Trash Removal	\$ 2,914.50	\$ 2,900.00	\$ 3,000.00
50140 Mops & Mats	\$ 1,421.10	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
50150 Boiler Chemical Services	\$ 487.85	\$ 900.00	\$ 900.00
50151 Wastewater Treatment Services	\$ 1,715.27	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
50152 Air Compressor Service	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50155 Pest Control	\$ 1,069.50	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50157 HVAC Services	\$ 2,826.00	\$ 3,700.00	\$ 3,700.00
50158 Elevator Services	\$ 2,808.00	\$ 2,800.00	\$ 2,800.00
50175 Licenses /Permits/Inspections	\$ 600.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00
Total Contract Services & Licenses	\$ 31,411.02	\$ 32,500.00	\$ 32,600.00
Durable Goods			
50180 Furniture, furnishings & Equipment	\$ 325.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50181 Tools & Maint. Equipment	\$ 571.08	\$ 800.00	\$ 800.00
Total Durable Goods	\$ 896.08	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,800.00
Total HOUSE & GROUNDS	\$ 121,929.79	\$ 122,500.00	\$ 122,800.00

**First Congregational Church
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	Actuals Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Budget Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Proposed Budget Jan 01, 2025 - Dec 31, 2025 No increase
MUSIC, ARTS, & HERITAGE			
MUSIC			
50429 Early Service Musician	\$ 2,700.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 2,500.00
50430 Vacation Substitutes	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 5,100.00	\$ 4,000.00
50435 Piano Maintenance	\$ 710.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,000.00
50457 Printed Music: Choirs	\$ 2,256.46	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 2,000.00
50460 Materials & Supplies	\$ 2,250.73	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 2,500.00
Total MUSIC	\$ 11,517.19	\$ 13,400.00	\$ 12,000.00
ARTS & HERITAGE			
50470 Memberships	\$ 306.88	\$ -	\$ -
50490 Archives	\$ 492.61	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Total ARTS & HERITAGE	\$ 799.49	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Total MUSIC, ARTS, & HERITAGE	\$ 12,316.68	\$ 13,700.00	\$ 12,300.00
JUSTICE & MERCY			
50500 UCC - OCWM - Set Distribution	\$ 46,590.63	\$ 45,563.41	\$ 44,599.68
50505 CUE Seminaries	\$ 400.00	\$ 400.00	\$ 400.00
50525 B.R.E.A.D.	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Total JUSTICE & MERCY	\$ 47,490.63	\$ 46,463.41	\$ 45,499.68
FAITH FORMATION			
CHILDREN'S EDUCATION			
Church School			
50575 Curriculum	\$ 1,644.99	\$ 925.00	\$ 925.00
50580 Teacher Resources & Training	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50585 Class Material & Supplies	\$ 169.05	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Total Church School	\$ 1,814.04	\$ 1,725.00	\$ 1,725.00
Programs			
50625 New Baby	\$ 48.34	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00
50630 Christmas Activities	\$ 205.66	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
50650 Misc. Supplies	\$ 378.01	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
57000 Lenten Materials (all ages)	\$ 81.69	\$ -	\$ -
Total Programs	\$ 713.70	\$ 850.00	\$ 850.00
Total CHILDREN'S EDUCATION	\$ 2,527.74	\$ 2,575.00	\$ 2,575.00
YOUTH AND PRE-TEEN			
Youth Program and Projects			
50700 Program And Curriculum	\$ 1,135.61	\$ 925.00	\$ 925.00
50704 Graduation Gifts	\$ 240.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
50710 Outings And Projects	\$ 448.42	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50726 Denominational Youth Events	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50728 Website Maintenance	\$ 40.00	\$ -	\$ -
Total Youth Program and Projects	\$ 1,864.03	\$ 2,125.00	\$ 2,125.00
Confirmation			
50715 Confirmation	\$ 498.33	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00
Total Confirmation	\$ 498.33	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00
Pre-teen			
50703 Program And Curriculum	\$ 2,176.10	\$ 925.00	\$ 925.00
50707 Outings And Projects	\$ 276.42	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50711 Denominational Youth Events	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50713 Mission Projects	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Total Pre-teen	\$ 2,452.52	\$ 2,425.00	\$ 2,425.00
Total YOUTH AND PRE-TEEN	\$ 4,814.88	\$ 5,150.00	\$ 5,150.00

**First Congregational Church
2025 DRAFT Budget 1/15/2025 v3**

CONFIDENTIAL

	Actuals Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Budget Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Proposed Budget Jan 01, 2025 - Dec 31, 2025 No increase
ADULT FAITH FORMATION			
Program			
50665 Materials And Curriculum	\$ 333.06	\$ 925.00	\$ 925.00
Total Program	\$ 333.06	\$ 925.00	\$ 925.00
Total ADULT FAITH FORMATION	\$ 333.06	\$ 925.00	\$ 925.00
Total FAITH FORMATION	\$ 7,675.68	\$ 8,650.00	\$ 8,650.00
CHURCH VITALITY			
Retreats			
50755 Spring Retreat	\$ 192.60	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
Total Retreats	\$ 192.60	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
Special Programs & Events			
50770 Fellowship Hour/Dinners	\$ 849.25	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
50775 Easter Brunch	\$ 169.84	\$ 400.00	\$ 400.00
50780 Block Party	\$ -	\$ 400.00	\$ -
50783 Lay Leader Award & Fellowship	\$ 189.68	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00
50795 Christmas Dinner	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
50800 Planned Special Events	\$ 285.42	\$ 425.00	\$ 425.00
50807 Hanging of the Greens	\$ 188.89	\$ 150.00	\$ 150.00
50810 Fellowship Beverages	\$ 303.60	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00
Total Special Programs & Events	\$ 2,286.68	\$ 3,375.00	\$ 2,975.00
Total CHURCH VITALITY	\$ 2,479.28	\$ 3,575.00	\$ 3,175.00
CHURCH GROWTH & STEWARDSHIP			
50815 Advertising	\$ 948.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
50820 New Member Committee	\$ 445.63	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
50838 Church Growth Events	\$ 24.99	\$ -	\$ -
50350 Stewardship	\$ 223.19	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Total CHURCH GROWTH	\$ 1,641.81	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
DEACONS			
50840 General Fund & Supplies	\$ 503.11	\$ 900.00	\$ 900.00
50845 Honorariums for Worship	\$ 2,357.77	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 900.00
50855 Stephen Ministry	\$ 1,502.37	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
50866 Baptisms & Communion	\$ 75.96	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 200.00
Total DEACONS	\$ 4,439.21	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 3,500.00
ASSIGNED SPENDING			
Trustees Funded			
Trustees-Property Insurance			
50055 General Liability Insurance	\$ 47,079.00	\$ 47,369.00	\$ 48,000.00
Total Trustees-Property Insurance	\$ 47,079.00	\$ 47,369.00	\$ 48,000.00
Trustees-Emergency Repairs			
50192 Emergency Repairs Trustees Plumbing	\$ 973.00	\$ -	\$ -
50193 Emergency Repairs Trustees Roof/Gutter	\$ 13,863.18	\$ -	\$ -
50196 Emergency Repairs Trustees Approved	\$ 11,827.61	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Total Trustees-Emergency Repairs	\$ 26,663.79	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Total Trustees Funded	\$ 73,742.79	\$ 77,369.00	\$ 78,000.00
Major Projects Funded			
50372 Major Projects - Office	\$ 32,090.59	\$ 33,700.00	\$ -
70004 Major Projects - Deacons	\$ 10,195.53	\$ 8,459.89	\$ -
Total Major Projects Funded	\$ 42,286.12	\$ 42,159.89	\$ -
Total ASSIGNED SPENDING	\$ 116,028.91	\$ 119,528.89	\$ 78,000.00
Total Expenses	\$ 1,118,932.64	\$ 1,173,779.45	\$ 1,127,822.11

**First Congregational Church
2025 DRAFT Budget 1/15/2025 v3**

CONFIDENTIAL

	Actuals Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Budget Jan 01, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024	Proposed Budget Jan 01, 2025 - Dec 31, 2025 No increase
Net Total with actual pledged amounts received	\$ (16,366.77)	\$ (79,456.32)	\$ (100,138.07)
2024 Carry over			\$ 43,031.89
Sustainable Budget Reserve Grant			\$ 57,106.18
adjusted total			\$ (0.00)

Year End 2024 Notes to Fiscal Reports
Statement of Activities - Year Ending December 31, 2024

December Income

Pledge and Unpledged Income

- We ended the year with \$17,122 above our budget Pledge projections for 2024. We budgeted \$759,390 for 2024, our actuals received were \$776,512 for the year.
- Prior year pledges finished the year better than we anticipated. We budgeted \$2,000 for the year based on commitments from members, as of this point, we are over budget by \$4,187 year to date. Just a reminder, these funds are from members who could not finish their 2023 pledge and let us know that they would continue paying in 2024.
- Unpledged revenue was budgeted at \$60,000. We ended the year (\$4,304) under budget.
- Total Pledge/Unpledged Revenue was over budget by \$17,004.

Building Rentals and Wedding Income

- All regular monthly rental income vendors are current.
- We set a higher revenue goal for miscellaneous building rentals in 2024, but we did not hit our goal by \$3,335.
- The year will end with a surplus in wedding income. Overall wedding income surpassed our budget by \$2,850 for the year. Good news, we already have weddings scheduled for 2025. Our expenses for wedding coverage came in under budget by \$832.
- Overall, rental income in total is under budget by \$15,919 year to date. However, this was the result of perceived errors in property valuation reassessment which resulted in Property Tax charges exceeding budget by \$16,266. Tom Worley represented the church in filing an appeal and subsequent hearing in which First Church prevailed. We should receive a refund in 2025.

Other Regular Income, Extraordinary Income, Trustees General Support and Trustees Assigned Funding

- Interest income continues to be a bright spot for the year providing \$24,774 in passive income for the church. This was \$12,774 over what we projected for the year.
- Overall, our actual revenues received throughout the year were \$1,102,566 vs. a budget projection of \$1,094,323, providing an overage of \$8,243 in revenue for 2024.

December Expenses

Staffing and Benefits

- Overall staffing year to date is lower than budgeted by \$51,268. Again, please note this is due to positions being vacant most of the year, along with savings from other staffing categories.

Equipment and Service Expenses/Office Supplies/Other Expenses

- Computer maintenance and software ended the year over budget by \$3,909 year to date.
- We have a \$460 savings on computer hardware.
- Office service contract is under budget by \$2,113 year to date. This cost is the weekly printing or worship materials for the 9am and 11am services weekly along with concert and any other program needs.
- Office supplies in total were over budget by \$3,151.
- Postage was over due to the postal service raising rates during the year, our overage is \$456.
- Telephone costs are over budget due to a new service agreement and software upgrades. We are over budget by \$925.

- Internet and website maintenance are under budget by a total of \$1,410.
- Payroll services are over budget due to adding a new timekeeping system for staff. We are over \$487.
- Bank/broker fees are also over budget by \$438. These are fees that members help cover when using credit, debit and ACH transfers.
- Meeting costs have a savings of \$495 year to date.
- Total Office Expenses are under budget by \$5,237 YTD.

House and Grounds

- We ended the year with \$6,858 in utility savings from the budget.
- Maintenance and repairs are over budget by \$7,332, there were a number of emergencies and major projects that needed taken care of during the year.
- Operating supplies ended up over budget by \$948.
- Contract services are under budget by \$1,089.
- Durable goods are lower than the budget by \$904.
- Overall H&G is below budget year to date by \$570.

Music, Arts and Heritage

- Music and Arts and Heritage is under budget by \$1,383.

Justice and Mercy

- Overall OCWM was close to our budget. Reminder, we estimate this amount based on our current year's pledge total. If we receive more pledges than anticipated, then we pay a higher contribution amount based on actual current year pledging. If current year pledges are lower than anticipated, we would pay a lower amount again, based on actual current year pledges received each year. Our annual contribution is based on 6% of our actual current year pledged received as of December 31. In 2024 we received \$17,122 in additional pledge revenue which then increased our distribution to OCWM by \$1,027 for 2024, thus causing an overage within this budget category.

Education – Youth and Adult

- We are under budget by \$974.

Church Vitality, Growth and Deacons

- Church Vitality is \$1,096 under budget.
- Church Growth is \$1,081 under budget.
- Deacons is \$961 under budget.

Overall, we expected to have a year-end deficit of \$79,456 for the year. We ended the year with a deficit of \$16,367.

The First Congregational Church
Summary of Restricted Net Assets YTD

Date Range: Jan 1st 2024 - Dec 31st 2024 | *Inactive Account | Includes Open Transactions

Accounts	Beginning Balance	Income	Expense	Ending Balance
Restricted Net Assets				
Missions				
80000 Bethlehem On Broad Street-Church	24,236.21	14,145.79	21,375.09	17,006.91
80002 Give Power	0.00	1,798.62	1,798.62	0.00
80003 BREAD	0.00	7,647.68	7,647.68	0.00
80005 Catalyst Project	225.17	0.00	0.00	225.17
80006 Childrens Defense Fund	0.00	1,313.00	1,313.00	0.00
80007 Jewish Family Services	0.00	2,103.67	2,103.67	0.00
80010 Freedom a La Cart	0.00	1,610.76	1,610.76	0.00
80013 Green Columbus	0.00	1,090.22	1,090.22	0.00
80014 World Central Kitchen	0.00	1,998.00	1,998.00	0.00
80018 Ukrainian Culture Association of Ohio	0.00	330.00	330.00	0.00
80024 Columbus Pride	616.06	772.00	1,245.17	142.89
80028 Bikes for All People	0.00	651.00	651.00	0.00
80029 Sandy Hook Promise	0.00	452.00	452.00	0.00
80035 Downtowners	0.00	200.00	200.00	0.00
80037 Childcare Wonderland	3,263.74	450.00	2,687.72	1,026.02
80038 Equal Justice	0.00	1,519.92	1,519.92	0.00
80040 Faith Mission Fund	5,438.14	200.00	2,296.52	3,341.62
80042 Faith In Public Life	0.00	936.00	936.00	0.00
80043 OCC-Anti Racism Ministry	0.00	1,151.00	1,151.00	0.00
80045 Gladden Community House Fund	0.00	1,407.78	1,407.78	0.00
80048 Congregational Care Ministry	0.00	10.00	0.00	10.00
80050 Good Samaritan	14,078.29	32,722.27	32,136.99	14,663.57
80056 Columbus Relief	0.00	1,098.52	1,098.52	0.00
80063 Broad Street UMC Shelter	0.00	26.36	26.36	0.00
80066 Laundry Love	1,815.12	5,003.04	5,262.69	1,555.47
80069 Kaleidoscope	0.00	1,705.76	1,705.76	0.00
80097 Sacred Earth	2,846.87	1,391.00	1,574.36	2,663.51
80127 YWCA - Family Center	0.00	1,263.17	1,263.17	0.00
80135 Other Missions	668.07	877.07	1,114.14	431.00
80144 Care-Card Ministry	294.55	200.00	0.00	494.55
80218 Unsheltered Support	787.30	3,242.72	1,548.44	2,481.58
80222 Mid Ohio Workers Association	0.00	3,148.00	3,098.00	50.00
80503 Vitality Events	0.00	4,199.00	1,311.66	2,887.34
83999 Amethyst House	0.00	152.00	152.00	0.00
84007 Huckleberry House	0.00	1,367.00	1,367.00	0.00
84014 Broad Street Food Pantry	0.00	1,969.68	1,970.36	(0.68)
*84017 National Alliance on Mental Health	0.00	644.00	644.00	0.00
84019 NAMI Franklin County	0.00	664.00	664.00	0.00
84023 Celebrate One	0.00	1,156.51	1,156.51	0.00
84027 Pathway Clubhouse	0.00	1,067.02	1,067.02	0.00
84029 Largest Table	1,623.19	2,504.84	3,092.30	1,035.73
84031 Immokalee Workers	0.00	1,254.63	1,254.63	0.00
84033 Horizon Prison Ministry	0.00	1,089.70	1,089.70	0.00
84034 Equitas Health	0.00	976.73	976.73	0.00
84041 MLK Kitchen for the Poor	0.00	1,023.24	1,023.24	0.00
84042 Sanctuary Nights	0.00	3,201.62	3,201.62	0.00
84043 Just Bearing Hope	0.00	1,111.39	1,111.39	0.00
UCC Missions				
80011 UCC-CRIS	0.00	2,498.54	2,498.54	0.00

Accounts	Beginning Balance	Income	Expense	Ending Balance
80025 UCC CUE Fund	0.00	200.00	200.00	0.00
80030 UCC-Church World Service	0.00	5,037.14	5,037.14	0.00
80085 UCC-Neighbors in Need	0.00	3,134.00	3,134.00	0.00
80090 UCC-Deep Griha-Onawales	0.00	1,349.25	1,349.25	0.00
80095 UCC-One Great Hour Of Sharing	0.00	8,597.35	8,597.35	0.00
80100 UCC-Strengthen the Church	0.00	955.08	955.08	0.00
80130 UCC-Christmas Fund	0.00	6,015.75	6,015.75	0.00
80143 UCC-O.C.W.M Donations	0.00	200.00	200.00	0.00
Total UCC Missions	0.00	27,987.11	27,987.11	0.00
Total Missions	55,892.71	140,833.82	148,711.85	48,014.68
Faith Formation-Nonbudget				
80140 First Serves	597.86	3,693.89	2,598.56	1,693.19
80160 Camp Scholarships	410.00	3,984.50	3,984.50	410.00
80250 Youth Curr.	125.00	0.00	0.00	125.00
80295 Youth Mission Projects	9,458.54	0.00	0.00	9,458.54
80304 Faith Formation Fund-Church	9.00	135.00	164.33	(20.33)
80370 Adult Library	0.00	1,300.00	336.15	963.85
Total Faith Formation-Nonbudget	10,600.40	9,113.39	7,083.54	12,630.25
Music-Nonbudget				
80170 Concert Fund	55,494.72	57,026.25	40,816.99	71,703.98
80190 Instruments for Worship	3,000.00	33,600.00	30,770.47	5,829.53
80210 Music Special Projects	2,548.90	500.00	0.00	3,048.90
80530 Choir Funds	3,693.63	0.00	0.00	3,693.63
80607 Harpsichord Project	6,472.00	327.00	154.00	6,645.00
80801 Choral Music Funds	1,148.29	0.00	0.00	1,148.29
80802 Anthem Donations-Music	20.00	0.00	0.00	20.00
80803 Choir Tour Fundraising	996.58	0.00	0.00	996.58
80804 Choir Recordings	1,104.28	0.00	0.00	1,104.28
80805 Choir Tour Payments	1,183.59	0.00	0.00	1,183.59
80806 Choir Robes	22.51	0.00	0.00	22.51
80807 Teen Choir Donations	20.00	0.00	0.00	20.00
Total Music-Nonbudget	75,704.50	91,453.25	71,741.46	95,416.29
Other-NonBudget				
80027 Holy Lands Trip	23,267.50	1,700.00	28,004.03	(3,036.53)
80039 Senior Minister Retirement Party	0.00	43,932.64	43,932.64	0.00
80075 Congregational Care Team	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
80077 Spring Retreat	0.00	3,231.99	3,231.99	0.00
80150 Staff Gift	0.00	18,944.00	18,424.00	520.00
80165 Computer Fund	0.38	0.00	0.00	0.38
80166 H & G Special Gift	5,218.89	6,321.49	654.87	10,885.51
80173 Deacon Fund-Bereavement	4,299.77	2,294.43	1,975.03	4,619.17
80175 Flower Fund	5,653.94	6,639.98	6,710.95	5,582.97
80215 Celebration & Remembrance	1,130.70	7,187.00	6,380.00	1,937.70
80220 Schumacher Fund	4,171.17	25,000.00	25,285.26	3,885.91
80230 Stephen Ministers	99.85	179.80	134.18	145.47
80240 Gladden Lecture	1,514.44	8,125.00	6,942.59	2,696.85
80245 Major Projects Fund-ColS Foundation	7,058.57	35,646.78	41,402.40	1,302.95
80300 Misc. Non Budget	5,933.27	30,089.57	30,153.52	5,869.32
80301 H & G Special Projects	10,666.64	0.00	0.00	10,666.64
80505 Staff Retreat Fund	66.14	0.00	0.00	66.14
80510 Kitchen Fund	50.00	0.00	0.00	50.00
80516 Social Justice Stained Glass Window	5,025.35	7,080.00	5,500.00	6,605.35
80535 Spec. Sanctuary Events-Tues@1st	2,502.49	0.00	0.00	2,502.49
80540 Special Art Projects	3,294.43	0.00	0.00	3,294.43
80610 Christmas Ornaments	(658.46)	215.00	0.00	(443.46)
80918 Historic Restoration Fund	1,762.92	765.00	0.00	2,527.92

Accounts	Beginning Balance	Income	Expense	Ending Balance
80920 Sustainable Budget Reserve	135,713.70	0.00	0.00	135,713.70
Total Other-NonBudget	216,871.69	197,352.68	218,731.46	195,492.91
Site Plan Project				
80902 Memorial Garden	14,855.24	0.00	0.00	14,855.24
Gladden Park				
80903 Social Justice Park	478,021.49	33,543.58	70,801.83	440,763.24
Total Gladden Park	478,021.49	33,543.58	70,801.83	440,763.24
Total Site Plan Project	492,876.73	33,543.58	70,801.83	455,618.48
Capital Projects				
80310 Parking Lot North - Maintenance	3,131.89	0.00	629.28	2,502.61
80386 Preservation Grant Project	0.00	0.00	37.78	(37.78)
80565 Sacristy	1,402.06	0.00	0.00	1,402.06
80601 Anderson Fund-Donations	113.05	0.00	0.00	113.05
Total Capital Projects	4,647.00	0.00	667.06	3,979.94
West Lot & Capital Campaign				
Capital Campaign Donations				
80585 Capital Campaign-Gifts & Donation	2,755,163.15	906.38	132.44	2,755,937.09
80700 Capital Campaign-Trustees	500,000.00	0.00	0.00	500,000.00
Total Capital Campaign Donations	3,255,163.15	906.38	132.44	3,255,937.09
Capital Campaign Expenses				
80360 Expenses-Capital Campaign	(103,693.79)	0.00	0.00	(103,693.79)
80365 Building-Capital Campaign Expenses	(740,090.00)	0.00	0.00	(740,090.00)
80375 Missions-Capital Campaign Expenses	(221,510.00)	0.00	0.00	(221,510.00)
80385 Property-Capital Campaign Expenses	(1,768,034.67)	30,000.00	51,998.98	(1,790,033.65)
Total Capital Campaign Expenses	(2,833,328.46)	30,000.00	51,998.98	(2,855,327.44)
West Parking Lot				
80311 Parking Lot West-Expenses	(2,000,329.49)	725.70	56,992.70	(2,056,596.49)
80701 Parking Lot West-Revenue	1,309,642.96	95,760.00	0.00	1,405,402.96
Total West Parking Lot	(690,686.53)	96,485.70	56,992.70	(651,193.53)
Total West Lot & Capital Campaign	(268,851.84)	127,392.08	109,124.12	(250,583.88)
Trustee Accounts				
80080 Trustees-Mission Endowment	0.00	10,950.00	10,950.00	0.00
80151 Trustees-Building Endowment	7,600.00	5,105.00	12,705.00	0.00
80163 Trustees-Restore, Repair Reserve	5,300.00	9,478.29	14,778.29	0.00
80180 Trustees-Alma Keeler Fund	0.00	11,971.48	11,971.48	0.00
80195 Trustees-MacNevin Organ Fund	2,129.29	9,663.90	4,511.25	7,281.94
80305 Trustees-Education Endowment Fund	0.00	527.19	527.19	0.00
80399 Trustees-Knight Perry Fund	0.00	7,431.70	7,431.70	0.00
80520 Trustees-Barnard Music Fund	0.00	11,368.55	11,368.55	0.00
80522 Trustees-Music, Art, Heritage Endow	0.00	2,415.00	2,415.00	0.00
80523 Trustees-Jackie Owen Fund	0.00	10,996.48	10,996.48	0.00
80531 Trustees-McElroy Wright Fund	0.00	1.35	1.35	0.00
80600 Trustees-White Endowment	0.00	1,456.13	1,456.13	0.00
80604 Trustees-Starr-Wingfield Furnishing	(236.00)	726.00	490.00	0.00
80614 Trustees-Legacy Fund	(5,100.00)	27,997.83	22,897.83	0.00
80615 Trustees-Social Concerns Endowment	0.00	2,195.00	2,195.00	0.00
80619 Trustees-Organ Preservation Fund	10,468.27	13,285.91	6,449.52	17,304.66
80620 Trustees-Stained Glass Preservation	0.00	2,940.00	2,940.00	0.00
80623 Trustees-Gordon Playground	(142.00)	142.00	0.00	0.00
80624 Trustees-Johannes Landscape Maint F	0.00	3,024.13	3,024.13	0.00
80625 Trustees-Project 2020	(3,000.00)	73,802.50	70,802.50	0.00
Total Trustee Accounts	17,019.56	205,478.44	197,911.40	24,586.60
Total Restricted Net Assets	\$ 604,760.75	\$ 805,167.24	\$ 824,772.72	\$ 585,155.27

Minutes

First Congregational Church – United Church of Christ
Annual Meeting
January 28, 2024

- A. Meeting purpose:** ...to receive reports from Council and staff to conduct the business of the Congregation.
- B. Minutes:** The meeting was called to order at 11:20 a.m. by Moderator Greg Halbe.
- C. Determination of Quorum:** (Lynn Wallich). A quorum was recognized and reported to Greg Halbe.
- D. Opening Prayer** (Rev. D. Timothy C. Ahrens) ‘Prayer for a New Beginning’ by John O’Donohue from “To Bless the Space Between Us.”
- E. Review and approval of the minutes** from both congregational meetings in 2023 (Mr. Greg Halbe):
- MOTION to accept both sets of minutes by Sue Cook; seconded by Victor John. Unanimously approved.
- F. Report from Senior Minister** (Rev. Dr. Tim Ahrens)
Tim thanked each staff member for their hard work this year and praised their spirit of joy, their ability to show compassion and their actions that enrich us. He marked that this was his 25th congregational meeting at the church and noted the cornerstones of worship, evangelism, mission and stewardship remain unchanged. He thanked the membership for showing love for the surrounding community and providing a helping hand.
- G. Report from the Board of Deacons** (Martha Wilson)
The deacons did a remarkable job this year and the highlights include the restarting of the Stephen Ministry under the leadership of Gary Glover and the resumption of the 9 a.m. worship service in person that attracts families with young children.
- H. Report from the Board of Trustees** (Sue Cook, Chair)
Expressed thanks to those who support the trustees and the endowment funds.
The financial position is strong and at the end of 2023, the funds were valued at \$5,245,894.03 and showed a 9 percent increase in 2023. Endowment donations totaled \$9,251 and a \$5,100 donation from the estate of Charles Drummond. House and Grounds committee was thanked for their work replacing the windows in Parish Hall.
- I. Report from Washington Gladden Social Justice Park Board** (Tom Worley)
The fifth anniversary of the park was noted as was the fact that it is the first Social Justice Park in the nation. Slides illustrated the progress as the park was completed, with a special emphasis on the installation of the sculpture and the 43 trees surrounding the park. Funding for the park’s maintenance endowment held by the church has a balance of nearly \$500,000.
- J. Follow-up Report from Governance Task Force** (Steve Sterrett)
Proposed constitutional amendments adopted at the special congregational meeting in October go into effect at the conclusion of this annual meeting. Three amendments are still under consideration

by the council. The Task Force is pleased that recommendations on personnel policies, records retention policies and a building use policy are being implemented.

K. Report from Moderator (Greg Halbe)

Plans are underway for a new five-year plan as well as monthly reports on how the congregation will prepare, celebrate, and release with love Rev. Tim Ahrens to his next chapter. Finding a Faith Formation minister continues to be a high priority. Plans are underway for a search team for an interim minister as well as a team to plan the events leading up to the senior minister's retirement. Four dates were highlighted – the Spring Retreat, the BREAD Nehemiah Action, Legacy Sunday and Rev. Ahrens' celebration dinner on Oct. 19th. In closing, Halbe told the congregation he needs volunteer help, seeks their wisdom and shares his love for them.

L. Report from Treasurer (Ramona Moenter, Treasurer-elect, with Annette McCormick, Business Administrator)

Reports were given to explain the 2023 budget. The deficit of \$36 thousand was covered by the prior year's surplus and did not touch the sustainable reserve. This figure was much lower than the \$200,000 that was projected. In 2024, the budget is projecting a \$79 thousand deficit, which will only use \$20 thousand in sustainable budget reserve funds.

MOTION to approve the 2024 operating budget by Bruce Panek; seconded by Victor John. Discussion noted a request to fund the church growth needs and signage. Discussion also noted a comment that if 22 new pledging units made a pledge, then there would not be a deficit in 2024. Question was called and the budget was unanimously approved.

M. Report from Nominations (Sarah Reed)

MOTION to elect the slate of candidates as listed in the nominations report by Sarah Reed; seconded by Sheldon Taft. No nominations from the floor. Unanimously approved.

N. Closing Prayer (Rev. Joanna Samuelson)

O. Adjourn

MOTION to adjourn the 2024 annual meeting by Todd Cunningham; seconded by David Hogrefe. Unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 12:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Wilson
Council Secretary-elect