

First Presbyterian Church



Organized 1871

Twenty-third Annual Report 2023 – 2024

PREPARED AUGUST 2024

PREFACE

This report presents to the congregation a summary by the church leadership of main events and committee activities that have taken place at First Presbyterian Church (FPC), Durham, during the June 1, 2023 - May 31, 2024 year.

This is the twenty-third annual report distributed to church members since approval by the Session (February 6, 2000) of a new organizational plan that charged the church's leadership with this task.

The clergy and current active officers hope that you will find this report informative. We also welcome your comments about its content and suggestions for future reports. Together we could improve this document to serve in years to come as a concise and accurate record of our congregational life and the actions of the Diaconate and the Session.

The Staff (June 1, 2023-May 31, 2024)

| | |
|---|---|
| Ministers: | All the Members of the Congregation |
| Pastor/Head of Staff: | Mindy Douglas |
| Designated Associate Pastor: | Esther Hethcox |
| Associate Pastor: | Mitzi Leshner-Thomas (medical leave) |
| Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families: | John Weicher |
| Parish Associate: | Susan Dunlap |
| Parish Associate: | Amy Heit (through December 2023, Summer 2024) |
| Director of Children's Ministry: | Lenore Champion |
| Minister of Music: | Kathryn Parkins |
| Parish Administrator: | Valerie McMillian |
| Business Administrator: | Tom Bloom |
| Administrative Assistant: | Sybil King |
| Church Sexton: | Vernon Cooper |
| Sunday Sexton: | Omar Guess, Sr. |

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Mindy Douglas
Pastor/Head of Staff



Dear friends,

It is a privilege and a pleasure to share with you about our ministry together as First Presbyterian Church from June 2023-May 2024. I continue to be so grateful to be here with you as Pastor and Head of Staff and join with you in discipleship, community, and service to Durham and to the world. You serve and lead in so many ways! Some of you are deacons and elders. Some serve on committees that help us make decisions about the work we do here and for the community. You work to feed the hungry, care for the sick, welcome the refugee, provide for the poor, and advocate for change in policy locally and state-wide. You serve on local non-profit boards and give generously of your time and resources. You live out your faith in your lives at work, school, and home. First Presbyterian Church is a healthy, vibrant church full of people who seek to follow Jesus by caring for our neighbors. It is truly a joy to serve with you and I continue to learn from you all about what discipleship looks like on the ground. Thank you.

It is also a joy to serve on this staff. We have three people who serve on our administrative team. One is full-time – **Valerie McMillian**, our Parish Administrator, and the other two are part-time – **Tom Bloom**, our Business Administrator and **Sybil King**, our Administrative Assistant. In addition, **Vernon Cooper** serves as our full-time sexton. These four manage the day-to-day activities of the church during the week. Their gifts keep the inner workings of the church moving smoothly.

We also have a strong program staff, and these folks you will see on Sundays in addition to throughout the week.

Kathy Parkins, full-time Director of Music Ministries

Lenore Champion, part-time Director of Children's Ministries

And our pastoral team:

Esther Hethcox, full-time Designated Associate Pastor

John Weicher, full-time Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families

Susan Dunlap, part-time, Parish Associate (volunteer)

Amy Heit served as a part-time Parish Associate from June 2022-December 2023 and again while I was on sabbatical, from May-July 2024.

These staff members are a joy to work with. They bring their energy, intelligence, imagination, and love to their ministry every day and I am grateful to call them colleagues and friends.

We are, once again, preparing for **staff transitions** ahead in the next few years. Valerie McMillian plans to retire at the end of 2024 and Tom Bloom, Sybil King, and Kathy Parkins have also let me know that they are considering retirement in the next one-to-three years. In the spring of 2024, the Session approved the formation of an ad-hoc retirement committee. This committee will collaborate with our personnel committee to plan for and move through these retirements and the subsequent staffing transitions that will come as a result.

Esther is currently on our staff as a *designated* associate pastor. This was necessary so that we could get her in place quickly when our associate pastor Mitzi Leshner-Thomas took permanent disability following a diagnosis of a glioblastoma brain tumor in late 2021. We will, however, be going through a process in the fall of 2024 that will allow us to call Esther to a permanent associate pastor position. She has been a wonderful addition to our pastoral team!

The FPC personnel policy provides for a three-month sabbatical for full-time program staff. I took my **sabbatical** from May-July 2024. John will take his in 2025. While I was away, John and Esther took on additional leadership roles related to the Session. Seven guest preachers preached during this time. In addition, Amy Heit came back to help Esther and Susan with pastoral care while I was away.

First Presbyterian Church is alive and well. God is doing amazing things here through you all. Our worship of God is full of energy, life, meaning, and depth. Our adult, children, and youth faith formation classes are expanding. Summer youth programming is transformative for the youth involved. People of all ages are learning and growing in our faith together. Our ministries and social justice work involve increased numbers of members and friends of FPC. We gather for fellowship in many and diverse ways, building and strengthening relationships along the way. Our Durham neighbors and friends find a warm welcome here and quickly become an active part of our family of faith. We continue to work for racial, social, economic, environmental justice – and for affordable housing, expanded health care, equal pay, jobs, childcare, and an end to gun violence.

Financially, we are getting back on our feet after the pandemic and the impact of inflation on our individual and church budgets. You are a generous congregation, and your kindness and generosity allow the light of Christ to shine in the world in diverse and powerful ways.

We continue to look to a future in downtown Durham that is as vibrant and active tomorrow as it has been in the over 153 years that have passed. As east Durham grows and expands, we want to continue to serve those in deepest need around us. We want to welcome our neighbors who are seeking a church home where they can worship God, find community, and grow in service and love. Our renovation and expansion plans, on hold as we continue to raise funding to match the increased costs from inflation, will allow us to serve the needs of the Durham community around us in new and expanded ways. These changes will also enhance our ability to serve the FPC community God is growing here now.

God continues to call us to this place in downtown Durham and to ministries of peace, compassion, and justice. God continues to call us to be those who worship God, learn what it means to follow Jesus, serve the least and the lost among us, and live the love of Christ in the heart of Durham.

Friends, this we know, believe, and claim loudly together: Our God is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the **Creator** of all that is, seen and unseen. Our God is the **Incarnate Lord** of our lives who has redeemed us and set us free to love God and one another. Our God is the **Generative Spirit** that flows in and among us and will not disappear – will never disappear. Brick and mortar may fall to dust. Churches may close. People may say, “Where is your God?” But this we know, and this claim guides our lives of faith and service: Jesus is Lord. He has been Lord from the beginning. He will be Lord at the end. Even now, he is Lord.

May we follow Jesus as we bear his light of love and hope to the world.
Thanks be to God for God's ongoing call to First Presbyterian Church.

Gratefully your pastor and friend,
Mindy Douglas

Esther Hethcox

Designated Associate Pastor

Greetings, saints of FPC!

It is with a joyful and grateful heart that I reflect on a year of discipleship and love in this incredible community of faith. I invite you to read my reflections below, knowing that it is difficult to fully speak of all the components of my role. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out!



The Somethings

- The 20-30 something year olds of FPC. Hence, the Somethings!
- We have GROWN, y'all! The Somethings were a group of less than ten young adults scattered throughout the community, and in the last year we have seen a 900% increase in the life of this community. There are many reasons for this:
 - They have seen evidence of **your value and trust** in young adults. You called the youngest person yet to the role of Associate Pastor, the first openly queer person to be ordained as a Minister *and* only the second "first call" to be ordained here. You have shown you trust our discipleship and leadership! This is not only because of my representation on staff, but because of *your* discerning trust in the Holy Spirit.
 - A mentor asked me how I was "getting" this group to grow. My response is this: we have to **give them something the world can't**. They can have potlucks with friends; they can pray alone; they can volunteer on their own. But they can't have those things within one solitary friend group. Within the Somethings, they have fellowship, spirituality, and the invitation to justice work—all wrapped into one. Spirituality and fellowship feed us and empower us to go forth to carry the yoke of justice. They feast on something *different* in this community, and that difference is drawing them in by large numbers.
 - **God!** Most importantly, God is present in their kindness and humility, joy and energy, love and faith, hope and excitement. Thanks be to God for showing up in this group of folks.

- Because of the outstanding growth, I assembled a **Vision Team** of leaders from the Somethings to aid me in this ministry. They guide us in fellowship, spirituality and faith practices, and justice work in Durham. They are amazing!
- Follow us @**thefpcsomethings Instagram** account! This is an intentional space where we seek to show the vibrancy of this community.
- Not only do they give me joy and hope for the church, but they also have inspired me to cultivate a philosophy for young adult ministry within the scope of my own vocation. In January of 2024, four Somethings and I traveled to the PCUSA Manna Young Adult Conference at Montreat. We were all inspired. I heard PCUSA clergy say from the pulpit that YA ministry is a ministry of the church that has been ignored for many years. Until recent years, nothing was available for the age bracket of 20/30 something year olds. I am grateful to be their pastor as I discern what YA ministry looks like for FPC.

The Diaconate

- I continue to be grateful for the discipleship of our incredible deacons. Please see the individual reports later in this document for the following committees, submitted by their chairs/co-chairs:
 - Welcome & Belonging
 - Pastoral Care
 - Fellowship

Pastoral Care

- This is a hard one to report on—how do I sum up the honor of holding the stories of so many in my love and prayers? It is a gift to love and care for you, and I am grateful for the ways I carry this out in weekly parish visits, monthly meals with fellowship groups, hospital and hospice visits, funerals and baptisms. Thanks be to God for your trust and openness.

Worship

- Thank you for the opportunity to lead worship every week, and for your trust as I preach the uncomfortable gospel God puts on my heart.

Social Justice

- Among my work in the world, I participate in the following social justice ministries. I am sure I have forgotten some, but these are built into my routine:
- **Durham CAN (Congregations, Associations, Networks)**
 - I attend monthly clergy caucus, city council meetings and gatherings (not metro council).
- **DCIA (Durham Congregations In Action)**
 - I attend monthly meetings, de-escalation meetings and other events.
- **Antisemitism work**
 - Through DCIA (above), I attended an antisemitism training in September 2023 in Washington D.C. through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM)

where, with an multifaith group of lay people and clergy, we learned of the history of antisemitism and worked to think of ways our community can cultivate peace and dialogue. In February 2024, we hosted our project from this training, a traveling exhibit titled *Some Were Neighbors*, which explored the action and in action of non-Jewish folk during the holocaust. This exhibit was hosted by many churches in Durham, including our own fellowship hall!

- **Multifaith relations**
 - I continue my work with Judea Reform, Beth El Synagogue, Makom Synagogue as well as relations with the Bahai Community and Muslim community (at Duke).
- **Protests**
 - Mindy and I attended different protests during the year – walking with DPS teachers and staff and protesting for reproductive rights.
- **Pride Service**
 - I am grateful to have organized the first Pride service of FPC at the request of lay folk. This was a wonderful service, which brought glory to God’s love for all of us and encouraged us to move forward in our work of inclusivity and liberation.

As I finish this report, I am thinking of the prophet Isaiah—who said that instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress, instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle and in the desert a crocus will bloom. While the world and our lives may be a wilderness at times, God is clearly tilling the earth of First Presbyterian Church. Seeds are blooming into flowers, and hearts are brimming with Christ’s love. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you. I am forever grateful.

In Christ,
Esther Hethcox

John Weicher

Associate Pastor for Youth & Their Families



If last year was the one where it felt like things had settled, this year was the one where it felt like we began to grow. In youth ministry, some of the clearest signs of that are when new people come into the program, whether through a friend or not. Some examples:

- **Lainey** (12th) and **Kirbey** (8th) **Blackwood** came to our first youth group of the year, invited by their friend, **Maeve McClain-Huslage**. It was great to see Maeve again, after the pandemic, but the Blackwoods became vital parts of our group – Kirbey in the confirmation class and summer trips, Lainey as a Youth Sunday preacher, Youth Ministry Committee member and youth group regular.
- **Michael Baker** (7th) came in right at the end of last summer – his folks are friends with Lenore Champion. Michael joined us for Massanetta at the last minute, and then became a regular on Sunday nights and Sunday mornings.
- **Sam Brown** (11th) and his folks began worshipping with us in the fall. They didn't know anyone at FPC, but had tried out several churches, and once I was able to connect with Sam, he quickly found a home among us on Sunday mornings, evenings at youth group and on the high school mission trip.

When a youth comes to us through their youth friend, who is already a FPC member/regular, it means that FPCer is comfortable enough to share their faith community with their outside-of-church people. It's an endorsement of our ministry and our congregation. It also means the new person is more likely to come back, because they already have a pal. When a youth comes to us through their family friend, it means that the family itself is ready to try out our community and find a new church home. It also means that youth ministry is one of things attracting them to FPC – that youth ministry is a core part of our congregation. When a youth comes 'right off the street,' as it were, it means that we are embodying welcome and loving, honest community, even when we aren't trying to impress someone. All of these are to the good, and all of these are signs of growing into the congregation and youth ministry God calls us to be. We are certainly not perfect, and there are visitors who don't take root, but these are all good signs.

In Youth Ministry, Sunday night youth group continues to be the heartbeat of our program. To that, we added a retreat (Keep Awake at Massanetta, for HSers) along with our CROSS-service retreat, the Presbytery middle school retreat, and our beach retreat, now for sabbath and in March. Our theme for the year was *All Together Now*, drawing on the call for inclusion and unity in Galatians 3:28-29. This manifested in many ways, including a new closing ritual with motions – All Together Now / No Matter What / God Loves All. We added a new youth advisor, **Kati Ruark**, and said goodbye to **Lenore Champion** as an advisor. Kati joined **Brent Curtis**, **Parker Stiles**, **Margaret Derry** (spring only) and me.

Youth Sunday has blessedly become the thing that the most youth are involved in. Seniors *Lorenzo Mbugua* and *Lainey Blackwood* preached on Psalm 139:1-18 and Matthew 6:25-34, respectively. Joining them we had 13 liturgists, 7 ushers, 4 musicians and bulletin artist Mason Armstrong, totaling 26 youth participants in the service (*Ruby Gentithes* doubled up).

Our summer trip season has continued to grow as well, becoming the other high point of the year. We again had four experiences – high school mission trip (Appalachia Service Project to Breathitt County, KY), middle school mission trip (Charleston Youth Mission), high school youth conference (Montreat) and middle school youth conference (Massanetta). For the first time in my tenure, each of the four trips had a chunk of youth: 8, 6, 6 and 4, respectively, as well as a stellar set of adult leaders, all 6 of whom are not during-the-year youth advisors. We again partnered with Trinity Avenue Presbyterian (Durham) at Montreat (as well as on the CROSS retreat). Additionally, we continue to be a congregation that produces youth who are leaders in the denomination. This summer, Ruby Gentithes and Mary Ellis Merritt served as advocates at Massanetta, with Ruby being one of the lead advocates.

Other highlights included baking cookies and sending care packages to our collegians, queer theology and Bible study, exploring downtown Durham, doing Flour War with Trinity Avenue & Westminster PCs, and defeating The Somethings in kickball (which may have just become our new year-end tradition).

Transitioning to Christian education, we had a particularly fabulous confirmation class, led by *Heidi Biermann*, *Cris Rivera* and myself. We had 5 confirmands who threw themselves into the experience, theologically and socially. All 5 chose to be confirmed, with an array of beautiful statements, some of which are unlike any I've ever read. We also found a new home for our spring Statement of Faith retreat at Montreat.

In Christian education, the leadership of our elders – *Stephen Berry* and *Beth Stringfield* – and Director of Children's Ministry, *Lenore Champion*, has continued to help us live into our structural changes. We welcomed three new committee members. Three-person ministry teams coordinate each event, which allows us to do more and to share the load, so that Lenore and I, in particular, aren't the limiting agents. I refer you to our CE Committee report, but highlights included Trunk or Treat, the Christmas Pageant, Crafts & Conversation and MLK Day of Service. We continue to be lifted up by the spiritual gifts and dedication of our teams of faith formation teachers for children and youth.

Among our adults, our ongoing classes continue to thrive – Lectionary, Journeys and Meaning in the Middle. *Susan Dunlap* led a few different series on books of the Bible, which were well attended and wonderfully thoughtful. I am thankful for the leadership of *Kathy Krahenbuhl* and *Andrew Whiteman* in coordinating Faith & Community with me. Highlights included series on Housing &

Gentrification, Transgender Issues, Political Asylum Seekers and FPC University, in which members share about the intersection of their faith and occupation. *Willie Jennings* was a particularly wonderful McPherson Lecturer.

I write this last part every year, because every year it's true – FPC continues to have a wonderful, collegial, faithful, gifted and fun staff. *Mindy Douglas'* leadership is no small part of this, but it comes from everyone – *Esther Hethcox, Kathy Parkins, Lenore Champion, Susan Dunlap, Amy Heit, Valerie McMillian, Sybil King, Tom Bloom, Vernon Cooper* and *Omar Guess*.

All together now,
John Weicher

THE SESSION

Report from the Clerk of Session

Report from the Clerk of Session

Active Elders, June 1, 2023 through May 31, 2024

| Class of 2024 | Class of 2025 | Class of 2026 |
|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Stephen Berry | Art Baker | Jon Abels |
| Leah Graves | Ruby Gentithes | Jennie Alwood |
| Fred Moore | Debbie Hamlin-Aggrey | Amy Dillon |
| Beth Stringfield | Keith Merritt | Gordon Campbell |
| Julie Whiddon | Mary Ellis Merritt | Conrad Carter |
| Emily Wilkins | Lanny Pratt | Alice Raney |
| | Laurie Ray | Katharine Whitmore |
| | Dawn Shelton | |

Session Moderators: Pastor Mindy Douglas; Associate Pastor John Weicher; Associate Pastor Esther Hethcox.

Clerk of Session: Jane Wettach

The Session called three congregational meetings during this period, as follows:

- March 4, 2024, at which the congregation approved the nominees for Elders and Deacons presented by the Nominating Committee and approved new terms of call for the pastors;

- April 28, 2024, at which the congregation approved revised by-laws for the church; and
- May 26, 2024, at which the congregation approved two additional nominees as officers.

The Session held ten stated meetings during this period, at which it received reports from committee chairs, voted on motions brought from committees, and heard reports from teams within the congregation and other organizations. The work of the committees is reported elsewhere in this Annual Report. Other actions of the Session include:

- Revisions to the by-laws of the church;
- Establishment of a task force to address issues related to the expected retirements of long-time staff members;
- Approval of a letter to Governor Cooper asking that he commute the sentences of all inmates currently on death row;
- Approval of a statement calling for a ceasefire in Gaza;
- Approved an FPC Anti-Racism statement;
- Heard ongoing reports regarding the planning for and fundraising for renovations to the church building; and
- Engaged in general oversight of the work of the church under the leadership of Pastor Mindy Douglas and Associate Pastors John Weicher and Esther Hethcox.

The Session held eight called meetings as needed throughout the year, primarily for the business of examining and approving new members and baptisms.

The 2023 Annual Statistical Report, included with this report and submitted to the Presbyterian Church USA in early 2024, reflected 546 active members, effective December 31, 2023. Special effort was made to accurately report the age, race, and gender breakdown of church members in general and those participating in the Christian education programs.

Report from the Board of Trustees

On June 26, 2023, the Board of Trustees met to elect officers for the 2023-2024 year. The officers are:

President- Lanny Pratt

Vice President- Julie Whiddon

Secretary- Jane Wettach

Treasurer- Torrell Armstrong

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Wettach, Clerk of Session

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ADULT VOLUNTEERS IN YOUTH MINISTRY

- Youth Advisors – *Lenore Champion* (fall), *Brent Curtis*, *Margaret Derry* (spring), *Kati Ruark*, *Parker Stiles* and *John Weicher*.
- Youth Leaders on Call – *Heidi Biermann*, *Mimi Dunn*, *Roxana Keesler*, *Elizabeth Klinck*, and *Phae Smith*.

SUMMER TRIPS:

- **Appalachia Service Project high school mission trip** – *Drew Cummings*, *Tyler Momsen-Hudson*, *Beth Stringfield* and *John Weicher*.
- **Middle school mission trip** – *Heidi Biermann* and *John Weicher*.
- **Massanetta Middle School Conference** – *Mimi Dunn* and *John Weicher*.
- **Montreat Youth Conference** – *Mary Ashley Rose* and *John Weicher*, with **Trinity Avenue Presbyterian**.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

- **Elders** – *Mary Ellis Merritt* and *Ruby Gentithes*.
- **Deacons** – *Thilo Fullenkamp* and *Evelyn Walters*.
- **Youth Ministry Committee**
 - **Chair** – *Ruby Gentithes* / **Scribe** – *Gretchen Sims* (fall) and *Izzy Allison-Pleasants* (spring).
 - **Youth** – *Lorenzo Mbugua*, *Lainey Blackwood* (spring), *Noah Dillon* and *Colin Bethune*.
 - **Adults** – *Laura Armstrong*, *Bob Pleasants* and *John Weicher*.
- **Artists in Residence** – *Izzy Allison-Pleasants*, *Mason Armstrong*, *Isa Cummings* and *Ellie Everett*.
- **Massanetta advocates** – *Ruby Gentithes* (lead) and *Mary Ellis Merritt*.
- **Worship Leaders** – *Thilo Fullenkamp* (Tech) and *Evelyn Walters* (Crucifer).
- And we continue to have youth who acolyte, sing, or play an instrument in worship.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- **Co-Chairs** – *Stephen Berry* and *Beth Stringfield*
- **Members** – *Kim Abels*, *Brent Curtis*, *Kathy Krahenbuhl*, *Amy Sanchez*, *Andrew Whiteman* and *Katharine Whitmore*.
- **Staff** – *Lenore Champion* and *John Weicher*.

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH FAITH FORMATION TEACHERS

- **2s-4s** – *Michael Bacon*, *Elizabeth Jones*, *Lucie House*, *Wayne House* and *Kristin Meade*.
- **5s-2nd** – *Lea Bingham*, *Amy Sanchez* and *Katharine Whitmore*

- 3rd-5th – *Kim Abels, Johanna Bernhardt* (spring), *Kathy Colville* (fall), *Celia Dickerson* and *Carolyn Merritt*.
- Youth – *Mimi Dunn, Annie Gentithes, Bob Pleasants* and *Amy Wilson*
- Confirmation– *Heidi Biermann, Cris Rivera* and *John Weicher*.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION

- Faith & Community – *Kathy Krahenbuhl, Andrew Whiteman* and *John Weicher*
- Journeys – *Paul Baldasare, Andy Henry* and *Eric Weibe*.
- Lectionary – *David Smith*
- Meaning in the Middle – *Mary Berry* and *Emily Diy*.
- Bible with Susan – *Susan Dunlap*

MCPHERSON LECTURESHIP

- McPherson Lecturer – *Willie Jennings*
- Committee – *Lea Bingham* (chair), *Steve Rimmer, David Sappenfield, David Smith, Nora Tubbs Tisdale, Hendrika Vande Kemp, John Weicher* and *Lyn Williams*.

Respectfully submitted,
John Weicher

Youth Ministry Sub-Committee

OVERVIEW

The committee met the first Monday of each month, totaling ten meetings over Zoom from August to May, with a celebratory June event. The Youth Ministry Committee served a variety of functions this year, including planning and assessing events, engaging in thoughtful discussions about our impact, and addressing the needs of the youth ministry program.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

The committee’s achievements over the past year included:

- Selecting trips for summer of 2024, specifically the mission trips
- Picking the theme for the school year: *All Together Now* based on Galatians 3:28-29
- Planning a variety of programming for youth, such as:
 - A book group reading *Help, Thanks, Wow* by Anne Lamott
 - Advent and Lenten devotionals
- Engaging in a larger conversation for multiple months about our church’s youth ministry and its impact
- Evaluating and considering the effectiveness of events and activities held throughout the year
- Creating an outreach list for youth to “plug in” to leadership opportunities within the church

- Updating some of the youth room's décor
- Researching and discussing doing a pilgrimage (Camino) through conversations with each other and experts
- Holding a fundraiser to support our summer trips (our stock sale)
- Designing and distributing sweatshirts for all those involved in our youth ministry
- Working with the Somethings to organize and execute events to celebrate Pride
- Planning ways to welcome our rising 6th graders
- Brainstorming summer programming, which included ice cream events and bigger one-time events

GOALS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

The primary goal of the Youth Ministry Committee for the upcoming year is to continue its successes in supporting all of the functions of the youth ministry at FPC-Durham. This includes all of the regularly scheduled Sunday evening events, faith formation classes, retreats and summer trips, the annual fundraiser, and devotionals. The committee hopes to promote consistent turnout and engagement from all the youth who attend FPC-Durham. Youth Ministry Committee will continue to primarily hold meetings on Zoom, as that format has the most availability among committee members. Ultimately, the goals of the Youth Ministry Committee are to advance the goals of the youth programs, with whatever methods are needed.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE COMMITTEE

Rotating off the Youth Ministry Committee this year will be *Lainey Blackwood* (graduated senior), *Izzy Allison-Pleasants* (rising 10th, taking on deacon duties), and *Laura Armstrong* (adult). Our other parent rep, *Bob Pleasants*, will remain on the committee for another year. *Sibu Admay* (rising 7th), *Kirbey Blackwood* (rising 9th), *Gretchen Sims* (rising 11th), *Isa Cummings* (rising 11th), and *Amy Cummings* (adult) will join us for this upcoming year.

Therefore, our committee membership is currently as follows:

Ruby Gentithes (chair, rising 12th)

Gretchen Sims (scribe, rising 11th)

Isa Cummings (rising 11th)

Noah Dillon (rising 10th)

Kirbey Blackwood (rising 9th)

Colin Bethune (rising 8th)

Sibu Admay (rising 7th)

Bob Pleasants (parent)

Amy Cummings (parent)

John Weicher (youth pastor).

Respectfully submitted,

Ruby Gentithes

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2023-2024:

Elders: *Stephen Berry* (Chair), *Conrad Carter*

Deacon: *Jancy Johnstone*

At-Large: *Tom Bacon, Bert Clere, Brent Curtis, Marie Sappenfield*

The committee used the same process to call for nominations, hold the election and complete new officer training, ordain and install the newly elected persons as in previous years.

The following persons were elected, trained, ordained, and installed to serve as officers in the Class indicated below:

| Ruling Elders (2027) | Deacons (2027) | Deacon (2025) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Al Arrowood</i> | <i>*Izzy Allison-Pleasants</i> | <i>*Lexy Rile</i> |
| <i>*Michael Bacon</i> | <i>*Matthew Eggleston</i> | |
| <i>*Kathy Conner</i> | <i>*Kerry Holbrook</i> | |
| <i>*Mimi Dunn</i> | <i>*Ann Huff</i> | |
| <i>Laura Hanson</i> | <i>David Loriner</i> | |
| <i>*Jordon Jones</i> | <i>Julio Manceras</i> | |
| <i>Mary-Jo Keenan</i> | <i>*Bill Wigger</i> | |
| <i>*Josh Walters</i> | | |

* Candidate for ordination

The following persons were elected to the Nominating Committee 2024-2025 as at-large members: *Tom Bacon, Bert Clere, Shirley Frederick* and *Jancy Johnstone*.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The First Presbyterian Church (FPC) Personnel Committee for the 2023-2024 term consisted of *Leah Graves* (Chair), *Debbie Hamlin-Aggrey* (Chair-elect), *David Sappenfield, Adrienne Allison, Luke Everett and Jennie Alwood* as well as *Mindy Douglas*, Head of Staff. The committee met primarily via Zoom but did transition to some in-person meetings starting in December 2023.

In August 2023, the Personnel Committee voted to support Duke Divinity School graduate student *Heidi Biermann's* path to ordination. The process took several months and involved getting the approvals of the Session and the Presbytery. After some back and forth with the Presbytery, Heidi Biermann's application for ordination in a Validated Ministry position was approved. In March 2024 the Presbytery examined Heidi's spiritual and scriptural knowledge and approved her for ordination. The Ordination took place at FPC on April 7, 2024, with several Personnel Committee members in

attendance. Heidi's Validated Ministry position is currently "housed" at FPC but she is not considered a staff member as she is under the supervision of the Presbytery of New Hope.

Over the summer and early fall of 2023, Mindy, as Head of Staff, conducted annual performance reviews of church staff. The Personnel Committee conducted interviews with congregation members and staff to gather information to be utilized by the Personnel Committee Chair to complete Mindy's 2023 annual review.

In October 2023, Mindy informed the Personnel Committee that several key staff members are planning on retiring within the next 1- 3 years. The Personnel Committee unanimously approved a motion to send a request to the Session that a Task Force be formed to plan for these retirements. In January 2024, the Session approved the motion to form a Retirement Transition Work Group. The Work Group consisting of elders, deacons and other members of the congregation came together in the spring of 2024 with *Doug Butler* as the Chair. Serving on the working group is *David Sappenfield* who has been an active member of the Personnel Committee for the past three years and rotated off the Personnel Committee in June 2024.

The Personnel Committee also worked on several other initiatives:

- Providing all staff with a cost-of-living increase and an annual Christmas bonus.
- Supporting Mindy as she planned for her 3-month sabbatical in May – August, 2024.
- Approving a request from the Director of Children's Ministry to set the base salary for childcare workers at \$15/hour and minimum schedule of 2 hrs. per day.
- Providing all staff with cards for their birthdays.
- Recognized staff for their years of service by:
 - Sending a card to a new staff member after one year of service.
 - Sending a card and dedicating sanctuary flowers in honor of staff members at the 5th service anniversary and each 5-year increment thereafter.

The goals for the next year will include supporting the process for the recruitment of replacements for retiring staff members, making 2025 Personnel Budget recommendations, and possibly forming another search committee in the coming year as Ester Hethcox's Designated Pastor position will end in the next year or two.

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Hamlin-Aggrey

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

ELDERS AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- Dawn (Carsey) Shelton - committee chair
- Lanny Pratt - highly involved in assessing, solutions & monitoring repair work
- Conrad Carter - main oversight for Day School needs, investigates solutions for complex problems (ex: sanctuary guttering, antique lamp posts)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS - knowledgeable, faithful, and wise, each one

- Barbara Buckley - Landscaping and Grounds lead and mastermind
- Celia Dickerson
- Tyler Momsen-Hudson
- Jim Rogers
- Chuck Wilson

We simply could not keep up with catching problems on a timely basis were it not for the observant eyes and ears of our sexton, **Vernon Cooper**. We also would be nowhere if it weren't for our knowledgeable and unflappable Building Administrator with a long institutional memory, **Tom Bloom**. He juggles an endless to-do list with constancy and without getting discouraged.

Landscaping and beautification of our grounds are thoughtfully led by **Barbara Buckley** and a **dedicated team of volunteers** who regularly pull weeds, keep things looking tidy, plant seasonal flowers, and hire out mowing as well as annual pruning & mulching.

These are the large-scale items that were addressed over the past year.

SOLAR ENERGY PANELS

- Our solar panel installation was completed and put into service summer 2023
- Duke Energy rebate of \$32,400 received
- Submission of request to US Dept of Energy for a direct pay grant, which is equivalent to an income tax refund, for approx. \$25K / 30% of cost of project, April 2024
- Submitted application for an additional 10% direct pay grant because our address is considered low-income (approx. \$2500), Nov 2023

HVAC

- HVAC units - still recovering from November 2022 vandalism (repairs and replacements), we have moved units to rooftop locations where possible
- HVAC - east side of undercroft: replaced compressor + air handler
- Replaced 2 leaking boiler plates + all gaskets
- Church house boiler repair
- Replaced both sump pumps in "twins" boiler room (20 years old)

- Discovered (and working on solutions) for conditioned air leaking into a room in our basement (old duct or coal chute?)
- Chapel HVAC - after much investigation, decided it needs to be insulated better before pouring more HVAC \$ into it OR use stand-alone floor units during actual use

SANCTUARY ROOF AND GUTTER WORK

- Sanctuary gutter replacement \$127K estimate (ouch!)
- After doing our own drone work, opted for the following work on / near sanctuary gutters:
 - Repaired / re-welded a couple of joints in sanctuary gutters
 - Applied to the inside of the gutters: Hydro-Stop coating (added 3-5 year lifespan?)
 - Cleaned out all debris and slate chips from gutters
 - Tightened loose fascia along gutters
 - Secured loose slate on sanctuary roof
- After a high windstorm: replaced sanctuary ridge cap

PLUMBING

- Cleaned out gutters and downspouts on west side of church house and ran new PVC pipes out to street; installed screens over rain gutters and scuppers in that area
- Roxboro St. side trench: pipes cleaned out; cleanout access point installed
- Pipes lifted to proper grade and replaced crushed pipes near sidewalk
- Cleaned out all trenches that run alongside walls of the sanctuary

TECHNOLOGY

- Sanctuary lighting switches: ongoing assessment and repair, re-repair
- Fire Alarm Control Panel (FACP) - goes offline when electricity blinks; parts no longer available; sought competitive quote; to be replaced by existing vendor Summer 2024
- Phone system to be changed - current system no longer supported
 - Replacement allows for connectivity via cell phone if internet is out
- Asana project management software now being used to track repairs and future work

DAY SCHOOL

- Ceiling just inside Day School entrance repaired
- Repaired and improved a variety of punch list items throughout the year
- Playground renovation ongoing (designed and paid for by Day School)
- Monitoring health of trees and tree roots as a result of the playground renovation

OTHER

- Switched to city trash and recycling services to save \$; dumpster to be removed
- Asbestos / Air quality readings continue to be excellent
- New flooring in choir room
- Cast iron lamp posts out front - addressing decaying mountings for large globes

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Shelton

SERVICE AND MISSION COMMITTEE

Over the course of the fiscal year, Service and Mission has remained active and held meetings most months. Some of the activities of the Committee have been:

- 1) A complete study of each of the organizations to which we give financial support was made, with Committee members each taking several organizations to study in depth, gaining an understanding of their mission, their relationship to FPC, financial viability, etc. This information was used to evaluate our budget for making donations. The study was particularly helpful in coming to agreement on this year's budget, as it required a substantial reduction in funding from prior years. The final budget allocations are attached herewith (page 21).
- 2) An analysis of the total funding given to the Day School was undertaken. That total, including both direct cash payments and in-kind support, amounts to about \$150,000 annually, making the school by far the most heavily supported endeavor of FPC. The school was started by FPC during the time of white flight from downtown Durham to achieve the following mission goals:
 - a) 40% to 60% of the students would be from low-income families
 - b) 40% to 60% of the students would be people of color
 - c) The school would always maintain its five-star rating.

These goals, while enforced over most of the fifty-year life of the school were never written down, but were, over time, understood by both the management of the school and by FPC. During the last ten years or so this understanding had lapsed, and the current management had never been made aware of them. This lapse has been corrected by a letter written by the chair of the Committee clearly stating them, which was followed by a meeting with the Director and Board Chair of the School. At that meeting it was agreed that the school would present to the Committee a semi-annual census of the students, indicating all tuition subsidies and scholarship being received and the racial/ethnic composition of the student body. The second of such census reports will be done in September of 2024. This report will be a central document in assisting the Committee and FPC as a whole to evaluate our relationship to the school over the next several years. On any given year 3-5 FPC members serve on the Day School Board, as does Esther Hethcox.

- 3) The Committee has made a commitment to increase congregational awareness of our foreign mission support and involvements. This has included a Faith and Community Zoom class with our mission co-workers in Nicaragua, together with an in-person visit from them in July, when *Ian Vallenga* preached, the participation of *John and Sue Fricks* in the Congo Mission Conference held in Charleston, SC. The Committee has also started the practice of emailing to the full congregation the newsletters and other updates that our mission co-workers periodically issue.
- 4) We have started a project to update the Outreach section of the FPC website, bringing it up to date with our current commitments and community involvements.

Respectfully submitted,
Gordon Campbell

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | 2024 Budget Authorized |
| | | | \$185,456 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Most Heavily Supported | Presby, Synod, GA (Unified Giving) | | \$20,000 |
| | Day School Subsidy | | \$62,556 |
| | Walk in Ministry | | \$18,000 |
| | Iglesia Emanuel | | \$23,700 |
| | | | |
| Housing | Urban Ministries of Durham | | \$5,000 |
| | Families Moving Forward | | \$3,500 |
| | Habitat for Humanity | | \$1,000 |
| | Housing for New Hope | | \$7,000 |
| | Re-Building Together | | \$0 |
| | CASA | | \$0 |
| | | | |
| Food Insecurity | Emanuel Food Pantry Support | | \$3,000 |
| | Meals on Wheels | | \$1,000 |
| | | | |
| Missions | Missionary Support | | \$4,000 |
| | Mission Partnership | | \$3,000 |
| | | | |
| Campus Ministry/ Theol. Edu. | Theological Education | | \$1,000 |
| | Duke Campus Ministry | | \$5,000 |
| | NCCU Campus Ministries | | \$5,000 |
| | | | \$0 |
| Advocacy | NAACP | | \$500 |
| | NC Council of Churches | | \$900 |
| | Durham Cong. in Action | | \$2,000 |
| | Durham CAN | | \$3,000 |
| | | | |
| Justice Involved | Human Kindness | | \$0 |
| | Our Children's Place | | \$0 |
| | RCND---Re-entry Program | | \$2,000 |
| | | | |
| Mental Health | Threshold | | \$2,000 |
| | El Futuro | | \$2,000 |
| | | | |
| Other | Step-Up Ministry | | \$3,000 |
| | Durham Literacy Center | | \$2,000 |
| | Senior PharmAssist | | \$1,000 |
| | Growing Thru Grief | | \$300 |
| | Durham Children's Initiative | | \$0 |
| | Village of Wisdom | | \$0 |
| | Emanuel Learning Center | | \$1,000 |
| RETF | Racial Equity Task Force | | \$2,000 |
| | | | |
| New Initiatives | Initiatives/Requests | | \$1,000 |

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

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 43:19

The 2023 stewardship pledge campaign began on October 8 with a kickoff reception following the Sunday service where stewardship packets were distributed to members before enjoying a light lunch and hearing a short message from Mindy Douglas and Jon Abels (Chair). The theme of the campaign was *Sing a New World into Being*, the title of a modern hymn, which draws inspiration from the scripture in Isaiah where God is making new things happen.

Over a four-week period, church members shared their thoughts about the ministry and services of FPC in a Minute for Stewardship each Sunday, in a weekly newsletter, videos, and reflections from families printed in our colorful brochure. The goal of the campaign was to meet a “needs budget” request of \$1.2M for 2024, which was a 10.5% increase in pledged giving from 2023.

Another goal was to reverse a recent downward trend in the number of families and individuals who submitted a pledge card (154 in 2023) and return to historic levels of approximately 180 pledges made annually, which would be a 17% increase from 2023. Given that nearly 80% of FPC annual revenue comes from pledged giving, increasing the amount and number of pledge donations was critical to continuing the level of ministry and services that the congregation and the community expect and relied on.

The pledge campaign was extremely successful in that it engaged more members, generated enthusiasm, and exceeded our needs budget goals and number of pledging individuals and families. Pledged contributions were 14% higher than 2023 Actuals, and the number of individuals and families who pledged were 25% higher than 2023 with 193 pledges submitted. The stewardship committee held a planning retreat in January to review the previous pledge campaign, identify new ways to engage the congregation, and promote stewardship beyond financial contributions including how we can support its two subcommittees: the Creation Care Team and the Legacy Society.

The Creation Care team promoted two earth care practices during Lent, and the Earth Day Creation Care Service was held on Sunday, April 21. They also facilitated a discussion in Faith and Community class on May 5 with local artist, James Keul, who painted the Chutes and Ladders mural for the First Presbyterian Day School, on art and climate justice, James’ current work, and faith’s place in his life and practice.

Legacy Giving Sunday was held on May 5, when 26 members, and others who wished to remain anonymous, were recognized in the bulletin as current Society members who have made a bequest to the church. The Society’s annual luncheon was held on Thursday, March 7th and organized by Sheila Breitweiser, Lisa Gabriel, and Sandy Roberts. The luncheon’s featured speaker was Olanda Carr, Jr., Senior Ministry Relations Officer of the Presbyterian Foundation, East Region. Sheila and Lisa shared that they wanted to step down from their leadership roles and requested a new chair be identified to carry on the promotion, education, and recognition of planned giving and the generosity of Society members at FPC. At the submission of this report, a new chair has not yet been finalized.

Also in May, Stewardship emailed an online Time & Talents survey to all members. Sixty members responded noting their engagement in activities and ministries of the church. The majority indicated that they were satisfied with their level of involvement; however, 17% indicated that they would like to be more involved. The committee is responding to those who participated in the survey and sharing relevant information with others who lead committees.

The direction and message of the Stewardship Committee's work this year was also informed by two reports created by the Presbyterian Foundation on FPC's annual giving and annual expenses benchmarked to other congregations of like size in our denomination. The summary of those two reports were that members of our congregation give at a higher amount on average than other PC(USA) members in like-sized congregations, our personnel expenses are slightly below the denominational average, and our giving to support service and ministry is notably higher than the average. Looking forward, the reports did make several suggestions on changes we may wish to make in how we communicate the financial needs of the church and engage the congregation about the importance of their financial support through pledges and planned giving.

The Stewardship Committee included *Jon Abels* (Chair), *Art Baker*, *Sharon Hirsch*, *Leslie Curtis*, *Tony Brown*, *Tom Roberts*, *Celia Dickerson*, *George Bernhardt*, *Pat Dillon* (webmaster), and *Jennie Alwood* (brochure), with staff assistance from *Mindy Douglas*, *Tom Bloom*, *Valerie McMillian*, and *Sybil King*. Creation Care Subcommittee included *Cris Rivera* (Chair) and numerous members. Legacy Society Subcommittee included: *Sheila Breitweiser*, *Lisa Gabriel*, and *Sandy Roberts*.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Abels, Chair

WORSHIP AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

Committee Co-Chairs *Julie Whiddon, Alice Raney*

Worship and the Arts Committee Members: *Peter Fish, Jean Wilson, David Smith, Kathy Parkins, Mary Ann Compton, Alice Raney, Julie Whiddon, Esther Hethcox, Floalice Reaves, Matthew Eggleston, Ann Huff*

The Worship and Arts Committee meets on the second Monday of every month throughout the year at 7:00 pm either by Zoom or in person at the church, with one exception: there is no meeting in July.

The main responsibilities of the committee include:

1. Flower Ministry

Fresh flower arrangements are provided for worship every Sunday. The arrangements are usually donated by members of the congregation in memory of a loved one, in honor of a special occasion or just to add to the beauty of the Sanctuary.

The committee is also in charge of the Tyren Fund which allows money to be used for flowers if there is an occasional open Sunday.

2. Weekly Worship Preparation

Members make sure that the Sanctuary is prepared for Worship services. This includes the paraments, candles, chalice and paten on the communion table and water in the pitcher beside the baptismal font. We also ensure that a member of the church youth group is available and provides the services of the Crucifer.

3. Communion Preparation

Communion is held on the first Sunday of every month, at the annual Christmas Eve Service held at 5:00 pm and on additional dates as requested. All dates are approved by the Session. Several members volunteer to prepare the bread and juice for each service. The prep team cuts the bread in the Sacristy as it is a gluten free environment. The team prepares for Communion before the serve and cleans up and returns the chalices and patens to their respective cabinets in the Sacristy. If the cloth is used on the table, it, along with the protective plastic covering, is returned to the cabinet in the Chapel.

4. Communion Server Assignments

All currently serving elders (Classes of 2024, 2025 and 2026) are given assigned dates to serve communion throughout the year. Volunteers are requested to serve communion on Christmas Eve, Maundy Thursday, and Easter. If a substitute is needed, elders may ask other members of the congregation may also serve in the place.

5. Annual Traditions

During Advent and Christmas, the Advent Wreath and then lovely red Poinsettias (a long-standing gift to the church gift from Arthur and Mary Clark) enhance the beauty of the sanctuary. The candle lighting service is held at 5:00 pm on Christmas Eve.

During Lent /Easter, the palms, Lenten Banner and Easter Lilies are an important part of the church celebration. Church members make donations towards the purchase of the lilies in memory or in honor of loved ones or friends.

New Ministry: Home Communion

Esther Hethcox, our Designed Associate Minister, has started a new Home Communion Ministry for members of the congregation who are unable to come to church. She has a list of members whom she periodically visits and feels would benefit from having Communion taken to them. During the regular Communion

preparation, the committee prepares small containers of the bread and juice that church volunteer will take when they visit those members after the church service. This service is provided for about six members each month.

Respectfully submitted,
Alice Raney

THE DIACONATE

| Class of 2024 | Class of 2025 | Class of 2026 |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Jennie Belle | Brianna Bennett | Rachel Bethune |
| George Gentithes | Thilo Fullenkamp | Andy Henry |
| Mark Higgins | Wil James | Kathryn Murchison |
| Jancy Johnstone | Lexy Rile | Mary Ashley Rose |
| Julio Manceras | Ashley Swavely | Eric Wiebe |
| Grace Mbugua | Evelyn Walters | |

I continue to be grateful for the discipleship of our incredible deacons! During this last year, we met monthly in person, and were guided by our moderator Jane Brown who worked to lead us in our meetings and empower us in our ministries. The diaconate continues to be an ever-changing organism—coming out of the pandemic we are wondering the new ways that God is calling us to serve. I am so grateful for the creativity, eagerness and openness of these incredible individuals who participate in the kingdom of God through their tenderness, wisdom and energy. Please see reports from committee chairs regarding the specifics of this ministry.

Esther Hethcox (on behalf of the change of leadership with the calling ministry)

Welcome And Belonging Committee

- In the Fall of last year, the Membership and Ushering Committees joined into one which is now the Welcoming and Belonging Committee.
- Co-Chairs are Mary Ashley Rose and Wil James
- Head Ushering Duties were updated. Outdated information was removed or updated and individual ushering duties were clarified.
- We had an interest gathering for those interested in joining FPC in February with presentations and Q&A with Pastors and Staff. There was a good turnout and we discussed

ways to improve for future gatherings. Together the committee assembled welcome bags for folks, which included a brochure of how to get involved, bios and pictures of staff, handwritten welcome cards from the deacons and prayer squares knitted by our Prayer Shawl ministry.

- Mary Ashley created a Google Calendar for the Committee.
<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0?cid=Y2E3OTkyNTYxMDgxOTdiODNjNmVkZTU2MGO5NDUwODEwNTE4NGY2MGY3ODdkZGE4OWQ2NjIxMGE5N2IwMzJlM0Bncm91cC5jYWxlbmRhci5nb29nbGUuY29t>
- We had a few Lemonade gatherings after service starting around March
- With more recruiting, we now have around 25 regular ushers and 3 substitutes
- Activity bags for the youth were cleaned and updated with newer material
- Planning an usher appreciation and usher interest lunch on Sunday afternoon
- From June of 2023-June of 2024, we have had 25 folks join FPC in membership (including four families with young children)
- If you are interested in being a part of this committee, please reach out to the co-chairs, Wil James and Mary Ashley Rose! We are always in need of lay folks who are excited to lend their wisdom, creativity and energy to this important ministry.

Sincerely,
Wil James

Pastoral Care Committee

Co-Chairs: Brianna Bennett, Andy Henry

The Pastoral Care committee's work focuses on communicating with and visiting church members who are sick, mourning, in convalescence homes, or homebound for any number of reasons. There have been many meal trains over the year for those recovering from illnesses and surgery, as well as those who have lost a loved one. Weekly, the flowers that have been donated by members in honor, or memory of someone at church, are then delivered to those who are on the joys & concerns list or identified as needing a visit with flowers. Approximately 134 bouquets have been delivered in the past year by deacons or other church members who volunteer. – *Brianna Bennett*

The deacons send the Stephens Ministries grieving series to those in the congregation who have suffered the loss of a loved one. The four-booklet series is sent at different periods over the first year after the death and helps people deal with the grieving process. First Presbyterian Church sent booklets to about fifteen over the last year. - *Andy Henry*

In addition, the pastoral care committee contributed to the care of the community through meal trains. Why do we do meal trains? Feeding people is one of the most fundamental ways we can show

God's love for each other. We do it to provide sustenance, to show compassion, and to connect with one another. While it is always easiest to sign up for meal trains for individuals or families in the church community we already know, consider stretching your horizons by providing a meal for someone you do not know as well--I promise you it will be appreciated. This past year we did seven meal trains, most consisting of 3 meals a week for six weeks. - *Eric Wiebe*

The Pastoral Care Committee also cares for our folks through the calling ministry, which seeks to provide comfort and connection with folks who are unable to come to worship or just need some extra support. We have 23 wonderful saints who receive calls (and visits) from 17 wonderful saints. It is a gift to care for the community in this way. - *Esther Hethcox*

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Officers for 2023-2024: Circle Chair: *Linn Lopez*
Circle Treasurer: *Shirley Frederick*
Card Ministry: *Bet Lawson*



Presbyterian Women is an organization within First Presbyterian Church, New Hope Presbytery, Synod of the Mid Atlantic, and General Assembly Council. We contribute to the life and mission of the congregation, the community, and the world mission of the First Presbyterian Church, using our talents, skills, knowledge, and monetary gifts to spread the love of Jesus Christ to those we can, help build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthen the Presbyterian Church (USA), and witnesses to the promises of God's kingdom.

The Circle meets on the first Monday of the month (unless rescheduled for holidays) at the church. It is a source of fellowship and support for members, especially as we study together from the Horizon Bible Study curriculum. This past year we began the study "Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts" led by the *Reverend Susan Dunlap*. Our meetings usually start with a brief business report and then the Bible study. Our average attendance is 15. This year we included an extra meeting for a picnic as a totally social event.

We normally collect two offerings: Least Coin for causes selected by The International Committee for the Fellowship of Least Coin, to support programs that work for justice, peace and reconciliation throughout the world. The Blessing Box is used for individual Circle projects such as gifts for shut-ins, Share the Warmth, Church World Service for blankets, or special requests.

In addition, members pledge to the local Presbyterian Women's budget. We made donations to the Children's Hope Alliance, Meals on Wheels, Families Moving Forward, and Durham Urban Ministries. At each monthly Circle meeting, 15-20 cards are brought by *Bet Lawson*, outreach chairperson, for members to sign. The cards are then mailed out or delivered by Circle members to shut ins.

We thank those who lead and support Presbyterian Women. Your devotion and faithfulness keep us strong. Women of all ages are invited to join us as we continue to serve Jesus Christ, and we pray for God's guidance in meeting the needs of our church, community, and the world.

Respectfully submitted,
Linn Lopez, Moderator

FINANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:

As of May 31, 2024, the Finance Committee Membership consisted of *Torrell Armstrong, Al Arrowood, George Bernhardt, Doug Butler, Tom Keller, Wendy McCorkle, Keith Merritt, and Fred Moore*. Church staff on the committee are *Mindy Douglas* and *Tom Bloom*.

Fred Moore, who had served as chair, rotated off the Session at the end of May 2024, so was no longer eligible to be the chair. Al Arrowood agreed to serve as chair beginning in June and Fred will remain on the committee as a regular member. With the resignation of *Ed Pritchett* from the Investment Subcommittee, *Celia Dickerson* agreed to serve as Chair.

PREVIOUS FISCAL YEARS:

In June 2023 the committee heard the presentation of the 2022 audit from Tricia Glidewell and Brandi Cawthorn of Bernard Robinson & Company, noting that it was an uneventful audit. Three recommendations were made regarding: 1) timeliness of bank reconciliations; 2) review of credit card statements; and 3) process for writing off old checks. As always, their opinion was "qualified" because FPC does not classify expenses by function, which is required under professional standards for non-profit organization. The audit was shared with Session.

During the summer of 2023 an effort was made to analyze revenue and expenses in previous years to better understand what we can expect as the year progresses. **Figure 1** below shows the five-year average of monthly revenues and expenses in the operating budget. With the exception of December, average revenues remain relatively stable while average expenses show more variability with quarterly peaks. In December, average revenues and expenses show a significant increase with expenses increasing more than revenue. Of course, each year tells its own story and past performance does not guarantee future results, but it does provide some perspective.

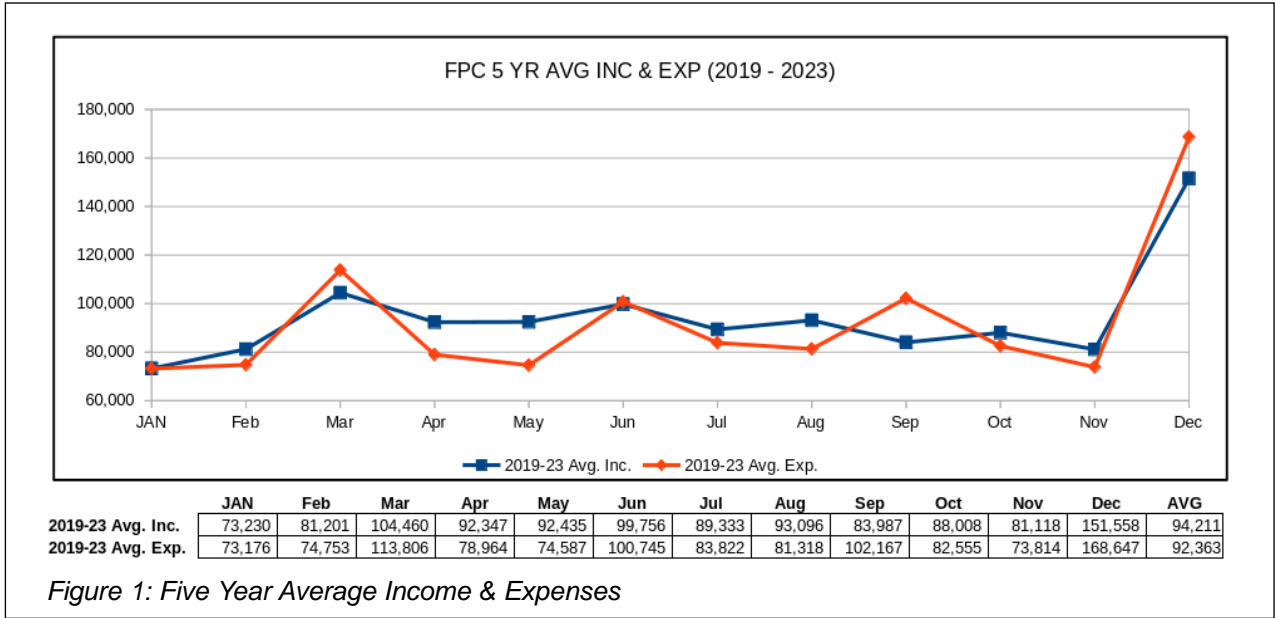


Figure 1: Five Year Average Income & Expenses

In addition, the Presbyterian Foundation did an analysis of FPC’s annual giving based on 2022 figures and presented their finding at a meeting in October 2023. Overall, the report showed that our congregation’s giving compares favorably to other PCUSA churches. However, an area of concern is that some families are giving at a very generous level but 47% of families are not financially supporting the church at all. In addition, giving is weighted towards a few of the church’s oldest donors.

2023 OPERATING BUDGET (12 MONTHS):

The 2023 budget was monitored closely by the Finance Committee throughout the year. The Business Administrator provided monthly budget status reports that were reviewed by the committee. **Figure 2** below provides a summary of the 2023 operating budget including the approved budget, the actual amounts received and spent, the variance from the budget, and the change in the approved budget when compared to the previous fiscal year.

| | % | 2023 Budget | Budget Change From Previous Yr. | Actual | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| | | | | Amount | % | \$ Diff. From Budg. |
| TOTAL REVENUE | 100.0% | \$ 1,209,283 | \$ 13,132 | \$ 1,201,569 | 99.36% | \$ (7,714) |
| Contributions | 86.7% | 1,048,070 | 2,654 | 1,030,905 | 98.36% | (17,165) |
| Interest Income | 2.1% | 24,874 | 13,974 | 37,228 | 149.66% | 12,354 |
| Misc. Income | 9.7% | 116,940 | (4,045) | 114,822 | 98.19% | (2,118) |
| Special Offering | 1.6% | 19,399 | 549 | 18,615 | 95.96% | (784) |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | 100.0% | \$ 1,209,283 | \$ 12,081 | \$ 1,215,902 | 100.55% | \$ (6,619) |
| Christian Education | 1.6% | 18,747 | (2,253) | 18,785 | 100.20% | (38) |
| Fellowship | 0.3% | 3,489 | 289 | 627 | 17.98% | 2,862 |
| Office Admin. | 5.4% | 65,770 | (630) | 78,707 | 119.67% | (12,937) |
| Pastoral Care | 0.1% | 918 | (382) | 871 | 94.92% | 47 |
| Personnel | 63.5% | 767,522 | 23,373 | 746,120 | 97.21% | 21,402 |
| Physical Plant | 11.8% | 143,223 | (4,445) | 164,809 | 115.07% | (21,586) |
| Service & Mission | 13.7% | 165,700 | 0 | 165,700 | 100.00% | 0 |
| Session | 0.7% | 9,019 | (141) | 7,318 | 81.14% | 1,701 |
| Special Offering | 1.6% | 19,399 | 549 | 18,657 | 96.18% | 742 |
| Stewardship | 0.2% | 2,016 | (734) | 2,910 | 144.36% | (894) |
| Welcome & Belonging | 0.3% | 3,741 | (809) | 1,848 | 49.40% | 1,893 |
| Worship & The Arts | 0.8% | 9,739 | (2,736) | 9,548 | 98.04% | 191 |
| NET | | 0 | | (14,332) | | (14,332) |

Figure 2: 2023 Budget Summary

At the end of the 2023 fiscal year, there was a \$14,332 shortfall (when not including the \$6,000 of budgeted reserves). To balance this deficit, the Session agreed to use the \$6,000 of reserves that had been budgeted and an additional \$8,332 of undesignated bequest funds. Also, \$6,000 was transferred to reserves from bequests to replenish the reserves that were used to balance the 2023 budget. During the 2023 fiscal year, *Karen Romines* was added to the list of people who are authorized to sign checks for the church. The annual audit for the 2023 fiscal year is scheduled to be presented to the Finance Committee in July 2024.

2024 OPERATING BUDGET (5 MONTHS)

The process of developing the 2024 budget started in June 2023 when a timeline for preparing the budget was discussed and approved. In July 2023 the 2024 budget process began with Tom Bloom sending budget information and instructions to the various committee chairs on how to prepare the needs budget for their committee.

The 2024 Budget Committee (composed of the committee chairs) and the Session met several times in July, September and October to prepare a 2024 “Dream Budget” to be used as a goal for the Stewardship Campaign. By November, approximately 150 pledges totaling \$897K or 84% of the annual budget had been received. It was projected that if everyone who had not yet pledged ended

up pledging the same amount they did the previous year, we would still be about \$40K short of the “Dream Budget” goal. By January 2024, with updated expense estimates, it became apparent that there was going to be a significant revenue shortfall in the Dream Budget, but the committee agreed that they needed the complete 2023 year-end numbers and updated 2024 pledge numbers before they could recommend a budget to the Session. It was believed these numbers would be available in February and in the meantime, the Committee Chairs would be notified about the situation and asked to look for potential savings.

At the February Finance Committee meeting the Chair presented a draft 2024 budget that was balanced at \$1,226,749. This draft was \$17,466 larger than the 2023 approved budget and included \$36,911 of undesignated bequests. This draft had been reviewed in detail with the Business Manager, the Chairs of the Finance and Stewardship Committees, and discussed with the Sr. Pastor. In addition, all committees had several opportunities to review and modify their individual budgets.

The committee’s discussion began with an update of the current pledge figures. Due to the generosity of the congregation, along with the creativity and persistence of the Stewardship Committee, there were 193 pledges (as of 2/20/2024) for 2024 totaling \$1,081,644.52 or 100.92% of the original goal (\$1,071,766). There was discussion about why bequest funds were needed if the Stewardship goal had been exceeded. It was explained that the original Stewardship goal was set last October and during the last quarter of the year, various income and expense lines had been modified as updated data became available.

Some of the highlights of the draft budget (compared to the 2023 budget) included:

A. Income

1. Increase in Pledges and Plate Offering.
2. Decrease of Unpledged Contributions to account for the increased pledging.
3. Decreased interest from the Designated Funds due to the move of Capital Campaign funds into a segregated account and the elimination of Realized Gains.
4. Increased Parking Lot Income to account for a full year of fees.
5. Decrease in budgeted Reserves and Bequests.

B. Expenses

1. 3% COLA except for Sr. Pastor
2. Increase in Health Insurance and Retirement costs
3. Loss of the Parish Associate Position
4. Decrease in Child Care budget
5. Eliminate Videography in Personnel
6. Increase in Property Committee budget (\$40,187).
7. Decrease in Unrelated Business Income Tax
8. Increase in Stewardship Budget to account for year around activity
9. Eliminate S&M cut of \$8,285

After lengthy discussion about the above highlights and other matters related to the budget, the following revisions were made to the draft budget. There was a strong reluctance to use bequest funds in the operating budget but without making further cuts in Personnel or S&M, funds will need to come from Bequests or Reserves.

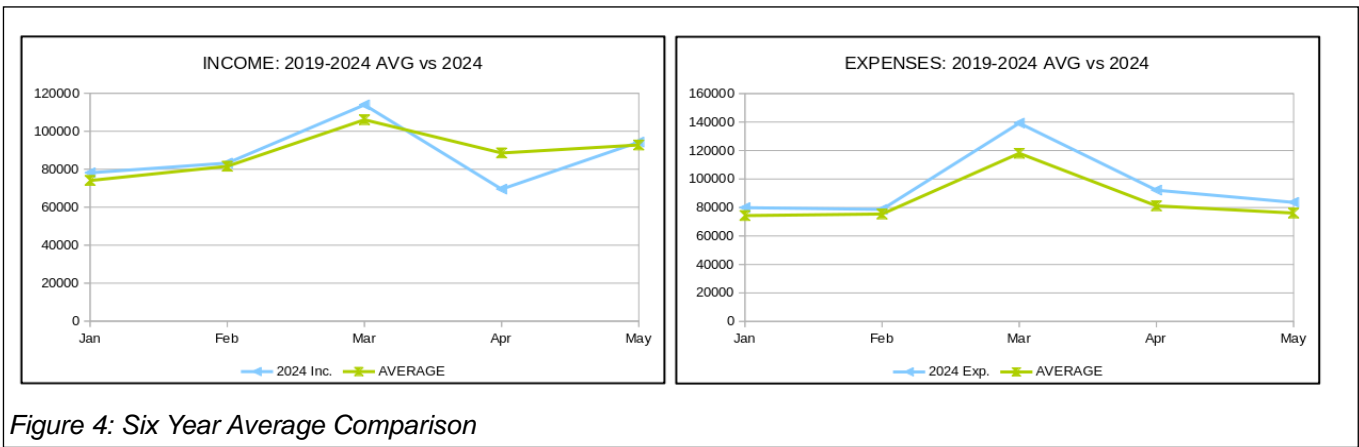
- A. The pledges were updated to account for the latest pledge data
- B. The amount needed to balance the budget (\$25,477) was moved from the Bequest line to the Reserves line. This left \$135,747 of undesignated bequests to be designated at a future date.
- C. The 3% COLA and cut in "Expenses" for the Sr. Pastor were reinstated
- D. The cut to the Service & Mission budget (\$8,285), that was in the original dream budget, was reinstated.
- E. This is budget was \$14,232 more than the approved 2023 budget and \$10,426 more than was actually spent in 2023.

After the above changes, the Finance Committee voted to recommend this revised 2024 budget of \$1,223,515 to the Session. The recommended 2024 budget was later approved by the Session and five months of monthly figures are included in **Figure 3**.

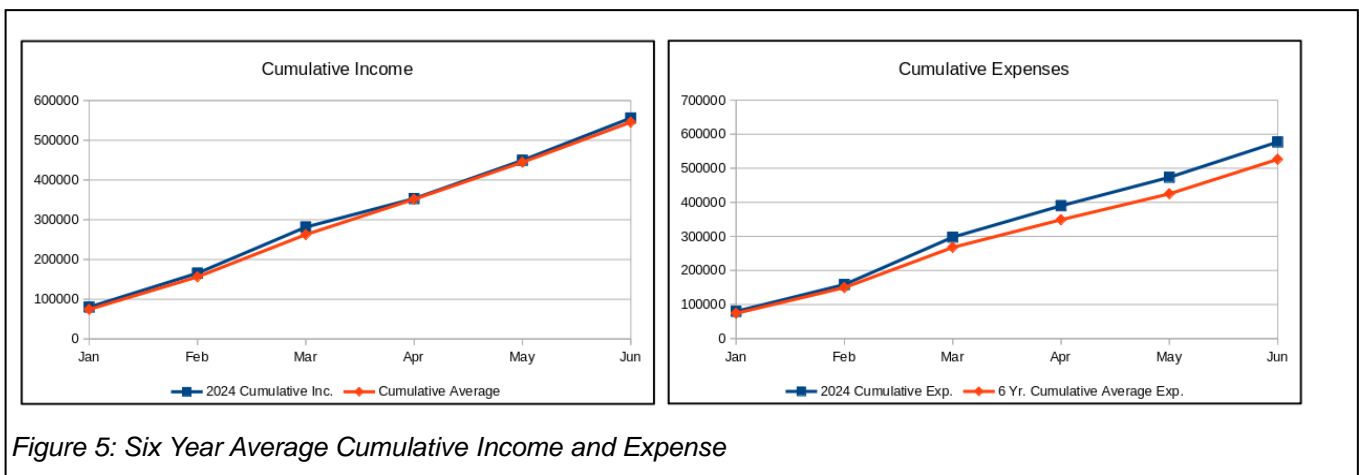
| | 2024 Budget | Budget Change From Previous Yr. | Actual | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| | | | Amount | % | 5 Mo. (Under)/Over Budget |
| TOTAL REVENUE | \$ 1,223,515 | \$ 14,232 | \$ 449,532 | 36.74% | \$ (60,266) |
| Contributions | 1,147,145 | 99,075 | 411,256 | 35.85% | (66,721) |
| Interest Income | 13,673 | (11,201) | 12,521 | 91.58% | 6,824 |
| Misc. Income | 62,697 | (54,243) | 20,324 | 32.42% | (5,800) |
| Special Offering | 0 | (19,399) | 5,431 | 0.00% | 5,431 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$ 1,223,515 | \$ 14,232 | \$ 485,719 | 39.70% | \$ (24,079) |
| Christian Education | 18,500 | (247) | 12,098 | 65.39% | 4,389 |
| Fellowship | 3,489 | 0 | 364 | 10.44% | (1,090) |
| Office Admin. | 79,136 | 13,366 | 22,959 | 29.01% | (10,014) |
| Pastoral Care | 918 | 0 | 665 | 72.46% | 283 |
| Personnel | 768,968 | 1,446 | 321,187 | 41.77% | 784 |
| Physical Plant | 170,044 | 26,821 | 65,865 | 38.73% | (4,986) |
| Service & Mission | 157,415 | (8,285) | 56,884 | 36.14% | (8,706) |
| Session | 7,813 | (1,206) | 275 | 3.52% | (2,980) |
| Special Offering | 0 | (19,399) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Stewardship | 3,950 | 1,934 | 703 | 17.79% | (943) |
| Welcome & Belonging | 3,541 | (200) | 450 | 12.72% | (1,025) |
| Worship & The Arts | 9,741 | 2 | 4,268 | 43.81% | 209 |
| NET | 0 | | (36,187) | | (36,187) |

Figure 3: 2024 Budget

Figure 3 shows that, as of the end of May, total revenue was \$60,266 under the expected budget. This shortfall is partially balanced by expenses being \$24,079 below expected and this left a \$36,187 deficit. This amount of deficit, at this time of year, has not been unusual during the last few years.



Figures 4 and 5 give additional perspective on the income and expenses during the first five months of 2024. Figure 5 shows that 2024 cumulative income closely matches the six-year average but cumulative expenses in 2024 are running higher than the six-year average.



In March, the committee reviewed the budget process used to develop the 2024 budget. Tom Bloom noted that approving the budget so late (end of Feb) caused several problems that complicated the church’s financial management. Tom hoped that future budgets would be approved no later than the end of January to reduce some of these complications. In addition, plans were being made to encourage individual pledgers to fulfill their commitments as they are able.

2024 ENDOWMENT DISTRIBUTION

The Investment Sub-Committee met in October 2023 to discuss the third quarter Investment Report and how much of the endowments would be available to be used in 2024. The Sub-Committee recommended that the 2024 percentage payout for the endowment be set at 4.03% (for a total of \$158,715) based on the formula in the investment policy. This was significantly less than the previous year’s total distribution of \$200,609. The Finance & Investment Committee and then the Session voted unanimously to approve the Sub-Committee’s recommendation.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

A committee made up of FPC members involved in the Capital Campaign project met to discuss the path forward given the near doubling of construction costs since the pandemic. The estimated project budget had grown to \$6 million vs. \$2.8 million in pledges. Members of the F&I Committee expressed concern about closing that gap through additional contributions and debt. Options to cut back the project/costs as well as increasing revenue (e.g. grants) were being looked in to. In May, Paul Baldasare reported that we had been approved for a \$15K, 2 to 1 matching grant from the Marion Stedman Covington Foundation for the purpose of replacing the roof of the Fellowship Hall. The Finance Committee and the Session approved the acceptance of this grant.

The question of how campaign donations were being invested came up at one of the “funding” committee meetings. It was felt that the capital campaign funds should not be kept in the stock market due to its volatility or mixed with other investment accounts. Over the next few months, with the approval of the Finance Committee and Session, the capital campaign funds were moved to a segregated money market account. By the end of May there was a total of \$1,929,830.61 in the Capital Campaign and \$1,811,554.14 of this was segregated in a Bank of America money market fund. While no formal decision has been made, due to the large gap between the estimated cost of construction and the available funds, the building project has been delayed. When a formal decision about the timing of construction is made, the investment strategy for these funds will need to be reevaluated.

Respectfully Submitted,
Fred Moore

INVESTMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Members of the FPC Investment Committee include *Celia Dickerson* (chair), *Sam Miglarese*, *Torrell Armstrong*, *Doug Butler*, *Fred Moore*, *Wayne House*.

This committee has oversight of the investment account for First Presbyterian Church held at Bank of America since Feb. 9, 2017. The account for investment monies is valued at ~\$5,000,000. The committee met quarterly via zoom in a two-part session. The members met first with *Reaves Greer* and his staff at Bank of America (BoA). Prior to each meeting, Greer sends the members the relevant quarterly report. Greer notes the asset allocation of the funds, with dollar and percentage changes. Greer notes recent market history and projects safety vs risk for investing in the near term. Members note the benchmark for return set specifically for First Presbyterian, comparing actual return against the expected return.

Upon the conclusion of the meeting with BoA, the committee adjourned to meet without the investment manager. The committee reconvened via zoom to discuss the bank report and FPC needs at the time.

This year about \$1,800,000 of monies donated for the Capital Campaign was moved to BoA. The committee authorized BoA to segregate this amount in a money market account, separate from our portfolio. The rate earned is currently 5% yield, or 5.12% APY.

In September, following the third quarter close, the FPC Investment committee calculates the withdrawal amount from this account to spend in the coming budget year (2024). According to the church's Investment Policy Statement, the choice is 1) 5% or 2) a rolling average of the most recent 3-year returns, whichever is lower. The investment committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the Finance committee a withdrawal of 4.03% for fiscal 2024.

Overall, the committee members find BoA to be prudent stewards of our funds and transparent in reporting both the specific allocation positions and the gains and losses. The committee members find BoA to be a satisfactory manager in a volatile market environment.

Respectfully submitted,
Celia Dickerson, chair

STATISTICAL REPORT TO PRESBYTERY OF NEW HOPE

2023 Church Statistical Report

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Church | First | PIN | 21311 |
| Presbytery | New Hope | | |
| Address | 305 E Main St, Durham, NC 27701 | | |
| Phone | 919-682-5511 | Fax | 919-682-0493 |
| Email | v.mcmillian@firstpres-durham.org | | |
| Web Site | www.firstpres-durham.org | | |



| Membership | | | |
|---|------------------|--|------------|
| Prior Active Members | 542 | Adjusted membership | 542 |
| Gains | | Losses | |
| Certificate | 3 | Certificate | 2 |
| Youth Professions | | Deaths | 6 |
| Professions & Reaffirmations | 11 | Deleted for any Other Reason | 2 |
| Total Gains | 14 | Total Losses | 10 |
| Total Ending Active Members | 546 | | |
| Baptisms | | Average Weekly Worship Attendance | 217 |
| Presented by Others | 3 | Friends of the Congregation | 30 |
| At Confirmation | 0 | Ruling Elders on Session | 21 |
| All Other | 0 | Do you have Deacons? | Yes |
| Age Distribution of Active Members | | People with Disabilities | |
| 17 & Under | 9 | Hearing impairment | 0 |
| 18 - 25 | 117 | Sight impairment | 2 |
| 26 - 40 | 121 | Mobility impairment | 8 |
| 41 - 55 | 90 | Other impairment | 7 |
| 56 - 70 | 134 | | |
| Over 70 | 75 | Gender Distribution | |
| Total Age Distribution | 546 | Women | 318 |
| | | Men | 226 |
| | | Non-Binary | 2 |
| Youth in Congregation | | | |
| Age 4 and under | 19 | Middle School (6th – 8th grade) | 18 |
| Elementary School (K-5th grade) | 27 | High School (9th – 12th grade) | 20 |
| | | Total Youth | 84 |
| Racial Ethnic | | | |
| Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian | 10 | Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous | 1 |
| Black/African American/African | 51 | White | 476 |
| Middle Eastern/North African | 0 | Multiracial | 2 |
| Hispanic/Latino-a | 6 | | |
| | | Total Racial Ethnic | 546 |
| Budgeted Income | 1,209,823 | | |
| Budgeted Expense | 1,209,823 | | |
| Receipts | | | |
| Regular Contributions | 1,081,265 | Bequests | 176,663 |
| Capital Building Fund | 597,651 | Other Income | 31,832 |
| Investment Income | 183,605 | Subsidy or Aid | 0 |
| Expenditures | | | |
| Local Program | 881,689 | Investment Expenditures | 24,464 |
| Global Mission | 204,629 | Per Capita Apprt | 5,863 |
| Capital Expenditures | 250,594 | Other Mission | 7,000 |

2023 WORSHIP ATTENDANCE MONTHLY AVERAGES

| Month | Weeks this month with in-person attendance | 2023 Monthly Average |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| January | 5 | 171 |
| February | 4 | 178 |
| March | 4 | 180 |
| April | 5 | 209 |
| May | 4 | 207 |
| June | 4 | 171 |
| July | 5 | 157 |
| August | 4 | 169 |
| September | 4 | 173 |
| October | 5 | 190 |
| November | 4 | 195 |
| December | 5 | 209 |
| Monthly Average | | 184 |

Live streaming of worship began March 15, 2020.
Attendance numbers include online views of worship at 11:00a.m.

OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS USING CHURCH BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

June 1, 2023– May 31, 2024

1. *AA Support Group
2. *Al-Anon Support Group
3. *American Red Cross Blood Drive
4. Carolina Recycling Association (Board Meeting)
5. *Coalition for Affordable Housing and Transit
6. CSA vegetables distribution
7. *Durham Bullhorns (rehearsal)
8. Durham CAN (Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods) Metro Council Delegates Assembly
9. Durham City/County Government Employees (MLK Celebration)
10. *Durham County Board of Elections (poll worker parking, and precinct meetings)
11. Durham CROP Walk training
12. Durham County Department of Social Services (departmental meetings /training)
13. Durham Habitat for Humanity Contractor parking
14. Eno River UUF staff retreat
15. First Aid/CPR training for staff
16. *First Presbyterian Day School (Board, Committees, Training, Bike rodeo, Fall festival, graduation)
17. Joe & Carlisle Harvard - 60th Wedding Anniversary Celebration
18. House Bill 271 Planning Meeting
19. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Service (Unity Rally)
20. NC House Bill 271 planning meeting
21. People's Alliance Economic Inequality Team
22. St. Philips Episcopal Church (parking for events)
23. Singers of New and Ancient Music (SONAM) rehearsal/concert
24. Some Were Neighbors exhibit
25. StepUp Roundtable
26. Ukraine Eye-Witness Report gathering
27. University Presbyterian Staff Retreat
28. Vocal Arts Ensemble rehearsal/concert
29. Weddings (non-member)
30. Women's Voices Chorus (rehearsals/concert)

* Denotes organizations that meet at least quarterly.



305 EAST MAIN STREET DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27701 919-682-5511
<https://firstpres-durham.org>
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