



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TOPEKA

Loving God, loving neighbors, and living with purpose

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

**First Presbyterian Church of Topeka
2023 Annual Report
Printed February 15, 2024**

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2023 Staff

Sandra Stogsdill Brown, Pastor and Head of Staff
Patrick Yancey, Commissioned Associate Pastor
Neil Weatherhogg, DMin, Pastor Emeritus

Herman Jones, Director of Family Ministries
Treven Broxterman, Assistant to the Pastors/Videographer
Patty Foster, Office Assistant
Becky Foster, Sunday Childcare Attendant
Will Hartner, Videographer
Mark Ingle, Director of Maintenance
Steve Johnson, Sunday Custodian
Kevin Kellim, DMA, Director of Music
Norma Pettijohn, Organist Emeritus
Samantha Edwards, Sunday Childcare Attendant
Christine Reeder, Sunday Childcare Attendant
Dina Pannabecker Evans, Organist
Cynthia Neufeld Smith, DMA, Assistant Organist

First Presbyterian Church of Topeka

817 SW Harrison St.
Topeka, KS 66612-1619

P: 785.233.9601
F: 785.232.4402
E: info@fpctopeka.org

www.fpctopeka.org
www.facebook.com/topekafpc

Pastor and Head of Staff

Dear Friends,

Every year in the life of our church is pure gift, and last year was no exception. In 2023, we faced new challenges and changes, and received boundless blessings. In the pages to follow, you will find a more detailed description of some of the ways we have leaned into our mission of “Loving God, loving neighbors and living with purpose.”

Here are my own **highlights of 2023**:

1. The sermon series **“And It Was Good,”** addressing matters of sexuality, gender identity, and intimacy. This was the most challenging sermon series I’ve ever done, and we were probably all a little uncomfortable with parts of it at one point or another. I was very proud of—and grateful for—the grace you showed in listening, and it was ultimately one of the most rewarding projects I’ve tackled in my preaching career. I also enjoyed preaching our **“Apostles’ Creed”** sermon series last fall, since the creed is so foundational to our faith.
2. **My trip to South Korea** and Japan during my sabbatical last summer. It was the experience of a lifetime to visit **five** (large!) **churches in South Korea that directly trace their roots to missionaries from our church** who dedicated their lives to planting the seeds of the Gospel in that part of the world more than 125 years ago. It was a fantastic reminder that what we do and how we give today matters deeply for future generations. I especially appreciated the opportunity to preach at the Daegu Jeil Church (First Presbyterian Church of Daegu) on Pentecost Sunday. Thank you for the gift of time away to learn and grow!
3. **Coming together with our friends from Grace Cathedral and First United Methodist** for World Communion Sunday, Trunk or Treat, and our Community Easter Egg Hunt on the Capitol Grounds. We also joined in hosting a special prayer vigil in support of survivors of sexual trauma, domestic violence and assault, prompted by the violent death of Zoey Felix last fall. In the midst of terrible tragedy, there were little glimmers of hope, like giving away all of our prayer shawls in one night.
4. Working with our **brave and wise elders**, our **gifted and hard-working staff**, our **compassionate, energetic deacons**, our many **creative, dedicated volunteers** and our **committed Stephen Ministers**. The best part of ministry is the people!
5. Our **All-Church Prayer**. In a recent sermon, I shared how a team of us went to Salina way back in September for a workshop on “Breakthrough Prayer.” With prayerful discernment, Pat Yancey, John Gould, Jerry Foster, Walt Menninger, and I reflected on

what we learned and eventually came up with the prayer we know today as our “All Church Prayer”:

Lord, like the light breaking through our windows, break through our resistance to change, show us the new things you want to do through First Presbyterian Church, and empower us to embrace new opportunities.

The experience of writing this prayer with this team, and then praying it every day, at every meeting and every worship service, is changing me! There is something about praying this prayer that is shifting my assumptions and expectations, and making me more receptive to the working of the Holy Spirit in my life and in the life of this congregation. I have deeper peace, stronger hope, greater energy, and a higher level of confidence since I started praying this prayer, and I sense that some of you are feeling this way too. **Prayer is powerful!** If you have not yet made it a habit to pray this prayer each day, it is not too late to start . . . with all of us praying this prayer each day in 2024, who knows what amazing things we might be sharing in 2024’s Annual Report?

Yours in Christ,

The Reverend Sandra Stogsdill Brown
Pastor and Head of Staff

Commissioned Associate Pastor

2023, was a roaring good year, with plenty of opportunities for ministry. As I look back over the past year, the word “new” comes to mind and I can see many areas of new growth. I see areas where the FPC experienced new ministries, and new opportunities for fellowship. We also saw new faces in our midst, as people made the decision to join in the mission and ministry of FPC. Life at FPC is a wonderful journey and it is with profound appreciation that I walk in faith alongside each of you.

And there is still much remaining on our journey. I truly believe a bright future lies ahead, for those who envision what God has in store for us, grab hold of that vision, and pursue it with all that we have. Below is just a sampling of the many ways FPC lived into its mission:

- Our new all church-prayer is a statement of belief that God is leading our way, into the future. Each day at 4:00 p.m., as I pray that prayer, I find it both comforting and exciting to think that God is hearing ALL of us pray that prayer in one, united voice. That’s what I call a mighty voice.
- For the first time in a long time, FPC embarked on a middle-school mission trip to Allenspark, Colorado.
- The youth group also held an in-house mission event, helping tidy up around the church, doing some yard work, painting and cleaning, while staying inside the church.
- Two of our youth completed confirmation and became members of FPC. It’s also exciting to see young people during worship, on Sundays.
- The Fellowship team added a new summer tailgate event, along the Landon Trail. It was heartwarming and fun to see all the generations of the church come together for an evening of food, fellowship, and fun!
- Our partnership with Harvesters continues to grow, enabling us to continue to feed hungry people.
- Our Faith and Flour small group has seen new growth, and we’ve added a second gathering each month to accommodate the number of people joining us. I figured it was easier to add another group than to expand the size of our kitchen!

This brief list only scratches the surface of what we’ve accomplished in 2023, and this list could go on much, much longer. As I close this report, I want to thank each of you for all you do for FPC and for me personally. Your support, your prayers, and your friendship are a cherished part of my faith journey, and I am grateful to God, for each of you. We can’t possibly know what the year ahead will bring, but one thing we can be confident of is that God is leading. So, let’s keep praying our all-church prayer each day, and be on the lookout for those new opportunities coming our way!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Pat

Director of Family Ministries

The Children and Family Ministry Team consisted of Allison Brewer (staff director), John Dorsey (elder), Becky Foster, Emily McGee, Susan Rowell, and Jennifer Wolff. The team met monthly in 2023. Allison Brewer's mid-year departure allowed Herman Jones to serve as the Child/Family Ministry Coordinator. As well, Jamie Corkhill served as the Elder.

Our team was busy with events to help FPC connect with children and families within our church and into our neighboring community. The year involved various events that included an Easter egg hunt, carousel rides at Gage Park, splashing in a city park pool, attending the area's Christmas parade, to name a few.

Sunday morning church nursery and childcare was staffed by Becky Foster and Christine Reeder. Upon Christine's departure Samantha Edwards was hired to fill the vacancy. They provided care for children ages birth through Kindergarten during 9:30 a.m. Sunday School and 10:30 a.m. worship. They had one or two regular visitors each week.

From January to May, Roger Basinger and Jessica Roberts led Sunday school for grade schoolers with support from Allison Brewer, Jennifer Wolff, and several other adult volunteers. Following Sunday school summer break Patty Foster and Terri Warrem provided church school learning for preschoolers and kindergarteners while first to fifth grade classes were led by Roger Basinger and Herman Jones. Our attendance ranged between four and eight students each week.

For the second year, First Presbyterian Church hosted close to 600 children and their families for a community-wide Easter egg hunt that involved more than 5,000 plastic eggs on the Capitol lawn. This event was in collaboration with other downtown churches. During Palm Sunday worship, we held an in-person palm processional of children and youth.

In June, volunteers helped bring to life Vacation Bible School. Children made crafts, learned songs, and played games on the Capitol lawn.

In August, students and teachers were sent into the new school year with backpack tags and stickers with the "You Matter!" affirmation and the blessing of the congregation. FIRST Families continued the fun with a splash day. Children and Families attended a Sunday afternoon at Garfield Park Swimming Pool to close out the summer break. Later in the day, FPC families enjoyed an outdoor picnic at the church's parking lot.

FPC Children and Families participated in the annual Trunk or Treat with Grace Episcopal Cathedral and First United Methodist Church. This year's event was hampered by severe cold temperature; thus it was moved indoors and hosted at First United Methodist Church on October 29.

Advent and Christmas Events involved a Parent/Children Family Outing where 25-30 participants enjoyed a family dinner meal in Willard Hall followed by FPC families taking a group journey to the Miracle on Kansas Ave Parade. Ecstatic church participants desire to build and enter a church float for next year's parade. All seemed to enjoy the meal selection. Children participated in Hanging of the Greens and made personal Christmas ornaments from FPC arts and crafts materials. During the Christmas Eve evening service all children in attendance received a joyful gift bag during the Children's Moment.

Respectfully submitted by Herman Jones
Children/Family Ministries Coordinator

Director of Music

I was very appreciative and inspired by the dedication of the Chancel Choir members as they provided music for our worship services last year (with the exception of July and August). As always, I feel very fortunate to have worked with our vocal soloists who, in addition to providing special music during the Sunday Offertory, served as section leaders in the Chancel Choir. We said goodbye to soloists Brendan Boyle (tenor) and Scott Frost (bass) at the end of the year. The choir welcomed soloists David Lundry and Ben Holcomb (tenors) in September.

The members of the Chancel Choir and soloists (*) in 2023 were:

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
Katelan Albus	Anita Jacoby	Gordon McQuere	Scott Frost*
Melanie McQuere	Connie Baer	David Lundry*	Jim Owen
Jane Owen	Mary Nichols	Bruce Perney	Walt Menninger
Diane Smith	Katie Keckeisen	Doug Exline	Jerry Foster
Marya Feldt*	Lauren Lewis*	Roy Knisley	Elliot Lauxman*
Jessica Crowder*	Julie Lady	Steve Crouch*	Bill Nichols
Sandra Willetts*	Jennifer Quanstrom	Brendan Boyle*	Hugh Clark
	Melissa Renick	Ben Holcomb*	Keith Brumley
	Jenny Kuner		

Our Organist, Dr. Cynthia Neufeld Smith, made the decision to step down from the position in mid-year, and she became our Assistant Organist. Thank you for your wonderful years of service, Cynthia! We were most fortunate to hire Dr. Dina Pannabecker Evans as our new Organist. Welcome, Dina! I feel blessed to be working with two such wonderful musicians.

Our Noon Noels services featured choral groups from Cornerstone Family Schools, Washburn Rural High School, and Shawnee Heights High School.

I enjoyed directing our choir and choral singers from Grace Episcopal Cathedral, First United Methodist Church, and St. John AME Church during the second annual World Communion service at Everyg Plaza.

Kevin Kellim
Director of Music

Organist

In just over half a year with FPC, it feels like there were many opportunities for worship, acknowledgments, remembrances, and celebrations.

I wish to acknowledge:

- Norma Pettijohn, Organist Emeritus, a dear friend, who reached out to me last February, and asked me to apply;
- Cynthia Neufeld Smith, Assistant Organist, a long-time friend and colleague;
- Gordon McQuere, who chaired the organist search committee;
- Kevin Kellim, Director of Music, who is a wonderful musician with equally skilled administrative experience;
- Jim Owen, chair of the Worship Committee;
- Instrument maintenance technicians: Doug Funston, organ; and John Haefele, piano;
- Clergy and staff, who have been extremely helpful and supportive;
- Choir, soloists, and congregation, who welcomed me warmly and continually exhibit audacious hospitality.

The FPC hospitality was front and center during the Noon Noels – a new opportunity for me. I marveled at the behind-the-scenes logistics to create a meaningful, community-driven, seasonal experience. It was a privilege to serve on the organ bench, and I look forward to next year.

I also assisted with the following:

- “Windows of Comfort” 25th anniversary event on Sunday, June 11;
- The Village Presbyterian Youth Choir visit on Saturday, June 17;
- The Lawrence Community Handbell Choir performance on Saturday, December 2;
- Played one memorial service and a community prayer vigil.

The audacious hospitality of FPC reminds me of a hymn text by Shirley Erena Murray: “For everyone born, a place at the table . . . and God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace . . . (Hymn 769 – Glory to God).

I look forward to a long tenure with you, as you continue to broaden the table in the heart of Topeka—creating justice, joy, compassion, and peace.

Respectfully submitted,

Dina Pannabecker Evans
Organist

Church Officers

SESSION:

Class of 2024

John Conlee
John Dorsey
Jerry Foster
Anita Jacoby

Class of 2025

Bill Nichols
Jim Owen
Norma Pettijohn

Class of 2026

Bob Baer
Jamie Corkhill
Tammy Mitchell
Walter Menninger

Moderator: Sandra Stogsdill Brown

Associate Pastor: Patrick Yancey

Clerk of Session: Melanie McQuere

Treasurer: Roger Basinger

DEACONS:

Class of 2024

Andrea Conlee
Hank Ernst
Jason Fish
Gayle Hunter
Julie Jensen

Class of 2025

Julie Lady
Susan Frydrych-Palmer
Linda Mets
Kathy Pauls
Susan Rowell

Class of 2026

Jill Adams
Hal Gardner
John Gould
Jeff Gustin
Terri Warrem

Moderator: Jeff Gustin

Vice-moderator: John Gould

Secretary: Hank Ernst

Members Serving in Higher Governing Bodies

Presbytery of Northern Kansas

Sandra Brown Presbytery Council
Steve Crouch Commission on Ministry

John Dorsey Heartland Camps and Retreat Center Board

Synod of Mid-America

Pat Yancey PNK Commissioner to Synod
Synod Treasurer and member of the Finance Committee

Church Membership Statistics

ADMISSIONS:

Profession of Faith:	3	Samantha Edwards, Mar. 19 Kaydence Barnes, May 14 Yaretzi Munoz-Villalobos, May 14
Reaffirmation:	9	Greg Albus, Mar. 19 Laura Albus, Mar. 19 Katelan Albus, Mar. 19 Aaron Edwards, Mar. 19 Brady Earnest Pryor, Apr. 30 Debra Lynn Pryor, Apr. 30 Shari Beheymer Brandenburg, Aug. 6 Clinton Richard Keckeisen, Aug. 6 Sara Katherine Keckeisen, Aug. 6

Restoration: 0

Certificate of Transfer: 0

DISMISSIONS:

Certificate of Transfer:	3	Vicki (Owen) Nguyen Mike Hall Linda Hall
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Deaths:	10	Robert McElroy, Jan. 20 James Pettygrove, Mar. 11 Virginia Petrik, Mar. 14 Mary Alice Huntsman, April 6 Mark Mueller, April 22 Ruth M. Covert, May 5 Polly Collins, June 8 Marilyn Ann McKenzie, June 18 Carolyn Frye, August 12 Joe E. Ham, December 3
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Removed by Request:	1	Carolyn Strouse
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MARRIAGES: 0

BIRTHS: 0

BAPTISMS:	6	Samantha Edwards, Mar. 19 Guinevere Edwards (8/16/2019), daughter of Aaron and Samantha Edwards, Mar. 19 Adalyn Jenae Mondesir (1/21/21), daughter of Leslie and Mackenzi Mondesir, June 25
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Layla Sky Walker (5/14/21), daughter
of Melissa and Travis Walker,
June 25

Benjamin Harris Keckeisen (1/9/20),
son of Clint and Sara Keckeisen,
Aug. 6

Sara Beatrice Keckeisen (10/1/21),
daughter of Clint and Sara
Keckeisen, Aug. 6

Membership as of Jan. 1, 2022:	364
Admissions:	12
Deaths:	10
Dismissions:	4
Membership as of Dec. 31, 2022:	362

Dinners for Eight

Dinners for Eight is a fellowship opportunity that has been a part of the life of First Presbyterian Church for many years. It offers an excellent opportunity to meet and get better acquainted with members of our church family. Groups are formed every January and meet four times throughout the year in homes – with all sharing in providing the food – or at local restaurants. The members of each group set their own schedule of time, dates, and place. In 2023 there were 3 dine-in groups and 2 dine-out groups.

Patty Foster and Norma Pettijohn, Coordinators

Tasty Tuesdays

Tasty Tuesday lunches met 11 times in 2023 (the group does not meet in December). The Tasty Tuesday lunches meet the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 11:30 a.m. at different restaurants around town. Anyone is welcome to come when their schedule allows.

Patty Foster, Coordinator

Needlework

Participants: Melissa Ashwill, Betty Baker, Jamie Corkhill, Kathy Pauls, Carrie Riordan, Marty Snyder, Marguerite Underhill, Terri Warrem

Mission: To share the love of God with each other, with our neighbors, and with friends near and far with items we have created.

Gifted in 2023:

- 90 Prayer Shawls
- More than 100 Mini Pocket Shawls
- 3 Baby Blankets
- 1 Face Mask
- 16 pr Gloves
- 25 Headbands
- 2 Adult Caps
- More than 100 Baby Caps

Submitted with gratitude,
Kathy Pauls

Deacons

For your 15-member Board of Deacons, 2023 was one of business as usual. Thankfully, Sunday fellowship resumed as concern for Covid for most of us had faded thanks in part to vaccinations and social distancing. As deacons, we take turns at the fellowship table after 10:30 service (unless someone has volunteered or been recruited to take a turn). The first Sunday of each month, we celebrate the month's birthdays with a cake or cupcakes. Birthday celebrants also are given stickers so everyone knows who they are.

To be sure that all new and prospective deacons know what is involved in being a deacon, a notebook has been prepared with all needed details. In the same vein, content labels have been placed on drawers and cabinets in kitchens adjacent to Disciples and Willard halls. The notebook was a joint effort of all deacons; the labeling was completed by moderator Jeff Gustin and Gayle Hunter.

Deacons provide welcome bags to visitors. We extend hospitality to bereaved families after a funeral or memorial service. They're reminded of God's on-going love by prayer shawls knitted by deacon Kathy Pauls and fellow members of FPC's needlework group. Both full-size and pocket prayer shawls are available for all. Susan Rowell and Susan Frydrych-Palmer keep the welcome bags supplied. Susan Rowell leads the memorial service team.

Through notes, telephone calls, and personal visits, a special committee of deacons and other church members known as Caring Friends works to express loving concern to those who are ill, hospitalized, or have had a death in the family. Notes of congratulations are sent when there are weddings, new babies, birthdays, and anniversaries to be celebrated.

Terri Warrem, co-leader of the Caring Friends ministry, invites you to join in, saying that the relationship built often proves to be as valuable to the helper as to the helped. Terri shares responsibilities with Jill Adams.

A wide variety of durable medical equipment, from wheelchairs to bathtub safety seats, is available. Contact the church office or Health Ministry leaders Andrea Conlee and Julie Jensen to see if your needs can be met.

Deacons help wherever they're needed, from assisting with Noon Noel services to taking their turn providing a third Sunday lunch.

Members who need a ride to church on Sunday may call the church office to make a request. An attempt will be made by the transportation ministry to find a driver who lives close to the would-be rider. Hank Ernst and Linda Mets lead this ministry.

Submitted by Hank Ernst, Secretary

Fellowship Team

The Fellowship Team known as the “Fun Team,” consists of the following members: Pat/John Dorsey, Becky Foster, Marlene Geysler, Chris/Jeff Gustin, Julie/Hal Jensen, Beth Johnston, Carlene/Herman Jones, Julie Lady, Shirley/Jim Martin, Norma Pettijohn, and Susan/Bill Rowell.

Special consultants and valued members: Carolyn/Dick Adams.

Staff members: Sandra Brown, Treven Broxterman, Pat Yancey.

Elder Liaison Norma Pettijohn, Co-Chairs Becky Foster, Susan Rowell

We do more than have fun and prepare wonderful food. We provide a time and space to really get to know each other in a caring way.

“Fun” and Really Good Food activities throughout 2023:

Jan: Silver Wings soup luncheon.

Feb: Annual church breakfast.

March: Made new curtains for Willard Hall.

April: Silver Wings, 20-25 attended, and 15 meals delivered to homes.

May: Fishing Derby, 20-25 attended, and the making of May baskets.

June: First All-church tailgate.

July: Silver Wings, 20-25 attended and 6-8 meals delivered to homes.

Aug: No event.

Sept: Welcome back breakfast.

Oct: All-church picnic, 60-65 attended. Silver Wings, largest group since Covid.

Nov: Advent kickoff.

Dec: Noon Noels, over 170 attended.

Fellowship also supports the following activities, organized by other church members.

- Tasty Tuesday, monthly luncheons throughout Topeka.
- Dinners for Eight
- Faith and Flour Saturday monthly

Our team is always looking for new adventures and ways to improve our congregation’s fellowship experiences and activities. If you have “fun” ideas, let us know, or better yet, join the fellowship team! We meet the first Tuesday of each month at noon in the conference room. Thank you to everyone who supported or attended one of our many events throughout the year!

Neighborhood Ministries

In 2023, FPC's Neighborhood Ministry focused on providing food and friendship to our community and organizing lifesaving blood drives.

Our leadership team includes Jill Adams, Bob Baer, Steve Crouch, Deborah Edwards, Hank Ernst, Patty Foster, Rick Friedstrom, Gayle Hunter, Leah Marshall, Walt Menninger. John Dorsey, Session Elder, serves as chair.

Stalwart supporters include the Adams brothers, Garret and Brandon, and their dad, Dave; Dick Adams, Shari Brandenburgh, Becky Foster, John Gould, Jeff Gustin, Carlene and Herman Jones, Brady Prior, Bill Rowell, and Janet Weatherhogg. Our team extends beyond those whose names are listed. We had an average of 50-60 volunteers actively participating in our food-sharing events throughout the year. Our mission would have been impossible without all the willing hands.

Supporting church staff included Pat Yancey, Sandra Brown, and Treven Broxterman. Carrie Riordan provided great support.

In addition to food-sharing events, we partnered with the Red Cross on four blood drives in 2023. The drives, coordinated by Julie Lady, Carlene Jones, and Becky Foster, collected between 30-35 units each time.

The Blessing Box Ministry continues through your donations and support. The box is continuously filled with food and essential items, and there is never too much for our neighbors in need.

Our food-sharing events go beyond providing food to needy households. We engage with the recipients through prayer and personal connections. Eleven non-members who received assistance have even become part of our team helping with the food-sharing events and six have become part of our church membership.

In addition to food for our guests, we have supplied socks, gloves, and lent a compassionate ear to listen to their stories. The impact of our efforts is evident as families can redirect their funds to other crucial life essentials like clothing and hygiene products.

Volunteers play a crucial role, offering support and hope to those in need, while experiencing personal growth and strengthening their own faith journey. It is a humbling experience to serve our neighbors. Please consider joining us by reaching out to any of our team members, you won't regret it.

2023 Food sharing events

Throughout the year we served an impressive 2,790 households. Those households included 7,678 individuals of whom 1,804 were seniors, 3,725 adults, and 3,149 children.

From January through March, we provided 50 bags of food and 10-15 gift certificates every Wednesday from ALDI. In March we supplied food from Harvesters to more than 79 households.

Starting in April, we transitioned to 50 bags of food and 15 gift certificates purchased from ALDI every second Wednesday of the month. We supplied more than 70-75 households with food from Harvesters on the fourth Friday of the month.

In November and December, we exclusively relied on Harvesters to supply food for our second Wednesday food distribution. At Thanksgiving, we provided 60 households selected by Doorstep (a long-time church partner) and us with turkey dinners, thanks to monetary and food donations from our church members.

We are now able to select a nutritionally balanced supply of food for Wednesday's sharing from Harvesters for less money or at no cost to us. Harvesters selects and provides the food for our Friday events.

This ministry would not exist without your support and contributions. As we enter 2024, we eagerly anticipate embracing new opportunities and achieving even greater things together.

Personnel

The Personnel Committee is Bruce Cooper, Sue Ohlde, Claudia Perney, Melissa Renick and Bob Baer, Chair. Both pastors meet with the Committee.

The year began with the Church well staffed, but changes come to the lives of people and organizations. Responsibilities were adjusted and some new faces brought on board. The bottom line: we are well staffed!

The Committee says a big THANK YOU to the many volunteers for the vital service they provide.

Property Committee

The Property Committee is responsible for the oversight and maintenance of the church's buildings, equipment, and grounds and how our facility is used. Our goal is to maintain our building's condition and appearance so it may serve as an effective tool for our service to God. Jane Owen chaired the 2023 Property Committee. The committee's members are Jerry Foster (Session Liaison), Dean Hill, Bruce Perney, Ed Lakin, Richard Adams, Tamra Yancey, Mark Ingle (FPC Maintenance Supervisor), Pastor Pat Yancey (Staff Liaison), and Jim Owen and Jim Martin who joined our team in the spring. We gratefully acknowledge the suggestions, expertise and the work the committee members perform to accomplish the responsibilities needed to take care of our facilities and property.

Maintenance Supervisor, Mark Ingle, has done an excellent job in dealing with the challenges that our facility presents due to its size and the age of the main building. We appreciate that he prioritizes keeping the facility clean at the same time as he works to be on top of the maintenance challenges of such a large physical plant.

The year 2023 was a year of challenges with some large investments to ensure that our church is in the best possible condition. Challenges aside, we were able to get numerous projects accomplished in 2023. The items listed below are in addition to the normal operations that our maintenance supervisor and the committee perform on a regular basis.

1. Due to a major break in our HVAC system in the spring, we undertook an expensive and complicated repair to the system, and subsequent repairs to damages to the ceiling, walls and flooring. We were fortunately able to recoup some of the cost through insurance.
2. In response to the HVAC accident, the Committee decided to pursue a proactive stance regarding HVAC issues in 2023. We sought bids from local companies to evaluate our entire system and provide continued maintenance. An RFP was sent to 7 companies for this purpose. We received one from P1, thoroughly researched it, and, after many meetings with P1 representatives, we recommended to the Session, who subsequently approved that we contract with P1 to do a complete evaluation of our HVAC system, make recommendations for corrections/updates, and also contract with them for provision for ongoing service.
2. We repaired and replaced the concrete on the north sidewalk.
3. We were blessed to have the assistance of Greg Wright to advise us on our contract with our gas supplier, Encore, at a substantial savings for the church.
4. We are continuing to make lighting upgrades throughout the facility to ease maintenance and decrease cost.

5. A written policy was created for use of and maintenance of the newly purchased church van.

6.. The Medallion Tiffany window on the south side of the Sanctuary was removed and transported to Willet Hauser for repair. WH installed a transparency for us during the repair process.

7. Our church has contracted with Harvesters to be a Food Pantry, which requires us to maintain a storage area for non-perishable items for regular distribution dates. Members of the Property Committee refreshed an area of the basement with the help of the Youth group for this purpose.

8. Several committee members and staff spent countless hours applying for a FEMA “Non-profit Security Grant” to make safety and security improvements with a focus on door replacement and video surveillance of the exterior property. We are pleased to report our Grant Proposal was approved for the total allowed amount of \$150,000.00!

We will initiate the process of implementing the grant funding and will turn the process over to a soon-to-be constituted “Security and Safety Committee.”

9. We are in the process of developing a systematic numbering and labeling system of all rooms throughout the facility to support maintenance, security and emergency safety among other things. This project will continue into 2024.

There are many projects that we are looking at for 2024. These include:

- Crack fill and seal the parking lots
- Interior Painting
- Replacement of Exterior Handrails around the property for safety and aesthetic reasons
- Addressing deficiencies identified by P1
- Updating our landscaping for safety and aesthetic purposes

We want to express our sincere thanks to the members of the Property Committee who utilized their personal skills and gifts and donated many hours of their personal time to accomplish the above projects as well as many others that are not listed here. Collaborating with these fine people is a blessing.

The Property Committee could not complete the projects it undertakes without the help of the congregation, the staff, and the guidance of our Lord. We are grateful for the congregation’s support and assistance given to us in the form of financial contributions, prayers, volunteer time, ideas, and suggestions for improvement in our facility. The committee thanks you, the congregation, for all you have done to help our committee serve our church and our God.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Foster, Session Liaison

Jane Owen, Property Chairperson

Stephen Ministry

The Stephen Ministers at FPC are trained individuals who are available to walk beside those in our congregation who are facing or going through difficult times in life, such as illness, death of a loved one, divorce and relocation to a new living situation. Our ministry is based on this simple tenet, "Christ Caring for People Through People." Stephen Minister training is a Christ-centered experience that equips people with essential caring and relating skills. After being matched with a person experiencing a life crisis, the Stephen Minister meets with that person on a weekly basis to listen, care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support. The caring relationship lasts as long as the need for care exists. In 2023 our ministry cared for many people, both members and friends, with confidentiality and the love of Christ.

This past year we trained four new people as Stephen Ministers. This training was a shared experience as the Stephen Leaders from First Presbyterian, First United Methodist, First Lutheran, Grace Episcopal, and Lowman Methodist came together to offer the training for our individual churches. The sharing of the expertise and experiences of these individual leaders and churches has proven to be effective and efficient for all involved.

Our membership in 2023 included Sheryl Daniels, Jerry Foster, Carlene Jones, Julie Lady, Diane Smith as Stephen Ministers. Newly trained ministers John Gould, Sue Ohlde Isbell, Nancy Shaunessey, Renee Messer, and Chris Wright joined them following their training and commissioning in June of 2023. The Stephen Leaders are John Dorsey and Jane Owen. Walt Menninger is our Consultant, and Sandra Brown is our Staff Liaison.

We met monthly for supervision and support of our membership and for continued education to stay current to meet the needs of our care receivers.

In December we hosted our annual Blue Christmas service that was well attended in person and on-line.

We look forward to a new year serving Christ and our congregation through this meaningful ministry.

Jane Owen, Stephen Leader

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee consists of Elders Anita Jacoby and Jim Owen, Connie Baer, Deanna Heilmann, Sara Keckeisen, Gordon McQuere, Rev. Sandra Brown (staff liaison), Kevin Kellim (ex officio), Cynthia Neufeld Smith (ex officio first 6 months), and Dina Pannabecker Evans (ex officio last 6 months). The committee generally met monthly, taking a sabbatical to coincide with Sandra's sabbatical.

The committee is responsible for supporting public worship, including special occasions, supporting the music program, overseeing communion, and facilitating various forms of online worship.

The committee regularly reviewed the relevant budget, noting that we came in under budget for the year.

We accepted Dr. Neufeld Smith's resignation as organist and thanked her for her excellent service. We were fortunate to have her agree to continue as assistant organist. An organist search committee was established, consisting of Drs. Kellim and McQuere, Norma Pettijohn and Claudia Perney. Their recommendation of Dr. Dina Pannabecker Evans, was approved and she has proven to be an outstanding addition as our primary organist.

The creation of a pool of liturgists with specific training was completed. The use of trained liturgists has worked well, with Gordon handling the scheduling. Gordon continues to care for the paraments, with Sara assisting. Anita continues to provide communion support.

Worship included return of a Good Friday service, which was well attended and appreciated. An innovative approach to the opening of Easter service was also well received. Guest preachers were arranged for services during Sandra's sabbatical, and subsequent services after her return emphasized her sabbatical activities. A pop-up bell choir performed at the Advent music service. We tried a different approach to the Offertory by discontinuing passing the plates. This proved unsatisfactory, and we returned to the previous method. We again participated in a joint Worldwide Communion Service at Every Plaza with First United Methodist, Grace Episcopal Cathedral, and St. John's AME.

A communion schedule for 2023 was recommended to Session, and we discussed a traveling communion process for in-home communion for those unable to attend in person. This would be provided by a pastor with an elder.

Noon Noels saw exceptional attendance with the final service resulting in 200 lunches served. We took a different approach to Hanging of the Greens, taking place on Tuesday evening instead of after Sunday service.

We continue to evaluate and enhance our online presence which is well attended. The dominant issue currently is the sound quality for music. The installation of additional microphones in the chancel has not adequately addressed the problem, and we are evaluating engaging an acoustics consultant to assist.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Owen

Adult Education

In 2023, our Adult Education Team began a season of discernment and rebuilding. Elder Tammy Mitchell met with new team members Julie Lady and Gregg Van Sickle, with Sandra Brown serving as staff liaison. They focused on laying the groundwork for new learning opportunities in 2024 based on the current needs and interests of the congregation. For 2023, educational opportunities for adults included: our long-running Men's Bible Study which meets at 7 a.m. on Wednesdays; a monthly Women's Bible Study, now with a morning and an evening session (both on the first Monday of the month); Donuts and Discussion, a group that gathers in the Weatherhogg Library at 9:30 on Sunday mornings to discuss the scriptures used in the sermons (and enjoy a few donut holes).

While not formally educational, the Widows, Tea, and Fellowship group meets on the third Tuesday afternoon each month, often in homes. Women who have experienced the loss of a partner offer support to one another and learn how to navigate grief and loss. Widows who want to get connected can contact Sue Ohlde or Sandra Brown for more information.

Youth Ministry Team

Over the past few years, FPC has experienced a resurgence in youth ministry activities, and in 2023, that showed no signs of slowing down. It is exciting to see new young people join our group, as our young people open themselves to inviting friends. During 2023, the already strong youth ministry team continued to prosper, and every volunteer leader contributes in many and varied ways, according to their gifts and strengths. I am so very grateful for the youth leadership team at FPC and can honestly say it is the strongest I've ever worked with in my 30+ years of youth ministry. The strength of that team is reflected in the many activities to experience "food, fun, fellowship and faith-building."

- For 2023, we made a conscious effort to engage with youth "in their world" by attending school events and other activities. That included attending plays, sporting events, cheerleading events, and band concerts. Not only is it a joy to see our young people excel in their pursuits, it's also a treat to sit with parents and chat, as we cheer on our young people.
- We saw new faces join our group on Sundays during the past year, and for 2024, we hope to continue to invite young people into our group. Our youth are good at evangelism!
- In 2023 we had two young people complete the confirmation study and become confirmed as members of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and we are planning to offer another opportunity for young people to join in helping to lead Christ's church.
- Our middle school and high school youth continue to meet every Sunday, for mission projects, lock-ins, Bible study and fellowship.
- Our middle school group spent a week in Allenspark, Colorado, attending a mission camp. The splendor of the Rocky Mountains offers an excellent opportunity to marvel at God's creation. Our high school group participated in a local mission lock-in at the church and did some cleaning and painting around the church building.
- It is a great joy to see young people in Sunday morning worship!
- This past fall, the group helped to plan and lead worship, coupled with an overnight lock-in. We didn't sleep much, but we sure had a lot of fun!

2024 is already off to a very fast start; the committee is making plans for another "amazing" year. Can we possibly top 2023? I have no doubts that we can, and we will! With the amazing leadership team of Beth Johnston, Marty Snyder, Becky Foster, Herman Jones, and Walt Menninger, and with the incredible youth we have and continue to reach, there are no limits to what God will do through us in the year ahead!

The FPC Youth Ministry Team

Patrick Yancey, Beth Johnston, Marty Snyder, Becky Foster, Linda Nantz, and Herman Jones



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