

A stylized, light gray graphic of a church steeple with a cross on top, centered in the background. The steeple is composed of several geometric shapes: a cross at the top, a tall narrow spire, a wider section below, and a base. The entire graphic is rendered in a light gray tone against a white background.

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

**First Congregational  
United Church of Christ—  
River Falls, WI Inc.**



# 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

February 2, 2025

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**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL - UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, INC.**  
**2024 ANNUAL MEETING**  
**February 2, 2025**

**AGENDA**

WELCOME

1. Opening Prayer – Pastor Chris
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of February 4, 2024, Annual Meeting Minutes
4. Old Business:
5. New Business:
  - a. Presentations by Committees:  
CE, Deacons, Discipleship, Endowment Grant, Mission, PTB, Scholarship, Trustees, Youth
  - b. Preliminary Discussion of Endowment Loan
6. Approval of Reports
  - i) Pastor, Denomination, Staff, and Moderator
  - ii) Boards and Committee Reports
  - iii) Clerk's Report
7. Building Fund Update - Joel Larsen
8. Acceptance of 2024 Treasurer's Report – Louie Filkins, Missy Luedtke, Kathy Rausch, Pastor Chris
9. Presentation and Approval of 2025 Budget as Recommended by the Church Council and Trustees – Louie Filkins, Missy Luedtke, Kathy Rausch, Pastor Chris
10. Election of Officers, Conference Delegates, and Nominating Committee Members  
Moderator, Vice Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, Conference Delegates, Nominating Committee
11. Other Business
12. Adjournment

No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!

As Jesus' courageous disciples, living God's grace, we strive to:

- † Worship faithfully
- † Welcome openly
- † Grow spiritually
- † Care passionately
- † Serve generously

# Pastor's 2024 Annual Report

Our theme for 2024 was connection. Connecting people to God, neighbor and self. This theme began due to the work of Church Council who read together the book *All The Lonely People* by Mike Gayle. It is a novel whose themes touched all of us. It centers on a man who is aging and lonely, but refuses to acknowledge it. His wife has died, his daughter has moved away and through both his own choices and the movements of society, he has become isolated. It is eerily relevant. Based on that book, and our subsequent conversations, we as church leaders spent much of 2024 trying to find ways to build better connections among and around us. This particular church is uniquely placed to do this work. In a world where it is easy to get lost and lonely, we are seeking to connect people to Christ and community. Here are some of our highlights for 2024.

## Worship

- Sunday Worship—We continue to offer three ways to worship each Sunday: in person, online, and on the radio. Our current in person worship schedule is 10am during the program year, with additional services on Christmas and Easter. Worship this fall has been very full on some Sundays (extra chairs!) and comfortably full on most Sundays.
- Communion—We are now entering our third year of offering weekly communion. We have an established system and a dedicated and growing team of deacons.
- Special Worship—Lent, Holy Week and Easter, Advent and Christmas worship services were all held and well attended. We continued Prayer Around the Cross for Lent and Holden Evening Prayer for Advent. Easter and Christmas were particularly full this year.
- Staff—With the retirement of Pastor Deb at the end of November, we are short one staff person and will begin a search. This will be a difficult, but needed position as finding pulpit supply for vacations is difficult.
- Choir—Our music team of Jamie Mills, Sarah Plum and Dave Reilly continues to lead the congregation in song. We are getting used to our new hymnal, *Worship and Rejoice*. We have discovered some great new music as well as some songs that did not work so well for us.

## Education

- Confirmation and Youth Group—Our numbers continue to rebound. We now offer two Confirmation classes: a Middle School Class taught by Stacy and a High School Class that combines Church Interns and 3<sup>rd</sup> year Confirmants (9<sup>th</sup> graders) taught by myself. Alex continues to lead both Middle and High School youth groups. We completed a Back Bay Mission Trip this past March and have scheduled another one for March of 2026!
- Babies and Baptisms—We had a record nine baptisms in 4 months. And our baby boom continues with three births in the past 4 weeks. Alex is heading up a group of young families to see ways we can support them.
- Programs—All of our educational programs such as Wednesday School, Sunday School, Bible Study, VBS and the Adult Forum continue. A special thank you to Pastor Stacy who spends enormous amounts of time and energy coming up with new ways to keep families connected to their faith.

## Fellowship

- Family Meals—Family Meals continued this year with in-person meals and take outs available.
- Small Groups—Our small groups are growing with Men's and Women's Groups, Knitting and Game groups. Among Friends continues to grow and expanded to 2 days per week, Tuesday and Thursdays. We also hosted three cooking classes in the church kitchen over the winter led by Peter Kwong.

- Care for Shut-Ins—We continue to reach out to our shut-ins and special friends through Amaryllis deliveries and a Companion Program to visit our senior friends.
- River Falls Days: Our Music Team hosted an awesome Bluegrass Concert out on the church lawn for the third time, which now seems like a kickoff to the River Falls Days festivities in the future! The second year of the food truck went well.
- Art Exhibits—We had our first art exhibit in October of the Biblical Art of Sadao Watanabe from Stacy's sabbatical project which was well attended. Another two exhibits will be next year.

## **Mission**

- Mission Committee—This committee continues to find creative ways to support our mission partners. EarthFest was again a hit, a Diaper Drive between Mother's and Father's Day was held and a Reverse Advent Calendar brought in 1500 pounds of food and about \$2000 for the River Falls Food Pantry.
- Church Mortgage—After 11 years and 2.4 million dollars on our renovated building, we are bank debt free! It was fun to ceremonially burn the church mortgage (safely!) outside on the church lawn this fall.
- Compassion Fund—Amazingly over \$12,845 was given to the Compassion Fund to help those in need in our community. We paid people's mortgages, bought medicine, provided grocery and gas gift cards.

Special thanks to our amazing church staff who daily step up and reach out. Missy who finds multiple ways to get information out and people signed up. Tim is busy fixing and maintaining things in the church (as I write this he is disassembling two HUGE Christmas trees). Stacy is finding creative ways to keep faith relevant for faith formation programs. Pastor Deb, called on members and worked with our Mission Committee, WISE, Green and Welcoming Teams before her retirement in November. Farnum Fuller kept our building clean and groups meeting where they need to (and he will be picking up lots of pine needles this year!). Marsha and Terry, Jamie and Sarah who continually try to harness our musical gifts. And Alex Plum who worked with our teens and young folk including a wonderful prank of hiding over 150 little plastic babies all over the church which has been a huge hit with all. Thank you all for your work and ministry.

## **Challenges and Goals for 2025**

Church life is never static. We are always growing and changing. Some of the challenges and goals I see for the coming year include:

Identity: Church Council is working on what makes us unique as a congregation. Our hope is to come up with an accurate, faithful and memorable way of helping all members identify our church and its values.

Fun events that bring people together like silent movies, concerts, cooking classes and our men's and women's groups. How can we plan more of these?

Hybrid World: Some days it is just easier to stay home to worship, but then it is hard to connect with others. How do we better minister in a hybrid age?

Finances: With our biggest givers aging, we need to foster better stewardship, finding creative ways to financially fund our church programs with an aging congregation.

Thank you for making 2024 a memorable, faithful and fun year!  
With Great Gratitude, Chris Myers, Pastor

## Minister of Christian Education 2024 Annual Report

In early 2023, I worked with Diane Crist, Suzanne Hagen, Kathy Rausch, and Alan Tuchtenhagen to apply for a Clergy Renewal Grant through the Lilly Foundation. Lilly grants are awarded to congregations to strengthen pastoral leadership by allowing pastors time away from daily ministry activities as well as enrich the vitality of congregations. In August 2023, we learned that First Congregational's application was selected. Accordingly, I took a sabbatical leave of three months spread over April-July of 2024. I am grateful to both the Lilly Foundation and First Congregational Church for affording me this opportunity.

During my sabbatical time, I observed and helped an elementary art teacher, observed two middle school teachers, read about Christian art and architecture, and traveled to Europe with my family.

The European travel was wonderfully renewing. Initially, Chris and I spent precious time by ourselves in an English cottage, and then we were joined by our children followed by extended family members. We toured churches and cathedrals (including the Cathedral at Chartres which is dear to my heart), art museums, architectural sites, the Vatican, and more churches and cathedrals. The Myers men climbed to the top of every building they could, while the Myers women stayed safely on the ground. We visited Assisi, ancient Pompeii and navigated an Italian train strike. We ended the trip by hiking in the Dolomite mountains and staying in refugios (Italian mountain houses with superb food). It was a restful, renewing time for my family and me. I have long had an interest in Christian art and its ability to speak to us of ideas and yearnings that escape words. It was a profound experience to be in the presence of magnificent, powerful Christian art and architecture.

Written into the initial grant proposal to the Lilly Foundation were funds to support bringing traveling exhibits of Christian art to First Congregational Church. The first exhibit we hosted was "Witness to Faith: The Art of Sadao Watanabe." Twenty pieces of Watanabe's art lived in our Fellowship Hall for two months. I led two events dedicated to observing and interpreting Watanabe's work for our congregation and a third one for visitors from Spirit of Grace Methodist Church. Experiencing Watanabe's art was woven into Sunday School, Wednesday School, Confirmation, and Among Friends programming as well. Starting in October 2025, we will have a second exhibit temporarily take up residence in our Fellowship Hall. The exhibit is called "Cardboard Chronicles: The Christian Art of Rudolph Bostic." It is my hope that the 2024 Watanabe and the 2025 Bostic exhibits will provide the congregation with a chance to be captivated by the power of Christian art—much as I was during my travel. Chris and I will continue to sprinkle art and insights from art throughout our ministry.

Writing the grant application required significant work and planning. Many thanks to the grant writing team, and to Chris for his travel planning expertise. Thanks also to Pastor David Ostendorf who provided pastoral leadership while Chris and I were both away, to Larissa Lueck who implemented the Sunday School and Wednesday School programs and supported the Christian Education Committee in my absence, and to Tim Bylander for building easels for the art exhibits. Tremendous thanks also to the members of First Congregational Church who recognize the importance of sabbatical time for pastors. This was my first and likely only sabbatical and it was a tremendous gift. Thank you.

Pastor Stacy Myers  
Minister of Christian Education

# Conference Minister 2024 Annual Report

*“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice.” Isaiah 60: 1 and 5*

I write this year-end Wisconsin Conference UCC summary on Epiphany Day and send it with prayers of light and love to you and your congregation. This day happens to coincide with the certification of Electoral College votes and the formal election of the next president of the United States. Four years ago, our Capitol was under siege by people seeking to undermine a free and fair election. This year we pray that the peace of Epiphany will abide. Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, this year coincides with the holiday commemorating the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In true UCC spirit, I invite you to pray for the dignity, equality and basic human rights of all who are marginalized or poor or feel unwelcome in this country.

The Epiphany season is about Christ's incarnation through the way we embody the teachings of Jesus. The role of the wider United Church of Christ is to resource, equip and support local churches in this vital ministry of incarnation. We do this in myriad ways, from guiding the Search and Call process and facilitating pastoral authorization, care and oversight; to our Damascus Project coursework and the training we offer on “best practices” for the church; to faith formation retreats and the many justice working groups that are eager to support your church's local efforts.

Sixteen months ago, the Conference Board of Directors and staff met in a retreat setting to begin conversations about the restructuring of our Conference life. Those discussions were an acknowledgment of the challenges inherent in maintaining two midlevel judicatories – the associations and Conference – in a Conference less than half the size of our founding membership in 1962. We wondered if unburdening ourselves of the many committee slots in the current structure might allow us to redeploy volunteer time and talent according to people's passions.

Throughout our conversations with stakeholders two ideas stood out like bright epiphanies – first, our desire to nurture UCC **relationships beyond the local church**, and second, our desire to **collaborate in the sharing of ministry ideas and resources**. This reframed the question about structural change from *What are we letting go of?* to *What are we living into?* Last fall, after several listening sessions and in consultation with Association leaders, the Board and staff recommended that we dissolve our four Associations at the Wisconsin Conference Annual Meeting in June. We have scheduled additional conversations in each Association in late February and early March for the purpose of sharing more details and illustrating the ways in which we might connect and support one another for greater ministry impact.

So far, we have nearly completed the proposal for a unified Committee on Ministry with regional representation. We appreciated the generous mission and scholarship support provided by the Associations and have made provisions for continuing them. We have drafted a new framework for membership dues and are preparing to streamline Association finance ledgers. And we have created a graphic that explains the Conference-wide resource web by showing the connections among our many resource hubs and active working groups. Imagine all the innovative ideas that will surface!

I feel the heart of this beloved Conference rejoicing at the advances we made in 2024:

- We launched a new website. Check it out at [wcucc.org](http://wcucc.org).
- We offered several marketing resources around the theme “Where God Is Still Speaking.”
- We made progress on the Leadership Forward campaign, with more than \$1.1 million pledged.
- We expanded Damascus Project course offerings and added an online Confirmation program.
- We created a volunteer Legacy Team that will accompany churches in closing decisions.
- We challenged our congregations to surface 20 new potential pastors over two years.
- We continued to strengthen our partnership with United Church Camps Inc.
- We advanced our anti-racism training through a course taken by Board and staff in the fall.

Joyfully submitted,  
The Rev. Franz Rigert  
Conference Minister



## Moderator's 2024 Annual Report

For the past two years it has been my privilege to serve as Moderator of this church. It has provided me with an opportunity to learn more about the church “from within” and to interact with many wonderful and committed people in leadership positions, as well as staff and volunteers.

One of the duties of the moderator is to preside at all meetings of the church and church council. The council is the governing body of the church and is charged with coordinating the programs that make up the life of the church. The council consists of the elected officers of the church, the senior pastor, and representatives from each of the standing committees of the church. It meets monthly except in June and July.

Council meetings typically begin with an opening prayer, followed by reviewal of the monthly treasurer's report. Discussion of old & new business follows. The meeting then turns to ministry updates, in which each committee representative present recaps the most recent meeting of their committee, shares their committee's activities and future plans, and requests discussion and approval by council of any topics that affect the church as a whole.

It is truly a blessing to be present for these updates and witness the creativity, energy and commitment of the leaders building the vibrant life of our church. People have so much to share that they need to speak quickly and summarize to the best of their ability so everything can be discussed within the time allotted for our meetings! I always leave council meetings feeling inspired, energized and humbled by how willingly our congregation members share their time and talents.

Council's goals for the 2024-2025 program year continue to mirror the emphases articulated by our Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Emphasis 1: Build a beloved community
- Strategic Emphasis 2: Care for our church home
- Strategic Emphasis 3: Grow our church
- Strategic Emphasis 4: Communicate our church's story

As a congregation, we are continually blessed to have a talented and dedicated staff serving our church – the pastors, the youth leadership, the music leadership, the building manager and custodial staff, and the office administrator. Their commitment, experience, and willingness to share their talents bless our church every day. Thank you!

And thank you, once again, to the members of the congregation for your openness and charity. Together we can help the church grow and thrive as we “strive to worship faithfully, welcome openly, grow spiritually, care passionately, and serve generously.”

Kathy Rausch, Moderator

## Among Friends 2024 Annual Report

A strong vision to continue our work of providing respite to those living with dementia and their caregivers has sustained our Board of Directors through this time of post-pandemic recovery. We survived. And now we are thriving. Yes.

Among Friends has opened a second day, our enrollment is full one day and almost full the second day, surpassing our pre-pandemic report. Thanks to a dedicated Board Personnel Committee, we were able to hire the exact right fit for our program. Sarah, our new Program Coordinator, is a gifted and creative leader, a compassionate person with our participants, and a smiling presence that we all appreciate.

As our participants' skills and abilities change so too does our Respite Program evolve and change. At present we have individuals who are living with dementia but physically quite capable. So our program now has drumming and dancing—but we still enjoy chair yoga, painting, and other activities. So many ways to enjoy a day at Among Friends.

We present to you an open invitation to join us for coffee and conversation at 9:00 Tuesday or Thursday morning. Or go to [amongfriendsrf.com](http://amongfriendsrf.com) or our Facebook page.

Last, without the spaces provided by folks like you, members of this congregation, Among Friends cannot exist. We are so very grateful for your generous sharing of space, donations to Among Friends, and volunteers from this church. God's best to all of you from the thankful hearts of Among Friends staff, volunteers, and participants.

Bonnie JonesWitthuhn, Board Chair and Volunteer

# Board of Christian Education 2024 Annual Report

The Board of Christian Education is responsible for Sunday School, Confirmation, Wednesday School, Vacation Bible School, and educational opportunities for adults. Below are highlights of 2024:

## Ongoing Responsibilities

- **Sunday School:** We offered Sunday School for students age 3 through grade 8. Lessons for elementary students were written for the congregation. There were 15 adults plus church interns who are teachers. Sunday School students prepared the annual Advent Musical, “Remembering the First Christmas.”
- **Adult Education:** The adult text study group met Sunday mornings during the program year to discuss the Bible texts used in worship.
- **Summer Program:** VBS served 42 students and included 34 adult and teen volunteers. The theme was “Christian Stories and Art.” Families received a booklet to help parents connect church learning to home life. The summer musical was “Rescue in the Night: The Story of Daniel” and had 16 participants.
- **Confirmation Students:** Confirmation classes met biweekly. Church interns met monthly. On alternate Wednesdays, confirmands and church interns attended Youth Group.
- **Wednesday School:** Wednesday School served elementary students and was supported by an excellent team of adult leaders. A highlight for 2024 was “Tiny Town”—buildings and structures made with boxes and tiny things—buttons, spools, and other random small things.

## Accomplishments

- Created an Advent resource highlighting four Advent themes (Hope, Peace, Joy, Love).
- Held four Learning Community events: Sabbatical Update/Art Conversation, A Conversation for Women about Women’s Health, The Art of Sadao Watanabe, and the Anxious Generation.
- Supported the congregation’s educational program during Pastor Stacy’s sabbatical.
- Established a temporary art exhibit, “Witness to Faith: The Art of Sadao Watanabe,” and arranged for another exhibit in 2025: “Cardboard Chronicles: The Art of Rudolph Bostic.”

## Report on 2024 Committee Goals

1. Align registration forms to the social media policy—Done.
2. Continue to expand use of the Family Resource Center—Ongoing, but needs more work.
3. Update Christian Education brochure—Will be done in 2025 in conjunction with new church brochure.
4. Make new wood backdrops—Done.
5. Offer opportunities to consider issues across the lifespan—Done.
  - *Anxious Generation* discussion
  - Health event for women

## 2025 Committee Goals

1. Revise Discipleship Traits and create new posters.
2. Update Christian Education brochure.
3. Increase use of the Family Resource Center.
4. Offer opportunities to consider issues across the lifespan.

Board of Christian Education: Kim Brown, Dawn Follstad, Jennifer Friese, Kathryn Hector, Angie Knutson, Christina Krueger, MiKayla Sanocki, Mara Shepherd (chair), Lori Swanson.

Minister of Christian Education: Stacy Johnson Myers

# Board of Deacons 2024 Annual Report

The Board of Deacons is called upon to:

- Minister to the spiritual interests of the church and community.
- Assist in preparing and administering the sacraments and caring for the altar and its fixtures.
- Support church services through ushering, collecting the offering, and providing additional assistance to the minister as needed.

The Deacons' ongoing tasks and goals include:

- Establishing and managing usher schedules and duties, including:
  - Greeting and assisting with in-person services.
  - Providing support for individuals with mobility challenges, including reserving back-row seats to accommodate those using wheelchairs or walkers.
  - Supporting multiple services during Easter week & Christmas Eve.
  - Assisting with "Welcoming" at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Entrance before each service.
- Assisting in the preparation and administration of communion:
  - Prepared and served weekly communion throughout the year.
  - To reflect our commitment to unity and inclusivity, we moved to a "single cup" of full-bodied grape juice for all, keeping with our practice of serving from a "single loaf" of bread.
  - Special thanks to Laura Anderson and Cindy Gandrud for baking our communion bread. Special thanks to Loral Keil for washing the communion cups each week.
  - Special thanks to Evelyn Purdy for continuing to help the Deacons keep the pitcher & chalice polished throughout the year.
- Assisting & supporting the Inquirers' Classes:
  - Hosted 2 Inquirers' Classes this past year – one in May and one in December.
- Hosting Coffee Fellowship for Confirmation Sunday:
  - We provided cake in honor of the confirmands during coffee fellowship in May.
- Supporting the Emergency Preparedness Committee:
  - The Deacons participated in UCC Emergency Preparedness Plan meetings and provided feedback on development of plan documents.

The Board is blessed to have the service of members: Laura Anderson, Cindy Gandrud, Loral Keil, Tanya Larsen, Karen Lloyd, Lance Lueck, Brian Miller, Jena Most, Ann Nelson, Becky Pajac, Marshall Skule, and Kathy Tomlinson. Special thanks to past members whose term ended in August 2024: Traci Hagberg, Suzanne Hagen, Linn Lawrence, and Lois Martin. We continue to strengthen our committee bonds through occasional social gatherings and by offering tangible support, such as flowers, food, and cards, to Deacon members who are facing challenges.

## Discipleship Committee 2024 Annual Report

The Discipleship Committee’s mission, as described in the Constitution, is to “plan and implement programs that generate support for the congregation’s ministries. This support is in the form of members’ time, talent, and money. The Discipleship Committee shall conduct the annual discipleship campaign.”

Our work also supports our strategic planning efforts by establishing and maintaining a sound financial base, which is essential to living out our purpose as a congregation to Worship Faithfully, Welcome Openly, Grow Spiritually, Care Passionately and Serve Generously.

In 2024, we continued the *People in the Pews* series once per month in the newsletter. Members answer a few questions about themselves and we learn a little bit about each other. Please consider answering the questions if one of our committee members asks you to do so or let us know if you are interested. This year as part of our fall Stewardship Campaign we asked three different church groups to reflect on their ministries before we dedicated our pledges on Giving Thanks Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup>.

The campaign theme for the 2024 budget was ***Imagine Together***. We tried to think of ways we as a church and individuals can imagine a better future together building off the theme Church Council expressed of connecting better with our faith, friends and community. Thank you to all who were bold enough to pledge more or begin to pledge in the year ahead.

The comparative results of the fall campaign as of January 3, 2025 were:

	<b>2024 Campaign (for 2025 budget)</b>	<b>2023 Campaign (for 2024 budget)</b>	<b>2022 Campaign (for 2023 budget)</b>	<b>2021 Campaign (for 2022 budget)</b>	<b>2020 Campaign (for 2021 budget)</b>	<b>2019 Campaign (for 2020 budget)</b>
<b>Total Pledges</b>	168	167	164	171	169	168
<b>Total Dollars Pledged</b>	\$435,734	\$431,684	\$424,552	\$385,736	\$382,114	\$388,867
<b>Average Pledge</b>	\$2,594	\$2,585	\$2,588	\$2,256	\$2,261	\$2,315

### Pledging Breakdown for 2024 Campaign:

**Increased:** 48 pledges (29% of total pledges)  
**Same:** 100 pledges (60% of total pledges)  
**Decreased:** 9 pledges (5% of total pledges)  
**New:** 11 pledges (6% of total pledges)

This year we continued our 8th straight year of increases in the total amount pledged. The total amount of dollars pledged, particularly by those who made new pledges and those who increased their pledges, was significant. Every gift to our congregation helps to strengthen who we are and what we can do together. The congregation’s generous giving even amidst challenging economic circumstances is a strong testament to the vitality of the church and its mission.

With appreciation,  
 The Discipleship Committee  
 Lara Koecher, Leland Lueck, Barb Mahoney, Diane Olson, Pastor Chris

# Endowment Grant Committee 2024 Annual Report

## Mission Statement:

To distribute funds allocated to the committee as per the Endowment Resolution of 2005.

## 2024 Endowment Grant Committee Budget

The 2024 Endowment Committee allotted funds for grants was \$17,000. .... \$17,000

### Grants Approved to Mission Education:

Guest Speaker for EarthFest ..... \$2,500

Feed My Starving Children Mobile Packing Event ..... \$3,000

Supplies for Christmas Shoeboxes ..... \$700

Yarn for the Knitting Group ..... \$350

Funds to the WISE Team for an Art Therapy Workshop ..... \$500

### Grant Approved to Christian Education:

Funding for classroom toys, storage containers, table ..... \$1,800

### Grant Approved to Welcome Committee:

Food for Game Day Sundays ..... \$600

### Grant Approved to Music Committee:

A portion of the musician fee for the Silent Movie Event ..... \$1,500

### Grant Approved to the Trustees:

Funds for upcoming building repairs ..... \$3,000

**Total Funds Dispersed ..... \$13,950**

**Remaining Balance ..... \$3,050**

Committee Members: Norma Revels-Chair/Secretary, Jennifer Elsesser, Del Hirstein, Marsha Pearson, Matt Bastian, Eunice Filkins.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Norma Revels

# Finance Committee 2024 Annual Report

The Finance Committee began 2024 overseeing the tail end of a much-delayed three-year capital campaign to: 1) eliminate the debt on our building, 2) fund improvements to our audio, visual, and online technology, and 3) replace our outdoor sign. We worked with Hal Johnson and Associates who conducted two previous capital campaigns for us. Thanks to the generosity of our church members, we had a very successful campaign. This fall we were able to finally make progress on all three of our goals.

- † On Sunday, September 15, we burned the church mortgage and finished our bank loan payments
- † In November, Audio Architects upgraded our sound and visual systems in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall
- † In November, Graphic House installed our church sign (with the correct color on the second try!)

This has been a long process, and we thank EVERYONE who has helped us along the way. As of January 13<sup>th</sup>, we are still waiting on a few tweaks and bills to come in so we will provide a final accounting for all three projects in next year's Annual Report. Thanks be to God!

## **Capital Campaign Summary – As of January 13, 2025**

• Original cost of facilities expansion project	\$2,386,970
• Remaining amount on bank loan	\$0
• Audio, visual, online technology, and outdoor sign (est. costs)	\$120,000
• Cash on hand in the Building Fund	\$92,254

## **Three Year Campaign Summary as of January 13, 2025**

Total Pledged	\$596,646.00
Total Received to Date	571,873.15
Remaining Balance	\$24,772.85

Respectfully submitted,  
Brad Williams, Pastor Chris, Scott Jameson, Fred Benson, Joel Larsen, and Carole Mottaz

## Investment Committee 2024 Annual Report

In 2024 the Investment Committee continued following the investment committee charter and policy guidelines created in 2013. Our roles and responsibilities included oversight of the invested assets of the church, as well as monitoring the management of the portfolio for compliance with the investment policies and guidelines.

In January 2024, the Investment Committee discussed, moved, and approved an expenditure allocation of 4% of the Endowment Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023, for disbursement in 2024. That 4% figure was \$37,376 and was disbursed in 2024 by Church Council.

In January 2025, the Investment Committee discussed, moved, and approved an expenditure allocation of 4% of the Endowment Fund Balance as of December 31, 2024, for disbursement in 2025. That 4% figure is \$39,015 and will be disbursed in 2025 by Church Council.

### 12/31/2024 Investment breakdown as follows:

Investments are held at United Church Funds. We also hold liquid funds at 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank of River Falls in a “Non-General Fund” checking account.

	<b>12/31/2023</b>	<b>12/31/2024</b>
CASH Equivalents: (UCF Cash & Equivalent Fund + Non-GF Checking)	\$38,004.11	\$54,159.11
UCF Funds:		
Fixed Income	\$289,021.06	\$307,784.54
Domestic Core	\$464,893.13	\$482,568.38
Small Cap Equity	\$211,246.27	\$213,757.80
International Equity	\$199,337.87	\$205,443.41
<b>Total Invested Funds</b>	<b>\$1,202,502.44</b>	<b>\$1,263,713.24</b>

### 12/31/2024 Church Funds breakdown:

	<u>Balances</u>	
Endowment Fund	\$	675,365.63
Scholarship fund	\$	533,071.14
Discretionary	\$	17,483.55
Music	\$	2,858.61
Brazil	\$	34,934.30
Sub Total		\$1,263,713.23
Endowment Loan	\$	300,000.00
Total of Funds		\$1,563,713.23

Total gain on the invested funds for 2024 was \$148,976 for an annualized return of 12%.

Total distributions from invested funds for 2024 was \$90,585.62

Accounting for all distributions, total invested funds increased by \$61,210.56 or 5.09%.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to ask any committee members.

Committee Members: Joel Larsen/Chair, Kris Roen, Janet Johnson, Kathy Rausch, Scott Elsesser, Marie Roe, or Chris Myers/Staff



# Mission Education Committee 2024 Annual Report

The Mission Education Committee is responsible for educating the congregation about mission opportunities, providing financial support for mission partners and seeking mission ideas from the congregation. The Committee is thankful for the generous cash donations and service time provided by the congregation in 2024. We feel blessed to be part of such a giving congregation!

## **Financial Support:**

**2024 Mission Partners:** Among Friends, Assistance & Resource Center (ARC), Back Bay, Feed My Starving Children, Food Pantry, Free Clinic, Habitat for Humanity, Our Church's Wider Mission, Our Neighbor's Place, Refugee Relief (Israel/Palestine conflict), Servant of the Shepherd, Turning Point, UCC Camps

**Financial and other donations:** Simpson Shelter meals, Mental Health books for UWRF Campus Free Library, Basics for Local Kids, funds to purchase cheater glasses to First Covenant Church.

**Endowment Grants:** Christmas Shoeboxes, EarthFest speaker, Knitting group, WISE committee art therapy event to be held spring of 2025, Feed My Starving Children 2024 community event at Tattersall.

## **Mission Opportunities:**

**Reverse Advent Calendar:** 1469 pounds of food and a check for \$1,908.23 were delivered to the Food Pantry at the end of December.

**Mother's Day/Father's Day Diaper Drive:** We donated over 7000 diapers and wipes to the RF Food Pantry, Turning Point and Our Neighbor's Place in June. The Mission committee continues to connect with other area churches, organizations and businesses in order to provide year-round diapers to those in need.

**Shrimp Boil:** Held on March 13th and raised \$1,680.98.

**Mission Ideas:** Committee members met with representatives from Habitat for Humanity, Basics for Local Kids, Compassion International and Journey House.

## **Education and Support:**

**WISE committee for Mental Health:** In April the WISE team presented a panel of adults who are living with, or who have family members living with mental health challenges. In December, a "Blue Christmas" service for individuals who are grieving or suffering from mental health challenges was held.

**EarthFest 2024** was held in April. First Congregational was recognized as a Gold Sponsor and assisted with funding for the keynote speaker, Paul Douglas. The Mission Committee had a "Spiritual Wellness" display table at the event where we gave away finger labyrinths and a basket full of weather-related items.

**Plans for 2025:** Service opportunities will be explored. Education through Mission Moments and newsletter updates will continue. Financial support to our partners and other organizations will be reviewed and updated.

**Mission Committee Members:** Bobbie Kuhn, Carol Merriman, Larry Peterson, Lori Otto (term ended August 2024), Rebecca Ferguson, Rene Bylander, Sue Simonet, Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn, Sally Steneman, Pastor Deb Meyer and our new members, Rene Whipple, Betsy Terlinden, and Evelyn Purdy.

# Music Committee 2024 Annual Report

**Committee Purpose:** To provide appropriate music to enrich the life of the church and to oversee the music of the church.

## Music Committee Goals and Objectives for 2025:

We will strive to:

- Provide opportunities to perform music that will enrich the lives and worship experiences of our musicians, congregation, and community
- Keep our musicians active and connected
- As stewards of the Kitzerow Fund, support exceptional musical offerings to our church and community
- Support musical endeavors and equipment, upkeep and supplies

## 2024 Music Events and Accomplishments:

- Funded the re-pitching of the organ in January of 2024, allowing for handbells and instrumentalists to play along with music performed on the instrument
- The Chancel Choir participated in the It Takes a Village Concert held at Ezekiel Lutheran Church in February and performed a Good Friday Cantata during worship in March
- Initiated use of new Worship and Rejoice hymnals, working to include dedications in every cover, in spring of 2024
- Hosted a concert featuring Jacqueline Schwab in April, she is the pianist heard on numerous Ken Burns productions
- Coordinated the concert on the lawn in July; hired a food truck, hosted Slapdash Bluegrass, and provided refreshments for attendees
- Organized a silent movie concert featuring Dennis James. With the help of an Endowment Grant, we were able to offer this to the community for free! He performed music to the film The Hunchback of Notre Dame in October.
- Sold 91 ornaments, raising a total of \$581 in December for future music opportunities. This would not have been possible without a generous donation by Bob Johnson.
- Planned and prepared music for a congregational Christmas carol sing along in December (Unfortunately due to the accompanist's illness, this did not take place).

## Music Events in 2025:

The Music Committee is planning a spring concert and hopes to bring back Slapdash Bluegrass and Rollin' River Mobile Hospitality for another event at the opening of River Falls Days. We have purchased a new Good Friday Cantata for Lent, and plan to get the handbells serviced this summer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jamie Mills  
Music Coordinator

## Music Committee Members:

Jamie Mills, Jamie Follstad, Dave Reilly, Deb Hoffman, Jen Syversen, Marsha Pearson

## Personnel Committee 2024 Annual Report

The Personnel Committee has several specific responsibilities as outlined in our committee description:

- *Develop and maintain a supportive relationship with each church employee.*
- *Conduct an annual performance review with each employee, create a review document outlining this discussion and retain these reviews in each confidential personnel file.*
- *Foster regular communication between each church employee, their needs and their role in service to church committees.*
- *Provide annual compensation recommendations to the Trustees and refine as needed to meet the annual church budget.*

In October and November individual committee members met with each church staff member regarding their work, accomplishments, challenges, and questions. This information was then brought back and shared with the committee and Pastor Chris. The committee also does a separate meeting with Pastor Chris regarding his work.

This year the committee did a review of the goals and performance review process that has been used in the past. It was decided that the goals exercise and accompanying document, as well as the review process and documents, be combined and done over the summer. In essence the process will now be that the staff member will develop goals for the coming year with Pastor Chris over the summer. The committee members and Pastor Chris will use this document as the basis for ongoing and summative discussions. This is the document that committee members will use as a guide when they meet with staff members individually.

At the conclusion of our work, the committee concluded that we have an excellent staff – very capably led by Pastor Chris. Their work is important to our church community, and we value what they bring to their endeavors. We are very blessed.

As is required by our committee charge, we made a salary increase recommendation to the Trustees. We recommended a 3.5% increase for 2025.

Alan Tuchtenhagen, Chair  
Personnel Committee

**Personnel Committee Members:** Kathy Rausch, Carol Merriman, Suzanne Hagen, Marie Roe, and Alan Tuchtenhagen

# Picture the Bible® 2024 Annual Report

## Ongoing Responsibilities

- Oversee all *Picture the Bible* (PTB) activities.
- Monitor and ship all PTB sales.
- Keep track of PTB sales and inventory.
- Make decisions regarding the appropriate, legal use of the PTB images.
- Make financial and business decisions for PTB.
- Monitor the PTB website.
- Provide financial updates regarding PTB to church council.

## 2024 Accomplishments

In 2024 the committee:

- Oversaw the completion of 45 of 52 PTB Kid Lit (as in *Picture the Bible* Children's Literature) resources and added the individual units to the PTB store.
- Found a new artist (Kira Vega) for the two existing PTB commissioned pieces.
- Directed Skinner and Associates to renew the PTB trademark. The trademark was established in 2016. Skinner and Associates reports an increase in trademark infringement. Since PTB has already had one trademark infringement, we hired Skinner for "trademark watching." This commitment is for one year and will be reviewed annually.

## Observations at the End of 2024

- The initial artist commissioned to do two new images ("Anointing of Jesus" and "Mana and Quail in the Wilderness") returned the commission. Subsequently, we sought and received submissions from seven artists, and selected one. The new artist, Kira Vega, is artistically talented and has experience working with children. We expect the two pieces to be done by May, 2025.
- Sales have slowed. Increasing sales requires time, expertise, and financial resources that we do not currently have. The most realistic focus for PTB will be First Congregation and the congregations currently using our resources.

## 2025 Goals

- Complete the seven remaining PTB Kid Lit materials.
- Work with the artist to finish the new commissioned images.
- Reproduce and frame new commissioned images.
- Create PTB Kid Lit materials and conversation pages for the two new images and add to the online store.

## Net Income

As of December 31, 2024, PTB has \$15,612.10 cash on hand, as well as physical and digital inventory.

Picture the Bible Committee: Rebecca Ferguson, Scott Jameson, Jennie Price, Jean Smith, Alan Tuchtenhagen,  
Staff Person: Stacy Myers

## Scholarship Committee 2024 Annual Report

Scholarships are awarded in three categories--High School Seniors, Continuing Education, and Spiritual Growth. The committee made several changes to the program in the past few years. The Continuing Education Scholarships will have a due date of the first Sunday in May, rather than being an open-ended application period. This will give the Investment Committee a better idea on how much needs to be withdrawn from the investments. We also added an essay component to our Continuing Education Application. Our final task this year was updating Scholarship Committee Guidelines that were originally created in 2016.

The Scholarship Fund was founded years ago by a church member named Fred Short. More recently an anonymous donor has provided the financial means for our scholarship program to expand greatly. This year our Scholarship Fund Balance was \$533,071. Our recipients are grateful, and our congregation and community are thankful!

Scholarship awards for High School Seniors, Continuing Education, & Spiritual Growth Scholarships totaled \$50,770. Thirty-two individuals (8 High School Seniors--\$25,570; 11 Continuing Ed Students--\$22,100; & 13 Spiritual Growth Recipients--\$3,100) benefited from these scholarships. Eleven of the Thirteen Spiritual Growth Recipients used their funds for the Back Bay Mission Trip. Some students deferred receiving their grants, so they will carry over to next year.

The scholarship funds are under the direction of the Church Investment Committee. Year-end financial information can be found in the Investment Committee report.

**2024/25 Committee Members:** Jenny Luedtke--Outgoing Chair; Wayne Roen; Lois Martin; Alex Plum; Pastor Chris Myers

# Trustee Committee 2024 Annual Report

The Trustee Committee is one of the many committees of the church that work hard to keep the church functioning. We are responsible for overseeing building maintenance, improvements and repairs, opening and closing the building on Sunday mornings, creating and implementing a balanced church budget, and other needed financial decisions as they arise. 2025 Trustee members: Jane Truesdill, Scott Nelson, Louie Filkins, Rick Price, Jon Paul Okal, Steve Koecher, Vicki Sippel, Matt Bastien, Tim Bylander, Missy Luedtke. **Thank you all for your support!**

**Special Thanks:** Missy Luedtke: Our treasured Treasurer and Tim Bylander: The fix-it guy

## 2024 Accomplishments

- Managed the replacement of our sign (twice!).
- Purchased a new lawn/snow tractor, nearly all of the cost donated by Lillian Tan, Thanks again!
- “Balanced” the 2025 budget.
- Inside cleaning of the Sanctuary, Fellowship, Kitchen, Bathrooms and other areas.
- Outside fall and spring clean-up days.
- Miscellaneous building tests and repairs including roof leaks.

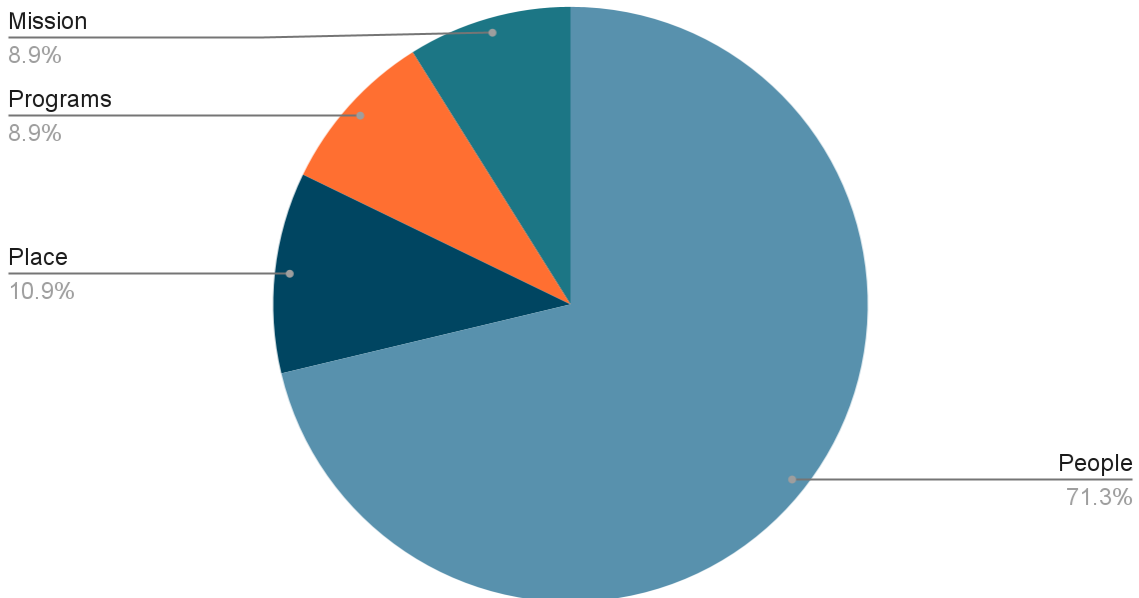
## 2025 Planned Projects

- **Outdoor and indoor cleanup events.**
- Investigate insurance options.
- Continue to grow our new “brick and mortar” fund.
- Estimate our 2026 budget.

## 2025 Budget Graphic:

- Budget up 1.5% (\$544k-\$552k), based on giving trends and 2024 surplus.

### General Budget



# Welcoming Ministry 2024 Annual Report

## **Mission Statement**

*The Welcoming Ministry seeks to live out God's gracious hospitality, as we open our doors wide, remembering that no matter who you are, or where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here.*

## **Goals**

1. Promote an atmosphere where we, as a church, welcome openly all new worshipers through:
  - a. Sunday service Welcomers at the doors.
  - b. We have partnered with the Deacons to help with the door on 3rd street.
  - c. Promotion of church nametags. Marshall built a new nametag holder.
2. Promote an atmosphere where we, as a church, welcome openly all new guests through:
  - a. Our new welcome table, made by Marshall Skule, where guests are encouraged to sign in and take a gift bag filled with church information and a church cup.
  - b. Have someone there to man the table after church to meet and greet the visitors.
  - c. Special invitation to all church events.
  - d. If we see someone sitting alone, go sit with them.
3. Support the Coffee Fellowship through promoting and scheduling volunteers, especially involving the interns. We serve Best Maid cookies for safety and now are allowed to serve other treats.

## **Highlights of the Year Include**

- We welcome our new committee members: Norma Revels, JoAnn Lentz, and Bobbie Kuhn.
- We said goodbye and many thanks to Jill Paulson and Pastor Deb. They will be missed.
- We pray this year of 2025 will be our best year ever and we can continue to welcome everyone who comes through our doors. Interact and fellowship together again.

## **Committee Members:**

Susan Walden, Lynn and Dennis Linder, Julie Bauer, JoAnn Lentz, Norma Revels, and Bobbie Kuhn

## **This year we assigned new positions for our group.**

Susan Walden (Chair and sending out Welcome Visitor Cards), Norma Revels (Gift Bags), Lynn Linder (Secretary), JoAnn Lentz (Welcome Schedule), Bobbie Kuhn (Fellowship)

Report submitted by Susan Walden, Chair

## Youth Ministry 2024 Annual Report

My name is Alex Plum and I am serving in my fourth year as Youth Minister for First Congregational UCC. In this role, I have had the honor to work with students and friends of our middle school youth group, our high school youth group, and our church intern program. I also serve on the committee and planners for 'Souled Out', a group of local youth ministers from River Falls area churches. We meet quarterly to discuss our youth programs, and to collaborate on programming and opportunities for students in our schools. As a youth minister, I have the exciting job of planning fun and engaging events for our church youth and their friends, as well as connecting to our students as they navigate their childhood and transition into adulthood. After 4 years, it has been a joy to see my first group of middle schoolers now in high school, while my first group of high schoolers are either about to graduate from high school, or are in their college programs, serving in the military, or doing amazing things in the workforce. My job allows me the unique opportunity to give experiences and memories to students during their formative learning years, so that they can look back on them and appreciate the wonderful church community that helped raise them and provided these opportunities to them.

Each year, our middle and high school youth groups change in dynamics as people enter and graduate the program. The first few years were years of growth as we learned how to navigate a new post-covid society and get back into a routine. After a few years of growth, this year has been a joy as our middle school youth group has been very lively, with high attendance and students encouraging their friends to join our groups. After four years of learning and finding ways to program for our very busy high schoolers, I have been finding more success in providing opportunities that excite and engage our high school youth as well. Some annual opportunities our youth get to experience that you probably know we do are preparing meals at Feed My Starving Children, serving the congregation at the annual Giving Thanks Meal and Easter Breakfast, wrapping Christmas shoeboxes for the men's rehab center, packing college packs for congregation youth studying in college programs, and unloading pallets of peaches for the annual peach fundraiser.

With the support of the church and the youth fund, our students have been able to do some fun things in 2024 for our youth group activities. Our high school youth attended a riveting game between the UWRF and UWEC women's hockey team, where UWRF continued their undefeated season. Our middle school youth taped glow sticks to their bodies mimicking stick figures and walked around the church in the dark. Our youth have played close races of Mario Kart on the fellowship hall big screen projector. They have played competitive games of four square in the church alley, and gaga ball at the middle school. Bowling. Kayaking on the Kinni. Bonfires on the church lawn. Whirlyball, which is a game crossed between basketball and lacrosse all while driving bumper cars. Laser Tag. Playing at the River Falls Arcade. And Chris's favorite activity to date, which is hiding 150 miniature baby figurines throughout the entire church. (BTW, there are still three babies in Pastor Chris's office that he has not found yet).

Looking into the new year, we have some great opportunities coming up for our youth. For instance, our high school youth group members are going late night skiing at Trollhaugen for a mini winter retreat together, and our youth groups are going rock climbing at the university. We are also beginning the planning stages for mission opportunities in the summer, as well as the Back Bay Mission Trip down to Biloxi, Mississippi, with the high school youth during the spring break of 2026.

As a parent of a toddler in the church, I am thankful that this church supports youth programming that brings children and families into this church through youth group, education, and community. I want to personally thank the congregation for supporting these youth opportunities and uplifting the children of our church.

Alex Plum, Youth Minister



# First Congregational United Church of Christ - River Falls, WI Inc.

## Annual Meeting Minutes, February 4, 2024

Attendance total: 105

Meeting opened by Moderator Kathy Rausch at 11:33 am.

1. Opening Prayer – Pastor Chris
2. Approval of Agenda - Motion made to approve the agenda by Bradley Williams, seconded by David Reilly. Passed by the Congregation.
3. Approval of February 5, 2023, Annual Meeting Minutes-motion made to approve Feb 2023 meeting minutes by Renae Bylander, seconded by Marie Roe. Passed by the Congregation
4. Old Business: No old business brought forward
5. New Business:
  - a. Presentations by Committees: CE, Deacons, Discipleship, Endowment Grant, Mission, PTB, Scholarship, Trustees
  - b. WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaging for Mental Health) Team presentation - Marg Downing provided an overview of the committee and the focus of their service in the congregation and community. The committee works towards becoming a WISE certified congregation.
  - c. Creation Justice proposal: Pastor Deb provided information from the Green Team seeking certification as a congregation. Copies of the Covenant provided to the Congregation outlining the conditions for the Creation Justice Certification. The Church Council will discuss how to move on this proposal.
6. Approval of Reports
  - a. Pastor, Denomination, Staff, and Moderator
  - b. Boards and Committee Reports
  - c. Clerk's Report

Motion to approve the reports made by Roz Ostendorf, seconded by Jean Smith. Approved by the Congregation.

7. Building Fund Update - Brad Williams provided an overview of the mortgage. The initial loan was for: \$2,386,970. The current balance is \$44,170 and the amount remaining to be collected from the campaign is \$113,449. The balance in the campaign will fund the new sound system and sign. The mortgage will be paid off in 2024 and the Capital Campaign ends in June 2025. If the mortgage is paid off more quickly, the congregation could focus on additional ministries.
8. Acceptance of 2023 Treasurer's Report – Louie Filkins, Kathy Rausch, Pastor Chris and Brad Williams reviewed the report and responded to any questions or comments brought forth. Stu Henning asked for clarification about the difference between the pledged funds and the unpledged giving amount that is estimated each year. Chris and Brad Williams provided additional explanation of the process to determine that. Alan Tuchtenhagen noted the importance of the quality of the staff the congregation employs. Deb Meyer observed the increases in recent pledge years.

9. Presentation and Approval of 2024 Budget as recommended by the Church Council and Trustees provided by Louie Filkins, Kathy Rausch, Pastor Chris. Motion made to accept the 2023 Treasurer's Report and the 2024 Budget by Brad Williams. Seconded by Christina Krueger. Passed by the Congregation.
10. Election of Officers, Conference Delegates, and Nominating Committee Members: Moderator, Vice Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, Conference Delegates, Nominating Committee. Motion made by Jean Smith to approve the election of officers, seconded by Brian Miller, passed by the congregation.
11. Other Business: Pastor Stacy Sabbatical: Stacy reported on the Lilly Clergy Renewal Grant she was awarded. The highly sought after grant will provide funding for travel and educational opportunities, replacement staff for Stacy during her absence and funding to bring in three or four visiting artists and receptions to show their work.
12. Congregation was asked for any items they would like to see Church Council address or on the agenda for the 2024 annual meeting. No suggestions were made at this time.
13. Adjournment: Motion made to adjourn by Rene Bylander. Seconded by Joann Lentz. Passed by the Congregation.

Respectfully submitted by Jo Anne Friedell, Church Clerk

## Clerk's Report 2024

Baptisms: Evie Grace Pearson dob: Oct. 9, 2023, child of Michael and Justin Pearson, 1/14/2024  
Hope Tyler Withers dob: Sept. 19, 2023, child of Erik and Vanessa Withers, 2/25/2024  
Laney Katherine Sitz dob: Mar 7, 2023, child of Daniel and Heather Sitz, 3/3/2024  
Nora Jean Koecher dob: Dec. 8, 2023, child of Dan and Mari Koecher, 3/10/2024  
Talia Kay Thompson dob: July 25, 2018, child of Kristopher Thompson & MiKayla Sanocki, 5/5/2024  
Orion Duane Thompson dob: Feb. 1, 2020, child of Kristopher Thompson & MiKayla Sanocki, 5/5/2024  
Oliver Jack Thompson dob: May 18, 2022, child of Kristopher Thompson & MiKayla Sanocki, 5/5/2024  
Tova Nancy Thompson dob: Feb. 27, 2024, child of Kristopher Thompson & MiKayla Sanocki, 5/5/2024

Confirmands: Marshall Joseph Friese  
Maranda Lucille Herum  
Alexander John Korent

New Members: Tony and Judy Hinden  
Dan and Mari Koecher, with children Lydia and Nora  
Tom Magraw and Kristin Andes – Associate members  
Kris Thompson and MiKayla Sanocki, with children Talia, Orion, Oliver and Tova

Marriages: Alexis Handeland and Adam Lovelace August 10, 2024

Transfers Out: David and Roz Ostendorf, October 7, 2024

### Deaths

Through

12/31/24: Richard Vennes Alexander, January 12, 2024  
Neal Harrold Prochnow, January 19, 2024  
Harold Duane Fosmo, March 4, 2024  
Richard LeRoy Wells, August 18, 2024  
Ronald Duane Truesdill, September 20, 2024  
Janice Lee Getting Charpentier, October 14, 2024  
Jean Violet Hector, November 9, 2024

Membership Total # of members on 12/31/2024: 691

Submitted by

Jo Anne Friedell, Church Clerk

## Budget History at a Glance

	Actual 2019	Actual 2020	Actual 2021	Actual 2022	Actual 2023	Actual 2024	Proposed 2024	Proposed 2025
Mission	40,675	44,398	44,438	47,500	47,533	47,570	47,500	50,000
People	353,309	325,510	326,202	357,398	377,565	390,554	394,208	392,829
Place	46,568	59,488	55,789	54,962	54,920	59,003	54,700	60,400
Program	44,478	47,494	43,775	44,048	47,927	49,603	47,670	49,170
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>485,030</b>	<b>476,890</b>	<b>470,204</b>	<b>503,908</b>	<b>527,945</b>	<b>546,730</b>	<b>544,078</b>	<b>552,399</b>
Surplus/Deficit	+362	+561	+665	+223	+125	+8,812	0	0

### 2025 Budget at a Glance Notes:

- The budget is balanced and realistic in terms of both expenses and income.
- All four of our main budget categories are up slightly:
  - \* People is increased because the Personnel Committee recommended a 3.5% cost of living adjustment which is included for all staff that have been employed for more than a year.
  - \* It includes 6 months of funding (starting in July) for our Minister of Community vacated by Deb Meyer's retirement last year.
- Our pledged income is up (see Discipleship Annual Report).
- Our general fund mission giving is up but that is only a small part of our total mission giving.

**ELECTED OFFICERS – 2024**  
**First Congregational United Church of Christ**

<b>MODERATOR (2-year term)</b>	<i>Marie Roe (2024-26)</i>	<i>715-781-2103</i>
<b>VICE MODERATOR (2-year term)</b>	<i>Louie Filkins (2024-26)</i>	<i>715-377-2669</i>
<b>CLERK:</b>	<i>JoAnne Friedell</i>	<i>715-426-6139</i>
<b>TREASURER:</b>	<i>Missy Luedtke</i>	<i>715-425-2052</i>
<b>DELEGATE:</b>	<i>Carol Merriman</i>	<i>715-307-1056</i>

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE (Elected– 5 members/3 yr. term)**

<i>Norma Revels</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>651-260-5725</i>	<i>Marsha Pearson</i>	<i>2026(2)</i>	<i>715-425-5614</i>
<i>Karen Lloyd</i>	<i>2027(2)</i>	<i>715-821-4478</i>			
<i>Bobbie Kuhn</i>	<i>2026(2)</i>	<i>715-425-6814</i>	<i>Marie Roe (Mod)</i>	<i>2024-26</i>	<i>715-781-2103</i>

**COMMITTEES AND BOARDS 2024-25**

**Approved by Church Council**

(Dates indicate final year of service; 1 or 2 after year indicates first or second term;  
terms began Sept. 1 of 2022) \*Asterisk before name indicates chairperson

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (9 members/3-year term)**

<i>Christina Krueger</i>	<i>2027(2)</i>	<i>715-222-9242</i>	<i>MiKayla Sanocki</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>651-307-6176</i>
<i>Kim Brown</i>	<i>2025(1)</i>	<i>952-232-7201</i>	<i>Angie Knutson</i>	<i>2026(1)</i>	<i>612-961-7974</i>
<i>Jennifer Friese</i>	<i>2025(1)</i>	<i>651-323-3267</i>	<i>Kathryn Hector</i>	<i>2025(1)</i>	<i>715-307-2052</i>
<i>*Mara Shepherd</i>	<i>2025(2)</i>	<i>715-533-2500</i>	<i>Dawn Follstad</i>	<i>2025(1)</i>	<i>651-278-3885</i>
<i>Lori Swanson</i>	<i>2025(2)</i>	<i>715-425-7470</i>	<i>Stacy Johnson Myers</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>715-425-2052</i>

**DEACONS (12 members/3-year term)**

<i>Laura Anderson</i>	<i>2027(2)</i>	<i>715-497-8103</i>	<i>Kathy Tomlinson</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>715-410-5256</i>
<i>Jena Most</i>	<i>2026(2)</i>	<i>651-503-0639</i>	<i>*Karen Lloyd</i>	<i>2025(2)</i>	<i>715-821-4478</i>
<i>Tanya Larsen</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>715-760-2190</i>	<i>Marshall Skule</i>	<i>2025(2)</i>	<i>612-282-1889</i>
<i>Cindy Gandrud</i>	<i>2025(2)</i>	<i>715-307-1289</i>	<i>Becky Pajac</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>715-684-9897</i>
<i>Lance Lueck</i>	<i>2026(1)</i>	<i>715-629-0006</i>	<i>Ann Nelson</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>715-222-4982</i>
<i>Brian Miller</i>	<i>2026(1)</i>	<i>715-425-0210</i>	<i>Loral Keil</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>715-425-0210</i>

**DISCIPLESHIP (6 members/3-year term)**

<i>Diane Olson</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>612-501-4611</i>	<i>Barb Mahoney</i>	<i>2026(1)</i>	<i>715-441-1881</i>
<i>Lara Koecher</i>	<i>2025(2)</i>	<i>651-285-2748</i>			
<i>Lee Lueck</i>	<i>2025(1)</i>	<i>715-781-0183</i>	<i>Chris Myers</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>715-425-2052</i>

**ENDOWMENT GRANT (6 members/3-year term)**

<i>Matt Bastien</i>	<i>2026(1)</i>	<i>312-731-0408</i>	<i>Del Hirstein</i>	<i>2025(2)</i>	<i>715-425-9522</i>
<i>Eunice Filkins</i>	<i>2024(1)</i>	<i>715-497-4514</i>	<i>Jen Elsesser</i>	<i>2026(2)</i>	<i>651-485-9799</i>
<i>*Norma Revels</i>	<i>2025(1)</i>	<i>651-260-5725</i>	<i>Marsha Pearson</i>	<i>2025(1)</i>	<i>715-425-5614</i>
			<i>Chris Myers</i>	<i>Ex-Officio</i>	<i>715-425-2052</i>

<b>MISSION EDUCATION (9 members/3-year term)</b>					
<i>Larry Peterson</i>	2026(2)	715-377-5007	<i>Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn</i>	2026(1)	715-307-1182
<i>Betsy Terlinden</i>	2027(1)	651-301-1051	<i>*Sally Steneman</i>	2026(2)	651-208-4128
<i>Carol Merriman</i>	2025(1)	715-307-1056	<i>Bobbie Kuhn</i>	2025(1)	715-441-2517
<i>Rene Bylander</i>	2025(1)	715-808-2806	<i>Sue Simonet</i>	2025(1)	715-425-2279
<i>Rebecca Ferguson</i>	2026(2)	262-227-1542	<i>Evelyn Purdy</i>	2025(1)	952-891-5182
<i>Rene Whipple</i>	2027(1)	715-307-5074			

<b>MUSIC COMMITTEE (6 members/3-year term)</b>					
<i>*David Reilly</i>	2027(2)	715-907-5381	<i>Jamie Follstad</i>	2026(2)	651-208-2995
<i>Marsha Pearson</i>	2027(1)	715-425-5614	<i>Jen Syverson</i>	2027(1)	715-821-6614
<i>Deb Hoffman</i>	2025(2)	612-308-4945			
			<i>Jamie Mills</i>	<i>Staff</i>	715-419-0850

<b>TRUSTEES (9 members/3-year term)</b>					
<i>Jane Truesdill</i>	2025(2)	715-338-9459	<i>Steve Koecher</i>	2025(1)	651-335-1768
<i>Scott Nelson</i>	2027(2)	715-307-5877	<i>Dan Rude</i>	2025(1)	715-781-7031
<i>Matt Bastian</i>	2027(1)	312-731-0408	<i>Jon Paul Okal</i>	2025(1)	715-386-0589
<i>*Louie Filkins</i>	2027(2)	715-377-2669	<i>Rick Price</i>	2026(1)	715-426-2640
<i>Vicki Sippel</i>	2027(1)	715-220-0270	<i>Tim Bylander</i>	<i>Staff</i>	715-425-7437

<b>WELCOMING MINISTRY (6 members/3-year term)</b>					
<i>*Susan Walden</i>	2025(2)	612-805-3505	<i>JoAnn Lentz</i>	2025(1)	715-425-6477
<i>Dennis Linder</i>	2025(1)	612-750-1761	<i>Bobbie Kuhn</i>	2027(1)	715-441-2517
<i>Lynn Linder</i>	2025(1)	612-280-6483	<i>Julie Bauer</i>	2026(1)	715-386-9603
<i>Norma Revels</i>	2026(1)	651-260-5725			

===== Appointed =====

<b>INVESTMENT COMMITTEE (5 voting members/5 yr terms, 1 ex-officio members; Appointed by Moderator &amp; Council)</b>					
<i>Kathy Rausch</i>	2026(2)	612-636-2348	<i>Janet Johnson</i>	2028(1)	715-425-6648
<i>Marie Roe</i>	<i>Moderator</i>	715-781-2103	<i>Scott Elsesser</i>	2027(1)	715-690-9537
<i>Kris Roen</i>	2025(2)	715-629-7230	<i>Chris Myers</i>	<i>Ex-Officio</i>	715-425-2052
<i>*Joel Larsen</i>	2029(1)	715-821-9800			

<b>MEMORIAL GARDEN (3 members; Appointed)</b>					
<i>Lu Lueck</i>		715-781-0138	<i>Susan Walden</i>		612-805-3505
<i>JoAnne Friedell</i>		715-821-3252	<i>Chris Myers</i>	<i>Staff</i>	715-425-2052

<b>PASTORAL RELATIONS (4 members; Appointed by Moderator and Pastor)</b>					
<i>Bob Ferguson</i>		715-629-7792	<i>Brad Williams</i>		612-723-1873
<i>Suzanne Hagen</i>		715-307-8744			

<b>PERSONNEL (6 members/3-year terms; Appointed by Moderator)</b>					
<i>Alan Tuchtenhagen</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>715-307-1748</i>			
<i>Carol Merriman</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>715-307-1056</i>	<i>Marie Roe</i>	<i>Moderator</i>	<i>715-781-2103</i>
<i>Suzanne Hagen</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>715-307-8744</i>	<i>Chris Myers</i>	<i>Ex-offico</i>	<i>715-425-2052</i>

<b>PICTURE THE BIBLE COMMITTEE (Appointed)</b>					
<i>Alan Tuchtenhagen</i>		<i>715-425-9666</i>	<i>Jennie Price</i>		<i>715-426-2640</i>
<i>Rebecca Ferguson</i>		<i>715-629-7792</i>	<i>Jean Smith</i>		<i>715-781-6880</i>
<i>Scott Jameson</i>		<i>715-410-0144</i>	<i>Stacy Johnson-Myers</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>715-425-2052</i>

<b>SCHOLARSHIP (3 members/3-year terms; Appointed by Moderator)</b>					
<i>Lois Martin</i>	<i>2026(2)</i>	<i>715-307-4412</i>	<i>Wayne Roen</i>	<i>2026(2)</i>	<i>651-707-6271</i>
<i>Alex Plum</i>	<i>2027(1)</i>	<i>612-224-5894</i>	<i>Chris Myers</i>	<i>Ex-Offico</i>	<i>715-425-2052</i>