



FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH



August 2023 - July 2024

# Annual Report

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,  
and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

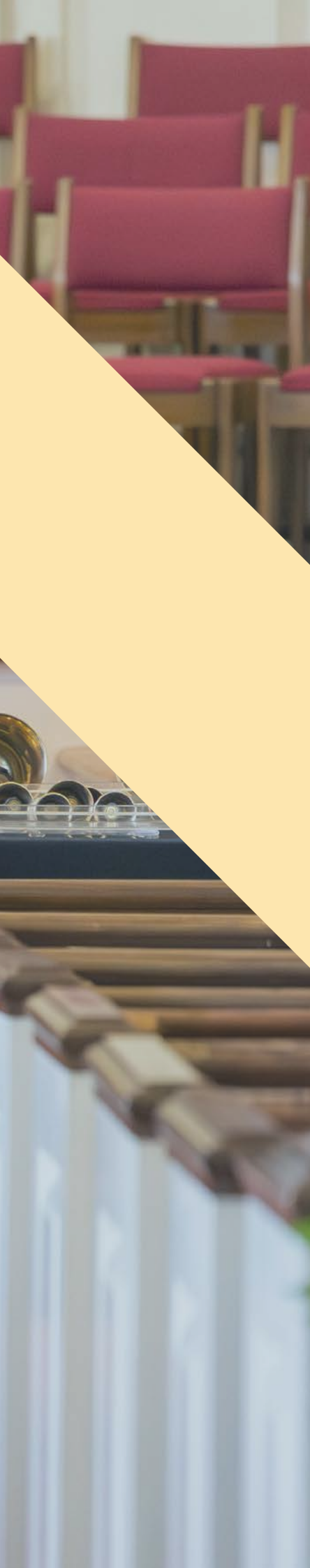
*Luke 10:27*



# Welcome

First Pres is an active Charlottesville church and a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA).





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## A Word from Our Pastor

# Rev. David Forney

Reflecting on the past year fills me with amazement. It has truly been a year of transformation, hope, and countless opportunities. Together, we have worshiped with joy, bearing witness to the resurrection. We've shared intergenerational fellowship through Kirk Nights, picnics, and supper clubs in each other's homes. Our Sunday mornings and small group gatherings have been rich with learning and growth.

We have deepened our connections with our neighbors and strengthened our ties with various mission partners, both locally and abroad. We've joyfully welcomed new members and reconnected with those returning home. Throughout it all, we continue to discern and respond to God's calling for First Pres.



I am profoundly grateful for the diverse gifts shared among us – from financial contributions to careful planning and the expert knowledge offered by our members throughout the year. Because of your generosity, our ministry's potential is inspiring.

This year, we bid a tearful farewell to two gifted pastors, Aram after 6 years and Rachel after 2 years of service. Their presence blessed us greatly, and I am thankful that they were both ordained at First Pres and are now serving in leaders of two PCUSA congregations.

As we look ahead, we are excited to welcome Reghan, our new leader of children and youth. I eagerly anticipate the ways Reghan will guide us in nurturing these vital young members of our community. Meanwhile, our Associate Pastor Nominating Committee is diligently searching for our next pastor to enhance our missions and

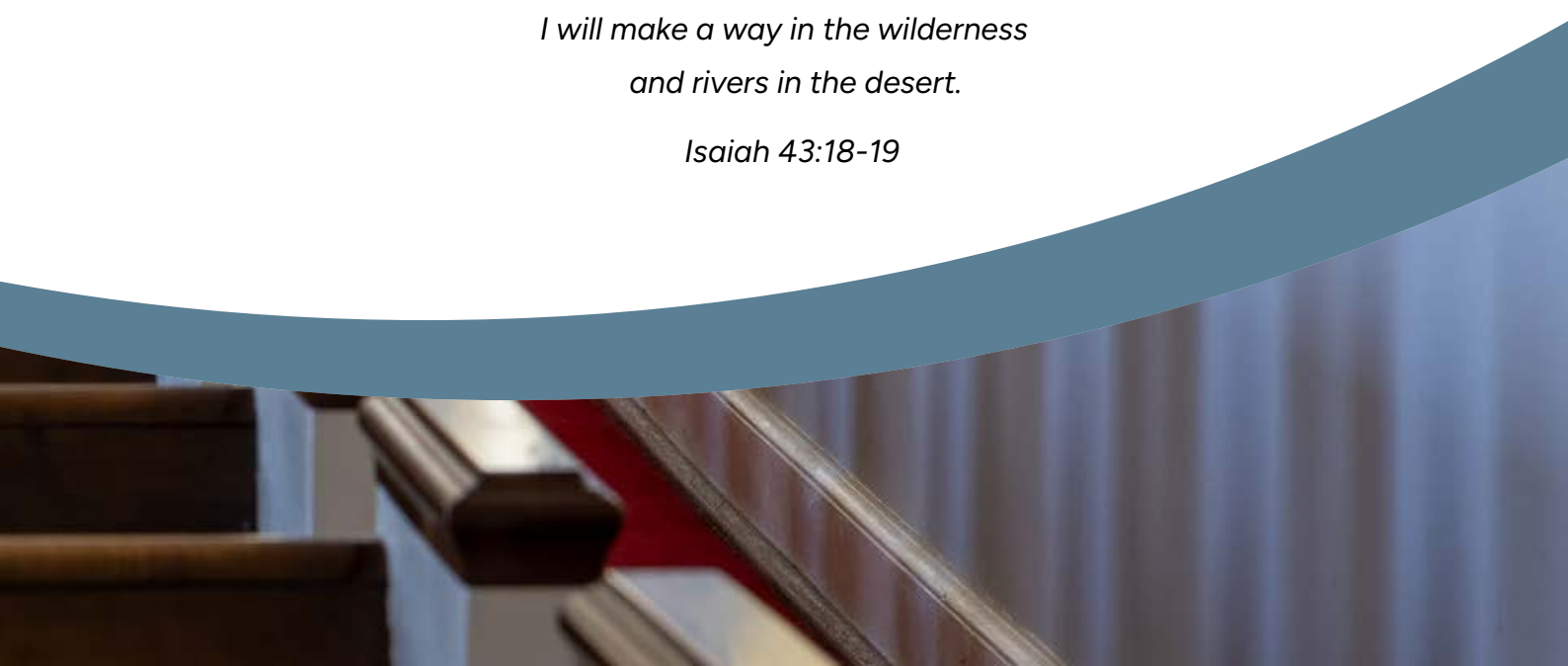
education programs. We are grateful for Jay Sanderford's steady and spirited leadership during this interim period. Many of you often remark about how exceptional our staff is, and you are right. They are a group of talented, faithful, and dedicated individuals who work creatively and diligently to foster various forms of engagement at First Pres. I am pleased to say that we enjoy our work together immensely!

As I embark on my 14th year at First Pres, I am continually moved by the love and service you all offer to God – as leaders, volunteers, caregivers, and friends. Every act of quiet care and love that I learn about reaffirms the truth that everyone here is called to minister in God's name. Each time we gather to worship, nurture, and serve, I am struck anew by the blessing it is to be called together as a community.

With gratitude for you and hope in Christ,  
David Forney

*Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.*

*Isaiah 43:18-19*





# Faithful Praise

# Worship Service

Worship is the heart of our faith community. It is in worship that we reconnect with the core of our spiritual identity and join with fellow believers in prayer, praise, and the proclamation of God's word.

*"We strive to worship God faithfully and joyfully, continually seeking God's guidance in our lives through prayer."*



## To the Glory of God

Music plays a pivotal role in our worship, and it stands as a defining feature of First Presbyterian Church. Our talented Praise Team, gifted Handbell Ensemble, and vibrant Sanctuary Choir offer numerous opportunities for worship leadership, and these dedicated volunteers are integral in supporting our worship of God. The First Presbyterian Church Concert Series, "Music on Park Street," took place throughout the year. In March, the series featured an evening of piano quartets by Gabriel Fauré and Richard Strauss. Susanna Klein (violin), Danielle Wiebe Burke (viola), Schuyler Slack (cello), and Jeremy Thompson (piano) brought these two distinct works to life.



## Volunteer Engagement and Attendance

The Welcome and Worship Committee successfully engaged volunteers for various service roles supporting weekly services, including Officer of the Day, Ushers, Communion Preparers, worship bag preparation, and Chancel Teams. Attendance remained steady throughout the year.

## Seasonal Celebrations

In November, the Hanging of the Greens event allowed congregation members to decorate the church for Advent while singing Christmas carols. Three Christmas Eve services were held: an 11:00am service for the fourth Sunday in Advent, then a family-friendly service at 4 p.m. with music by the Praise Team, and a traditional Lessons & Carols service at 8:00 p.m. led by the Sanctuary Choir.

## Special Worship Services

Additional worship services were held on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. The Sanctuary Choir, accompanied by guest musicians, presented Sir Edward Elgar, a renowned English composer, "The Light of Life." This composition is based on the story of Jesus healing the man born blind, as recounted in John 9-10, proclaimed this well-known biblical story with fresh insight and animation.





## Sacred Sounds

# Music Ministry

The past year was another rich year of the music ministry leading the congregation in worship, sharing the profound gift of music to the congregation, and helping to draw them closer to God. We are extremely grateful for the tireless efforts of the music volunteers who rehearse weekly and continue to work on developing their musical gifts.





One of the major highlights of the year was the presentation of Elgar's Oratorio The Light of Life with orchestra and soloists. The Praise Team and the Sanctuary Choir continued their faithful service of providing music for the morning services with many new songs, hymns and anthems added to our repertoire. The handbell choir continued their outreach in the community performance concerts at Christmas, as well as enriching Sunday worship services. Music on Park Street concerts continued with excellent performances of sacred and chamber music by some of the best musicians from the region. As we begin a new year of programs, the music ministry will continue to search to find new ways to worship God even more richly through music.



# Nuturing Faith Fellowship

*"Nurture our faith in Jesus Christ through education and fellowship, growing in wisdom, and deepening our relationship with God and one another."*



## Fostering Community

Fellowship continues to be a vital part of our life together. We value our times of conversation, laughter, and, of course, sharing meals together.





## Intergenerational Events and Gatherings

The Congregational Life Team excelled in organizing our Epiphany brunch, Kirk Night, the seasonal Sunday picnics, and the Picnic on Park. These intergenerational gatherings have been instrumental in strengthening our church community, allowing members of all ages to connect, share experiences, and build lasting relationships.

## Sunday Fellowship Time

Each Sunday morning, different groups took turns hosting Fellowship Time, providing an opportunity to participate in this cherished activity and to showcase the work they do.

## Welcoming New Members

Our New Member Team continued to welcome newcomers, hosting an in-person Getting to Know First Pres class. This past year, we welcomed 31 new members into our community.

## Supporting Ministries

Various ministries, including the Card Ministry, Flower Delivery, Prayer Team, and Visitation, continued to nurture and support both our members and the wider community.

**31** New Members



# Engaging Conversation

# Adult Ministry

## Summer 2023

The 2023/2024 program year for Adult Ministries began with a look to the world around First Pres, in Charlottesville and the country. David Pettit led us in a 4-week class on “Gun Violence” and how we, as Christians, can respond to this problem in our society. We heard from speakers such as Charlottesville Chief of Police Michael Kochis and UVA professor Brian Williams. We discussed ways in which we could go from being informed to being active.

We offered a very different class led by Anita Brochette, “Exploring Brene Brown’s Atlas of the Heart” We explored how to describe specific emotions to make us better able to identify those emotions in others, as well as ourselves. We also considered what the Bible has to say about these emotions and experiences.

## Fall 2023

Our Fall Sunday School schedule finished with both a look back and a look forward. Wayne Mullins led us in a study of “The Kings of Israel and Judah: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly” and the Christian Outreach Committee led us on “A Mission Journey Through Advent” as we learned more about First Pres’s mission partners, their work, and how we can

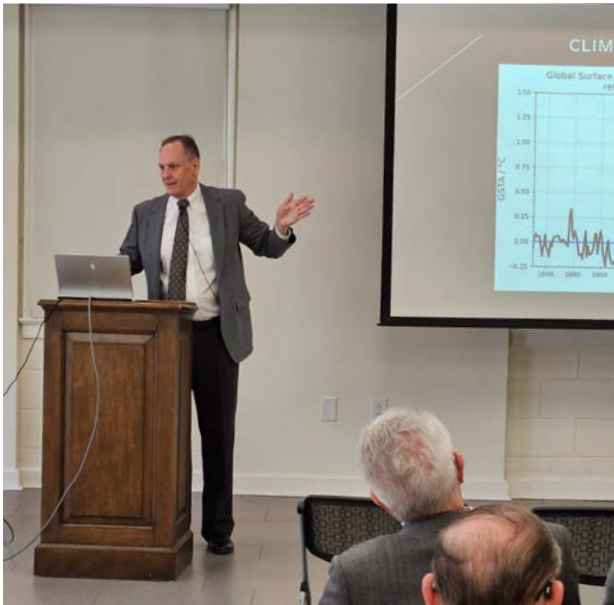
participate. Throughout the year we also offered our “Faith and Family” class, oriented toward parents of school age children and teens.

Outside of Sunday School we started a new initiative in the Fall. Jill and Jim Campbell coordinated the Supper Club, small groups that participated in dinner and fellowship. Supper Club continued throughout the program year and will return this Fall.



## Winter 2023/24

We began the new calendar year with “Reading Both Books: Exploring the Intersections of Science and Religion”. David Forney led us in an exploration of the complex and often misunderstood relationship between scientific inquiry and Christian faith.



Our Lenten Study was “Parakletos: Seeking the Holy Spirit” led by Bill and Harriet Gosh. This class investigated the Spirit’s interactions in the world from Old and New Testament perspectives and discussed how we relate to the Holy Spirit today.

## Spring 2024

We finished our spring schedule with two classes. “Jesus Revealed: The ‘I Am’ Statements in the Gospel of John” looked at the “I Am” statements as symbols that resonate throughout the Gospel and all of Scripture. This study was led by a team of 5 individuals who brought different perspectives to the study. “Scripture in the Headlines” was an examination of current events through the prism of scripture in a discussion-based format.

## Summer 2024

We finished the program year with a summer class on the “Scripture of the Day” with the pastors discussing the scripture they were preaching on that Sunday.

We continued to offer spiritual growth opportunities during the week both in-person and via Zoom. These included the Monday Morning Bible Study, the Brown Bag Bible Study, Lectio Divina, Weekly Women’s Bible Study, and the Men’s Luncheon.

Our focus was, and remains, to offer a balanced set of spiritual growth opportunities, both in the classroom and outside of it, that help us to look outward from our church to the world, back to our heritage as Christians, and forward to how we can engage and shape the world around us in Christ’s image.

## Looking Forward

Our Fall Sunday School schedule will focus on both new issues and old topics offered in a new way. We will look forward but remember where we have come from as Christians. Classes to be offered are: “Poverty, by America”; “What About Faith Now?”; “Difficult Decisions: Bringing Christianity to Everyday Ethics”; “Suffer the Little Children: A Christian Response for At Risk Children & Adolescents”; “Exploring Advent”; and “Faith and Family” which will continue.

*...and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.*

*1 Corinthians 12:5-6*

# Journey Forward

# Youth Ministry

Our Youth Ministry has been consistent and dedicated this year, demonstrating the vital role young people play in our church community. Through Sunday School, Confirmation classes, community service projects, and Youth Group activities, our youth have engaged deeply with their faith, served others, and built meaningful relationships. Their dedication and enthusiasm highlight the importance of nurturing and involving our young members in the life and mission of our church.

## Sunday School

In Sunday School, we focused on exploring how our faith informs our daily lives. We wrestled with questions of how the Ten Commandments guide us, how the church's confessions still speak to our context, and how the Bible helps in our discernment. At the culmination of the year, the Sunday School class worked together to organize and write the liturgy for Youth Sunday.







## Confirmation

This year, we had seven confirmands who met weekly to learn what makes Presbyterians unique and to thoughtfully consider church membership. We began the year making timelines of our lives and then we explored the timeline of Jesus's life. We studied theology and wondered about how God is still active in the world. The class ended with each student writing their personal faith statement and sharing it with the Session.

## Community Service

FPC's youth enjoyed engaging in a variety of community service activities over the year. The Youth Ministry Committee aimed to provide youth with community service opportunities at least once a month. Some of our activities included shopping for food for Loaves and Fishes, rolling utensils for Soup Kitchen, and volunteering with PACEM.

## Youth Group

Youth group provides youth with an opportunity to build supportive relationships and lifelong friendships. From pool parties to hikes to bowling, our youth participated in a variety of on and off-site activities meant to encourage teamwork and team bonding. Each Sunday, we met to cook a meal, reflect on our week, and have fun together.

*I know the plans I have for you,  
declares the Lord,  
plans for welfare and not for evil,  
to give you a future and a hope.*

*Ephesians 6:1-4*



## Growing Together

# Family Ministry

Family ministry is more than just a program—it's a vibrant ministry dedicated to nurturing the spiritual growth of children. Through a combination of Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and Faith & Family, FPC offers young members of the congregation an engaging and enriching experience that lays a strong foundation for their faith.

### Sunday School

Thanks to the help of more than 20 dedicated and talented volunteers, we offered four children's Sunday School classes. Each class has its own unique curriculum depending upon the developmental needs and interests of the students.

- The two and three years olds are introduced to Bible stories and the flow of Sunday School.
- The preschool and kindergarten class begins to wonder how their faith impacts their daily lives.
- The early elementary class is oriented to the liturgical calendar and uses hands-on storytelling.
- The older elementary class dove deep into scripture and theology as they prepare for confirmation.

## Faith and Family

Faith and Family is both a Sunday School class and a social group for parents of kids birth through 5th grade. There are a couple dozen folks who comprise this group at FPC.

This past year we explored topics such as James Fowler's Stages of Faith, Brian McClaren's Faith After Doubt, and Sandy Sasco's Spirituality of Children.

Over the Summer we have enjoyed an intergenerational class in the Chapel where parents and children are learning about the Fruit of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control. We also have family friendly activities such as tacos at Brazos IX, picnic at King Family Vineyard, and a pool party to end the summer together.

This Fall we will be reading *Flourishing on the Edge of Faith* by Andrew DeCourt. The book takes a in-depth exploration into the theology and spirituality of the Lord's Prayer.



## Vacation Bible School

Our VBS theme "Camp Firelight" was a big hit! We had 71 children, including some from Abundant Life Ministries. Together, we explored how we trust God to always be with us. The children collected food for Loaves and Fishes and set the table for Soup Kitchen.



# Nurturing Young Minds

## FPC Preschool

After a full academic year closure due to COVID-19 and a subsequent challenging year managing COVID protocols, our preschool has not only rebounded but is thriving. This year, we increased enrollment, and expanded our facilities and programs. Enrollment has surged to 150 students, up from 114 last year, demonstrating a strong recovery and growing interest in our preschool. In response to the high demand, we added a new classroom, bringing our total to 10 classrooms.



Our dedicated teaching staff has remained remarkably stable, ensuring continuity and quality education for our students. Under the leadership of our new director, Maria Brown, who has just completed her second year, the preschool continues to flourish. We have also reinvigorated our Parent Committee, expanding it to 12 active members who play a vital role in supporting our initiatives.



A highlight of the year has been the launch of the Nature Playscape, an exciting new addition funded through a targeted \$35,000 fundraising goal. We have successfully raised over \$25,000 towards this goal, thanks in part to the successful Silent Auction held during the Preschool's annual Spring Fling. These efforts reflect our commitment to providing enriching and innovative experiences for our children, and we are grateful for the strong community support that has made these advancements possible.



## Acts of Service

# Christian Outreach

In order to glorify God, the Christian Outreach of First Presbyterian Church supports missions that serve those in need beyond the church walls.

As we prayerfully discern the Spirit's direction for our time, talent and treasure, we seek to:

- Engage in relationships with our mission partners and the greater Charlottesville community to inspire hope and promote God's restorative love.
- Educate the congregation on areas where God's heart breaks.
- Equip the congregation to serve as God's hands and feet in the world.
- Empower the congregation to minister to those in need and advocate for justice.

***For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.***

***Ephesians 2:10***

FPC's Christian Outreach Committee is charged with responding to the congregation's social justice interests by promoting service opportunities outside the church walls, responsibly spending a tithe from the annual revenues of the church, and assessing requests for Mission and Benevolence funds earned by FPC's endowment.

## A Morning of Service

Mission Matters brought together 32 FPC members to complete five projects for Mission Partners.

Our volunteers:

- Scrambled 321 eggs as part of a full breakfast served at The Haven day shelter.
- Assembled and delivered a dozen Welcome Home Easter baskets to Georgia's House, a recovery residence for women. The baskets included housewarming items and quilts provided by our Quilt Sewers.
- Cleaned Nellie the Neighbor Bus inside and out for International Neighbors.
- Built, sanded, and painted 40 wooden toolboxes to be filled with tools and presented as housewarming gifts to new Habitat homeowners during the coming year.
- Put together and distributed 50 Loving Our Neighbor snack bags that included food, drink, and a bilingual resource guide for our neighbors in need on the street.

## Sunday School Mission

COC invited directors from Loaves & Fishes food pantry, The Haven day shelter, the Prospect neighborhood's Abundant Life Ministries, and the B.U.C.K. Squad gun violence prevention team to present a three-part Sunday School series about their social justice work during Advent.





## In the Mission Field

In February, 11 FPC members (plus 2 friends) traveled to remote western Honduras. Through **Palmetto International Missions**, the team assisted impoverished families to build sturdy, sanitary concrete block homes to replace their mud and stick sheds.

Through **PACEM's** emergency shelter program, FPC welcomed 35-39 unhoused men into Agape Hall for two weeks in December. Members of the Faith and Family Sunday School class put together gift bags for the guests. Congregation Beth-Israel provided evening meals, and more than 55 FPC volunteers helped set up and break down the accommodations, offer snacks, monitor shower time, and engage with our guests.

First Pres members continued to volunteer on **Habitat for Humanity** construction sites and in the Habitat Store. The local Habitat affiliate, including the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle, Greene, and Louisa counties, built 60 new affordable homes, and updated 23 homes so that residents could remain in them.

**The Haven**, a day shelter supported by FPC, is open 365 days a year, and offers breakfast, showers, laundry facilities, a mailing address, storage bins, and computers to the area's unhoused residents.

During the year, FPC recruited a team to cook breakfast at The Haven, a Mission Matters activity, and brought Executive Director Anna Mendez into the church as a guest speaker as part of the Advent Sunday school series.

FPC volunteers assisted the **AIM** Senior Reach Program with monthly deliveries of non-perishable food items, paper goods, and personal care products to participants in AIM's Secure Seniors program. These clients are living on monthly incomes ranging from \$650 to \$1,200.

**Georgia's Friends** operates a structured recovery residence and provides programs and services to help women suffering from addiction. FPC volunteers have worked with residents to plant a garden at the house, and donated items during Lent for Welcome Home baskets for the women.



***During 2023-24, COC recognized eight Mission Partner organizations for annual contributions from its budget. In addition, COC supports our community's Soup Kitchen.***

FPC volunteers at **Loaves & Fishes** food pantry help put together grocery baskets for food-insecure families in the area. In 2023, L&F served more than 100,000 families, and demand continues to grow. A new kitchen at the warehouse allows onsite food preparation classes that incorporate typical food bank offerings. From time to time, L&F shares large quantities of perishable foods—meat, bread, and fruit—with Soup Kitchen.

**Abundant Life Ministries** offers spiritual development, academic support, and economic empowerment programs in the Prospect neighborhood. FPC members purchased and delivered gifts for 25 families last Christmas. Other FPC support has included hosting AL's art auction, which raised \$16,000 in 2023. And in 2024, FPC sponsored AL's Gospel Explosion benefit concert at IX Park.

**International Neighbors** builds relationships that equip refugee neighbors with the network and skills needed to thrive in their new home community. IN matches volunteer Great Neighbor Guides with newcomers and hosts two women's support groups. A school liaison supports student transition and development. In the past year, we scoured IN's Nellie the Good Neighbor bus inside and out, a Mission Matters activity, and granted free bus parking in our lot.

***Congregation members are welcome to attend COC meetings, share new service ideas with the committee, and volunteer with our Mission Partners.***



## Meeting Funding Needs

COC considered a wide range of applications, and contributed endowment income earmarked for Mission and Benevolence to six projects in our larger community.

We helped to fund:

- FPC's Preschool Playscape
- Furnishings for an extended stay apartment operated by Yellow Door Foundation to house families whose children are undergoing treatment at UVA.
- A privacy fence at Georgia's House, the women's recovery residence
- Start-up expenses for a new training and mentoring program for vocational education and skilled trades through Abundant Life Ministries
- Building upgrades at Massanetta Springs through its capital campaign
- Habitat for Humanity's Southwood redevelopment as part of a matching gift campaign



# For Those We Love In Memorium

- Lois Carstens
- Diana Chambers
- Travis Craig
- Tom Doyle
- Jane Franklin
- Evelyn Garnett
- Jimmy Locke
- Theresa Metz
- Elaine Miller
- Robert Packard
- David Rathburn
- Will Richey
- Carolyn Smith
- Bob Snoddy Sr.
- Nathan Spindel
- Robert Tatum Jr.
- Susan Tatum
- Al Taylor
- Margaret Wood

## Memorial Garden

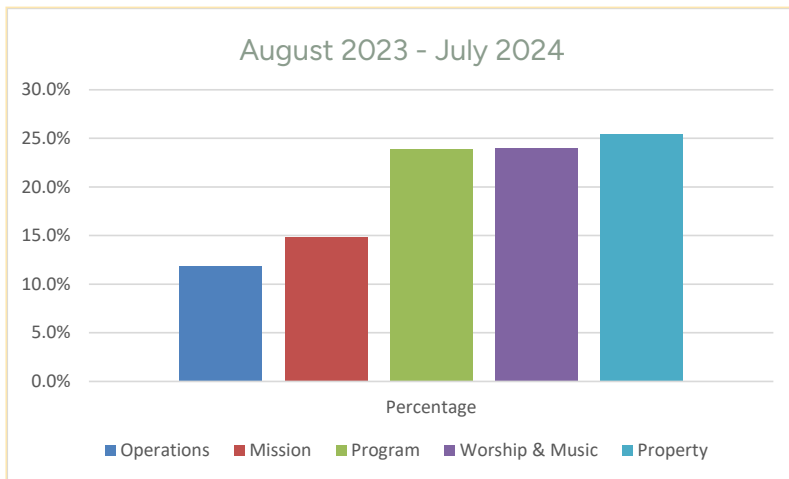
The Memorial Garden, established in 1999, underwent extensive renovations during the summer and fall of 2023. The project included a new bluestone hardscape connecting the Gathering Terrace outside Fellowship Hall to the Chapel and Memorial Garden, extending to Maple Street. An outer circle of saw-cut score joint concrete, inspired by the existing granite Celtic cross, forms the walking surface around the garden's inner circle. A brick wall, matching the Chapel's style, now defines the garden's boundary along Maple Street, and new lighting complements the Gathering Terrace.

Six dogwood trees were added to two existing dogwoods in the garden. The cruciform shape of the flower and blooming in time for Easter is significant symbolism. Four sweetbay magnolia trees were planted. An assortment of shrubs, perennials, grasses, and bulbs completed the planting. Many of the flowering plants will have white flowers.

A dedicated fund for the Memorial Garden exists and has received \$169,000 to date to fund the renovation. In addition, a Memorial Garden Endowment account was established to ensure the perpetual care of the garden. This fund will cover the maintenance and care of the garden going forward. This fund received \$161,000 of funding in the past year.



# Allocation of Expenses Church Budget



## Faith Grows Here Capital Campaign

We are so excited that the Faith Grows Here renovation is finished – and beautiful! We boldly started the multi-year project in 2019 with a capital campaign to fund the \$7.3 million renovation.

This past year \$547,000 was contributed to the campaign, bringing the total received to more than \$7 million. One year ago, the loan from the FPC Endowment Fund had a balance of \$600,000; that balance is currently down to \$49,206. The dedicated final giving over the life of the project has been a testament of faith. Closing out the capital campaign is on the horizon as we anticipate receipt of the remaining Faith Grows Here pledge commitments and additional gifts of gratitude.

At a Glance

# FPC in Numbers

Baptisms

**7**

New Members

**31**

Active Membership

**1,013**

Average In-Person Worship

**232**

Average Online Worship

**190**

Total Online Worship Views

**7,635**



# Associate Pastor Search

The Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) was appointed by the congregation in Spring of 2024. Jason Bell, Lisa Dugan, Amy Gillespie, Brooke Lambert, Mark Roberson, and Marta Ruggles with guidance and support from David Forney began meeting and developing a plan for the search.

A review and update of FPC's mission study was completed with the help of a congregational survey, focus group meetings with relevant committees and teams, and interviews with staff members. The resulting Mission study was reviewed and approved by Session, then submitted to Presbytery of the James – Commission on Ministry for review. We received approval to proceed with our search and eventual call.

The committee then received an orientation from the Presbytery. Jay Sanderford provided insights and additional guidance on strategies and resources for starting the search. The Mission Discernment Profile (MDP) was then formatted to reflect FPC's needs and recruit the most appropriate candidates. Our church was added to the PC(USA) Church Leadership Connection (CLC) site to begin the process of matching our criteria with possible candidates' profiles.

The first applications and matches on the CLC have begun to arrive. The APNC is currently completing the preliminary review to determine which candidates will be asked for additional information and possible screening interviews.

The next steps will be to clarify the APNC approach to candidate evaluation and then begin the interview process. The committee asks for the congregation's ongoing prayers for discernment and God's action in the heart of the person God has already chosen for our church.



# Staff

Adam Barber	Communications Director
Maria Brown	Preschool Director
David Forney	Pastor and Head of Staff
Reghan Harms	Director of Children and Youth Ministries
Michael Joyce	Facilities Manager
Nancy Lutz	Faith Community Nurse
Ashley Ravitsky	Assistant Director of Children's Music
Ellen Roberson	Program Coordinator
Jay Sanderford	Pastor for Adult Ministries
Jen Snook	Finance Director
Jeremy Thompson	Director of Music

# Leadership

## Class of 2024

### Elders of the Session

Charlie Chadwick  
John Dillery  
Linda Hitt  
Jocelyn Kelley  
Jolene Kidd  
Trip Walker

### Board of Deacons

Johanna Chase  
Sally Clarry  
Brooke Lambert  
Greg Ravitsky  
Amy Richardson  
Mark Sackson  
Teller Stalfort

## Class of 2025

### Elders of the Session

Anita Brockette  
Jan Garnett  
Jim Gillespie  
Jean Hudson  
Elaine Knight  
Marty Mason  
Rick Welborn

### Board of Deacons

Barbara Carswell  
Maggie Kleinot  
Bonita Metz  
Jamie Miller  
Julie Patterson  
Jayne Rathburn

## Class of 2026

### Elders of the Session

Allen Bailey  
David Bear  
Tim Blair  
Lori Chapman

Hannah Crosby  
Kevin Dean  
David Pettit

### Board of Deacons


Mary Wyatt Bowers  
Jill Campbell  
Luke Divine  
Sheila Hegwood

Susan Moorville  
Keith Thompson




## All Are Welcome

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