



**First Church
Berkeley UCC**

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Church Officers

Moderator

STEVE SPIELMAN

The theme for 2024 was “Opening Doors, Opening Hearts”. While those literal doors are *not quite* open, many of us have enjoyed tours of the building, looking forward to the good things to come. As for the hearts of this community, they are open indeed! Taking on the position as Moderator felt a bit outside my comfort zone. I wondered if I would be up to the task if conflicts arose. Would the emotional stake we each have in our church manifest itself in stubborn factions? Hurtful words? However, I can honestly say that this year has taught me nothing about coping with politics. It turns out the members of Council and staff don’t play that game. While people inevitably disagreed, they never failed to recognize that everyone was operating in good faith.

I was proud to play a role as the Council voted on two items that promise to one day direct our property towards those in need. I’m speaking first of the partnership with the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, who will help us use Durant House as interim housing for asylum seekers. And second, our decision to sell a portion of our land to EBALDC will someday provide the community with a permanent source of affordable housing.

And I’ll take this opportunity to thank those who organize activities I took part in. The celebration of our 150th anniversary was a nugget of joy, with music, inspirational words from emeritus pastors, and a festive march through Berkeley. The retreat to Monte Toyon was fantastic; please consider joining us this year if you missed 2024. And throughout the year I am sustained by our music program. I hope you each find or create an activity that brings you joy and brings you to church.

It has been an honor to serve as Moderator this past year. I’m continually impressed by the care and energy provided by our ministries and teams. And the stability offered by each member of staff is such a lifeline. “I’ll take care of that,” someone invariably says at just the right time. Thank you all for being a great team as we build this warm community.



Moderator Elect

MARGARET KAVANAUGH-LYNCH



While serving as Moderator Elect I have enjoyed attending Church Council meetings and learning more about how our church is governed; as well as the roles of many members of the congregation as they work in the various subcommittees that serve our church. It impressed on me how many volunteers we have amongst us and how they are making real the commitment of being the “hands and feet” of God in our community. I am moved by their love, commitment and dedication.

I also attended, for the first time, the NCNC UCC Annual Gathering, held in Fresno last June. I combined the opportunity to attend this important gathering with self care by camping at a nearby state park. It was an all around educational and restorative experience.



Actual morning view

By day, I attended many workshops and was deeply impressed by different congregations in our region as they shared some of the struggles that they are facing and the hard work they are engaged in. My unexpected joy was the opportunity to rekindle my friendship with our Conference Minister, the Reverend Dr. Davena Jones, who I first met many years ago at my former UCC church. It was wonderful to experience our larger family, first hand.

Clerk

LAURA MONROE



The clerk of the church is responsible for keeping the records of church business and taking minutes at Council and Congregational meetings. Highlights from 2024 are summarized here.

In March, Council authorized the church to sell the Durant House property to EBALDC rather than leasing it. This is the next step in First Church's commitment to build affordable housing for families on the church property we are no longer using. Council also approved updates to the employee handbook to cover parental leave and approved a ministerial housing allowance for Rev. August Laperche, First Church's

Director of Operations. This allowance is available to ministerial staff in lieu of providing housing.

In April, Council ratified a revised personnel handbook.

In June, an addendum to the revised personnel handbook was accepted. This change honors pre-existing agreements for Lay Professional sabbatical leave and pension/retirement funds.

In September, Council held a special meeting with the Affordable Housing team to approve the parameters the team will use in negotiations with EBALDC. This is the next step in the sale of the Durant House property.

In the scheduled September Council meeting, Council agreed to join with other Berkeley nonprofit organizations in opposing city measure GG on the November ballot, which was ultimately rejected by Berkeley voters.

In December, Council voted to approve the proposed 2025 budget for First Church. As part of the motion, they authorized Council to establish a committee to review income and expenses in the operating budget. The goal is twofold: seeking areas where current financial adjustments are possible in 2025 and working to balance the budget going forward in 2026.



Membership

Members Received 2024

Affirmation/

Reaffirmation

John Brockett

Amy Dickie

Carolina Escobar Garcia

Barbara Hollinger

Frankie Maston

Sara Orem

Heather Robertson

Leo Tseng

Bella Vavra

Associate Member

MC Miller

Katia Kiefaber

Becky Smith

Joy Xiao

Associate Member to

Member

none

Confirmation/Adult

Baptism

none

Friend

none

Letter of Transfer

Rebekah Miller

Reinstatement

none

Child Blessing

none

Members Lost in 2024

Associate Member or

Friend (Moved Out of

State or Dropped)

none

Became Inactive

Nancy Campbell

Joined Another Church

none

Requested Inactive Status

none

Transfer of Membership

none

Withdrew at Their Own

Request

Alexander Cebula

Frances Falling

Matthew Peacock

In Memoriam

Jim Spitze (4/25/2024)

Lee Donaghey (11/5/2024)

John Wadman (11/13/2024)

Evelyn Goodman (12/13/2024)

Six-Year Membership Report

GAINS	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
By Baptism/Confession	0	0	0	1	0	0
By Confirmation	0	0	6	0	0	0
By Affirmation/ Reaffirmation of Faith	10	16	0	6	11	9
By Letter of Transfer	1	1	3	8	2	1
By Reinstatement	2	1	1	3	0	0
Assoc. or Friend to Full Membership	0	0	0	1	0	0
Friend	0	3	2	3	0	0
Voted in by CF&I	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	13	21	12	22	13	10
Associate Member Received	2	3	1	1	0	4
Total Gains	15	24	13	23	13	14
LOSSES	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
By Death	-4	-10	-5	-7	-7	-4
By Letter of Transfer	-3	-7	-3	-5	0	0
Joined Other Church/Withdrew at Own Request/Requested Inactive Status	-6	-7	-6	-8	-12	-3
Placed on Inactive	-10	-18	-9	-5	-4	-1
Membership Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0
Associate Member or Friend Dropped	-5	-1	-1	-1	-1	0
Total Losses	-28	-43	-24	-26	-24	-8
Audit Correction	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net Gain / Loss	-13	-19	-11	-3	-11	6
Membership at Year End	397	378	367	364	353	359
Average Weekly Attendance by Month	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
January	155	166	141	101	138	150
February	181	163	136	137	177	142
March	170	154	124	173	177	195
April	338	151	145	214	201	148
May	164	155	121*	138*	145	137
June	151	152	109*	127*	152	131
July	157	173	114*	134	126	112
August	147	160	120*	135*	133	113
September	153	161	94*	153	143	145
October	145	134	149	191*	154	129
November	162	133	147	140	147	145
December	340	224	231	226	234	250

2021 attendance for Jan.- Oct. 3 reflect Sunday morning “live” views on Facebook, YouTube & Vimeo. The numbers reflect **single viewers only** and don’t account for multiple viewers per screen, so these numbers are **lower** than the actual number of viewers. Oct. 10 through December numbers reflect webcast viewers as well as in-person attendance. Some months (*asterisk) include in-person “Lawn Church” worship attendance. **2022 attendance** for Jan. - Feb. 6 webcast only; Feb. 13 through year end, attendance includes both webcast & in-person participation. **2023 & 2024 attendance** totals reflect both in-person and webcast views, which don’t account for multiple viewers per screen.



Ministries

Adult Education Ministry

MACK GRIFFITH, CHAIR



Adult Education has a long history at First Church and the Adult Education Ministry is serving the congregation in upholding and organizing the continued learning in our church.

This year, Adult Education has continued the momentum built from the previous year. We have continued to offer many learning hours, partnering with various individuals and ministries in the congregation to offer a variety of programming that is timely and draws interest from the congregation. In early 2024, we offered an Adult Education Retreat which brought together around 20 members of the congregation to discuss what continued learning means to us personally and as a congregation. Christina Hutchins served as a co-facilitator with the ministry and it was a great success. In addition to learning hours, the Progressive Theology sessions continue with lively discussions on “Ologies of Progressive Theology” and will now transition to discussions rooted in video series by Work of the People.

Also during 2024, Willem VandeKamp stepped down from the ministry and we remain very thankful for his service and continued engagement as he proposes timely and relevant learning hour topics.

The members of the ministry in 2024 were: Jim Alnas-Benson, Bob Stumpf, Mary Haake, Kelly Colwell as staff liaison, and Mack Griffith as chair.



Care, Fellowship, & Invitation Ministry

SUSAN WEBB, CHAIR



The Ministry of Care, Fellowship, and Invitation (CF&I) seeks to provide a welcoming and inviting presence for all who cross the threshold of our church and to offer hospitality and care for the First Church Community and beyond.

Throughout 2024 CF&I members staffed welcome tables each Sunday greeting members and visitors, offering name tags, and answering questions. The ministry met virtually each month to address the upcoming needs and catch up with each other.

Along with the ongoing coordination of the After Party soup providers (thank you, Susan Greef), and Meal Train requests (thank you, Robin Kempster), this year our efforts included picking up and serving coffee and doughnuts for Easter Services, serving pie for the Juneteenth celebration, and offering mac and cheese to our Trunk or Treat visitors. We also collected cookies for Cal students and served cookies after the Christmas Eve service, along with serving cake and ice cream for a variety of other celebrations.

For the first time we offered the opportunity to engage more members in our efforts with the option of serving as auxiliary members. This meant an email would be sent to this group when there was a need for extra help with a specific event. Auxiliary members were free not to attend our monthly meetings or serve regularly. This arrangement proved beneficial especially through the summer months and holidays. Most of those on the auxiliary list participated at least once and have agreed to continue as auxiliary members.

We look forward to continuing to contribute to making FCCB a warm and inviting place for all. As chair I greatly appreciate the members and staff who generously offered their time and positive energy.

CFI Members: Rick Ayer, Jacqueline Dennis, Kathy Keller, Robin Kempster, Chuck Webb & Susan Webb, Chair; Louise Halsey & Kathy Helliesen, Staff Liaisons.

Auxiliary Members: Mary-Ellis Adams, Katie Brookes, Carol Chapman, Susan Greef, Hanni Hanson, Annis Kukulian, Kristina McNaught, Sara Orem, Becky Wright, & Andy Young



Families, Children, & Youth Ministry

PAM VANDEKAMP, CHAIR



The Families, Children & Youth (FamChY) Ministry at First Church Berkeley envisions our ministry to be devoted to building fellowship and connection among families in our congregation, to supporting families in the challenges of raising children today, and to nurturing the faith formation of children, youth and parents/guardians. Throughout the past year, we have engaged each month in a reflective process related to the actualization of this vision in service to our children, youth and families.

Within our reflective conversations, we spent time building support for dedicated spaces to cherish and support the children, families and youth in our congregation. After establishing and staffing the Children's Space in 2023, which takes place every Sunday (with the exception of All Ages Sunday) we looked for ways to expand our outreach. This year, we spent time each month talking about the opportunity to provide dedicated trainers for Our Whole Lives (OWL) interactive workshops. Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a comprehensive, lifespan sexuality education curriculum for use in both secular settings and faith communities. Despite the limited physical space available, we are striving to offer this to our church children and youth and develop in house resources to provide this opportunity on an ongoing basis. We hope to offer this training for facilitators in our church in the Fall of 2025.

We also expanded the scope of care for our youngest members by hiring a Child Care Coordinator in the Fall of 2024. Sharonda Chappel joined us in December to attend to children 0-2 and is sharing the Pillar Room with the Children's Space during worship. Sharonda will be at church every Sunday ready to provide excellent care. Our prayer is that this will increase the number of families with young children who are interested in attending FCCB. In addition, the Amen Corner behind the pews in the sanctuary provides a small assortment of activities and items for anyone who might need a little support during the weekly worship service.

Our Children's Space and Childcare needs volunteers to assist each week to comply with our church policy that children are always supervised by at least two adults who have been screened and trained in best practices for child supervision. In order to increase the number of volunteers in our Children's Space we held a LiveScan Party on November 3. We had eight volunteers who met to complete the LiveScan



form and went together to submit it to the DOJ. Many more requested the LiveScan form and have done this on their own. Next step is to complete the SafeChild online training and volunteer application our church requires.

FamChY also provided support for a number of events for children, families and youth including:

- Mardi Gras celebration with crafts and activities
- Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday
- Annual Summer Work Camp for our Youth
- Fall Festival activities and support
- Trunk or Treat in conjunction with All Soul's Day
- Advent Craft Fair with hot cider and cookies
- All-Ages Christmas Eve Service in which children and adults dressed up and reenacted the story of the birth of Jesus

We are also blessed with an ever expanding chorus of FamChY Angels, members who are not able to commit to being on the Ministry Team, but are always available to help with specific projects and events.

As our Ministry continues to prioritize building connection among families in our congregation we ask for your prayers and support.

FamChY Members:

Pam VandeKamp, Chair, Jim Marrone, Matt Reed, Katie Nnadi, Frances Tinney,

Staff: Rev. Hannah Turner, Bella Vavra



Justice & Service Ministry

MAUREEN PROCHASKA, CHAIR



The Justice and Service (J&S) Ministry has the privilege of learning about nonprofit organizations and then deciding the orgs that will be the recipients of the weekly plate offering and the special offerings for Easter and Christmas. During this past year, J&S spent time discussing our stated criteria for decision making; we reviewed the list of priorities created by the 2017 FCCB survey and discussions held by previous J&S teams. We decided the current criteria and priorities will continue to be our guide for discernment. **J&S and the recipient organizations are grateful for your generous support, First Church. Thank you!**

Justice and Service organized two Service as Worship Sundays; one in January and one in August. **We appreciate the dedication of other ministries and FCCB members who are always willing to lead projects.** Thank you, First Church, for donating an abundant amount of school supplies and money, so that **20 School Kits** (and extra supplies and \$81) could be provided to **Church World Service Northern California**. Thank you, Amare, Kathy, and Lucas for the support you provide by setting up all the extra tables and chairs.

J&S thanks you for your continued support of our unhoused neighbors and Berkeley/Albany residents experiencing food insecurity. In 2024, you have provided:

- **600 Bag Lunches** for the Second Sunday Sandwiches program led by Richard Brabham, with support from Judy Huston and Susan Greef. Thank you, Paul Kealoha-Blake for helping to distribute these lunches.
- **683 Boxes of Cereal** and **639 Jars of Peanut Butter** for the Berkeley Food Pantry with the dedication of Birtukan Beyenssa and Mary Fujii who weekly collect and deliver the items along with lots of egg cartons and brown bags
- **60 Christmas Love Notes with two \$10 gift cards from Target and Safeway** with help from W&SL. (\$1,380 was generously donated. The extra \$180 was given to the Women's Daytime Drop-in Center.)
- **72 Pairs of new, warm socks** and lots of plastic bags for Trinity Center in Walnut Creek

For all the other ways that J&S is supported by the First Church community, we are grateful:

Delivering the Invitation to the Offering * Providing suggestions for organizations * Engaging with the people from the recipient organizations during the After Party * Participating in the CROP Hunger Walk * Participating in the Service as Worship projects * For Kara, Brittany and Jon, for sharing their knowledge of organizations for Youth at Risk * For Willem, for keeping us informed about ICJJ * For Sharlet, for keeping the J&S donation spreadsheet up to date and for August and Louise, for always efficiently and warmly responding to questions and requests. For Steve, for always being willing to provide tech support * For Rev. Molly, Rev. Kelly and Rev. Hannah, for their ideas and responses to numerous emails.

Thank you to J&S Ministry members Stan Boghosian, Barbara Grady-Ayer, Doris Lynch, Chuck Monroe, Susan Shome, and staff liaison, Rev. Molly Baskette. Your awesome ideas and willingness to take on tasks are true gifts.

Justice & Service Account Summary

BENEVOLENCES in 2024
Grants Given to Outside Organizations in 2024

Collection Plate 2024

<u>Month</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Total</u>
January 7, 14, 21, 28	Black Wealth Builders Fund	\$5,495
February 4, 11	Berkeley Food Pantry	\$993
Feb 18 - Mar 24 (Lent)	Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity	\$4,186
March 31 (Easter)	East Bay Sanctuary Covenant	\$3,258
April 7	One Great Hour of Sharing - UCC Appeal	\$600
April 14, 21, 28, May 5	Canine Companions	\$2,636
May 12, 19, 26, July 7	SNAPkids	\$2,143
June 2, 9	Transmission Ministry Collective	\$1,122
June 16, 23, 30	Pacific Center for Human Growth	\$1,548
July 14, 21, 28	World Central Kitchen (Gaza, Ukraine)	\$2,325
August 4, 11, 18, 25	Soccer Without Borders	\$2,267
September 1, 8, 15, 22	East Bay Agency for Children	\$2,328
September 29	Neighbors In Need - UCC Appeal	\$1,753
October 6, 13, 20, 27	First Church Durant House Shelter Fund	\$7,649
Nov 3, 10, 17, 24	Dorothy Day House	\$3,176
Dec 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	Black Wealth Builders Fund	\$4,640
Dec 24 (Christmas)	Puente de la Costa Sur	\$832
Dec 24 (Christmas)	Common Hope	\$832
	Collection Plate Total	\$ 47,783

Mental Health & Disability Ministry Team

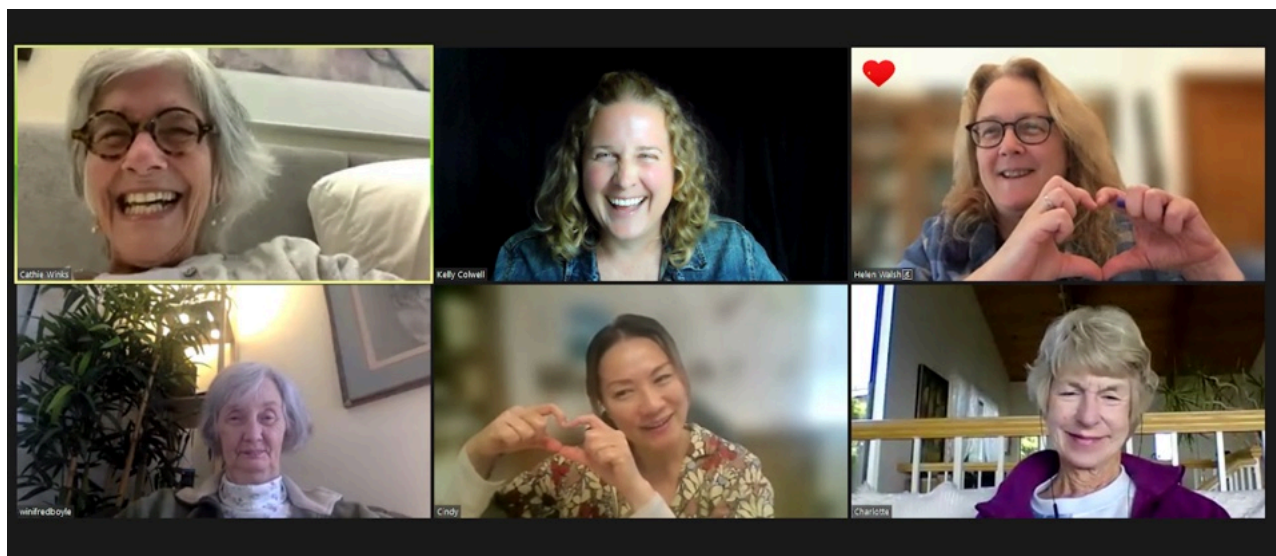
REV. KELLY COLWELL, STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

Led by a strong and collaborative leadership team comprised of Helen Walsh, Winnie Boyle, Charlotte Russell, Cindy Au, and Kathy Keller, the Mental Health and Disability Ministry Team continues to meet regularly to bring the congregation's awareness and focus to those with mental health and disability related needs both inside of our congregation and beyond. The team continued to meet by Zoom each month to support the congregation's commitment to being a Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged (WISE) Congregation for Mental Health. Meetings served not only as space for planning and decision-making but also a space for deep sharing and mutual support among members.



This year, the team brought a truly intersectional lens to their work, attending to the ways that mental health and disability overlap with and contribute to poverty and food insecurity. The group took on leadership supporting Richard Brabham's efforts with the Second Sunday Sandwich program, as well as making

connections with the organization Consider the Homeless and the 63rd Street Community Garden. The in-person mental health spiritual support group continues to meet on the third Sunday of every month, facilitated by chaplain Cindy Au. The team continues to strengthen the library offerings and look for ways to raise the profile of mental health and disability inclusion in the congregation. The team looks forward to working in the coming year to support the congregation's ongoing learning and growth as a WISE congregation, and continuing to support the working group that is guiding the congregation towards gaining the *Accessible to All (A2A)* designation from the UCC Disability Ministries.



Green Ministry Team

MARTA BLACK, CHAIR

During 2024, the Green Team continued to offer environmental presentations, Green Tips, and Abundance Table offerings.

We held a tree planting event, offered a presentation on rooftop solar in California, met with our local Representative Buffy Wick and staff to help influence solar industry policy, wrote postcards for the Environmental Project, gave a presentation on the environmental stakes of the election, and upgraded one of our recycling bins (with plans to do more once we are in the new building).

On the 3rd Sundays of the month, Andy Young hosted the Abundance Table and offered plant seedlings, including milkweed and other native plants, to the congregation. Members also brought extra garden produce for giveaway.



We posted Green Tips each time the *Carillon* came out and included a range of different topics such as: electric vehicle affordability, environmental reading recommendations, sustainable seafood information, solar power policy updates, and breaking news on Climate Change. We also posted a survey asking church members to tell us what they would like more of from the Green Team (though got only a few responses).

The Green Team looks forward to 2025 and sharing new and important information as well as fun and hands-on activities, to the FCCB community.

The Green Team has the following committed members: Marta Black, Barbara Grady-Ayer, Annis Kukulian, Charlotte Russell, Carol Chapman, Andy Young, & Charles Taylor.

Stewardship, Finance, & Administration Ministry



NICK KUKULAN, CHAIR

Major thanks go to Moe Wright, our treasurer, Sharlet Gilbert, bookkeeper, and August Laperche, director of operations, for working together to provide accurate and timely financial reports for SFA to review and track with the budget.

One major highlight for the SFA team was the July basement clean out over two Sundays. FCCB members and friends removed one truckload of paper for shredding, two City dumpsters of junk, two carloads of e-waste, and multiple car loads of toxic waste material. Thanks to all who participated.

SFA members also led two Service as Worship Sundays with pew cleaning and tidying, and outside garden and parking lot clean up.

Stewardship

The members of SFA all took part in the annual commitment program; drafting the letter, participating in the telethon, giving testimonies, and following up with personal contacts.

2024 results:

155 pledge units, gave a total of \$554,116 with an average of \$3,575 per pledge unit (a pledge unit is usually made up of two members).

2025 results so far:

127 pledge units, giving a total of \$524,330, with an average of \$4,129 per unit.

Finance

2024 results in brief:

Income Sources cover what percent of total expenses?:

- *Sustained giving and all contributions - 42%
- *Facilities Use Income –27%
- *Endowment Income and Draw - 7.5%
- *other income interest- 2.75%

Expense Categories as % of total expense:

- *Personnel – 70%
- *Ministry programs – 5.7%
- *Administration – 3.5%
- *Church Plant – 16.5%
- *Budgeted Benevolences – 4.3%

In 2024 our deficit is about 20% of total expenses. There are several accounting records that will be used to balance the books.

SFA recognizes and has presented to Council and the Congregation that a committee consisting of Molly, Kelly, Jennifer N., Moe W. Nick K. will start meeting regularly to figure out ways to reduce expenses in 2025 and to provide a balanced budget for 2026.

Administration

SFA looks after “Buildings and Grounds.” Amare Gebreyesus does a great job of taking care of regular maintenance and some project work. Outside vendors are used for janitorial, gardening, electrical and plumbing repairs.

SFA manages endowment funds designated for projects on the campus. This year there were a few projects:

- To reduce PGE electric costs, SFA authorized replacement of Sanctuary and Hall of Entrance light bulbs to LED. This was accomplished this year.
- Our EBMUD water bill increased dramatically this year. A leak detection service gave a list of areas for repair. We spent around \$12k updating 14 toilets, 2 faucets, and repiping leaky galvanized pipes in the basement.
- SFA continues to investigate replacement of the aged and over-capacity gas boiler that heats the Sanctuary.
- Tower waterproofing is on the target list of concerns.

In October of 2024 the parking lot was brought under self management using the SpotHero app. This will enhance revenue.

SFA Members: Diana Graham, Robin Luchesse, Tim Culvahouse, Bob Helliesen, Nick Kukulan, Eunice Kwon, Christopher Batson

Treasurer: Moe Wright Staff: Molly Baskette, August Laperche



Worship & Spiritual Life Ministry

JULIE GREER, CHAIR



The Worship & Spiritual Life Ministry (the Deacons) supports the spiritual life of the church, pursuing the vision statement's call to "grow in intimacy as the weird and wonderful Body of Christ" and "provide a diversity of open but distinctly Christian, creative and liberating worship forms to nourish the spiritual lives of the current community and reach new seekers."

Our core responsibilities include communion, setting up and taking down the Chancel on Sundays, providing welcome flowers for the children to hand out in church, serving at memorial services, and organizing monthly Operation Love Notes for our First Church folks who could use some encouragement and connection.

This year we partnered with the Justice & Service Ministry to conduct two additional Operation Love Notes: one for Christmas notes to hold gift cards for our unhoused neighbors, and one to write notes of encouragement to Altadena UCC, which tragically burned down in the fires in Los Angeles. Deep gratitude to everyone who participated in any or all of the events – Love Notes are a beautiful and tangible way to share our love with folks in our congregation and in the wider community.

Two new Deacons this year brought additional energy and talent to the group: Linda Sawyer took on the heavy lifting of organizing and scheduling our communion celebrants and making sure we always have supplies, and Kate Lucchese – bless her! – spearheaded the audacious task of cleaning out the Bride's Closet. A devoted team spent two days (and more) organizing, cataloging, cleaning, laundering, and labeling a veritable mountain of worship-related sundries. We were grateful for the cheerful presence of little Andie, who kept us going with her giggles while mom Rev. Kelly helped out. The photo above captures the relief and joy of a few of us when our task was complete (the actual team was larger). A labor of love!

The Worship & Spiritual Life Ministry includes Julie Greer (chair), Kerrie Hein, Carolyn Thiessen, Arin Dahl, Kate Lucchese & Linda Sawyer. Rev. Kelly Colwell is our amazing staff liaison.

Prayer Team

WILLEM VANDEKAMP, COORDINATOR



The Prayer Team at First Congregational Church of Berkeley is a team ministry within the Worship and Spiritual Life Ministry. Since the last four years we have been meeting every other Monday night, online via Zoom.

We receive prayer requests with concerns and prayers of thanksgiving from the congregation, mostly through the Sunday worship services, but also from our clergy and congregational care program manager and care team. Based on this information we maintain a running prayer list, which gets updated once a week, and guides us in our bi-weekly team meetings. The list is also used by our church staff in their weekly meetings. Some of these prayers are shared with the congregation in *The Carillon* under "Tree of Life." The purpose of this is not only to share the joyful events and the various concerns with our church community, but also to involve the congregation in praying for each other.

The format of our meetings is: a check-in, a review of the list with new requests and updates, and a time of prayer with and for one another as a team.

We are really thankful that our ministry expanded in the past two years, and now has eight members. Unfortunately, Larana McVay had to end her participation due to health issues and moving out of state. We encourage the congregation to use the prayer request cards in the sanctuary pews and/or to share prayer requests online during the Sunday service.

We are thankful to God who invites us as followers of Jesus to pray with and for one another.

The team: Helen Walsh, Jonelle Lucas, Kathleen Cooney, Lee Beryl Heuermann, Marta Black, Martha Vognar, Qaisul Takihunang, Willem VandeKamp (coordinator).



Committees

Blue Fire Committee

LORENZO LLANILLO, COMMITTEE MEMBER



The Building sub-committee of Blue Fire Committee which consists of myself and Moe Wright has been focused on getting the building completed this year. The delays have been typical if you consider a normal course of building construction. Any alterations have been minimal, and once again due typical to constraints of what may happen in the course of a construction process such as adjusting materials to fit what was budgeted. Taizan Construction has done well with finishes. The detail work in the assembly space has been particularly impressive as they have enjoyed the craft of edge finishes. As you begin to occupy the space, look around and pay close attention to the fine work at the corners of the wood features. You will notice many of these fine touches as you begin to live in these spaces in the coming months and years.

The quality of the spaces too, are remarkable. Regardless of personal aesthetic preferences, Siegel and Strain have created spaces that are richly defined by the light that fills them. Functional spaces are playfully articulated with color and brightness to represent the joyful care of which our community is known for. The kitchen is nicely laid out to optimize triangulation of movement to make it comfortable to cook in and easy to meet in. The terrace is a great use of outdoor space and makes the footprint of the space feel much bigger. The building is in the exciting place where we can begin to project our life in the spaces and will be able to actually live in the spaces in the next couple of months.





Covenant & Discernment Committee

ANN JENSEN, CHAIR



The Covenant & Discernment Committee is under the oversight of the Ministry of Worship & Spiritual Life. Our primary task is to support and oversee members who are seeking ordination in the United Church of Christ (UCC).

We encourage our members-in-discernment to participate in a wide variety of congregational experiences. We support them during their process of discernment as they seek ordination and their call to ministry. We currently have three members in various stages of the several-year long process: Emily Carduff, Hope Hilton, and Qaisul Takihunang.

First Church also forms and maintains three and four-way covenants with church members who are currently ordained ministers in the UCC and are called to positions other than parish ministries. The partners in a three-way covenant are the ordained person, the local church, and the Bay Association of the UCC. Four-way covenants include a calling body, usually the person's employer. Molly Baskette, Kelly Colwell, and Hannah Turner are in a three-way covenant with us. Those continuing in a four-way covenant are: Cindy Au, Chaplain with Sutter Care, and Larry Titus, Chaplain at John Muir Hospital.

We plan to meet with all members in covenant with First Church at least once a year and we are looking at ways to increase their involvement/connection with our community and ways we can be more supportive of them in their respective ministries. We are also looking to build relationships with retired ministers and those not in covenant with us who are members of our congregation.

The Discernment and Call committee has been reinvigorated with several new and returning members: Ann Jensen, Chair, Jim Alnas-Benson, Kristina McNaught, & Sara Orem. Kelly Colwell continues as the clergy liaison and support.



Investment/Endowment Committee

NICK KUKULAN, CHAIR



Thanks to the generous gifts of FCCB members over the years, we have endowment funds that provide support for our annual budget, maintenance of our church plant, and support of specific ministries to which endowment funds were specified. Gifts to the endowment are greatly appreciated and welcomed.

Our endowment investments continue with the United Church Funds. Our investment policy has not changed for the past years:

- To maintain an asset allocation of 65% in equity funds and 35% in bond funds. This provides diversification and stability through the ups and downs of markets
- To re-balance the funds to maintain this asset allocation on a monthly basis
- Invest in socially responsible principles established by the United Church Funds

FCCB has two endowment funds:

The General Endowment finished the year with a market value of \$3,398,619 a reduction of \$42,229 from \$3,440,849 12/31/2023.

The Housing Endowment ended the year with a value of \$738,340 an increase of \$66,435 or 9.89% from 12/31/2023. We do not draw dividends from this account.

So why did the General Endowment have a -1.23% decline compared to the Housing Endowment?

For the years 2012-2022 we booked an endowment draw, but never took the funds from the UCF account. This was because FCCB had adequate cash, and this allowed the Endowment to grow. This year our Treasurer, Moe Wright, decided that it was time to bring our accounting records up to date and going forward to only book actual cash drawn from the Endowment account. To accomplish this, we drew a total of \$297,584 from the UCF Endowment account. This covered the 2012-2022 period, and the years 2023, 2024.

To put the Combined Endowment Funds values in perspective:

12/31/2024 \$4,136,959
12/31/2023 \$4,112,753
12/31/2022 \$3,618,617
12/31/2021 \$4,376,244
12/31/2020 \$3,998,077



12/31/2019 \$3,387,080

12/31/2018 \$2,915,898

Members of the committee for 2024: Nick Kukulan, Nathan Hood, Bob Helliesen, & Moe Wright, Treasurer.

Legacy Circle

First Church Berkeley's Legacy Circle includes individuals in our church community who have named First Church Berkeley in their planned giving through their wills or trusts, retirement funds or life insurance beneficiary designation, and/or other resources or assets to be distributed after their deaths. These important legacy gifts contribute to our church's long-term financial sustainability for generations to come. Planned gifts are added to First Church Berkeley's Endowment and are prudently invested by the church's Investment Committee. We are extremely grateful for the faith and generosity of the Legacy Circle members. More information on how to become a member of the Legacy Circle may be found on the church's website.

Legacy Circle Members: Molly and Peter Baskette; Richard Brabham, Mollyanne Brewer (Maremaa); Michael Casendino and Amy Hiestand; Bob and Kathy Helliesen; Robert and Bonnie Hester; Hope Hilton; Robin and David Kempster; Carmelle Knudsen; Lewis Perry; Phil Porter; Boyard and Ann Rowe; Bruce and Susan Stangeland; Charles Taylor and Alice Clark; John and Helen Wadman; Morris and Rebecca Wright; Anonymous



Committee of Involvement

The Committee of Involvement (COI) has responsibility for nominating the elected officers of the Church, the at-large members of the Council of the Congregation, members of the Governing Boards of our six Ministries, the Long Range Planning Committee, the Investment Committee, and the Pastoral Search Committees.

The COI consists of the Church Clerk, the six immediate past chairpersons of Ministries and the immediate past Moderator, five at-large members, the Senior Minister, and such other members of the Church staff as the Senior Minister may designate.

Through prayer, discernment, and direct discussions with individuals in the Congregation, COI prepares a slate of nominees for consideration by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting in February. There are so many opportunities to serve in the spiritual work of First Church, and it has been our joy to help people find ways they can connect the gifts of their time and talents with the various ministries and committees.

Committee members who participated in 2024 include: Leonard Ash, Molly Baskette, Kelly Colwell, Susan Greef, Louise Halsey, Kathy Helliesen, Laura Monroe, Nick Kulkan, Steve Spielman, Jeanne Strauss, and Willem VandeKamp



Personnel Committee

JENNIFER NIXON, CHAIR

This past year has been a full one for the Personnel Committee. A big project was the multi-month revision of the 2015 FCCB Personnel Handbook. Capably guided by Kara Korbel-Chinula and Director of Operations August Laperche, the revision included many updates reflecting current laws and guidelines, a cost-conscious review of compensation and benefits with SFA, input from staff, and updated and inclusive wording. Council approved the final version in April. Jennifer Nixon and August Laperche attended an “HR Bootcamp” at which they learned of various laws and regulations relevant to churches. As a result, FCCB migrated a number of 1099 contractors to W-2 status, among other things.



The committee worked to help make the leaves of Rev. Kelly Colwell and August Laperche successful. Several temporary and permanent staff joined FCCB this year, including Frankie Maston, Yosha Gottbrath, Frances Tinney, and Sharonda Chappel. Leah Walz left FCCB as of 1/3/25 and we are grateful for her many contributions as Event Coordinator. Bella Vavra has recently stepped down as Coordinator of Children’s Involvement and handed over the reins to Frances Tinney; we are grateful for Bella’s caring contributions. Sharonda Chappel is FCCB’s new Childcare Aid--a new position. The team helped coordinate the 360-reviews for staff, and chair Jennifer Nixon led the reviews for co-senior ministers Rev. Kelly and Rev. Molly. Rev. Kelly kept the church’s org chart updated. Jennifer worked with August to pull together the information required for the \$1M 2025 Personnel budget.

Committee members: Jennifer Nixon, *Chair*, Kara Korbel-Chinula, Christine Gregg (early 2024), Sara Orem (late 2024); Rev. Molly Baskette & Rev. Kelly Colwell (staff)



Officers, Ministry, & Committee Members for 2025

OFFICERS	(terms end Jan. 2026)	(terms end Jan. 2027)	Council Rep.
Moderator	Margaret Kavanaugh-Lynch		Margaret Kavanaugh-Lynch
Moderator Elect	Hanni Hanson		Hanni Hanson
Clerk	Laura Monroe		Laura Monroe
Treasurer	Moe Wright		Moe Wright
Council at Large (no specified term)	Ann Naffziger	Jennifer Hu Craig Pratt Qaisul Takihunang	

MINISTRIES	(terms end Jan. 2026)	(terms end Jan. 2027)	Council Rep.
Care, Fellowship, & Invitation (CFI), Susan Webb, Chair			
	Rick Ayer Jacqueline Dennis Kathy Keller Robin Kempster Susan Webb		Susan Webb
Adult Education, Mack Griffith, Chair			
	Mack Griffith Mary Haake Bob Stumpf	Jim Alnas-Benson Carolyn Ash Melissa Moss	Bob Stumpf
Families, Children, & Youth (FamChY), Pam VandeKamp, Chair			
	Frances Tinney Pam VandeKamp	Joey Gottbrath Matt Reed Jeanne Strauss	Pam VandeKamp
Justice & Service, Stan Boghosian & Barbara Grady-Ayer, Co-Chairs			
	Stan Boghosian Barbara Grady-Ayer Chuck Monroe	John Brockett Carolyn Cox Katia Kiefaber	Stan Boghosian Barbara Grady-Ayer

Stewardship, Finance, & Administration (SFA), Christopher Batson, Chair			
	Tim Culvahouse Diana Graham Robin Lucchese	Christopher Batson Emily Carduff Nathan Hood Eunice Kwon	Christopher Batson

Officers, Ministry, & Committee Members for 2025

Worship & Spiritual Life (Deacons), Julie Greer, Chair

Kerrie Hein	Arin Dahl	Julie Greer
Linda Sawyer	Julie Greer	
Carolyn Thiessen	Kate Lucchese	
	Leo Tseng	

COMMITTEES*

Long Range Planning, Steve Spielman, Chair

Megan Bates
 Nat Binns
 Hanni Hanson
 Margaret
 Kavanaugh-Lynch
 Kara Korbelt-Chinula
 Rod MacKenzie
 Steve Spielman
 Sara Woods

Investment/Endowment

Chair is Elected by the Committee

Bob Helliesen Nathan Hood
 Nick Kukulan Rod MacKenzie

DELEGATES (no specified terms)

Richard Brabham
 Hanni Hanson
 Hope Hilton
 Jeanne Strauss

COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL*

Personnel

Kara Korbelt-Chinula
 Jennifer Nixon
 Sara Orem

**Terms may vary.*

Staff

Co-Senior Minister

REV. MOLLY BASKETTE

What a year we have had, Beloved. Again!

Most significantly in the arc of our history, in June we celebrated our 150th year as a faith community in Berkeley. For a century and a half, we have sung, prayed, preached, worked for the good of our neighbors, built, scrapped, rebuilt, moved, built again, fought entropy and decline, found ourselves in seasons of sudden massive growth, lived and thrived.

We have persisted through natural disasters, wars and many other seasons easily as perilous as the one we face now, with climate-fuelled fires burning Los Angeles and a second Trump administration about to take office. We have endured. We have stoked hope, fought for justice, and tended to those most at risk. And so we do still.

In 2024 we enjoyed a full year of Rev. Kelly Colwell and I working together as co-senior ministers, a model that many other churches are thinking of emulating. Our new structure has brought a greater degree of tensile strength, creativity and sustainability to our community. Rev. Kelly, and indeed our whole staff team (paid and volunteer: Rev. Hannah, Rev. August, Louise, Derek, Amare, Kathy, Robin, Bella, Leah, Sharlet & Kathy) is as hardworking, capable, mature and kind as you can imagine. I feel deeply blessed to work with this amazing group of humans. In addition to working really well together, we are cross-trained and well-equipped to handle the varying absences (such as Kelly's maternity leave—welcome Andie! We love you! And my upcoming medical leaves for hip-replacement surgery).

While I'm calling out servant-leaders (there are frankly too many of you to name!), I specifically want to thank Nick Kukulian and Moe Wright. Nick has served as our chair of Stewardship, Finance & Administration for many years, and is stepping down as chair but staying on the ministry. Moe will continue to serve as our Treasurer this year in what may be his 30th (!) year in the role, but will train a new treasurer to take his place over the course of this year. Additionally, Moe continues to be involved in our post-fire rebuild in a very hands-on way that has spared us untold dollars and difficulties. We are extremely blessed to have been beneficiaries of Nick and Moe's self-sacrificing, calm and competent leadership for many years—a kind of leadership that does not seek accolades but quietly does what needs doing (including triaging a raw sewage leak under Durant House!). You are blessings, Nick and Moe! Early in 2024, 30 of us went on a Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Selma and Montgomery, AL led by member Brittany Walker Pettigrew. Our many hours of study and conversation beforehand, and the willingness of every participant to show up as their best selves, meant we enjoyed a profound and holy experience of spiritual growth and insight regarding the reality of systemic racism and injustice in our nation, devilish divides that persist and are on the rise again.

Our new community building is almost finished! We will hold a potluck in the still-raw great assembly after Annual Meeting on February 2, and a Love Feast Reunion/Prom in the finished



space on May 3. The building is just as we had hoped: inviting and warm, flexible, beautiful, light-filled, energy-efficient. It is hard to believe that 8 ½ years after the fire, we are finally about to be fully home, and operating at full capacity to do ministry in the East Bay! Oakland School for the Arts senior and church member Hana Walker Pettigrew is on deck to paint two beautiful murals for us this spring in the completed building: a redwood forest in the upstairs Music Room, and a South Berkeley flower garden in bloom in the downstairs lobby. Thank you to ALL of you who made this possible by giving so generously to the Build. Gather. Grow Capital Campaign! If you haven't yet completed your gift to the campaign, it is not too late, as we are still paying construction bills!



In addition to the planned Love Feast/Reunion, our 150th anniversary committee led us on a history walk to all of our previous sites around Berkeley, created an installation in the sanctuary of First Church through the ages, and in April will present a staged reading of an original play by Kate Lucchese bringing to life our role in the transfer of Japanese-American citizens in Berkeley to the internment camps during WWII.

Our on-campus affordable housing project continues, albeit at a slower pace given the current (region-wide) inhospitable funding environment. But there have been positive new developments, including changes to zoning and political culture in Berkeley that will allow us to build up to 69 units of housing on our relatively small footprint. In the meantime, we are undertaking the audacious step to turn Durant House into emergency sanctuary housing for refugees and asylum seekers until it is time to demolish it (likely several years from now).

I continue to gather and host Berkeley All Faiths, a community of lay and clergy from a wide variety of faith communities. We meet for mutual support and prayer, and to have a strong unified voice for issues of moral concern in Berkeley. Early this year we'll have an audience with our new mayor, Adena Ishii, to build political power.

In May 2024 I finished my yearlong certificate program at CIIS in psychedelic-assisted therapy and research. Despite setbacks on the road toward legalization, psychedelic medicine shows robust promise as a treatment for depression, anxiety, addiction, PTSD and many more conditions, as well as an adjunct for spiritual growth and renewal. I have been enjoying both educating folks at church and throughout the mainline church about the benefits of psychedelics, and working on a *pro bono* basis for those who have already undertaken their own medicine journeys as they do "integration work" afterward.

As a neatnik, I'd be remiss if I didn't say that one of my personal highlights from this year was the Great Basement Cleanout of Summer 2024! We spent two Sundays hauling out all the stuff we had accumulated in our vast basement, selling, recycling, upcycling and trashing it. We are left with a tidy well-ventilated space that both our HVAC system and the Holy Spirit can move through for optimal circulation.

As we set our faces toward 2025 and more history-in-the-making, we are all wondering what to do & how to engage, as individuals and as a strong faith community. I want to share an excerpt from a sermon I preached in November, post-election.

“Beloved, a lot of us are still reeling from the election. We may be called upon to go along with massive injustice, to turn a blind eye, to pretend ignorance, and hate ourselves a little or a lot because of it. Or we may be called to resist human powers and principalities, to speak and shout for the voiceless; to heal, repair and transform the world. We may be called to be people of courage, or more realistically people of faintheartedness who have said their prayers and set their jaws, then sing and pray and act and SHINE.

I don’t yet know what the coming reckoning looks like. Nobody quite does. But I have an inkling of what our faith will demand of us.

Number one: mutual aid. It’s good that we already do this, and love to do it—because we’re going to be asked to do it on a grander scale, for all kinds of people we don’t know yet who don’t have their basic needs met.

Number two: Engage in ethical noncompliance with unjust policies and laws, such as: pretending to go along and then doing the opposite. Getting into good mischief, making tiny chinks in the armor of the oppressive forces. Noncompliance with injustice will be different for each of us depending on the jobs we do and where we sit in society.

Number three: Sacrifice. This encompasses mutual aid and ethical noncompliance, both of which cost us something: money, time, reputation, respectability, safety. But the sacrifices we may be called on to make—TOGETHER, it’s important to add, for there is strength and safety in numbers—may range beyond these first two calls. They may demand our lives.

This is all big talk, and I am definitely not as brave as I sound. But I know this: being here with you makes me a lot braver than I would be otherwise.

This week, our sesquicentennial anniversary committee put up around the sanctuary foam board posters documenting 150 years of our history, our values, our vision. What we *have* done.

Which makes me wonder: what *will* we do? How will our bicentennial anniversary committee remember us in 50 years? What stories will they tell? Just as we tell the complex story of what our congregation did to mitigate the harm to our Japanese-American neighbors when they were put into camps during World War 2, what stories will *they* tell? Will they be proud of us? Will they wish we had done more? Will *we* wish we had done more?

We have more wall space. Which is to say: we have a history, and we are a part of history being made right now. Where will we go from here?”

Christlove,
Rev. Molly



Co-Senior Minister

REV. DR. KELLY COLWELL

It's an honor to take a moment to look back at the year we've finished together and reflect a little bit about where I see us going in the coming years ahead for this phenomenal community of faith. The past year began in January with Becky Smith's funeral, which was a remarkable event celebrating a remarkable life cut short, full of love and tenderness. We welcomed new members in January as well, delighting in the people God is bringing through our doors. Our annual meeting last year was woven through the worship service for the first time in a few years, and it really helped us to frame the "business" of the church as part of our faith practice.



Ash Wednesday came early this year, and we offered ashes to many students and staff on the UC Berkeley campus and then to our own folks in the evening as well. It was sweet to have it coincide with Valentine's Day and to think about love and ashes together. And February also saw a big, beautiful group of Firsties head to Montgomery and Selma on pilgrimage, which you'll have read about in Rev. Molly's report. That pilgrimage was on behalf of the whole church and continues to bear fruit in our collective learning and reflecting. We also had a Spirituality and Learning retreat led by Christina Hutchins, attended by a robust and engaged group of Firsties thinking about our Christian vocation to ongoing learning and growth.

In Lent, we gathered with the worship theme of Hard Asks & Surprise Blessings, focusing on the big things that our faith asks of us and the surprises that we find in rising to those challenges. I've hit 200 recipients on the twice-daily prayers I text out in Lent and Advent, and people gathered for faith sharing groups and prayer during Lent as well. We marked Maundy Thursday as house churches again this year, gathering in eight locations to share a simple meal and wash each other's feet. We shared Good Friday with our neighbor UCC churches from Plymouth and City of Refuge to Orinda and the Good Table, hosted by Orinda again this year. On Holy Saturday we put our cloth labyrinth out one more time, hoping that "next year in Jerusalem" will be real for us and we can move to our own stone labyrinth in 2025. And Easter Sunday found us back up at Lawrence Hall of Science for sunrise and in our sanctuary for a beautiful and moving service thinking and praying about what resurrection looks like in our own lives. Easter coincided with Trans Day of Visibility last year (March 31) which was a beautiful overlap!

After Easter my wife Sheryl and I entered a personal countdown mode towards the Big Event of the arrival of our daughter Andrea Claire, who we call Andie. I spent much of April preparing for my parental leave, although we did find time to celebrate Earth Day and I had the honor to preach for the Annual Gathering for our siblings in the Disciples of Christ here in Northern California and Nevada Conference, extremely pregnant at that point. Then, for me, it was directly on to parental leave starting May 1, and Andie was born May 3. The congregation has my deep gratitude for the gift of four months for us to learn to be a family of three, and our

strong and resilient staff team handled the leave seamlessly, even as there was overlap in leave for August Laperche's medical leave August-October. I'm also grateful for all the meals and gifts that helped welcome this extremely well-loved baby into the world and into our community!

I returned from leave in September in time for our third annual Church D.I.Y. Triathlon, lovingly curated by Ann Naffziger and family. Sheryl and I split the Tri this year for childcare reasons but it was a delight to be among friends and to introduce Andie to the event, her debut at First Church! Andie began splitting her Sundays between First Church and the church where Sheryl was serving in ministry, the Congregational Church of San Mateo. At First Church, all Fall she spent Sundays with Jeanne Strauss, whose volunteer service taking care of Andie made returning to work so much less stressful for me. I'm so grateful for all the ways this church has cared for me and continues to care for us in this new season of life.

Many of us (70?) tried out a new and lovely retreat center for our All-Church Camp Retreat in September at Monte Toyon near Aptos, a beautiful setting amongst redwood trees that was also a little more walkable and a little more accessible for those with mobility challenges. We loved the bowl-shaped campfire/worship space and the great food (and very allergy-friendly!). We'll return there again in 2025 and look forward to more years to come enjoying each other's company and God's presence in the outdoors.

Our Fall Festival this year was well-attended and joy-filled, featuring a dunk-your-pastors event for the first time that was an absolute riot. I'm increasingly convinced that we need more opportunities to enjoy each other and laugh together, especially as politics and world events get more dire. Our bodies and our nervous systems especially really need those connecting events. We began a worship theme for the fall of Bad Kings, Drama Queens, and Divine Doings, taking a hard look at power through our scriptures as we wrestled with the coming election. Many of us traveled in the fall to swing states to canvass, knock doors, and support progressive candidates for office (at all levels, not just the presidency).

October saw us taking blessings to the dog park (under the capable leadership of Rev. Hannah and Deacon Rev. Arin Dahl) in celebration of St. Francis and the Blessing of the Animals--we also blessed photos of animals during church, which I found deeply moving. And a group of folks headed back to St. Dorothy's Rest retreat center for a second Silent Retreat led by Ann Naffziger and attended by Rev. Molly this year. We capped the month of October with our fourth Trunk or Treat event, attended by over 60 people, many of whom were first-time attendees! August came back from their medical leave in October, and we held another Telethon as we marched our way through the Season for Commitment again, asking each other to commit to funding this beloved community together.

November saw us hold another Election Night watch party, where the mood started out hopeful and ended with sorrow and resolve. It was the best use of those hours, though, to eat snacks and dance and alternate between the news coverage in Loper Chapel and the children's movies playing in the Pillar Room. You can't sink too deep into despair while Moana is playing, I think.

And we picked ourselves up the next day with a supportive campfire gathering, a singing circle, and a rousing Sunday worship where we promised each other we'd keep going together.

The mood of resolve took us through to December and our Advent theme of Star Stuff, where we held space for a longer and more expansive view of the cosmos and our place in it. We're all made of the same materials, from stars to sand to human beings, and it's good for us to right-size our sense of self-importance from time to time, even living in these crucial and dangerous times. We sang, we lit our Advent candles, we enjoyed basking in the light of our five new chancel Christmas trees. And at Christmas eve services, my own (giant seven-month-old) baby got to play the role of Baby Jesus. She slept through most of the 4pm family service, but stayed wide awake and engaged throughout the 9pm service, taking it all in. This year I can truly say that my heart is full, my cup runs over with blessings.

This year was my first full year serving in the capacity of co-senior minister alongside the incredible Molly Baskette, having been called into this role of greater leadership and responsibility in late 2023. Molly and I continue to build on the strong foundation of our working relationship, leaning on each other's strengths and calling each other to grow in helpful ways. I'm delighted to continue working with Rev. Hannah as she really starts to build momentum in her ministry with us in her third year. And in 2024 we really benefited from the strong and capable staff team we've built. Derek offered us glorious and stirring music, ably supported by Liz and Amar; August took on a lot of organizational work this year and helped us put strong systems in place for ourselves; Louise continued to hold infinite details together with grace; Amare kept our building in good order and our furniture where we need it to be, with help from Kathy So and others; Sharlet kept our finances on track and information where it needed to be; Leah managed the building rentals with grace and kindness towards our renters; Bella offered a beautiful space for our children to thrive on Sundays and has now handed that space off to Frances, supported by Sharonda, our new nursery care worker.

Being fully staffed by great people has made it possible for us to cover for each other during illnesses, parental leaves, and medical leaves without too much stress or strain. It's created space for us to dream and create new things, meet emerging needs from within our community and meet the emerging needs of the political and natural world. It has offered me the ability to continue teaching--during the past year, I taught a course on Ritual, Trauma, and Social Change, and another on our denomination's history, theology, and polity at Pacific School of Religion as well as a course on Faith Formation at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. As we look ahead to what comes next, I'm grateful to be going into it strong and supported by this team.

I will echo Molly's report by ending with a sermon excerpt, preached the Sunday after the election:

"Who's to say what comes after this? It's not a rhetorical question. It's a question with an answer, and the answer is: we are. We are among the ones who'll determine what this all means. Our varied resistance will be what creates the thing that follows this crisis. It would have been that way regardless of the outcome of the election. And if I know anything, it's that

we're always called to resist the powers of this world, holding them accountable to the most vulnerable and the earth, sharing a vision of a world made new even as we live in the world as it is. Two things can be true at once: we're tired, overwhelmed, exhausted, scared. And we're going to be ready for what we're called to do in the days to come, equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit who will never leave us and drawn forward by our shared and sacred vision of God's kingdom on earth."



Minister for Youth, Young Adults & Emerging Ministries

REV. HANNAH TURNER



Hello Church! We did a lot in 2024 - hard to believe all we did together. I hope in reading this entire report you feel a sense of pride and hope. Pride in your church and hope for our future despite budget deficits, national political adversaries, and all the other things this life throws at us. We have a foundation in this community - over 150 years in fact - of great love, seeking justice, loving kindness, and practicing mercy.

Due to Rev. Kelly's parental leave, I was given the great honor of leading our Annual Queer Pulpit Takeover this past June for Pride Month. We brought in our in-house queer and trans preachers, and welcomed several queer and trans musicians to our chancel. I personally was blessed by Steph Hord who led us in worship music with the blend of traditional hymns to contemporary worship styles. Other than Pride Month, our summer consisted of Work Camp with four high schoolers up to Chiloquin, Oregon where we participated in building sheds and fences for the community members there and a stop at the famous Crater Lake. We made some wonderful memories together and the teens made friendships with kids all around the country.

As I continue to look back at our 2024 season, I am inspired by the hundreds of Love Notes we handed out and many people we prayed for at Oakland Pride. The number of dogs we blessed, with Animal Chaplain Rev. Arin Dahl, as we celebrated St. Francis of Assisi's Blessing of the Animals at a local Berkeley Dog Park, our dunk tank fundraiser at Fall Festival, and the 60+ people members of First Church who attended our Trunk or Treat. I anticipate 2025 will offer us further opportunities to host these events and make them an even greater success, pulling in those all around the Berkeley area who would find our community a place to love and grow. That is my prayer for this year.

I am looking forward to the work we create together for college students after our inspiring brunch with our Cal Affiliates in October, which produced lots of wonderful ideas for how we might use our new building to serve our Cal neighbors. So be sure to keep a look out for how YOU might join in this mission. If you haven't noticed already, over half of our new members who joined in 2024 were young adults! Efforts made by many serving in our community to engage young adult folks traditionally uninterested in church are clearly working. We continue to hold a monthly Supper on the second Thursday of the month, an additional fun event to get us together to build friendships, and a yearly retreat that averages about 10-14 people in attendance. I am personally blessed by our thriving young adult ministry and I am excited to see what the Holy Spirit is going to lead us to next.

In 2025 there will be a lot of *new* for me! My wife, Bailey, and I are expecting a baby in June! So, you will not be seeing me around much this summer, but you can expect me, Bailey, and Baby Olive Rose Turner will be excited to come back to join you in the fall. Your prayers are welcome! Prayers for my family, and for our church. Consider with me, what might be in store for us in 2025, First Church Berkeley.



Director of Music

DEREK TAM



I'm grateful for yet another full year of music at First Church!

As always, I am thankful for the tireless efforts of my dear colleagues and friends, organist Elizabeth Forsyth and multi-instrumentalist Amar Khalsa. For the past decade, I have enjoyed collaborating with them week in and week out.

Over the course of a year, about 50 church members volunteer their services to our music program—and there's always room for more! Of those folks, I am particularly grateful for our Sanctuary Choir. We are lucky to have so many talented and joyful singers giving their voices and spirits so fully to our worship experience almost every Sunday from September to June. I also want to take some time to thank our other standing music groups, including our Gospel Choir, bell choir (led by Jim Coates) and Uke-atastrophe (led by Kate Lucchese). And what fun it was to lead such a full orchestra at our Christmas Eve family service this year!

We are also very fortunate to have so many amazing musical guests join us in worship. From the voices of youth—the San Francisco Girls Chorus, Piedmont-East Bay Children's Choir, and Pacific Boychoir Academy—to myriad other guest artists, we are treated to an embarrassment of riches.

Finally, I want to lift up our amazing concert series, Resonance, as well as the many outside musical groups that call us home as well.

I look forward to a musically rich 2025, as we continue celebrating our church's 150th anniversary and the inauguration of our new community building.



Director of Operations

REV. AUGUST LAPERCHE



Dear FCCB fam,

It is hard to believe that in September, I celebrated one year on staff and as a part of this loving community! It has been an eventful year for the church, as well as in my personal life. I want to start by thanking everyone who was present in body and/or in spirit at my ordination service in March (photo below). It was so meaningful to me to have so many beloved FCCB folks there celebrating with me - and thank you for the gorgeous stole! I will always cherish it. Many, many thanks for how everyone worked in collaboration to support the day-to-day operations of FCCB while I was on medical leave this fall, and thank you for the prayers, meals,

calls, and good energy. It all meant the world to me! I have so much to be thankful for when I reflect on 2024.

Now that I am feeling more settled and up-to-speed in my role as Director of Operations, I am thankful to say that the routine tasks, spanning from day-to-day to annually occurring, feel like they are in a manageable rhythm - thanks in great part to the support of amazing volunteers + a dynamic, creative staff team! I feel a better sense of what is coming down the pike each part of the year, and myself and other members of staff are developing routines and implementing systems to help simplify some of our processes. One example of this is how the staff is migrating to a software that allows us to categorize expenses on church credit cards and/or reimbursement requests - attaching the receipt, choosing the purpose of the expense, and submitting the information to our bookkeeper all through a simple app!

I continue to participate in the monthly Stewardship, Finance + Administration meetings, as well as Ministry Council meetings to report on the happenings behind-the-scenes of giving year-to-date actuals, logistics such as our parking lot, and buildings and grounds maintenance.

Thank you times 1,000 for all your support and encouragement this year! Let's have another wonderful year together in community, trusting in the Spirit of Hope and supporting one another along the journey.

Peace,

Rev. August



Congregational Care Program Manager

LOUISE HALSEY



The spate of activities and life together continued in 2024 in our beloved First Church community – from welcoming new members to mourning the passage to glory of our beloved saints, to new programs and engaging Learning Hours, to Retreats – contemplative & activity-filled, and much more. There were so many ways to be present to and to connect with each other in community.

From a “behind-the-scenes” perspective, there are always lots of details to coordinate, to communicate, and to juggle, and I’m grateful for all the support the staff receives from each other and from our church members. It all happens because each of us embodies the hands and feet of Jesus, offering what we are able to the greater body.

I want to give a special shout out to our Memorial Service Guild (MSG) volunteers and its coordinator Andy Young for their ongoing dedication to our community. Thank you for providing hospitality and refreshments at our memorial service receptions, a gift of comfort & care to our church families who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

A few highlights for me – I’ve continued to enjoy putting together the *Carillon* newsletter each week. I feel like I have my finger on the pulse of a vibrant community that cares deeply for each other and the world. I enjoy coming up with photos and graphics to support the words on the page and to choose a poem each week that somehow touches on what’s alive in that moment. Whenever Rev. Hannah gives the announcements during worship on Sunday mornings, she often includes a plug to read the *Carillon*, which is the comprehensive, go-to source for what’s happening in our community and beyond. If you aren’t yet receiving the *Carillon*, you can subscribe on our website’s home page (scroll down to the bottom) or view the *Carillon* each week here: <https://www.firstchurchberkeley.org/?s=carillon> .

I loved being together with many of you last September at the All-Church Fall Retreat in a **new**



location for us – **Monte Toyon in Aptos**. To my mind, there’s nothing better than gathering in person for more than 24 hours with a group of people of all ages – such creature comfort! There’s actually time to have some meaningful conversations with folks we have been saying a quick “hello” to for months or even years. There were also art projects, campfires and singing, dancing, storytelling, rope climbing, and good food! If you missed out, see the photos [here](#) and make sure to join the fun in the fall – save the dates – Sept. 12 – 14, 2025!

The ultimate highlight for me is being in community with all of you and being part of our amazing staff. It's a delight to be part of this beloved community and a joy to work with such a dedicated, spirited, & insightful group of talented people. I love you all!



Out Beyond Ideas of Wrongdoing and Rightdoing
Rumi

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
There is a field. I'll meet you there.
When the soul lies down in that grass,
The world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase each other
Doesn't make any sense.

Translated from Persian by Coleman Barks and John Moyne, from *The Essential Rumi*, published by HarperCollins.
Copyright © 1995 by Coleman Barks.



New Member Coordinator

KATHY HELLIESEN (VOLUNTEER)



We joyfully welcomed 14 New Members into the life of First Church Berkeley in 2024. A heartfelt welcome to Heather, Barbara, Carolina, Sara, Bella, Amy, Joy, Katia, Becky, Bekah, MC, John, Leo and Frankie. Our newest members are already serving on ministries, singing in the choir, blessing us with their beautiful solos, participating in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage, serving as FCCB's children's coordinator, and offering hospitality. Our community is enriched by their presence.

Our Discover First Church classes are led by Rev. Molly and Rev. Kelly. After getting to know each other over Cheeseboard pizza, inquirers learn about our denomination, the UCC, what it means to be a member, the sacraments we observe and have plenty of time for questions. Those deciding to become members meet the following

Saturday for crepe making and sharing spiritual stories. This rich sharing is a gift to all who attend. Joining follows the next morning at our 10 am worship service.

Many thanks to Revs. Molly and Kelly for leading the classes, and to Louise Halsey for her support.





Left to right: ~ Katia (she/her), John (he/him), Leo (he/him), Becky (she/her), Frankie (she/her), Bekah (she/her), MC (she/her)



Parish Associate

ROBIN KEMPSTER (VOLUNTEER)



I am pleased to serve the church as a Parish Associate. In this role, I attend staff meetings, participate in the Pastoral Care team, coordinate Meal Train, and support other programs as needed. I look forward to continuing as a Parish Associate in the coming year.



Chat Pastor

GEOFFREY GASKINS (VOLUNTEER)



Online worship at First Church is alive and well! We’re hosting between twenty and forty folks each week, and it continues to be a privilege for me to be a part of this program.

Our technology continues to improve – our tech folks are the best; and our reach continues to expand. Increasingly, we’re going global. (Last week we had folks from Italy joining the chat!)

I’ve observed in this report before that there’s a kind of magic, a kind of living spirit to how things unfold at First Church. Our worship continues to inspire and a real First Church Chat worship community has developed. Folks who used to be regulars and have moved away are now regulars again, in Chat this time. It’s more than “extended family.” It’s more like one family, experiencing the same communion ... all over the place. Exciting!

Online worship is certainly here to stay, and we are constantly looking for ways to increase and enhance the worship experience for folks who aren’t in the room. Please email me with your thoughts and suggestions (ggaskins@progressiveevangelical.org).

I’m reminded of something Rev. Colwell said a while ago: “online is our new front door.” Our online opportunities to share who we are and what we do continue to inspire me, makes me giddy with excitement and hope ... for the work we do, the community we love, and the world we have a (not-so-hidden) hand in making a better place for the Spirit move.

“In the beginning was the Conversation, and the Conversion was with Gd, and the Conversation was Gd.” (John 1:1, PCBS) May our Conversation and our community continue to be blessed in the name of the One who calls us to this Body.

Blessings on all our holy conversations.



Other Ministries

Affordable Housing Committee

KERA BARTLETT BINNS & SCOTT SPORTE, CO-CHAIRS

The Affordable Housing Committee has collaborated closely with our development partner, EBALDC, to plan and develop affordable housing on our campus.

In the spring, we launched a committee [FAQ webpage](#) and held an online congregational information session to update members and address questions and concerns about the project's vision and



progress. Additionally, we met with the Church Council to brief them on the project and secure authorization to negotiate with EBALDC on selling parcels of our property, rather than pursuing development through a ground lease.

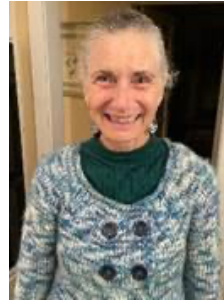
The preliminary project concept envisions an approximately six-story building with 50–65 units of primarily two- and three-bedroom family apartments. The building would face Dana Street and include a newly planned play area for the East Bay School for Boys, as well as a driveway pass-through to the parking lot.

Looking ahead to 2025, we plan to begin negotiating the term sheet with EBALDC and providing input as needed to support their efforts in obtaining the required entitlements from the City. However, with last year's proposed regional housing bond withdrawn and the current political climate, the funding environment for affordable housing projects has become strained. These challenges may delay projects like ours across the region.

Committee members include Kera Bartlett Binns (co-chair), Molly Baskette, Alice Clark, Sophia DeWitt, Lorenzo Llanillo, & Scott Sporte (co-chair).

FCCB Over 60 Group

**CARMELLE KNUDSEN, KERRIE HEIN, & SARA OREM, STEERING COMMITTEE
BOB STUMPF, PROGRAM LEAD**



Cultivating Joy Course Instructor: Sara Orem

Program Co-leaders: Holly Coates Bash, Craig Pratt, Judy Huston

Administrative Support: Melissa Moss

Engagement Committee: Robin Kempster, Ann Jensen, Alice Clark, Charles Taylor, Susan Greef & Jonell Lucas

At the end of 2023, Carmelle and Kerrie invited FCCB members who were over 60 to attend an in-person or online focus group and/or fill out a survey to better understand what the members of this age cohort wanted from their church community. They wanted: opportunities to explore the meaning and purpose of their lives at this stage, to share their spiritual journeys with each other, to deepen their spiritual practices, and to learn more about aging and support each other with its challenges. Above all, they wanted to get to know each other and share their life stories.

A steering committee was formed, which led to the creation of the Over 60 Engagement Committee and the following programs, all of which have been well-received and attended by up to 40 members:

- *Cultivating Joy*, taught by Sara Orem, PhD. Offered both in-person and on Zoom, this class offered participants a 6-week opportunity to try out activities that might bring them joy.
- Saturday Discussion Groups:
 - o A Three-Part Series: *The Last Chapter: What Does Life and the Sacred Look Like Now?* facilitated by Bob Stumpf.

- o A Two-Part Series: *Encountering Change in a Changing World*, facilitated by Bob Stumpf, Holly Bash, and Craig Pratt.

- o Part 1 of a Three-Part Series: *Visions of Aging*, facilitated by Judy Huston and Bob Stumpf.

Sunday Adult Education Programs, facilitated by the Over 60 Engagement Committee:

- o *Our Experiences of Growing Older*: looking at myths about aging and internalized ageism and sharing personal experiences.

- o *Community Resources helpful to Over 60 members*.

The Over 60 Engagement Committee has reached out to some 60 church members who have not attended church in a long time, sharing information by message and by phone about current activities at church, especially of Over 60 activities, in an effort to re-engage these members. They meet once a month for discussion and fellowship.

FCCB Over 60 also initiated restarting Taizé Services.





Progressive Christian Bible Study

GEOFFREY GASKINS, M.DIV., FACILITATOR

Wow! Our Progressive Christian Bible Study has been running continually for 16 years at First Church ... and we'll be expanding our program this year with two additional studies.

One will be a survey of the Gnostic Gospels and the other a thematic study addressing the biblical basis of our responsibility as Jesus's disciples in the current socio-political climate. These are not only times that try human souls, they are times that call for progressives of every religious stripe to step up to the plate. We're up!



Our Progressive Christian Bible Study (PCBS) is an online program that meets by Zoom weekly, on Wednesday afternoons at 4 pm. Let's talk if you're interested. (ggaskins@progressiveevangelical.org)

In PCBS Gatherings we do deep readings of the texts we engage, often studying one text for years. These are primarily biblical texts, but not necessarily. We've worked with gnostic material, the Qur'an, Buddhist sutras, Hans Christian Anderson, Nietzsche, Miley Cyrus

In 2025, PCBS will be engaging the challenges presented by new thinking in biblical scholarship and the challenges presented by the New Atheism and Christian Deconstruction movements. These are some of the most prophetic voices speaking today and they're asking questions we need to address ... and soon!

Email me if you're interested. (ggaskins@progressiveevangelical.org) I'll send you more stuff and we'll talk. Our time and place is a holy challenge. I pray that we be worthy of it, and that we find in our sacred tradition fuel for what lies ahead.

In Yeshua's holy name, peace be upon him ... and upon you.

Ministry Partners

Berkeley Pilgrimage Foundation

ROD MACKENZIE, BOARD PRESIDENT



The Berkeley Pilgrimage Foundation (BPF) is a private foundation affiliated with First Church that supports housing, healthcare, and related services for seniors and people with disabilities in and around Berkeley. We make annual donations to five or six deserving organizations in the amount \$15,000-\$30,000.

We took a year hiatus this past fiscal year, but we look forward to recruiting new members, finding new organizations to fund, and continuing our much needed support of local non-profit support services.

We gratefully appreciate Scott Spote's continued work as Treasurer and thank outgoing Secretary Amy Hiestand and long-time board member Janet McDonald for their years of service. Continuing board members are Sophia DeWitt, Jacki Dennis, Rod MacKenzie, and Helen Walsh.

How to Get Involved

We are always looking for new board and committee members! If you think you might want to volunteer with the Foundation, please reach out to Rod MacKenzie (rod.mackenzie@gmail.com) or any of the board members listed above. We'd love to hear from you!



East Bay School (Formerly East Bay School for Boys)

TIM BAASE, SCHOOL COORDINATOR

In our 15th year, the East Bay School for Boys is now The East Bay School. In the summer of 2024, the EBS(B) board made the strategic decision to open our doors to students across the gender spectrum. This aligns with our long-held vision that the school's feminist-forward, social-justice curriculum is suitable for all learners. Additionally, EBS transitioned some curricular structures to better align with our students' needs in a fast-changing world. To learn more, visit our website at <https://www.ebsfb.org/>.



**New name, same
revolutionary middle school.**



**Now serving all students
across the gender spectrum.**

Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministry of the UCC (PAAM)

QAISUL TAKIHUNANG, FIRST CHURCH REPRESENTATIVE



Ministry Focus

As an FCCB representative, I support PAAM’s ministry by fostering cultural diversity and assisting members in their spiritual journeys. With the church’s support, I strive to strengthen cultural connections and witness the transformative power of faith in diversity.

2024 Ministry Reflection



Easter Sermon at Chinese Congregational Church, San Francisco (CCC)

On March 31, 2024, I delivered an Easter sermon, celebrating the church’s designation as an Open and Affirming (ONA) church. Their decision reflects a commitment to justice and inclusivity, rooted in lessons from the Chinese Exclusion Act and their church history.



Supporting Indigenous Land Rights

On July 13, 2024, I joined Rev. Kathryn Schreiber at the “West Berkeley Shellmound Land Transfer Celebration,” led by Sogorea Te’ Land Trust. This historic return of land to the Ohlone people symbolizes restorative justice, with Berkeley Chinese Community Church reflecting Christ’s love in action.



45th Anniversary of the First Filipino American United Church of Christ (FFAUCC)

On August 18, 2024, I attended the 45th-anniversary celebration of the First Filipino American United Church of Christ, witnessing their resilience in preserving faith and culture across generations.



Sermon at Berkeley Chinese Community Church (BCCC)

On September 29, 2024, I preached on “Radical Love in Fellowship,” based on Mark 2:1-12, encouraging the community to demonstrate love and trust through action. I shared insights from my studies at Pacific School of Religion, emphasizing inclusivity and mutual support.

Vision for 2025

- **Preaching:** Deliver cross-cultural sermons to inspire faith and love.
- **Writing:** Share reflections on cultural diversity and faith practices.
- **Networking:** Strengthen connections with PAAM churches and members.

Through these efforts, I aim to support PAAM’s growth and reflect the power of faith in cultural diversity.

Pacific School of Religion

KIMBERLY GRIFFITH, Director of Enrollment



First Church has had a strong relationship with Pacific School of Religion (PSR) throughout its history. Several PSR students and alumnae have served our community in a variety of ways, and several First Church members have served on PSR’s Board of Trustees and various committees. We are grateful for this ongoing partnership!

This Fall, PSR welcomed its most racially diverse class in recent history, with approximately 70% of incoming students identifying as students of color.

In October, Kwaray, a bold and collaborative initiative by PSR to reimagine theological education, went live. Kwaray is a community-based learning platform equipping rising faith leaders as they navigate an era of profound spiritual and cultural upheaval. Kwaray’s mission is to unleash the potential of rising faith leaders as they discover their purpose and take action.

Other highlights from the year included PSR’s Earl Lecture Series, which centered around the intersections of Disruptive AI, Christian Nationalism, and Democracy and included a screening of the film *Bad Faith* at the Elmwood Theater in Berkeley, and an online workshop series by the Center for LGBTQ+ and Gender Studies in Religion entitled “Queering the 2024 Vote,” which was aimed at empowering LGBTQ+ individuals, allies, and communities to be voices and votes for positive change in our nation’s urgent need for justice, hope, love, and compassion.

PSR continues to partner with missionally aligned organizations—Berkwood Hedge Middle School and The Coleman Fung Institute for Engineering Leadership at UC Berkeley—to create a diverse learning community on the Pacific School of Religion campus.

PSR’s mission is to prepare a diverse cadre of spiritually rooted leaders with the vision, resilience, and skill to create a world where all can thrive. Grounded in the rigorous study and faithful practice of progressive Christian faith, PSR partners with students of all backgrounds to deepen their spirituality and enhance their capacity to lead in transformative ways.

Capital Fund Campaign

Advanced Commitment Campaign Co-Chair

Nick Kulkan



In February 2023, our church launched our **Build. Gather. Grow. Campaign** to build a new structure on the site of Pilgrim Hall destroyed by fire in September of 2016. Today we are seeing the finishing work on the new building, and we expect to move in and enjoy it very soon. This is amazing progress considering the many years of planning and two plus years of construction. The new creation brings many new opportunities for our congregation and for the wider community.

Thanks to everyone who pledged more than \$1.75 million in commitments that are crucial for fully implementing all features of the new building. As we approach completion we encourage everyone to complete their pledges in this year. We invite anyone who has not contributed to please join in. To find out more about the campaign on our website <https://www.firstchurchberkeley.org.capitalcampaign/>

We expect a shortfall between the amount pledged and the final construction cost, due to unexpected delays, and increased construction costs. Please give more to the campaign!



Financial Reports

Treasurer

MOE WRIGHT



From the Treasurer's point of view this year has been one of review and modification of the accounting methodology that the church has used. In addition, there has been the work of managing the capital for the improvements related to replacing Pilgrim Hall and of course budget planning and preparation. All in all, much progress has been made on all fronts.

The following is a little technical, but I feel it is necessary to document the changes made in our accounting this year. Since the 1990's the church budget along with income and expense reporting has been idiosyncratic. Our basic system is "cash" based. This means that a transaction is recorded when cash moves either into or out of our accounts. We don't report income when it is billed. We don't report accounts receivable or payable. There was one big exception to this when it came to endowment accounting. Our rules call for an endowment "draw" of 5% to be used for intended purposes. Some of this draw is sent to us as cash from dividends and interest (this is about 2% of the draw), but the remainder must be requested and stocks or bonds sold to raise the funds. For many years, the books reflected the "cash" transaction (receipt of dividend and interest) as actual income, but accounted for the remainder of the draw as a liability against the value of each endowment. Every few years we would request some of the endowment stocks and bonds be sold and the money sent to us to use as specified, but this did not happen often. Keeping track of this liability is a time consuming, mistake-filled process and it does not harmonize with the rest of our accounting. By 2021 the liability on the books had accumulated to \$388,090.63. To adjust the liability, we transferred an adjusted amount from the appropriate endowment's stock and bond accounts into our checking account to put us back on a cash basis and in the future, we will transfer the cash during the year it is appropriated and not accumulate the liability. This cash infusion helped balance this year's (2024) budget and will help with next year as well.

On the capital improvement side, we spent \$3,973,650 on the Community Hall rebuilding. The total spent to date is \$9,002,433. We have already built most of the additional features that the Capital Campaign outlined and the total will come in at about \$11,000,000. It looks like we will be able to start using the building in late March.

The budget this year represents the continuation of a condition that started last year. In 2024 we voted for a deficit budget in anticipation that funding would be available once Durant House and a portion of our parking lot was sold to a developer for the construction of affordable housing. The sale has been deferred so other alternatives must be considered. This year we also adopted a deficit budget along with a recommendation from Council to work to reduce the deficit this year and eliminate it next year. As mentioned above, the remaining cash infusion

from the transfer from endowments will help this year. The details of the 2024 budget and actual results and the 2025 budget are included in this Annual Report in a table. The plan for this year's deficit is to use the remaining \$160,327 from the endowment transfer explained above and to borrow the balance from the Ministerial Housing Endowment.



Six-Year Stewardship Review

<u>Six-Year Stewardship Review</u>						
	1/14/25					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Commitments						
Amount committed	\$664,071	\$620,000	\$634,322	\$581,122	\$554,116	\$531,080
# of commitments	166	161	175	163	155	129
Average	\$4,000	\$3,851	\$3,625	\$3,565	\$3,575	\$4,117
Funds Received Actuals as of 1.14.25	\$668,801	\$680,206	\$673,847	\$647,383	\$585,841	TBD
Difference Received less Commitments	\$4,730	\$60,206	\$39,525	\$66,261	\$31,725	

2024 Activities' Funds Report

Activity Funds			
2024	Start Balance	Net Activity	End Balance
WORSHIP & SPIRITUAL LIFE			
Cazadero All Church Camp	\$9,328.64	-\$9,328.64	\$0.00
Camp Scholarships	\$530.00	-\$530.00	\$0.00
Advent /Lent Retreat Grp	\$2,803.42	\$82.00	\$2,885.42
Parish Nurse	\$994.90	\$0.00	\$994.90
Advertising	\$6,033.20	\$0.00	\$6,033.20
Memorial Service Guild	\$1,678.09	\$175.00	\$1,853.09
Spiritual training/direct	\$1,954.63	-\$1,800.00	\$154.63
Social Action	-\$829.95	-\$500.00	-\$1,329.95
EDUCATION			
Youth Groups	\$567.11	\$375.00	\$942.11
FamChY Events	\$385.46	\$0.00	\$385.46
Befrienders	\$57.50	\$0.00	\$57.50
Song of the Soul	\$1,297.70	\$0.00	\$1,297.70
Sunday School	\$1,704.36	\$0.00	\$1,704.36
Winthrop Work Camp	-\$491.71	-\$1,989.77	-\$2,481.48
Adult Ed	\$2,497.11	\$816.00	\$3,313.11
God Swag	-\$933.37	\$0.00	-\$933.37
CARE & FELLOWSHIP			
Women's Voices & Retreat	-\$329.84	\$0.00	-\$329.84
Healing Services	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Men's Group & Retreat	\$1,035.34	\$0.00	\$1,035.34
Fall All-Church Retreat	-\$7,575.00	\$7,489.45	-\$85.55
Silent Retreat	-\$2,643.00	-\$1,580.00	-\$4,223.00
Senior Ministries (TE)	\$1,016.32	\$0.00	\$1,016.32
Montgomery trip	-\$1,419.06	\$5,125.33	\$3,706.27
Over 60 Activities	\$0.00	-\$744.54	-\$744.54
150th Anniversary T-Shirts	\$0.00	\$292.00	\$292.00
STEWARDSHIP, FINANCE & AD			
Transitional Tasks	\$41,140.05	-\$41,140.05	\$0.00

Legal Expenses	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
CHURCH COUNCIL			
Council Contingency	\$126,111.20	-\$126,111.20	\$0.00
Emergency Preparedness	\$2,558.55	\$0.00	\$2,558.55
Staff Retreat & Review	\$2,769.64	\$0.00	\$2,769.64
Background checks	\$607.95	-\$85.25	\$522.70
UNIVERSITY/YOUNG ADULTMIN			
Young Adults	\$5,040.24	-\$670.24	\$4,370.00
Total Activity Funds	\$197,889.48	-\$170,124.91	\$27,764.57
Donor Designated Funds			
2024	Start Balance	Net Activity	End Balance
Worship & Spiritual Life			
Music Fund (Resonance)	\$13,266.43	\$12,190	\$25,455.99
Music Fund (Piano & Organ)	\$9,480.29	\$0	\$9,480.29
Flower-Sanctuary Decor	\$8,444.23	\$65	\$8,509.23
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$1,110.17	\$2,310	\$3,420.17
Seminarian Support	\$592.37	\$0.00	\$592.37
Church Council			
Celebration Fund	\$39,013.65	-\$13,781.25	\$25,232.40
Computer Fund	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$150.00
Building & Ground Fund	\$0.00	-\$20,000.00	-\$20,000.00
Total Donor Designated Funds	\$72,057.14	\$ (19,216.69)	\$ 52,840.45
Non-Budgeted Benevolence Funds			
2024	Start Balance	Net Activity	End Balance
Worship & Spiritual Life			

Easter Offering	-\$95.00	\$171.00	\$76.00
Christmas Offering	-\$109.00	\$109.00	\$0.00
Justice & Service	\$208.49	\$0.00	\$208.49
Collection Plate	\$132.71	\$10,446.25	\$10,578.96
Welcome Home Baskets	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
Christmas Eve Stockings	\$3,656.19	\$0.00	\$3,656.19
Mental Health Ministry	\$4,306.30	-\$94.11	\$4,212.19
2nd Sunday Sandwiches	\$699.40	-\$51.82	\$647.58
Crop Walk (CWS)	\$0.00	-\$50.00	-\$50.00
Singing Hope!	-\$0.30	\$0.00	-\$0.30
Kitchen Community Ministries	\$1,345.62	\$0.00	\$1,345.62
Homeless Encampments	\$340.51	\$0.00	\$340.51
Green Ministry Team	\$1,418.64	\$0.00	\$1,418.64
Sanctuary Ministry Team	\$2,582.10	\$0.00	\$2,582.10
NuevaEsperanzaPre-Escolar	\$744.18	\$0.00	\$744.18
Total Worship & Spiritual Life Non-Budgeted	\$15,429.84	\$10,530.32	\$25,960.16
Outreach	Start Balance	Receipts/Disb	End Balance
Black Wealth Builders Fund	\$0.00	\$5,495.00	\$0.00
Berkeley Food Pantry	\$0.00	\$993.00	\$0.00
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity	\$0.00	\$4,186.50	\$0.00
East Bay Sanctuary Covenant	\$0.00	\$3,257.50	\$0.00
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$0.00	\$600.00	\$0.00
Canine Companions	\$0.00	\$2,636.00	\$0.00
SNAPKids	\$0.00	\$2,143.50	\$0.00
Pacific Center for Human Growth	\$0.00	\$1,548.00	\$0.00
World Central Kitchen - Gaza	\$0.00	\$2,325.50	\$0.00
Soccer Without Borders	\$0.00	\$2,267.00	\$0.00
East Bay Agency for Children	\$0.00	\$2,328.00	\$0.00
Neighbors In Need UCC	\$0.00	\$1,753.00	\$0.00
FC Durant House Shelter Fund	\$0.00	\$7,649.00	\$0.00
Dorothy Day House	\$0.00	\$3,176.00	\$0.00
Black Wealth Builders Fund	\$0.00	\$4,602.50	\$0.00

Puente de la Costa Sur	\$0.00	\$1,862.00	\$0.00
Common Hope	\$0.00	\$1,862.00	\$0.00
Total Outreach	\$0.00	\$48,684.50	\$0.00
Total Non-Budgeted Benevolences	\$15,429.84	\$59,214.82	\$25,960.16
Buildings and Grounds			
2024	Start Balance	Net Activity	End Balance
Building and Ground Fund	\$ 64,744.19	\$ 28,353.20	\$ 93,097.39
Building Reserve Fund	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00
Equipment Replacement B&G	\$ -	\$ (4,400.00)	\$ (4,400.00)
Total Buildings & Grounds Funds	\$ 74,744.19	\$23,953	\$ 98,697.39

2024 Assets, Liabilities & Fund Balances

Statement of Assets, Liabilities & Fund Balances											
December 31, 2024											
This sheet shows our liquid assets, and the various funds in which they are held as balanced against any outstanding liabilities, including the fund balances. The value of the church plant is only shown for the improvements after the fire. Across the top of the page are the broad categories of the funds, and the finer detail shows up on later sheets.											
ASSETS	Budgeted Operations	Activity Funds	LISC Grant	Designated Gift Funds	Plant Funds	Capital Campaign	Fire Rebuilding	Endow Funds	Minister Housing		<i>Total All Funds</i>
Cash, bank and money market accounts at Mechanics Bank & Morgan Stanley	160,328	261,528	10,000	10,863	98,697	1,322,784	678,653				2,542,853
Accounts receivable	68,730										68,730
<i>Equity investments</i>											
Shared appreciation notes United Church Funds								3,386,735	738,340		4,125,075
<i>Real Estate Improvements</i>											
Community Building							9,002,433				9,002,433
Sanctuary Repairs							3,139,444				3,139,444
Pilgrim Hall Stabilization							1,234,297				1,234,297
<i>Total assets</i>	229,058	261,528	10,000	10,863	98,697	1,322,784	14,054,827	3,386,735	738,340		20,112,832
LIABILITIES											
Suspense/Special Projects CTS	1,000		10,000								11,000
Construction Loan / Payables											
Endowment principal funds								3,386,735	738,340		4,125,075
Deferred income	28,650			10,863	98,697	18,827					157,037
<i>Total liabilities</i>	29,650	0	10,000	10,863	98,697			3,386,735	738,340		4,293,112
FUND BALANCES											
Surplus (deficit) from operations											
Real Property Fund							14,054,827				14,054,827
Restricted gifts & funds allocated	199,408					1,303,957					1,503,365

Endowment principal funds											0
Total fund balances'	199,408	0	0	0	0	1,303,957	14,054,827	0	0		15,558,192
Total liabilities and fund balances	229,058	261,528	10,000	10,863	98,697	1,322,784	14,054,827	3,386,735	738,340		20,112,832

2024 Operating Budget

Operating Budget								
This is the fund which we budget every year. The everyday income and outgo associated with the operation of the church. This sheet shows actual income and expenses in various categories for the past several years, and shows for the past year, actual amounts against budgeted amounts. Also, it shows the budget for the coming year. This fund is zeroed out each year.								
RECEIPTS	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	Over (Under)	2025 Budget
Contributions								
Commitments	656,913.00	607,312.00	613,022.52	576,679.00	520,000.00	535,235.84	15,235.84	527,000.00
Other Contributions	16,581.00	31,089.00	21,552.22	8,963.00	16,000.00	24,726.50	8,726.50	16,000.00
Additional Gifts	28,186.00							
Total contributions	701,680.00	638,401.00	634,574.74	585,642.00	536,000.00	559,962.34	23,962.34	543,000.00
Facility Use*	267,887.00	284,868.00	362,382.87	538,196.00	416,922.00	359,704.38	(57,217.62)	479,597.80
Transfers from FCCB funds								
Nelson Gen Endow	5,048.00	4,787.00	5,142.00	5,337.00	5,525.00	5,503.26	(21.74)	5,666.27
Endowments to Univ. Min.	54,306.00	51,492.00	55,311.00	57,406.00	61,286.00	59,190.91	(2,095.09)	61,884.25
Emerging Leaders	8,421.00	0.00	0.00				-	
Music Fund	3,594.00	3,408.00	5,870.00	6,092.00	6,503.00	8,281.35	1,778.35	6,467.41
Special Endowment	0.00	24,545.00	26,661.00	27,670.00	29,540.00	27,069.93	(2,470.07)	33,656.86
Total transfers	71,369.00	84,232.00	92,984.00	96,505.00	102,854.00	100,045.45	(2,808.55)	107,674.79
Other Income								
Misc. income/Invest. Interest				5,788.00	8,000.00	36,213.82	28,213.82	6,000.00

PPP Loan	90,464.00								
Total other income	90,464.00	0.00	0.00	5,788.00	8,000.00	36,213.82	28,213.82	6,000.00	
Total receipts	1,131,400.00	1,007,501.00	1,089,941.61	1,226,131.00	1,063,776.00	1,055,925.99	(7,850.01)	1,136,272.59	
DISBURSEMENTS									
Operating Expenses									
Personnel*	712,043.00	678,342.00	725,650.37	834,571.00	928,898.00	926,306.17	(2,591.83)	1,036,111.29	
Program*	45,637.00	42,967.00	57,635.48	66,072.00	76,620.00	75,133.88	(1,486.12)	76,620.00	
Administration*	48,941.00	55,707.00	49,372.84	51,599.00	62,000.00	47,388.08	(14,611.92)	66,500.00	
Church Plant*	160,862.00	151,421.00	164,001.91	208,836.00	233,000.00	216,655.52	(16,344.48)	266,760.00	
Total operating expenses	967,483.00	928,437.00	996,660.60	1,161,078.00	1,300,518.00	1,265,483.65	(35,034.35)	1,445,991.29	
Denomination and Other Support									
Our Church's Wider Mission	65,695.00	60,425.00	60,481.00	57,628.00	52,000.00	53,523.58	1,523.58	52,700.00	
Other Benevolences		5,500.00		6,113.00	6,500.00	5,000.00	(1,500.00)	6,500.00	
Pacific School of Religion	3,000.00		3,000.00						
BOCA/ Justice & Service			1,220.00						
UCC Strengthen the Church	500.00		500.00						
UCC Christmas Fund	500.00		500.00						
UCC New Church Starts	1,000.00		1,000.00						
Total denom/conference support	70,695.00	65,925.00	66,701.00	63,741.00	58,500.00	58,523.58	23.58	59,200.00	
Total operating exp. & benevolences	1,038,178.00	994,362.00	1,063,361.60	1,224,819.00	1,359,018.00	1,324,007.23	(35,010.77)	1,505,191.29	
Excess (deficit)	93,222.00	13,139.00	26,580.01	1,312.00	-295,242.00	-268,081.24	27,160.76	-368,918.70	

Balancing Funds								
Council Contingency						127,242.00		
Transitional Funds						41,140.00		
Application of previous Endowment Transfers						99,699.24		
Balance						0.00		

Statements

A Seeker's Statement

Finding a home in God's wilderness, we seek to savor God and magnify the longings of Jesus. We dare to be uncertain. Practicing compassion and awakening conscience, we bear hope for a suffering world. In this Spirit, we honor one another in beloved community.

Long Range Planning Committee, Fall 2003

Mission Statement

To bring ourselves and others to God, and to develop within us spiritual maturity so that we may be equipped for ministry in our lives and for mission in the world.

To celebrate the Good News of God's inclusive love for all people.

We are called to be a community of faith that invites spiritual transformation through the power of love, affirmation and inclusion;
to come to know ourselves as whole and healed;
to embrace our unique gifts;
and to act out of gratitude to help create a world of love, justice and harmony.

With God's love, following the teachings of Jesus, we recognize and celebrate the diversity of paths that will fulfill a vision of love and justice for all the world.

We are called to be a growing and inspired community, a beacon in the East Bay, renewing, reaching out, rejoicing. *January 2002*

Open and Affirming Statement

We, as a diverse body of believers seeking to live in the light and image of God in Christ, do affirm:

- that every person has worth as a special and unique creation made in God's image;
- that in the Spirit of love, openness, and inclusiveness we welcome persons of every sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, nationality, ability and age to participate fully in all aspects of the Church's life and ministry;
- that as agents of reconciliation and wholeness we embrace justice and seek to support all who suffer discrimination or who are disenfranchised from the religious community;
- that in light of the gospel we will continue to comprehend and appreciate more fully our differences and gifts;
- that through grace our love for God and neighbor may flourish.

This ONA statement was originally passed by vote of the Congregation on April 2, 1995. It was amended (April 19, 2015) to include the phrases "gender identity" (referring to one's innermost core concept of self which can include male, female, a blend of both or neither, and many more)

and “gender expression” (referring to the ways in which one expresses gender identity to others).

WISE Congregation for Mental Health

Affirming our faith in a God who loves and is embodied among all persons, and affirming our tradition as a welcoming congregation, First Congregational Church of Berkeley is a Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged (WISE) Congregation for Mental Health.

- We *welcome* people with mental health challenges and those who love them.
- We *include* those with mental health challenges in the life, work, and leadership of the congregation.
- We *support* people with mental health challenges and those who love them.
- We *engage* with other organizations at the intersection of mental health and spirituality.

We care about the whole person: body, heart, mind, and soul, and we claim the deep and constant movement of God’s Holy Spirit seeking to bring us fullness of life. All are beloved by God, and when one has a mental health challenge, one has a right to be known in one’s fullness. Likewise, those among us with mental health challenges have gifts to offer our faith community, and the community is called to receive them.

(passed by vote of the Congregation on February 3, 2019)

Vision Statement

We are a community that values radical inclusion and artful worship, where belonging is more important than belief, and joy is a guiding principle. We are a restorative sanctuary for the suffering and weary, a space for creative and contemplative ritual, and a hub for transformative moral action on the justice issues of our day.

Guided by these values, God calls us to:

- Grow in intimacy as the weird and wonderful Body of Christ
- Provide a diversity of open but distinctly Christian, creative and liberating worship forms to nourish the spiritual lives of the current community and reach new seekers
- Follow Jesus’s urging to minister to the “least of these” [Matthew 25] by addressing our region’s most visible and urgent human needs: ending homelessness in the East Bay, and its intersecting justice issues

Vision Elaboration

- **Grow in intimacy as the weird and wonderful Body of Christ**
First Church fosters extravagant welcome, connection/community and compassion. We are called to grow in love with one another, a foundation for living out the teachings of Jesus in the wider world. To do so, we will facilitate small groups, intergenerational engagement, and community spiritual practices that will bond and bind us together.

- **Provide a diversity of open but distinctly Christian, creative and liberating worship forms to nourish the spiritual lives of the current community and reach new seekers**
 Less than 3% of Berkeley identifies as main- line Protestant. That leaves many folks unaware of or uninitiated into the richness of our progressive Christian faith. The UCC Constitution affirms “the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship.” We will experiment with new forms of worship to go deeper on our own spiritual journeys, attract new- comers who may have been hurt or excluded by other Christian churches, and pique the interest of those who have never considered Christianity a viable option. The worship experiments may include, but not be limited to:
 - Worship days and times outside of Sunday morning
 - Virtual/digital worship and spiritual formation
 - Lay-led and participatory worship experiences
 - Outdoor worship
 - Services geared toward multiple generations/learning styles
 - Contemplative worship
 - Cross-cultural worship, and
 - Spiritual formation on retreat
- **Follow Jesus’s urging to minister to the “least of these” [Matthew 25] by addressing our region’s most visible and urgent human needs: ending homelessness in the East Bay, and its intersecting justice issues**
 The suffering of homeless people is evident on our streets every day. Countless more suffer housing insecurity in less visible ways. We are moved by the teachings of Jesus to respond with love, compassion and generosity. We will join with the wider community (faith communities, non-profit organizations, and government agencies) to educate, advocate, and take action to prevent homelessness, to reduce the suffering it causes, and to restore individuals and families to safe, permanent, dignified shelter.
September 2019

Sanctuary Movement Pledge

The Church Council voted in June 2017 to sign the National Sanctuary Movement Pledge and formally establish itself as a Sanctuary Congregation.

National Sanctuary Movement Pledge

We pledge to resist any policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants and discriminate against marginalized communities. We will open our congregations and communities as sanctuary spaces for those targeted by hate, and work alongside our friends, families and neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people.