

2023

Annual Report

2023

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What a year it's been!

For the past few years, our ministry leaders and staff have prioritized engagement. In 2023, we saw (and felt) real progress on this front.

From worship to outreach, stewardship to fellowship, 2023 was a year of new energy, positive momentum, and Holy Spirit-driven impact in the lives of those inside and outside our congregation.

What I know is that behind and beneath all of this success was the steady and providential hand of God, who always promises to be faithful to Christ's church. I also know that part of what made 2023 a great year for ministry was YOU – our members – who sustain what we do for Christ's sake by the ways that you share your time and your treasure.

So, THANK YOU. And may God continue to build in us greater promise and impact for the year ahead.

In faith, hope, and love –

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pen". The letter "P" is large and loops around the "en".

Worship

Psalms 100 starts, “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into God’s presence with singing!”

In 2023, the sanctuary and chapel at First Presbyterian Church were filled with JOY.

Between the voices of children singing, the Sanctuary Choir in harmony, parents and children at the baptismal font, sermons from the pulpit, moments of silence in our Contemplative Service, or prayers that lifted the yearnings of the congregation who gathered, the time we spent as a community of faith in worship was the heartbeat of our life together.

Worship last year was an experience that reflected the intergenerational makeup of our church family – and each generation enjoyed the gifts of the other as we gathered in God’s name.

Between our 9 a.m. Contemplative Service (in its second year and engaging an important need for a space that is quiet and reflective), and our 11 a.m. service that integrates excellent music with Scripture and liturgy that fit together to make an offering of praise, worship at First Presbyterian Church remained the center of our mission “to reflect the love of Christ from the heart of our city.”

357

Average in-person attendance

2,003

Christmas Eve attendance
1,374 in person | 629* virtual

**unique screens, not individual viewers*





136

Hymns used in
worship

60

Children enrolled in
children's choirs

703

Singing in the Season
participants

496 in person

108 virtual*

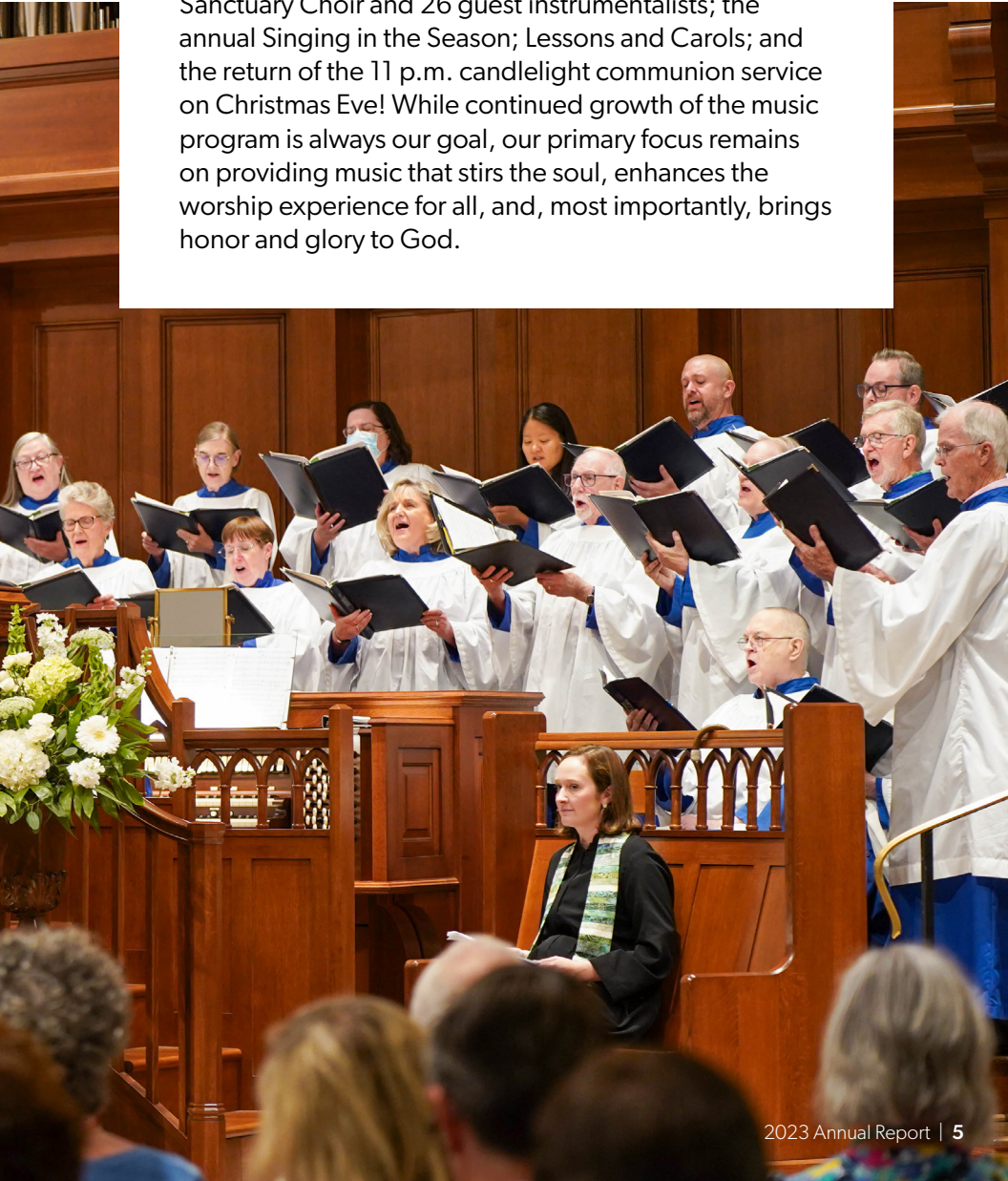
99 singers + musicians

**unique screens, not individual viewers*



Music Ministry

Music Ministry enjoyed the first full year of programming in four years! Highlights included the Kirk Choir's presentation of "100% Chance of Rain;" a heaven-themed, music-led service in May; the Montreat Worship and Music Conference; the Ivey Handbell Ringers' tour to Montreal and Quebec; the presentation of Morten Lauridsen's "Lux Aeterna" on All Saints' Sunday by the Sanctuary Choir and 26 guest instrumentalists; the annual Singing in the Season; Lessons and Carols; and the return of the 11 p.m. candlelight communion service on Christmas Eve! While continued growth of the music program is always our goal, our primary focus remains on providing music that stirs the soul, enhances the worship experience for all, and, most importantly, brings honor and glory to God.



Formation

ADULTS

In Christian Formation, we seek to be disciples. As every moment and experience contributes to a life of following Jesus, we know that Formation is not limited to one hour on Sunday morning but is part of everything we do. We are united by our love of Christ and yearn to be filled individually and communally so we may then pour out Christ's love.

In 2023, Formation partnered with Advocacy to explore faithful responses to challenges such as racism and gun violence prevention in our community. The Willard Lecture focused on mental health and God's presence in trauma. Classes and small groups were grounded in Scripture as gifted teachers delved into the Bible, brought relevance to the ancient words, and invited each person to be accountable for their own faith development. As part of the new initiative, FPC Travels, 39 people journeyed to the Holy Land for experiential learning and fellowship outside our walls. The young adult program saw growth in new participants, programs, and small groups.

GOALS FOR 2024

Collaborative programs with Outreach and Care ministries will help to identify concrete ways to live as faithful people in 2024. Sunday School offerings in a hybrid format will equip participants to live as disciples with a deepening connection to Christ. The Pathways to Discipleship website continues to offer recordings of past classes and resources for personal exploration. Two trips with FPC Travels this year will explore how we are called to be at work with God in the world. Every member of the congregation is encouraged to find a place in faith formation to grow their trust and love for God and to help others in their journeys as disciples.

342

Willard Lecture attendees

145

Classes, groups, and events

97%

Sunday classes offered in hybrid format







Formation

YOUTH MINISTRY

Youth Ministry saw many changes in 2023. Natalie Raygor and Tristan Wall accepted calls at other churches. Given these changes, we've used this time to develop a new vision and strategic plan for our Youth Ministry program. Ministry Architects, a consulting firm for faith-based institutions, has been engaged to guide our work. In 2023, the need arose to hire an interim youth director (accomplished in 2024) to oversee the Youth Ministry until a permanent director is hired.

Despite the difficulties of losing the youth leadership, Youth Ministry had many highlights throughout the year. In the spring, 16 eighth graders participated in 12 weeks of theological and biblical exploration, culminating in their confirmation, formal church membership, and personal faith statements. Thirty-two youth planned and participated in Youth Sunday, and five seniors gave homilies. They also regularly participated in worship and leadership; two served as ushers, and one supported First Church each week. The congregational breakfast hosted by the youth raised \$7,572, which helped fund trips to Montreat and Massanetta Youth Conferences, CROSS Missions, and Raleigh Youth Mission. Additionally, two youth received the Will Appleby Award, which recognizes those dedicated to Youth Ministry and the church. The year saw many more programs and outings – basketball league, camping, bowling, trips, and group lunches – and our youth and their families had plenty to do and celebrate in 2023.



16

Completed confirmation

4

Summer trips

32

Youth planned and led Youth Sunday



Formation

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Children's Ministry is thriving! When First Presbyterian promises at baptism that children belong to the church, we mean it. From babies to fifth grade, children engage in faith formation, fellowship, and worship. Each week, we see an average of 50 children plus their families. In 2023, we offered at least one opportunity every month to put faith into action by engaging with our ministry partners. The children made sandwiches for Operation Sandwich, stocked the shelves in our on-site pantry, painted a Habitat for Humanity playhouse, served dinner to Room in the Inn guests, and more! Boo Bash and the Easter Egg Hunt, two of our biggest events, welcomed record-setting numbers of church families and community members.

Children who participate in our programs are building biblical knowledge and building a community of church friends. Growing in God's love is a lot of fun!





180+

Children participated
in the 2023 Egg Hunt

4

Milestone classes
to deepen faith

85

Children presented
the Nativity Program

38

Teachers
and staff

215

Children enrolled
in the WDS



FPC Schools

WEEKDAY SCHOOL

In 2023, the Weekday School provided a nurturing educational environment for 215 children and prioritized creating a cleaner and safer environment. We spent approximately \$170,000 to upgrade the flooring throughout the WDS. We painted classrooms and donated excess rugs and furniture to create a brighter and more functional learning space. In addition, we increased security in the WDS footprint by adding more fob-access-only areas.

Reflecting on the past year, the WDS children enjoyed touching a snake at Discovery Place, laughing at a puppet show from the Children's Theatre, and sharing treats with the firefighters at Station 4. We are grateful for every day together and look forward to helping the children continue to develop in the years to come.



5

Children on
scholarship

Offering scholarships to children who would otherwise be unable to attend preschool is integral to our mission. This year, we have five students receiving scholarships. These funds are provided by generous Weekday School families who believe in this mission.



FPC Schools

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Child Development Center is a thriving, caring community fully engaged in demonstrating the teachings of Jesus Christ each day. Our Nurture Covenant remains our touchstone and guide for this important work. The staff and families are committed to creating an environment that promotes and celebrates each child's individuality and recognizes their importance in our future.

We are continuing the work of fulfilling the charge given by the Session to increase diversity within the CDC enrollment. It remains our goal to have our community reflect a variety of cultures. With the full support of the FPC Schools' Board, diversity criteria was added to our priority waiting list.



6

Children on capital campaign-funded scholarships

115

Children attend school at the CDC

This change has resulted in a substantial increase in the representation of diversity in our community. We have added the Second Step program to enrich our social and emotional curriculum in our ongoing work toward inclusion. We are committed to building an inclusive environment where all children and families are welcomed and valued.

In addition, the congregation's generous contributions to the capital campaign have allowed six children to attend the CDC on scholarship.



Local Outreach

IN 28208

Local Outreach Ministry strives to provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with our mission partners in the community for folks of all ages and stages of life. We work to develop authentic relationships while journeying alongside people who may be vulnerable or oppressed. In recent years, we narrowed our focus to an area of high need, the 28208 zip code, where many of our nonprofit partners do the bulk of their work. 2023 brought FPC a new Associate Pastor for Outreach and Mission, Rev. Lucy Crain, and her immediate efforts to improve partner relations and increase volunteer engagement.

As a church, we supported the children, families, and staff of Westerly Hills Academy with nearly 1,500 hours of tutoring, Christmas gifts, food donations, and fun events. Church members, choir members, youth, children, and CDC families participated in monthly Operation Sandwich events, leading to the assembly of nearly 3,500 sandwiches for hungry neighbors in Charlotte. In the coldest months of the year, member volunteers manned the church overnight, providing lodging and meals to 160 unsheltered guests through Room in the Inn. In the fall, 27 volunteers worked over 220 hours on our 35th and 36th Habitat houses, which

were a part of the Carter Work Project located in a new Habitat community within the 28208 zip code.

As we seek to live out our mission to be “For Christ in the Heart of Charlotte,” we use our financial resources, time, and talents to deepen the impact of our presence in the city.





51

Volunteers spent 1,476
hours tutoring
Westerly Hills' students

200

Room in the Inn
volunteers

3,600

Neighbors assisted
with groceries in our
on-site pantry



Global Outreach

CUBA, MEXICO, + HAITI

We are excited to be part of what God is doing in the world by participating in outreach in Cuba, Mexico, and Haiti. We enjoy building relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ around the globe.

In 2023, we resumed international mission travel with a group visiting our friends at the seminary in Matanzas, Cuba. We provided 17 large suitcases full of donated medicines and other supplies that are difficult to obtain in Cuba (and even one bag with a Christmas tree and all the trimmings!). In Haiti, we continued to support the health clinic in Bayonnais, send funds for emergency feeding programs, and complete a solar project that provides power to the school. This project allows the school to have a computer lab for the first time and gives students access to secondary education!





Thanks to the congregation's generous support of the 2021 capital campaign, we gave \$50,000 to our partner, Accion Ministries, in the Yucatan. This gift will sustain the future of Accion's student houses, including the new Merida Student House for women to attend college. By the fall of 2023, both Merida Student Houses were bustling with university students. Ten young women were studying chemistry, health, business, or architecture. Twelve young men were studying education, engineering, nutrition, agronomy, or accounting.

17

**Members
traveled to
Matanzas,
Cuba**

40

**Students
in Haiti
sponsored
by members**

22

**Students
living in the
Merida Student
Houses**

Advocacy

The Advocacy Committee is involved in learning about the needs of neighbors in our Charlotte community, particularly those in poverty and suffering from systemic inequities. We work together with the agencies, officials, organizations, community groups and neighborhood leaders who are seeking to address these needs and issues.

We have six areas of focus: Anti-racism, Climate Change, Equity in Education, Gun Violence Prevention, Housing and Homelessness, and Plowshares Book Club.

In 2023, we focused on providing education to the congregation through various channels to highlight what we believe God is calling us to do in Charlotte to address community needs. In 2024, we will be focusing on small group, action-oriented events to engage the needs of our city and support our neighbors and the community in which we live.



842

People engaged in
Advocacy events

12

Advocacy events

1,264

Advocacy website traffic
An increase of 90% over 2022

Identity Statements

In 2023, we unveiled FPC's new Identity Statements that serve to guide us, shape us, and help us extend our arms in hospitality to our neighbors.

WHO WE ARE STATEMENT

First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte is a warm and loving family of faith in Jesus Christ, seeking to understand and follow God's word and teachings. We find confidence and joy in the promise of God's everlasting and redeeming love, and the truth that all people have inherent dignity and are known and loved as God's children. We also acknowledge that we are an imperfect people in need of God's grace as we continuously reform and learn how to be better instruments of God's love. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we bring our diverse social, political, and theological perspectives to be woven together in a caring community of believers for Christ in the heart of Charlotte.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte is to reflect the love of Christ from the center of our city.

Strengthened by our connection to God and one another through worship, study, and service we seek to

- glorify God;
- humbly trust God to work through us;
- continually learn;
- support and equip one another to know and love our neighbors;
- create a space of love and welcome for all;
- serve the Charlotte community and beyond;
- work for justice; and
- celebrate our calling to be for Christ in the heart of Charlotte.

STATEMENT OF WELCOME

We invite you, whoever you are and whoever God is helping you to become, to join First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte in our journey of faith. God is love, and that love is for you. You belong as a child of God, and we welcome you. Come experience how that belonging might change you and our world as we seek to be for Christ in the heart of Charlotte.

Care Ministry

First Presbyterian members and staff have embodied our commitment to “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven [us]” (Ephesians 4:32). Our community has shown up for each other in prayerful, supportive, and practical ways, giving witness to our belief that God designed us to share life together. This year, 17 Stephen Ministers have provided an estimated 500 hours of one-to-one support to members of our community walking through challenging life seasons and engaged in 18 hours of continuing education. The Prayer Team and pastoral staff have lifted daily prayers for an estimated 130 prayer requests submitted via connect cards during worship. The Meal Ministry has brought 156 meals to 12 individuals and families in need of care following a loss, surgery, or sickness. Twice, 30 church officers and staff members took church beyond the walls of the sanctuary, offering 71 at-home members communion. Our church hosted two vaccine clinics this year, providing 37 vaccines, and our faith community nurse has taught 50 yoga classes.





We have also enjoyed gathering with one another for fellowship this year. Our 15 Presbyterian Women's circles met monthly, and plans are in the works to form a new circle in the coming year to accommodate our growth in membership. Fifty-five women attended our annual Women's Retreat. Following our May "Music Sunday," 250 members of our congregation gathered on the front lawn for a picnic lunch catered by Hubee D's. Of course, the impact of care ministries cannot be quantified in hours spent and meals shared and delivered, but is felt in deepened friendships, lightened spirits, and shared burdens, all of which are gifts of the Spirit at work in us.

500

**Hours of support provided by
Stephen Ministers**

156

**Meals provided to FPC
families in need of care**

Membership

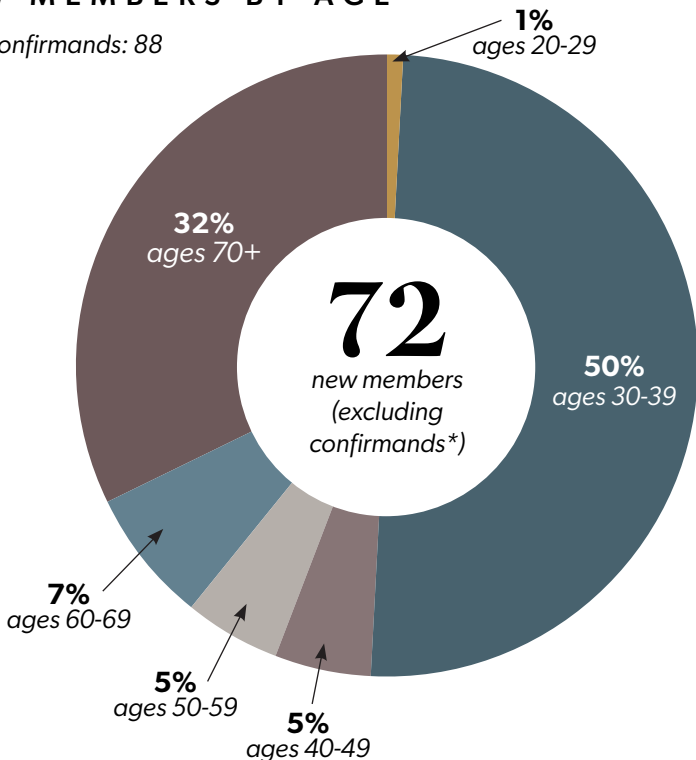
Membership had one of its busiest years in a long time, welcoming 72 new members (excluding confirmands) to First Presbyterian! We have four joining opportunities each year in February, May, August, and November. All new members attend an informational class taught by Rev. Anna Dickson, and the following Sunday, join before the Session and are announced to the congregation during worship. Last year, our new members joined by letter of transfer, reaffirmation of faith, and adult baptism.

The new members learn about the church with a “meet ‘n greet” with various ministry area representatives on the morning they join the church. We implemented an engagement survey that all new members fill out, which allows ministry leaders to learn about new members’ interests and then reach out personally to get them involved. Additionally, 2023 saw the beginning of new member luncheons after church, hosted by the Membership Committee. These were better attended than the previously hosted dinners as they are more convenient and children can attend.

Welcoming new members to First Presbyterian has been full of joy, excitement, and lots of new friendships for our congregation!

NEW MEMBERS BY AGE

**with confirmands: 88*



Digital Engagement

All statistics listed reference 2023 only.

3,253 **PODCAST DOWNLOADS**

1,379 **SUBSCRIBERS** to This Week @ First

Our weekly newsletter open rate increased from an average of 63% in 2022 to 68% in 2023. In partnership with Outreach, we also began sending a monthly Outreach + Advocacy newsletter.

133,093 **WEBSITE VIEWS**

31,304 **LIVESTREAM VIEWS**

Worship was viewed on our website, First United's website, Facebook, and TV apps. In 2023, 9,674 unique viewers watched 170 broadcasts in 27 countries and 48 states.

858 **INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS**

An increase of 120 new followers in 2023

Posts and stories, both organic and paid, reached 11,729 people.

2,182 **FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS**

An increase of 193 new followers in 2023

Posts, stories, ads, check-ins, and tags on Facebook reached an estimated 145,578 people.

902 **YOUTUBE SUBSCRIBERS**

An increase of 287 in 2023

In 2023, 339 choral music videos were added to FPC's YouTube page, in addition to class recordings, topical videos, and the introduction of sermon shorts.

GOALS FOR 2024

In 2024, Communications will work to better understand and increase FPC's digital engagement, both on livestream and through the TV Ministry.

Stewardship

In 2023, you – the members of our church – built on a legacy of generosity in an extraordinary way.

Pledges to the church for 2024 increased by more than \$207,000 (or 7%), and, perhaps more importantly, the number of households who made a pledge increased from 412 for the 2023 giving year to 452 for the 2024 giving year (or 9.7%).

It is easy to celebrate what this increased generosity will mean for our church’s ministry and the ways more resources will help us to have a greater impact on those we seek to serve – within these walls and beyond them. But this increased generosity also tells an important story of discipleship: it points to the fact that more members of our congregation are excited about their faith and invested in their church.

To God be the glory!

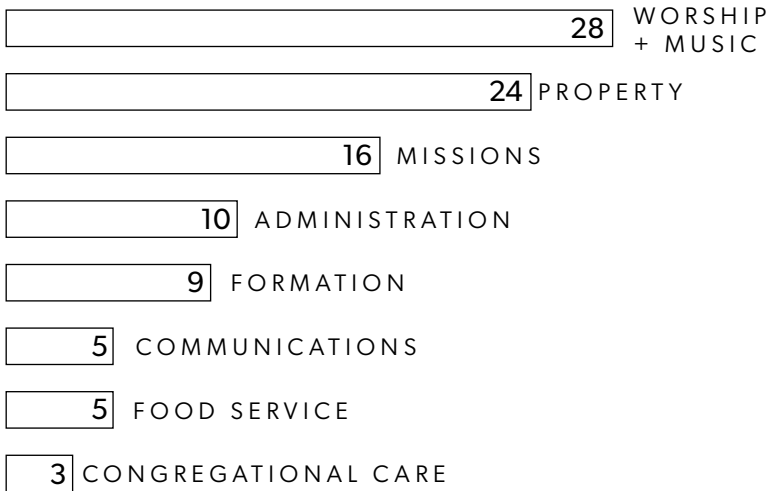




2023 MEMBERSHIP GIVING TOTAL

\$3,329,869

department expenses by percent



JANUARY-DECEMBER 2023 TOTALS

BUDGET	REVENUE	EXPENSES
\$3,766,685	\$4,002,664	\$4,002,664







First Presbyterian
Church of Charlotte