

The background of the entire page is a soft-focus bokeh of warm, golden-yellow and orange lights, creating a festive and celebratory atmosphere. A single, sharp white starburst is positioned centrally below the text.

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**Annual
Report**

Introduction	3
Worship	4
Music	5
Formation	6
Adults	6
Youth	7
Children	8
FPC Schools	9
Child Development Center	9
Weekday School	10
Local Outreach	12
Global Outreach	14
Advocacy	16
Care	17
Membership	18
Digital Engagement	19
Stewardship	20
Planned Giving	21
Capital Campaign	22



There is so much about the life of faith within the covenant community of the church that feels incremental. Week in and week out, we gather, worship, learn, care, serve, and grow together. Our year is one of rhythms and routines. And yet, when we look back, it is easier to see how much God's presence has been at work in and through us as Christ's body.



This Annual Report differs greatly from a "stockholders report" that accounts for dollars and cents. This report is designed to tell a story about who we have been as God's people over the past 12 months.

When you flip through it, I hope you will be both grateful for where we've been and encouraged by where we are going!

In faith, hope, and love,

Pen



Worship

*"O come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!"
(Psalm 95:1-2)*

Worship is the heartbeat of our life together at First Presbyterian Church, and in 2024, that heart was beating soundly.

Between our robust and intergenerational 11 a.m. service, our 9 a.m. contemplative service, weddings, memorials, and special worship events, our community had ample opportunities to praise and celebrate the good news of God's amazing grace.

397 Average in-person worship attendance

11% Increase in attendance over 2023

1,183 Attended Christmas Eve services

Music

For Music Ministry, 2024 brought Kaitlyn Davros to the staff as Assistant Director of Music Ministries. Kaitlyn leads Beginning Handbells, Ivey Handbells, and Youth Choir; she collaborates in worship planning, plays organ and piano, and directs in worship. Highlights of the year include the Kirk Choir's presentation of "Adam's Apple," a music-led service titled "The Promises of God" in May, the Montreat Worship and Music Conference, hosting the Charlotte Symphony Majestic Brass and Organ Concert, the 10th annual Singing in the Season, Service of Lessons and Carols, and participation in three Christmas Eve services.

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.

149 Different hymns sung in worship

82 Children and youth enrolled in music programs

690 Singing in the Season participants

(485 in person, 93 virtual, 86 adult and children's choirs participants, and 26 instrumentalists)



Formation

ADULTS

Through study and fellowship, Adult Formation in 2024 transformed what we learned into how we lived—a movement from knowing Christ to showing Christ. Sunday Classes and Bible studies focused on Scripture and its guidance on caring for ourselves and others. A class on the history of Christianity and a trip to Scotland revealed how the search for God's will shaped the Reformed tradition and enables our faiths to evolve in our own contexts. Examples of contextual learning last year included class discussions about Artificial Intelligence and Climate Change and grounding in biblical truths in turbulent times. The monthly Young Adult Evening Bible Study and First Draughts of Faith fellowship time continue to build bonds of faith and support.

FPC Travels ministry hosted a trip to Scotland for 41 people and to Alabama for a tour of Civil Rights sites with 28. The community that emerged processed their learnings together, generating renewed urgency to bring Christ's light back home.

The 2024 Willard lecturer, Brian McLaren, urged us towards a personal spiritual transformation that seeks to reveal more of God's kingdom on earth now. The recording of Brian's talk was the most-watched video on our YouTube channel in 2024, with 4,730 views.



4,730 YouTube views of The Willard Lecture with Brian McLaren

159 Traveled at least once with FPC Travels

58% Increase in weekly Passages Class attendance over 2023

Formation

YOUTH



In 2024, Youth Ministry experienced significant growth and transformation. In January, we welcomed Crystal Sellers as interim director of youth ministry, and in August, we hired Audrey Webb Kahrs as full-time director of youth ministry. Crystal transitioned into the part-time role of youth ministry coordinator, where she continued to provide invaluable support.

A Youth Committee was formed, comprising parents, staff, and youth deacons.

Communications for youth expanded to include monthly newsletters, an updated Instagram page, and a mass text line through Text In Church. Over the summer, youth participated in some of their favorite events: Montreat Youth Conference, Massanetta Springs Middle School Conference, and CROSS Missions. Kickoff Sunday was a joyous occasion, with 65+ youth and parents joining us to celebrate the start of a new season. We embraced a new rhythm for Sunday night programming, meeting twice per month for youth group at the church and once per month for a youth group social at a church family's house. In the fall, we launched Parent Connection, a quarterly gathering for parents of youth for education and group discussion. Some of our off-campus activities included pop-ups for after-school fellowship, service projects with Crisis Assistance Ministry, escape rooms, and lake parties.

50 Active youth

10 Members of the Youth Committee

3 Summer trips



Formation

CHILDREN

Children's ministry exuded joy in 2024! A trio of learning, fellowship, and service framed our year in which children from birth to fifth grade built on their foundation of faith. Annual events such as the Easter

Hunt and the Nativity Play were exciting celebrations, bringing families of all ages together to embrace the traditions of our faith. This year, we added Grandparents

Camp to our summer events line-up and found it was a success. We continue to offer weekly Sunday School classes, age-level playdates, and special opportunities to serve as families. Actively participating children are building on their foundation of faith week after week in creative and meaningful ways that will carry them through their lives.



52 Sundays offering children's formation opportunities

500+ Boo Bash attendees

21 Children brought their grands to Grandparents' Camp

FPC Schools

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The year 2024 continued our ongoing commitment to high-quality early childhood education by focusing on the development of the whole child. We offered free vision screenings that informed families of their children's need for additional vision support, and we continued to provide screenings for speech and occupational therapy, ensuring each child has the tools needed to reach their highest potential.

Family involvement was emphasized through events such as spring picnics in the park, courtyard coffees, class Popsicle parties, and the Halloween parade of costumes. A new event—Grandfriends Day—welcomed over 200 "grandfriends" who spent time in children's

classrooms and experienced the joy and wonder of learning alongside the little ones. The CDC was blessed to receive \$11,000 in donations at this event, which is being used to upgrade the communication technology for parents.

In the fall, the CDC was named on "Charlotte's Best" list as one of the top three child development programs in Charlotte. This validates

our commitment to excellence in all aspects of our program offerings.

118 Children attend the CDC

5 Children on capital campaign-funded scholarships

45 of 82 CDC families are church members



FPC Schools

WEEKDAY SCHOOL

Reflecting on the past year, we are grateful for the opportunity to provide a nurturing education environment for over 200 students. Our teachers continuously support each child's development and partner with parents to prepare the children for kindergarten and beyond. Last June, 60 children graduated from the Weekday School and attended 20 different schools in the Charlotte area.

In 2024, the children enjoyed performances from the Children's Theatre, vibrant music classes and My Gym, field trips to Discovery Place, visits to the fire station, and Christian Formation led by Pastor Delilah. In addition, the classes prepared breakfasts and lunches for Room in the Inn guests, created holiday decorations for Levine Children's Hospital, and made Valentine's cards for retirees at The Sharon. The children have so much joy to share with others, and we are thankful to be a part of this ministry in the heart of Charlotte.

36 Teachers employed by the WDS

215 Children attending classes

170 Families served by the WDS



Local Outreach

Local Outreach Ministry strives to provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with our mission partners in the community. We work to develop authentic relationships while journeying alongside people who may be vulnerable or oppressed. In 2024, one of our most significant impacts in the 28208 zip code—an area where many of our nonprofit partners do the bulk of their work—was the donation of over \$275,000 from our Easter Sunday offering to support affordable housing right across the street from Westerly Hills Academy (WHA). In the fall, 27 volunteers worked over 300 hours on our 37th Habitat for Humanity house with the Charlotte Church Partners. In the coldest months of the year, volunteers hosted guests at the church overnight, providing lodging and meals to 160 unsheltered neighbors through Room in the Inn. On Christmas Eve, our special offering collected \$33,208—our largest Christmas Eve offering to date—which went to Roof Above to help house unsheltered neighbors.

Last year brought FPC a new outreach coordinator, Heidi Squires, who began leading our efforts to support the entire community at Westerly Hills Academy. As a church, we supported the children, families, and staff with nearly 1,500 hours of tutoring, new school uniforms, Christmas gifts, food donations, and fun events. WHA's Principal Pride feels that the partnership with FPC is responsible for increased student achievement and staff retention rates.

To address food insecurity in our community, church members, youth, children, and CDC families participated in monthly Operation Sandwich events, assembling nearly 3,500 sandwiches for hungry neighbors in Charlotte. Communion Sunday food drives and Ten Cents-a-Meal offerings kept our food pantry stocked.

26% Increase in the student proficiency level at WHA

\$275,000 Total Easter Offering for Affordable Housing

1,864 Households served by our on-site food pantry
(1,838 children, 2937 adults, 545 seniors)



Global Outreach

CUBA, MEXICO, HAITI, AND WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

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 2024, we celebrated as the seminary in Cuba opened a long-awaited second campus in Havana. The embargo on Cuba affects the country's ability to import needed items, including medical supplies. FPC donated, packed, and delivered medical supplies, which made life-saving breast cancer surgeries possible for women in Cuba. Seven travelers spent a week with our partners at Acción Ministries in the Yucatan, working on a Presbyterian Retreat Center in Chuburna. Our friends from Haiti were able to visit in the fall and share with us about our ministry partners there. While conditions are harsh and food is scarce, we were encouraged by the education, feeding, and health programs at work in Bayonnais. Our Global Mission Sunday offering went to purchase food for the students there through our partners.

Global Outreach also encompasses mission work on a national level. When disaster struck Western North Carolina in September, First Presbyterian members joined together to raise \$183,772 in response. By the end of 2024, \$6,307 had been distributed to Camp Grier, \$5,000 to Crossnore Presbyterian Church, \$10,000 FPC-Asheville, and \$4,000 to the Presbytery of Charlotte. Our remaining contributions will go to the continued support of providing basic needs and rebuilding housing in Western NC.

\$67,000 Donated to Cuba for a Seminary Expansion in Havana

70 Breast cancer surgeries made possible by donated medical supplies

\$183,772 Raised for Western NC Hurricane Relief



Advocacy

At First Presbyterian Church, part of our call to be faithful disciples involves advocating for the marginalized, the poor, and the oppressed. For that reason, the Advocacy Committee supports endeavors in our community and beyond to seek racial justice, confront climate change, challenge inequity in education, reduce gun violence, and promote increased affordable housing. We work to educate and engage our members on current issues and in causes that result in the greater good for all of God's creation. In 2024, 28 people from FPC and First United Presbyterian Church traveled to Alabama to visit key Civil Rights sights and learn more about our country's history with racism. The Climate Change interest group worked with our youth group to fashion a Sunday School class and a worship service focused on creation care. Our Plowshares book study group hosted four congregation-wide book studies on various topics.

28 Travelers on the Civil Rights Trip

196 Attendees at Plowshares' events

1,500 Nonpartisan postcards written for the "Get Out the Vote" Campaign



Care

First Presbyterian members and staff have lived into Scripture's encouragement to "love one another, for love is from God," show in our care that we believe that "whoever loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7-12). This year, the congregational care ministry has worked to strengthen the connective tissue of our community. We launched a new First Visitors program, pairing 36 visitors with 18 at-home members for monthly visits. We've enjoyed 12 social gatherings at various retirement communities. Twice, 30 church officers took Home Communion to 65 recipients. The Prayer Team and pastoral staff have lifted prayers for an estimated 150 prayer requests submitted via Connect Cards and online. In addition, the Meal Ministry and Stephen Ministry have provided countless hours of support and dozens of meals to members after births, losses, and surgeries.

Our Presbyterian Women celebrated the formation of a new Circle for women in their 30s and early 40s! That group began meeting monthly in September for fellowship and a devotional lesson. We were thrilled to have 91 women attend our annual Women's Retreat in Montreat this year—up from 55 the prior year. Following our "Music Sunday" in May, about 250 folks enjoyed a potluck-style lunch in the fellowship hall. In all of these ways, we have shown up to love one another and discovered God in our midst just as God has promised to be anytime two or three (or 91!) are gathered, and we're deeply grateful for the gift of sharing the highs and lows of life together.

91 Women attended the Women's Retreat in Montreat

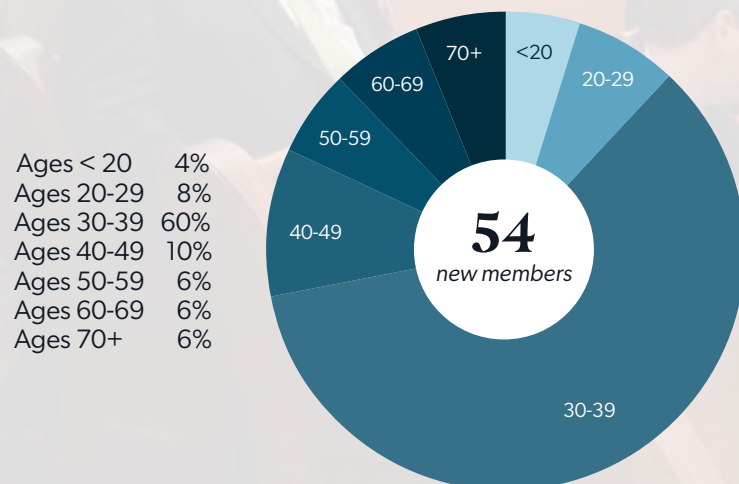
65 Individuals received home communion twice

36 First Visitors made an estimated 70 visits to at-home members

Membership

Membership had a wonderful year, welcoming 54 new members (excluding confirmands) to First Presbyterian in 2024! We have four joining opportunities each year: February, May, August, and November. All new members attend an informational class taught by Rev. Anna Dickson, and on a following Sunday, join before the Session and are announced to the congregation during worship. In 2024, our new members joined by letter of transfer, reaffirmation of faith, and adult baptism. They learn about the church at a “meet and greet” with various ministry area representatives on the morning they join. We also use an engagement survey that all new members complete, which allows ministry leaders to learn about the new members’ interests and then reach out personally to get them involved. Additionally, 2024 saw the continued success of membership committee-hosted new member luncheons after church. Welcoming new members to First Presbyterian has been full of joy, excitement, and new friendships for our congregation!

NEW MEMBERS BY AGE



Notes about the graph: new members under the age of 20 include two teenagers who joined as new members who were not present during confirmation. The number of new members between the ages of 30-39 increased by 10% in 2024, and new members between the ages of 40-49 increased by 5%.

Digital Engagement

In 2024, we began the work of engaging the TV congregation with a goal of transitioning them from passive viewership to active participation. As part of this initiative, Communications developed a new-giver packet, which includes a personalized thank-you letter, a digital viewer connect card, and a brochure outlining the digital opportunities available to our audience. We introduced updated branding and styling across all elements of the TV broadcast, including new end-of-service pastor messages. In collaboration with WAXN, we analyzed audience demographics, revealing a viewership comprising 52% women and 48% men, 76% of which are over the age of 65. Additionally, we implemented an in-service invitation encouraging at-home viewers to participate in communion. In 2024, our TV broadcast reached a total of 31,800 unique viewers.

Looking ahead to 2025, Communications plans to launch a targeted campaign aimed at the approximately 1,800 viewers currently in our TV congregation database.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

All statistics listed below reference 2024 only.

31,800 TV Viewers **29,583 Livestream Views**
Worship was viewed on our website, Facebook, YouTube, and TV.

389 New YouTube Subscribers (1,270 total)
In 2024, our YouTube channel proved to be one of our best tools for online engagement, with nearly 126,000 views and 10,800 hours of content watched.

3,540 Podcast downloads

2,496 Email Subscribers
Our average open rate across all emails was 69.25%

2,260 Facebook Followers **943 Instagram Followers**

Stewardship

In 2024, you—the members of our church—built on a legacy of generosity in a wonderful way. Pledges to the church for 2025 totaled \$3,307,500—a 5% increase over the previous year.

Beyond annual pledging, the congregation also donated an additional \$604,962 for outreach efforts, including the Easter offering for affordable housing, the Christmas Eve offering for Roof Above, the Western NC Hurricane Relief fund, Ten Cents-a-Meal, the on-site Nourish Up Food Pantry, and the Global Missions Sunday offering. To put that into perspective, our typical yearly budget allots approximately \$500,000 for outreach, meaning this congregation more than doubled that amount in 2024!

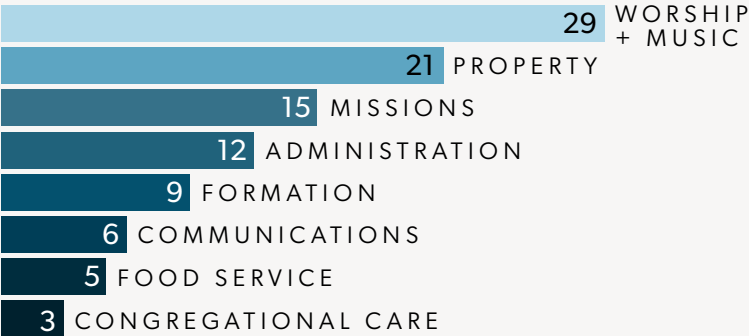
It is easy to celebrate what this increased generosity will mean for our church’s ministry and how more resources will help us have a greater impact on those we seek to serve—within these walls and beyond them. But this increased generosity also tells an important story of discipleship: it points to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

To God be the glory!

2024 MEMBERSHIP GIVING TOTAL

\$3,602,139

DEPARTMENT EXPENSES BY PERCENT



Planned Giving

*“Out of the believer’s heart
shall flow rivers of living water.”
(John 7:38)*

After establishing the Legacy Fund in late 2023, in 2024, the Session chartered a Planned Giving Committee to raise awareness and invite participation from the congregation into a long-range stewardship initiative to help secure our church’s financial future for successive generations of disciples.

The Legacy Fund is organized into seven categories: Unrestricted, Facilities, Formation, Care, Outreach, Outreach (Children and Families), and Worship and Music.

For those interested in learning more about the Legacy Society or making a Legacy gift, please contact Rev. Pen Peery at ppeery@firstpres-charlotte.org.

\$350,000 Given and pledged to The Legacy Fund





Capital Campaign

With continued gratitude for the extraordinary ways the congregation generously supported the Opening Doors Capital Campaign, we want to provide three final updates. Two updates are related to the local outreach components of the campaign, and one shares progress on ways the campaign has enabled us to keep up with maintenance of our church buildings.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

One way the Opening Doors Capital Campaign seeks to address the needs of our city is to provide access to affordable, quality early childhood education. Of our total campaign, \$1.5 million has been reserved to help us achieve this end.

In response, the FPC Schools have committed to expanding the racial and socio-economic diversity of our students and families. Initially, the hope was to use campaign funds to expand our CDC classrooms to increase the number of students receiving financial assistance. Upon further exploration and due diligence, the expansion of the CDC proved to be cost-prohibitive.

However, the Implementation Committee, the Schools Board, and the Session, are committed to fulfilling the vision of providing more affordable, early childhood education. Investing our campaign's \$1.5 million dollars will allow us to generate income to provide CDC scholarships to families in financial need in perpetuity. We hope that over time, this endowment might grow through more gifts, which would enable us to increase our commitment toward our goal of having 25% of the CDC's students receiving financial assistance.

In addition to providing scholarships to children in our CDC, we are also working with our mission partner, Freedom Communities, who also operates a CDC to increase access for families needing assistance with childhood education in the 28208-zip code. This ongoing partnership will be evaluated each year and will involve financial as well as collaborative support.

COUNSELING CENTER

We have maintained our commitment to supporting mental health within our church community and uptown. Last summer, Session approved a new partnership with Presbyterian Psychological Services (PPS), a nonprofit counseling practice that provides a range of services on a sliding scale. Our model will be to have two to three PPS counselors practicing in the two offices located in the fresco lobby. One practitioner, Kim Nanna, began her work in the fall of 2024, and we anticipate another by the end of the first quarter of 2025. In support of our partnership, Session approved the disbursement of \$45,000 of capital campaign funds to support the financial accessibility of services at PPS. Additionally, in light of demonstrated need for adolescent mental health support in our community, Session approved the disbursement of \$40,000 to HopeWay's new teen center.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

Property maintenance is required to provide a safe, welcoming space for our ministries and future generations. In 2024, capital campaign funds were used to repair and refurbish many areas of the church, including replacing the Poplar Street flat roofs and repairing the slate roofs; seven Poplar Street rooftop heating/air conditioning units and the chapel units were replaced, bringing all RTUs to less than six years old; two high-efficiency condensing boilers were installed, which will bring gas bill savings; the aging Church Street elevator was replaced; the pastor's suite was painted and refurbished; the Session room's carpet and chairs were replaced; and damaged windows were replaced throughout the building.

Other endowment and operating funds were used to replace three water heaters, the sound system in the Chapel, and the audio-visual system in P203 Pattie Cole. The CDC and Music Suite were repainted, and damaged ceiling tiles were replaced throughout the church. Restrooms in the CDC and WDS have been painted and refreshed. New blinds were replaced in the CDC and other classrooms. New Automated External Defibrillators were installed. A new landscape plan was designed and implemented around the Columbarium. The staff and Property Committee have also developed a five-year plan to continue the important work of maintaining our church home.



First Presbyterian
Church of Charlotte