

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

Downtown Kalamazoo



2024

# ANNUAL REPORT



*Expanding our welcome,  
deepening our relationships  
and caring for creation.*

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## **Provided at the Meeting**

- 2025 Budget
- Annual Meeting Agenda

## FCC Congregational Meeting 01/28/24

*The membership met with the purpose of accepting all 2023 Congregational Meeting minutes, approving revised bylaws, accepting nominations for 2024 Council Reps, approving 2024 budget, and approving all reports in the 2023 Annual Report.*

*Meeting was announced for 2 prior Sundays as required by by-laws.*

**Total members present: 89**

- I. Meeting called to order by Moderator Kristi Droppers at 11am.
- II. Invocation by Beth Luppe
- III. Confirmation of quorum (at least 27 based on current congregational numbers)
- IV. **VOTE TO ACCEPT MINUTES** for prior 2023 congregational meetings. *Motion by Tom Birkhold, seconded by Warren Cook; Passed unanimously.*
- V. **VOTE TO APPROVE REVISED BY-LAWS** (As first communicated end of Dec. '23) *Motion by Howard Tejchma, seconded by Michele Gossman.*

### **Discussion:**

**#1** Question asked by Sharon Nichols-Hicks as to why the Member-at-Large representative was eliminated from council. It was explained that the purpose was to make the council smaller and more effective, and any concerns by the congregation could be brought to the council, deacons, team chairs or staff. Former Member-at-Large rep Edna Thompson said that there had always been concerns about confidentiality and hearsay when relaying concerns second hand.

**#2** Question asked by Jodi Brylinsky as to why the quorum to vote was so small. It was explained that by Michigan law the quorum only had to be 10%.

**Motion to end discussion was passed**

**VOTE taken, and passed with 2 no votes and 2 abstentions.**

### **VI. VOTE TO ACCEPT NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES 2024**

*Motion by Dom Licavoli, seconded by Michele Gossman. Passed with 3 no votes.*

### **VII. TREASURERS REPORT/VOTE FOR 2024 BUDGET** *Motion to accept the 2024 budget by Derl Oberlin, seconded by Ivan Pillars. Passed with 1 no vote.*

- a. **2023 budget:** Carol Chandler reported that 2023 ended with a surplus of \$56,000, while keeping our PPP reserves.
- b. **2024 budget:** Total budget for 2024 is \$761,115, with projected congregational giving of \$415,000

### **VIII. VOTE TO RECEIVE ALL REPORTS IN THE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

*Motion to accept all reports in the 2023 annual report by Tom Birkhold, seconded by Rebecca Uttormark. Passed unanimously.*

- IX. **PASSING THE TORCH AND RECOGNITION** Heidi Oberlin presented Kristi Droppers with a gift from the congregation. Kristi talked about how the three things we set out to do last year were improving our welcome, strengthening relationships, and caring for creation. This was met by an approving congregation for her hard work.

BENEDICTION BY MARY AUSTIN

ADJOURNMENT

*Runners and vote counters were Jeri Schuler and Tim Hiscock Submitted by Ginny Stapleton*

**FCC Special Congregational Meeting 04/14/24**

**First Congregational Church of Kalamazoo  
Special Congregational Meeting 4/14/24**

**Meeting purpose to vote to elect Gregory Greenman  
as Council Representative for the Worship Arts Ministry Team.  
Meeting was announced for 2 prior Sundays as required by by-laws.**

**Quorum has been met for current membership of 253.**

Peggy Johnston made a motion to elect Gregory Greenman as  
Council Representative for the Worship Arts Ministry Team.  
Seconded by Tim Hiscock.

Total votes of 73.

Hand vote of 71 yes, 2 abstentions.

**Gregory Greenman has been voted as Council Representative  
for Worship Arts Ministry Team.**

*Submitted by Ginny Stapleton, FCC Clerk*

**FCC Special Congregational Meeting 11/03/24**

**First Congregational Church of Kalamazoo  
Special Congregational Meeting 11/3/24**

**Quorum has been met for current membership of 252.**

*Congregational meeting was announced twice  
from the pulpit, and twice in the Spire.*

**Allison Hart-Young made a motion to  
elect Bob Van Dis as Moderator Elect.  
*There were five seconds to this motion.***

**Total votes of 74; 74 yes**

*Meeting closed with prayer by Pastor Mary.  
Submitted by Ginny Stapleton, FCC Clerk*

## **FCC Council and Ministry Teams 2024**

### **Council Voting Members**

*Church Trustees=+(7 total)*

+Heidi Oberlin	Moderator
+Kristi Droppers	Past Moderator
+ Bob Van Dis	Moderator Elect
+Carol Dunleavy-Chandler	Treasurer
+Ginny Stapleton	Clerk (alt. Nancy Johnson)
Kristi Droppers	Human Resources
+Tim Hiscock	Property Team
Gregory Greenman II	Worship Arts
Jamie Sue Knight (part of year)	Faith Formation Team
Janice Resch	Hospitality Team
+Margie Stinson	Misson & Social Justice Team

### **Non-Council Roles**

Assistant Treasurers:	Philip Micklin, Don Nelson, Ann DeZwarte
State Conference Delegates:	Howard Tejchma, Dianne Roberts
Southwest Association Delegates:	Edie Trent, Howard Tejchma
KDCCC Board Rep:	Open

### **By Laws Revision Committee**

Michele Gossman, Bob Morris, Howard Tejchma

### **Deacons**

Betty Buss, John Idema, Peggy Johnston, Russ Kowalisyn, Steve Stapleton,  
Rick Welch, Janice Rensch, Pam Moseley, Em Norwood, Mose Moseley

### **Pastoral Relations Committee – Rev. Mary Austin**

Bob Van Dis, Amy Glass, Nancy Trotter, Valerie Hart-Young, Joe Schreck

### **Pastoral Relations Committee – Rev. Sarah Schmidt-Lee**

Julie Noteboom, Joe Lekan, Maggie Lekan, Mose Moseley

## 2024 Budget Summary

<b>BUDGET SUMMARY REPORT - GENERAL FUND</b>			
<b>AS OF 12/31/24</b>			
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>% TOTAL</b>
CONGREGATIONAL GIVING: Pledges	395,000	399,168	101%
Other	20,000	8,020	40%
SPECIAL OFFERINGS	20,000	23,605	118%
GILMORE FOUNDATION	35,000	35,000	100%
W.E. UPJOHN TRUST	85,000	88,600	104%
MISC. INCOME	12,000	7,600	63%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>567,000</b>	<b>561,993</b>	<b>99%</b>
<b>TRANSFERS:</b>			
GENERAL ENDOWMENT: Property	10,000	10,000	100%
Other	31,000	31,100	100%
VARNEY ENDOWMENT	128,000	128,000	100%
SHORT TERM INVESTMENTS	8,000	9,014	113%
PPP	12,000	12,000	100%
<b>TOTAL TRANSFERS</b>	<b>177,000</b>	<b>190,114</b>	<b>107%</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME &amp; TRANSFERS</b>	<b>744,000</b>	<b>752,107</b>	<b>101%</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>% TOTAL</b>
PERSONNEL	467,215	462,477	99%
PROPERTY: Bldg. Serv. & Supplies	82,600	84,702	103%
Maintenance & Repair	65,000	70,550	109%
Debt Service	30,000	30,000	100%
MISSION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: Outreach	22,000	22,000	100%
SPECIAL OFFERINGS	20,000	23,605	118%
OFFICE	11,000	14,813	135%
FAITH FORMATION	8,000	8,402	105%
WORSHIP ARTS	25,000	25,000	100%
GENERAL	10,300	9,558	93%
COMMUNICATION	14,000	13,829	99%
HUMAN RESOURCES	2,000	1,874	94%
PARISH CARE	4,000	4,782	120%
<b>TOTAL BUDGETED EXPENSES</b>	<b>761,115</b>	<b>771,591</b>	<b>101%</b>
CURRENT YEAR SURPLUS/DEFICIT	(17,115)	(19,484)	
PREVIOUS YEAR SURPLUS/DEFICIT	19,540	19,540	
<b>**CUMULATIVE SURPLUS/DEFICIT</b>	<b>2,425</b>	<b>56</b>	

\*\*To be funded by reserves

**FUND BALANCE**

BEGINNING 1/1/23	19,540
YTD INCOME	752,107
YTD EXPENSES	(771,591)
ENDING 12/31/24	56

## 2024 Accounting Fund Balances

*First Congregational Church UCC*

### Accounting Fund Balances

December 2024

Fund	Beginning Balance	Direct Transactions	Income	Expense	Transfer	Ending Balance
01 - GENERAL FUND	45,081.36	(10,000.00)	39,829.65	74,855.05	0.00	55.96
January 2024 - December 2024	19,540.11	124,000.00	539,402.32	682,886.47	0.00	55.96
02 - DESIGNATED FUNDS	177,268.67	(20,000.00)	0.00	3,654.54	0.00	153,614.13
January 2024 - December 2024	155,487.86	(20,000.00)	23,757.17	5,630.90	0.00	153,614.13
10 - CHILD CARE CENTER	95,462.58	0.00	85,311.67	34,864.10	0.00	145,910.15
January 2024 - December 2024	146,392.59	0.00	249,004.14	249,486.58	0.00	145,910.15
15 - SPECIAL OFFERINGS	3,154.13	0.00	3,605.30	7,446.07	0.00	(686.64)
January 2024 - December 2024	(1,718.51)	0.00	23,604.62	22,572.75	0.00	(686.64)
20 - RESTRICTED FUND	50,023.44	0.00	7,788.39	12,301.36	0.00	45,510.47
January 2024 - December 2024	55,577.56	0.00	17,725.85	27,792.94	0.00	45,510.47
30 - ENDOWMENT FUND	1,001,412.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,001,412.20
January 2024 - December 2024	930,755.21	(24,400.00)	124,016.57	28,959.58	0.00	1,001,412.20
35 - VARNEY ENDOWMENT	3,126,135.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,126,135.09
January 2024 - December 2024	2,907,092.38	(120,000.00)	386,898.89	47,856.18	0.00	3,126,135.09
40 - FLEX BENEFIT FUND	879.46	0.00	983.82	617.06	0.00	1,246.22
January 2024 - December 2024	581.80	0.00	14,658.51	13,994.09	0.00	1,246.22
50 - CAPITAL CAMPAIGN	2,584,404.44	30,000.00	241.11	0.00	0.00	2,614,645.55
January 2024 - December 2024	2,530,688.20	38,000.00	32,958.93	(12,998.42)	0.00	2,614,645.55
75 - NATURE PLAYSCAPE	1,318,874.91	0.00	18,396.09	11,365.52	0.00	1,325,905.48
January 2024 - December 2024	1,295,384.14	2,400.00	142,956.58	114,835.24	0.00	1,325,905.48
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8,402,696.28</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>156,156.03</b>	<b>145,103.70</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>8,413,748.61</b>
January 2024 - December 2024	8,039,781.34	0.00	1,554,983.58	1,181,016.31	0.00	8,413,748.61



## Moderator Report

What a joy it's been to serve as your Moderator! With a successful, steady Designated Senior Pastor who had easily settled in, I was able to build on the hard work and invaluable support from previous Moderators. It's been a great year.

There have been some more bureaucratic tasks, such as implementing the revised FCC Bylaws, and revising the Council Charter but these tasks were always approached by everyone on Council with the implied attitude of "What will best serve the FCC Congregation now and in the future?" One change in 2024 was creating and launching a Nominating Committee to work with members to discover how their energies and gifts can support FCC, whether serving on a ministry team or volunteering for one event. There are ways for everyone to contribute and support FCC's work, within and outside our historic building. One joyful task this year was the Council's endorsement of Emily Norwood as a Member in Discernment, a step toward possible ordination to the ministry in the UCC.

As I shared with the congregation during my announcements on November 17, Council considered and voted to approve Pastor Mary's proposal to have more work/life balance by reducing her working time (and corresponding salary) while at the same time extending her contract with us by 2 years. If staffing needs change, Council will have the option of varying the percentage worked between 80 and 100%, initially starting at 90% for 2025. Because this proposal is a modification of Pastor Mary's Call Agreement, it will require Congregational approval at the Annual Meeting.

In addition to the capable and hardworking staff, the work of FCC is largely done by and through Ministry Teams. Council meetings provide a venue for sharing and highlighting the Ministry Teams' work, plans and issues. Please read through each report as there were so many 2024 accomplishments; each team deserves everyone's gratitude.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey from *Holy Cow Consulting* that will provide some direction as FCC looks toward its future. I anticipate focused meetings to further explore ways of moving FCC forward in 2025 and beyond. Stay tuned!

In addition to monthly meetings, Council meets as needed when a decision should not wait for the next scheduled meeting. I thank Pastor Mary, Pastor Sarah and all Council members for their flexibility and commitment to honoring their duty to the FCC congregation and devotion to FCC's mission.

I look forward to assuming my role as Past Moderator and supporting Bob Van Dis as Moderator!

Heidi Oberlin

## Pastor Mary Austin

Dear FCC Members and Friends –

What a great year we had together!

I'm so thankful for this year's joys:

- All of our worship services, and the way that Sarah, Kim, Max, Kory and Jamie Sue and I can weave together the music, the participation of the children and youth, special moments and the message. It's a treat to hear your comments afterward and to know which parts of the service touched you.
- Seeing more kids involved in church, thanks to the work that Kim Licavoli does.
- Welcoming Max Trombley as the church's new Director of Music, after working with the search team through the hiring process. (Thanks, Carl Ill, Liz Rohs, Jane Rooks Ross, Bob Van Dis and Barb Cole Smith!)
- Supporting the sabbatical process for the Rev. Sarah-Schmidt-Lee, and helping work on a new job description for her that matches her talents and the church's needs. This has been approved by the HR Team and the Council.
- The time we spend together at meetings, service projects, dinners, small groups and even in hospitals and care centers, when you have to be there. Plus, the Monday Bible Study, church happy hours and personal visits! Any time we spend together is a gift.
- Working with all of the staff to understand and support their work.
- Working with Council on the congregational survey – thanks to all of you who participated. Lots of information to follow in the new year.
- Attending the HR, Worship Arts, Finance and Property team meetings, plus others as needed or invited.
- Meeting the new people who come to worship as guests, and hearing what they see in FCC that led them here, and welcoming new members.

I'm grateful to serve here alongside you! As always, I welcome your observations and hopes.

Mary Austin,  
Designated Senior Pastor

## Pastor Sarah Schmidt-Lee

Dear Congregation,

2024 will always be notable in the life of my family as the year in which we received the gift of a sabbatical. The five months in which I was able to rest and spend extra time with each of my kids was truly priceless. Thank you all for this treasure.

I am glad to confirm, after four months back from sabbatical, that this year has provided deep confirmation that I love this job, and that rest was needed in order for me to regain the energy I want to invest in it.

Some of my professional highlights from 2024 have been:

- Getting to support Emily Norwood in their ongoing vocational development, through the Taking Root collaborative, and United Campus Ministry.
- Supporting the Kalamazoo Drop-in Child Care Center in their process of hiring a new Director who can continue the legacy Kathy McNinch will leave.
- Connecting with artists among our members, like Bob Morris, Randy Walker and Samn Johnson, who are willing to host creative opportunities for our youth.
- Discovering new options for how to use the church website and social media.
- Watching the numbers of kids engaged in worship and Formation Hour grow steadily every single week!

In 2025, as I adjust to the ways my job description has been updated, I'm looking forward to:

- Education and Social Justice Collaborations with other faith communities in town.
- Supporting the work of the newly formed Green Team.
- Creating opportunities for families with kids and youth to form deeper relationships with each other and with other generations in the church.

I will also celebrate, in August, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my employment at First Congregational Church. We've come a long way together in the last decade, friends, and I am exceedingly grateful that we get to continue journeying side-by-side into the unknowns ahead.

Rev. Sarah Schmidt-Lee

Associate Pastor

## **Properties and Land Stewards Team**

### **Accomplishments in 2024**

- Refurbished Children’s Worship Room with new carpeting, paint and lighting.
- Refurbished Vestry Restroom with a new sink and fresh coat paint.
- Refurbished the round table in Library, and two classroom tables.
- Continued upgrade of audio/visual booth; added three new cameras in Sanctuary for better streaming of Sunday Service.
- Expanded Children Area in Sanctuary to include more room for children.
- Repaired LED lights in Youth Room.
- Repaired roof leak on east side of Sanctuary, new plaster and paint.
- Repaired exterior security lighting on the west end of building.
- Repaired 2 exterior windows.
- Installed split AC unit to serve Vestry and Children’s Nature Playscape office.

### **Goals for 2025**

- Investigate the cause of the boiler leak and determine if it’s covered by warranty.
- Restore two stained glass windows in Mary Martha Room.
- Restore flaking plaster in upstairs kitchen, sanctuary, and other misc. areas.
- Pursue funding to replace the three sets of Academy Street Doors.
- Repair the downstairs commercial kitchen dishwasher.
- Continue to urge the city to address the uneven sidewalk on Academy Street.

## **Communications Team**

### **Accomplishments in 2024**

- Updated the video cameras and extensive wiring in the sanctuary. The new cameras are installed on the walls, eliminating the need for large tripods in the pews, and they can be remote-controlled from the soundboard station at the back of the Sanctuary.
- Introduced a new rotation of color signs in both street sign-boxes on Michigan and Academy Streets.
- Used social media more strategically to engage conversation, represent the church’s values, and highlight special events.
- Began long-overdue updates to the church website, updating the look, the navigation options, and the content on the page. We are making more use of photo slides, video inserts, and clickable images. We are working with staff to keep the home page updated with fresh links to upcoming events and fresh photos of the life of the congregation.

### **Goals for 2025**

- Improving indoor signage, to help guests and community groups navigate the building.
- Using social media advertising to increase visitor attendance at particular events.
- Updating signage and banners on the Academy Street side of the church to increase name recognition from Bronson Park visitors.
- Exploring new ways of engaging with the community through social media videos or podcasts.

## Faith Formation Team

### **Accomplishments in 2024**

- A growing number of kids attend worship and join Formation Hour! We began the year seeing an average of 5-10 kids in worship and 2-5 during Formation Hour. By December, we were averaging 15-20 in worship and 6-12 in Formation Hour. The Kids Corner has physically expanded twice this year to accommodate the number of families regularly using the space, and the number of kids participating in worship by ringing bells, presenting the offering, and making music with the W.o.W. program is in the 20s!
- A consistent staff presence in the church nursery! We are so grateful to Kathryn Rummel for her steady, warm, and organized presence each Sunday.
- New arts-focused events for youth. We are grateful for the Aging with Attitude Group for their reflections on what gifts they could offer the youth, and the awesome opportunities emerging from those discussions.
- A shift to the Narrative Lectionary in worship and Formation Hour has produced lots of opportunities for connections across generations. The Formation Hours stories and materials get echoed in the Kids' Corner, and all point to the same themes and stories as the sermon. We've seen adults appreciate the kids' materials and the kids connect to the sermons more consistently.
- Great opportunities for adult education, conversation, and spiritual growth, with Monday morning book discussions, Saturday Bible Studies, Men's and Women's retreats, a growing interest in contemplative practices, and other books discussions as topics arise.

### **Goals for 2025**

- The way that quarterly Team meetings will free us up to engage volunteers in new ways and build social gatherings for the growing numbers of kids, youth and families connected to the church (like a recent Reindeer Ranch excursion!).
- Collaborations like a Faith Friends' Reading Group with Temple B'nai.
- More opportunities for youth to gather for creativity and play.

## Diaconate

### **Accomplishments in 2024**

- Set-up & served Communion.
- Supported the Pastoral Staff through the Deacons Ministry program.
- Delivered Easter & Christmas flowers to homebound, ailing &/or grieving FCC Members.
- Conducted Safe Church, Confidentiality & Communion Training.
- Initiated regular visits to Friendship Village.

### **Goals for 2025**

- Set-up & serve Communion.
- Support the Pastoral Staff through the Deacons Ministry program.
- Deliver Easter & Christmas flowers to homebound, ailing &/or grieving FCC Members.
- Conduct Deacon Training as appropriate.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the visits to Friendship Village. Adjust as appropriate.
- Support New Deacon Leadership.

## **Missions and Social Justice Team**

### **Accomplishments in 2024**

- Regular Loaves & Fishes warehouse work team.
- Regular Kalamazoo Defenders observation team.
- Provided financial support for various critical needs (Warm Kids, FUMC Phone project, Noori family, etc.).
- Superb fundraising and subsequent Re-Member mission trip to Pine Ridge, SD.
- Blue Star Mothers produces blankets for Veterans Day care packages.
- Open Doors Christmas Dinner & Gifts.
- Initiated & spun off the FCC Green Team.

### **Goals for 2025**

- Continue ongoing interface with & support of Key Mission Partners (United Campus Ministries, Open Doors, Loaves & Fishes, Ministry with Community, etc.).
- Continue Loaves & Fishes regular warehouse work team.
- Continue Kalamazoo Defenders observation team.
- Continue support of the Noori family as feasible.
- Sponsor & serve the Open Doors Holiday Dinner.
- Support the new MSJ leadership team.

## **Worship Arts Ministry Team**

### **Accomplishments in 2024**

- Weekly anthems/music in worship complimenting overall service themes.
- Special music for Lent, Easter, Pride Sunday, Advent and Christmas.
- Hosting Community Choral Event: Voices United for Peace.
- Children/Youth programming through WoW activities/participation in worship.
- Growth of Spoken Word Ministry.
- Collaboration with other ministry teams for special projects and programs.
- Continuity and smooth transition of music programming during hiring process for a Music Director, with support from music staff, Section Leaders, and Choral Scholars and Choir.

### **Goals for 2025**

- Support and advocate for all music staff.
- Nurture music programming for children/youth through WOW.
- Continuing advancement of the Academy Ringers.
- Grow the Chancel Choir and expand their music repertoire.
- Maintain a strong program of Section Leaders and Choral Scholars.
- Fundraising event to keep scholar program solvent.
- Plan for the Chancel Choir to perform a major work.
- Begin planning events for the anniversary of the sanctuary organ.

# Hospitality Ministry Team

## Accomplishments in 2024

- Friendship Hour set-up and clean-up including special Sundays Friendship Hour:
  - Ice Cream Social
  - Send-off for Sarah Schmidt-Lee's sabbatical
  - Meet & Greet Noori refugee family
  - Pet pops and pics following blessing of the animals
  - Celebrate and thanksgiving for Kathy McNinch, KDCCC Executive Director
- Provide ushers and greeters for each Sunday service and special events
- Women's retreat
- Community meals
  - Easter breakfast
  - Pasta-bar fund raiser for Re-Member trip
  - Fall Kick-off picnic in the dining room followed by ice cream & play in the Children's Nature Playscape
  - Thanksgiving dinner
- Showing appreciation and care
  - Graduate blankets
  - Prayer shawls
  - Care baskets for members in need of a pick-me-up
  - Care packages for unhoused
- Social Events offered at FCC
  - Garden Social
  - Soul Sisters monthly breakfast & Christmas party
  - Men's Retreat
  - FCC- Brothers
  - Aging with Attitude
  - Aging Backwards Fitness Class
- Celebration of Life
  - Bonnie Lewis
  - Michael Payne
  - Sandie Idema
- Meal preparation day for FCC meal pantry
- Provide support for Meal Train
- Card ministry
  - Birthdays 80 and over
- Working with other Ministry Teams:
  - Blankets and care packages for our Troops
  - Hanging & retiring of the Greens
  - Messiah Sing; providing ushers and reception
  - Tree lighting in the park

## Goals for 2025

- Recruit new Team Leader and members
- Continue all the above
- New Member Class Reunion
- New social events

# Human Resources Team

## Accomplishments in 2024

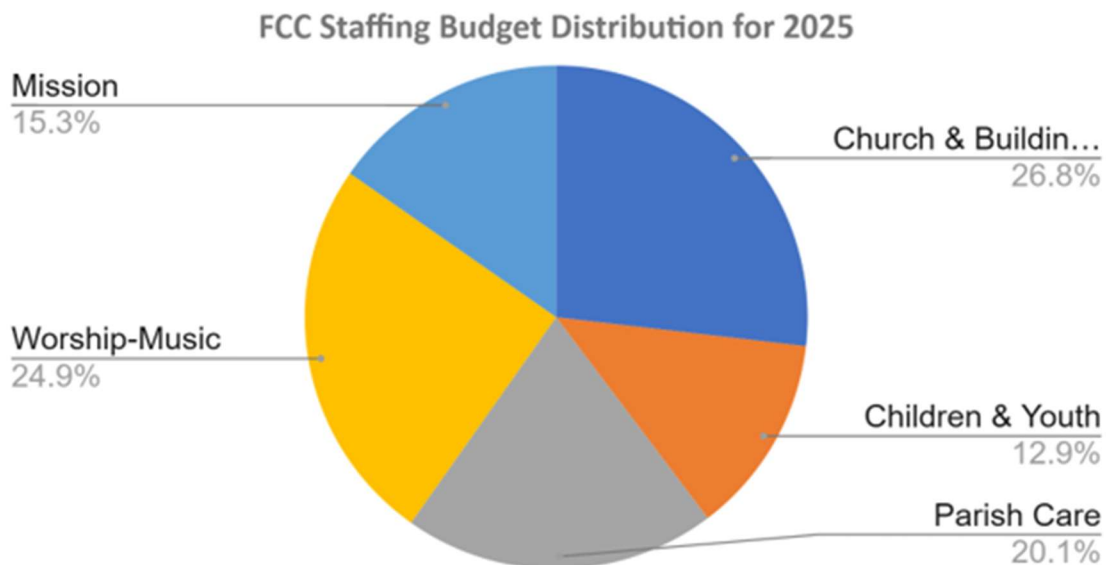
- Significant Revision to Personnel Policies which were last updated in 2016. Thanks to Gregory Greenman for his editorial skill in reviewing the document!
- Worked with Rev. Sarah Schmidt-Lee prior to and after her return from sabbatical for smooth transitions and an opportunity to reflect on role and responsibilities as we move forward.
- Director of Music Hire - Established a search and hired a new director, Maxwell Trombley.
- Handbell Director Hire – Jamie Sue Knight as regular hire after the interim year.
- Staff reviews completed by Senior Pastor and all supervising staff by October.
- Continued progress on updating job descriptions including for Associate Pastor, Music Director, Children’s Arts & Education Director, Parish Care, Handbell Director and many others.
- Worked with KDCCC on the new Director hire process, including a Search Team charter, job posting and job description, so we were ready to hire when Director Kathy McNinch retires as planned early in 2025 after 28 years in the role.
- Reviewed salaries and made recommendations to the Treasurer as part of the budget process.
- Initiated conversations with Pastor Mary as her initial 36-month contract by January 2025 will have only 17 months left. We explored options to extend and those were moved to Council and will be presented to the congregation to approve in January.

## Goals for 2025

- Continue to review roles, their scope and ministry needs, and update job descriptions.
- Investigating training and development opportunities for staff.
- Reflect on Congregational Survey (Holy Cow) for HR opportunities.

**Thanks to the congregation for generously supporting our staff through their giving!**

HR Team Members: Rick Johnson, Carl Ill, Kristi Droppers, Kay Nelson, Howard Tejchma, Bob Van Dis





## Finance Team

The purpose of the Finance Team is to oversee all aspects of the financial affairs of the church. The team is responsible for prudently investing all the church's funds, preparing the annual budget, ensuring that appropriate systems, policies, controls, and procedures are in place to protect and report on the financial condition of the church. The team oversees the organization and planning of the seasonal stewardship activities.

The congregational membership voted to approve the 2024 budget.

The approved sophisticated strategy approach to Climate, Social and Governance was implemented. The proposal is in accordance with the investment policy of FCC. The strategy was created by Breakwater, the financial advisors to FCC. The Finance Team continues to meet and review the investments of the Church with Breakwater. The Investment Policy was updated in 2024.

The Legacy giving program was updated in May 2024 with the assistance of Derl Oberlin, Chris Schram and Kristi Droppers. The brochure was adopted by the Council and rolled out to the Congregation in September. The program includes the Century Fund with specific intent to receive contributions for the building. The goal of the Century Fund is to promote a Building reserve for the Church.

Work began in the Fall, to create the Stewardship campaign for 2025. For four Sundays in November, various committees presented to the Congregation their work for 2024 and goals for 2025. As of December 31, 2024, pledges totaled \$397,881. 122 members pledged a financial commitment. Pledges account for 60% of our budget while our legacy investments make up 40%. The goal was \$415,000.

The congregation received a \$35,000 grant from the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation to continue our work with the Kalamazoo community.

Work began on a new HVAC system to control the heating and cooling of the church. The Congregation was asked to raise \$50,000 toward the cost of the system. We fell \$17,000 short of the fund-raising goal. It was decided to begin the process to replace the system. A contractor was hired, and the work will be completed in the first quarter of 2025.

### **Goals for 2025**

- Continue our work with Breakwater to review and enhance the endowment investments.
- Apply for 2026 Irving S. Gilmore Grant.
- Stewardship and Budget 2026.

Carol D-Chandler, Treasurer

# Children's Nature Playscape

## **Accomplishments in 2024:**

- Hosted over 1500 visits from children in “the Zone”- a 10-block radius surrounding the CNP.
- The construction of the Pavilion was completed and paid for with the partnership of the Kiwanis Club.
- The CNP continued to diversify our paid staff to reflect Kalamazoo as a whole.
- Our Signature Early Learning Programs, Reading and Exploring in Nature continue to grow exposing children to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) activities and over 120 books were provided to Kalamazoo families for FREE.
- New programs: the Summer Solstice, the Fall Equinox, and Indigenous People's Day were well attended.
- Continued to nurture strong partnerships with popular and established local organizations: Rooted, KRESA, Kazoo Parks and Recreations, The Urban Bird Treaty, Open Roads, K College, KVCC, and WMU.
- More (700) prairie plants were purchased, planted, and sod was turned resulting in a native plant landscape that is greener and thriving as much growth has occurred in 2024. Additionally, Kalamazoo in Bloom installed a bee house and supplied us with mason bees.
- Transitioned from a CNP Working Board to a CNP Governing Board.

## **Goals for 2025:**

- The Governing Board establishes a framework or structure for the CNP such as Bylaws and Strategic Planning to guide and provide the foundation (strong roots) for future growth.
- Increase our CNP Zone percentage to 50-55%.
- Complete Phase 2 construction by installing the sensory garden instruments.
- Secure funds for 2026 by grants and fundraising.
- Strategically increase hours of operations based on 2024 data and community engagement at Bronson Park.

Submitted by the Children's Nature Playscape Governing Board

## **Kalamazoo Drop-In Child Care Center**

### **Accomplishments in 2024**

- KDCCC served 91 families and 126 children during 2024.
- Our average daily attendance was 9. (Still recovering from Covid).  
As of November:
- 16 times families said they were looking for permanent housing or moving.
- 22 times families said they were looking for employment.
- 165 times families said they were attending medical or other appointments.
- 12 times families said they used KDCCC to attend Court.
- Other reasons used most often were for respite, personal time, errands, school or study or employment.
- Our numbers are still not up to what they were at pre-Covid, but each year we are getting closer. We have been going out to agencies and other places where our families frequent, putting our brochures and posters there. We are diligently getting the word out again since Covid.
- Our budget still looks good for the end of 2024.

### **Goals for 2025**

- We have a new Executive Director beginning in 2025. Her name is Madison Ring.
- We hope to raise our numbers to pre-Covid.
- The KDCCC board of Directors will be putting together a marketing plan to get the word out to reach more families in our community.

## Church Staff 2025

Designated Senior Pastor	Rev. Mary Austin
Associate Pastor	Rev. Sarah Schmidt-Lee
Church Administrator	Tad Drabik
Director of Music Ministries	Maxwell Trombley
Handbell Choir Director	Jamie Sue Knight
Director of Parish Care	Dianne Roberts
Director of Children's Worship Arts	Kim Licavoli
Organist/Accompanist	Kory Heitzig
Secretary	Polly Blowers
Sexton	Hayden Blowers
Housekeeper	Deb Zandt