

*The First Presbyterian Church  
in the City of New York*

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023



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*THE FIRST PRESBYTEIRAN CHURCH  
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK*

ANNUAL MEETING  
JANUARY 28, 2024

# OUR STORY

Welcome. As the new year begins, we would like to invite you to recap our 2023 year and discuss the future and goals we have planned for First Church.

As we say goodbye and welcome a new year, we reflect on our accomplishments and challenges. We are determined to grow and will continue working on creating a space that's welcoming for everyone, focusing on our community and members, and assisting all those in their spiritual journeys. With all the challenges that the world faces, we aspire to bring hope to those that surround us and find meaning in our place in the larger world. We invite you to explore our community and culture and help us find ways to be a positive force for changes and partner with all around us.

## OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION – 2023

### SESSION

The Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell, Pastor & Head of Staff  
The Rev. Dr. Barbara E. Davis, Executive Minister  
Lawrence N. Tallamy, Clerk of Session

2024: Donald B. Dillport  
Irenka R. Jakubiak  
Lauren McGill  
Joan L. Ryan  
Duane D. Wall  
Kathie S. Young

2025: Sally M. Collins  
Christine S. Flouton  
Kathryn W. Ketcham  
David A. MacDougall  
Heide Chavez Valero  
Vacancy

2026: John Buchanan  
David Delahunt  
Christian Tuchscherer  
Barron Flood  
Keisha Flint  
Vacancy

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Nicky Moody Ordway, President  
David N. Biette, Vice President  
Alyssa Puccinelli Browne, Secretary  
Anne Gray, Treasurer  
Amy Cooper & Martha Ferry, Asst. Treasurers  
Reade H. Ryan Jr., Counsel

2024: David N. Biette  
Miyoung Lee  
Diana R. Pardue

2025: Roger W. Leaf  
Nicky Moody Ordway  
George Varughese

2026: Tim Warmath  
Alyssa Browne  
Ingrid Figueiredo

### BOARD OF DEACONS

Co-Moderators: Eileen Choi and Wendy Williams

Treasurer: Emily Dawson

Co-Secretaries: Alexis Schutz and

2024: Elizabeth “Buffy” Barton  
Emily M. Dawson  
Ashleigh M. Rosciszewska  
Sarah Wendy Williams  
Eileen Choi

2025: John Cody Bennett  
Daniel Duque  
Esther Gowrie  
Parul Parmar  
David B. Richardson  
Tiffany Wagner

2026: John Houser  
Michael Judkiewicz  
Will Browne  
Jeanne Gordon  
Ian Boswell  
Michael Clay

### STAFF

*Organist & Choirmaster Emeritus:* William F. Entriken

*Coordinator of Family Music Ministries:* Rachel Barker

*Sexton, Facilities Manager:* Jose Diaz

*Assistant Sexton:* Keith Blacknall

*Director of Finance & Administration:* Babs Smith

*Office Manager:* Aileen Caba

*Hospitality & Operations Associates:*

Shaniqua Brockington

Eric Velez

*Custodians:* Anthony Arocho

Alfonso Cruz

Sandra Gutierrez

Santiago Puente Natera

Jonathan Rodriguez

Robert Toussaint

*Pastor & Head of Staff:* The Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell  
*Executive Minister:* The Rev. Dr. Barbara E. Davis  
*Associate Pastor:* The Rev. Dr. Mark D. Hostetter  
*Interim Associate Pastor:* The Rev. Emily Brewer  
*Director of Music:* Michael Shake  
*Director of Communications:* Sophia Yacca  
*Director of Family & Youth Ministries:* Jenny Bennett  
*Nursery School Director:* Halima Fuller  
*Nursery School Director of Enrollment & Advancement:* Ashleigh Rosciszewska  
*Nursery School Associate Educational Director:* Elizabeth Soqui  
*Pastor Emeritus:* J. Barrie Shepherd  
*Pastor Emeritus:* Jon M. Walton

**Annual Meeting of  
The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York  
Sunday, January 28, 2024 12:00 p.m.**

**Agenda**

Call to Order – *Greg Stovell*

Opening Prayer

Call for the Meeting – Clerk *Lawerence Tallamy*

Determination of a Quorum

Approval of Minutes of Annual Meeting January 29, 2023 ..... 7-11

Receive Annual Reports

Ministers and Staff ..... 12-19

Session ..... 20

Board of Deacons ..... 21

Financial Report – *Martha Ferry* ..... 26-28

Approval of the Terms of Call / Terms of Contract for the Pastors

–*Christine Flouton* ..... 29

Necrology Report – *Barbara Davis* ..... 31

Recognition of Retiring Officers – *Greg Stovell* ..... 4

Nominating Committee Report – *Joan Ryan & Kathie Young* ..... 33

Election of Elders, Deacons, Nominating Committee

Other Business

Adjourn to Corporate Meeting

*Nicky Ordway* will preside

Call to Order

Recognition of Retiring Trustees

Election of Trustees

..... Nominating Committee Report – *Joan Ryan & Kathie Young* 0 33-37

..... Investment Report – *Roger Leaf* 38-39

..... Adjournment of Corporate Meeting

Pastor's Report

Benediction

After the Annual Meeting the Officers' meetings will follow:

Session (to examine new elders and deacons)

Trustees (to elect officers)

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## THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

### Annual Congregational Meeting

January 29, 2023

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Corporate and Congregational Meeting of the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York on Fifth Avenue between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets, New York, New York, will be held on Sunday, January 29, 2023, following the 11:00 a.m. worship service. This meeting is for the purpose of electing elders and deacons to replace those whose terms expire and for electing successors to the following trustees: Richard Korchak, John McGinn, and Janet Shin and to transact such other business as may properly come before it. Nominees for election to the Trustee Class of 2026 are Alyssa Browne, Ingrid Figueiredo, and Tim Warmath. This meeting is open to all members of First Church.

Following the determination by the Clerk that a quorum was present, the meeting was called to order by the Moderator, Dr. Greg Stovell, Senior Pastor, at 12:16 p.m.

Lawrence N. Tallamy, Clerk of Session, read the Call printed above. The Call had been read at previous Sunday worship services, printed in the weekly Church newsletter, *First Matters*, and posted on the Church website.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 30, 2022 as printed in the Annual Report.

The Annual Report [**Attachment A**], which had been distributed before the meeting, contained financial statements, reports of the Pastors, Director of Music, and staff, Board of Deacons, Session, Trustees, committees, and ministries.

There were no questions from the floor in response to the Moderator's query, so a motion was made, seconded and passed *to receive the reports as printed*.

Dr. Stovell invited Assistant Treasurer Martha Ferry, filling in for Chair of the Joint Finance Committee, Donald Dillport, to present the financial report for 2022 and the budget for 2023, which was approved by the Session on December 14, 2022.

Ms. Ferry described the makeup of the Joint Finance Committee as well as its role in creation of the budget and oversight of financial operations. The church ended 2022 in a very strong financial position, with a large surplus, largely because of Federal Payroll Protection Plan credits and the fact that External Space Use (filming and associated holding rental income) exceeded budget by over \$213,000.

The budget for 2023 [**Attachment B**] is balanced and represents income and expenses of \$3,735,093. The budget is "conservative," with income comprised of about 33% from pledges and giving, 33% from earned revenue, and 33% from endowment

funds. Ms. Ferry observed that she looks forward to the time when giving is the largest share of total income. Expenses are broken into two major categories, 50% for pastoral and congregational care, of which 13% is for committee/action Group work, teaching and learning, outreach and service and discipleship. The other 50% is derived from salaries and benefits (low by comparison with like institutions), facilities maintenance, and administrative costs such as insurance. She noted that expenses are typical for a nonprofit organization such as First Church. Endowment draws are set at the standard 4 1/4% over a five-year trend and represent 85% of the church's outreach effort, 20% of spending on facilities and 7-8% of pastoral care; they are therefore "crucial."

There were no questions following the Joint Finance report.

In concluding, Ms. Ferry acknowledged the excellent work of the Business Office in support of the Joint Finance Committee; she also thanked the Committee and Treasurer Anne Gray and Assistant Treasurer Amy Cooper for their service.

A **motion** to receive the report of the Joint Finance Committee was made, seconded and passed.

The staff, including Dr. Stovell, and Dr. Davis, left the meeting, and Dr. Stovell temporarily relinquished the Chair to Elder Charles Anderson, who introduced Elder Christine Flouton, Chair of the Personnel Committee. Elder Flouton indicated that all salaries and benefits had been reviewed in accordance with the *Book of Order* and that Session had approved the recommendation that all eligible staff receive a salary increase of 2%.

A **motion** was then made by Elder Flouton, seconded and passed to approve the Call to the Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell and to receive the salaries and benefits of Rev. Dr. Barbara Davis, who is under contract with the United Church of Christ, as follows:

	<u>Dr. Stovell</u>	<u>Dr. Davis</u>
Salary	\$125,017	\$160, 652
Housing	\$153,000	\$29,000
FICA Offset	<u>\$9,564</u>	<u>\$12,262</u>
<b>Total Salary</b>	<b><u>\$287,581</u></b>	<b><u>\$201,914</u></b>
Pension/Health	\$75,000	\$72,000
<b>Total Salary and Benefits</b>	<b><u>\$362,581</u></b>	<b><u>\$273,914</u></b>

Elder Flouton entertained questions and comments from the floor. Betty Jones reminded the congregation that we are only approving the Call for Dr. Stovell, since Dr. Davis is under contract with the United Church of Christ and the terms of her

employment are approved by Session. She urged that the Supplementary Session Report on the Pastoral Salary Recommendations be presented to reflect that. Elder Flouton stated that Session had approved the terms of Dr. Davis's employment as required.

The staff returned to the meeting. Dr. Stovell assumed the Chair. Elder Flouton thanked both Dr. Stovell and Dr. Davis for their extraordinary work and service this past year.

Dr. Davis read the names on the Necrology Report, previously distributed, and led the congregation in a moment of silence and prayer.

Dr. Stovell thanked retiring elders and deacons by name for their diligent work and commitment to First Church.

The Moderator called on Elder Donna Halverstadt, Chair of the Nominating Committee, who thanked the Dr. Stovell and the Nominating Committee for their support.

She then announced the slate of candidates for election as elders to the **Class of 2026**:

John Buchanan, David Delahert, Keisha Flint, Barron Flood, and Christian Tuchscherer; and to the **Class of 2025** for a two-year term, Heide Chavez Valero.

In response to the Moderator's request, there were no nominations from the floor. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed *to close the nominations*. A **motion to receive the slate of elders** was made, seconded and passed.

Elder Halverstadt then presented the slate of candidates for election to the Board of Deacons for the **Class of 2026**:

Will Browne, Ian Boswell, Michael Clay, Jean Gordon, John Howser, and Michael Judkiewicz; and to the **Class of 2024** for a one-year term, Eileen Choi.

In response to the Moderator's request, there were no nominations from the floor. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed *to close the nominations*. A **motion to receive the slate of deacons** was made, seconded and passed.

Elder Halverstadt then presented the slate of candidates for the **2023 Nominating Committee**: Charles Anderson, Mark Fontaine, Amy Frisch, Pat Nunez, and Jennifer Adams Webb.

In response to Dr. Stovell's request, there were no nominations from the floor. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed *to close the nominations*. A **motion to receive the slate of candidates for the 2022 Nominating Committee** was made, seconded and passed.

Elder Halverstadt presented the slate of candidates to be **alternates to the 2022 Nominating Committee**: Steve White.

In response to the Moderator's request, there were no nominations from the floor. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed *to close the nominations*. A **motion to elect the candidate to be an alternate to the 2022 Nominating Committee** was made, seconded and passed.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to receive the report of the 2022 Nominating Committee, with thanks for its work from Dr. Stovell.

Dr. Stovell asked if there was any other business to come before the congregation; there was none.

A **motion to suspend the Congregational Meeting temporarily** was made, seconded and passed at 12:42 p.m. in order to hold the meeting of the Corporation. Following the conclusion of the Corporate Meeting at 12:52 p.m. the Congregational Meeting resumed at 12:53 p.m.

Dr. Stovell reminded all present of the meetings scheduled to follow adjournment of the Annual Meeting.

In closing, the Moderator observed that one year ago in January, 2022, the church was closed because of the dangers of the Covid 19 Pandemic. During the year that followed we have been reminded over and over again that "God is good...all of the time!" Indeed, this has been a year of "post-Covid" firsts: We were able to celebrate Easter in person as a congregation, attend to the Pride Sunday Water Table in person, as well as to celebrate Christmas in candlelight, in person. He concluded that we have much for which to be very thankful.

There being no further business, a **motion** was made, seconded and passed *to adjourn the meeting at 12:57 p.m.*

Dr. Stovell closed the meeting with prayer and then offered a benediction.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Greg Stovell, Moderator  
Clerk

Lawrence N. Tallamy,

**THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**Annual Corporate Meeting**  
January 29, 2023

A quorum being present, David Biette, Vice President of the Board of Trustees, stepping in for President Richard Korchak, called the meeting to order at 12:42 p.m.

A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to approve the minutes from the Annual Corporate Meeting of January 30, 2022 as set forth in the Annual Meeting Report for Sunday, January 29, 2023.

Reporting on the Trustees' focus during this past year, Mr. Biette referred those present to the report on page 20 of the Annual Meeting Report for today's meeting, noting that the church achieved strong financial performance and ended the year with a large surplus, and that the church's investment portfolio was challenged by market conditions. Mr. Biette also highlighted several projects undertaken by the Board of Trustees: receipt of an updated Certificate of Occupancy from the NYC Department of Buildings, establishment of "First Presbyterian 2030" capital improvement project, conclusion of the five-year garden restoration, and installation of new carpets in the sanctuary pews.

Mr. Biette thanked Anne Gray and Reade Ryan for their contributions to the Trustees, as well as Paul Schnabel and Babs Smith for their stellar performance in managing the church's business office. Mr. Biette then recognized the trustees who will be rotating off the Board of Trustees.

Mr. Biette introduced Elder Donna L. Halverstadt, chair of the 2022-23 Nominating Committee, who presented the candidates recommended by the Committee for election to the Board of Trustees to the class of 2026: Alyssa Browne, Ingrid Figueiredo and Tim Warmath. Elder Halverstadt called for nominations from the floor; there being none, a motion was made, seconded and passed to close the nominations. A motion was then made, seconded and passed to elect the candidates presented by the Nominating Committee.

Mr. Biette then called on Roger Leaf, who served as the 2022-23 Investment Committee Chair. Mr. Leaf referenced the full report to be found on pages 24-25 of the Annual Meeting Report. Mr. Leaf noted that the committee made two changes to the investment portfolio in 2022: 1) it reduced its holding of more actively managed funds and increased its holdings of straight index funds, and 2) it took actions to reflect the shared goals of the Investment and Earth Care Committees, resulting in 16% of the total investment portfolio now invested in funds without any holdings of fossil fuel companies. The total return on the investment portfolio in 2022 was -16.8% which reflected a very rough year in which both equity and fixed income markets suffered double-digit decline. Mr. Leaf stated that the investment portfolio is well positioned for growth and outperformance vs benchmarks in 2023. A motion was then made, seconded and passed to receive the Investment Committee's report as presented.

There being no other business before the meeting, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded and passed at 12:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janet Shin, Secretary

## PASTOR / HEAD OF STAFF

God put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise... (Psalm 40:3)

A few days ago, I opened an email from an online music streaming service. Apparently, it kept track of everything I listened to in 2023 and it gave me a list of the artists who've been in my ears the most.

I went through the list and, while a little creeped out by knowing that my listening habits have been monitored all year, it was still meaningful to remember what my year was like through the lens of music (and in case you're wondering, Journey and Jake Shimabukuro consistently topped my list).

In the same way, it was very meaningful to go through my calendar, to see where God has led us in 2023. In my trip down memory lane, it was easy to see that the Psalmist is right. God has led our church graciously while putting a new song in our hearts.

First Church has remained strong in ministry, involvement and in stewardship. We completed a 2-year journey searching for a dedicated Associate Pastor for Social Justice and Mission. We are very excited to have Rev. Ashley Bair join our church family in only a few days. We welcomed two world class speakers to our pulpit: Tom Long and Bill McKibben. We celebrated Barbara's 25th anniversary with us, and by the time you receive this report, we will have also celebrated Mark Hostetter's 25th anniversary of ministry at Old First. Our Session struggled in discernment and prayer in order to do our part in the city's crisis of hospitality toward refugees and asylum seekers. As many of you know, a new exciting partnership with the First Spanish Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn is taking form and showing great promise for 2024.

Personally, this was a transformative ministry year. My trips to Cuba and Israel-Palestine opened my eyes and heart to struggles and partnerships beyond our borders. I attended The Festival of Homiletics, which is the largest preaching conference in the country. Through that conference I was invited to be the guest preacher in Atlanta for Day 1, a syndicated radio show and podcast with over 200 radio stations around the world and over 10,000 downloads a week. The sermon and interview gave me an opportunity to speak about First Church to a wide audience. (You can still access the sermon and interview at [Day1.org](https://Day1.org))

I also had the opportunity to go on a writing retreat before Advent, which proved to be an invigorating and refreshing change in my own sermon preparation routine. Outside Old First, I served on the Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry and represented our church as Secretary on the board of the Snug Sailor Harbor.

2023 was a challenging year around us. Our world continues to see devastating wars in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine. The adversarial nature of the political discourse is slowly increasing in preparation for the 2024 elections. This city continues to struggle to find a way to offer hospitality to countless of migrants and asylum seekers looking for a better (and safer) life. All this without even mentioning the countless challenges we face with homelessness, hunger, racism, anti-

semitism, islamophobia, and a city-wide ministry context in which being a person of faith is the exception. Being Church in these times is not for the faint of heart.

That's why I'm grateful for Old First. This is both a challenging and exciting time to do ministry! Our Session and church leadership will gather in early 2024 for an offsite retreat as we discern how God is calling us to lead and serve in this great city. Pray for us and pray for each other, as in this coming year, we continue to sing the songs God places in our heart. A song of worship to our God.

I consider it a blessing and a great joy to be your pastor.

Greg

## **EXECUTIVE MINISTER**

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Midday Bible Study on Wednesday, Coffee and Theology on Sunday mornings, and Prayer Writing on Thursday mornings continue to be the foundation for our teaching and learning programs. Bible study has focused on our three-year series examining each book of the Bible, and we have experienced the joy of welcoming newcomers into the group as well as the “build” of knowledge over the larger series. Tony Amoury Alkhoury, a doctoral student at Union Theological Seminary, taught the series this fall while I was on sabbatical and introduced the group to new resources and perspectives. Coffee and Theology has explored a wide range of topics, most recently focusing on the Psalms with guest teacher, Dr. Alan Cooper, a professor at Jewish Theological Seminary. Morning prayer writing sessions focus on various themes and use both scripture and outside reading to prompt prayer responses, for Advent we used Ross Gay’s book of essays, “Inciting Joy.” My thanks to Meg Harper, Sally Collins and Lauren McGill who taught this series while I was on sabbatical.

Church School restarted in September, under the rising leadership of Jenny Bennett, our new Director of Youth and Family Ministries, who started her position in April. Jenny has worked with me and others to select a new curriculum for this year, Growing in Grace and Gratitude, and has provided strong support to the church schoolteachers this year. Jenny has launched several new programs this fall for families, children and youth.

The Nursery School has been thriving under the leadership of Halima Fuller as the new director. Her leadership team includes Ashleigh Rosciszewska and Elizabeth Soqui who each bring valuable skills and perspective to the overall health of the school and the broader parent community. We continue to wrestle with changing needs in early childhood education, and I am continually impressed with Hal’s vision and the agility of her team to respond to this changing landscape. I am grateful to Duane Wall, who is the out-going chair of the Nursery School committee and to Keisha Flint who is the new chair.

### **PASTORAL CARE**

Pastoral care continues to be a joy for me in the congregation. I feel blessed to be connected to so many members of his congregation and to have the privilege of so many one-on-one conversations about your spiritual lives, joys and challenges.

The Deacons continued with another incredible year in their work as the caring taking arm of the church. I am especially thankful to Wendy Williams and Eileen Choi for their leadership as co-moderators, and to the whole board for all their work with the congregation and community. The Deacon’s report highlights their work, and I am grateful to each one of them for the compassion, good humor, and gentleness they show me and each other.

Respectfully submitted, The Rev. Dr. Barbara E. Davis

## **DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**

The ministry of music encourages both the song of the congregation and lifts their own song on behalf of the congregation. From 2023, our ministry celebrates...

### Family Music

- calling Rachel Barker-Asto as Family Music Ministry Coordinator
  - Rachel provides music leadership for weekly Church School and monthly Worship for Families with Babies and Toddlers
- introducing Student Choristers, a new, weekly choir for 1st-6<sup>th</sup> grade students
  - Choristers offered special music in morning worship on November 12<sup>th</sup> and December 17<sup>th</sup>, and the December 17<sup>th</sup> Candlelight Carol Service

### First Church Choir

- moving to a “mask welcome” choral environment in April, with masking based on the personal comfort and health of each chorister
- welcoming six new volunteer and staff choristers
- premiering a new choral anthem, “I Sing the Mighty Power of God,” by Rick Bassett, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Rev. Dr. Barbara Davis’s ministry to First Church in June
- offering four special services of musical worship:
  - *Love Lives Beyond* – a Vespers Service of Music for Lent, which included *The Best Beloved: Four Motets* by Chris DeBlasio, whose life was tragically ended by HIV/AIDS in 1993; and, the U.S. premiere of Cecilia McDowall’s *On Angel’s Wing* (March 19<sup>th</sup>)
  - All Saints Sunday worship with movements of Gabriel Fauré’s *Requiem* (November 5<sup>th</sup>)
  - *Hodie: A Vespers of Music for Advent* featuring the Christmas cantata *Hodie* by Ralph Vaughan Williams with the world premiere of a new organ transcription of the orchestral accompaniment, commissioned by First Church, arranged and played by international concert organist David Briggs; joined by three guest soloists, five instrumentalists, and the Concert Choir of the New York City Children’s Chorus (December 3<sup>rd</sup>); received a grant from the Vaughan Williams Foundation
  - Candlelight Carol Service with beloved anthems and carols, plus seven guest readers, spanning ages 8 to 80

### Summer Choir

- providing choral leadership in June and July, averaging 14-18 singers weekly
  - included volunteer and staff singers from the First Church Choir, plus four Summer Choir “guests” – singers who joined just for Summer Choir

## Worship

- a season of music meditations prior to midweek worship in Lent, with cellist Nathan Whittaker, pianist Andrew Kimsey, and organists Claudia Dumschat, Alistair Reid, and Michael Shake

## Resources

- receiving a generous donation of a late 1970's Steinway Model M piano for the Choir Room
- donating one of the church's lesser used pianos to the Fourth Presbyterian Church, Bronx
- a promising inspection of our long silent tower bell, cast in 1865

Finally, as your director of music, I personally celebrate

- dropping into midweek Bible Study to introduce the Book of Psalms in May
- a week-long practice retreat at the Portageville Chapel in Western New York in June
- the opportunity to offer the sermon on Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup> as part of a series on the Psalms
- the high privilege to serve First Church – I am grateful to be here with you, and look forward to how God will work in our midst in 2024

## First Church Choir (active as of December 31, 2023)

*Sopranos:* Christina Angelopoulos, Katherine Brown, Ellen Hagopian, Samantha Noonan [music librarian], Elizabeth White-Pultz, Shanelle Valerie Woods, Kathie Young; *Altos:* James Brown, LouAnne Gilleland, Anne Gray, Samantha Long (new), Meredith Lischer (new), Margaret McGovern, Elizabeth Hubbell Riggs, Ann Timmons; *Tenors:* Ryan Bauer-Walsh, Michael Genese (new), Mark Robertson, Sam Rosner, José Velazquez, Jr. (new); *Basses:* Robbie Cowan (new), John Charles Kelly (new), Joey LaPlant, Andrew Martens, Keith Sisterhenm, Joel Zeltzer

With thanksgiving,

Michael Shake

## COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

This year, as the Director of Communications, I've had the privilege of guiding our community through a period of transformation. Taking on the role of Interim Director of Communications and later being approved as the permanent Director on November 1st, I have endeavored to build on existing foundations while introducing new initiatives to enhance our communication strategies. It has been exciting settling in to this position, and I was pleased that I had experienced several elements while in the position of Live-Streaming Coordinator.

- One notable achievement was the successful launch of "First The Questions," a platform designed to foster thought-provoking discussions. We look forward to continuing the podcast this year.
- We revamped our newsletter, introducing a more organized and consistent style, complemented by detailed blog posts and articles for spotlights, announcements, and events, all accessible through strategically placed "read more..." tags. Collaborating with Aileen, we revamped calendar event descriptions, providing comprehensive details to minimize confusion and inquiries. Our calendar has become a reliable resource, fostering increased congregant engagement.
- Efforts were made to streamline our workflow, introducing announcement request deadlines for small groups to optimize the creation process of our bulletin and newsletter. We also contacted our website host to grant us an account manager who has been extremely helpful. With him, we found we were running on a shared server. I have since upgraded our server which will allow a faster and safer browsing experience.
- Strategic initiatives were introduced in our social media presence, emphasizing thoughtful and visually appealing content with a focus on avoiding repetitive, text-heavy posts. Graphics are now customized for optimal viewing with different suitable sizing among our various platforms.

### Outreach and Partnerships

Recognizing the importance of timely communication, I've strived to promptly respond to requests, ensuring a quick turnaround for essential matters for our community groups. We have begun establishing connections with New School and NYU, and actively participating in the Christian Club Fair, allowed us to engage with college students in the area.

### Engagement and Community Building

Our movie nights, featuring "Back to the Future" and "Coco," witnessed great engagement, attracting almost 50 new sign-ups for First Matters. This turnout is largely due to the new promotions we had been advertising in offering a free raffle for Broadway tickets! I was very pleased to see that most of those who discovered us through our online ads were young adults.

## **Expanding our Communications Department**

With combining my previous position as Live-Streaming Coordinator and the Director of Communications role, it was clear to see that I might need some help along the way. I am happy to announce that we have found some fantastic assistance through Juna Tuazon as our new Marketing & Graphic Design Associate who will be starting with First Church on February 1, 2024.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, I am excited about the continued growth and improvement that lie ahead. Thank you for your ongoing support!

Sincerely,  
Sophia Yacca  
Director of Communications

## **DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRIES**

It has been a privilege to serve in this position for nine months now with the youth, children, and families of First Church. I am appreciative of the congregation for welcoming me into this role, and I am deeply grateful for the whole staff at First Church for their support and positive spirits. It's inspiring how much these ministries have grown in less than a year! The foundational piece that motivates all of our efforts has been relationship-building: among children, families, members, and with God. Through this work, I am reminded of how our children and youth are not just the "future" of the church - they are the church *now*, in the same way as adults, which is evident through the vibrant energy in our Youth and Family Ministries.

Church School kicked off in September with a new PC(USA) curriculum, *Growing in Grace and Gratitude*. After a time of music and prayer all together, the children split into groups of 3-5 year olds and 1st - 6th graders, which helps tailor the lessons and activities to the children's ages. I am so grateful for each of our volunteer church school teachers and helpers: Caroline Fjeldheim, Doug Schwalbe, Esther Gowrie, Heide Chavez Valero, Keisha Flint, Martha Ferry, Nicky Moody Ordway, and Steve White. Our teachers are such an important part of each child's faith formation, relationship with the church, and friendships with each other.

Other ministry offerings include reinvigorating past programs and starting new ones! Worship for Babies and Toddlers now meets twice a month, where we explore God through movement, musical instruments, singing, and story time. We also started Club 34 for 3rd and 4th graders and Bibles and Bagels Youth Group for 5th - 12th graders, which have included games and devotion on Sundays, as well as fellowship with ice cream meet-ups and neighborhood walks. Additionally, we excitedly welcomed our Family Music Ministries Coordinator Rachel Barker-Asto in September. Rachel leads music during Church School, directs our Student Choristers program for 1st - 6th graders, and also takes part in leading our Worship with Babies and Toddlers service. We are grateful for Rachel's leadership in our family and music ministries.

I have also taken time this year to explore leadership opportunities with our youth, in an effort to nurture their sense of agency in worship and church life. They participated in St. Joe's Soup Kitchen, made holiday cards for LGBTQ+ elders in our city with the organization SAGE USA, held Teen Tech Support during coffee hour, as well as served as lay readers and acolytes. Each of these leadership opportunities came from brainstorming with the youth as they learned more about First Church initiatives and shared their own creative ideas. I look forward to hearing more as they conceptualize inspiring new ways to lead our church community.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Bennett

## SESSION

With the crises posed for First Church by the Covid-19 Pandemic largely behind us, and viewed through the lens of a worsening global immigration/asylum-seeker catastrophe, Session focused much of its energy, creative thinking and effort on ways for the Church to become a part of a solution to the local dimensions of the problem. Guided by the pastoral staff and the Refugee and Immigration Action Group, for example, we seriously considered the re-creation of a men's shelter, largely for displaced members of the LGBTQ+ community. When that was deemed infeasible for a number of reasons, we began to develop a relationship with First Spanish Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, whose congregation has swelled exponentially with the influx of migrants from many parts of the world, and with that, so have the needs of the Church. It has become clear that much of Sessions strategic thinking in 2024 will need to be around ways to continue to be creative in doing God's work to care for the strangers among us.

Other highlights of Session's work in 2023 include:

1. Approval and oversight of a revamped plan for allocating grants, creating a more transparent process, and one that gives more power to vet applicants to the appropriate action/work group;
2. Support for all phases of the work of the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee, leading to the choice by the congregation of Rev. Ashley Bair, who starts as Associate Pastor for Social Justice and Mission on February 1, 2024;
3. Oversight of another successful financial and stewardship year and approval of a balanced budget for 2024;
4. Sponsorship of gun violence prevention training with emphasis on the need for appropriate hospitality;
5. With trustees, approval of the expansion and refurbishment of the columbarium;
6. With Dr. Stovell and the Personnel Committee, support of a reorganization of the Business and Communication Offices, and the promotion of new leadership for both;
7. With the Earth Care Action Group, renewal of our Earth Care Pledge, continued sponsorship of educational programs for the congregation, and a ban on single-use individual food services items;
8. Approval of hiring Jenny Bennett as Director of Youth and Family Ministries;
9. Approval of and support for Dr. Davis's sabbatical leave;
10. With the trustees, approval of a joint task force named "Open Gates," commissioned to study all aspects of campus safety while encouraging greater community access.

Lawrence N. Tallamy  
Clerk of Session

## BOARD OF DEACONS

Our ministry is one of *Compassion, Witness, and Service*. Many of the things we do are intangible. This report describes some of the tangible things we did together this year.

The deacons participated in organizing and serving communion, led clean-up, and held home communion for members who requested it. Our board hosted and organized coffee hour throughout the year, with the tremendous help of the staff in setting it up each Sunday. Deacons of the month assisted in baptisms throughout the year. The board also maintained a system for staff to arrange transportation for those who need assistance getting to and from church.

The board continued pairing deacons with “care partners,” to keep in touch with physically distant members and those facing challenges with mobility or illness. We also sent birthday cards to senior church members celebrating a birthday of 70 years and above. Deacons participated in Action Groups focused on social justice, building community, and the sacredness of the earth. Social Justice and Advocacy – Alexis Schutz; Immigration and Refugees – Eileen Choi; Earth Care – Buffy Barton.

Eileen Choi led, and many of us participated in, the Annual Coat Drive with the Refugee and Immigration Fund (RIF). We collected 52 new coats (and a handful of used coats) from the congregation. Presbyterian Women contributed 10 gift cards (each at a \$75 value), and the deacons purchased 24 additional gift cards. This year, RIF invited a group called Rusa LGBTQ to join them, and they received some of the coats and cards. We are grateful to everyone who donated coats or funds this year.

We saw an increased need for pastoral care from outside the church membership and made funds available to the pastors to provide for those in crisis with Metrocards and groceries, as well as some emergency funds to pay utility bills and rent. We arranged delivery of over 70 bouquets of flowers at Christmas to members who had a difficult year, such as an illness or loss of a loved one. Between Thanksgiving and the New Year, the deacons made personal phone calls to the congregation, just to check in and say hello and offer prayers for those who requested it.

The Board of Deacons thanks Rev. Barbara Davis for her spiritual and practical guidance.

Members of the Board of Deacons:

Class of 2024: Buffy Barton, Eileen Choi (Co-Moderator), Emily Dawson (Treasurer), Ashleigh Rosciszewska, Alexis Schutz (Co-Secretary), Wendy Williams (Co-Moderator)

Class of 2025: Cody Bennett, Daniel Duque, Esther Gowrie, Parul Parmar, David Richardson, Tiffany Wagner

Class of 2026: Ian Boswell (Co-Secretary), Michael Clay, Will Browne, Jeanne Gordon, John Houser, Michael Judkiewicz

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Williams and Eileen Choi, Co-Moderators

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jesus calls his followers to live out their values in the world. Not just on Sundays and not in a world that we wish exists, but every day, in the world as it actually exists. The Board of Trustees of The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York is called to help guide and manage the business of the church such that it is positioned to fulfill its mission over the long term. The work of the church's trustees in 2023 does, we believe, reflect our spiritual call as well as our fiduciary call.

Reflecting evolving preferences for keeping loved ones close, the trustees oversaw an expansion of the columbarium. Reflecting that time moves relentlessly forward, the trustees addressed a variety of issues presented by the church's aging bricks, mortar, and equipment. These include repairing the chapel's stained glass, replacing the equipment that distributes tap water throughout church buildings, and transitioning from a physical to a cloud-based file server.

The Investment Committee, chaired by Roger Leaf, oversaw the church's investment holdings, which registered robust growth over the course of the year. Its report follows this one. The Audit Committee, chaired by George Varughese, undertook its annual review of the church's audit for the prior year. Auditors Condon O'Meara McGinty & Donnelly LLP issued a 'clean' opinion of the church's 2022 financials. The Insurance Committee, chaired by David Biette, renewed our policies for another year. The committee was pleased to learn that our 11% increase in premiums was on the low end of rate increases offered to comparable institutions, due in part to the church's sound risk-management practices. The committee thanks Babs Smith for her prescient budgeting of our premiums for 2024.

The Buildings & Grounds Committee oversaw completion of an energy audit that will facilitate the church's compliance with New York City's recently enacted Local Law 97, which sets standards for greenhouse gas emissions in buildings of 25,000 square feet or more. The committee looks forward to integrating that report's recommendations into the 'First Presbyterian 2030' plan established by last year's board, with a focus on making church facilities healthier, more comfortable, and more affordable to maintain. Buildings, the committee learned, are New York's primary source of the emissions driving climate change. In doing our small part to be good stewards of creation by reducing building emissions, we anticipate that the trustees' management of church business in 2024 will once again reflect our spiritual call as well as our fiduciary call.

Trustees also served on the church's Joint Finance, Nominating, Nursery School, and Personnel Committees. We thank Anne Gray for her service as treasurer, Reade Ryan for his inestimable counsel, Babs Smith for her tireless leadership of the business office, and Joe Diaz and his team for maintaining the church buildings and grounds.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nicky Ordway

2023 Trustees: Nicky Ordway - President, David Biette - Vice President, Alyssa Browne - Secretary, Ingrid Figueiredo, Roger Leaf, Miyoung Lee, Diana Pardue, George Varughese, Tim Warmath

## **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

The Personnel Committee met throughout 2023, with three new members rolling on in February. It includes Ingrid Figueiredo (Trustee), Tim Warmath (Trustee), Irenka Jakubiak (Elder), John Buchanan (Elder) and Christine Flouton (Elder and Chair). Pat Nunez was the Congregational Member until August 2023. Joining from our staff are Greg Stovell (Senior Pastor) and Babs Smith (Business Office).

In the past year, we have conducted many items of business. Our wonderful staff has come together and coalesced and is providing exceptional service to our church and our members.

### **FPC Staff Changes and Additions –**

We are very appreciative of our wonderful staff, managers, and pastors, and thank them for their work.

We engaged Jenny Bennett as the Director of Youth and Family Ministries, and Jenny has demonstrated a true gift in this role. We are fortunate to have her, and our children and youth programs are flourishing under her leadership.

Upon Sam Ogundare's departure in the role of Communications Director, we offered the interim position to Sophia Canfield. After her exceptional performance and great ideas on ways to improve our Communications Department and FPC's reputation through the summer, we were delighted to offer her the permanent position in the fall. Sophia is managing First Matters, our bulletin, oversight of our Sunday service filming, increasing awareness and participation for all of our musical and other events, and our many communications vehicles (posters, flyers, social media).

In our Business Office, Paul Schnabel resigned from his position in September, and in a seamless transition, our highly competent and wonderful Babs Smith, who has served the church with both diligence and excellence for the past eight years, has been promoted to Director of Finance and Administration. We are so happy with Babs and her fresh ideas for the Business Office.

After serving with us for a year as Interim Associate Pastor for Mission and Social Justice and doing a stellar job, Emily Brewer left us in December for her new position, and we look forward to having Ashley Bair, our new Associate Pastor, with us when she starts on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

**FPC Documentation -**

This year, we have continued to document and update and create HR and Staff policies and procedures.

We have also overseen the performance reviews that were completed in the summer, that include goals for each person in their position.

**Finances -**

In 2023, due to the ending of the PPP loans and the lost revenue from the church space rental from the Actors' and Writers' strikes, we had a slight overage in the Personnel budget. In December we gained Session's approval to provide a 2.5% cost of living increase, plus a Christmas bonus to all employees.

**For 2024**

The Personnel Committee, as a Committee of Session, will continue to serve the Session and staff of our wonderful church. As ever, upon their election, new members will be joining the Committee and recognizing a new Chairperson.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine S. Flouton  
Chair, Personnel Committee

## **BUSINESS OFFICE**

After nearly nine years of working in the Business Office, I am excited and grateful for the opportunity to take on the role of Director of Finance and Administration. I look forward to reflecting on and continuing the important work this office does in partnership with the staff, the Session, the Board of Trustees, the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurers, and the various committees including Joint Finance, Personnel, Buildings and Grounds, Investment, Insurance, and the Nursery School Committee.

From a financial standpoint, 2023 is projected to end with a small deficit. Non-pledge income is behind budget for the year by approximately \$18,000. External revenue was at budget for the year, but we did not have the surplus on this line as in year's past due to strikes. In addition, we had several expense line items with larger one-off expenses during 2023.

The 2023 stewardship drive amounted to approximately \$972,000, which surpassed the goal of \$950,000. It should be noted that while 2023 projections include the full stewardship drive and an uncollectible allowance of 2.5%, we still have open pledge balances. Without the cushion of an external revenue surplus this year, it is important to meet these balances to keep the deficit where it stands drafted for 2023. Thank you to everyone for their support in these collection efforts and generosity throughout the year.

This was the sixth year in a row that the financial audit was completed with no adjustments. Our auditors report that the books are kept in excellent condition and internal controls are strong.

As you will read, we had a few significant projects around the building this year, including construction on the rear façade, columbarium expansion Phase I, and Local Law 97 studies to examine our building emissions. It is exciting to think about the work ahead in collaboration with the Buildings & Grounds committee to improve the building's energy efficiency measures. Also in the process is a cloud migration project to phase out the use of the Church's physical servers.

### **Looking ahead:**

In 2024, we plan to hire a Finance and Operations Associate for the Business Office. This new role will provide essential support to ensure smooth daily operations for both facilities and financial functions. Additionally, the associate will undertake and work with staff on exciting new projects, including long-term facilities planning and operational improvements.

In closing, a special thank you to Joe Diaz and the entire facilities staff for their never-ending work in keeping our buildings and grounds clean and safe. I am ever grateful to be a part of this community and provide support to the staff, Session, Trustees, committees, and congregation.

### **Respectfully Submitted,**

Babs Tennent Smith  
Director of Finance and Administration

**THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS - CHURCH**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	
	<i><b>DRAFT</b></i>		
	<b>APPROVED</b>	<b>CURRENT</b>	<b>APPROVED</b>
	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>DECEMBER 31</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>			
<b>Giving: Unrestricted Operating Fund</b>			
Stewardship Pledge Income	950,000	972,754	960,000
Non-Pledge Income	210,000	186,815	205,000
Loose Cash Offerings	-	3,786	3,000
Other Giving	10,000	11,719	10,000
<b>Total Giving</b>	<b>1,170,000</b>	<b>1,175,074</b>	<b>1,178,000</b>
<b>Earned Revenue</b>			
Tartan: Christmas, Yard Sale, & Auc	40,000	30,605	20,000
Space Use: Mission	35,000	28,658	35,000
Space Use: External	100,000	116,910	110,000
Space Use: Education	1,001,449	1,013,863	1,027,094
Other Misc. Income	11,000	23,971	10,000
<b>Total Earned Revenue</b>	<b>1,187,449</b>	<b>1,214,007</b>	<b>1,202,094</b>
<b>Operating Endowment Draw - 4.25%</b>	<b>776,389</b>	<b>776,389</b>	<b>785,079</b>
<b>Operating - Mission &amp; Outreach Draw</b>	<b>74,787</b>	<b>17,386</b>	<b>74,226</b>
<b>Benevolence &amp; Music Endowment Draw</b>	<b>314,571</b>	<b>302,006</b>	<b>315,117</b>
<b>Thoren Building Fund Endowment Draw and reserve offset</b>	<b>211,897</b>	<b>165,884</b>	<b>208,005</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b><u>3,735,093</u></b>	<b><u>3,650,746</u></b>	<b><u>3,762,521</u></b>

**THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS - CHURCH**

	2023		2024			
	<u>DRAFT</u>		APPROVED	APPROVED		
	APPROVED	CURRENT				
<b><u>EXPENSE</u></b>						
<b>Pastoral &amp; Congregational Care</b>						
Pastoral Salaries, Benefits & Expenses	836,490	804,450	861,312			
<i>Lenox Fund</i>	42,713	31,763	43,119			
<i>Deacon's Expense</i>	23,730	22,214	23,928			
Mission review/Pastoral nominating	10,000	7,273	3,000			
Session Expense	4,000	5,002	4,500			
<b>Total Pastoral &amp; Congregational Care</b>	<b>916,933</b>	<b>870,702</b>	<b>935,859</b>			
<b>Worship</b>						
Music Program						
Personnel	311,526	315,776	322,081			
Supplies & Maintenance	17,250	19,627	20,250			
<i>Sarah Marquis Expenses</i>	90,461	90,461	90,521			
<i>West &amp; King Expenses</i>	6,491	4,982	6,591			
Total Music	<b>425,728</b>	<b>430,846</b>	<b>439,443</b>			
Pulpit Supply/Guest Preaching	6,000	5,453	6,000			
Communion Supplies	600	214	600			
Sanctuary Flowers	3,000	5,451	3,000			
Worship Supplies	1,000	894	1,000			
Lent & Holy Week Expense	5,000	5,499	5,000			
Tuesday Worship Expense	5,000	-	-			
<b>Total Worship</b>	<b>446,328</b>	<b>448,357</b>	<b>455,043</b>			
<b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>						
Salaries & Benefits	132,217	101,080	138,133			
Adult Education Expenses	2,800	6,636	2,800			
Children & Families Ministry	30,000	23,214	27,000			
Youth Ministry	2,000	2,214	3,000			
<b>Total Teaching &amp; Learning</b>	<b>167,017</b>	<b>133,144</b>	<b>170,933</b>			
<b>Outreach &amp; Service</b>						
<i>Outreach &amp; Service Benevolences</i>	118,046	119,500	118,068			
Outreach & Service Expense	40,000	36,567	40,000			
<i>Operating - Mission &amp; Outreach</i>	74,787	17,386	74,226			
<i>Emmanuel Presbyterian</i>	26,062	26,062	25,777			
<b>Total Outreach &amp; Service</b>	<b>258,895</b>	<b>199,515</b>	<b>258,071</b>			

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS - CHURCH

	2023		2024
	APPROVED BUDGET	<u>DRAFT</u> CURRENT DECEMBER 31	APPROVED BUDGET
<b>Discipleship &amp; Community</b>			
Hospitality	12,000	25,946	15,000
Membership Expense	3,500	9,214	5,000
Stewardship Expense	4,000	1,861	2,000
Garden	2,000	250	-
Tartan Fair expenses	40,000	30,605	20,000
<i>Presbyterian Women</i>	7,068	7,024	7,112
<b>Total Discipleship &amp; Community</b>	<b>68,568</b>	<b>74,900</b>	<b>49,112</b>
<b>Facilities, Buildings &amp; Grounds</b>			
Facilities Salaries & Benefits	560,000	615,850	540,574
<i>Buildings &amp; Grounds Expenses</i>	40,000	32,307	40,000
<i>Total Maintenance &amp; Repairs</i>	125,000	125,526	125,000
Utilitites	130,000	121,767	130,000
<b>Total Facilities, Buildings &amp; Grounds</b>	<b>855,000</b>	<b>895,450</b>	<b>835,574</b>
<b>Administration &amp; Overarching Ministry</b>			
Admin Salaries & Benefits	360,000	395,076	361,103
Communications	186,275	186,615	197,208
Staff development	7,500	6,642	10,000
Supplies, Postage, Etc.	110,700	129,509	111,000
Professional Fees	99,000	120,193	112,250
Insurance	140,000	147,028	167,862
Presbytery Per Capita Expense	35,730	35,573	31,500
Personnel Committee and other	3,000	-	-
Uncollectible pledges (3.5%)	33,250	24,300	24,000
<b>Total Administration &amp; Overarching Ministry</b>	<b>975,455</b>	<b>1,044,936</b>	<b>1,014,923</b>
<i>Annual capital expenditures</i>	46,897	8,050	43,006
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>3,735,093</b>	<b>3,675,054</b>	<b>3,762,521</b>
<b>Surplus (Deficit) from Operations</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(24,308)</b>	<b>-</b>

## JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Joint Finance Committee is responsible for preparing the Church's annual budget for approval by the session, and for reviewing actual results during the fiscal year.

### 2023 Forecasted Actual Year End

Stewardship pledge income for the year is \$972,754, which represents the total 2023 Stewardship drive. Non-pledge income was below budget by approximately \$18,185 for the year. All other revenue line items were in line with budgeted amounts. It should be noted that while external was slightly over budget for the year, movie and television filming activity at the Church was brought to a standstill early on in March of 2023 due to the Hollywood strikes. While the Church has seen great success on this line in past years, this year was a good example of why external revenue should be conservatively budgeted for in future years. Anticipated total revenue is \$3,650,746. On the expense side, 2023 held several staffing transitions across different departments, which led to overages on several line items. These overages were largely offset by savings on other personnel lines due to the timing of positions being filled. Total anticipated expenses for the year are \$3,675,054. The 2023 annual fiscal year is projected to have a small deficit of \$24,308.

### 2024 Budget

First Presbyterian Church has three revenue streams: (1) giving (contributions), at 31.3% of total revenues that are generally unrestricted from individuals; (2) earned revenue at 31.9%, generated primarily from use of the church's space and facilities; and (3) endowment earnings, some restricted as to the purpose for which they can be spent (the benevolence endowment income), and some unrestricted (the operating endowment income). Throughout the financial report, restricted revenues and the expenses that they cover are shown in *italics*. The budget adopted by the session last month includes a conservative increase for 2024 giving revenue of \$8,000 to \$1,178,000; earned revenue of \$1,202,094; operating endowment earnings (at 4¼% of endowment balances) of \$785,079; restricted revenue to be released for Benevolence & Music endowment of \$315,117; Thoren Building Fund Endowment Draw of \$208,006 (\$165,000 for operating and \$43,005 for capital.); and the Mission & Outreach endowment draw of \$74,226.

Expenses are shown organized by the appropriate ministry; total expenses are budgeted at \$3,762,521. Personnel expenses include 2.5% raises for all staff.

The overall budget represents an increase of 1% over last year's budget. This will be sustained in 2024 by a small overall increase in the operating endowment draw (still 4.25% annually), and conservative increases in both giving and earned revenue.

Respectfully submitted, Donald Dillport, Joint Finance Committee Chair.

Committee Members: Alyssa Browne, Amy Cooper, Martha Ferry, Anne Gray, Roger Leaf, David MacDougal.

Ex-Officio: Christine Flouton, Babs Tennent Smith, Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**NECROLOGY 2023**

Sally Anderson  
Marlene E. Payton  
William “Bill” Sadler  
Neil Chrisman  
Theda Reid  
Rosie James  
Kay Rogers  
Edward Rogers  
Constance Carr Shepherd  
Frank Lloyd Dent  
David Jeffrey

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

*(Revelation 14:13)*

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.

Then in Thy mercy grant us a safe lodging though Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**MEMBERSHIP  
STATISTICAL REPORT**

January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

**MEMBERSHIP**

Last Year (2022) .....	695
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**ADDITIONS**

Profession, Reaffirmation, Restored .....	21
Certificate .....	6
TOTAL ADDITIONS .....	27

**LOSSES**

Transferred to other churches .....	5
Deceased .....	10
Removed .....	4
TOTAL LOSSES .....	19

NET GAINS .....	8
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NEW TOTAL MEMBERSHIP .....	703
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**OTHER STATISTICS**

Elders .....	16	Weekday Nursery School	
Deacons .....	17	Pupils .....	93
Trustees .....	9	Teachers .....	18
Baptisms		Administrative Team .....	4
Child .....	12	Specialists .....	5
Adult .....	1		

Confirmands .....	3	P.S. 226M36
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Church School	Pupils .....	36	
Pupils .....	33	Teachers .....	9
Teachers &		Speech & Language .....	2
Substitutes .....	8	OT Therapists .....	2
		Nurse .....	1
		Physical Therapist .....	1
		School Aide .....	1
		Site Coordinator .....	1

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The Nominating Committee requested nominations from the congregation in September and October, and met in person and via zoom during October, November, and December to nominate the following slate:

Session:

Susan Jackson - 3 yr term  
Sean Sakamoto - 3 yr term  
Sorrel Ann Aulberger - 3 yr term  
Martha Ferry - 3 yr term  
Eric Riedel - 3 yr term  
Nate Asker - 3 yr term  
Barbara Sherman - 2 yr term  
Gregoire Vabre - 1 yr term  
Nadine Stewart - 1 yr term

The Board of Deacons:

Neil Williamson - Deacon - 3 year term  
Leslie Shipp - Deacon - 3 year term  
Nancy Hicks - Deacon - 3 year term  
Mary Virginia Ireland - Deacon - 3 year term  
Aurora Jones - Deacon - 3 year term  
Hanson Wetzel - Deacon - 3 year term

The Board of Trustees:

Brett Cochran - Trustees - 3 yr term  
Rod Thompson - Trustees - 3 yr term  
Caterina Musatti - Trustees - 3 yr term

Nominating Committee 2024

Emily Dawson - Nominating - 1 year term  
Dan Lyng - Nominating - 1 year term  
Susan Korchak - Nominating - 1 year term  
Daniel Duque - Nominating - 1 year term  
Irenka Jakubiak - Nominating - 1 year term  
Duane Wall - ALTERNATE NOMINATING - 1 year term  
Parul Parma - ALTERNATE NOMINATING - 1 year term

Respectfully Submitted,

Nominating Committee Co-Chairs, 2023, Elder Joan Ryan and Elder Kathie Young,

Nominating Committee Members:

Steve White, Jennifer Webb, Pat Nunez, Amy Frisch, Mark Fontaine, Charles Anderson  
Diana Pardue - Trustees Representative. John Houser - Deacon Representative

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE BIOGRAPHIES

### FOR ELECTION TO THE SESSION Class of 2027

**Sorrel Ann Alburger** – Sorrel has been a member of First Church since 2001. She is an Elder and has been active on the World Mission group, Church & Society, and Communications committees, and LGBTQ advocacy groups. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon and the University of Pennsylvania, she was formerly Vice President of Creative Services for an investment advisory firm. Sorrel currently serves as consultant to non-profit organizations, including technical coordinator for PC(USA) Cuba Partners Network.

**Nate Asker** – Nate lives in Greenwich Village with his wife and three kids. He and his family joined First Church in 2022. Each of his children attended the wonderful nursery school, for which he is very grateful. He works as a lawyer, advising companies on antitrust aspects of mergers. He is originally from Houston.

**Martha Ferry** – Martha has been a member of First Pres for more than 25 years and during that time has served as a Trustee and on the Session. She is currently active on the Elder Care and Art at First committees, but what she most enjoys is teaching the first to sixth graders on Sunday mornings, thereby getting to know a group of children and parents who are new to her. Martha is retired from a career that included equal parts commercial banking and nonprofit management. Her current interests include museum and performing arts attendance, travel, reading, and piano practice.

**Susan Jackson** – A writer and editor; joined First Church in 2000. She has served as an elder (in 2005-2009; 2014-15); a committee chair or co-chair (Family Ministries, Worship, Membership-fellowship); committee member (all of the above, plus Nominating, Personnel, Nursery School task force, Volunteer Day); and working group member (Earth Care, 2018-present; Facing Racism/FPC History group, 2020-22); as well as a longtime Tartan Fair volunteer. She is the editorial director at the Juilliard School and she and her husband live in Greenwich Village.

**Eric Riedel** – Eric and his family have been members of First Church since moving to New York City in 2017, after transferring from Calvary Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. He and his wife, Beth, are college sweethearts and have two children, Preston (7) and Parker (4). Preston graduated from First Presbyterian Church Nursery School in 2021 and Parker is currently attending. After graduating from Cornell University, Eric served as an officer in the Navy where he reached the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Eric is now a lawyer specializing in corporate governance and shareholder rights litigation. He is an avid sports fan and especially enjoys basketball, golf, and Buffalo Bills football.

**Sean Sakamoto** – Joined First Church in 2011 by transfer from the First Presbyterian Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan where he had been a member since he was born. He volunteered for a short time on the Communications Committee at First Church and is currently a member of the LGBTQ group. Professionally, Sean has had a varied career, from teaching English in Japan to producing

documentaries, including the NAACP Image Award nominated "Roots: A History Revealed," — about the transatlantic slave trade — for the History Channel. For the past seven years, Sean has worked as a content strategist for BlackRock and writes screenplays on the side. He wrote and directed "The Reception," a short film starring Ricard Kind. Sean bikes to church from his home on the Lower East Side where he lives with his wife, Noriko, who is an absolute peach, and his son, Kazu, whom he adores.

**Barbara Sherman** — Founder and co-chair of Art at First, she started attending First Church in 1986 and joined in 1988. She has served as an Elder, Trustee, (as Buildings and Grounds Chair) and Deacon, and co-chaired the restoration of the South Wing in the 1990's. She is an artist, teacher and writer with a weekly blog titled "Seeking the Sublime in the Everyday."

**Nadine Stewart** — Nadine joined First Church in October 2001 by Reaffirmation of Faith. She is a native of Pennsylvania and has had careers as a journalist and professor at Montclair State University. She now coordinates the cross bearers for worship. She lives in Chelsea with her husband, David Zydallis.

**Gregoire Vabre** — A member at First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York for a number of years and served on deacons for two. He is currently part of the LGBTQ & Friends group, helping to support the work of this church in our city and works in home renovations. Becoming a member and participating in the work of this church has brought new meaning to service. He is grateful for our church.

#### FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Class of 2027

**Brett Cochrane** — Brett (and his family - wife Kristen and daughter Caroline) joined First Presbyterian Church 18 months ago, having moved from Chicago for Caroline to attend the School of American Ballet. They have been active in a variety of activities and groups at First, including the Tartan Fair, Yard Sale, LGBT+ and youth groups. In addition to practicing architecture, Brett has been active in music, the arts, and several not-for-profit boards.

**Caterina Musatti** — I have joined the amazing FPNY community in the fall of 2021. I am originally an Italian Waldesian and I was so thrilled to find a new spiritual home in NYC. I am a member of the Presbyterian Women group and I enjoy volunteering at church events every time I can. Professionally, I hold a Ph.D. in Economics and I divide my time between NYU and Columbia University where I teach college and Masters' students.

**Rod Thompson** — Joined First Presbyterian Church in 1995 and has served as Deacon and Elder. In addition to being involved in various restoration projects, he's a contractor and member of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. He restores antique furniture with his business, Santo Spirito Restoration, based in Brooklyn.

## FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DEACONS

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Class of 2027

**Nancy Hicks** – I've been primarily in banking since moving to New York in 1979. I'm originally from Michigan. I opened my own consulting business after leaving banking and became member of FPC in 2012. I was honored to serve on the Board of Deacons from 2014-2016 and was asked to become Treasurer two of the three years. I've enjoyed being a Deacon very much. I've also Ushered, participated in Communion, worked on the men's homeless shelter, helped on Tartain Fair and Grants Committee.

**Mary Virginia Ireland** – Mary moved to New York from Tennessee in 2019. She's been an active attendee in the church since, but formally joined in 2023. She has grown up in church her entire life as her father is a minister and her mother is hospice chaplain. When she first arrived in New York, she found a home at First Church and appreciated the warm and welcoming congregation and the service-oriented ministries. She's a member of the Young Adults group as well as the Refugees and Immigration Action Group. She currently works in the field of financial technology and has a background in higher education.

**Aurora Jones** – Joined First Presbyterian Church in December 1997. Aurora used to sit on Deacons and is thrilled to be elected to the Board of Deacons. We are grateful for the time and dedication she has put at First Church.

**Leslie Shipp** – Joined First Church in October 2020. Leslie has been a cross bearer, usher, lay reader, and has participated in several of our programs, including Earth Care, Qigong, and Tartan Fair. We are excited for her to join the Deacons and look forward to what other bright ideas she has to offer.

**Neil Williamson** – I joined First Presbyterian Church in November 2022. I am a graduate of Boston University (B.A. Philosophy) and Union Theological Seminary (M.Div. Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics). Ordained in the United Methodist Church. I have had a long-time commitment to advocating for social justice, beginning in Middle School. I am retired from the US Dept. of HUD. Presently I am active in the LGBTQ+ Allies action group, Elder Care, Art at First, Bible Study Group and volunteered for the Tartan Fair. I grew up in the Boston Area and now make my home in the Village.

**Hansen Wetsel** – Hansen is thrilled and honored to have been nominated for the role of Deacon at First Presbyterian Church! He officially became a member of the congregation on January 29th, 2023 after regularly attending services for a little over a year. In his free time, Hansen enjoys reading, running with the South Brooklyn Running Club, and playing tennis. He currently works as a data analyst at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

## FOR ELECTION TO THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2024

**Emily Dawson** – Emily Dawson has attended First Church since 2016 and a member since 2020. She recently served on the board of Deacons and currently heads up the Young Adult group. She regularly volunteers with the events at First Church, including the Yard Sale, Tartan Fair, and movie nights. Emily works for a technology company, Shopify, and is a resident of the Upper West Side.

**Daniel Duque** – I became a member of First Presbyterian Church in 2017. Since then, I organize a Conversational Spanish Group that meets once a week. At the present time I am a Deacon and a member of the group in touch with the Presbyterian Church in Taguasco, Cuba.

**Irenka Jakubiak** – Member of FPC since 2014. Committees involved include; Mission Review, Art At First, Tartan Fair. I served on Personnel and Session (rolling off both in 2024) and Deacon. Currently, I have a fashion consulting business: IRJ Creative. I'm also a performing artist (actor/singer).

**Susan Korchak** – Susan has been a member of First Church since 2000. She has been an Elder and has served as a member or chair of several committees and work groups. Susan is a writer.

**Daniel Lyng** – Daniel joined FPC in 2022. He is a member of the LGBTQ+/Allies action group and is excited to deepen his involvement with the church. Daniel lives in New Jersey with his wife, Martha. He is a PhD candidate at Princeton University and a data scientist at the World Bank.

## ALTERNATES

**Parul Parmar** – My family and I have been active in the life of First Pres since becoming members in 2014, I am currently a Deacon, usher, and greeter. We are active church goers and faithful participants in youth and family ministries programs. I have been employed by the Church Pension Fund (Episcopal) for over 25 years.

**Duane Wall** – Duane became part of the congregation of the Church in 1965. He has been a Trustee, a member of Session and Personnel Committee, and the Chair for the last three years of the Nursery School Committee. A lawyer, although he recently retired from active practice at the international law with which he became associated in 1968. He and his wife, Myrle, live in the Village.

MEMBERS OF THE 2023 NOMINATING COMMITTEE  
Kathie Young & Joan Ryan, Chair

## INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

The Investment Committee of the Board of Trustees is charged with overseeing the management of the Church's Operating, Benevolence, Building and Mission Endowments, and the Nursery School's investments. Since September 2019, the Committee has been advised by the SPG Fiduciary Partners unit of Raymond James, a group specializing in investments of not-for-profit organizations.

In 2023, the Investment Committee made several changes to the investment portfolio. We increased our investment in climate-friendly investments, and gradually decreased our over-exposure to equities vs. fixed income, and slightly increased duration over the course of the year. In addition, in December the Trustees approved the recommendation of both the Investment and Nursery School Committees to restructure the funds invested by the Investment Committee on behalf of the Nursery School.

In contrast to 2022, when the US equity and fixed income markets simultaneously logged double-digit declines for the first time in nearly 100 years, 2023 saw a sharp drop in inflation, an easing of supply chain issues, robust job growth and remarkably strong economic activity despite unsettling global unrest. Markets rebounded sharply from the lows of October 2022, and the Church's investments benefitted from these gains.

**Portfolio Performance.** In 2023, the endowment logged a gain of 15.24% for the full year, outperforming its Broad Market Benchmark by 21 basis points. Equities gained 21.33% vs. the MSCI All World benchmark return of 21.58%, while fixed income gained 5.35% vs. 5.53% for the Barclays Aggregate Bond Index. The outperformance for the portfolio vs. the Broad Market Benchmark was attributable to an overweight of equities throughout the year.

The strongest performer for the year was the iShares Paris-Aligned Climate ETF, which was added to the portfolio in mid-2022. It gained 29.36% in 2023, outperforming the S&P 500 index by a remarkable 307 basis points. The best performing fixed income investment was the iShares US Green Bond Fund ETF, which was also added in 2022. It gained 6.32% in 2023 vs. 5.53% for the Barclays Aggregate Index - an outperformance of 79 basis points. Early in the year, the Committee increased the portfolio's exposure to both the Paris-Aligned Fund, from 4.6% in January to 11.0% at year-end, and the Green Bond Fund, from 11.2% in January to 20.8% at year-end.

We began the year with an asset allocation of 64% equities, 33% fixed income and 2% cash vs. an endowment target of 60% equities and 49% fixed income. The Committee rebalanced three times during the year in response to market performance, and ended the year at 63% equities, 36% fixed income and 1% cash.

**Endowment Draw.** The Trustees and the Session have established a target draw of 4.25% of the quarterly average fund balance over the last five years for each of the Church's Endowments. The draw in 2023 from the Operating Endowment was \$776,389, while the Benevolence and Building Endowment draws were \$319,392 and 165,884, respectively.

**Endowment Funds.** Thanks to prudent stewardship and the generosity of many contributors over its long history, the Church is blessed with an endowment to support its operations and benevolences, and to help maintain its 117-year-old sanctuary and other buildings. The endowment reached an all-time high of over \$35.1 million at the end of 2021 before the setbacks of 2022, but regained \$5.2 million in 2023, even after endowment draws of \$1.1 million in during the year.

**Year End Portfolio Values After Annual Portfolio Draws**  
*Amounts in millions*

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Operating	\$ 20.8	\$ 21.8	\$ 20.8	\$ 17.1	\$ 19.1
Benevolence	7.3	8.0	8.6	6.9	9.6
Building	<u>5.0</u>	<u>5.3</u>	<u>5.7</u>	<u>4.4</u>	<u>4.9</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 33.1</b>	<b>\$ 35.1</b>	<b>\$ 35.1</b>	<b>\$ 28.4</b>	<b>\$ 33.6</b>
Nursery School	\$ 2.0	\$ 1.4	\$ 1.8	\$ 2.0	\$ 2.4

I would like to thank the members of the Investment Committee for their commitment and dedication, and collectively we would like to thank the Church's finance staff for all their excellent work this year, and SPG for their advice, counsel, and professionalism.

Respectfully submitted,

Investment Committee  
Roger Leaf, Chair  
Amy Cooper, Miyoung Lee, Nicky Moody Ordway

## NURSERY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Nursery School had another successful year that featured: a strong admission season that included a new section; a fruitful ex-mission process during which all families were offered a space in their school of first choice; and good financial health resulting from strong enrollment and the success of the annual fund and the annual auction.

Proceeds from the auction benefited the School's scholarship fund but also raised monies for expanded teacher development. In particular, a group of teachers was able to participate in an immersive week-long international study group in Italy devoted to the Reggio Emilia approach to child education and development.

As a testament to the exemplary teaching and curriculum of the School, it was able to partner this year with Columbia University Teachers College by hosting student teachers to observe and learn from the classroom performance of the School's teachers and staff.

The School continued to expand its staff, including adding teachers and specialists, which notably brought new life to the School's signature program, Project A.P.P.L.E. (an acronym for a place for planting, learning and eating), by adding a nutrition and horticulture teaching specialist.

The Planning Committee referred to in last year's Annual Report is continuing its work and expects to complete this year its report on how the School can best prepare to face the challenges it will encounter during the next few years.

Nursery School Committee Members: Laura Asker; John Blondell; Steve Castar; Keisha Flint; Miyoung Lee; Megan Traphagen; Kyongsoo Noh; Lauren Park; Duane Wall; and Carolyn Weist.

Ex-Officio Members: Barbara Davis, Executive Minister of the Church, and Halima Fuller, Executive Director of the School

Keisha Flint will succeed me as Chair of the Committee after the Congregational meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Duane Wall, Chair

## A TARTAN CHRISTMAS FAIR and YARD SALE

A Tartan Christmas and Yard Sale again partnered with the Bank Street Head Start School on East Fifth Street. Proceeds from both the yard sale and the fair will be used by Bank Street Head Start, to help support their early childhood education for needy families here in the East Village. In exchange, the Bank Street family helped support the fair with volunteers, interviews, and presence at a mission table.

The Yard Sale once again was foiled by rain, and after being rained out September 23<sup>rd</sup>, our rain date of October 7<sup>th</sup>, was a must execute, rain or shine. And YES, it rained again so the entire sale was held inside, in the South Wing. Not the easiest of scenarios, but we made the best of it. All unsold items we pay forward by donating to the Salvation Army, Goodwill, and this year we added Spanish Presbyterian Church to the list.

Fall Family Craft Day on October 29<sup>th</sup> in the Great Hall, always a favorite, had adults and children alike joining us from all aspects of our church life, family ministries, the nursery school, as well as families from the Bank Street community. Family Craft Day provided some of the only new handmade ornaments that we offered in December.

A Tartan Christmas Fair, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> was once again a full fair, a first since pre-pandemic days. Christmas Greenery and Plants, Cafe, Crafts, Jewelry, Outside Vendors, Photo with Santa, Friday night Reception, and our Silent Auction, were all back. We continued with red canopy tents and greenery being sold outside, a nice attraction for street passer-bys. And Photo with Santa was by appointment. Kiosks in the lobby continued up until Christmas Eve.

Two new auction items supported Bank Street in ways that went beyond past years, “Bootember”, boots and socks for all 65 kids, and “Teacher Stay Well Boxes” for 20 staff members. On December 20<sup>th</sup> we delivered to the school 65 individual gift bags with boots, socks and mittens for each child, along with 20 stay well boxes for teachers and staff. The school also asked for fifteen \$100 gift cards from Target for their immigrant families, which we were happy to facilitate, with those dollars coming directly from fair proceeds. Needless to say, the school was delighted. Check out the photos on Facebook.

We are looking forward to 2024, with a bit less rain in September.

### Committee Members:

Ellie Garlow, Jane Ritter, Joan Ryan, and Kathie Young, Co-Chairs  
Martha Ferry, Jackie Fike, Jean Galle, Aretie Haralabatos, Marian Hewitt, Hope Hudson, Beth Iskander, Michael Judkiewicz, Irenka Jakubiak David Kipin, Sarah Leonard, Chandra Metzler, David MacDougall, Sam Ogundare, Marjorie Penrod, Erin Noll, Doug Sheppard, Mary Smith, Ann Timmons. And the weekly yard sale sorter and pricers, crafters, and the throngs of volunteers who worked a shift or more at the fair and yard sale.

Respectfully Submitted, Kathie Young, Co-Chair A Tartan Christmas Fair.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION GROUPS**

As we moved into the second year of the Social Justice Action Groups, we continued to build community, respond to need and pursue our unique way of manifesting the social justice mission of First Presbyterian Church. During 2023, we were blessed to have the leadership and guidance of Rev. Emily Brewer as our Interim Associate Pastor for Social Justice and Mission.

Our Social Justice Action Groups are:

- Earth Care - Chairs Kathie Young & Buffy Barton
- Facing Racism - Chair Suzanne Mecs
- LGBTQ - Chair Jeff Nichols
- Presbyterian Women - Chair Lara Mullarky
- Refugees and Immigration - Chair Charlotte Walker Said

The Social Justice Action Groups have been creative and committed in their endeavors. In addition to the ongoing activities such as Earth Care's gardening and tree-watering, LGBTQ's Pride water tables and brunches, Presbyterian Women's Bible studies, Refugees and Immigration's coat drive, and Facing Racism's educational programs and history research, this year brought exciting new opportunities including increased support of the Hetrick Martin Institute, an outstanding panel presentation on Climate Change with internationally renowned speakers, Facing Racism's Creatives Create series, and the serious exploration of ways to support immigrants and asylees now living in NYC. Each group has provided opportunities for learning, engagement, advocacy, and fun! I encourage you to read the following individual reports to hear much more about what these groups have done this year.

Each of the Social Justice Action Group members and especially their chairs are to be commended for their time and commitment. There are the monthly meetings as well as the many activities and projects which require much collaboration and hard work. The groups have addressed needs, improved lives, enlightened and educated participants, and enriched our church and community. Many thanks to these dedicated individuals!

As we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves, we are called to pursue and advance social justice. It cannot be done alone nor is it a singular endeavor. Our Social Justice Action Groups provide a way to learn, participate, and contribute, perhaps resulting in more than we ask for or imagine! Please read the reports of each group, reach out to those of us already involved, and consider where you are called to be!

Social Justice Committee Chair Sally Collins

## FACING RACISM ACTION GROUP

The Facing Racism Action Group aims to listen, educate ourselves, raise awareness where we can, and work against racism to help build the Beloved Community.

The group's major project in 2023 was a collaboration with Art@First on *Creatives Create! Bending the Arc Toward Justice*. Building on reactions to the 2022 [\*Old First and Slavery\*](#) report, we invited members of the congregation to share their experiences on racism and justice through creative acts in any medium. The resulting exhibition of nineteen visual art pieces was hung in the Great Hall from May 14 to June 19th. The project also included two performance dates that featured personal narratives, song, poetry, book excerpts, and a dramatic reading. In total there were performances from twenty-six participants and ninety audience members.

The Action Group held regular meetings via Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month.

- Members shared resources of current events and projects happening within New York City and the greater Presbyterian Church; some book and pod-cast recommendations have been posted to the History Kiosk which is in the atrium leading to the Sanctuary's south aisle.
- Two members of Session – Joan Ryan and Keisha Flint – volunteered to begin working with the Action Committee to build up First Churches antiracist actions as a follow on to the *Old First and Slavery Report*.
- The Committee supported dissemination of information to encourage congregational participation in the *One Great Hour of Sharing Offering* to support initiative that build economic and social resilience nationally and within the NYC Presbytery.
- The Action Group coordinated a summer reading with two discussion groups around the book *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America*, by Clint Smith. Extra copies of the book were added to the Church library.
- In July, a group visit the Whitney Museum to see the Jaune Quick to See Smith's retrospective which included powerful pieces on Native American experiences and historical treatment.
- In the fall, we served lunch at the Church of Gethsemane, a congregation whose ministry supports current or formerly incarcerated individuals and their friends and family. The action group hopes to support meals there every two months on Sundays in 2024.
- We held a November Sunday morning Bible Study with PCUSA resources to explore passages of the Book of Confessions with the antiracism focus for Matthew 25 churches.

**Members and Project Participants 2023:** Ann Timmons, Barbara HerMor, Barbara Sherman, Betty Jones, Bonnie Woit, Brian Fletcher, Carole Colone, Cody Bennet, David MacDougall, David Pultz, David Richardson, Duane Wall, Ed Groder, Eileen Choi, Elizaeth "Buffy" Barton, Emily Brewer, Esther Gowrie, Faye Timmer, Genia Maciel, I.B. Ekure, Irene Gilman, Irenka Jakubiak, James Hollander, Jeff Nichols, Jenny Bennett, Joan Ryan, Kathie Young, Kathryn Ketcham, Keisha Crossbourne Flint, Leonardo Maciel, Leslie Shipp, LouAnne Gilleland, Madeleine Sinor, Martha Ferry, Mary O'Hara Smith, Meg Harper, Michael Clay, Nadya Robinson, Neil Williamson, Ryan Bauer Walsh, Sally Collins, Sam Ogandare, Sorrel Ann Alburger, Soyini Crenshaw, Steven White, Susan Jackson, Zoe Chambers-Daniel. **Submitted by** Suzanne Mecs, chair

## EARTH CARE ACTION GROUP

We are a PCUSA Earth Care Certified Congregation, and The Earth Care Action Group had a very busy 2023, starting with our PCUSA Earth Care Congregation recertification application, and acceptance. Our very popular weekly Down to Earth articles that run in First Matters and now the FPCNS newsletter, continued through all of 2023. These are 75 word, earth friendly lifestyle tips, lead by the editorial team of Susan Jackson, and Genia Naro-Maciel. Archives of these articles are also housed on the church website.

Our Five Part Seminar Series continued in January, highlighting the church's current and future plans. In February, the "Divest First Church" report written by Nicky Ordway, Lisa Caswell, and Bradley McCormick, was presented with Roger Leaf discussing the church's divesting from fossil fuels. The series culminated with Bill McKibben preaching on April 16<sup>th</sup>, followed by a four member panel discussion live streamed from our sanctuary, *Saving the Planet - An Ethical Imperative*. In addition to Bill, panelists included Erik Bottcher, our New York City Council Representative, Rev. Lindley DeGarmo, Vice Chair of the Board of Pensions & Investments PCUSA; & Rev. Gregory Simpson, Co-Founder Hudson Valley Environmental Justice Coalition.

For Earth Week we continued our Earth Day Sunday Celebration, with our annual neighborhood clean-up. Our territory expanded to run between 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. and University, from 14<sup>th</sup> Street to all of Washington Sq Park, which brought out members and neighbors alike. We met on the north lawn, were assigned an area to "clean up", returned the trash to our recycling, composting, and trash bins, and enjoyed some outdoor fellowship. The children had a nature scavenger hunt in our garden and members were invited to take a 30-day Earth Day pledge.

Earth Care partnered with B&G, and our church gardener Susan Sipos, supporting our grounds with a garden volunteer group, and a street tree watering group. Garden volunteers met once a month on average, and the street tree watering happened weekly throughout the summer. A huge thank you to Laura Bowden, who was our lead volunteer gardener, Joan Reutershan who spearheaded the street tree watering crew and Buffy Barton who coordinated the volunteer effort for both groups. The big news is the addition of two new trees along Fifth Ave., and the 11 beautiful new tree guards that were installed. The garden group was able to add mulch to the beds, and in April 2024 are planning a congregational tree bed planting event...stay tuned!

In September we joined Green Faith and sponsored congregational participation in the Climate March to End Fossil Fuels. After enjoying lunch at the "Welcome Back" celebration, a group of 14 congregants met up with Green Faith at Fifth and 53<sup>rd</sup>, marching to the United Nations.

The 2023/24 Seminar Series began again in October with an E-Waste disposal event & in Nov. a viewing of the PEC *Travel Choices & Our Future: A Carbon Footprint Transportation Webinar*. 2024 seminars include: 1/21 - *The Climate Reality Project: Savings, Health & Comfort: Learn How to Take Advantage of Federal, State, and Utility Incentives*. In February, entomologist and environmentalist, Douglas Tallamy, presents *Nature's Best Hope*, and in April, Presbyter Sue Smith will discuss divestment and socially responsible investing for the individual.

Additionally, we purchased recycle, compost & trash cans for each of our 11 public space rooms, partnered with Art at First & FPC youth to create a bottle cap art piece, helped with easter egg dying, and created compost/recycle info boards for the trash receptacles. All in all, a busy year.

Respectfully Submitted, Co-chairs, Buffy Barton and Kathie Young, Members: Lisa Caswell, Christine Flouton, Jean Galle, Susan Jackson, Bradley McCormick, Nicky Moody Ordway, Genia Naro-Maciel, Diana Pardue, Joan Reutershan, Jane Ritter, Barbara Swanson Sherman, Bonnie Woit. Sally Collins Social Justice Chair.

## PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN (PW)

Presbyterian Women continued to meet twice monthly during 2023 - once on the first Tuesday evening (virtually) and once after church on the first Sunday (in person). We have approximately 35 women on our email list, with an average of 8-10 attending each meeting.

Our PW is a uniquely diverse group of women, spanning in age from 20s to 90s, representing a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints. Regular attendees include several women who are not official members of the church and several from other NY congregations. This range of life experiences leads to rich and interesting conversations.

PW spent last spring completing the 2022-2023 national curriculum entitled *Celebrating Sabbath*. This was a year-long look at the concept of “sabbath,” including the relationship between sabbath and topics like justice, community, and hospitality. Tying in with this study, our PW participated in an ecumenical service marking the *World Day of Prayer* in conjunction with International Women’s Day in March. This event, organized by Church of the Village (7<sup>th</sup> Ave & 13<sup>th</sup> St), brought together women from several downtown congregations. Six of our members read or sang at the service, with more attending in person or virtually.

As an additional extension of our look at the sabbath, a group of PW members visited the Georgia O’Keefe exhibit at the MOMA in May. Entitled *To See Takes Time*, the exhibit “offers a rare glimpse of the artist’s working methods and invites us to take time to look.” We considered how time and space affect our ability to notice and wonder, and the important role both might play in our spiritual lives.

After taking a summer break, PW returned this fall and launched into the new curriculum *Sacred Encounters*. Each lesson in this study considers a different encounter in the book of Luke. Many are encounters with Jesus, but some are encounters between two people. The first lesson, for example, focused on Elizabeth and Mary as they were both told they would bear children unexpectedly. This led to a conversation about the relationships between women in the bible, but also in our lives. We hope to extent on this conversation as the curriculum progresses.

Another lesson took a closer look at the encounter between Jesus and the bleeding woman. We discussed “period equity” and “period poverty” – the taboo in our society when talking about menstruation as well as the cost of menstrual products, which are still not covered by programs like WIC or food stamps. In response, we used a portion of our funds to supply \$500 worth of menstrual products to the College Student Pantry in the East Village.

For the last few months our PW has also been building a relationship with First Spanish in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. This small congregation has been providing an array of supports to newly arrived migrants from South America. Several of us attended a Sunday service at First Spanish. Their service is followed by a free lunch for over 100 attendees as well as work in the “Deacon’s Closet,” a space they’ve developed for distributing clothes and other supplies. It was an impressive demonstration of God’s work. Since that visit, we have collected and delivered clothes and toys to the Deacon’s Closet (including some from the Yard Sale and Tartan Fair – thank you!). We also had a virtual conversation with several women from First Spanish, allowing the larger PW to hear

about their work and needs. Finally, we used our remaining yearly funds to purchase products of immediate need to the migrant families. These included strollers, rolling luggage, toiletries, and winter gear – all of which will be distributed through First Spanish. This is a relationship we plan to continue developing in 2024.

PW Committee – Laura Bowden, Betty Jones & Lara Steensland Mullarkey  
Submitted by Lara Steensland Mullarkey (chair)



*World Day of Prayer participants, March, 2023*



*PW visiting the Georgia O'Keeffe exhibit at the MOMA in May, 2023*

## REFUGEES AND IMMIGRATION

In May 2023, the Refugees and Immigration Action group of FPCNYC decided to donate the committee's \$3,000 budget to Church World Service. Our contact at Church World Service (CWS), Nora Salitan, who is the Director of Development, was extremely grateful. CWS informed us that the money would be allocated to the new arrivals in the refugee program.

The Refugees and Immigration Action group also met throughout spring 2023 to discuss the possibility of entering into a contracted "co-sponsorship" agreement with CWS to assist new arrival refugees alongside CWS. After careful consideration, the Refugees and Immigration Action Committee decided that no one in the committee could reasonably complete the weeks-long training or commit to the extensive service commitment required of a full co-sponsorship. The Refugees and Immigration Action group decided to continue as a supporting partner to CWS instead.

In light of this, the Refugees and Immigration Action group assisted in the review of grant proposals that were under consideration with the FPCNYC Grants Committee in October 2023 and met to discuss our suggestions for prioritizing immigrant-focused charities and organizations. The committee relayed to Interim Pastor Emily Brewer our choices of three applications, one of which was from Church World Service, and the other two were Welcome Home Jersey City and Asylum Support Clinic-Rutgers Presbyterian Church. We emphasized that funding one or more of these proposals would be a very worthy use of First Presbyterian's funds. After careful consideration, FPCNYC selected CWS for a \$10,000 grant. Our action group was thrilled we were able to coordinate and convey our thoughts on the grants process for a successful outcome for our CWS partner.

In November, we held our annual coat drive alongside our partners at members of RIF Asylum Support and RUSA LGBTQ who came to the church to get warm winter coats. We collected about 70 coats and also provided gift cards (from the deacons fund) for those who did not find a properly fitting coat.

Members: Eileen Choi, Mary Virginia Ireland, Carla Mercado, Lara Mullarkey, Anne Wall

Charlotte Walker-Said  
Chair, Refugees and Immigration Action Group

## GLOBAL MISSIONS / CUBA PARTNERSHIP

Facing many ongoing national and international challenges, our mutual mission with the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba (IPRC) and the IPRC church in Taguasco during 2023 was marked by slow recovery and the continuing transition from virtual connections during the pandemic to in-person visits and gatherings, including:

**Visit to Taguasco** – Senior pastor Greg Stovell and members LouAnne Gilleland and Sorrel Alburger took part in a visit to Taguasco April 19 to 26, to continue our congregational commitment to learn, share, and worship together, to plan for another 3-year partnership cycle, and to deliver 2023 funds for our partner's senior program. The team visited the ecumenical seminary in Matanzas and traveled onward to Taguasco, where they were hosted by pastor Fernando Lopez, Roxana Gonzalez, and members of session. After participating in Sunday worship, with a sermon delivered by pastor Greg, the team traveled to Havana for flights home. The group later presented an update to the congregation in a presentation with music and photos, along with a delicious lunch featuring Cuban food.

**2023 PC(USA) Cuba Partners Network Gathering** – Entitled “A Gift of Stories: Faith, Partnership, and Hope”, this year’s annual gathering was held at Sandy Cove Ministries in North East, Maryland, from October 24 to 27. Approximately 80 participants, including six from Cuba, worshiped and prayed together, participating in presentations ranging from advocacy to current Cuban reality. This was the first network meeting in the U.S. since 2019.

**“Partnership of Partners (PoP)”** – We continue to strengthen our denominational bonds with the three other PC(USA) congregations who partner with Taguasco. Through regular monthly video calls, we recommit to assist Taguasco in mutual mission to the community.

**Prayer & Fellowship** – WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger continue to be important for us to keep in touch with our partners. Along with sharing news and prayers, short video highlights from these calls were also distributed to the PoP and our congregations.

**Conversational Spanish** – FPC’s popular class with leader Deacon Daniel Duque continues our efforts as a congregation to connect with our larger community and world.

**Upcoming item of interest** – Although plans have yet to develop for a possible 2024 visit, FPC action groups have expressed interest in participating in a Living Waters for the World sustainable water project, recently approved by the Taguasco session. More info to follow.

We look toward 2024 with increased focus on working together in mutual mission with other FPC action groups and the PoP, as we strive toward promoting understanding, healing divisions, and advocating for reconciliation with our Latin American sisters and brothers in faith.

*Submitted by Sorrel Ann Alburger (chair). Action group members: Daniel Duque, Winston Fuller, LouAnne Gilleland, Meg Harper, Irenka Jakubiak, Richard Korchak, Lauren McGill, Rita Rochford, Eric Velez. PoP participants: Susan Ambler, Ron “Coco” Alison, Ed and Jan Grey, Dawn LaPides, Kathy Mills, Betty Schroll, Cecil “Paul” Smith, Dave and Sweet Young.*

## **ERADICATING POVERTY**

St. Joe's Soup Kitchen has continued to serve the hungry populations of New York on a weekly basis from the South Wing of our building without missing a Saturday. Our partnership with St. Joe's continues to grow. First Church members volunteer with St. Joe's on a regular basis. First Saturdays remains an opportunity for groups within First Church to volunteer together.

St. Joe's does a remarkable job and served over 11,000 meals during 2023 with an increase in weekly meals served over the course of the year. We will continue to look to strengthen our partnership with St. Joe's in the year to come.

Chairperson Lauren McGill

## ART AT FIRST

Art at First embraces the creative spark in all of God's children, encouraging this aspect of our sacred lives by: Opening our doors as a community venue for artists to gather and share their work and engaging our congregation and community at the intersections of art and faith, peace and justice.

Art at First hosted several art exhibits in the Great Hall in 2023:

- *Spiritual Travelers*, curated by Max Kornfeld, a student of church member Leigh Behnke at the School of Visual Arts (January-February)
- *Seven Days: Artists View the Creation*, curated by Barbara Sherman with a smaller works by Barbara Hermor, *What did Adam and Eve Look Like?* (March-April)
- *The Seed: The Spark that Sets an Art Life in Motion*, curated by Barbara Sherman and Fran Beallor (September – November)

We also partnered with Earth Care to spearhead the Bottle Caps Project, collecting plastic bottle caps and creating assemblages that were displayed in conjunction with the *Seven Days* exhibit. We thank Buffy Barton for carrying out the project and Bonnie Woit for contributing canvases.

The visual arts and performing arts arms of Art at First both worked with the Facing Racism action group to present this year's edition of *Creatives Create! -- Bending the Arc Toward Justice*, an art exhibit and performance event held in the Great Hall in May and June.

First Acts, the performing arts group of Art at First, presented a community reading of *Becoming Calvin* by Ann Timmons on October 22. This "provocative play of political intrigue, religious rebellion, and an unlikely leader—John Calvin—who shaped the modern world," was read by fifteen members of our FPC community, followed by a meaningful discussion. In the talented cast were: Cody Bennett, Jenny Bennett, Janie Boswell, Ian Boswell, Sophia Canfield, Michael Clay, Martha Ferry, Irenka Jakubiak, John-Charles Kelly, Eugenia Naro Maciel, David Richardson, Greg Stovell, Ann Timmons, Neil Williamson, Kathie Young.

First Acts joined with Family Ministries to offer a readers' theatre version of the popular holiday story *Santa Calls* by William Joyce for the family Christmas Party. Readers for this festive story were: Cody Bennett, Sophia Canfield, Michael Clay, Martha Ferry, Irenka Jakubiak, John-Charles Kelly, Eugenia Naro Maciel, Ann Timmons.

And to end the year, Art at First sponsored a reception following the Choir's December Vespers Festival of Music performance of *Hodie* by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Submitted by Barbara Sherman and Ann Timmons

Committee members: Bill Buice, Martha Ferry, Louanne Gilleland, Irene Jakubiak, Kathie Young, Irene Gilman, Michael Clay, Neil Williamson, Jean Gallé,

## **ELDER CARE COMMITTEE**

The Elder Care Committee has completed its first year of programming for the seniors of the Church and the community. We have held a monthly luncheon followed by a program on various topics. Most of the programs relate to issues regarding health, safety, and insurance. We have also had musical performances by members of our choir and members of the Committee. A highlight for the seniors was the presentation of 2 songs by the four-year-old's in our Nursery School at our Christmas Luncheon. They enjoyed their singing and the box of cookies which the children had made for each senior. The children had designed the name tag and had printed the name of the senior on the tag.

At the beginning of this year, a survey was completed by the seniors requesting their interest and programs which would be most helpful to them. Two programs were high on their lists: technological assistance and a memory project capturing their life experiences. To promote an intergeneration approach to the technological requests, Teen Tech was organized under the leadership of Jonathan Metzler, one of our senior high members. The junior and senior high members meet on the first Sunday of the month to provide assistance to the seniors. If the senior is unable to come to the Church, members from the Teen Tech group will make a home visit.

Our Elder Care Committee is working with an organization which will provide professionals in developing people's stories. We hope to develop this program with our seniors in 2024.

The Committee meets on a monthly basis to discuss the promotion of programming with the seniors. We look forward to more intergenerational programs and the completion of the memory film.

Committee Members: Martha Ferry, Jeanne Gordon, Esther Gowrie, Betty Jones (Chair), Kathryn Ketcham, Chandra Metzler, Georgia Pease, Leslie Shipp.

## **WORSHIP MINISTRY USHER MINISTRY WORKGROUP**

We are grateful to the following members and friends who reserved regularly as ushers for the in-person services at First Presbyterian Church from January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023.

Katie Adams  
Sorrel Ann Alburger  
Alexander Bal  
Leigh Behnke  
Cody Bennett  
Ian Boswell  
Kenneth Bower  
Chance Carpenter  
Sally Collins  
Emily Dawson  
Iberedem Ekure  
Martha Ferry  
Christine Flouton  
Mark Fontaine  
Ellie Garlow  
Jack Griem  
Michael Judkiewicz  
David Kipin  
David MacDougall  
Ben Maddox

Bradley McCormick  
Lauren McGill  
Suzanne Mecs  
Lara Mullarkey  
**Jeff Nichols (Co-Head Usher)**  
Parul Parmar  
Robert Reiter  
David Richardson  
Geoffrey Rigs  
Jane Ritter  
**Joan Ryan (Co-Head Usher)**  
Alexis Schutz  
Janet Shin  
Leslie Shipp  
Alan Snoddy  
Christian Tuchscherer  
Gregoire Vabre  
Tiffany Wagner  
Neil Williamson  
Matthew Yee

**We offer special thanks for our Greeter who has served for over 36 years, Don Eddy.**

Respectfully submitted,

Joan L. Ryan

## WORSHIP MINISTRY

### Annual Report 2023

Through worship, we gathered as a community – in-person and online – to hear God's Word read, sung, and proclaimed; experience the sacraments of baptism and communion; and be renewed to go into the world to proclaim the Gospel. In 2023, there were 73 individual services of worship, including:

- **weekly worship** on Sundays
  - total number of communions
    - January: 82
    - February: 140, 77
    - March: 170
    - April: 180, 48, 30
    - May: 127
    - June: 168
    - July: 70
    - August: 118
    - September: 181
    - October: 131
    - November: 135
    - December: 153
  - 12 infant baptisms; 1 adult baptism
- worship for **life passages**
  - 7 memorial services
  - 1 wedding service
- midweek worship during **Lent**
- **special services of worship** for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas Eve

The leadership of Meg Harper (communion), Joan Ryan (ushers), and Nadine Stewart (cross-bearers), along with the support of many others, enabled us to experience year of faithful worship, and a generous welcome for all.

Respectfully submitted,  
Michael Shake

