

2023 Annual Reports

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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BOARD CHAIR

My first term of Board Chair began with the execution of a new 3-Year Vision Plan and ended with the execution of a 6-Month Contingency Plan. These two events bookended eleven typical months of operations with a few unique projects mixed in. Here are some of those unique projects:

Vision Plan: As mentioned, the term began with the congregation approving the execution of a 3-year Vision Plan for our church. Val Baughman has been leading the execution of the plan and will provide a report on status.

Wadsworth City Schools Opportunity: Early in the year we were approached by the Wadsworth City Schools, (WCS), with an opportunity to rent them space in our education building for an experimental school for behaviorally disabled children. After about 3 months of effort, we came to an impasse as our attorneys attempted to negotiate the formal lease agreement. Though I saw it as a personal failure on my part, looking down the road to other challenges we would have in 2023, I think God knew we need not be burdened by this project at this time. I have kept touch with WCS and still plan to revisit this in early 2024, but with the recent school board turmoil, it might be more of an uphill battle than before.

Personnel: We welcomed Keyshia Beverly as Director of Child & Family Ministries to support the Vision Plan and celebrated the retirement of Mary Rocha who ran our Preschool for so many years.

Sabbatical Test: After five years on the job, Pastor Sarah took a 6-week sabbatical in July and August during which, our staff and committees had to operate church without a senior pastor. At the time, it was simply something we had to plan and execute. Looking back on it, God blessed us with a low-impact opportunity to practice operating church without a senior pastor. Looking forward to Pastor Sarah's impending surgery and recovery, we already know that with God's help we can manage in her absence again.

Pastoral Performance Reviews: In September, I completed the annual performance review for Pastor Sarah and contributed to the review of Pastor Shelby. For the first time, a summary of these reviews was reported to the Official Board and placed in the record.

As part of that review process, we found that as per Pastor Sarah's Letter of Calling, our Elder Board also has a responsibility to participate in the annual review process and provide regular guidance to Pastor Sarah relative to the spiritual direction of the church. In 2024, we will insure that participation.

Pastoral Contingency Plan: When faced with Pastor Sarah's health concerns and Pastor Shelby's plan to take maternity leave, I felt there was a very real possibility that we would find ourselves without a senior pastor in the first several months of 2024. To prepare for this I met with Sarah, our Elders, several other FCC leaders to create a contingency plan. I took that plan to our Regional Minister and Regional Elders for council, then made arrangements with several local ministers to assure our pulpit was filled whether we needed a few weeks or several months of help. Several of our Elders stepped up to be the first to preach and buy us time in early 2024 as we learn more about Pastor Sarah's treatment schedule. Currently, the pulpit is filled through March 17th and many wonderful preachers are standing in the wings to step in if needed. I can tell you that that many people inside and outside this church are praying for Pastor Sarah and this congregation. We have a solid plan and with God's blessing we will get through this valley too.

Single Service: To assist in the contingency planning, we did make the decision to revert to one weekly worship service through Christmas, then extended that time frame until the end of the summer in 2024. I know that many are not happy about this decision, but I am convinced it is best for this church at this particular time in our church life and I sincerely thank you for your understanding and patience. We will return to two services once we weather this storm.

Extended Leave Policy: Late in the year the Board approved a change to our extended leave policy by agreeing to pay for up to 8 weeks of maternity leave. This was a contested decision with reasonable arguments on both sides. In the end, the Board passed the motion to provide paid leave in some instances and bring our policy up to current business standards.

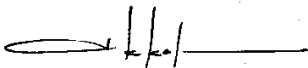
Youth Studies: During Pastor Shelby's maternity leave, we were able to maintain studies and growth opportunities for our youth. This seamless maintenance

came through the extra efforts of Keyshia Beverly, Heather Errante, Val Baughman, Michelle Moore and many others to the point where even the 50th Annual Search for the Christ Child went off with little or no historical experience and barely a hitch. This was no small task and my thanks go out to all who contributed.

Congregational Performance: With all the ups and downs of 2023, our various committees and teams performed consistently to ensure that our worship services, Sunday schools and outreach efforts continued to operate without issue. The efforts of so many of you continued with God’s blessing but little worldly fan-fair. Your impact on this congregation may only be celebrated here, but all who played a role have my deep and sincere adoration. Thank you.

All these actions were in response to challenges that appeared in 2023. I can’t imagine what turmoil this world has in store for us in 2024, but equally so, I can’t imagine the gifts and blessings that God has in store for us either. Thank you so much for the support you’ve given me and each other in 2023. We are strongest together. Keep the faith.

Yours in Christ,



T. Kevin Kaufman
Board Chair

SENIOR PASTOR **OVERVIEW**

This past year we embarked on the first phase of our three year visioning implementation plan. Each initiative is directed by a committee or task force and all of these groups are overseen by Val Baughman, our Visioning Chairperson. I am grateful for the diligence and creativity of the many volunteers who are making our dream a reality! While you can read more about all of the objectives in the Visioning Report, I want to touch on a few that I was involved with this past year.

Continuing Education for Pastors

One of the visioning goals was to “create multiple opportunities for our pastors to participate in meaningful professional development”. Thanks to the generosity of the church, both Pastor Shelby and I were able to attend

the “Festival of Homiletics” in Minneapolis May 15 - 18. I have always wanted to attend this annual conference that attracts the best preachers from around the country and clergy from numerous mainline denominations, but have never had the opportunity. The sermons and workshops provided me with both information and inspiration related to sermon content, preparation, style and delivery. The conference inspired me to move away from preaching from a written manuscript and I now preach from an outline. I have also started incorporating more personal anecdotes in my messages. I am looking forward to continuing to experiment and further develop my sermon writing and delivery skills.

Child and Family Ministries

One of the proposals that came out of the visioning plan was to create a new position “Director of Child and Family Ministries” to build relationships and develop programs to meet the spiritual needs of current and prospective young families. After a lengthy search we hired Keyshia Beverly in July. She has assumed responsibilities for programming for children and families including weekly Sunday School classes, God’s Kids Club, Junior Youth Fellowship, and Children’s Chats during worship as well as fellowship events such as movie nights and bowling. She initiated the formation of the God’s Kids Club Choir to sing periodically in worship. Weekly childcare is now under her supervision and we finally have consistent weekly care for our little ones who see the same caring and familiar face each week. Additionally, she has encouraged members to invite others to worship by creating postcards to be distributed for special worship services each month. She has been a fantastic addition to our ministry team and is eager to share her love of Jesus, love for children and fresh new ideas with our church!

Media/Marketing

Since my arrival at FCC one of my goals has been to enhance our media/marketing content. Over the last five years this has included updating our website, greater use of social media platforms, use of more videos in worship and creating new branding materials. The visioning team identified this area as in need of continued emphasis and improvement. To that end I worked closely with this task force to design the following marketing materials: New seasonal banners for the front of the church, new banners for the colonnade, FCC t-shirts with a new

design featuring our core goals “Faith, Compassion, Community”. This Spring we will use this same design to create lawn signs which congregation members can purchase and display at their homes. We have also made greater use of banners and displays on our front lawn. Thanks to the generosity of Dan and Lucy Sondles we became sponsors of our local Wadsworth radio station which includes advertising spots for our church and events. I wrote and recorded several radio spots for the holidays.

Building

This was our first year making due without a Building Operations Manager. Those duties were covered by the Trustee Chair, our team of Trustees and our Office Manager Donna Kronander. We were successful in keeping on top of our building maintenance and upkeep, but only because of the many volunteer hours contributed by these individuals, especially Terry Tucker this year’s Trustee Chair who was at church on a weekly and sometimes daily basis overseeing projects. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his faithful dedication to making sure our short term and long term building needs were addressed!

Sabbatical

There were a lot of firsts this year, including my first time taking a sabbatical. I have outlined below how I spent my sabbatical month. In a nutshell, it was a time of spiritual refreshment and rest. I benefitted from time spent in study and prayer, being in nature, and connecting with family and friends. The final week of my sabbatical I was diagnosed with cancer.

Cancer diagnosis

Needless to say, this unexpected news which turned into a diagnosis of stage 4 cancer quickly altered my plans for the remainder of the year. I began chemotherapy treatments in November which lasted through the end of the year. I am grateful that the side effects were relatively manageable and I was able to continue working. Most of all, I am grateful and humbled to be on the receiving end of an outpouring of prayers and support from the congregation. The love and assistance including meals and rides and encouraging notes have meant the world to me and my family! It has given me encouragement and strength to fight this battle. I am particularly thankful for our Board Chair, Kevin Kaufman who has stepped up to help coordinate coverage

ensuring that our ministry continues to move forward as I go through my cancer treatments. Lastly, I am immensely grateful for the ability to continue to serve God and this church which fills each day with purpose, meaning and joy.

Navigating Change

The last few years have brought about increased polarization in our world. It is not surprising that these divisions and tensions have impacted our faith community as well. Our congregation is what church scholars refer to as a “purple church”. This is simply a designation that indicates that our church membership is politically diverse and is made up of Republicans (Red) and Democrats (Blue) and I’m sure many other persuasions as well. Churches like ours face unique challenges in this context as we learn to respect one another’s ideological differences while remaining united through our common bonds of faith, compassion and community. We each seek to worship and serve Jesus with spiritual integrity while honoring the person in the pew next to us who may worship and serve in ways that are different from us. This past year I have heard from congregation members who are upset with some of the changes that have been made and have considered leaving the congregation. These changes include offering an alternative Lord’s Prayer, changing the Doxology to replace the male pronoun “He” with the gender neutral pronoun “God”, wording on our website that indicates inclusion of transgender individuals and the existence of a DEI committee. Others in the congregation view these changes in a positive light. Some of these changes were decided upon by me or a small task force, while other changes were brought to the Elders, Board and relevant committees for collective discussion and discernment. After listening to these concerns I decided to change the doxology back because this is a change that I made unilaterally. As we continue to move into the future, I will encourage us to continue to have collective conversations about how to faithfully live out our call to be disciples in a way that honors the diversity of our membership.

While some may consider this tension problematic, I see rather an opportunity for FCC to bear witness to the body of Christ. Who better to demonstrate what it looks like to love and serve alongside people who are different than us, if not the followers of Jesus? We are in a unique

position to show the world how to live out the motto, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all things love”. I respect that there may be those who leave FCC to join churches that are more homogenous, where people share the same theologies and ideologies whether that be a “conservative” church or a “progressive” church. But I think purple churches like ours have an incredibly important role to play in our current context. Disciples are “a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world”. I intend to keep helping our church have honest and open conversations that foster compassion and unity. As the scriptures remind us:

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. (Ephesians 2:14)

Pastoral Contacts

Providing pastoral support to our members; whether in hospitals or homes, in person, by phone or even by text, continues to be one of the most meaningful and rewarding parts of my ministry. I am humbled and honored to walk alongside you in times of sorrow, in times of joy and every time in between.

Statistics:

In person - 125
Phone Calls - 83
Text - 63
Cards – 9

Teaching and Worship Leading

- **Lent Sermon Series and Book Study** - In consultation with the Worship Committee we selected a sermon series and small group book study for Lent entitled “Lent in Plain Sight” which focused on a different object for reflection each week. I worked to develop sermons, recruit small groups and adapt liturgies for Lent and Holy Week based on this series. I also led one of the small group book studies during Lent.
- **Summer Sermon Series** - I used the sermon series created to accompany the theme of this year’s General Assembly “Kingdom of God Within Us Among Us”.

- Collaborated with the Elders to select an all-church book study focused on reading and interpreting the Bible. Conducted a Teacher Training for the Book Study “**Making Sense of the Bible**”. Taught a couple of sessions to different classes and sat in on others.
- **Baptism Preparation** - Pastor Shelby and I worked together to develop a new Baptism Class curriculum. I helped to lead the baptism class, baptism retreat, and accompanied the youth on a field trip to a local Jewish temple.
- This summer we planned for three **Outdoor Worship** services although one had to be moved inside due to rain. We also hosted another **Joint Worship Service** with Trinity UCC, our next door neighbor.
- **VBS** - I served as a storyteller at VBS this year. I love engaging children in the stories of the Bible and watching their curiosity and excitement. I also love watching the loving devotion of our faithful volunteers.
- Participated in **Urban Plunge** for a day. I enjoyed the opportunity to connect with our youth and help at the Akron Canton Food Bank.
- **Visitors** - I reached out to the visitors who started attending worship to make a personal pastoral connection with them. A couple of them reached out for prayers and support.
- **Speaker Series and Forum** - Worked closely with the DEI Committee to recruit individuals from the broader community to participate in a speaker series and forum entitled “Creating a Community of Belonging”.

Shepherding and Oversight

- **Staff** - I worked with personnel to interview and hire a Director of Child and Family Ministries. Keyshia Beverly came on board in early July and has been a wonderful addition to our ministry team!
- **Christian Education** - In the interim months prior to hiring a Director of Child and Family Ministries, I chaired the Christian Education Committee and

coordinated Sunday School, God's Kids Club and JYF.

- **Media/Marketing** - Worked closely with the Media/Marketing task force to create new marketing materials.
- **VBS** - As this was our VBS director's first year in this role, I worked closely with them to help coordinate the event.
- **Tech Booth** - For several months after the departure of our Building Operations Manager I coordinated the tech team schedule, sent out reminders and communicated needs for special services.
- **Stewardship** - From Jan - Nov. I chaired the Generosity Team who meets regularly to discuss how we inspire the spiritual practice of generosity and communicate to the congregation about how their dollars translate into ministry. Our theme this year was "From Bread and Cup to Faith and Giving". I am grateful to Dan Sondles who has now taken over the role of chair for this committee.
- **Building** - I met with Board Chair Kevin Kaufman and Trustee Chair Terry Tucker to discuss short term and long term building needs.

Denominational Involvement

- Attended District 3 clergy meetings
- Attend Regional clergy gatherings periodically
- Attended the General Assembly in Louisville, KY

Community Engagement

- **July 3rd** - I helped organize and participated in our July 3rd Concert on the Steps, handing out free popcorn to people passing by and talking with those gathered.
- **Community Kindness Festival** - I organized a group from our church to staff a table and participate in the 1st Annual Community Kindness Festival at Memorial Park. We had several families stop by our booth for crafts, face painting, giant bubbles and games. Our raffle basket was a favorite pick.
- **Chamber Luncheon** - Attended a couple of chamber luncheons and offered the prayer at one of them.

- **Ecumenical Lenten Lunches** - I attended the Wednesday Lenten worship service and lunches hosted by Grace Lutheran and delivered the sermon for one of the weeks.
- **Alternative School** - Participated in discussions with the Wadsworth School District about using our building to house their Alternative School for K - 4th grade. In the end, the district decided to use one of their own buildings for this program.

Continuing Education

- **Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Training** - I attended an all-day training at Camp Christian required of all clergy and hosted by the Ohio Region's Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Task Force.
- I attended The **Festival of Homiletics** in May and gleaned some helpful information and experiences to help me develop my preaching skills.
- I attended the **General Assembly** including worship, business sessions and workshops.
- **Sabbatical** - I took a month long sabbatical for spiritual renewal, refreshment and study. This was my first sabbatical and I wasn't sure what to expect. I discovered that having an extended break from daily duties enabled me to do some spiritual reflection and discernment that I don't have time for in my regular schedule. I was pleasantly surprised that I did indeed feel emotionally and physically refreshed when I returned. The leadership books I read were very helpful in giving me new insights and tools for effective church leadership.
 - Week 1 - Time with family
 - Week 2 - Retreat in the woods
 - Weeks 3 & 4 - Study at home
 - Spiritual Renewal
 - Spent intentional time in bible study and prayer
 - Spent time in solitude and nature (solo camping)
 - Refreshment
 - Spent time reconnecting with family and friends
 - Spent time in West Virginia and the Finger Lakes

- Study
 - Read books on pastoral leadership
 - “Know Your Story and Lead With It: The Power of Narrative in Clergy Leadership” - Kelli Walker-Jones and Richard Loren Hester
 - “Dare to Lead” - Brene Brown
 - “Braving the Wilderness” - Brene Brown

Funerals/Weddings/New Members

New Members: 12
 Baptisms: 5
 Reaffirmation of Faith: 2
 Child Dedications: 1
 Funerals: 13
 Weddings: 0

Worship Statistics 2023:

2 Service Sundays:
 Average in person:
 Contemporary – 71
 Traditional – 73
 Average Online:
 Contemporary – 15
 Traditional – 11
 Average Total: 170

Combined Worship Sundays
 Average in person – 121
 Average online – 24
 Average Total – 145

Christmas Eve Total:
 Contemporary – 145
 Traditional – 110
 Online – 25
 Total - 280

Respectfully submitted,
 Pastor Sarah West, Senior Pastor

ASSOCIATE PASTOR AND DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES

Overview

2023 saw the implementation of our new church visioning plan, Pastor Sarah’s Sabbatical, and my Maternity Leave. There were ups and downs - while we experienced the excitement of baptisms and new members, we also saw a decline in our youth

participation. The new measures we took thanks to our visioning plan for youth were partially successful - some youth brought friends to events and youth group, two of whom joined our 2023-2024 Baptism Class! However, our re-brand and re-design of our Sunday morning and evening offerings did not greatly increase attendance and numbers continued to decline for Sunday evening youth group in particular. This presents us with an opportunity to focus more on relationship building in the new year with hopes to truly discern the wants and needs of our youth and their families.

Pastor Sarah also took a month-long Sabbatical in August, providing me with the opportunity to take on new responsibilities such as some staff oversight and expanded my chances to engage in pastoral care with the larger church. This time presented challenges as I was able to learn and grow in my pastoral role and identity, and overall was a gift to me as I continue to develop and discern in my ministry. I also grew in my personal and family life as I became a mother, giving birth to my first child, Gabriel, in October. This big life change facilitated 8 weeks away for Maternity Leave, requiring volunteers and staff to cover many of my responsibilities in my absence.

I am extremely grateful for the people who stepped up to make this possible and who oversaw the continuation of our ministries. Thank you especially to Keyshia Beverly and Heather Errante for organizing and running Search for the Christ Child and to Heather, Michelle Moore, and Val Baughman for overseeing our youth ministry program while I was gone.

Youth

Our church’s new visioning plan included new ideas for our youth ministry. We decided to experiment and try new things! Our first objective was to enhance the youth group experience for all youth - this included increasing our youth group time to two hours, combining our middle and high school ministries, providing dinner every week, and beginning a youth band. Some of these measures were unsuccessful and we ended up reverting back to a one-hour session, stopped the weekly dinners, and discontinued our time of music. We will continue to experiment with new ideas while making sure the youth have input with the goal to provide meaningful programming for youth currently in our church and to grow our youth group.

Our second objective was to increase youth fellowship event participation - this included providing bring-a-friend incentives and giving “swag bags” to visitors. We will continue this objective moving forward. Youth have been bringing friends and two of those friends even joined our Baptism Class for 2023-2024! Our third objective was to provide youth outreach opportunities. We have been doing this primarily by hosting a MLK Jr. Day of Service in January and a week-long service opportunity during the summer (we reprised Urban Plunge in 2023 and are planning a service-learning trip with Appalachia Service Project in 2024). We also continued our tradition of packing the Disaster Relief Buckets in the fall.

Our youth leaders also decided to rebrand and reimagine our Sunday School and Youth Group offerings in 2023. Rather than having an educational hour on Sunday mornings (which was not well-attended in previous years), we decided to have a fellowship hour called the “Hangout”. Attendance has slightly increased due to this change. We also renamed our Sunday evening youth group “Elevate” and tried a new curriculum. The curriculum was not popular and attendance dropped, so we will be going a new direction in 2024. The wants and needs of our youth are constantly changing as they grow in their lives and their faith, so we want to be responsive and flexible to ensure we are reaching as many youth as possible.

2023 also saw the continuation of another church tradition: holding Baptism/Pastor’s Class for our 6th graders. We baptized four 6th graders! We also had the opportunity to baptize one of our older youth, Kayla, who did not grow up in church and had never been baptized! In addition, 2023 was our 50th year of hosting Search for the Christ Child, where we had 195 people in attendance. Our youth and adult volunteers did a fantastic job of pulling off another Search. Special thanks to Keyshia and Heather for planning and running the event!

None of our efforts in youth ministry would have been possible without our wonderful volunteers. Many thanks to all those who volunteered for Sunday School/Hangout, Youth Group/Elevate, and Fellowship Events in 2023: Heather Errante, Val Baughman, Michelle Moore, Mary Ellen Huber, Sarah Maxon, Chris Jones, Amy Tuck, Amy Benson, and Sarah West. Thank you also

to our Baptism Mentors for the 2023 Baptism Class: Ray Landis, Gentry Dean, Susan Ritzman, and Loa Gerberich. Your service to our church and your care and compassion for our youth are so appreciated!

Below is a summary of 2023 youth events:

January

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service
- Baptism Retreat
- CYF Winter Retreat
- Baptism Class Field Trip (Temple Israel)

February

- Baptism Class

March

- Youth Sunday
- Escape Room Fellowship

April

- Chi Rho Lock-In
- Baptisms & Reception
- Board Game Night

May

- Baccalaureate Sunday
- Youth Banquet

June

- Ice Cream Friday
- Urban Plunge
- Chi Rho Camp

July

- Ice Cream Friday
- CYF Camp

August

- Ice Cream Friday

September

- Youth Kickoff

October

- Baptism Class Kickoff
- Disaster Bucket Packing
- Baptism Class Field Trip (St Thomas Orthodox Church)
- Halloween Party (maternity leave)

November

- Search for the Christ Child Practices (maternity leave)

December

- Search for the Christ Child (maternity leave)
- Christmas Party (maternity leave)
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Other

- Meeting monthly with another Youth Director
- Coffee meeting with Wadsworth UMC Youth Director
- Leading conversation at WHS Spectrum Meeting
- Youth Visioning/Youth Leaders Meetings
- WHS Commencement
- Youth Dance Recital
- Baptisms: Kayla Bowles, Daniel Boarman, Lily Church, Grace Bowen, Justin Hrutkai
- Graduation Parties

Camp Christian

I have had the privilege of serving on the Camp Christian Committee these past few years and am glad to spend my time doing so because of my passion and our congregation's love of camp. Our committee works hard to ensure that we take advantage of our wonderful property, maintain our facilities, host meaningful camps and conferences for our Region, and provide space for the local community. I attended 2 retreats for planning, camp counselor training, and monthly meetings for the committee this past year. In 2023, we sent 1 youth to Otter Camp, 10 youth to Chi Rho Camp, and 5 youth to CYF Camp. I also participated in Chi Rho and CYF camps as a counselor. Our Outreach Committee also served our Camp and Region by going down to assist with building upkeep. A portion of the Outreach quarterly disbursements is also usually designated for Camp Christian.

Young Adults

Most of our young adults are college students who have moved away for school, but we still have a handful of local young adults. Our only events for young adults this year were fellowship game nights at Great Oaks Tavern. However, I did meet with some of our young adults one-on-one. I hope to grow our young adult ministry in 2024 by prioritizing one-on-one meetings and hosting more frequent events. Our church is also working to include more young adults in church leadership roles.

Worship

I participated in weekly worship planning and leadership as well as preaching monthly. Pastor Sarah and I worked together to plan services in advance.

Special Services

- Lent
 - Ash Wednesday
 - Palm Sunday
 - Maundy Thursday
 - Good Friday
- Easter
 - Easter Sunday
 - Holy Humor
- Pentecost
- World Communion
- All Saints (maternity leave)
- Thanksgiving (maternity leave)
- Advent
 - Lessons and Carols (maternity leave)
 - Christmas Eve

Pastoral Care

I had the opportunity to provide more pastoral care to the larger congregation this year due to Pastor Sarah's sabbatical. In August especially, I met with members in their homes, in the hospital, at rehab or hospice centers, out for coffee or a meal, and in my office. I also provided pastoral care through phone calls and texts, primarily with our youth and young adults. In addition, I assisted with two funerals this year (Ray Landis and Jim Rivers) and presided over another by myself (Rick Holt). It is a gift to walk alongside people in their times of need and I hope to have even more opportunities for pastoral care in 2024.

Church and Community Life

I had the opportunity to attend many events in the life of our church and community in 2023. From family movie nights to sharing a meal with our "Just Older Youth" at the JOY Kickoff event, I loved being able to interact socially with our congregation. I also enjoyed a few faith formation opportunities such as leading a group for the Lenten Book Study and leading music for our kids at VBS.

I participated in the following events in 2023:

- All-Church Bowling Night
- Community Lenten Services and Lunches
- Lenten Book Study
- Gateway Event
- Women's Ministry Pot Luck/Bingo
- DEI Forum
- JOY Fellowship Event
- Chili Cookoff

- Vacation Bible School
- Summer Movie Night
- Lemonade on the Lawn
- Outreach Pancake Breakfast
- All-Church Picnic
- All-Church Softball Game/Potluck
- Helping Haitians in Need Fundraiser
- All-Church Back-to-School Cookout
- Fall Family Movie Night

Meetings

My work includes regular meetings with various groups, both within our congregation and within our district and region. I participated in meetings for the following groups/committees in 2023:

- Board
- Elders
- Staff
- Worship Committee (& Sub-committee meetings)
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee
- Visioning Committee
- Children & Family Ministry Committee
- District 3 Clergy Gathering
- Camp Christian Committee (Meetings and Retreats)

Continuing Education

2023 was a great year for continuing education. I participated in an Anti-Racism Awareness Conversation (hosted by the Christian Church in Ohio), several online preaching workshops, a Suicide Prevention Training, and a Child Abuse Prevention Training. The two biggest educational events of 2023 were the Festival of Homiletics (sponsored by Luther Seminary), a nearly week-long preaching conference, and the Disciples of Christ General Assembly. The General Assembly hosted many workshops in addition to the business sessions and worship gatherings, so I had the opportunity to learn from a variety of people on various faith, church, and ministry topics, including ministry to young families, disability justice and inclusion, and different models for community outreach.

Overall, 2023 had its successes and its failures. I have learned from both and am striving to improve our many ministries, especially with youth and young adults, in 2024. While 2023 was a difficult year for me personally

and professionally, I am going into 2024 with optimism and hope. Our congregation is full of incredible people who have stepped up to lead our church into a brighter future with enthusiasm and passion. I am inspired by our members and will use that inspiration to drive me moving forward. As we move into this next year of ministry together, my primary goal is to focus more on relationship-building, knowing that stronger relationships make for a stronger church and community.

I am honored to be a pastor of this congregation and am grateful for the many ways our people support me to learn, grow, lead, and love our church and community. Thank you to all of you who have dedicated your time, resources, and heart to serving God and one another - it is because of you that First Christian Church can live into our mission to grow in faith, serve with compassion, and build a community of belonging for all.

Respectfully submitted,
 Pastor Shelby Baxter-Andrews,
 Associate Pastor/Director of Youth Ministries

DIRECTOR OF CHILD AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

Office Responsibilities

- Manage Children's Sunday School Class and Childcare Room.
- Review and manage Children's Sunday School curriculum.
- Train and oversee weekly Sunday School teacher volunteers and Childcare worker.
- Prepare and manage schedule for Sunday School teacher volunteers and Childcare worker.
- Manage Child and Family Ministries budget.
- Created and posted a job summary to Indeed for a Child Care Worker. Interviewed several prospects. Two applicants were hired and there was also a temporary childcare worker in November.
- Coordinate activities and crafts for the God's Kids Club (GKC) and Junior Youth Fellowship (JYF).
- Plan and facilitate all other programs and events for the Child and Family Ministries.

- Write all Board Reports, Bulletin Announcements, *Caller* Articles and all correspondence that goes out to parents and Sunday School teacher volunteers.
- Attend weekly Staff and monthly Board meetings.
- Create church invitations to invite non-members to special worship services.

Worship Responsibilities

- Weekly Pastoral Prayer, Benediction, Invitation to the Table and Children’s Chat when slotted in Planning Center.
- Handle the online chat for the streamed church services and oversee Kids Cart.
- Blessing of the Backpacks was held on Aug. 27.
- 3rd Grade Bible presentations were held on Oct. 1. Bibles were given to two students.
- Ugly Christmas Sweater and Sock Day was held on Dec. 10.
- Put together an Elementary Kids Choir. The God’s Kids Club Choir (GKCC) practiced during the Sunday School hour and performed on Nov. 5 for All Saints Sunday and on Dec. 17 during Lessons and Carols.

Children’s Sunday School

- Children’s Sunday School met each week. I incorporated a small-group-based curriculum that includes fun icebreakers, easy-to-lead small group activities, meaningful discussion, and active worship featuring songs for the Children’s Ministry. The new teaching episodes are full of humor and feature real-life kid challenges as the characters in the videos search for biblical truth and model spiritual growth.
- Met with Child and Family Ministry Committee on July 19, 2023 to go over ideas for the year.
- Created binders for Sunday School and Childcare Room which includes policies, procedures, schedules and other important information needed for the teachers.
- Organized and prepared the Children’s Sunday School room and Childcare room for Sunday School Kick-off. Purchased new toys, learning materials and wall décor.

- Held a Children’s Sunday School Teacher training to go over policies, procedures, and the new curriculum for the class.
- The God’s Kids Club (GKC) met Sept. 17 and Oct. 15 to talk, do craft projects, and write letters to all the Homebound members of our church.
- GKC shirts were designed and purchased.
- Junior Youth Fellowship (JYF) met Oct. 29 for pumpkin painting and Dec. 10 for Christmas Cookie decorating. During this time of fellowship, kids participate in games or other fun activities to build relationships between their church peers.

Special Events

- All Church BBQ Planned and organized the “All Church Back to School Barbecue, held on Sept. 24. There were 65 in attendance.
- Planned and organized the “Fall Family Movie Night,” held on Oct. 22. Watched the Disney movie “Coco.”
- Veterans Day Service was held on Nov. 12. The children recognized the Church Veterans and presented them with crafts following Children’s Chat Veterans Day video.
- Planned and organized the “50th Annual Search for the Christ Child” which was held on Dec. 1. There were 195 in attendance. A collection of food and monetary donations were donated to Wadsworth FISH and the Salvation Army.
- Parents Day Out was held Dec. 16. This event gave parents time to finish Christmas shopping, and complete last minute Christmas preparations while their children spent time playing games and doing crafts in the Childcare room. There were seven children in attendance.

Visioning Objectives

- Monthly updates sent to Visioning Chair.
- Designed Baptism t-shirts for Visioning Objective.
- Intentional Fellowship events were planned and added to the church calendar.

Respectfully submitted,
Keyshia Beverly, Director

MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Contemporary Worship

It has been a great year. I am so thankful to all those who have been involved in the Contemporary music teams and tech teams. We have awesome volunteers that give their talent each week to help lead us in worship. It is always our goal that the attention would not be on us as a worship team but that we can lead people into a deeper and more personal worship experience.

We have added some people this year and have lost a few to moving as well as a desire to take a break. We are always looking and asking for those who are gifted in the area of vocal music or instrumental to consider using that talent on Sundays on a rotating schedule. Let me know if you are interested.

Here are a few bullet points of some of the activities that happen each week.

- Plan the weekly worship experience through a software program called Planning Center.
- Research new music that would fit our worship style and the talent we have on the worship team.
- Practice each week the music for Sunday.
- Come early on Sunday for an additional rehearsal.
- Rehearse all music multiple times during the week.
- During weekly staff meetings give input regarding the entire worship experience.
- Schedule weekly worship teams and correspond through email.
- Open the building on Sunday morning and turn everything on for the service.
- Organize and maintain order in the Music Equipment Room.
- Check in with music team members when they are facing challenges.
- Works with the Tech team on Sunday's so they know about transitions and which Microphones are being used.
- Support the Pastoral Team in any way I can to help things run smoothly on Sunday.
- Setting up the stage and removing it each week.

I am Thankful to all of the staff and congregation who are so encouraging each week as we gather to worship the Lord together.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Oliver, Director of Contemporary Worship

Chancel Choir and The Bells of First Christian Church

The Chancel Choir rehearses on Wednesday evenings September through May providing anthems on Sundays and Special Services and always leading the hymns. In 2023 we met for the entire choir season. Chancel Choir members for 2023 were Karole Heisler, Jody Meager, Karen Leatherman, Nanci Sullivan, Connie Dague, Susan Ritzman, Dora Kaufman, Marcia Stubbendieck, Jerry Ritzman, Tom Kaufman, Carolyn Kiser, Kent Stubbendieck, and Jim Rivers. We lost a dear member of choir with the passing of Jim Rivers.

The Bells of FCC rehearse Wednesday evenings. The group provided special music during worship multiple times throughout the year. Karen Leatherman, Maggie Sayre, Elaine Williams, Sue Elliott, Terri Hansen, Diane Pels, Kristen Sayre, and Karole Heisler make up the current ringers.

Special Music has always been an important part of our worship services. A shout out to vocalists Karen Leatherman, Nanci Sullivan, Jim Rivers, and Tom Kaufman, and instrumentalists Michael Fox, Mary Ellen Huber, Amos West, and Julie Sedlovsky for their willingness to add to worship with such joy in their hearts.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Kronander, Organist

SUB BOARD REPORTS

ELDERS

The Elders fulfilled their regular duties of helping lead the worship services, visiting homebound members and bringing them communion, God's Kids Club letters and pictures, and Christmas Blessing Bags. They were also on call to do hospital visitations when needed.

In 2023, the Elders helped select and preview the book "How to Make Sense of the Bible" by Adam Hamilton for the very successful All Church Book Study.

Our Pastors attended an AntiRacism/ProReconciliation training session and the General Assembly. Elder Ken Dye attended a Lay Preaching Workshop. Reports were made back to the Elders of each of these events.

The Elders discussed having the Wadsworth City Schools rent classrooms in our Ed. Building for a K-4 Alternative School. In the end, it was not able to be done due to an indemnification clause and liability issues.

Visioning progress reports were given to the Elders every month by Val Baughman, the Visioning Committee Chairperson.

Notice that a Building Operations Manager would not be hired was given to the Elders. They were also kept apprised of the process in hiring the Director of Child and Family Ministries, and then the successive child care workers.

The Elders were kept informed about a fundraising campaign that will take place in 2024 to raise money for a new swimming pool at camp and to hire a conference center director. Three additional part time staff members would be hired for the regional church.

The Elders will annually initiate and oversee a review and evaluation of the priorities and ministry of our church and the direction Pastor Sarah is leading us. This is to ensure unity of purpose so that more kingdom work will be accomplished.

Elders volunteered to give sermons when Pastor Sarah has her surgery and is recovering.

There are also Elder volunteers to do pastoral visits and funerals, if needed.

The annual Elder's Retreat will be held in April this year so Pastor Sarah will be able to attend. The new Elders will be commissioned during a worship service instead of at the retreat.

The Elders fulfilled their role well as the spiritual leaders of our church and as a support to our pastors. We thank them for their dedication and love of FCC and its people. We were well served by the following Elders in 2023: Val Baughman, Nathan Brothers, Connie Dague, Ken Dye, Sue Elliott, Mike Gromofsky, Chris Jones, Jerry Lash, Jean Sullivan, Karen Rule, Amy Tuck, and Roger Wright.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Rule, Val Baughman, Co-Chairs

DEACONS

Thank you to our Deacons. This year, once again, has brought change and we sincerely appreciate the flexibility and positive attitude of all the Deacons. We transitioned from two services to one and are now sharing duties. This is working well, and special thanks go to Karen Rule and Sue Elliott for their guidance and cooperation in this change. Also, all of the Deacons appreciate Karen cutting the bread each week. Thank you to Heather Errante for getting us started this year. And thank you, Donna, for your weekly reminders to each of the Deacons on their scheduled weeks and for rescuing us whenever we needed it.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Pels and Kay Lyn Brown,
Deacon Co-Chairs

TRUSTEES

Calendar year 2023 was a good year as far as facilities of FCC were concerned with no major problems and only regular maintenance needing addressed. Routine maintenance and inspection items included lighting, heating and air conditioning, electrical, plumbing, painting and health, safety and security. These items were performed and overseen by the trustees and regulatory bodies of the City of Wadsworth, Medina County and State of Ohio as well as insurance and contracted personnel. The trustees routinely supported various programs of FCC such as the Advent/Christmas Committee, Search for the Christ Child Committee, baptisms, various outreach functions and funerals. An unusual duty we had this year was the review of our facilities in conjunction with Wadsworth City Schools regarding the possible usage of some of our educational facilities to support an expanded program for the schools. While the decision was made by the schools to not use our facility due to an impossible schedule, it is noteworthy that we received excellent cooperation from our staff and IT group as well as all of the city and county engineering, planning and safety personnel.

The Trustees' weekly reviews included the buildings interiors, as well as the grounds, supporting landscaping and parking areas and tree lawns. We looked at continued functionality as well as building and grounds appearance to the community and wear and tear on our

buildings. Each year we endeavor to not only address the here and now issues but the strategic needs such as fluorescent lighting conversion to LED lighting due to government mandate, concrete replacement of steps as needed due to age or safety requirements and painting to maintain the architectural ambiance and strength of the various pieces of the buildings and equipment. The trustees get involved in a lot of different things at your church and we work hard with your support to keep up with the daily, weekly, monthly and annual changes. A special thank you to Donna Kronander and Anita Tenney for their help in providing help and input to the Trustees. Overall, our facilities are in excellent condition and it has been a pleasure working with Pastor Sarah and staff, our Board Chair, board members, the Trustees and you the congregation all of whom provide input and support to keep your church looking great and running safely, smoothly and efficiently.

The Trustees this year were Dom Accordino, Dave Frisby, Matt Gruver, John Hoover, Kevin Kalina, Bob Mooney, Bill Roberts, and Bill Tuck. Thank you all for your support and hard work.

Respectively Submitted,
Terry Tucker, Chair

COMMITTEE REPORTS

BUILDING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

SPECIAL FUND

We made it through the year without any major parts of the building needing repairs or upgrades!

The checking account balance is \$61,254.02.

The Beasley Growth Fund had a balance of \$72,137.62 as of 11/30/23.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Henderson, Chair

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Purpose & Mission

First Christian Church Wadsworth seeks to build lives of compassion through our faith in Jesus Christ and the building of an inclusive, diverse and loving community for all people. As congregants, this Committee strives to

empower the congregation to become who we already believe ourselves to be.

The DEI Committee meets once a month but have been on hiatus since October due to Pastor Sarah's illness. Members include: Mary Christ, Loa Gerberich, Denise Hachat, Mary Ellen Huber, Amy Tuck, with Kevin Kaufman and Pastors Sarah and Shelby attending most meetings. Sadly, we recently lost DEI committee member, Jim Rivers. We hope to add new members this coming year.

2023 Events and Activities:

- Continued conversations regarding conducting an Accessibility Study for our church facility. This included more extensive focus on hearing accessibility options, including closed captioning and installing a hearing loop for those hearing impaired.
- Sponsored a sermon series and forum entitled: *Building a Community of Belonging*. Speakers were:
Jenna Sevago, licensed therapist
Erika Harris, Disciples of Christ seminarian
Dr. Vince Suber, Wadsworth high school principal
Kevin Kaufman, Forum moderator
- Participated in Lemonade on the Lawn
- Held Casa Del Rio fundraiser November 27, 2023

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ellen Huber, Committee Member

VISIONING COMMITTEE

The Visioning Committee was hard at work in 2023 implementing our Vision Plan objectives.

The following are the Short Term, (0-6 months), and Intermediate, (6-9 months), objectives and the percent accomplished and implemented in 2023. If a percent is not 100% it just means that the leaders/task force teams of that objective are still actively working to complete it at 100%.

Welcome and Integration of Visitors and New and Current Members- 100%-Short Term

- Created "I Wish" and "Thinking of You" cards in the back of pews.

- Delivered hand written invitations door to door with our neighbors on neighboring streets to invite them and welcome them to the Chili Cook Off.
- Gave out free popcorn with FCC labels to everyone attending the Fireworks on July 3.
- Put up a Visitor Parking sign. (Visitor Parking- Welcome to our Church).
- Created Visitor Swag Bags, (made by the Sewing Sisters), with FCC magnets, notepads, seed packets, a letter from our kids, etc.
- Created younger kids visitor bags - Ages 3-6.
- Created youth visitor bags - Ages 7 and up.
- Treasure box for kids filled with tiny toys.
- Created Information Packets for visitors.
- Ordered New Member FCC T-shirts.
- Currently working on a 2024 new FCC Pictorial Directory.

Children's Programming- 100%- Short Term

- Combined all Youth Sunday School classes; grades 1-5.
- Incorporated preexisting youth activities into the Sunday School hour; God's Kids Club and JYF.
- Developed a new curriculum.
- Hired a Director of Child and Family Ministries in July. (Keyshia Beverly)
- Brought back the Children's Choir.
- Created Baptism T-shirts.
- Created God's Kids Club T-shirts.
- Decluttered and redecorated the Sunday School class rooms and added new toys.
- Held a Sunday School Curriculum Teachers meeting and developed a teacher rotating schedule.

Continuing Education for Pastors- 80% - Short Term

- Pastor Sarah and Pastor Shelby attend the Homiletics Conference in May 2023.
- Professional Development Forms were created for Pastors to complete after attending a conference, workshop, etc. and available in the office for any congregation member to review.

- Pastors have read books and articles, listened to Podcasts, and joined Webinars on Leadership and Preaching.
- Pastor Sarah took a Sabbatical in August and took some time to reflect, review her lessons from the Homiletics Conferences, and develop her preaching skills.

Community Visibility and Media Marketing- 100%- Short Term

- Painted the Front Door
- Purchased a Safety Town and 911 Memorial Paver that was placed behind the new Wadsworth Fire Station on College Street.
- Created church yard signs for church events. (Chili Cook Off, Garage sale, etc.)
- Designed and bought banners for the front of the church and the Colonnade.
- Designed and sold FCC t-shirts and quarter zip sweatshirts.
- Designed a new Church logo with Faith, Compassion, Community for T-shirts and banners.
- Posted on Facebook and Wadsworth Neighbors different church events.
- Flower pots were added to the Front porch.
- Flyers for church events were created and handed out at church and at First Friday downtown events.
- Bought sponsorship on Wadsworth Community Radio 97.1 with interviews of Pastors and members, advertising FCC events, and FCC getting a shout out as a sponsor after ads or shows.
- Using the digital front yard sign to reflect more community events. (WHS graduation, etc.)
- Aligned Church events with Wadsworth First Friday events to bring in more foot traffic. (i.e.- Search for the Christ Child).

J.O.Y. Fellowship - 100% - Intermediate

- Changed name from "Golden Agers" to "J.O.Y. Fellowship", (Just Older Youth).
- Kickoff Kookout event at the Ritzman's in April - 60+ in attendance.
- Crazy Corn Hole in May - 30+ in attendance.

- Picnic at Kaufman Farm in July - 35+ in attendance.
- Amish Country Trip in October - Lunch and Musical, "Dear Soldier Boy" - 34 in attendance.

Youth Programming - 100% - Short and Intermediate Phases

- Youth group was extended from 1 1/2 hours to 2 hours and included Chi Rho. (6th-8th graders.) Each Sunday 6:00-8:00 pm with dinner, worship, music, and games.
- Name changes were made - Sunday School was changed to Hangout and Youth Group changed to Elevate.
- In the Spring a survey was sent to all youth parents and our youth to collect information on what day and times worked best for them to attend.
- Swag bags were developed for friends of youth that attended youth events. (Stickers, Bible highlighter, youth brochure, permission forms, a letter from Pastor Shelby, etc.)
- 5th graders were invited to attend events.
- Increased Outreach opportunities - Urban Plunge went from 3 days a week to a full week, started a MLK Day of Service, packed buckets for Bucket Brigade.
- Incentives for bringing a friend to a youth event.
- Events with other Church's youth. (Hosted a Halloween Party with the Methodist Church youth and their Youth Pastor).

Music Enhancements - 75% - Short and Intermediate Phases

- A list of 66 people was created to recruit for the choir, praise team, and the tech team.
- Recruiting began but with little success.
- The choir held an "Open House" in the Spring and as a result three new members joined the choir.
- The Board Chair used his *Caller* article in the March Caller to let everyone know they are welcome and hopes they consider joining the choir or praise team.
- One new tech booth person was added.

- Some people were added to Services that could provide special music. (Horns, piano)
- One new bass player and singer were added to the Praise Team.
- A Fall rotation schedule was developed for the Praise Team.

Relationship Building and Spiritual Formation for Families and Young Adults - 75%- Short and Intermediate Phases

- Child Care worker was hired so that parents could attend Sunday School and Worship Services.
- Added more intentional fellowship with family and church events. (i.e.-Back to School BBQ).
- Restructured the Pathways Sunday school curriculum to a "plug and play format".

Respectfully Submitted,
Val Baughman, Chair

GENEROSITY COMMITTEE

Throughout the year, directors and board members of the organizations FCC supports, came to speak during Worship, to update us and share stories to connect us with the impact of their mission. (Children's Center of Medina County - Exec. Director Ashley Krause; Camp Christian - Shelby Baxter-Andrews, Committee member/Counselor; Francis House Recovery-Santo Costanzo, President; Cleveland Christian Home - Maureen Horton, Director of Development, Salvation Army - Summer Program - Envoy Ashley Smith; FISH - (Melanie Raines was ill so Board Member Nancy Cordas read her prepared remarks; The Garage, Laurie Beal Directory of Ministry.)

Weekly our Elders use the Offertory time to speak of aspects they appreciate about our church. Leading up to November 19, our Elders shared personal stories explaining how they reached their decisions to contribute to the mission of the church. Our Pastor's sermons regularly reflected on thanksgiving and gratitude.

"From Bread and Cup to Faith and Giving" was our theme for the Fall, leading up to Commitment Sunday. We genuinely appreciate all of the Commitment Cards. November 19, we blessed 50 Commitment Cards, just as

we give thanks over gifts received each week. We look for ways to show the impact our congregation's donations make far away and close to home.

Members of the Committee: Dan Sondles, Joe Sayre, Amy Benson, Pastor Sarah West

Respectfully Submitted,
Dan Sondles

MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

The Committee had an easy year which consisted of Freda Kramer writing thank you notes to families who made contributions. There were no requests made for funds! Consequently, the fund grew by the amount of donations – which amounted to \$6,890.25 – and now stands at \$27,030.58

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Henderson, Chair

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Forty-two FCC members receive Outreach agendas, notes and updates. Almost all have participated in some function, meetings and community events Outreach has offered members of First Christian Church. Most have a role they enjoy to the point that they encourage others to participate. Anyone may join our email list to receive our meeting details and updates.

Quarterly the Outreach Committee discuss and makes a recommendation to the FCC Board for distributing donations to local non-profits, and Disciples organizations. We have a personal relationship with these organizations. We know their history and respect their impact in the community, plus those organizations recommended by FCC members on annual Commitment Cards.

March 21, Maureen Horton, Cleveland Christian Home joined us to share what's evolving at the Cleveland Christian Home, since their merger with The Centers, October 1, 2022.

18 of our members were present to help Feeding Medina County with the Wadsworth food distribution March 23 and again June 23.

We moved our Chili-Soup Cook-off to Saturday, April 15, and combined it with Drop & Drive receiving hundreds of personal items, toiletries or laundry products, towels and blankets, which we divided among Marian's Closet, Francis House Recovery and Haven of Rest. We delivered a car-load of items to each organization. Chili-Soup Cook-off proceeds of \$625, went to Helping Haitians in Need. Paul Huber (a HHN founder) received the most votes for best chili.

Seven painters returned to Camp Christian to prep and paint the Administration Building May 15-17.

The success of our June 2 & 3, Garage Sale allowed us to split the proceeds of \$3,900 among HHN, FCC's Youth Programming and Outreach. All leftovers after June 4, were donated to the Holmes County Thrift Store, whose volunteers took everything away.

On Sunday, June 25, proceeds from The Nancy Hachat Memorial Pancake Breakfast benefitted The Salvation Army with \$476 of free-will offerings.

The City of Wadsworth Independence Day Fireworks & food trucks came downtown on July 3. We offered the community seating on our front lawn for that event. Michael Fox, Julie Sedlovsky, Amos West and friends played American Jazz classics, to the delight of all on the lawn and steps. We popped corn for hours and offered large bubble wands for the kids, until the fireworks started.

July 14, seven Outreach volunteers helped pack 200 bags and hand them out, aiding the Salvation Army food distribution. They have continued volunteering on the second Friday each month since.

In July we collected 869 Back to School Supplies and in September your donated cleaning supplies to fill 40 Bucket Brigade, emergency clean up buckets, which our Youth gather to pack.

We do not participate in every opportunity presented to us. We continue to look for weekend and family oriented volunteer opportunities, suggested to us by the Visioning Committee.

Monthly, Red Bags filled with food (667 items) and personal toiletry (351 items) come in to Church and are taken to Salvation Army for their food pantry. Thanks to all who support this ministry as well as stocking our own small pantry at the Boyer Street entrance.

Haven of Rest asked for help replenishing their ground coffee supply just before Thanksgiving. We asked for the Congregations' help. We took over 100 lbs of coffee, thanks to our congregation

We concluded the year receiving requested items for our Angel Tree so Salvation Army could bring Christmas cheer to families in and around Wadsworth.

Outreach assisted in the set-up and clean-up on December 1, Search for the Christ Child.

Outreach members volunteered to ring the Salvation Army bell, in Buehler's vestibule, in one-hour shifts: December 5.



Some of the members present at Outreach's October 21 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan Sondles, Chair

LEGACY FOUNDATION

The First Christian Church, Wadsworth (FCC) Legacy Foundation is an avenue for the receipt and careful management of gifts to FCC through wills, bequests, and other estate planned gifts. These donations are divided between Permanent and Current Ministry funds as prescribed by the Legacy Foundation Charter or as directed by the donor. Permanent funds are invested through the Christian Church Foundation and Current Ministry Funds are distributed as outlined in the Legacy Foundation Charter.

A typical gift or bequest to the Legacy Foundation would be divided as follows:

50% to the Permanent Fund (i.e., long term investment).

50% to the Current Ministry Fund.

Current Ministry Funds are divided and allocated as follows:

- 1) 40% will be spent according to the recommendation of the Outreach Committee, with approval of the Elders, and approval by the Board. These funds will not be considered as part of the regular budget expenditure for outreach causes,
- 2) 30% to the FCC Legacy Building Fund, and
- 3) 30% to FCC Legacy Non-budgeted expenses fund.

At the beginning of calendar year 2023, the balance in the Permanent fund was \$202,828.70. During the year, \$3,000 was donated to the Legacy Foundation. The entire \$3,000 was designated by the donor to be placed in the Permanent Fund, therefore \$0.00 was allocated to the Current Ministry Fund. As of September 30, 2023, the value of the Permanent Fund was \$214,860.51. The year-end value was not available on the date this report was written.

The Legacy Foundation is managed by a Board of Trustees, which consists of at least five (5), but no more than seven (7) members. The Senior Minister, the Chairperson of the FCC Board, and the FCC Board Treasurer are ex-officio, non-voting members.

Legacy Foundation Trustees in 2023 were:

Chuck Keach, Karol Tucker, Joan Acuff, (terms expiring December 31, 2023).

Bob Henderson (term expiring December 31, 2024).

Cathy Hall and Jerry Ritzman (terms expiring December 31, 2025).

Sarah West, Kevin Kaufman and Staci Pappas were ex-officio, non-voting members.

Thanks to all Trustees for serving in the past year(s).

For further information about the fund, the financial details or how you may contribute, please contact one of the Legacy Foundation Committee members.

Respectfully submitted,
Jerry Ritzman, Chair

IT COMMITTEE

I did research on cloud computing for non-profits and got us signed up with Microsoft Azure. They have a \$3,000 per year grant program for Non-Profits.

Started doing offsite backups to MS Azure.

Future with MS Azure will be to reduce the onsite hardware and move to the cloud.

Respectfully submitted,
Chad Gray, Chair

MINISTRIES

CARE & VISITATION MINISTRIES

Communicating our concerns, celebrating our joys, visiting our sick and homebound, assisting with rides, praying for special concerns, and keeping all our members connected with First Christian Church are accomplished with help from our various Care Ministries.

Card Care Ministry - Cards are sent to members who are celebrating their 50+ wedding anniversary and 80+ birthdays. Thank you to Nanci Sullivan for thoughtfully sending out the cards. We pray our members can feel the caring spirit of our congregation conveyed by these notes and cards.

Prayer Chain - There are over 150 members on the Prayer Chain and notifications are sent via email. Contact the office if you would like to be added. Prayer requests may be made through the pastors by contacting the office.

Prayer Shawl Ministry - Prayer shawls lovingly knitted and prayed over by members of the congregation are delivered to church members in the hospital or recovering from illness at home. A special thank you to Marilyn Slaby for keeping us well stocked with beautiful shawls and lap blankets.

Homebound Ministry - The goal of this Ministry is to keep our members assured that we care and that they are not forgotten. They are supported by gifts and letters from God's Kids Club and the Outreach Committee. Everyone can be part of this ministry by simply sending a "Birthday Card" or a "Thinking of You" note. They really appreciate hearing from you. A Homebound List, name, address, and birthday is available in the Gathering Area by the

Registration Table. Homebound members received deliveries of "Blessing Bags" on numerous occasions.

SALVATION ARMY

First Christian Church remains actively involved in the Wadsworth Salvation Army in many ways. The soup kitchen, now serving off-site, is always in need of cooks and bakers on a monthly basis. The Women's Auxiliary is a wonderful opportunity for the women of our church to get involved; beside you will see many FCC members there! Currently there are several FCC members serving on the Board of the Salvation Army.

For the first time, the Red Kettle Campaign brought the FCC Bell Ringers inside to Giant Eagle. Ringing in early December, the FCC team collected the most of all locations since the campaign had begun! The goal for 2023 was \$50,000. Through the efforts and support of ringers, friends, organizations and donors, the grand total raised was \$56,570. Thank you for your commitment and support of one of the most vital local missions. Knowing all donations remain in Wadsworth, Wadsworth Township, and Sharon Township means we see these benefits every day.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Hall, Coordinator

FUNERAL DINNER COMMITTEE

The Funeral Dinner Committee provides a warm and inviting meal in a comfortable setting for family members to gather after a memorial service for their loved one. The menu is chosen by the family and prepared at a nominal cost. Desserts and beverage are provided by our church through donations by members.

This is a truly appreciated ministry at FCC. A huge thank you to Sandy Galbreath and Mary Christ for heading this Committee (usually last minute). Thank you to all who volunteered their time preparing meals, calling volunteers, serving, and donating desserts.

ADULT FELLOWSHIP

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

The FCC Women's Ministry invites all women of the church to participate in our programming throughout the year.

In December, we invited Kat Skoff back to be our guide as she instructed 28 of us in painting a beautiful winter/holiday scene.

We have sent out a survey to the women of the church asking what they need, and want to see, in our programming this year.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Errante

FIRST MEN OF FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The following are highlights for the First Men's program from 2023:

Men's Gathering: *Get Real* - Feb 18

First Men of FCC Wadsworth and Medina gathered at Letha House Park Shelter west of Medina, for a day's program focused on concluding Derek Maul's study, Get Real, a Spiritual Journey for Men, which was the focus of our prior fall Men's Forum. Chris Jones, Donn Taylor, and Dan Sondles led the group through the day's program. Approximately 16 men attended.

Men's Forum

FCC Wadsworth and Medina men met weekly from mid-February through March and again from September through mid-November covering the following materials:

- In God's Image, What the New Testament Teaches About Being a Man, by Derek Maul
- The Unmaking of a Part-Time Christian, by Derek Maul

Fellowship Events:

All Church Euchre Tournaments - We held tournaments this year on Friday evenings

- Jan. 20 - 30 players, winners: Emily Kerstetter and Randy Kerstetter
- Nov. 11 - 24 players, winners: Sally Porter and John Hoover

Lenten Breakfast - On Sat., Mar. 25, we held a Lenten Breakfast featuring Brian McKeighen's secret recipe pancakes. Following breakfast, the group shared a reflection on Honesty and Authenticity from Derek Maul's In God's Image study program. About 20 men attended this event.

All-church picnic & softball game - On Sun., Aug. 6, we sponsored an All Church Picnic to complement our traditional Annual Softball Game at Valley View Park. We had about 25 attend the picnic and 16 players of all ages filled out the rosters.

Golf Outing - On Sun., Aug. 20, four scramble teams teed off at Pine Valley Golf Club. It was a fun afternoon which concluded with a cookout at the Kaufman farm.

Fall Kickoff Pig Roast - Sept. 25 - It was a perfect day for a cookout at River Styx Park. 25 men gathered for an afternoon of fellowship including our traditional corn hole tournament followed by Noah and Bill Bentley's amazing smoked pork and chicken. We had planned to feature author, Derek Maul, as a guest speaker following the meal, but he had to cancel his trip to Ohio at the last minute. Chris Jones shared some materials from Derek and introduced the group to his book, The Unmaking of a Part Time Christian, which was the focus of our Fall Forum meetings. Derek is scheduled to visit us for a weekend in February to lead an all-church family event, off-site men's gathering, and preach on Sunday. We were able to donate \$150 to each recovery house programs, Cathy's House in Medina and Francis House in Wadsworth.

Thanks to all the hard work and commitment by our steering committee of Donn Taylor, Dan Sondles, Michael Fox, and Dave Baker (FCC Medina). Many thanks also to everyone who supported and participated in our events who helped to make our limited programs impactful.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Jones, FCC First Men Coordinator

J.O.Y. FELLOWSHIP

No Senior Citizens at FCC!!!

There are no longer any Senior Citizens at FCC, there are only **Just Older Youth!** Functions for this group became J.O.Y. Fellowship events. This was in keeping with the Visioning Committee's recommendation. A brainstorming/planning session was held on March 6, with Milissa Bachtel, Cindy Farver, Pat Neal, Pat Rathmell, Leanne Virgin, Kirt Virgin, and Jerry Ritzman attending. The group committed to help plan and support at least four events in 2023. That commitment was met, with the following events held during 2023.

- Kickoff Kookout , April 13 at the Ritzmans, 60+ in attendance.
- Crazy Cornhole Tournament in May, 30+ attendees (Karen and Keith Longfield organized).
- Picnic at Kaufman Farm in July. 35+ attendees. Dora and Tom Kaufman hosting. Tom on vocals, Kevin K. on guitar.
- Amish Country trip in October for lunch and the musical, "Dear Soldier Boy". 34 in attendance. Luanne Beavers-Willis organizer and promoter.

Plans are being made for Brainstorming/Planning II in February. Any and all JOY are encouraged to attend.

Respectfully submitted,
Jerry Ritzman

2023 FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS REPORT

2023 CONTRIBUTIONS BUDGET \$478,065.00

Regular Offerings Received		
Envelopes	\$447,956.03	
Loose Offerings	3,222.50	
Sunday School	559,48	
Initial	<u>1,475.15</u>	
Total Regular Offerings		453,213.16
Special Offerings Received:		
Easter	\$ 3,762.75	
Thanksgiving	2,732.75	
Christmas	<u>4,317.75</u>	
Total Special Offerings		<u>10,813.25</u>
Total Received Toward 2023 Budget		<u>464,026.41</u>
Amount Under Budget 2023		<u>\$ 14,038.59</u>

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Johnson, Assistant Treasurer

**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH - TREASURER'S REPORT
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

GENERAL FUND - CASH ACTIVITY - 2023

Cash Balance, January 1, 2023		\$218,271
 RECEIPTS:		
Contributions (Budget: \$478,065)		466,397
Subtotal		684,668
 DISBURSEMENTS:		
	EXPENSE	BUDGET
Salaries & Benefits	292,085	\$335,713
Insurance	15,831	15,717
Copier Lease	3,585	4,000
Purchase Equipment/software	407	450
Office Supplies	1,281	1,200
Church Supplies	3,607	2,700
Postage	634	1,500
Flowers	49	150
Custodial Supplies	881	750
Christian Education Supplies	0	25
Subscriptions/books	213	250
Curriculum	572	1,660
Music	0	400
Maintenance	5,811	6,600
Maintenance Contracts	4,521	4,500
Grounds Maintenance	7,926	5,000
Continued Improvement	1,666	4,500
Christian Education Programs	2,138	2,425
Youth/Young Adult Programs	2,221	5,150
Church Programs/Functions	2,668	3,025
Utilities	23,683	26,150
Technology/Social Media/Advertising	3,434	4,500
Credit Card/Banking Fees	4,765	5,500
Continuing Education	50	1,000
Miscellaneous	2,536	200
Total Budgeted amount for Outreach		45,000
Disciples Mission Fund	21,596	0
Local: Camp Christian - Operations	4,362	0
Local: FISH	2,250	0
Local: Salvation Army	2,550	0
Local: Cleveland Christian Home	1,200	0
Local: Feeding Medina County	6,000	0
Local: Habitat for Humanity	900	0
Local: The Garage	600	0
Misc. Outreach	7,388	0
Designated: CTEN	500	0
Designated: HHN	3,100	0
Subtotal	431,010	478,065
Less: Transfer From Memorials	-2	0
Total Expense / Budget	\$431,008	\$480,493
 Cash Balance, December 31, 2023		 \$253,660

**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH - TREASURER'S REPORT
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

BUILDING FUNDS - FUND BALANCE - DECEMBER 31, 2022

Cash Account - Building Fund	\$61,254
Beasley Growth Fund - CCF	55,542
(Investment value: \$72,137)	
Total Fund Balance - Building Funds	<u>\$116,796</u>

SPECIAL ACCOUNTS - FUND BALANCES - DECEMBER 31, 2023

FELLOWSHIP FUNDS:	
J.O.Y. Fellowship	\$94
L.Critchfield Women's Retreat	587
MEMORIAL FUNDS:	
General Memorials	27,055
Landis/Snyder Children's	687
Trent/Kelley/Brubaker Youth	17,163
PERMANENT FUNDS:	
Legacy Foundation	0
Common Balanced Fund (Market balance 9/30/23)	214,860
SPECIAL MINISTRY FUNDS:	
Good Samaritan	10,458
Funeral Dinner	804
Martha Everhard Bibles	4,842
Women's Ministries	4,458
Men's Ministries	1,074
Preschool	8,674
OUTREACH FUNDS:	
Outreach Committee	7,158
Children's Sunday School Outreach	534
J.Singleton Preschool Scholarships	3,114
Compassion/Reconciliation	513
Christmas Outreach	25
MISCELLANEOUS FUNDS:	
Choir-Chancel	3,683
Handbell Choir	709
Choir- Children's	346
Library	200
Children's Library	118
Garden Group	554
Staff Continuing Education	1,578
IT Fund	621
Grief Ministry	519
Interior Building Revitalization	250
Legacy Fnd./Current Ministry - Building	2,951
Designated	2,320
Vision Committee	7,348
Cash Reserves	96,439
Total Fund Balance - Special Accounts	<u>\$419,735</u>

**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH - TREASURER'S REPORT
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

OUTREACH SUMMARY 2023

<u>Cash Disbursements:</u>	
General Fund	\$50,446
Compassion	24,633
Special & other accounts	4,000
<u>Other:</u>	
Mission trip/Camp fees/Other expenses paid	860
Total Outreach Disbursed 2022	<u>\$79,939</u>

There were many non-cash drives and outreach projects held by the Outreach Committee, CYF, Women's Ministries and other groups, including the following:
Food and personal items for the Salvation Army (Red Bag program), as well as school supplies and backpacks for Salvation Army, clothing and supplies for Marian's Closet, and Churchworld Service Buckets.
Prayer shawls, and many other items made by Sewing Sisters .
The Giving Tree provided gifts and gift cards for many families in need.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Jones, Treasurer

