

FIRST CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024



SEATTLE

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF SEATTLE
IS A PROGRESSIVE FAITH COMMUNITY OFFERING
A PLACE TO GROW SPIRITUALLY AND A REFUGE
OF INCLUSIVE CHRISTIANITY. WE USE OUR VOICES
AND ENERGY TO ADVOCATE FOR PERSONS ON
SOCIETY'S MARGINS AND FOR ALL GOD'S
CREATION.**



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THE YEAR BY THE NUMBERS

153 Average Sunday attendance (Online + In-Person)

ONLINE WORSHIP

246

YouTube
Subscribers

30%

eNews Open
percentage

159

Subscribers to
our Lenten
Devotional
daily email list

GIVING

\$375,630

2023 pledge
offering giving

\$22,555

2023 upledged
offering giving

\$7,504

2023 bequeathed Gifts

MEMBERSHIP & MINISTRIES

5

New members at
First Church

6,035

Shared Breakfast
meals served in 2023



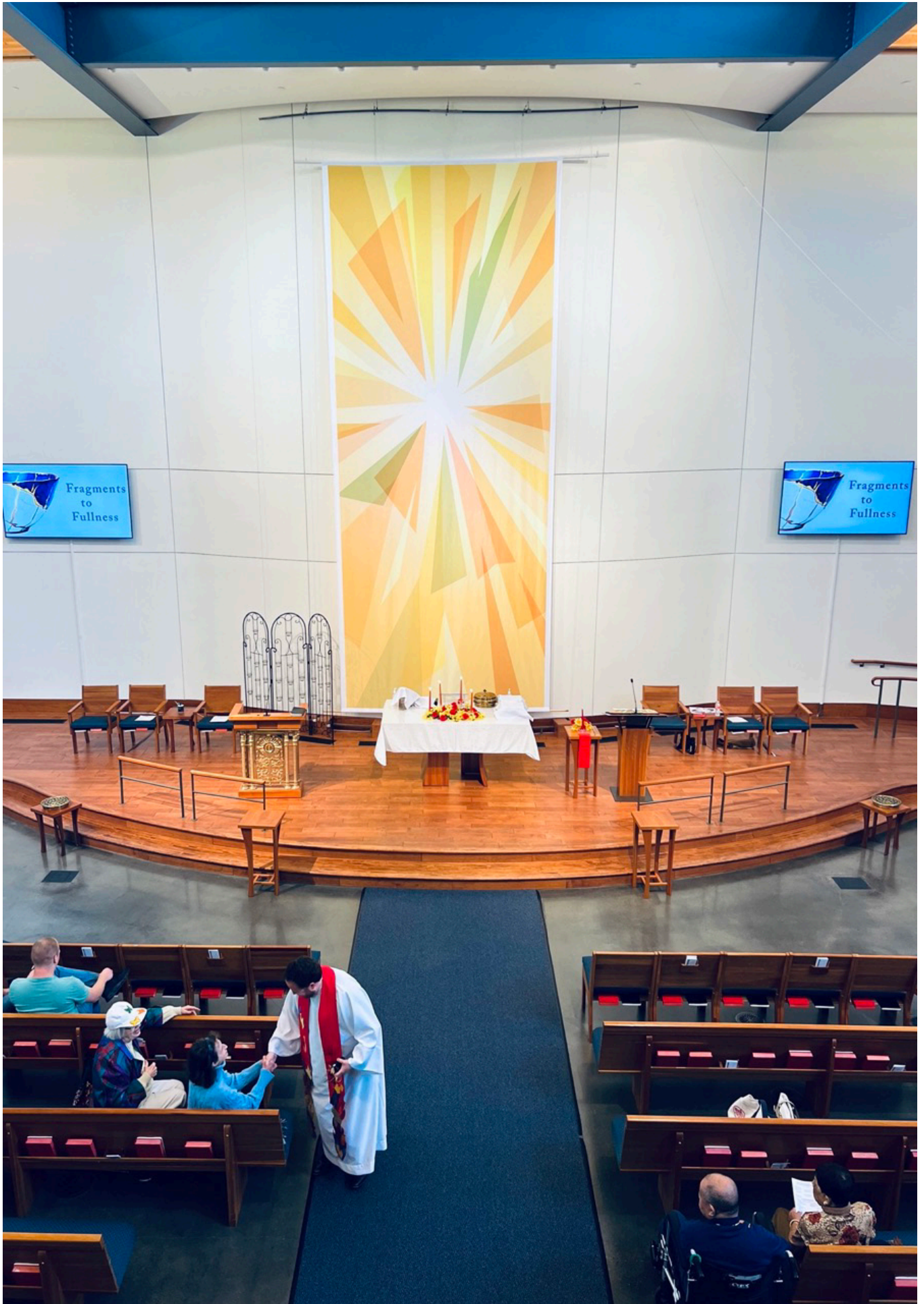




photo credit to Mike DuBose UMNS

REV. JEREMY SMITH

There was a moment at the General Conference (a worldwide United Methodist conference held at the end of April 2024) that was surreal. We are used to the roller coaster of dry parliamentary procedures alongside emotional appeals for important issues. But close to the last day, the opening worship band began to play the 1970's song "Love Train" by the O'Jays, and the worldwide conference started dancing together. After removing harmful language against LGBTQ+ persons, the gathering of Methodists couldn't help but dance and celebrate.

There are SO MANY moments of spontaneous joy over the past year.

- ◆ JOY at the 2024 class of confirmands as eight youth professed the vows for church membership and the entire church recommitted ourselves to discipleship in Christ.
- ◆ JOY at the full house for worship on Christmas Eve
- ◆ JOY at the restructure of the church leadership that brought together larger groups around the table and kept the decisions close to the people most affected.
- ◆ JOY at the completion of the 2010-2024 section of the History Wall.
- ◆ JOY at each baptism as our community left the sanctuary changed, transformed, because we were a community plus one more
- ◆ JOY even at hard transitions of saying goodbye to beloved staff, members to moves away, and celebrations of life of those who left this mortal coil. We know we will see each other again.
- ◆ JOY at transformed hearts, convicted of social justice needs by our lunch and learns, meaningful movies, preachers, and speakers.
- ◆ JOY at over \$20,000 in grants received or promised for Shared Breakfast food and supplies since our last Annual Report...and the transition to veteran's housing at the newly re-named Blaine Veteran's Center.

Rev. Jeremy's Report

Isaiah 55:12 reminds us that the people of God “shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills...shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” It’s a great reminder that we can find joy anywhere, even in rote committee meetings, even in worship, even in 7:00 am breakfast service, even in death. And that if we really want to celebrate, we need to care for creation too so it can continue to be joyful with us.

I’m so proud of First Church for finding the joy in justice work, and the energy to get through the hard things. You can read all these celebrations in the coming pages of this annual report.

In closing, this is my last Annual Report for First Church. I conclude seven amazing years with First Church as I am being reassigned to Edmonds UMC in July 2024. Thank you for giving me the great, incomparable privilege of being your pastor through these years. With this writing, I release you from looking to me as your pastor, and I ask your forgiveness for the ways that I fell short as your pastor. I will take with me the lessons I learned and memories I have cherished with you—and in our United Methodist always connected way, this is goodbye for now, but not forever.

As always, remember my constant refrain: “All shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” Julian of Norwich

Blessings and we will see each other again,



Pastor Jeremy

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS //

CHURCH COUNCIL

Em Rigler, Chair

The United Methodist Book of Discipline outlines the purpose of the Church Council as such:

252.1. Purpose - The church council shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life. It shall envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the mission and ministry of the church. The church council shall be amenable to and function as the administrative agency of the charge conference. In simpler terms, the Council serves as a place for fellowship, conversation, and engagement for the leaders of First Church.

This was the first year of our grand experiment with the Administrative Board being separate from the full Council. With a smaller Council, members were able to focus our time together more tightly on handling decisions outside of the administrative sphere. The council approved the budget as proposed by the Finance Committee (more details of which are in the Finance section).

Members also endorsed the Seattle Housing Levy at the request of the Church & Society Social Justice Committee, leaning into our congregational values of working to address homelessness. Finally, the Council welcomed Ann Forest from the North Seattle Emergency Hubs to present on our possible needs for curriculum and materials around emergency aid kits.

Individual committees continued their work within the four areas of focus of the 2022-2025 Vision. The four focus areas are:

- Seeking intercultural fluency and committing to anti-racism
- Seeking to take action for Climate Justice
- Seeking to act in solidarity with the Hungry and Homeless
- Seeking to rebuild Community Connections and Collaborations

Overall, this was a time of transition as we experimented with the Administrative Board and the Council, a structure that it seems we will keep for the time being. We were able to do the business of the church and represent the congregation well. It was a great group of dedicated leaders working together for the betterment of our community, and it was a pleasure to serve.

STAFF PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Staff Parish Relations Committee:

Ruby Amegh, Jane Gregg (chair), Cary Lee, Nancy Sherertz

It is with gratitude and affection that we reflect on the ministry of our First Church Staff this last year.

A Stable and Changing Team

We celebrated 14- and 15-year anniversaries and service of long-time staff members Dir of Music Elisabeth Ellis and Dir of Food Services Duuna Evans! Melinda Waggoner earned a new title and increased responsibilities as Director of Operations. These folks were joined by their colleagues, Yoga program instructor Sharon Donahue, Facilities supervisor, Sione Tuihalamaka, Sr Pastor Rev. Jeremy, Communications Dir Gina del Rosario at our annual Staff Appreciation lunch in December.

In March we welcomed Jackie Celin back to staff, this time as our Director of Engagement. Julie Cress joins Alyx Gregg on our nursery staff. In April we welcomed Jordan Reynolds as a bookkeeper.

In November we thanked Jonathyn Kraig for his many years of faithful service as he decided to focus on his teaching duties; thankfully, he continues as a member of the congregation.

This coming June we will honor the 7-year ministry of Reverend Jeremy Smith and his family as he transitions to his new parish assignment at Edmonds United Methodist Church.

In July we will welcome Reverend Wongee Joh as Senior Pastor and we look forward to supporting her in her ministry with us.

In 2025 we plan to fill the Director of Youth Ministries position (which we placed on hold due to budget constraints for 2024).

Stable and Changing Goals

We remain committed to the goals we identified to align with and support the new First Church Vision for 2022-2025. In addition, this year we added goals related to the Sr. Pastor transition.

Goal

New Prepare for a pastoral transition. Honor outgoing pastor and provide closure for congregation. Prepare welcome and onboarding for incoming pastor in a way that supports pastor, staff, and congregation to be engaged in the community and mission of the church.

New Manage change openly and deliberatively so that church members are included in a transparent Pastoral transition process

Ensure hiring and recruiting is inclusive and address bias in our hiring practices

Progress Made this Year

- ◆ Included staff and congregation in the planning throughout (see goal #2)
- ◆ Updated skills analysis of staff and prepared for transition of knowledge and skill building.
- ◆ Created onboarding plan for incoming pastor with knowledge management consultant in the congregation
- ◆ Conducted 2 congregational listening sessions and a survey to and used this input as we prepare to onboard a new pastor.
- ◆ Communicated monthly to the congregation about the transition process and provided opportunities for questions and input after services.
- ◆ Updated job descriptions, recruitment sources, and interview questions to ensure more equitable practices

Goal

Progress Made this Year

Review the employee handbook for alignment with anti-racist principles and to eliminate bias.

✦ Last year we reviewed employee handbook. Will prioritize this activity for next year with new pastor.

Arrange for training and equip staff with references and assistance to give to people when they reach out for help with homelessness (maps, hours of operation, allows staff to act as tier 1 support so not everything has to go to Jeremy)

✦ Included these items on the training and onboarding plan for pastoral transition

Encourage ecologically minded actions by staff, such as use of paper, use of air conditioning, etc.

✦ Prioritized this for next year after onboarding new pastor

Encourage supervisors to approve staff development/training opportunities and participation in any of these areas. For example, allow staff to participate in climate justice activities on paid time.

✦ Supervisors are aware of this opportunity. SPRC reinforces during regular check-ins

SPRC continued our practice this year of assigning a liaison for each clergy and staff. Member for regular and ongoing support.

In appreciation,

*Staff Parish Relations Committee:
Ruby Amegah, Jane Gregg (chair), Cary Lee, Nancy Sherertz*

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership Co-Secretaries

Claire Gebben and Mona Tanaka

Baptisms

Graham David Harless

Reid Matthew Harless

TOTAL MEMBERS REPORTED AT THE START OF 2023

369

Members received in 2023

5

Alex Becker

Nahal Entezam Nia

Reagan Page

Isaac Pruden

Jean Braun

Transferred out/Withdrawn

12

David Ham

Calvin Goings

Liz Powell

Lauren Shimek Bloom

Janey Smith

Dave Stewart

Linda Jansen Stewart

Sarah Jansen

Gregory Johnson

Amelia Esmele

Ann Scharf

Bradley Scharf

Deceased

3

Renwick Hester – August 10, 2023

Evelyn Joneson – August 22, 2023

Rolf Luth – October 1, 2023

TOTAL MEMBERS AT THE END OF 2023

359

First reading of 7 names for membership removal

Jennifer Anderson

Jim Whitson

Barbara Baker

Doug Baldwin

Beatrice Mozelle Bowers

Alfredo Gomez

Drew McKibben

12



ADMIN BOARD CHAIR, JIM SCHONE

The 2022-2023 Annual Report showcased a "new, simplified committee structure" that the church intended to implement in the 2023-2024 program year. This new structure included the creation of an Administrative Board that was to include the responsibilities of four committees under the previous structure: Finance, Trustees, Staff Parish Relations Committee and Stewardship. This new structure was a response to the challenge coming out of the pandemic of filling all the positions on those committees. The goal in combining these committees, all of which had met separately involving different lay members in years past, was to create a more efficient structure (better decision making and less meeting time) for handling the church's administrative needs.

Deb and John Loacker graciously hosted the first meeting of the newly-formed Administrative Board at their home in August of 2023 as a wonderful way for the members to get to know one another and to talk about how to make this new structure work. Over the course of the last 8 months, various adjustments have been made to the meeting structure in order to make the best use of staff and laity participation. While there is never a perfect solution, in general, this new structure is meeting the goal of creating a more efficient process for handling the church's administrative needs.

Following are the reports of the subcommittees that comprise our Administrative Board.

FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

Joe Frost, Chair



Faith and optimism are essential values for a church, but not necessarily for its budget. For the calendar year of 2023, we applied them to our finances and were pleasantly surprised.

We approved a 2023 budget with an \$30,059 deficit and with the proviso that we would revisit the budget in the Spring to make any cuts or adjustments that would be needed. In addition, we initiated a program to invest the endowments and savings into CDs that paid significantly better rates than the investment options available from our banks.

On review in April 2023 we did not find it necessary to seriously amend the budget. Pledged and unpledged offerings were in the range we had hoped for, parking income was buoyed by the resumption of sports events and concerts at Climate Pledge Arena, and our expenses were being zealously managed by all staff and volunteers.

Also in April 2023 we launched “The Spirit Moves Us Forward,” a capital campaign to retire the \$450,000+ mortgage. The generosity of the congregation’s response, even in these uncertain financial times, leads us to expect to pay off the mortgage completely rather than refinance it in August, 2025. For the first time in fifteen years, we expect to be debt-free.

By year’s end, the combination of better than expected income and cost savings in unfilled positions yielded a net surplus for the year of \$11,939. Without facetiousness, we can say this was an answer to our prayers.

TRUSTEES CHAIR, JOHN LOACKER

The Seattle First United Methodist Church Trustees has the responsibility to oversee the church properties (the sanctuary property, the garage and the Blaine Veterans Center). We consider it an honor to serve the church in this manner.

As a volunteer group, we are very appreciative of the involvement of our Director of Operations, Melinda Waggoner, and our Facilities Manager, Sione Tuihalamaka. We are grateful for the efforts of these staff members who help keep this highly sophisticated facility operational, clean, and safe. Both Melinda and Sione work hard to monitor our facilities, engage with contractors, and strive to make every dollar count towards repair and maintenance.

Documentation of our procedures has been a focus for our group for years, and we are building a resource for future volunteers and staff that provide information on procedures and practices to keep this building running smoothly. This information is being uploaded to a Google Drive to enable easy access.

We are grateful for the many volunteers, including our board members who facilitated many tasks these past months.

We offer our sincere thanks to the volunteers who helped with yard clean ups, replacement of hundreds of lights (requiring a great deal of planning), and those that facilitated the boiler room clean up (including the building of new storage racks in Fellowship Hall).

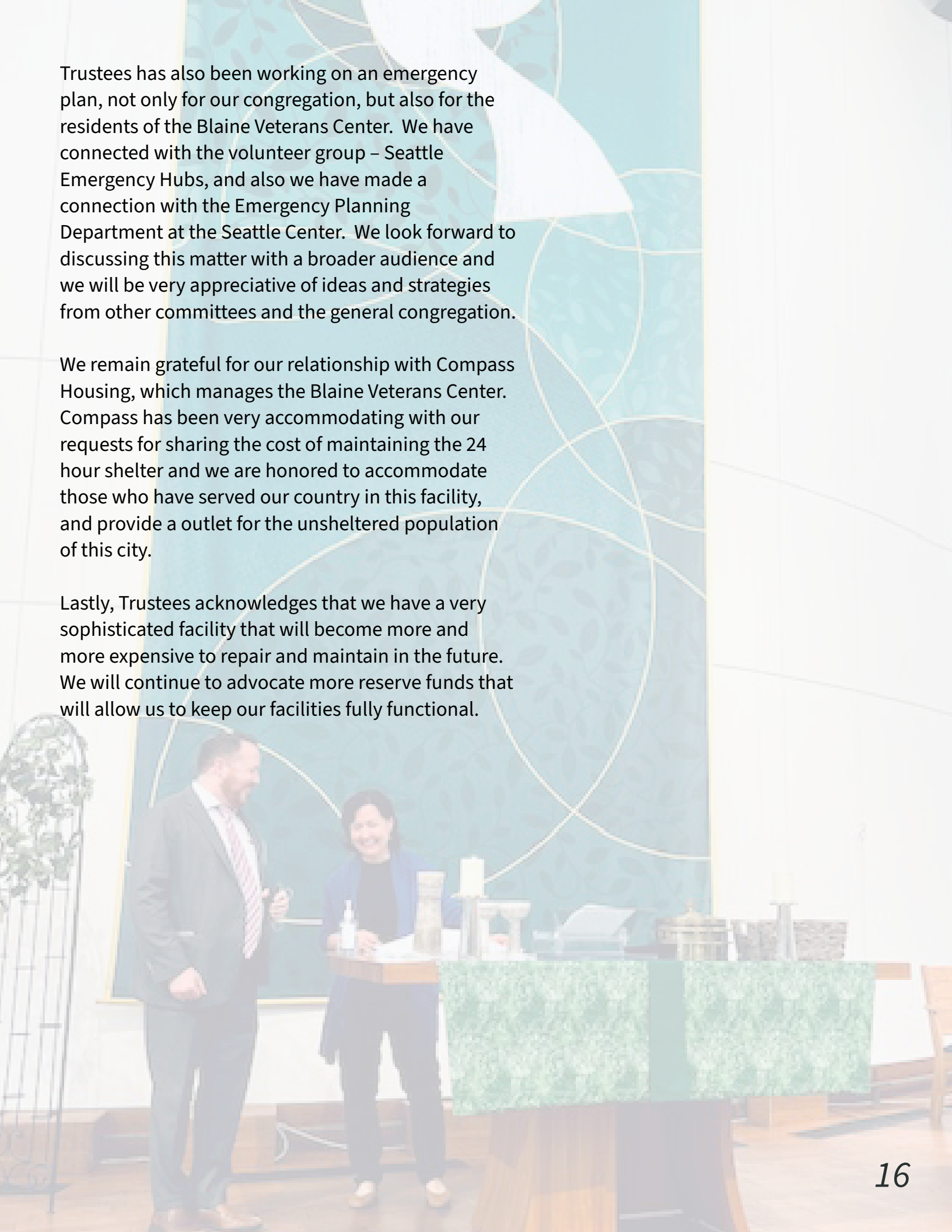
With the assistance of our Climate Justice Team we are focused on compliance with the 2040 government mandate to convert to all-electric in the upcoming years (our heating system, and kitchen use gas). Also, members of that team are researching the possibility of installing solar panels as a means to reduce our energy consumption/carbon footprint. We thank them for their effort and energy on this matter.

In alignment with the stance of our church regarding environmental issues, we have also transferred our rights to a coal mine (bequeathed to us in the 1960's) in Illinois to a conservation group (Prairie Rivers Network) in that state. Not only will this prohibit mining activity in this area, but this act makes a strong statement by our church regarding our recognition of the serious environmental concern of carbon emissions.

Trustees has also been working on an emergency plan, not only for our congregation, but also for the residents of the Blaine Veterans Center. We have connected with the volunteer group – Seattle Emergency Hubs, and also we have made a connection with the Emergency Planning Department at the Seattle Center. We look forward to discussing this matter with a broader audience and we will be very appreciative of ideas and strategies from other committees and the general congregation.

We remain grateful for our relationship with Compass Housing, which manages the Blaine Veterans Center. Compass has been very accommodating with our requests for sharing the cost of maintaining the 24 hour shelter and we are honored to accommodate those who have served our country in this facility, and provide a outlet for the unsheltered population of this city.

Lastly, Trustees acknowledges that we have a very sophisticated facility that will become more and more expensive to repair and maintain in the future. We will continue to advocate more reserve funds that will allow us to keep our facilities fully functional.



2023 BUDGET REPORT

Sources of Funds

Pledge Offering	375,630
Expected Giving	36,696
Unpledged	22,555
Loose Offering	2,406
Easter	2,074
Thanksgiving	1,767
Christmas	2,340
Building Use	3,825
Bequeathed Gifts	7,504
Events Income	1,963
Garage NET Income	300,334
Miscellaneous Income	826
Investment Interest	8,394
TOTAL	766,314

Sources of Funds

SPRC	432,620
Facilities	173,497
Administration	22,219
Food Service	10,045
Communications	3,516
Apportionment & General Conference	86,296
Church & Society	813
International Missions	0
Pride Parade	2,300
Welcoming & Congregational Care	22
Worship & Arts	11,543
Worship Supplies	6,921
Spiritual Formation	4,583
TOTAL	754,375
NET SURPLUS (OR DEFICIT)	11,939

2023 FUND BALANCES

Temporary Restricted Funds

Handbells	15
Camp/Event Scholarships	1,715
General Scholarships	13,967
Library	1,709
Yoga Ministry	1,041
Building Reserve (Maintenance)	26,411
Pride	1,942
Archives	27
Youth	409
Retreat Reserve	10,157
Global Missions/Salud Y Paz	1,209
Organ Fund	1,713
Undesignated Memorials	5,161
Music	104
Capital Campaign – Debt/Mortgage Elimination	79,157
Nursing Scholarship	4,283
Indianola Camp Scholarship	2,657
Homelessness	10,044
Gloria Shared Breakfast	23,368
Tech Upgrade	417
Campaign Expenses	5,536
Temp Restricted Total	191,042

Permanent Funds

Endowment - Non-Garage	41,118
Viola & Gordon Gump Endowment	314,875
Nursing Endowment	6,000
Scholarship Endowment	24,000
TOTAL	385,993

Assets	2023	2022	Change
Cash and Cash Equivalents	228,319	389,824	161,505
Receivables	58,128	55,629	2499
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	2,406	4,031	1,625
Temporary Restricted Funds	191,042	66,723	124,319
Permanent Funds	101,370	403,455	302,085
Property Held for Sale	5,000	5,000	0
Investments	400,196		400,196
Land, Building & Equipment	22,190,121	22,727,405	537,284
Other Assets - Reserve Coal Property	2,600	2,600	0
ASSETS TOTAL	23,179,182	23,654,666	475,484

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

	2590	13,857	11,267
Account Payable	-400	6,723	6323
Miscellaneous Liabilities	240,526	423,810	183,284
Long-Term Liabilities	242,716	444,390	201,674
LIABILITIES TOTAL			
	22,936,466	23,226,175	
Equity	23,179,182	23,646,985	

Total Liabilities & Equity



NOMINATED CHURCH LEADERS 2024-2025

All Members / The All Church Conference in June 2022 affirmed a fourfold Vision 2025: addressing connections, hunger and homeless, climate justice, and racial justice. Every First Church member is expected to participate in some aspect of the Vision.

Church Council / Program and Administrative executive team at First Church

Officers	Lay Leader / Chair	Barbara Moreland
	Vice-Chair	Wally Shaffer
	Secretary	<i>vacant</i>
Members	Youth Member	Julius Perez
	Creating Sacred Exp.	Isaac Pruden
	Creating Sacred Exp.	
	Connecting Our Community	Chris Russell
	Connecting Our Community	
	Transforming the World	
	Transforming the World	
	Admin Board- Chair	Jim Schone
	Admin Board - SPRC	Jane Gregg
	Admin Board - Trustees	John Loacker
	Admin Board - Finance	Joe Frost
	Membership Secretary Co-chair	Claire Gebben
	Membership Secretary Co-chair	Mona Tanaka
	Conference Lay Member	Barbara Moreland
	Conference Lay Member -alt	Jane Gregg
	Staff	Rev. Wongee Joh, Rev. Jackie Celin, Gina del Rosario, Melinda Waggoner

Administrative Board / Combines the Disciplinary authority and various responsibilities of the Finance Committee, Staff Parish Relations Committee, and Trustees into an Administrative Team, a single body of up to 15 members called to “resource” the work of the church. Reports to Church Council.

Officers	Chair	Jim Schone
	Vice Chair	Cary Lee
	Secretary	Karen McOmber



Members

SPRC / Lay Leader
 SPRC
 SPRC
 Finance
 Finance
 Finance
 Trustee
 Trustee
 Trustee
 Staff
 Staff

Nancy Sherertz
 Ruby Amegah
 Jane Gregg
 Joe Frost
 Ed Tanaka
 Warren Askov
 John Loacker
 Linda Allen
 Doug Donohue
 Rev. Wongee Joh
 Melinda Waggoner

Transforming the World Program Area / "Seek to "change the world" through collaborations with those outside the building in activities to include non-attenders in a personal, meaningful way. Reports to Church Council.

Program Area co-chairs:

Vacant, Vacant

Church & Society - co-chair
 Church & Society - co-chair
 Church & Society
 Church & Society
 Church & Society
 Church & Society

Dale Alekel
 Nickie Askov
 Bill Sherertz
 Nancy Sherertz
 Sue Porter
 Warren Askov

Climate Justice Working Group - chair
 Climate Justice Working Group
 Climate Justice Working Group

Tom Carlson
 Peter Jabin
 Dale Alekel

Climate Justice Working Group
 Climate Justice Working Group
 Climate Justice Working Group
 Climate Justice Working Group
 Climate Justice Working Group

Doug Donohue
 Bruna Hygino
 Ann Shaffer
 Walter Shaffer
 Bill Sherertz

Global & Local Missions - chair
 Global & Local Missions
 Global & Local Missions
 Global & Local Missions
 Global & Local Missions

Michael Scott
 Michiko Kono
 Adam Scott
 Jackie Celin
 Katie Harris

Urban Outreach - Administrative chair
 Urban Outreach - Operations chair
 Urban Outreach - Coordinating chair
 Urban Outreach
 Urban Outreach
 Urban Outreach
 Urban Outreach

Bruce Hall
 Judson Taylor
 Rev. Jackie Celin
 Beth Snyder
 Bruna Hygino
 Kris Henn
 Sue Porter



Connecting our Community / Develop opportunities to socially connect congregational members with each other in person, online, and by mail. Efforts include reaching out to new people, those not able to come to the church building, and building connections with each other at and outside the building. Reports to Church Council.

Program Area Co-chairs:

Chris Russell, **vacant**

Congregational Care - chair
 Congregational Care
 Congregational Care
 Congregational Care
 Congregational Care
 Congregational Care

Joyce Frost
 Claire Gebben
 Debra Loacker
 Holly Jones-Rothacker
 John MacKean
 Nancy Dudgeon

Prayer Team - chair

Joyce Frost

Camp & Retreats - co-chair
 Camp & Retreats - co-chair
 Camp & Retreats - co-chair
 Camp & Retreats
 Camp & Retreats
 Camp & Retreats
 Camp & Retreats
 Camp & Retreats

Diane White-Shaw
 Denise DeGabriele
 Karen McOmber
 Mark Forbes
 Bruce Hall
 Joyce Frost
 Julie Sullenszino
 Sharon Donohue

Welcome & Hospitality - chair
 Welcome & Hospitality
 Welcome & Hospitality
 Welcome & Hospitality
 Welcome & Hospitality
 Welcome & Hospitality

vacant
 Beth Snyder
 Eleanor Schubert
 Karen McOmber
 Shawn Smith
 Mona Tanaka



Creating Sacred Experiences / Develop opportunities for personal spiritual growth through meaningful worship services, and appropriate spiritual development outside the worship service for all ages. Reports to Church Council.

Program co-chairs:

Isaac Pruden, *vacant*

Adult Team - chair
 Adult Team
 Adult Team
 Adult Team

Beth Snyder
 Deb Anderson
 Holly Harvey
 April Little

Children & Youth - chair
 Children & Youth
 Children & Youth
 Children & Youth
 Children & Youth
 Children & Youth
 Children & Youth

Lauryn Fraas
 Dave Hiniker
 Diane White-Shaw
 Holly Jones-Rothacker
 Julius Perez
 Katie Harris
 Lesley Heerwagen

Worship & Arts - chair
 Worship & Arts
 Worship & Arts
 Worship & Arts
 Worship & Arts
 Worship & Arts
 Worship & Arts
 Worship & Arts Staff

Peter Jabin
 Craig Mathews
 Barbara Moreland
 Erin Elaine Gail
 Isaac Pruden
 Jerry Roberson
 Teresa Benedict
 Elisabeth Ellis



Standing Committees / teams that gather as needed for a task or purpose. Reports to Church Council or Admin Board.

Anti-racism Task Force - Co-chairs

Jane Gregg, Jonathyn Kraig

Endowment Committee - Chair

Mark Forbes

Endowment Committee Staff

Melinda Waggoner

Endowment Committee Staff

Rev. Wongee Joh

Endowment Committee Admin Rep

Ed Tanaka

Endowment Committee Council Rep

Barbara Moreland

Scholarship Committee subteam:

Denise DeGabriele, Diane White-Shaw,

Melinda Waggoner

Donor Acknowledgement subteam:

Vi Boyer

Nominations - Chair

Joe Frost

Nominations - Members

Kris Henn, Chris Russell, Barbara Moreland,

Jonathyn Kraig

Nominations - Staff

Rev. Wongee Joh

Organ Committee - Chair

Don Crawley

Organ Committee

Cary Lee

Organ Committee

Dana Birkby

Organ Committee

Dorlene Agenbroad

Organ Committee

Jim Palmquist

Organ Committee

John MacKean

Organ Committee - Staff

Elisabeth Ellis

Stewardship - Chair

Vacant

Stewardship - Members

Sharon Perez, Kathryn Nelson

Stewardship - Staff

Gina del Rosario, Melinda Waggoner

Trustees Building Usage - Chair

Mark Forbes

Members

Joyce Frost, Jonathyn Kraig

Staff

Melinda Waggoner

Trustees Building Maintenance - Chair

Tom Bruhns

Members

Justin Prasad, Michael Sullenszino

Staff

Sione Tu'ihalama



PROGRAM REPORTS//

CONGREGATIONAL CARE TEAM

Joyce Frost, Chair

It is a joy to be the chair of the Congregational Care Team. I am deeply touched by the care that our congregants show towards people within our congregation and within our community. I continue to be amazed by the depth of talent, expertise, and passion exhibited by all of those involved.

This has been a particularly important year for us to come together as a church community and to care for one another. In June, we said “goodbye” to our part time Pastor, Doug Vernon who was such a blessing. How easily he connected with everyone within the congregation, sharing humor, compassion, and blessings. We are thankful for his leadership and example, especially as we now say “goodbye” to Pastor Jeremy and welcome our new minister, Rev. Wongee Joh. This is definitely a time to care for each other by listening, sharing, and helping with this transition. We are very sad to see Pastor Jeremy go, even as we rejoice with him for new opportunities to share his many talents and gifts.

confidentiality of our prayer team or even of just our pastor.

As we connect with members of our church family, we connect as a community. In striving to be the heart of the congregation, we listen, pray, write cards, make calls, email, provide prayer shawls, encourage each other, and offer a friendly ear or a needed hug. Of course, we rely on all of you to let us know when someone needs prayers, a kind word, a visit, a baby shower, a card, birthday wishes, or even a Meal Train set up. We are here for each other!

Our Congregational Care Team is a collection of caring and connected members within our church family. We share good news and sad news – all of those moments that make us human. We celebrate milestones and joys and grieve the sorrows of our congregation and their family members. If this is something that speaks to you, please let me know and you can be included on our regular email check-ins. As a lifetime member of First Church, I cherish these connections that continue to shape me as well as others into the persons that we would like to be.

This year, we have added a subset of our Congregational Care Team – our Prayer Team. This is a team that prays regularly for those who wish to remain anonymous as well as for those named to the congregation and online. On the communication card, there is a special box for those who wish for the confidentiality of our prayer team or even of just our pastor.

Sadly, this year, we again said farewell to some very dear members who left a special mark on our hearts. Just yesterday we learned of the passing of our retired minister, David Williams. His talents and gifts were numerous. We remember him for his mission work, his beautiful wood working, and his lovely voice singing in our choir. He will be missed. We also said a sad farewell to Betty Gabor, Helen Crum, Evelyn Joneson, Rolf Luth, Will Cook, and Renwick Hester. It is hard to mention their names without remembering special stories and memories of each one.

We continued with our twice annual (or more) delivery of gift bags and cards at Christmas and Easter. Thanks to the special talents of Sharon Donohue, Christmas, Easter, and Valentine's Day also included beautiful hand crafted cards with special notes.

I am extremely thankful for the dedicated volunteers who deliver the bags along with a cheery visit. These small tokens give us a chance to purposefully interact and honor special church members. It is a blessing to remember that Gwynne Dodge faithfully organized this activity twice a year. I feel her presence and caring as we continue this tradition that she started.

I am incredibly proud of the work our team has done this year. First Church is not just a building but an amazing collection of caring people. I am grateful for the blessings of our church and look forward to continuing this work. Community has helped us through some challenging times and inspires us to be more compassionate.



SACRED EXPERIENCES

Barbara Moreland

In July 2023, at the beginning of our church year, First Church implemented a new organizational structure for our various committees and work groups. The worship team, the adult spirituality team, and the children and youth group came together under the title “Spiritual Experiences.” We met one month as separate, work-specific groups, and the next month as a combined “sacred experiences” collaborative. Together we decide what on our priorities and plans, then each team works on implementation. The new structure has proven to be extremely productive. Having a variety of voices in the room and sharing ideas and priorities has allowed us to work together to enhance the educational opportunities and the worship experiences for the entire congregation. Below are highlights of the accomplishments of each group.

Worship

Our Sunday morning worship services have thrived in the new “post-Covid” world. We offer the congregation the opportunity for both the physical connections of in-person services and the option of engaging, well presented, online worship experiences. Attendance and participation in both formats are up. On Easter Sunday 2024 we had over 200+ attend in person and 100+ online.

We have increased the number of volunteers who provide logistical help, such as communion stewards, and who play a role in the worship service, such as scripture readers and lay worship leaders.

A major project for the Worship Team this year was to compose a Land Acknowledgement statement: a formal acknowledgment that the land on which our church stands was the home of Native Americans, particularly the Duwamish. This statement is to be made public, spoken in the liturgy of the worship service and posted in writing in the narthex. In order to educate ourselves for this task, several of the team visited the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center. Eventually, after much prayerful wordsmithing, we crafted an Acknowledgment Statement, in both a long and short form, that was presented to the congregation in June 2024.

The Worship Team’s responsibilities reach farther than Sunday opportunities. For example, for the sixth year in a row, members of the congregation wrote devotionals for each day in Lent, which were distributed via email and printed booklets. We also had services in cooperation with other groups for special days throughout the year, from Longest Night to Maundy Thursday to Pride Sunday.



One such cross-team team effort was with the Climate Justice Work Group and Global Missions. The “Blessing of the Animals” service in October is a collaborative event. In April and May 2024, the Climate Work Group took the lead in both worship services and Adult Spirituality classes on the series Common Calling, Common Home. This study examined the important efforts in cultivating a faith perspective and response to the growing climate crisis.

The Worship Team remains faithful and committed to our task of providing opportunities for meaningful worship opportunities for each member of the First Church family.

Adult Spirituality

This has been a wonderfully successful year, judging by the variety of subjects we explored and the number of leaders and people who attended and participated. Books that we studied include Help, Thanks, Wow by Anne Lamott, Light of the World by Amy-Jill Levine, See No Stranger by Valerie Kaur, and The Deconstructionists Playbook, edited by Crystal Cheatham and Theresa Ta.

There was a fascinating study of poetry and faith, led by First Church poets and poetry appreciators Alex Smith and Gary Skinner. We looked at a series of theological concepts as presented by Theo Ed videos. During Lent we discussed the daily Lenten devotionals written by members of First Church in one class, and the Deconstructionists book in another. After Easter we read Between Heaven and Mirth by James Martin, SJ, and ended the church year with a series presented by the Climate Justice work group.

We also enjoyed presentations by graduate students and First Church members April Little and Regan Page.

We are so grateful to an amazing group of leaders including Holly Harvey, Teresa Benedict, Alex Smith, April Little, Em Rigler, Sue Porter, Kathryn Everett, Vi Boyer, Jean Braun, and Barbara Moreland.

Children and Youth

The bad news for the Children and Youth area is that our longtime and much-loved program director, Jonathyn Kraig, resigned his position. The good news is that there was a confirmation class that met throughout Lent. As a result, eight young people joined the church on Easter Sunday.

As part of their confirmation class the young people created a “Walk through Holy Week” experience. This involved transforming the third-floor classrooms into a series of “experiences” related to the events of Jesus’ life during his final week on earth. Church members and visitors were invited to visit each “experience” after church on Palm Sunday. The response to the young people’s work was overwhelmingly “amazing” or “moving” or “so impressed.”



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

COMMITTEE

Chris Russell, Chair

The new Community Connections Committee is the parent committee over three groups contributing enormous amounts to fellowship in the church: Welcoming and Hospitality, Young Adults (aka 'The Vintners'), and Pride & Faith. All three groups have done great work this year, fostering communities around the church and exploring new ways to get people plugged in.

Welcoming and Hospitality kicked off a new series of Lenten Lunches this year, serving hundreds of meals over the course of Lent to hungry parishioners, before sending them off to after church classes and discussion groups. Classes like youth confirmation and the Deconstructionist's Playbook book club, and the Lenten Devotional discussion group allowed for fostering community and conversation around important topics. These were a wonderful collaboration with the Spiritual Experiences committee, which will be exciting to explore future opportunities around in the future. Similarly, Welcoming and Hospitality also put on a wonderful Maundy Thursday potluck, providing a great meal and worship opportunity smack in the middle of Holy Week. They also explored new methods of greeting visitors and new members, and finding ways of getting them plugged in with fellowship opportunities as soon as they walk in the door, which will be exciting to implement in the coming year.

Youngs adults continues to provide fellowship opportunities for the churches 20 and 30 somethings. Game nights, potlucks, and pub theology have continued to form the backbone of these opportunities, especially as we get back to more and more in-person fellowship activities post-pandemic. We've explored Pub Theology at familiar pre-pandemic haunts like Redhook and Queen Anne Beerhall, as well as game nights closer to home at Cafe Cosmos right down the street from the church, and at least one potluck where we had to shoo bees away from a plate of watermelon. Pub Theology explored such topics as the purpose of prayer, the future of AI and faith, and even getting to know peer groups at other Methodist churches in the area.

Pride + Faith is the LGBTQIA+ & Allies group at First Church. We welcome anyone who supports the LGBTQIA+ cause to be a part. Pride + Faith has enjoyed a year of monthly fellowship events, alternating between Sunday lunches and Saturday dinners, with attendance usually fluctuating between eight and twelve participants. We are looking to grow our group, both in numbers and in activities. Once Pride Sunday 2024 is behind us, we will be re-introducing potluck events, and we'll be exploring service projects that Pride + Faith can participate in. As for Pride Sunday 2024, the group will be supporting overall First Church volunteer efforts, helping make our presence at 2nd & Denny as visible as possible to Seattle Pride Parade attendees and participants.





TRANSFORMING THE WORLD PROGRAM AREA

Co-Chairs: Reagan Page and Jackie Celin

The Transforming the World Program Area involves many of our Outreach Missions and Ministries. It is comprised of the following committees and ministry teams; Urban Outreach, Church & Society / Social Justice, Global Missions, and Climate Justice Working Group.

Our Urban Outreach committee is focused on transitional housing and hunger in the City of Seattle. They are primarily responsible for our Shared Breakfast meal program that operates out of our Fellowship Hall, and our Blaine Center Transitional Housing Shelter located next to our church building. Shared Breakfast provides a warm meal every Sunday morning to anyone that is hungry. It is led and run by volunteers. They served 6,035 meals throughout the year 2023, an average of about 115-120 meals per Sunday. The Blaine Center is operated by our partner, Compass Housing Alliance. In April, Compass Housing Alliance partnered with the King County Veterans Program to designate the Blaine Center as King County's first all-Veteran 24/7 enhanced shelter. We celebrated this milestone with them at a Grand Opening event held in our Narthex.

Several guest speakers shared words of inspiration including; Compass Housing Alliance President - Michael Baily, and Director of Emergency Services - Charlene Mitchell, King County Councilmember - Jorge Barón, Department of Community and Human Services Adult Services Division Director - Leon Richardson, and King County Executive Director - Dow Constantine.

Our Church & Society / Social Justice committee is focused on building educational awareness around social justice issues affecting our society, and providing advocacy opportunities for how we, as people of faith, can respond. This program year, they held three Meaningful Movies Project Lunch and Learn events, with a possible fourth event in June. In December, they held a Zero Waste event to discuss ways we can advocate for a healthy and waste-free world, with guest speaker, Heather Trim, of Zero Waste Washington. In January, the committee held an event about Homelessness in Seattle with guest speakers; film director - Melinda Raebyne who created the documentary Stories of Us: Camp Second Chance, nurse manager of healthcare for the homeless - Anneleen Severynen, and senior manager for member and civic engagement, coalition on homelessness - Jody Rauch.



And in April, they co-sponsored an event with the Climate Justice Working Group about activating faith communities for climate justice, centering on the film “The Letter” that discusses Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* on the climate crisis. We were joined by our guest preacher for the day, Rev. Jim Antal and the North America senior programs manager with the *Laudato Si’* Movement – Anna Johnson. The committee also continued to maintain our relationships with other important partners like Reclaim our Vote and Faith Action Network (FAN), coordinating postcard writing campaigns to advocate for voter rights, and representing First Church at FAN’s Interfaith Advocacy Day held at our state capital of Olympia in February. Our Climate Justice Working Group has been hard at work helping the congregation address the climate crisis, both in our individual lives and as a collective faith community. They have developed earth pledges for congregants and families, alongside our stewardship campaign for the second year in a row, and have coordinated several earth-centered worship services throughout the program year, including; the Blessing of the Animals service in October, an ecologically focused Christmas Cantata in December,

and mostly recently, a three-part sermon series in April called, “Common Home, Common Calling,” focusing on the common calling we have as Christians, and people of faith, to restore creation and cultivate hope. These series included two guest preachers, Rev. Dr. Lisa Graumlich, an ordained Deacon in the Episcopal Church and climate scientist, and Rev. Jim Antal, author of *Climate Church*, *Climate World*, and Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. The Climate Justice Working Group also seeks out ways to lessen our emissions and reduce our energy in our facility, working with Seattle City Light to change most of our lightbulbs to LED’s, and tracking City of Seattle Clean Building Performance Standards requirements for our buildings. In addition to co-sponsoring the April Meaningful Movies Project event with the Church & Society committee on “The Letter,” they are also currently working on hosting a special event in our sanctuary on July 2 with lifelong climate activist, Bill McKibben, coordinating with several co-sponsors, including Third Act Washington, and other local faith communities.

Our Global Missions Team focuses on providing both regional, domestic, and international service opportunities for the congregation. They began the program year by hosting a presentation from Katherine Parker, a United Methodist Missionary in Nepal. In December, they invited the congregation to put together 30 hygiene kits for Neighborhood House, a human service agency that provides services to address the needs of entire families, with a focus on low-income community members, public housing residents, immigrants, and refugees. In March, they held another service event through Food Lifeline, which provides food to feeding programs, food pantries, and shelters throughout Western Washington. Currently, the Global Missions team is exploring opportunities for summer service project trips. The committee also promoted and supported United Methodist special offerings for World Communion Sunday, Human Relations Day, UMCOR Sunday, and Native American Ministries Sunday throughout the program year.

This is just a highlight of some of the key items that these committees have done over this past program year. There is much more work that occurs behind the scenes. It is wonderful to see our faith community active in so many important social justice and climate justice issues, leading us in opportunities for educational awareness, advocacy, and service, and encouraging us to seek justice through compassion.





STAFF REPORTS //

DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT

Jacqueline Celin

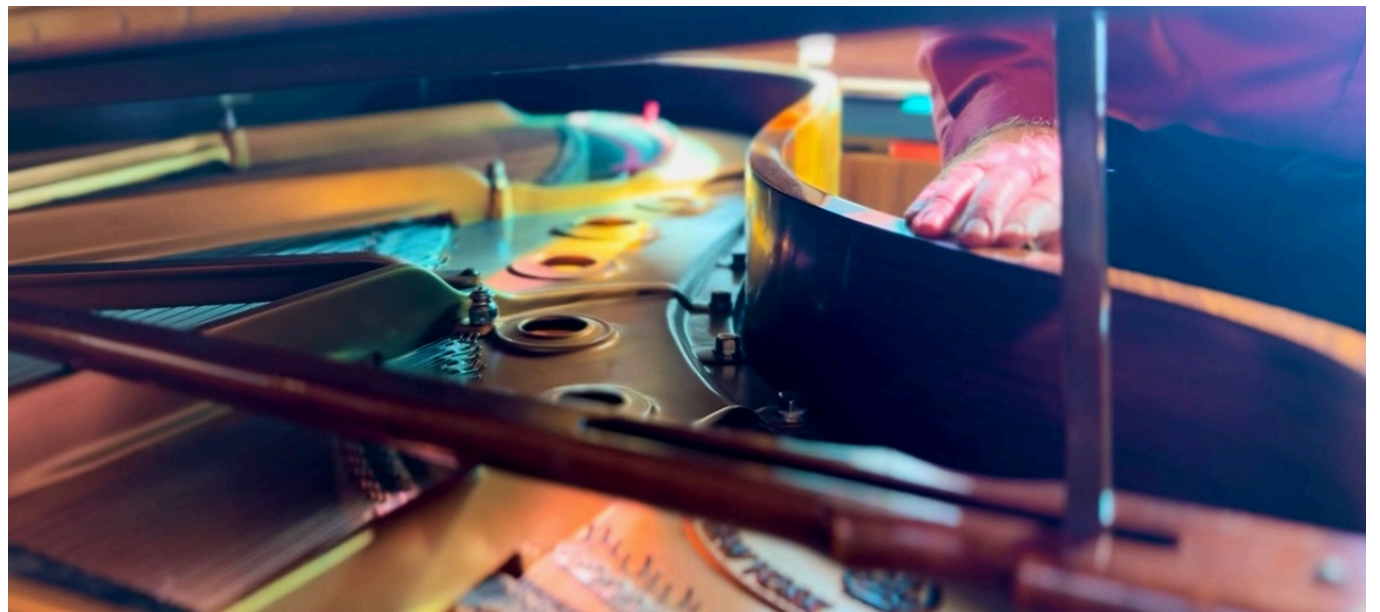
This past March, I started in a new position at First Church as the Director of Engagement. My primary role is to foster active engagement within our First Church community by developing, implementing, and enhancing our volunteer programs. I work closely with our Transforming the World outreach missions and ministry teams, assist with recruiting volunteers to help lead and support our worship services on Sunday mornings, and help coordinate volunteers for our special events, like our Pride Sunday celebration at the end of June as the Seattle Pride Parade finishes right at our church building. We offer Holy Communion for all, water, otter pops, cookies, music, joy, compassion, hospitality, and respite.

Much of the work in this engagement role is an extension of the effort I did during my internship as a Student Pastor last year, and I am grateful for the opportunity to build on that experience. Another component of this role includes acting as a connection between First Church and some of our partners, maintaining these important relationships that will continue to provide ways for our faith community to be involved in the mission and ministries of First Church, offering a refuge of inclusive Christianity and seeking justice by advocating for person's on society's margins and for all God's creation.



Within the past few months of starting in this new role, I've met and coordinated with the Blaine Center Compass Housing Alliance staff to discuss opportunities for us to engage with the new Veteran's only transitional housing shelter located on the ground floor of our parking garage, and the Seattle area Reconciling Ministries Network churches to coordinate together our joint presence at the Seattle Pride Parade, and the planning committee for our special event on July 2nd, "An Evening with Lifelong Climate Activist Bill McKibben," that is being hosted by First Church and presented by Third Act Washington (TAWA), with assistance from several other partners, including other Seattle area faith communities with a strong commitment to climate justice.

Going forward, I also hope to find additional ways for us, as a faith community, to connect with the work of justice and compassion in our city and in our region by building relationships with other organizations, other Puget Sound United Methodist churches, and other faith communities that share our same values and commitments. Additionally, I hope to connect us with denominational resources and training opportunities through our conference and other agencies, such as our General Board of Global Ministries and our General Board of Church and Society. Lastly, I look forward to finding ways to connect each of you with your own passions for ministry, helping you to fulfill how God is currently calling you to participate in the life of the church! As always, reach out so that we can connect!





MUSIC DIRECTOR

Elisabeth Ellis

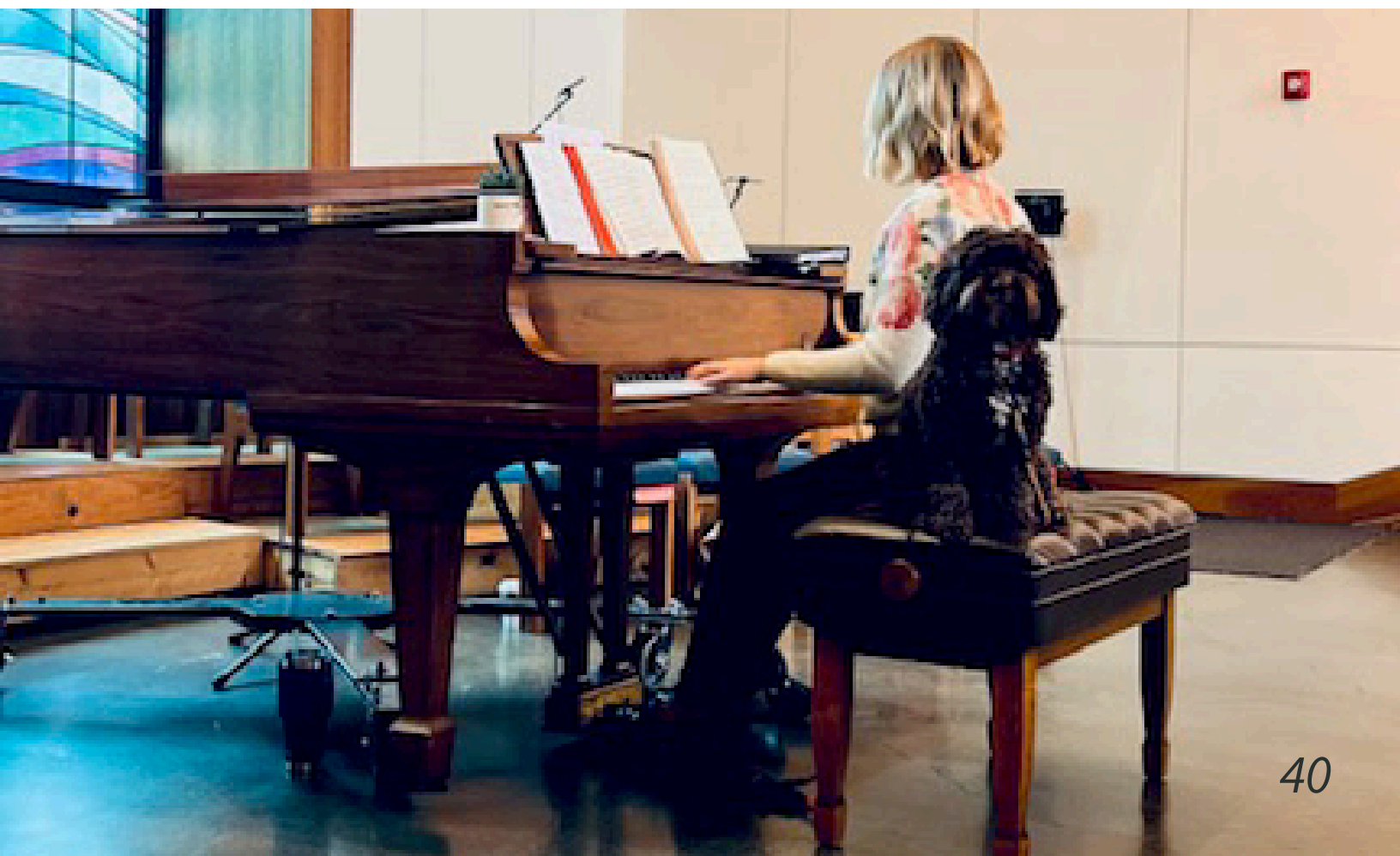
The music ministry at First Church continues to be such a source of joy, inspiration, and beauty, both for the congregants and for those of us presenting the music each week. This year our musical selections have ranged from selections by Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo, to folk songs and spirituals, jazzy pieces, reflective a cappella masterworks, classical selections from Handel's Messiah, and a non-traditional but delightful 'Friendly Beasts' themed Christmas cantata featuring Eric Whitacre's "The Seal Lullaby."

The choir continues to grow, currently averaging about from 20-25 members per Sunday. We rehearse each Sunday morning in the sanctuary, and always especially enjoy the spring transition to Daylight Savings time, which floods our music area with sunlight through the stained glass window. We have continued to push ourselves musically, and are doing more advanced pieces than ever before. I am especially proud of the choir's ability to not only present music that is technically difficult, but also their ability to connect emotionally and spiritually with the message of each piece. We often discuss the fact that, until we are moved ourselves, our music can not move others. I do my best to select pieces that are not only beautiful or interesting, but that also have an important message, and that resonate with the mission of our church and with ongoing world events.

And each week, the First Church musicians lean into the music and sing it with such heart that they often give me goosebumps and bring tears to my eyes. I feel so blessed to be their leader.

We have access to such a rich musical community in Seattle, and luckily have had several stellar musicians join our ranks throughout the season - most notably Tess Altiveros, Ibidunni Ojikutu, and Danielle Reutter-Harrah (all sopranos with Seattle Opera and many top local groups), and cellist Elena Denny, who has joined us virtually in the past, and whom we were thrilled to collaborate with in person. Don Crawley continues to be a delight on both the piano and the organ, substituting for Elisabeth on vacation and also joining on duets, special music collaborations, and hymn playing! Cary Lee leading us in the sung communion and singing beautiful offertories and choir solos is always wonderful. And it has been a pleasure to welcome Glenn Gregg back to conduct the choir as Director Emeritus on several occasions! My gratitude goes out every member of the choir, showing up so faithfully each week and leading the congregation in hymns, prayer responses and anthems.

We look forward to the year ahead and to launching new musical programs, such as a summer recital series and hopefully a December Messiah Sing-a-long as well! The First Church music program continues to thrive and to inspire, and I am so excited to keep making music with this lovely and loving group of people each Sunday.





CLERGY REPORTS //

PETER JABIN, DIACONAL MINISTER PASTORAL PSYCHOTHERAPIST GRIEF MENTOR

To the Saints at First Church Seattle,

It seems that it is a new day in the United Methodist Church, given the outcome of the latest General Conference. And it is a new day for First Church more specifically as we say goodbye to Pastor Jeremy and welcome Pastor Wongee. As I look forward to seeing how these changes will change us, I continue to be grateful for the First Church family of faith as a community that has lived into its commitment to being a refuge for progressive, inclusive Christianity. I persevere in the conviction that we have all been called as the right people for this particular historical moment. Spirit is using us to shape the world in ways that we cannot fully perceive or appreciate.

Pastoral Psychotherapy

I continue to locate the primary expression of my ministry in private practice as a pastoral psychotherapist. I continue to carry a case load of 25-30 clients, including number of folks working within the frame of spiritual direction. As we move more deeply into a time of societal unraveling and the chaotic transition into a new era of human consciousness and human society (let's hope!), the implicit mission of my therapeutic work is, "Cultivating warriors for the human spirit."



Grief Mentoring

Parallel to my clinical practice, I have continued to be formed as a grief mentor/mender, nurturing and developing my skills as a facilitator of grief rituals. This involves weekend retreats in which I lead groups of people into a shared grieving process in an interfaith, depth psychological context that draws deeply on the expressive arts of poetry, drumming/chanting/singing and writing. I am very pleased to have returned to offering in-person, embodied gatherings, in collaboration with grief mentoring colleagues in this region of the Salish Sea.

Climate Psychology

Over the past couple of years, I have become much more aware of and connected to the movement of climate psychology within the larger psychotherapeutic world. This movement is concerned with many aspects of fully encountering and responding to the world-changing reality of climate crisis, one aspect of the ever-expanding poly-crisis. This has involved a second presentation on climate psychology at the annual conference of the NW Alliance for Psychoanalytic Study, in addition to formally mentoring less experienced clinicians within the same professional network.

Companis

Over the past year, I have concluded my long involvement with Companis Mission Workers Association, in order to dedicate more time to my practice and my grief work.

Thank you, First Church, for sustaining my spirit in this work, and for grounding me in a vision for a unified human family and a healed and restored planet.

In peace,



Peter Jabin

CH, LT COL KEVIN HUDSON, USAF



Last year I received a new assignment. I moved from Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado to the Air Force Chaplain Corps College (AFCCC) at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. In this new role I serve as the Deputy Commandant of the AFCCC. The mission of the AFCCC is equipping the Air Force Chaplain Corps through training and education of the right student, in the right seat, at the right time in their career progression to inspire the readiness of Airmen, Guardians, and their families. One of our most important tasks is to train the Air Force's brand new chaplains by providing them with the information and skills they need to become effective in caring for Airmen and Guardians and their families in the U. S. Air Force and U. S. Space Force. Last year we graduated 105 new chaplains. Additionally, we provide continuing education courses for over 300 chaplains and Religious Affairs Airmen at various points in their careers. The AFCCC has led the way in the Air Force for utilizing advanced technology in the classroom. We utilize artificial reality as well as virtual reality tools to provide state-of-the-art training for students. We've also led the way for the Air Force Chaplain Corps in teaching Diversity and Inclusion to chaplains and Religious Affairs Airmen at all levels of their careers. I'm truly grateful for the prayers and support of First Church Seattle.

FIRST CHURCH



First Church
First United Methodist Church of Seattle

SEATTLE