



First Church

First United Methodist Church *of* Seattle

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2025 PROGRAM YEAR

**AMENDED FOR
FALL 2025
CHARGE CONFERENCE**

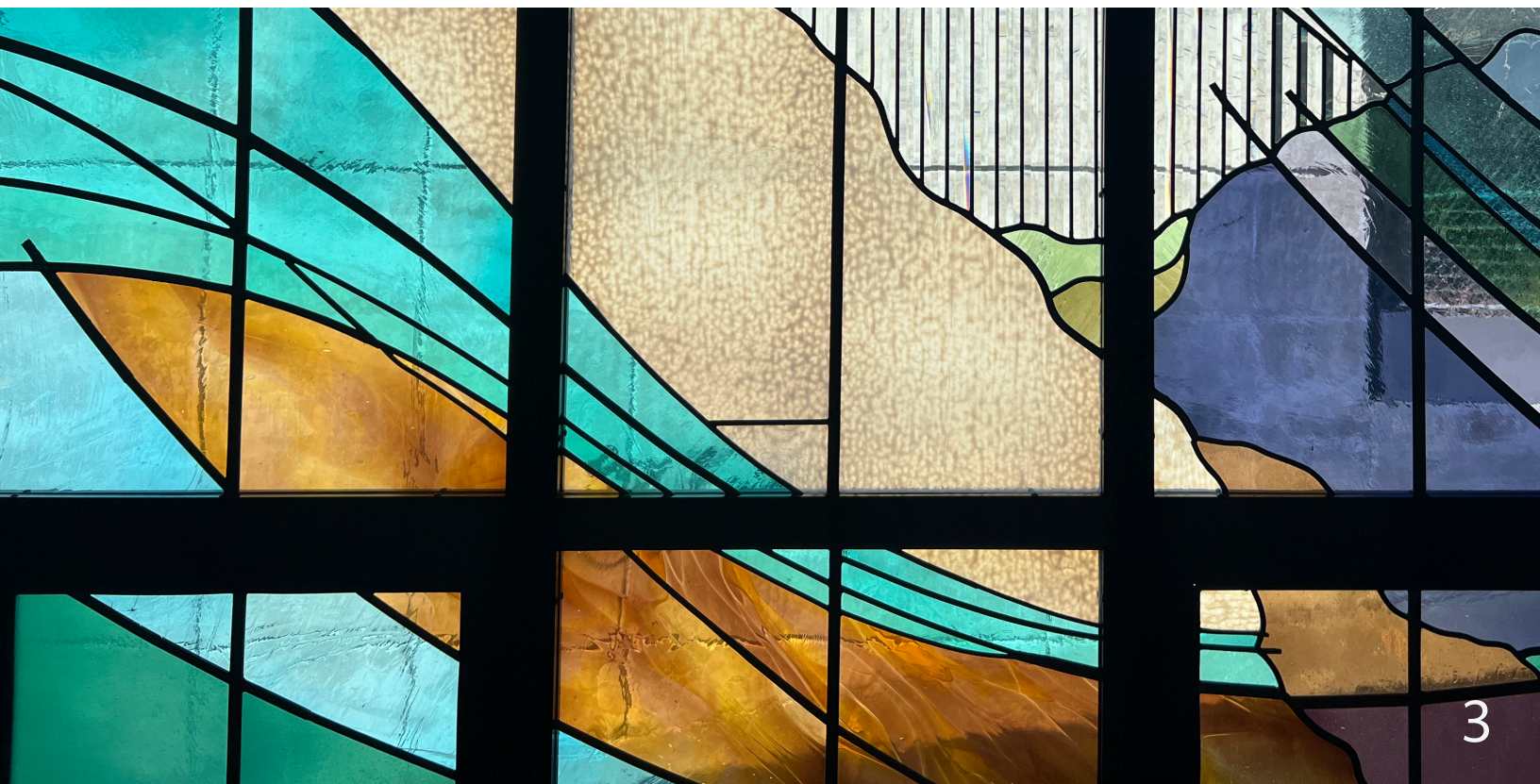
**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF SEATTLE
IS A PROGRESSIVE FAITH COMMUNITY OFFERING
A PLACE TO GROW SPIRITUALLY AND A REFUGE
OF INCLUSIVE CHRISTIANITY. WE USE OUR VOICES
AND ENERGY TO ADVOCATE FOR PERSONS ON
SOCIETY'S MARGINS AND FOR ALL GOD'S
CREATION.**

O may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice,
and in his blissful presence
eternally rejoice!



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INTRODUCTION

First United Methodist Church – our church – has been in ministry in Seattle since 1853. The early members were instrumental in building not only this church, but the city of Seattle as well. The names on the Frist Church history wall are also recorded in the history of our city. We are truly, “First Church,” and we can be proud of our heritage.

We’ve seen it all. Years of great prosperity and eras of economic downturns. A congregation of thousands every Sunday, meeting in a great cathedral style building for decades, followed by “church at the theater” during our homeless years. That period prepared us for creating “church “without gathering” when we moved online during the Covid years. What would the Blaine and Denny families think of “attending” Sunday worship from their couch in the living room! As the contents of this Annual Report clearly demonstrate, First Church is alive and well, constant in its commitment to worship, to serve, to care, to advocate. To make disciples and to work for the transformation on the world.

This report comes in three parts. The first, which focuses on **“Who We Are,”** includes statements from our pastors and our other certified members of the Annual Conference. It also presents the names of leaders and members of our committees, task forces, and working groups for the coming year. This page will tell you the leaders are and who to talk to about specific areas where you might become involved.

The second section tells us **“What We Do.”** Here you will read reports of the accomplishments this year by the various groups in our congregation. From Trustees and Finance, to Worship and Pride, to Children and Congregational Care. Let’s celebrate the dedication and productivity of our committees and teams, and read about dreams, goals ,and expectations for the upcoming year.

The third section talks about **“Stewarding Our Resources.”** In order to do ministry we need resources. Physical assets, like our buildings. Financial assets, like money for today’s expenses and tomorrow’s needs. And we can’t forget our human assets, the pastors and staff and volunteers whose contributions are tremendous. In this section the committees of Finance, Trustees, and Staff/Parish Relations lay out our current circumstances and highlight plans for the future.

You are encouraged to spend some time with the wealth of information in this Annual Report. Shout “Halleluiah” as you read all that’s happened. Tell someone “Thanks” for the leadership they provide. Offer a new idea to one of the teams or committees. Discover a place where you want to become involved.

Amen.



THE YEAR BY THE NUMBERS
as noted at our June 2025 Church Conference

147 Average 2024 Sunday attendance (Online + In-Person)

ONLINE WORSHIP

306

YouTube
Subscribers

37%

eNews Open
percentage

205

Subscribers to
our Lenten
Devotional
daily email list

GIVING

\$321,503

2024 pledge
offering giving

\$34,980

2024 upledged
offering giving

MEMBERSHIP & MINISTRIES

14

New members at
First Church

6,634

Shared Breakfast
meals served in 2024

2

Baptism at First Church



WHO WE ARE





2024 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Mona Tanaka and Claire Gebben, Membership Secretaries

TOTAL MEMBERS AT THE START OF 2024
as read at our June 2025 Church Conference

360

Baptisms

Jason Tea (adult)
Basil Rothaker

Members received in 2024

Danil Basenko
Roman Basenko
Verle Bleese
Lorry Celin
Aailyah Dana
Gabby Frederick
Evan Hiniker
Ben Kim
Julius Perez
Andre Rukeyser
Liam Sweeney
Jason Tea
Ashleigh Young
Chloe Young

+14

Transfers Out

Laura Turner
Gary Parker
Marc Brooks
Judy Naegli
Randy Miller

- 5

Deceased

8 Tom Allen- August 18, 2024
Frank Couch -- 2024

Betty Gabor- January 5, 2024
Edward Mabin- January 13, 2022
Charles Wheeler- July 22, 2024
Dave Williams- May 2, 2024 (clergy)

- 5

First Reading for membership removal

Jordan Brenner/Lindsey Davis
Beth Burry
Mark Chensky
David Eastlack
James Flynn
Cary Kenner
Esther McKinney
Chandler Sapp
Andrew Thomas

Second reading for removal

Jennifer Anderson
Barbara Baker
Doug Baldwin
Beatrice Mozelle Bowers
Alfredo Gomez
Drew McKibben
Jim Whitson

TOTAL MEMBERS AT THE END OF 2024 **364**

TOTAL MEMBERS AFTER THE SECOND READING FOR REMOVAL **357**



2025 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

*Membership report January 1, 2025 - November 16, 2025
Mona Tanaka and Claire Gebben, Membership Secretaries*

TOTAL MEMBERS REPORTED AT THE CLOSE OF 2024 357
As read at our November 2025 Charge Conference

Baptisms

Bo Babarinsa (adult)
Arthur Panhorst (infant)

New Members received + 7

Bo Babarinsa
Charley Bickford
Sheila Api
Ellie Tayebi
Ben Ohene
Katherine “Kitty” Gustafson
Dan Gustafson

Deceased - 3

Barbara Couch
Jane Hines
Wilda McOmber

Transfers Out - 4

Glen and Tina Quinton to Langley UMC
Joseph Danso Opong to Hope UMC, Bellevue
Gary Parker to Anacortes UMC

TOTAL MEMBERS AS OF NOVEMBER 16, 2025 356*

The following names are recommended for membership removal

First reading (15 names)

Shauna Balderson
Beatrice Mozelle Bowers
Alfredo Gomez
Amy Vaughn Hedlund
Luke Iris
Terry Jackson
Samantha Jacobson
Weldon Ledbetter
Phil Lillich
Laurabeth McIntire
Steven M. McNeilly
Jay and Lynne Nowicki

Joey Roberts
Keith Varnau

Second reading (10 names)

Jordan Brenner
Lindsey Davis
Beth Burry
Mark Chensky
David Eastlack
James Flynn
Cary Kenner
Esther McKinney
Chandler Sapp
Andrew Thomas

***Once these 10 names are approved for removal at this charge conference, the total members will number 346.**



NOMINATED LEADERS FOR 2025-2026

July 2025 - June 2026 Lay Leadership (Nominations) Report

as read and elected at our June 2025 Church Conference

Leadership

Conference Lay Member

Barbara Moreland

Conference Lay Member

April Little

Conference Lay Member - Alt

Jane Gregg

Membership Secretary Co-chair

Claire Gebben

Membership Secretary Co-chair

Mona Tanaka

Administrative Board

Officers

Chair (2026)

Jim Schone

Vice Chair (2026)

Greg Wallace

Secretary (2026)

Karen McOmber

Members

SPRC - Chair (2026)

Jane Gregg

SPRC (2026)

Cary Lee

SPRC (2026)

Nancy Sheretz

SPRC (2027)

Candy Bonham

SPRC (2028)

Kristina Gonzalez

SPRC - Ex Officio (Lay Leader)

Barbara Moreland

SPRC - Ex Officio (Pastor)

Rev. Wongee Joh

Trustees Co-Chair (2026)

John Loacker

Trustees Co-Chair (2028)

Tom Bruhns

Trustees (2026)

Kurt Armbruster

Trustees (2027)

Linda Allen

Trustees (2027)

Doug Donohue

Trustees (2027)

Greg Wallace

Trustees (2028)

Mark Forbes

Finance Chair (2027)
Finance (2026)
Finance (2027)
Finance (Treasurer)
Finance (Financial Secretary)
Finance (Stewardship Rep)
Finance (Revenue Enhancement)
Finance - Staff

Joe Frost
Warren Askov
Karen McOmber
Ed Tanaka
TBD by committee
TBD by committee
Jim Schone
Melinda Waggoner

Stewardship

Stewardship Co-Chair
Stewardship Co-Chair
Stewardship
Stewardship
Stewardship (Council Rep)
Stewardship

Jim Schone
Greg Wallace
Ruby Amegah
Teresa Canady
Barbara Moreland
Sharon Perez

Lay Leadership (Nominations)

Lay Leadership - Chair
Lay Leadership
Lay Leadership
Lay Leadership
Lay Leadership
Lay Leadership
Lay Leadership - Ex Officio
Lay Leadership - Ex Officio

Barbara Moreland
Dale Alekel
Kris Henn
Peter Jabin
Chris Russell
Jim Schone
Rev. Wongee Joh
Rev. Jackie Celin

Church Council

Officers

Chair (2027)
Vice-Chair (2026)
Secretary

Barbara Moreland
Wally Shaffer
TBD

Members

Youth Member
Congregational Care

Lorry Celin
Joyce Frost

Connecting Our Community Co-Chair
Sacred Experiences Co-Chair

Chris Russell
Isaac Pruden

Church & Society Co-Chair
Climate Justice Working Group Rep
Global Missions Coordinator
Urban Outreach Co-Chair

Alex Becker
Wally Shaffer
Rev. Jackie Celin
Bruce Hall

Admin Board - Chair
Admin Board - SPRC Rep
Admin Board - Trustees Rep
Admin Board - Finance Rep

Jim Schone
Jane Gregg
John Loacker
Joe Frost

Church Council - Staff
Church Council - Staff
Church Council - Staff

Rev. Wongee Joh
Rev. Jackie Celin
Melinda Waggoner

Special Task Forces and Subcommittees for Admin Board and Council

(Committees that each reports to is in Parentheses)

Endowments (Trustees) - Admin Bd Rep
Endowments (Trustees) - Finance Rep
Endowments (Trustees) - Trustees Rep
Endowments (Trustees) - Council Rep
Endowments (Trustees)

Jim Schone
Ed Tanaka
Linda Allen
Barbara Moreland
Vi Boyer

Revenue Enhancement (Finance) - Coordinator
Scholarships (Trustees) - Coordinator
Building Use (Council/Admin Bd) - Coordinators
Building Efficiency (Trustees) - Coordinator
Organ (Trustees) - Coordinator
Donor Acknowledgment (Finance) - Coordinator

Jim Schone
Melinda Waggoner - Staff
Barbara Moreland/Jim Schone
Doug Donohue
Don Crawley
Violet Boyer

Program Committees (Can Be Filled Throughout the Program Year)

Connecting our Community

Chair
Vice-Chair

Chris Russell
Debra Loacker

Vintners Coordinator	April Little
Small Groups Co-Coordinator	Craig Matthews
Small Groups Co-Coordinator	Shawn Smith
Pride + Faith Coordinator	Charley Bickford
Pride + Faith Coordinator	Tristan Mitchell
Prayer Team Coordinator	Joyce Frost
Camp & Retreats - All Church Retreat Chair	Karen McOmbler
Camp & Retreats - New Years Co-Chair	Denise DeGabriele
Camp & Retreats - New Years Co-Chair	Mark Forbes
Camp & Retreats - Women's Retreat	Diane White-Shaw
Camp & Retreats - Women's Retreat	Erin Elaine Gail
Camp & Retreats - Women's Retreat	Kathryn Everett
Camp & Retreats	Bruce Hall
Camp & Retreats	Joyce Frost
Camp & Retreats	Julie Sullenszino
Congregational Care - Coordinator	Joyce Frost
Welcome & Hospitality - Coordinator	TBD
Welcome & Hospitality	Sharon Donohue
Welcome & Hospitality	Kris Henn
Welcome & Hospitality	Eleanor Shubert
Welcome & Hospitality	Shawn Smith
Welcome & Hospitality	Beth Snyder

Sacred Experiences and Spiritual Development

Chair	Isaac Pruden
Vice Chair	April Little
Adult Spirituality Team - Co-Chair	Beth Snyder
Adult Spirituality Team - Co-Chair	Holly Harvey
Adult Spirituality Team	Gary Skinner
Adult Spirituality Team	Alex Smith
Adult Spirituality Team	Jean Braun

Children & Youth - Chair
Children & Youth - Youth Member
Children & Youth
Children & Youth
Children & Youth

TBD or Staff
Lorry Celin
Sheila Api
Katie Harris
Diane White-Shaw

Worship & Arts - Chair
Worship & Arts
Worship & Arts
Worship & Arts
Worship & Arts

Isaac Pruden
Teresa Benedict
Craig Matthews
Barbara Moreland
Jerry Roberson

Transforming the World

Coordinator - Staff

Rev. Jackie Celin

Church & Society Co-Chair
Church & Society Co-Chair
Church & Society
Church & Society

Alex Becker
TBD
Kathryn Everett
Denise DeGabriele

Climate Justice Working Group - Chair
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group
Climate Justice Working Group

Tom Carlson
Wally Shaffer
Dale Alekel
Alex Becker
Dan Gustafson
Bruna Hygino
Ben Ohene
Ann Shaffer
Bill Sherertz
Ellie Tayebi

Global Missions / Outreach and Engagement (GM/OE)

Coordinator - Staff

Rev. Jackie Celin

GM/OE - Immigration Justice Focus Team
GM/OE - Immigration Justice Focus Team

Roman Basenko
TBD

GM/OE - Disaster Response Focus Team
GM/OE - Disaster Response Focus Team

Ben Ohene
TBD

GM/OE - GBGM* and UWF** Focus Team Sue Porter
GM/OE - GBGM and UWF Focus Team Katie Harris
(*GBGM: General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church)
(**UWF: United Women in Faith of the United Methodist Church)

GM/OE - Land Acknowledgement Focus Team Kristina Gonzalez
GM/OE - Land Acknowledgement Focus Team TBD

GM/OE - Anti-Racism Focus Team Rev. Wongee Joh
GM/OE - Anti-Racism Focus Team Rev. Jackie Celin
GM/OE - Anti-Racism Focus Team Jane Gregg

Urban Outreach (Shared Breakfast / Blaine Veterans Center)

Urban Outreach - Co-Chair Bruce Hall
Urban Outreach - Co-Chair Judson Taylor
Urban Outreach Roman Basenko
Urban Outreach Ayres Gipson
Urban Outreach Kris Henn
Urban Outreach Sue Porter
Urban Outreach Beth Snyder

PASTOR REPORTS

Rev. Wongee Joh

Hallelujah!

*I will give thanks to God with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*

*Great are the works of God!
studied by all who delight in them.*

*The fear(reverence) of God is the beginning of wisdom
those who practice it have a good understanding;
praising God endures forever.*

-Psalm 111

Dear friends on the journey,

May 19, 2025

Thank you, beloveds! Praise be to God!

John Wesley said at the end of his life, "Best of all, God is with us." I trust that we proclaim in the end what was wisdom throughout the entirety of our lives. God is with us, through it all, including transitions. God meets us just as we are. There is no time or place in which God does not extend love/grace so that we are "tethered to eternity."

Below you will find my pastoral review in prayer. I invite you to use this as a means of grace, a meditation/prayer by writing your own words (including your name) at the end of each alphabet letter. My list is incomplete/imperfect/limited. I hope it creates space for Wisdom's perfecting love that continues to form us.

First, a word about the Scripture quoted and how the psalmist speaks of "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." The word "fear" is better translated as "reverence" for God. One of the ways the psalmist reveals reverence for God is through this psalm, which serves as a prayer, praise, or acrostic poem. The psalm, translated into English, praises God from A to Z. In the original Hebrew text, it consists of the 22 characters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each line, written from right to left, spells out a word, message, or the alphabet, all words praising God. Through each line, the psalmist poetically shares a sense of awe for God's amazing deeds. By acknowledging the wonders of God, we can grow in wisdom as we also realize our place and limitations before God and creation.

Let us remember that awe and reverence for God arise from our full humanness. Our lives embody feelings of awe and joy, as well as pain, grief, confusion, sadness, doubt, and suffering. Just as the earth reveals sunshine and rain, may we trust that our humanity is vast enough to carry joy and pain. We are people who can praise God in the paradoxes of life. We are people of the Promise.

I also invite you to read the reports throughout this Annual Report as a form of the same acrostic praise, with a responsive, Alleluia! One of the ways that reverence for God is revealed is in the first words of this psalmist, "Hallelujah!" meaning, "Praise God!" Hallelujah and/or Alleluia is what we shouted out on Easter morning. And as Easter people, it is what we shout/pray/live out all along our journey, not just on Easter morning.

As we head toward Pentecost Sunday with baptisms and reception of new members, may our celebrations and reaffirmation of our faith, a means of grace available to us, renew us in grace to joyful discipleship.

The prayer below is not exhaustive. You are invited to make visible and praise that which is absent, silent, invisible, and open for your remembering and our praise together. I pray it re-members us in the joy of Christ. I'm grateful to our God of wisdom for the experiences of new relationships/partnerships/collaboratives.

A-Alleluia, Architect, Advocate, anti-racism, Alyx, ableism, Andy, A/V, Adult Ed classes, Admin Board, Annual conference, Aegis, ashes to go, advent, Ayres, Alex, authors, American democracy, aid, Angie, addiction, Aailiyah, Ava, all are ministers, archives, altar guild, April, Alex, acolytes, _____

B-Behold, Become, Beauty, Beloved, baptisms, bread, Barbara, banner, Blaine Veterans Center, BOM, Bayview, bequests, beads, bookkeeper, blessing of the animals, births, birthdays, budgets, Brian, Bailey, Bob, Ben, bibles, Bill, building maintenance, building use, _____

C-Compassionate One, Comforter, Creator, Counselor, Consuming fire, Charles, caregivers, Cosmic Christ, committee, classism, Canalis, Church of Mary Magdalene, Climate justice, Camp Indianola, Congregational Care, Church and Society, choir, covenants, church, capital campaign, CPR, consecration, Christmas, children, Cathy, chalice, community connection, communion stewards, church council, chosen families, Campbell, Carson, cards, cataract, Chun, Christmas bags, cancer, Carol, Connie, cats, clothing, courage, Chris, Charles, Candy, Catalina, cross, communion assistants, candles, chestnuts, Christmas party, Carolina, _____

D-Defiant Joy, Delightful, Defender, Deliverer, Dwelling place, Dorothy, David, discipleship, disaster relief, deep listening, death, DEI, Democracy-Dirtbags-Divas, Danil, Darrell, daughters, Don, depression, divorce, Deb, Dorlene, Dave, Dan, Derek, Duwamish, Duuna, _____

E-Elohim, Easter, Eternal, Encourager, Everlasting, ecumenical partners, Elizabeth, El Gaucho, Ethnic Caucus, endowments, Em, Elisabeth, Easter bags/hunt, Ellie, emergency workers, empathy, enemies, Edmond, Eleazer, education, enfleshed, _____

F-Faithful, Fortress, Forgiving, Father, FAN, Fairwood UMC, Finance com, furniture repair bank, Freddie, flowers, free speech, food, Fred, food banks/distribution centers, faithfulness, _____

G-Gracious, Gardener, Glory, gifts and graces, GNW conference, grants, Greater Seattle Council of Churches, Get out and vote, guests, Gospels, Global missions, garage, Glenn, gun violence, Gaza, Gina, Gerald, graduates, guest speakers, Grace Ji-Sun, greening, Glenn, Gregg, guitarist, _____

H-Healer, Hope, Helper, Haiti, Hiding place, Hallelujah, Holy One, Helen, health kits, Holy Spirit, heterosexism, Haller Lake UMC, Horizon House, holy week, hospitality, HVAC, health, houseless, hospice care, handbooks, Hands Off rally, hip, heart, Heather, _____

I-Intercessor, Immanuel, Infinite, immigrants, interfaith advocacy days, legislative work, Israel, intercultural competency, _____

J-Jehovah, Justice, Jubilee, job insecurity, Jessica, Joyce, Juleen, Jane, Jon, jazz, Jessica, Jim, Jessie Mae, Jacob, Jerry, Janet, Jean, Jewel, Jackie, Judy, James, Joe, _____

K-Kyrie Eleison, Keeper, Kind, Korea, Kylie, Karen, Kristin, Kristina, knees, _____

L-Love, Light, Liberator, Lent devotionals, Laura, Linda, Lorraine, Lily, lay leaders, leadership in our nation/internationally, Lunch and Learn, lgbtqai+, lay speakers, lay servants, Lenten lunches, Los Posadas, lessons and carols, longest night, land acknowledgement, Lyda, Lawrence, Lebanon, Lillie, live streaming, lynching tree, leukemia, _____

M-Merciful, Mother, Mighty Rock, Majestic Glory, Methodists, memorial services, miracles, microaggressions, musicians, mortgage, Mirabella, Ministry fair, Mary, music, Melissa, migrants, meaningful movies, meetings, men's breakfast, Melinda,

N-Nancy, new members, Neighborhood House, newcomers, nominations, Natalie, Norm, newsletter, nursery,

O-Omnipresent, order of love, oralism, open mic, Overlake hospital, Outreach Com, organ,

P-Provider, Peace, Powerful, Peter, Present, Potter, Pride & Faith, prayer shawls, prayer groups, PNW cabinet, Palestine, Phil, Pauline, peace and justice, Pat, preaching, picnics, pervasive grace, potlucks, palms, peaceable kingdom, partners, pets, Peter, pastors, pledges, presence and prayers, partnerships,

Q-Queen Anne UMC, queer siblings,

R-Refuge, Rock of our salvation, Revelation, Righteousness, Redeemer, Resurrection, Risen One, Residents in Ministry, recitals, retreats, rally Sunday, Roxanne, Rose, radiant, RayAnn, Regina, Regan, Rolando, resilience, retirement, reviews, reserve, resources,

S-Savior, Shalom, Sanctifier, Sovereign, Shepherd, Shield, Sanctuary, Shelter, Sustainer, staff, Spring, singing, St. Sebastian, Sunday schools and teachers, small groups, sexism, SLAM, Seattle opera, Seattle university, Shared Breakfast, Shared Wheel, strangers, Swedish hospital, Seattle clergy cohort, shoulder, Sacred Experience, Sharon, stewardship, siblings, saints, scholarships, secretary, soloists, special Sunday giving, Skyline, SPRC, scripture, surgeries, security shepherds, Stan, strength, Si, Sid, Sheridan, Steve, Stephanie, Sandy, Samantha, survey, service, stories, Sione's closet, solidarity, Shawn, suffering, stones, substitutes, singing bowls,

T-Truth, Tower, Trans, trustees, Tom, Tent City 4, Ted, Thayer, troubling times, trust, teachers, Thacher, Terri, time and talents, testimonies, Third Act, transphobia, transfer of membership,

U-uplifting, understanding, Ukraine, U.S.A., undocumented, UMVIM, UMCOR, unemployment, Urban outreach,

V-Visioning, visitations, Vitner's Pub Theology, visitors, Valentina, Verle,

W-Wisdom, Wonderful Counselor, worthy, weddings, Women in Ministry (WIM), worship, Wesley Homes, welcome, wives, Worship Song, water, West Bank, Wilda, Wongee, witness, When God Became White, Who wrote the bible, WAISEN, white supremacy, washing,

X- Χριστός (Christos), xenophobia no more,

Y-YHVH, Youth Group, You Are Not Alone, yoga, YouTube,

Z- Zoom meetings, zero-sum game resisters, zealots,

May the Holy Spirit/Wisdom remember and renew us, to experience joy in our solidarity with God and humanity as God is in solidarity with us, including all of creation.

Praise be to God, alleluia! Pastor Wongee





Rev. Jackie Celin, Associate Pastor of Congregational and Community Engagement

What a whirlwind year it has been! Exciting in many ways, and challenging as we think about the ever-worsening injustices and oppression occurring for so many people in our society; immigrants, refugees, people of color, the transgender community, and so many more. We are reminded again and again that we must not sit silently. We must speak with urgency and clarity about the harm being done, and consider how we are called to “Act Justly, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly” (Micah 6:8) in all that we do, especially in times such as this. I see this devotion day in and day out with our First Church community, and I couldn’t feel more blessed to be a part of it.

Last June, with the grace of God, I was commissioned as a Provisional Deacon during the 2024 Pacific Northwest Annual Conference gathering. It’s hard to believe it has been almost a year already! While I started in a part-time role at First Church at the beginning of 2024 as the Director of Congregational Engagement, I officially started my first appointment as a commissioned Deacon here at First Church at the start of our program year, on July 1st as a half-time Associate Pastor! One of my main tasks has been coordinating all of our volunteers each week, for both worship and for our Shared Breakfast food ministry. Additionally, I’ve provided pastoral support to our Outreach Missions teams, specifically; Urban Outreach, Global Missions, Church & Society, and Climate Justice.

Together, we’ve also sought out many additional collaborative opportunities over the past year with local faith communities, ministries, and organizations. We started that effort off quickly by hosting a large event featuring environmental author and activist, Bill McKibben, on the second of July, coordinating closely with the organization Third Act Washington, and several local churches to make the event a success.

In the Fall, we participated in an anti-racism book study, on the book *When God Became White, Dismantling Whiteness for a More Just Christianity* by author Gace Ji-Sun Kim. This study took place across the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area. We also participated in a zoom study group on the book with a United Methodist congregation in Portland.

During Advent, we held a collection drive for the Blaine Veterans Center, to continue developing our relationship with our transitional shelter on our property, while providing some much needed items for the men that stay here. In the winter, we started Sione's closet with the help of our staff and volunteers, to provide warm clothing to unhoused individuals during the frigid cold winter. And in Lent, we collected items for Neighborhood House to create Welcome Kits for families moving into stable housing situations after experiencing periods of instability in their lives. This Spring, we organized a poster making party in our Narthex, inviting many congregations in the area, as we participated in the nationwide Hands Off rally and protest next door at the Seattle Center to express our concern for the current state of our democracy. And now, we are getting ready for our biggest event of each year, our Pride Welcoming and Hospitality Event that occurs at the end of the Seattle Pride Parade route. We are putting together an exciting collaborative worship service, with several congregations co-sponsoring our guest preacher, transgender activist and author, Gabrielle Claiborne.

At the beginning of 2025, I took on some additional tasks to coordinate our children and youth programs, while transitioning to a full-time status at First Church. I am looking forward to the hiring of a new children and youth coordinator to assist with this work so that we can work towards goals to further develop our children and youth programs next program year.

It has been a joy to work alongside Pastor Wongee, and all of our staff, laity, and volunteers of First Church. I am truly amazed by the dedication of everyone involved and how we all continue to show up for and support one another. First Church, even though some days may seem long, and some days we may tire, your faith in God will sustain each and every one of you so that we will continue to be energized to face the challenges of tomorrow. May Christ's love continue to be revealed through the actions each of you take daily in your care for one another, for our planet, and for our world. Blessings on our continued work together.

Rev. Jackie Celin



MUSIC MINISTRY, STAFF REPORT

Elisabeth Ellis, Music Director

The music ministry of First Church continued to be an integral and beloved part of our worship experience during 2024. The dedicated Sanctuary Choir of 20 to 25 singers offered anthems and special music each Sunday, as well as for a variety of special services throughout the year. There were many highlights:

The Sunday Afternoon Recitals and Concerts Series was introduced. Featured soloists included Cary Lee, Ibidunni Ojikutu, Tess Altiveros, and, in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, Elizabeth Galafa Ylayam, who offered a selection of Latin American Music. The concerts were accompanied by Andrew Brandon-Rumman and Elisabeth Ellis on the piano. Donations at the events support the First Church music program.

In March, choir members gathered with other church choirs at Haller Lake United Methodist Church for a fundraiser concert benefitting the University Churches Emergency Fund (UCEF), a Seattle organization working to prevent homelessness.

The choir fondly bid farewell to Pastor Jeremy on his final Sunday with the anthem “All You Need Is Love.” Star Wars themed music also accompanied the service, as well as special solo performances at the farewell luncheon.

A summer adult education class exploring the requiem mass was led by Don and Janet Crawley, Elisabeth Ellis, and Glenn Gregg. Don and Janet Crawley substituted during Elisabeth Ellis’s vacations. Don played organ and piano, while Janet sang and offered special music with crystal singing bowls.



Other musical gifts came from Seiko Werts and Glenn Gregg who directed the choir . in Elisabeth's absence.

The gifts of soloists Tess Altiveros, Ibidunni Ojikutu, Cary Lee, Danielle Reutter-Harrah, Seiko Werts and others brought musical inspiration to our worship. Sometimes God works via the music program to bring us unique, serendipitous moments as gifts to our congregation. For example, one Sunday in June, the Arenivar family, former members, were visiting. Their daughters, Jenna and Maryn, raised their angelic voices in singing "Pie Jesu" as an offertory.

The year ahead promises to be equally rich in music, expressed with joy, kindness. and love.





WHAT WE DO

CHURCH COUNCIL / PROGRAM REPORTS

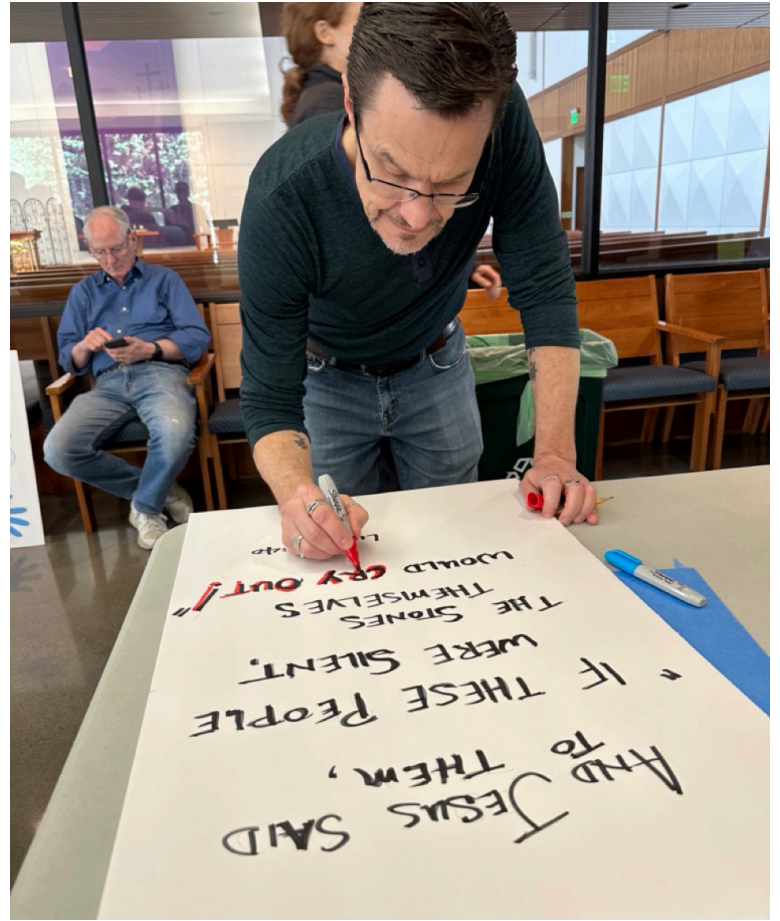
SACRED EXPERIENCES


The past year has seen First Church do so much in the Sacred Experiences space. We've had numerous adult education classes and guest speakers on Sunday mornings to uplift a variety of voices and perspectives. We debuted our Land Acknowledgement as our first step towards living a reparative relationship to Seattle's land and indigenous peoples. We've had several opportunities outside of church on Sunday morning for the sanctuary to be a home used to host music, educational talks, and art (including a Polar Bear representative of Saint Sebastian).

And with all of that, one thing rings true for us on Sacred Experiences as we look ahead: we want to do more. With all our successes, we know that they are only indicative of what more First Church can do. First Church has never been more in a place to grow and change and try new things that we've never experienced before. Our music program has debuted our first (of hopefully many) Open Mic Night at First Church earlier this year. We have a desire to continue to have many new voices present and heard in both our sanctuary pulpit and in our adult education classes.

Sacred Experiences wants to continue to weave the interconnectedness of new voices throughout our First Church opportunities. We'll continue looking for how to refresh our services through new liturgy and statements, though new voices in and out of Sunday mornings, and most of all by trying to be the refuge that the world needs. Think of it as a genre switch or update. This is our chance to experiment, to rewrite our existing older weekly languages, try new music and art opportunities, and show people (both visitors and our congregation) that we are a church that is alive.







WORSHIP TEAM

In preparation for the church leadership retreat in March of this year, we were asked to consider our accomplishments back into 2023. It was interesting to note that it wasn't until well into 2023 that we fully emerged from COVID pandemic restrictions and reinstated weekly in-person communion using the common cup – while continuing to livestream our worship services to maintain expanded accessibility for the housebound and far flung. It seems strange how quickly we have normalized the innovations made necessary by the COVID crisis, even as it fades from our collective memory. At the same time, the sense of consecutive and interpenetrating crises – the polycrisis – only deepens. It is quite a moment to be church, and to use our worship life to find meaning in and discern our response to these crises, together.

With regard to contemplating the climate crisis, we have been quite pleased with the creative output flowing from our ongoing collaboration with the Climate Justice Working Group since its inception. Through multiple special Sundays and series each year, we feel we have been successful in incorporating climate crisis awareness and creation-focused concern into our liturgical life. In particular, we would lift up our 2024 Eastertide series “Common Home, Common Calling” featuring Dr. Lisa Graumlich and Rev. Jim Antal. We are also very proud of the First Church community for its courage in hosting the artist Jospheh Rossano and his very confronting sculpture, St. Sebastian, for our 2024 Blessing of the Animals service.

Many of our anti-racism efforts in 2023-2024 did double-time, as it were, in also speaking to the climate crisis. These include hosting Sarah Augustine, Director of the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discover Coalition, as part of our Holy Ground series in 2023. In 2024, the Worship Team also took the lead in facilitating a year-long process to formulate Land Acknowledgment statements for First Church, both short form and long form.

Notably in 2024, we supported a pastoral transition as we said goodbye to Pastor Jeremy Smith and hello to Pastor Wongee Joh. Such transitions are never easy, and we are grateful to so many leaders in congregation who stepped up to hold the congregation and provide continuity through this time of change. We want to give particular acknowledgment to Pastor Jackie Celin who went above and beyond in supporting us all. In the midst of this transition, the Worship Team worked to expand our cadre of worship volunteers providing leadership for our liturgical life.



We are also very pleased to have added another Isaac Pruden original to our banner collection with the introduction of our new Advent banner in 2024. Thank you, Isaac!

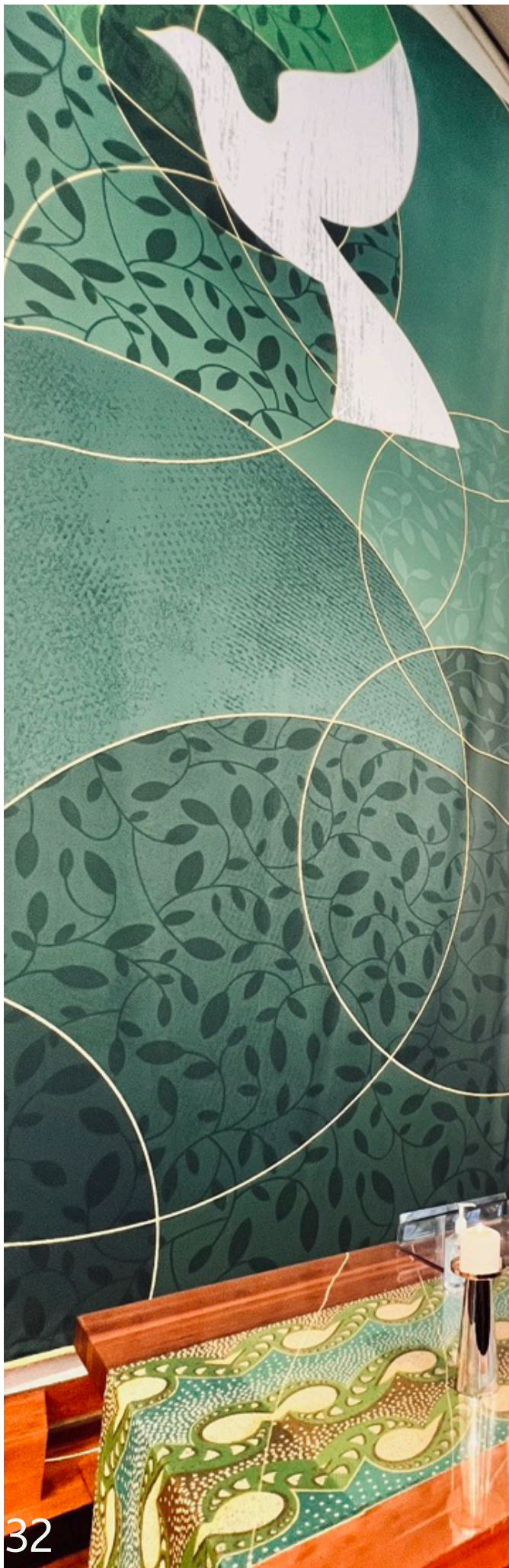
As we look ahead to the remainder of 2025 and 2026, our goals include:

§ Refresh and simplify liturgical structure & elements. This will include review and revision of our liturgy; consideration of frequency and flow of communion; expanding the variety of congregational music (hymns), and creation of new banners (as funding allows).

§ Center worship in prophetic voice/witness, while providing solace/assurance. This will include ensuring that the voices of those most impacted by hostile regimes, domestic and otherwise, are represented in worship; and working to include congregational witness and testimony in services.

§ Accessibility. Immediate focus will include exploring closed captions for hearing impaired and ASL interpreters for special Sundays, while we evaluate other accessibility issues.

§ Climate Justice. We will continue to collaborate with the Climate Justice Working Group on special Sundays & series, as well as working to include more natural/organic elements and images in our worship life.





ADULT SPIRITUALITY

This year we tackled a wide range of topics presented in a variety of formats, including book studies, videos and online presentations. Classes were held at the traditional 9:00 hour, and we also experimented with having sessions after worship. We were blessed with great teachers, both congregation members and outside facilitators.

Topics include:

Buddhist meditation

Deep Listening – a three part study

The Christmas Letters with Magrey deVega (video series)

Who Wrote the Bible? (youtube series)

Books studies were:

Jesus for Everyone by A.J. Levine

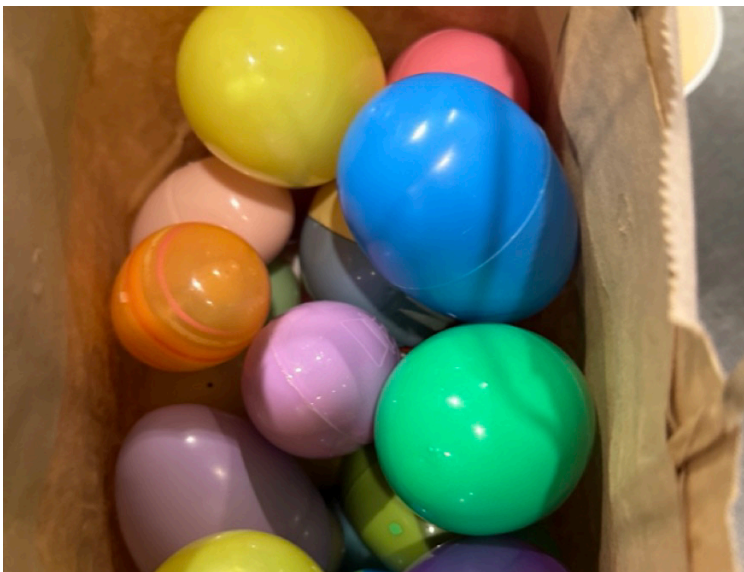
The Cross and the Lynching Tree by James Cone

Looking Inward, Acting Outward by Dan Wolpert, who led the discussion

Facilitators include, Vi Boyer, Kathryn Everett, Chris Russell, Holly Harvey, Barbara Moreland, Beth Snyder, Alex Smith, Pastor Jackie Celin, Pastor Wongee Joh. Some sessions were held at 9:00 and we tried having some sessions after worship.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

This year, we have been focusing on rebuilding our Children & Youth program. In the Spring, we restarted our Sunday School program by offering classes for Children and Youth on the second Sundays of the month. This fall, we hope to expand this to more Sundays a month. We also held a special Lenten youth study group session after worship, using the General Board of Church & Society's Connecting Faith with Justice Youth Curriculum. We incorporated a Children's Message into Worship on Christmas Eve and Easter, and held our annual kids Easter Egg Hunt in our education wing on the third floor. Currently, we are in the midst of planning for our participation in the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area S.L.A.M trip to the Yakima Reservation in July.






TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

Our Transforming the World program area is composed of four committees that are focused on our outward engagement to our society and the world around us. It includes; Climate Justice, Church & Society / Social Justice, Urban Outreach, and Global Missions. Our Climate Justice committee educates and engages our congregation in understanding our collective impacts on our climate, how it affects the most vulnerable in our society, and what we can do about it. Our Church & Society committee offers educational and advocacy opportunities for our faith community by bringing in special guest speakers to discuss sensitive topics that inform us about the unnecessary suffering caused by injustice and oppression in our communities, and across the globe. Our Urban Outreach team is responsible for keeping our Shared Breakfast ministry operational each Sunday to offer a warm meal to anyone that is hungry. They serve this meal out of our Fellowship Hall from our entrance on Denny Way. Our Global Missions team held a collection drive during Lent to create Welcome Kits for a local non-profit, Neighborhood House, and started to develop a covenant relationship with a United Methodist missionary in Nepal working with the United Mission to Nepal. These four committees offer numerous ways for our congregation to acknowledge the hurt, suffering, and injustices that we see and experience in our world, and work together with our partners for meaningful change. They do this by offering educational awareness events, encouraging involvement in advocacy opportunities, and inviting participation in service activities. Read on to learn more about the specific work of each of these committees.





CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate Justice Working Group Accomplishments and 2025-2027 Goals

Accomplishments

- Elevated creation-centered themes in preaching and worship.
- Organized annual Spring worship series on creation care and the climate crisis.
- Recruited faith leaders and climate experts as guest preachers.
- Garnered 40+ Earth Pledges as part of annual stewardship campaigns.
- Hosted a public event featuring climate writer and activist, Bill McKibben. 650+ attendees (in-person and online).
- Engaged church members and McKibben attendees in a successful campaign to Defeat I-2117 and preserve Washington's Climate Commitment Act.
- Led Adult Spirituality classes on creation care, earth grief, and the BBC Planet Earth series.
- Advised Trustees in effort to green/decarbonize church physical plant.
- Engaged First Church members in advocacy and action to stop investment in fossil fuels.

Goals - Collaborate with other church committees and develop community partners to:

Amplify the voice of nature/creation care in worship.

- Periodically refresh language in liturgies.
- Spread CJWG involvement in worship throughout the year to include Earth Day, Indigenous/Native American Sunday, Seasons of Creation series, Blessing of the Animals, and Longest Night services.
- Gather and share creation-centered resources (music, written word, art, videos).
- Recruit an annual guest preacher/speaker on the topic of climate justice.

2. Engage members in key advocacy campaigns.

- Promote advocacy opportunities during the annual Washington State legislative session.
- Engage members in campaigns to eliminate support of fossil fuels.
- Engage members in campaigns and events to promote renewable energy

3. Adopt and put into action a Climate Church Covenant.

2025: Adopt a First Church Climate Covenant—a collective pledge to address the climate crisis. Live into and en flesh the Covenant.

Brand First Church as a climate church.

4. Provide education and training opportunities for members and the broader community.

Conduct Lunch & Learns and Adult Education classes on topics such as Divesting from Fossil Fuels, Food and Climate Change, Transportation and Climate Change, and Adaptation to Climate Disruption, Health and Climate Change, Human Rights and Climate Change, Rights of Nature

5. Support church leadership in the stewardship of facilities.

Share information about potential sources of funding and about legislation and regulations (state and local) requiring the church to transition from gas to electricity. Seize opportunities to use the church building for public events (e.g. SunDay September 21, 2025)

6. Cultivate shared leadership.

Share leadership in leading/facilitating meetings.

Support CJWG members in conceiving initiatives and planning/leading activities.

Recruit additional CJWG members.



CHURCH & SOCIETY / SOCIAL JUSTICE

Mission: To advocate for and act on social and civic issues such as peace, justice, equity, and environmental stewardship.

Accomplishments 2023 - 2025

All goals were met. Visit

<https://firstchurchseattle.org/gather/grow-learn/church-society/> for details. In partnership with other organizations and through church e-newsletter articles and events, the committee:

Informed the church community about housing equity, voting rights, genocide in Gaza, environmental stewardship, equity in the justice system, gun control, and other issues, and then offered opportunities for advocacy and action.

Partnered with Reclaim Our Vote to write postcards encouraging voter registration and voting.

Planned and led the following five Lunch & Learn and Meaningful Movies (MM) events after Sunday worship, each attended by 30 to 85 people in person and on Zoom. (1) Genocide in Gaza and Palestinians' struggle under Israeli occupation. (2) Homelessness and affordable housing. (3) Voter suppression and voting rights. (4) Beavers and healthy ecosystems. (5) Climate change and faith communities (in partnership with the Climate Justice Working Group).

Attended Faith Action Network (FAN) events, including its annual dinner in November and Interfaith Advocacy Day in February in Olympia.

Committee budget supported nonprofit partners and speaker honorariums.

2025 - 2027 goals

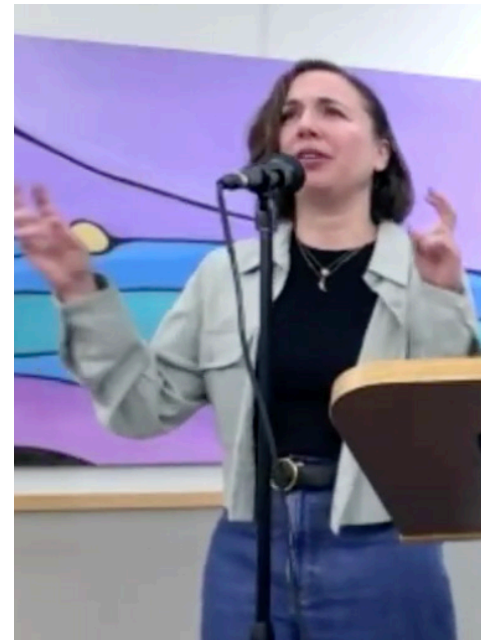
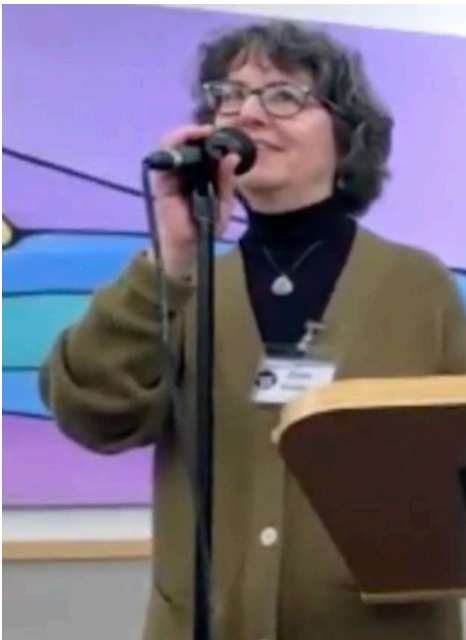
Continue advocacy and action alerts in church e-newsletters. Include information on where to find reliable news, timely action alerts, and organizations needing financial and volunteer support.

Continue to partner with advocacy organizations to support voter registration and voting and continue participating in Faith Action Network (FAN).

Learn about sanctuary churches. Possibly support a nearby sanctuary church.

Organize a group to volunteer periodically at the Furniture Repair Project.

Consider an event, in collaboration with the Climate Justice Working Group, about the food industry and impacts on health, environment, and immigration.



URBAN OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Goals for 2024-2025:

- Complete a discernment process around our operating model and ask what we want Shared Breakfast to be:
 - Do we want to change from our post-covid set up?
 - Should we reconsider offering the pre-covid sit-down meal?
- Invite other congregations to serve at Shared Breakfast.
- Raise Awareness: Share with our congregation the time and resources it takes to produce Shared Breakfast, for example, through “mission moments” worship services.
 - Develop stronger connections with Blaine Center.
 - Continue to work with other organizations in advocacy for those on the streets.

Looking back on what we accomplished

- We had a weekly Shared Breakfast serving approximately 130 breakfasts each week to those in need.
- We supported the Blaine Veteran’s Center.
- We have focused this year on just running Shared Breakfast, and that has taken most of our bandwidth.

We met some of the church-wide goals set in 2022, highlighted in bold below:

Building inclusion / Community

- Develop stronger connections with Blaine Center.
 - The director of Blaine Center spoke to the congregation last year.
 - John Loacker has gotten meals donated from Canlis and done a lot of personal outreach to the Center and individuals.

Changing the World

- **Collaborate with other congregations and volunteer with other feeding and advocacy programs.**
 - A congregation from Mercer Island sent a team once a month to Shared Breakfast. They concluded their service with us in December.
- **Challenge governmental entities and work with advocacy organizations to enact lasting change**
 - Bruce testified at a City Council budget hearing to lobby for funding for meals program.
 - We are active in Meals Partnership Coalition.

Looking Ahead

- We hope to be able to continue to have Shared Breakfast.
- We aspire to bring in other congregations as we did with Mercer Island church.





COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Communities of all types within First Church continue to thrive, providing a spiritual refuge for congregants in turbulent times. Established fellowship groups continued to meet as per usual, with the typical Vintner game nights, Pub Theology meetups in Queen Anne, and Pride and Faith potlucks in congregants homes. New opportunities for fellowship also sprang out of collaborations with Adult Spirituality. Two classes in particular – one where we read the Deconstructionist’s Playbook and a second on the video series “Who Wrote the Bible?” - provided rallying points for building closer community.

We also hosted or reimagined several events last year around Pastor Wongee’s arrival. In particular, a series of meet-and-greets were held in congregants’ homes as a way of getting to know our new pastor. Congregants greatly enjoyed these events, and hopefully they helped Pastor Wongee get to know church members more easily, without having to rely solely on short after service interactions. We also shuffled around a few typical summer events at the beginning of the ministry year to better accommodate the pastoral transition. We pushed the all-church summer picnic to Rally Day, and we held the ministry fair later than usual. Both events were a success, with special thanks to Barbara for herding the cats around the ministry fair.

Pride continues to be a highlight of the church’s calendar. We had a successful Pride Sunday back in June, with plenty of volunteers to organize the event, collect and distribute treats to parade goers, feed our volunteers, and facilitate guests inside our building. It was a beautiful Pride Sunday, and large numbers of people interfaced with members of our church family as part of this annual hospitality event. For the coming year, the committee will be focusing on leadership support and development. First order of business is organizing a standing overarching Community Connections committee, a task being undertaken with the Nominations Committee.

The program area has largely been functioning as independent committees, with church wide events largely being handled ad-hoc throughout the year. Establishing a regular standing committee will enable better collaboration across groups, as well as a more organized calendar for all events. We also want to use it to provide logistical support for group leaders. The goal is to reduce the work required to spin up new fellowship groups and host fellowship events. Less logistical onus on group leaders wanting to host events makes offering activities easier and better for everyone.

In addition, we'll be fostering connections with Adult Spirituality to recreate the successes of the discussion groups over the past year. Discussion content is often in high demand for Pub Theology events as well, so this will hopefully be a productive partnership on multiple fronts.







CONGREGATIONAL CARE

It is a privilege for me to chair the Congregational Care Team, a loosely knit group of faithful church members who come together to care for our church family in small and big ways. I am deeply touched by the care that our congregants show towards people both within our congregation and within our community, using their talents, expertise, and passion in helping to make life more hopeful and enjoyable.

As our committee members care for our congregation, we are constantly listening for ways to support each other. Through prayers, conversations, cards, emails, calls, visits, helping hands, offers of assistance, prayer shawls, encouragement, and plenty of hugs, we strive to be the hands of Christ and fulfil his mission. We rely on members of the congregation as well as family members of congregants to let us know when someone is in need of prayers, a kind word, a visit, a baby shower, a card, birthday wishes, a Meal Train set up, or help moving! We are here for each other.

As chair of the committee, I send out regular emails with prayer concerns and contact information for those willing and able to help. For those whose prayers are more personal or who request confidentiality, we also offer a subset of individuals (our prayer team) as well as concerns only viewed by Pastor Wongee.

One of the great joys of the year is our Christmas and Easter deliveries to some of our members who have had health issues, the loss of a loved one, mobility issues, or just need to know how much we care. We especially appreciate Sharon Donohue who makes incredibly beautiful cards to include in each gift bag. Nancy Dudgeon is always a big help providing special touches for the bag as well. And many dedicated volunteers deliver the bags along with a cheery visit. These small tokens give us a chance to purposefully interact and honor special church members. As many of you know, Gwynne Dodge, with help from Michiko Kono, faithfully organized this twice a year activity that has become 'a cherished First Church tradition.

First Church is not just a building; it is an amazing collection of caring people. Community has helped us through some challenging times and inspires us to be more compassionate. We are the lucky to have this amazing community.

CAMPS AND RETREATS

Many in our faith community gathered at Camp Indianola for our annual All Church Retreat. Check out some of the photos below of the time spent sharing together in food, fun, fellowship, and worship! A big thank you to Karen McOmer and the camp and retreats committee for their work in putting together the retreat, and for all those that helped on the service project to repair some benches at one of the campfires!



A high-angle photograph of a church service. People are standing in the pews, shaking hands and talking. A man in a patterned sweater with a yellow and black design is shaking hands with an older man in a black jacket. A woman in a light blue patterned jacket is clapping. A woman in a red jacket is holding a book. A man in a light blue shirt is standing in the foreground. The pews are wooden with blue cushions. The text "STEWARDED OUR RESOURCES" is overlaid in a white box with green text.

STEWARDED OUR RESOURCES

ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD - CHAIR

The 2024-2025 program year was the second year for the Administrative Board, which includes four sub-committees: Finance, Trustees, Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) 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 into the Administrative Board, In years past, all of them met separately and involved different lay members. The goal in combining these committees into the Administrative Board was to create a more efficient structure (better decision making and less meeting time) as well as more synergies for handling the church's administrative needs.

The program year got underway with Greg Wallace and Craig Sheppard graciously hosting the Administrative Board at their home for dinner in August 2024, as a way to welcome the church's new pastor, Rev. Wongee Joh and her husband, Ben Kim, and to introduce them to its members as well as their partners/spouses. The second year of this new structure has seen continued adjustments to the meetings to handle all the various administrative needs of the church. In general, this new structure is achieving the goals of more efficient meetings and decision-making processes. A highlight of the year was a retreat held at the church on Saturday, March 8th, for members of the Administrative Board and Church Council to celebrate the accomplishments of the past year and develop plans for the next year. There were seven themes that emerged from the discussions at the retreat, They are:

1. Use of the church building;
2. Resource development (people);
3. Resource development (finances);
4. Connections within our congregation;
5. Creating meaningful worship experiences;
6. Communication and interactions of the church with the world around us; and
7. Our Shared Breakfast ministry.

These themes have been incorporated into the goals and plans of the church's committees that you will see throughout this document.

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

STAFF /PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Looking Back

Staff /Parish Relations Committee had a busy and extremely productive year. In addition to saying good-bye to one pastor and welcoming another, we made progress on a number of goals for all our staff. We've also set goals to keep us moving in a positive direction.

Goal 1. 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 allows them to be engaged in the community and mission of the church.

Accomplishments

- Welcomed and onboarded incoming pastor
- Change management included closure for the congregation as we honored outgoing pastor.
- Included staff and congregation in the planning throughout (see goal #2)

Goal 2. Manage change openly and deliberately so that church members are included in a transparent Pastoral transition process.

Accomplishments

- Communicated monthly to the congregation about the transition process and provided opportunities for questions and input after services.
- Conducted 2 congregational listening sessions and 1 congregation-wide survey. Used this input to onboard the new pastor.

Goal 3. Support new pastor and staff through the transition. Be responsive to changes in the staffing needs of the church.

Accomplishments

- Have continued our liaison support of staff throughout the transition.
- Had our Yearly Staff Appreciation event
- Restructured a number of roles to respond to shifting needs:
 - Created Director of Operations role
 - Added office assistant tasks to bookkeeper role
 - Rescoped Director of Communications role
 - Created Associate Pastor of Community and Congregational Engagement role
 - Created Youth Coordinator role

Goal 4. Ensure hiring, recruiting, and pay is equitable and address bias in our hiring and recruiting practices.

Accomplishments

- Updated job descriptions, recruitment sources, and interview questions to ensure equitable practices.
- Hired and retained qualified staff, diverse in skills and perspective.
- Conducted market analysis of all roles to ensure equitable pay. Made adjustments as necessary in 2025 budget.

Goal 5. 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.

Accomplishments

- Supervisors are aware of this opportunity. SPRC reinforces during regular check-ins.
- Budgeted for staff development.

Looking Ahead: Goals for 2025-2026

- Re-establish a regular performance appraisal process, updating to a collaborative approach.
- Maintain values related to hiring highly qualified staff, recruited from a variety of sources that ensure we have the best candidates.
- Provide support of staff through the complications ahead, given the unease created by national disruptions and the local impact of the national situation.
- Support growth and development of staff as needed.
- Develop strong teamwork between SPRC and Pastor Wongee.





TRUSTEES

Even as the current term of our Trustee group nears completion, our awareness of the current and future needs and demands of our facilities continues to grow. It is hard to believe that we have occupied this property for approximately 15 years! While the sanctuary building and the parking garage structure may seem new to many of us, these facilities require our attention, not only from the perspective of daily use, but also in preparing for the future.

Documentation of procedures and practices has been a priority for us this year, and we have begun creating a resource for current use and future reference. We located and uploaded the full set of building plans to Google Drive. We also started documenting and uploading “how to” details dealing with maintenance and repair issues as they arise.

Energy efficiency and attempts to move towards a more carbon-free environment have also been activities that Trustees are giving attention to. In particular, we are grateful for the efforts of Doug Donohue (who was also very involved in the installation of energy-saving lights). Doug has not only been researching options for replacing our use of natural gas appliances and heating systems, but has also been researching how to implement a solar-powered solution for our facilities. Kurt Armbruster has also been a tremendous help to us with his understanding of effective use of our sophisticated heating/cooling control system.

There are many other volunteers who keep our properties functional. Tom Bruhns regularly shares his vast array of skills. Another reliable group helps with our spring cleanup and special outdoor projects such as the month-long light replacement efforts and the breezeway drainage repair (Find out if John has this photon “photo-repair of breezeway drainage”).

Trustees also believes that the garage offers opportunities for promotion of our church and potentially increases to our revenue stream by leasing space on the west side of the garage for advertising. (Trustees is currently discussing this with two companies.). Also, signage promoting our church has been added in two locations in the garage. (Does John have this? optional photos-see thumbnail of banner).

Planning for emergencies has also been among the goals of our group for the past few years. WE now have signage indicating emergency exits, first aid kits, and instructions of where to go in the event of a disaster r placed throughout the church building. A “starter” disaster/earthquake kit, has been placed in the breezeway storage, with the expectation of completing that kit in the near future.

Trustees will continue to advocate for sufficient reserve funds to aid with the maintenance, repair, and replacement of the key components of our facilities. The life span of our large roof top heat pumps is estimated to be 15-30 years. PVC roof membrane is 20-35 years. Our previous elevator contractor has recommended needed upgrades could run into the six figures. While maintenance contractors and other regular practices can prolong the life of these building components – replacement is inevitable.

Our Trustee group is grateful for the involvement of our Operations Manager, Melinda Waggoner, and our Facilities Manager, Sione Tuihalamaka. Both of these staff members deal with problems in an expedient and professional manner. The sophistication and complexity of our facilities is a bit daunting, but both Melinda and Sione of done a great job dealing with the many issues that arise.





FINANCE

Our 2024 budget of \$750,000 predicted a roughly \$21,000 deficit. We hoped that, as in 2023, we would have some additional windfalls to fill the gap. We were fortunate to have: about \$9000 more in donations than budgeted, and to earn more than \$32,900 of interest, where we expected only \$16,500.

However, the garage income was almost \$25,000 short of our goal. The net result was that our actual income was slightly less than what was in the budget.

Expensive repairs to the hot water system, garage elevator, and other systems in the building were covered by the budget and by drawing down the building reserves, which are set up to deal with one-time expenses like these. A major leak in our waterline hit us with several months of enormous water bills, but Melinda Waggoner was able to negotiate a significant reduction from the city. Careful management of expenses by all committees and staff kept our actual expenses near or below the budget targets, so our final operating deficit was roughly \$25,000.

Our Donor Restricted Contributions included more than \$95,000 towards paying down the mortgage and almost \$25,000 for the homeless fund and Shared Breakfast. We used that money for its intended purposes! Another \$24,000 was donated for other specific funds and we covered expenses that had not been in the budget using appropriate designated funds. The net result was that we drew down the restricted funds by almost \$10,000.

We are excited to pay off the garage mortgage in 2025, which will free up more than \$36,000 per year from our operating budget. The finances for 2024 were not as good as we had hoped, but not bad enough to be of major concern. We were off by about 3% in our operating budget and drew down about 6% of our reserves.

2024 Budget Report

Sources of Funds

Pledge Offering	321,503
Expected Giving	49,530
Unpledged	34,980
Loose Offering	3,241
Easter	2,177
Thanksgiving	953
Christmas	1,964
Building Use	3,725
Bequeathed Gifts	
Events Income	500
Garage NET Income	247,743
Miscellaneous Income	100
Investment Interest	32,953
Mortgage Campaign Principal Income	32,400
TOTAL	731,769

Expenses of Funds

SPRC	436,765
Facilities	176,878
Administration	23,191
Food Service	8,914
Communications	3,797
Apportionment & General Conference	83,872
Climate Justice	380
Church & Society	900
Global Missions	200
Community Engagement	200
Pride Parade	2,300
Welcoming & Congregational Care	522
Worship & Arts	12,082
Worship Supplies	6,588
Spiritual Formation	1,202
TOTAL	757,791
NET SURPLUS (OR DEFICIT)	(26,022)

2024 Fund Balances

Temporary Restricted Funds

Handbells	15
Camp/Event Scholarships	1,715
General Scholarships	13,319
Library	1,554
Yoga Ministry	977
Building Reserve (Maintenance)	13,148

Pride	3,275
Archives	27
Youth	409
Retreat Reserve	10,049
Global Missions/Salud Y Paz Organ Fund	809
Undesignated Memorials	3,271
Music	1,689
Capital Campaign – Debt/Mortgage Elimination	16,003
Pipe Organ Savings Fund	1,713
Nursing Scholarship	4,283
Indianola Camp Scholarship	2,337
Homelessness	6,680
Gloria Shared Breakfast	18,298
Tech Upgrade	17
Campaign Expenses	5,536
Temp Restricted Money Market Interest Accrued	4,196
Temp Restricted Total	109,320

Endowment Funds (Previously Named Permanent Funds)

Endowment - Non-Garage	41,118
Viola & Gordon Gump Endowment	314,875
Nursing Endowment	6,000
Scholarship Endowment	24,000
TOTAL	358,993

Assets	2024	2023	Change
Cash and Cash Equivalents	180,186	228,319	(43,133)
Receivables	53,213	58,128	(4,915)
Pastor’s Discretionary Fund	3,443	2,406	1,037
Temporary Restricted Funds	109,320	191,042	(81,722)
Permanent Funds (Endowment Banking Accounts)	118,743	101,370	17,373
Property Held for Sale	5,000	5,000	0
Investments (Includes Unrestricted & Endowment Funds)	426,915	400,196	26,719
Land, Building & Equipment	21,657,837	22,190,121	532,284
Other Assets - Reserve Coal Property	2,600	2,600	0
ASSETS TOTAL	22,557,257	23,179,182	

LIABILITIES & EQUITY	2024	2023	Change
Account Payable	17,759	2,590	15,169
Miscellaneous Liabilities	2,646	-400	2246
Long-Term Liabilities	45,832	240,526	194,694
LIABILITIES TOTAL	66,237	242,716	
Equity	22,491,020	22,936,466	
Total Liabilities & Equity	22,557,257	23,179,182	



CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

Barbara Moreland, Chair

Church Council = Working Together.

I firmly believe - with absolutely no disrespect to our clergy – that it is the people-in-the-pews who make a church successful. Especially in the Methodist itineracy tradition where pastors are moved from church to church on a regular basis, it is the faithfulness, devotion, and plain old hard work of the laity that keeps the doors open and the love of God and neighbor flowing into the world. And when we meet this holy goal, it is because each person offers their particular gifts and talents, their wisdom and experience, their professional training and personal passions, and their time. Lots of time.

The Church Council is where all these workers come together. The folks planning worship and those finding ways to welcome everyone. Those who keep track of the personal and spiritual needs of our church family, and those who see that the bills get paid. Some who work with our children and others who pack kits for our neighbors in need. First Church is blessed to have an abundance of smart, dedicated people who faithfully give their time and talents.

In the pages that follow here you will read the reports of our program committees and reports from our administrative teams. As we celebrate the accomplishments of the past year, take time to offer a word of gratitude or appreciation to those who have served. And as you read of the plans for our next year, consider where you might find a new way to become involved .



RETREAT FOLLOW-UP

November 16, 2025

Dear Church Council & Admin Board members,

On March 8, many of us gathered in Fellowship Hall for a retreat to celebrate the many accomplishments of the First Church congregation during the previous year and to discuss work areas and programs of the church that needed attention in the coming 18 months. Once we reviewed all the notes from the retreat, seven key themes emerged that were shared with all of you. A great deal of time and effort by various church committees have gone into working on these themes during the past six months. With our Charge Conference today, we felt that now was a good time to update you on the progress that has been made.

1. Use of the church building

There have been 8 separate groups that have "rented" the building since March 8th, meaning they applied and signed contracts. Of those 8 groups, the building has been used by them for separate 21 events. There are 3 more dates in December so that will make at least 24 events in 2025. Of the 21 events to-date, 13 of these were considered to be an extension of our ministries.

2. Resource development (people)

A leadership retreat, focused on "how to get stuff done" organized by Barbara Moreland and Dale Alekel, was held for committee leaders on July 27.

Laity were encouraged to be leaders in worship – worship leader, scripture reader, communion helper, and to make announcements from specific working groups.

Laity were supported in bringing forward new ideas for programs and events, such as the presentation from the Palestinian and Jewish activists.

3. Resource development (finances)

The Finance Committee led the effort to pay off the church's \$1.8 million mortgage, a monumental goal that was met on June 23, 2025.

Efforts are underway now to grow the church's Building Reserves with the funds that are still outstanding from the Mortgage Reduction Campaign.

Members of Trustees and the Finance Committee negotiated and submitted a lease for approval by the Church Council and Admin Board with Summus, Inc. for advertising on the church's garage. This partnership has the potential to provide \$66,000 in pre-tax revenue in 2026.

4. Connections within our congregation

A variety of old, established groups – like Pride and Faith, Vintners young adults and the men's Thursday breakfast group – have continued to draw folks together.

Seasonal events, like the 12 Days of Christmas parties that are being planned for later this year, help folks meet and connect in homes.

Connections were also strengthened through updates from the Congregational Care team about births and deaths, milestones to celebrate, and specific needs of individuals in our community.

The women's retreat at Camp Indianola strengthened connections between the women attending and resulted in plans for a new ongoing women's group.

The All-church Retreat at Camp Indianola in May was also a wonderful event for strengthening connections.

5. Creating meaningful worship experiences

Our doors remained open to all. (All means ALL.)

We continued to have meaningful worship experiences that involve a variety of clergy and laity speakers, outstanding music, Methodist traditions, and open communion.

We continued to have a variety of lay members who share worship leadership roles.

Some speakers come from our congregation (Peter Jabin), others come from other ministry areas (Doug Cunningham), and some are experts in a specific ministry area or another church. (Dan Wolpert).

Planning is underway for another Longest Night service in December.

Conversations have begun regarding “refreshing” the worship service.

6. Communication and interactions of the church with the world around us

We continued to work together on big projects like Pride Sunday, sharing the tasks of assembling treats and sharing them and Holy Communion with marchers going past our doors.

Social Justice / Climate Justice Working Group brought us a variety of speakers.

Various groups offered concrete ways to be involved in the world outside our building, such as bringing school supplies to an under-funded local elementary school.

First Church youth, along with teens from other churches, went on a service trip (SLAM: Students Learning About Missions) to the Yakama Nation Reservation in July.

First Church people attended a protest at the NW Detention Center, as well as supported the ministry of the Church of Mary Magdalene.

We hosted special events to support anti-racism and immigrant justice work, such as the Faith over Fear International Symposium on white Christian nationalism, Detention Lottery, and the Defend Migrants Alliance meeting.

We had congregational and pastoral presence at special advocacy events in the area, such as “A United Call to Action” at Edmonds UMC, and a press conference with Representative Jayapal and other faith leaders.

Church members have organized dinners provided by local restaurants for the residents of the Blaine Veterans’ Center.

7. Our Shared Breakfast ministry

The Church Council approved allocating \$10,000 from the Viola Gump bequest for use by Shared Breakfast.

The Urban Outreach Committee has submitted multiple grant applications and was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from King County, payable in 2026.

Committee members have participated in advocacy at the city level with the Meals Partnership Coalition to request funding in the Seattle budget for meal programs.

There is so much good work going on! We apologize for any initiatives that we missed. Thanks for all your planning, prayers, energy, time and work that have made all of this possible.

With gratitude,

Barbara Moreland and Jim Schone

Chair - Church Council & Chair - Admin Board

LAY SERVANT/ LAY SPEAKER REPORT

I first became the lay delegate from First Church to the PNW Annual Conference near the end of the first decade of the 2000s. During those years I also served on the Conference Board of Laity. In 2009, I completed the course work and requirements to become a Certified Lay Servant, and then a Certified Lay Speaker. In 2012 I accepted a teaching position that meant leaving the country, and when I returned in 2015, I stepped back in as a Conference Lay Delegate from First Church, and continue to participate in Conference meetings, special sessions, and activities.

The connectional system that is fundamental to Methodism offers an incredibly wide array of opportunities to share with, learn from, and work alongside members of churches far from our urban Seattle location. Thanks to the one good thing that came out of the Covid pandemic – the ability to meet people via Zoom – I have connected with Lay Servants and Lay Speakers in other Conferences, and they have been a great source of information, inspiration, and community. I would be happy to talk with anyone interested in becoming a Lay Servant or Lay Speaker.

This year I have served in a variety of leadership capacities in my home church, and currently I am Chair of Church Council and Chair of Nominations / Leadership Development. I continue to be on the Worship Team, the place where I originally connected at First Church. I will have preached at our church four times this year, and I had two speaking opportunities in other churches.

This year I caught up on the classes offered to Lay Servants for recertification by taking two different four-week courses organized by the Lay Servant leader of the Oregon/Idaho Conference. One class was the Social Principles of the UMC, based on the changes to the Book of Discipline in 2024. The second was Living Our Beliefs - the United Methodist Heritage, where I learned more about Wesley and the theological beginnings of Methodism. Classes were offered via Zoom, and I participated with Lay Servants from not only the Pacific Northwest, but also from Louisiana and Idaho.

One of the (many) reasons I am a United Methodist is that my church expects and enables me to follow Christ in all parts of my life. Every Christian is called to make the most of their gifts in service to God and neighbor – not just the clergy – but everyone who claims to follow Christ. I am grateful for the opportunity to be in ministry with all the disciples, friends, and colleagues at First Church



CLERGY REPORT

Kathryn Everett, Retired Clergy

Hard Year!

With the world in chaos my ministry has focused on teaching meditation for others and myself. Meditation (prayer) can give us peace, help us know what to do and how to live wisely, and grow our compassion.

Knowing we can't do everything I feel called to help alleviate the difficulties for people who are without stable housing. Shared Breakfast is one way and I also have volunteered at Real Change, the street newspaper that helps provide resources and support by having people sell their newspaper and keep the money. The paper also does advocacy with their articles and in person at City Hall. The paper is struggling from their loss of the founder and the pandemic. The move to remote work means there aren't nearly as many people out on the streets to sell to. So please buy the paper when you see them.

This year I have participated more at our church and am starting to know more of you. What a wonderful group you are and you bring so much hope and joy to my life. I feel the need of that support more than ever!

Thank you and may we all feel the Spirit beside us in these hard times.



CLERGY REPORT

Ron Hines, Retired Clergy

Retired clergy in the PNW Conference are required to report annually to the local congregation with which they are affiliated in their retired status. I have not exercised a pastoral role for some time, but I was asked to provide the opening prayer for the memorial service for Dr. John B. Cobb, Jr., who died just after Christmas, 2024, a few weeks shy of his 100th birthday in February.

From March, 2020 through December, 2024 I was the principal facilitator of online conversations with “John Cobb & Friends,” sponsored by the Cobb Institute, which is now incorporated into the Center for Process Studies, which had been founded fifty years ago by John Cobb & David Griffin at the School of Theology at Claremont. An international audience of over 700 people tracked these weekly 2-hour presentations and conversations via ZOOM, and each week 25 to 75 people showed up for the conversation. I no longer carry that responsibility, but I do remain on the board of the Center for Process Studies. The influence of John Cobb continues to be extended. I was pleased that he was able to share a sermon at Seattle First Church, thanks to arrangements by Jackie.

We worship nearly every Sunday at Claremont United Methodist Church, where we are in fellowship with many retired UMC clergy colleagues, many of whom still keenly track developments in our global denomination. Also, we meet at regular intervals with Pilgrim Place neighbors who are in the Order of Saint Luke, an ecumenical group bringing creative worship resources to bear on covenant living. I do take occasional leadership roles in their seasonal eucharistic liturgies.

May God bless you in the ministries of First Church in the year ahead!

Sincerely,

Ron Hines



DIACONAL MINISTER REPORT

*Peter Jabin, Diaconal Minister
Pastoral Psychotherapist
Grief Mentor*

To the Saints at First Church Seattle,

I'm sure many who read this will relate when I say, I never imagined I would live to see such days in these once United States. I feel called to live into my faith to a depth – and this is hard to admit - that I had hoped would never be required of me. And so, I continue to be deeply grateful for the First Church family of faith as a courageous community that lives into its commitment to be a refuge for progressive, inclusive Christianity, and an island of sanity in a world going progressively mad. I persevere in the conviction that we have been called as the right people for this particular historical moment. Spirit is using us in ways we cannot imagine.

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 a deeply ecumenical, animistic spiritual context that draws deeply on the expressive arts of poetry, drumming/chanting/singing and writing. Offering in-person, embodied gatherings, in collaboration with grief mentoring colleagues in this region of the Salish Sea, nourishes me and sparks a hope within me that is difficult to put into words. I strongly encourage members of the First Church community to come share one of these experiences.

(Working) Sabbatical

This description of my work has not changed much in the past few years. What is changing is me. As I enter my 60th year, and as we descend into what my teacher Francis Weller calls The Long Dark, it is clear to me that I need to find a new way to be in relationship with my work and with my life as a whole. This is a question both of resilience and perseverance, as well as fulfillment and joy. God willing, I have a number of years left. I want to be effective in them, and I want to enjoy them. To this end, I will be stepping back from all committees and work groups at First Church, as well as many other commitments outside of church, for the next year in order to make time and space for some deep discernment, even while I continue to work in my practice. I will continue to be a regular participant in our worship life, so you will see me around. I am just going to be practicing relentfulness for a while. I invite any who are intrigued by this idea to be in conversation with me.

Thank you, First Church, for sustaining my spirit in the contributions I am blessed to offer, and for grounding me in a vision for a unified human family and a healed and restored planet.

Peace,

Peter Jabin



First Church

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