



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF
WINCHESTER, VA

MISSION STUDY REPORT



2024

Prepared by :

THE MISSION STUDY COMMITTEE



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Letter from the Study Group

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Mission Study Committee (MSC) is thankful for the opportunity you accorded us to participate in this part of our journey to a new installed pastor at Winchester First Presbyterian Church. In the process we have gained a much better understanding of and appreciation for FPC and its current status and aspirations as a part of Christ's body at this place and time.

We are forever grateful for past leadership of FPC. However, we understand that change is inevitable. One of the things we have learned in this process is that FPC has a long and strong history of responding to changing conditions with bold and visionary actions.

We find ourselves at a point in time where FPC is again being called to respond with such bold and visionary action. Societal views on institutional religion are changing. Church attendance has been declining at the same time that the spiritual and material needs of our neighbors seem to be expanding. Given that we find ourselves literally in the middle of the fastest growing area in the Commonwealth of Virginia, it seems clear that there are significant and increasing opportunities for mission. FPC has gifts and resources that can help meet these spiritual and material needs, "in the heart of Winchester and beyond."

We would like to thank all those who contributed to this report, through participation in listening sessions or written submissions. We trust that we have been able to accurately reflect your views.

Although we did not set out with specific passages of scripture as guideposts, we believe that our work has been informed by, and is reflective of, the following verses:

Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every activity under heaven.

Psalms 26:2-3 Test me, Lord, and try me, putting my heart and mind to the proof; for your constant love is before my eyes, and I live by your faithfulness.

Romans 14:19 Let us, then, pursue the things that make for peace and build up the common life.

With love and faith, and trusting in God's guidance,

Charles Uphaus (chair)

Glenn Burdick

Dianne Wake

Debora Alverson

Sam Kerns

William Aikens

Our Call

As the Mission Study Committee began its work on March 11, 2024, our team of six volunteers from the congregation met with our interim pastor, Michael Hafele to review the nature of our assignment and develop a timeline for completion of a mission study report to the Session. We were provided with two documents to assist us with our work. First, we reviewed the 2012 Mission Study Guide for Congregations prepared by the Presbytery of San Francisco Committee on Ministry. Second, we reviewed the 2023 Mission Study Report completed by the First Presbyterian Church of Raleigh, North Carolina. Both of these documents proved useful in helping our committee to focus our efforts and provided concrete examples of the components our final report would need to include. Our review of these materials made clear the importance of developing a methodology for soliciting attitudes and opinions of our congregation related to the mission of our church. Early on, there were many members of our congregation who indicated their lack of enthusiasm for using a pencil and paper or computer-based questionnaire approach to gathering that vital information. Consequently, our committee determined that conducting a series of face-to-face listening sessions with as many individuals within the church family as possible would be a better strategy for gathering the information we would need to formulate our report.

Our committee learned from our interim pastor and from the documents listed above that our call was to seek discernment about God's expectation for our church and how it shapes who we as a congregation are to be and how we are to act. Our work was to establish where we have been as a church, who we are today, what values guide us as a church, and what we are called to do next. We determined that our report should be completed and made available to the session by early September.

Over the period from mid-April through mid-June, our committee coordinated approximately fifteen listening sessions that included more than 110 members of our church family (including professional staff) at church, in members' homes, during the day and after hours, beginning with an initial exploratory session with several members of the session who assisted the committee in finalizing the questions that would be posed to all of the listening session groups. The kick-off took place in the fellowship hall with a potluck dinner and five breakout listening sessions on April 24th. Each listening session that evening and each of those that followed in the next few weeks was facilitated by a member of our mission study committee, leading the discussions through the five questions which the committee had agreed upon. The questions are listed below:

1. Our current mission statement is: "Serving Christ and Neighbor in the Heart of Winchester and Beyond." What do you see as the core values implied in this statement? Is this mission statement still valid? What, if anything, should be changed in our Mission Statement?

2. What, for you, are the essential elements of worship? Are we meeting those needs? Where would you like to see changes?
3. Do our internal ministries (e.g. Christian Education, discipleship, bereavement, visitation, fellowship) address the needs of our congregation? What changes would you like to see?
4. What is missing for you in your overall church experience? How might that be remedied?
5. As we look to the future: What should give us pause as we consider how we move forward? What are reasons for hope?

What We Heard

The committee's next step was to engage in a process of reviewing and distilling the raw data and to attempt to discern the most prevalent themes. After reviewing the responses to those questions there were, indeed, a number of prominent themes which tended to emerge. What follows is a list of those prominent themes in no particular order of importance. In fact, our committee would argue that they are all important considerations for our church at this significant moment in our history, since they reflect the attitudes and opinions voiced to us by the church itself. This is what we heard:

- The core values of First Presbyterian Church include a commitment to service to Christ and neighbor, with Christ at our center; the belief that our church has a significant role to play in the life of our community; a strong belief in and support for education and nurturing our youth; a desire to be an inclusive church which cares for all people.
- Our current mission statement continues to generally reflect our church's intentions.
- Our church is viewed as effective in our mission engagement with the local community.
- Our church generally views itself as not sufficiently welcoming and not effective enough at nurturing our congregation. The absence of the deacon role is a recurring theme, along with the need for more attention to new member training.
- Our church views itself as not diverse.
- Multiple services at different times, in different settings, and with different styles of worship are generally viewed as an asset, but an unintended consequence is a lack of unity within the church family.
- Important elements of worship include: a scholarly sermon which is educational, uplifting and related to everyday life; time for prayer and reflection; music of varied styles which is inspiring and motivational; regular observance of communion.
- Our church recognizes that we are blessed with a large, attractive, modern facility which is debt free.
- Our church recognizes that we are blessed with capable, committed professional staff but we lack a discernable leadership succession plan in programs like our music ministry (where some leaders are reaching the latter stages of their careers.)

- Our church recognizes that we face a potential financial reckoning due to loss of membership and a declining revenue stream.
- There is an overwhelming desire for more social fellowship activities for the congregation at times more convenient for more people.
- Adult Sunday School is generally viewed as a significant weakness and an untapped opportunity to help bring the church family together.
- There is general concern that communication methods have concentrated too much on electronic tools and have ignored more traditional efforts to reach out to people who are not as tech-savvy.
- There is general agreement that our church lacks a plan to systematically identify, train, and encourage lay leaders to handle much of the work of the church.

Our Research

First Presbyterian Church History

Church History

Winchester Church was first mentioned in Presbytery records in 1779. The old stone church on Timbrook Circle, built in 1788, was owned by the Church and used as its principal place of worship until 1834. (The Old Stone Church was sold in 1834, but reacquired by FPC in 1932.)

In 1815 an interdenominational Sunday School was organized at Old Stone, which was the first documented Sunday School south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

In 1839, reflecting a schism in the national church, a second Presbyterian Church was formed, which built a place of worship on Kent Street.

The present FPC sanctuary on S. Loudoun Street was constructed in 1840. In 1883 a foyer and steeple were added, now incorporated into the present Sanctuary. In 1900 the Loudoun Street and Kent Street congregations merged at the present Loudon Street location.

The years 1900 to 1928 saw rapid growth. In 1928 the church acquired an adjacent dwelling which was renovated for use as Sunday School classrooms. Further expansion in the years 1935-1939 included addition of a kitchen, fellowship hall, church offices, a parlor, and a parking lot.

In 1948 The Weekday School – Winchester's first kindergarten -- was established in church facilities.

In 1955 the church was renamed First Presbyterian Church. The current Austin pipe organ was acquired.

In 1957 Boyd Chapel, paid for by bequests and donations from the Philip & Frederica Boyd family, was constructed.

In 1963 a new Sunday School facility was completed.

In 1973 the conversion of Loudon Street to a pedestrian-only mall served to isolate the front of the church from vehicular access. In 1979 property on the east side of the church was purchased and the present parking lot constructed, with direct access to the church facilities.

In 1980 a full-time Associate Pastor position was created.

In 1986 the Winchester Free Medical Clinic was established by Dr. Terry Sinclair in the basement of the church. Now known as the Sinclair Clinic, it continues to operate and provide free or low-cost healthcare and pharmacy services for uninsured or Medicaid patients from its current location on the downtown Winchester "Our Health" campus.

In 1993 Jubilee Kitchen, operating out of the FPC kitchen, started providing free mid-day meals on Saturdays to those in need.

In 1994 FPC began a partnership with Metu congregation of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

In 1997 Stephen Ministry, a one-on-one Christian Caregiving outreach was begun.

In 1998 Vision 2000, an initiative to expand music, outreach and children's ministries, was adopted by the Session.

In 2000, Beth Goss was called as the first woman associate pastor.

In 2004 the Weekday School received full accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

In 2005 The Disaster Response Team was trained.

In 2008 a major renovation/expansion, including a new Fellowship Hall, kitchen, choir rooms and offices, was completed. A fourth service was added, with simultaneous 8:30 services: New Stone Gathering, a contemporary service in Fellowship Hall, and a traditional service in the Sanctuary.

In 2009 the Guatemala Mission began as a partner with the Guatemala Faith Stories Project.

In 2017 The number of Sunday services was reduced from four back to three, with the elimination of the 8:30 sanctuary service.

In 2020-2021 the Coronavirus Pandemic forced the shutdown of in-person worship. FPC responded by initiating streaming services and, later into the pandemic, outdoor services in the parking lot as weather permitted.

In 2022, following the disruption of the pandemic and in light of declining attendance/membership, FPC conducted a study, "A Way Into the Future," to assess where we stand and offer recommendations. One of the recommendations stemming from this study was to continue to offer streaming services into the indefinite future.

In Sept. 2023 Pastor Dan McCoig retired, setting in motion a pastoral search, which includes preparation of this church Mission Study.

Clerical History

FPC has been served by a line of highly capable pastors since 1799. The first installed pastor, William Hill, a man of strong intellect and commanding personality, led the church through its periods of early growth and controversy until 1834.

As a church in a southern state in the years prior to the Civil War, there is no avoiding the fact that FPC was complicit in the institution of slavery. Andrew H.H. Boyd, who served as pastor in the years 1842-65, was a major (for Frederick County) slaveholder and public apologist for slavery. He was imprisoned for his refusal to take an oath of allegiance to the United States.

The longest serving pastor was James Graham, from 1851 (at the then Kent Street Church) until 1900, after which he served another 14 years as pastor emeritus. A historian of Presbyterianism in Virginia, he served as clerk of the Winchester Presbytery and moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1894.

J. Horace Lacy, who served from 1905 -1922 oversaw a major renovation of the sanctuary, the establishment of the Highland Mission Church, and the emergence of a new era of women's work.

Ronald Wilson, who served from 1937-1952, initiated the Sunnyside Mission Church, Vacation Bible School and a weekly kindergarten that has evolved into the Weekday School.

George D. Jackson (1952-64) served as pastor during a time of great expansion that included the renovation of the chancel, the building of the educational wing, and Boyd Chapel.

James Robert ("Bob") Jackson was the third-longest serving pastor in FPC history, occupying the pulpit from 1965 to 1992. He was a popular pastor, teacher and community leader. Post-Civil War segregation was a fact of life in Winchester into the 1960s. Dr. Jackson, in concert with other community leaders, helped see the church and community through the period of desegregation and advances in civil rights and women's rights. It was under Dr. Jackson that the first women elders were ordained.

Richard W. Reifsnyder (1994-2015) emphasized expansion of educational and music ministries, renovation of the Sanctuary, implementation of Stephen Ministry for pastoral care and strengthening of the church mission partnership with Ethiopia. He oversaw the largest

renovation and building project First Presbyterian has ever undertaken, creating a campus with a new multi-use Fellowship Hall allowing for contemporary services.

Dan M. McCoig (2017-2023), who had served as Associate pastor since 1995, led the church through the Coronavirus Pandemic, retiring in 2023.

FPC first engaged an associate pastor in the years 1967-71 and then on a permanent basis from 1981 to the present. During the years 2006-2017 there were two associate pastors, both were full-time. One associate pastor temporarily switched to part-time hours after her children were born, but completed her tenure at FPC as a full-time pastor.

Community and Church Demographics

Winchester and the surrounding Frederick County are part of the four-county “Top of Virginia” – the fastest growing region in the Commonwealth of Virginia since 2020, according to data from the Demographics Research Group at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia.

In 2023 the population of the City of Winchester was 28,400; Frederick County’s population was 95,300. The population of Frederick County grew 21 percent between 2010 & 2022, for an annual rate of roughly three percent. Average household income is \$61,000 for the City of Winchester and \$84,000 for Frederick County. Nearly 90 percent of the population has at least a HS diploma, and roughly 30 percent (28 in Frederick County, 34 in Winchester) has a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

According to the 2021 State of the Commonwealth Report (SOCR), the Winchester Metropolitan Statistical Area – comprising Winchester, Frederick County, and Hampshire County WV, the median household income is \$76,500, with 8.6 percent of the population below the federal poverty line. The Median age is 41.3, with 65 and older comprising 18 percent of the population, and 18 and younger 22 Percent.

In terms of race and ethnicity, the region is overwhelmingly white (85 percent), with Black/AA at 5 percent. The most rapidly growing ethnic group is Hispanic/Latino, increasing as a share of total population by roughly five percent between 2010 and 2022. There is a small but growing Asian population, many of them in the health services.

In Frederick County, among six age groups — 0 to 4, 5 to 19, 20 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65 and older — the 65+ group was the fastest-growing, increasing by 80 percent over this period. In the City of Winchester, the 65+ group was also the fastest growing during this period, increasing by 32 percent. (USA Facts)

Winchester has been listed in several publications as a top retirement location, as evinced by the high rate of growth among the over 65 population. The Winchester Medical Center is recognized as one of the best hospitals in Virginia and offers a wide range of services -- from

neonatal intensive care to advanced heart and brain surgery to comprehensive physical rehabilitation -- to meet the needs of a growing community.

Attractions include proximity to parks and recreation (Shenandoah National Park, Shenandoah River, George Washington National Forest, Virginia State Arboretum), a rich history from colonial times (George Washington slept here for a number of years) to the present including being the focus of four major Civil War battles. There is a lively arts community, and Methodist Church-affiliated Shenandoah University is renowned for its theater and music programs.

Finally, the region benefits from proximity to Washington D.C. Many local residents commute to jobs in the rapidly growing Virginia suburbs. Mean commute time for the region is 30 minutes.

Facilities

A vital marketplace for more than 250 years, Old Town Winchester cherishes its heritage. Old Town is located within the heart of a 45-block National Register Historic District and features a pedestrian walking mall bursting with outdoor cafes, specialty retail shops, historic attractions and family-oriented activities throughout the year.

The campus of the First Presbyterian Church occupies one and a half acres on the south end of the Loudoun Street Pedestrian Mall. The sanctuary building, with its impressive symmetrical façade and imposing steeple, is an example of ecclesiastical architecture in the city during the nineteenth century and anchors the east side of the south end of the mall.

The structures and spaces that comprise the FPC's facilities total roughly 64,000 sq. ft., and are a mix of old and new, offering the congregation and the community versatility and a rich architectural heritage. According to city records, "A two-story Gothic Revival-Style church was built in 1840, and extensively remodeled in 1883 with later additions in 1905, in 1947, and in 2007." The present-day sanctuary has a seating capacity of 385. The exterior walls are flanked by 12 tall stained-glass windows, six on a side, which enhance the serenity and beauty of the light-filled room.

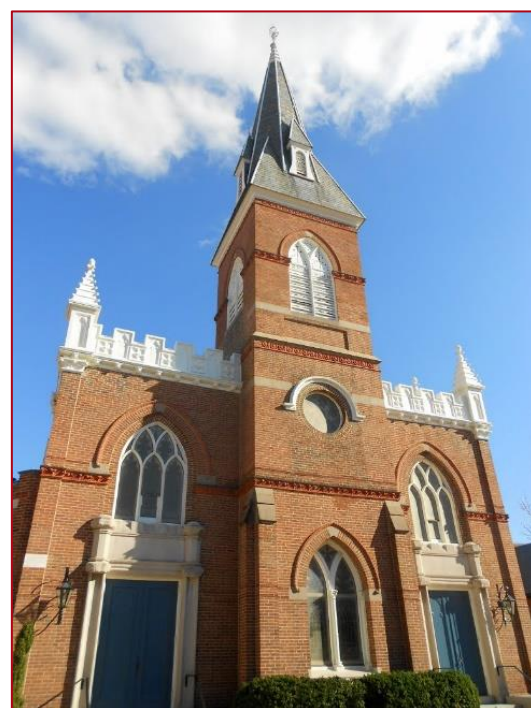


FIGURE 1 FRONT FAÇADE



FIGURE 2 BOYD CHAPEL

In 1963 Boyd Chapel, seating 85, was added on the west elevation. It is now used for early Sunday service and other, more intimate, services and small gatherings. Other additions on three floors are a mix of day school and Sunday school classrooms, church gathering spaces, church offices and a library. The basement area includes restrooms with showers, a music library and office, a choir rehearsal room, mechanical room, a gathering space for youth and a large multipurpose room.



FIGURE 3 FELLOWSHIP HALL

The large, multi-purpose Fellowship Hall addition, with full audio-visual capability, was completed in 2008 and accommodates 425 people with an adjacent gathering space of 245. Both areas are connected to a commercial-grade kitchen. These grand spaces are used for Sunday morning 8:30 service, congregational functions, Jubilee Kitchen, Bible School, Winchester Area Temporary Thermal Shelter (WATTS), and as a staging area for the annual Apple Blossom Festival. These two areas and the kitchen are available for community use.

Donegal House, on the corner of the Cork Street and the Pedestrian Mall, appears to be one large building with varying roof lines. In fact, it was originally multiple buildings built before 1900, which possibly shared common walls at one time. They were renovated and painted to appear as one building. The upstairs portion of the south building is now a one-bedroom apartment and is rented out. The rest of Donegal House is used for church functions and can be rented by community organizations on an hourly basis.



FIGURE 4 FRONT FAÇADE, HILLS KEEP, AND DONEGAL HOUSE

The purchase and renovation of both buildings exemplifies the church's commitment to the preservation of Winchester's historic character.

Immediately north of Donegal House is Hill's Keep, a small, one-story limestone building of historical significance. It is named for William Hill, the first installed pastor of the Winchester Presbyterian Church in 1799. The building was relocated from 8 E Cork Street in 2004 to make way for the construction of the new Fellowship Hall. In the past it has been a printing shop, a candy store as well as headquarters for Preservation of Historic Winchester. Today the building is rented out for office space.



FIGURE 5 HILLS KEEP

The Rouss Hook and Ladder building, on Cork Street, dates from 1892. It was purchased by First Presbyterian Church prior to the 2008 Fellowship Hall addition. The historic firehouse was refurbished and is now used by church youth as "their space."



FIGURE 6 12 EAST CORK

These buildings, along with a 53-space parking lot and a children's playground, form the campus of the church.

The Facilities Council is responsible for maintenance and improvement of all church owned properties, including improvements in energy consumption, which helped qualify FPC as an "Earth Care Congregation." The recent addition of new windows in nine classrooms has made a difference in energy use, which is tracked monthly. In partnership with Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS), the church submitted a grant proposal to the Department of Energy and received a \$2500 grant to convert to LED lighting. In 2023 the council explored the possibility of installing solar panels to further reduce energy costs on a long-term basis. A pending grant application may make that more affordable.

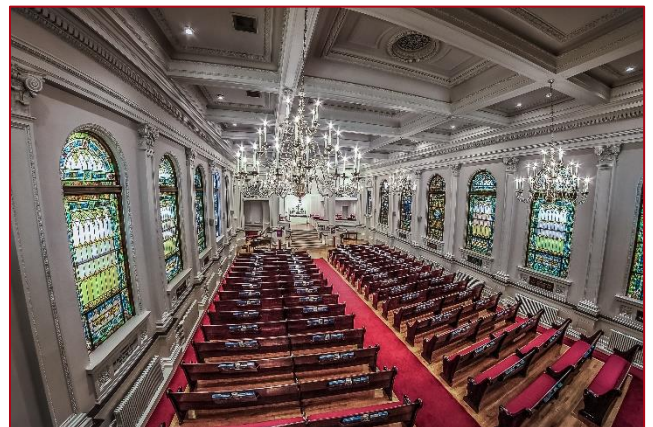
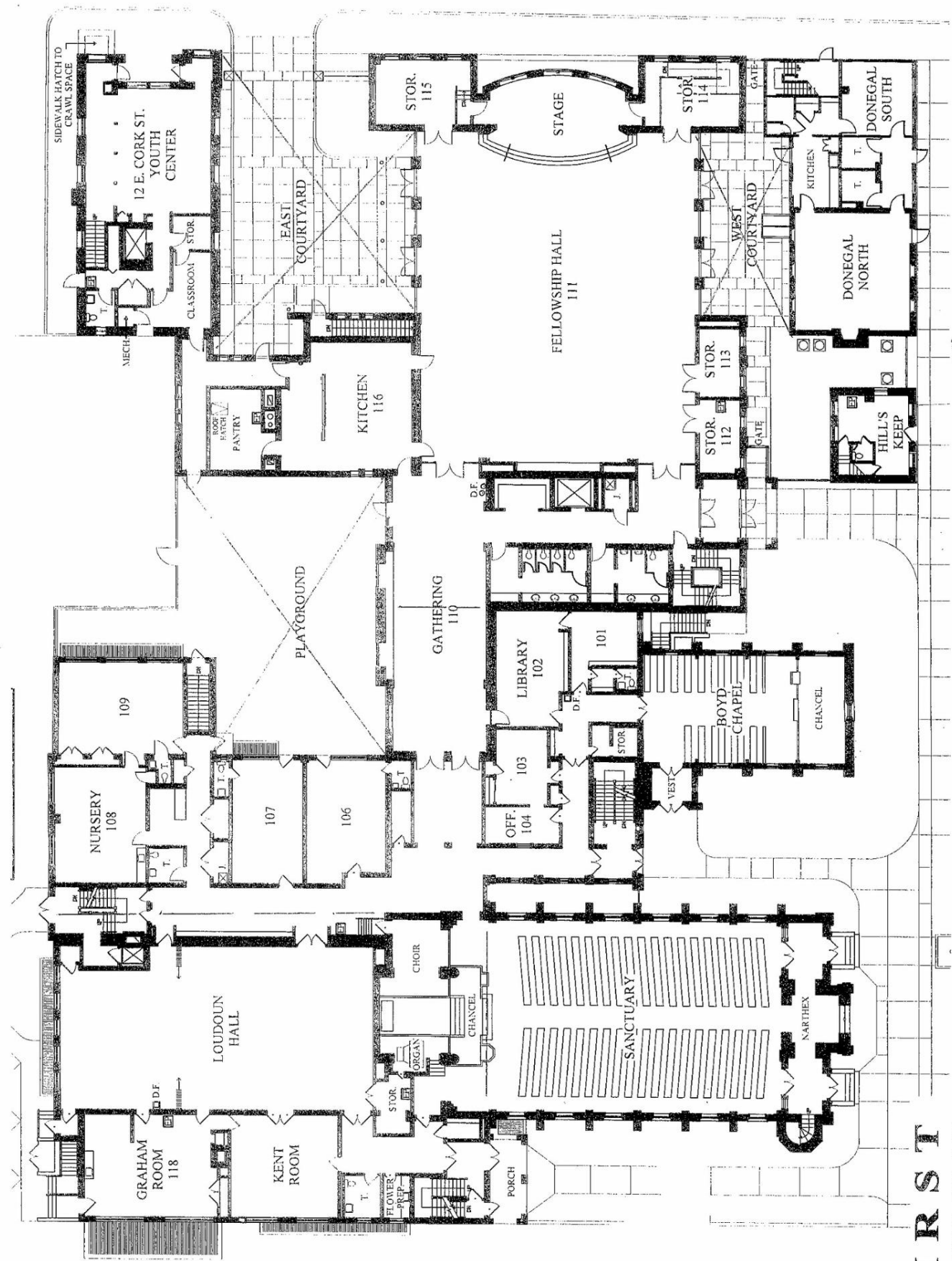


FIGURE 7 SANCTUARY VIEW FROM BALCONY



S. LOUDOUN STREET PEDESTRIAN MALL

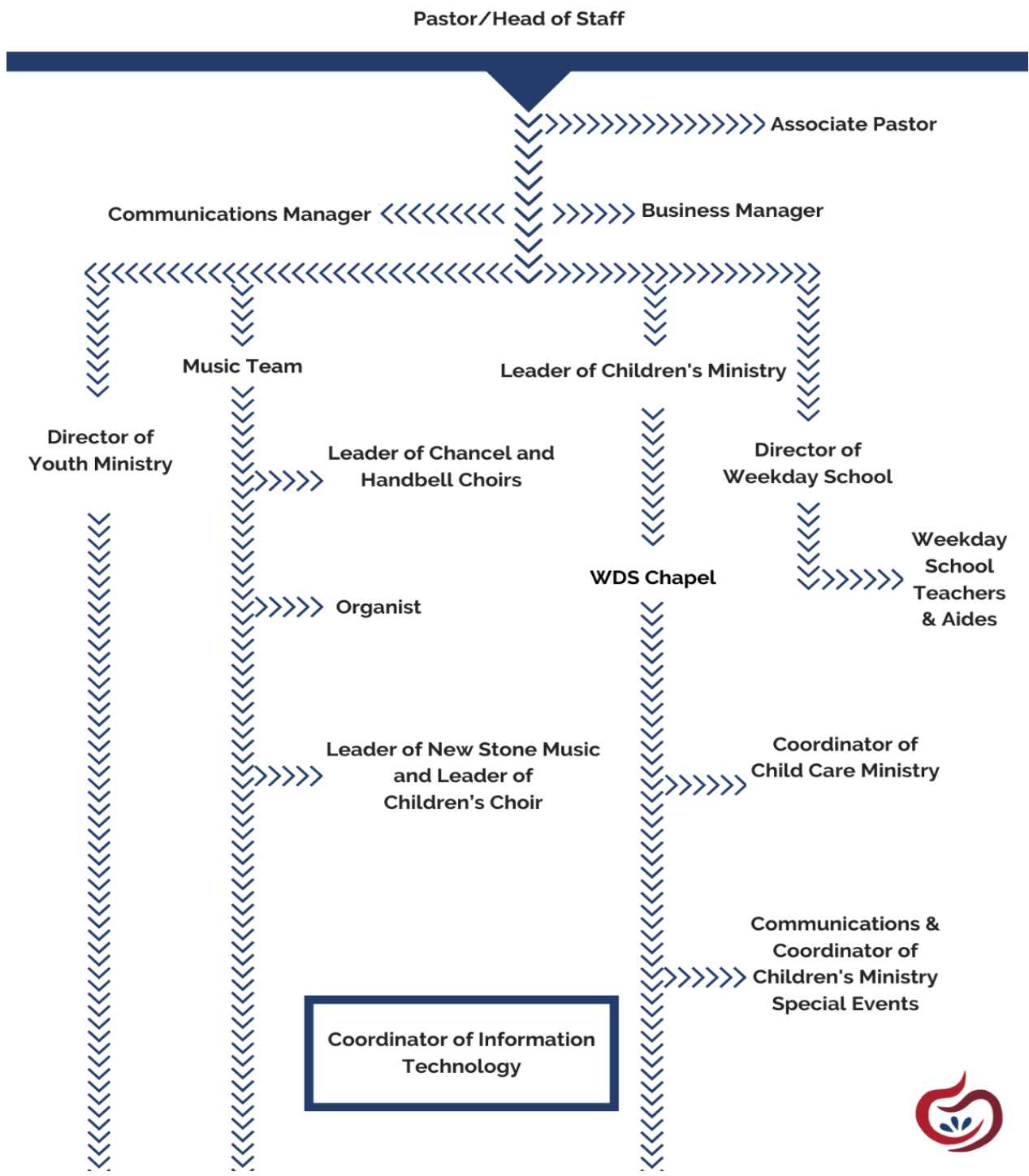
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Church Programs and Ministries

Staff

First Presbyterian Church Staff



The Pastor serves as Head of Staff. A detailed Personnel Handbook was revised in 2018. The current full-time positions are: Head of Staff/Pastor, Associate Pastor, Business Manager, Communications Manager, Director of Youth Ministry. The part time positions include: Director of the Weekday School, Leader of Chancel and Handbell Choirs, Organist, Leader of Children's Ministry, Leader of New Stone Music and Children's Choir, Children's Ministry Special Events Coordinator, and Child Care Ministry Coordinator. The staff normally meets bi-weekly under the chairmanship of the Pastor/Head of Staff.

A six-person Staff Relations Committee made up of congregation members with knowledge/experience in personnel matters serves in a consultative capacity to the P/HOS with regard to personnel matters. The SRC reports directly to Session to provide information on a quarterly basis, and on occasion to seek authorization or guidance. It plans, coordinates and oversees the employee relations program of FPC. SRC is responsible for facilitating compliance with applicable employment laws and providing clear and consistent application of employee relations policy. SRC also serves as a support to the staff and when appropriate serves as a staff advocate. In carrying out its responsibilities, SRC consults with the pastors and, as appropriate, Session councils.

Following is a brief summary of staff comments from a feedback session with members of the Mission Study Committee:

The FPC staff is fully committed to the mission of the church. They view the church in a pragmatic way, aware of life's modern landscape and the challenges therein. They see Winchester and the surrounding area growing, and would like FPC to be a part of that growth.

They are appreciative of the beautiful, clean, and well-maintained facility in which they work, the informative church website and ever-present help from the church office. They appreciate the Earth Care initiatives and feel that an environmental awareness is important for younger church members and young adults. Staff would love to see increased adult education and opportunities for fellowship.

We are Mission focused, and do well in terms of service to the local community. In terms of reaching the un-churched, we are not so good. The Weekday School is an asset, but currently underutilized in terms of outreach. More scholarships for the Weekday School would help.

Our downtown location has both positive and negative points. The physical location on the pedestrian mall provides opportunities for mission and outreach, but there are also drawbacks. Nighttime physical security can be a concern. Parking is a deterrent to

young families. More importantly, we are at ground zero for the un-housed community. We need to accord priority to addressing this issue.

Most importantly, the staff prays for increased leadership and involvement in church life from membership, even before a new pastor arrives. They want to see a congregation fully engaged in the work of the church and its mission with an open mind and heart.

In sum, our staff is excellent and sets a very high bar of performance. As a church we need to rise to that level of expectation.

Lay Leadership Roles

As of July, 2024, the Session of First Presbyterian Church consists of fifteen (15) elders. The Moderator of Session is Rev. Michael Hafele, Interim Pastor; the Vice Moderator is Rev. Amanda Maguire-Thomas, Associate Pastor; the Clerk of Session is John Fisher; the Treasurer is Mike Thompson. Regular meetings of the Session are held monthly. Session members are assigned to one of four councils which have specific responsibilities for oversight and leadership of the ongoing activities of First Presbyterian Church. In addition to these four, revitalization of the Congregational Life Council, which basically discontinued activity during the period of the Covid pandemic, is now under active consideration.

- The **Administration Council** is responsible for monitoring the church's financial activity, including comparing actual revenue and expenditures to the approved annual budget and tracking investments and designated fund balances. The council prepares an annual operating budget based upon historical data and current trends. The council works closely with the church's business manager, Jenifer White, a paid staff member, and a local accounting firm is hired to conduct an annual examination of the church's financial activities. The council also oversees the process of maintaining an accurate roll of active church members based upon criteria established in the church's Membership Classification Policy.
- The **Mission Council** coordinates most of the local, national and international mission outreach programs of First Presbyterian Church. Those mission outreach programs are described in more detail in the section on FPC ministries.
- The **Worship and Discipleship Council** is responsible for two main areas of congregational life including Worship Services and Christian Education.
 - **Worship Services-** Continues to support and plan for three weekly worship services (Chapel Service at 7:30 am, New Stone Service at 8:30 am, and Sanctuary Service at 11:00 am) in person as well as live-streaming and the 8:30 am and 11:00 am services who prefer virtual participation. The "FPC has left the building" initiative was tested in 2023, and after gaining feedback, WD decided it would take place on fifth Sundays, with a meal and a combined service at 11:00 am. The 8:30 am initiative focuses on a service project either in-house or in

the local community, aligned with mission initiatives. However, after the initial leadership that launched this initiative, no lay leadership has taken it on. The council also provides oversight and support for the church's music program, including the chancel choir, bell choir, children's choirs, solo performances, and the New Stone worship team.

- **Discipleship Responsibilities-** The council conducted a search for a new Children's Ministry Leader during 2023, Vacation Bible School resumed in person after the Covid pandemic had eased, and the Youth Ministry Director has worked to build relationships and experiences with the church's youth resulting in greater participation with events and youth group activities. The council oversees scholarship support for seminary, youth and music scholarships as well as youth camp scholarships through the Claytor Fund. The council oversees Adult Sunday School programs, which have included A Year of the Bible, Lent in Plain Sight, Women's, Earth Care, Coffee and Conversations, and various Bible study topics.
- The **Facilities Council** is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of all church-owned properties on the Loudoun Street Campus and routinely oversees physical inspections, routine maintenance and repairs in concert with the church's Sexton Crew. The council has been active with numerous projects recently, including window replacements to improve energy conservation, reduce maintenance and outside noise and enhance visibility as well as additional energy improvement projects including retrofitting the fellowship hall with energy-saving LED lights. Ongoing maintenance and repair projects have included repairing the HVAC unit above Loudoun Hall, washer/dryer replacement in the Donegal House apartment, repairing roof leaks, and repairs to the boiler which service the sanctuary and older portions of the campus. A particular challenge faced by the council remains the local homeless population, which tends to congregate on the Pedestrian Mall adjacent to the church campus, especially during the winter months. Providing support for the un-housed population and creating a welcoming environment while ensuring a safe and respectful environment within the church facility has presented a difficult and ongoing challenge. Efforts to deal with this challenge have included periodic removal of gathering space furniture, coffee and food, seeking quotes for additional security cameras and for a fence and gate at the north portico, entering into an arrangement with the Winchester Police Department to expedite the processing of trespassers, and leasing the Donegal House apartment to a local law enforcement officer who keeps a police car parked in the church parking lot.

A Staff Relations Committee serves in a consultative role in support of the Pastor/Head of Staff with regard to personnel matters. The six-member committee, including the pastor/head of staff, meets monthly. It reports directly to Session to provide information on a quarterly basis, and, on occasion, to seek authorization or guidance. The committee plans, coordinates and

oversees the employee relations program of FPC. SRC is responsible for facilitating compliance with applicable employment laws and providing clear and consistent application of employee relations policy. SRC also serves as a support to the staff and, when appropriate, serves as a staff advocate. In carrying out its responsibilities the SRC consults with the pastors and, as appropriate, Session councils.

Internal Ministries

Music

From its very beginning, music has played an important role in the life and worship of this congregation. The church has had choirs for children, youth, and adults for decades. In the 1900's the church made two significant musical investments. In 1955 a new, custom-built Austin pipe organ (three manuals, 2200 pipes) was installed in Sanctuary. A three-octave set of handbells was also acquired, both of which are fully used in our services today.

In 2000, the church hired its first full time Minister of Music who served full time until retirement in 2013. During this period the church had nine ongoing choirs: three children's choirs, a youth choir, an adult choir, two adult handbell choirs, a senior high youth handbell choir, and a middle school hand chime choir. When all of the choirs combined to sing there were more than 125 voices. The children usually presented two musicals a year, the youth also did their own musicals, and the adult choir presented major works.

Currently the church has a wonderful number of resources for its music ministry. In addition to the Austin pipe organ, FPC has five fine baby grand pianos, a Clavinova, an electronic keyboard that we use for outdoor services, a harpsichord, a set of four concert timpani, assorted other drums and Orff instruments. There are now a full five octaves of handbells.

The church music library is on line in the same format as that at the Shenandoah Conservatory. There are more than 475 anthems ranging from the masters (Bach, Beethoven, Mozart) to a wide selection of fine contemporary offerings. There are also hundreds of other pieces of music dating back over a hundred years, but the copies are in a very limited number.

The music ministry benefits from two designated funds: The Wilson Memorial Fund and the Sue Jackson Concert Fund. The Wilson fund is in memory of a former pastor; it has a principal of \$10,000, but only the interest can be used to offer special programs. The Jackson Fund can be used at FPC's discretion for special programs. It currently has a principal balance of \$10,600. To date only a small part of its principal has been touched.

Shenandoah Conservatory, at Shenandoah University, constitutes a rich asset for FPC. For decades the church has secured section leaders for the Chancel Choir from vocal students at SU. Not only are these students a choral asset, but quite a few of them have continued in church music, both full and part time, after they have graduated and moved away. Currently we have four section leaders; one a doctoral student, two working on their masters degrees, and one undergraduate.

With the decline in membership and resources, the music ministry has been scaled back. Currently, FPC has multiple leaders serving its music ministry on part-time basis: One directs the adult choir and the handbell choir, another leads the music for the contemporary service and a children's choir, and another leads the youth choir. There is also a dedicated organist/accompanist.

Music has been an important component of the life and worship for this congregation. There was frequent mention, in the listening sessions, of the importance of music for the church, and a desire to see the program rebuild.

Youth

General

Over the past year the Youth Ministry Program has continued to grow in numbers and range of activities. FPC youth consistently show their Christian values through the projects that they choose to take on, not only through the church but through their everyday lives.

Youth ministry leaders strive to make sure that our youth know that they are loved and accepted by God, by our church, and by our youth ministry program. Events focus on faith, but also on community and fellowship. This allows youth to invite others to programs without their feeling pressured by not being "In the Church." When youth attend events that focus more on community, they then feel more comfortable attending events that focus on faith.

Every Sunday evening is Youth Group for 7th – 12th graders, and every couple of weeks is UpNEXT for 5th and 6th graders. Both of these include a lesson and a game. There is also a dinner each week that all youth are invited to join. Starting in the coming (2024-25) year, 5th grade will be moved back to Children's Ministry; Youth Ministry will contain 6-12th grade, with revised programming.

Numbers

In 2023-24, 53 youth attended some aspect of youth ministry. They lead worship twice each year, once in the spring and once on Christmas Eve. This gives them the

opportunity to share their faith, practice speaking in front of people, share their talents, and, for some, write and deliver the sermon. Youth choir recently resumed, allowing youth to praise God through music in rehearsals and services.

Twenty youth were involved in the 2023 Youth-Led Christmas Eve Service; 25 were involved in the extremely well-received 2024 Youth Sunday Service. The Youth Choir usually had nine singers.

The most recent (2023) confirmation class numbered thirteen. Due to the small size of the most recent 8th grade class, the '23-'24 and '24-'25 confirmation classes will be combined.

Events

This past year on Wednesday afternoons, youth were invited to come by the church after school and do homework, play games, eat snacks, and spend time together. This was a good opportunity for our youth to become more comfortable with each other as well as get homework help from their peers. On days that all or most of the local school systems have the day off school, the youth ministry director often takes FPC youth for breakfast at IHOP, thus providing another opportunity to spend time with each other outside of normal church events.

Camps and Conferences

Each year FPC brings 2nd-6th graders to Camp Joy El in Greencastle Pennsylvania. In February 2023 there were six participants and one youth chaperone; in December there were five youth participants.

Youth attend multiple conferences each year at Massanetta Springs in Harrisonburg, VA. In November 2023, nine youth attended the Keep Awake Conference where they learned about the Matthew 25 Initiative. In July 2024, nine youth attended Middle School Conference and five took part in the youth program of the Church Music Conference.

FPC youth also participate in a mission trip each summer. In July 2024, 14 youth and 6 chaperones traveled to New Bern, North Carolina, where they repaired houses damaged by hurricanes in the area.

Each summer FPC hosts a camp called (H)ands (I)n (S)ervice Week. This is an opportunity for youth to volunteer in different aspects of our community. Rising 4th to rising 8th graders are invited participate. Rising 9th graders and up serve as youth leaders. Thirty-five youth participated in the most recent HIS Week, spending time at a local retirement community, volunteering at local food pantries and CCAP, setting up for Vacation Bible

School, working in the community garden, and packing bagged lunches for the “Freedges” (free community refrigerators) in town.

Youth are also heavily involved in FPC's Vacation Bible School. In 2024 VBS, 37 youth acted as crew leaders and assistant crew leaders,

Youth Thoughts

When asked what words they would use to describe FPC's Youth Ministry program, responses were:

- Exciting
- Friendship
- Faith
- Community
- Fun
- Welcoming
- Loving
- Helpful

When asked what events and activities they most enjoy, responses included:

- Camps
- Lock Ins
- HIS Week
- Mission Trips
- Babysitting Night/VBS

FPC youth are well-led and active, a highly valuable resource, not just for the church of the future but for the church today.

Weekday School

The First Presbyterian Weekday School, established in 1947, was the first kindergarten in Winchester. Now in its 76th year, it continues to thrive as an important mission of First Presbyterian Church. When the local public schools began providing kindergarten, the weekday school expanded to take in younger children. In 2004 the Weekday School became accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The school currently has 126 children ranging in age from infant to five years old. This enrollment number is up about 7 percent from 2022; the school is now considered to be at capacity. Eleven classrooms in the FPC campus are designated for use by the Weekday School. A variety of class offerings meet the needs of our families including 2 day, 3 day, 4 day, and 5 day enrollments. Each classroom has a teacher and assistant teacher. The staff's credentials include doctoral, masters, bachelors, and associates degrees, as well as a nurse practitioner.

The school remains accredited by NAEYC through 2025. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) continues to be the state regulator, reflecting the understanding

that early childhood education is now viewed and accepted as “education” rather than “caregiving.”

The curriculum is enhanced with bi-weekly chapel classes and chapel story times. Music is a weekly highlight for all classes.

Congregational Life

With the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic, congregational life activities at FPC – in-person worship, congregational social gatherings, study groups, hospital and home visitation -- basically came to a halt. The church was able to pivot fairly rapidly to some compensatory measures – e.g., live-streamed worship. And while some activities have now resumed, it's generally acknowledged that we are not back to where we need to be. This is a gap in the life of the congregation that was noted in nearly all of the listening sessions. There is a strong sense that FPC needs to re-institute a multi-faceted congregational life program encompassing social gatherings, visitation, adult education, and study groups. A renewed Stephen Ministry along with institution of a deaconate – missing from FPC for many years – were frequently cited. This, in turn, raises another frequently-cited issue, that of training laity for leadership positions. (All of these are also noted in other sections of this document.)

Session and staff are fully aware of this issue, and a reconstituted Congregational Life Council that would address at least some of these points is now under active consideration.

Mission Outreach Activities

- **Winchester Area Temporary Thermal Shelter (WATTS):** One week hosting area homeless with overnight shelter, meals, showers and activities during the winter period.
- **Refugee Resettlement in support of Church World Service:** Setting up housing, acquiring and placing furniture, supplies and groceries, providing transportation and English language tutoring for over 125 refugees last year.
- **Disaster Preparedness and Response:** Supporting Shenandoah Presbytery in the donation of Church World Service disaster kits, and providing support as needed to the national and local Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Response efforts.
- **Helper Fund:** Assisting neighbors in need with financial aid for housing, medical expenses, rent and utilities in coordination with the Highland Food Pantry and the United Way of the Northern Shenandoah Valley.
- **Highland Food Pantry:** Serving local residents who are food insecure, including a Special Delivery Program to senior citizens unable to come to the pantry.

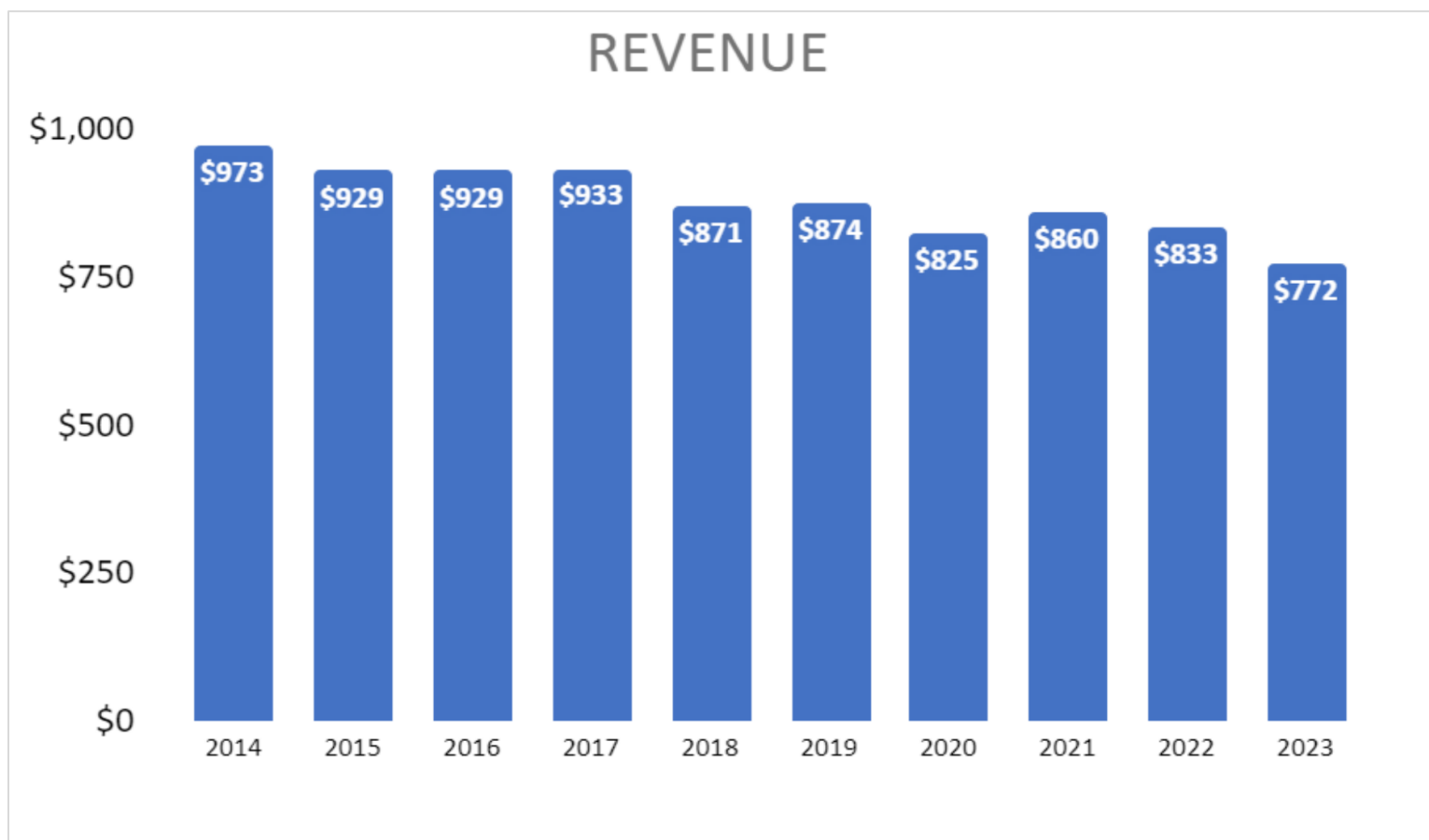
- **Jubilee Kitchen:** Serving a midday Saturday meal during approximately 50 weeks each year to local community members. FPC provides the facilities and staffs the operation one Saturday per month; the days rotated among other community churches.
- **Sherando Food Pantry:** Serving families in need two evenings per month with assistance from the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.
- **Congregational Community Action Project (CCAP):** First Presbyterian Church provides both financial and in-kind support to CCAP, a community lifeline for area residents who are struggling to meet basic needs and find paths to self-sufficiency.
- **Community Thanksgiving Dinner:** Serving approximately 1,100 meals in 2023 in concert with local business partners and with volunteer assistance from other area churches.
- **Guatemala Mission:** A fifteen-year effort in support of the Guatemala Women's Faith Stories Project, which works with Guatemalan women as they develop and implement plans to use theater to assist their communities learn about domestic violence and access to health care. Additional financial support goes to fund reliable telephone service and in-country travel.
- **Ethiopia Mission:** FPC has participated in Shenandoah Presbytery's mission partnership with the Illubabor Bethel Synod (IBS) of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church – Mekane Yesus (EECMY) -- since 1990, and has exchanged visitors (staff and members) multiple times over this period. FPC maintains "church to church" partnerships with two congregations of the IBS. Over the years, FPC and individual members have contributed financially to help purchase pews and bibles for the congregations, donate books to the community library, build a health clinic and support medical staff at the clinic, provide scholarships to the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, and support the congregations' "widows and orphans" ministries.
- **Community Garden:** A part of FPC's Creation Care ministry, providing fresh produce in-season to Highland and Sherando Food Pantries.
- FPC hosts several "anonymous" groups in church facilities, as well as local Boy and Girl Scout troops.
- FPC also provides financial support to such other local institutions as the Laurel Center, Winchester Rescue Mission, Winchester Day Nursery and Bright Futures.

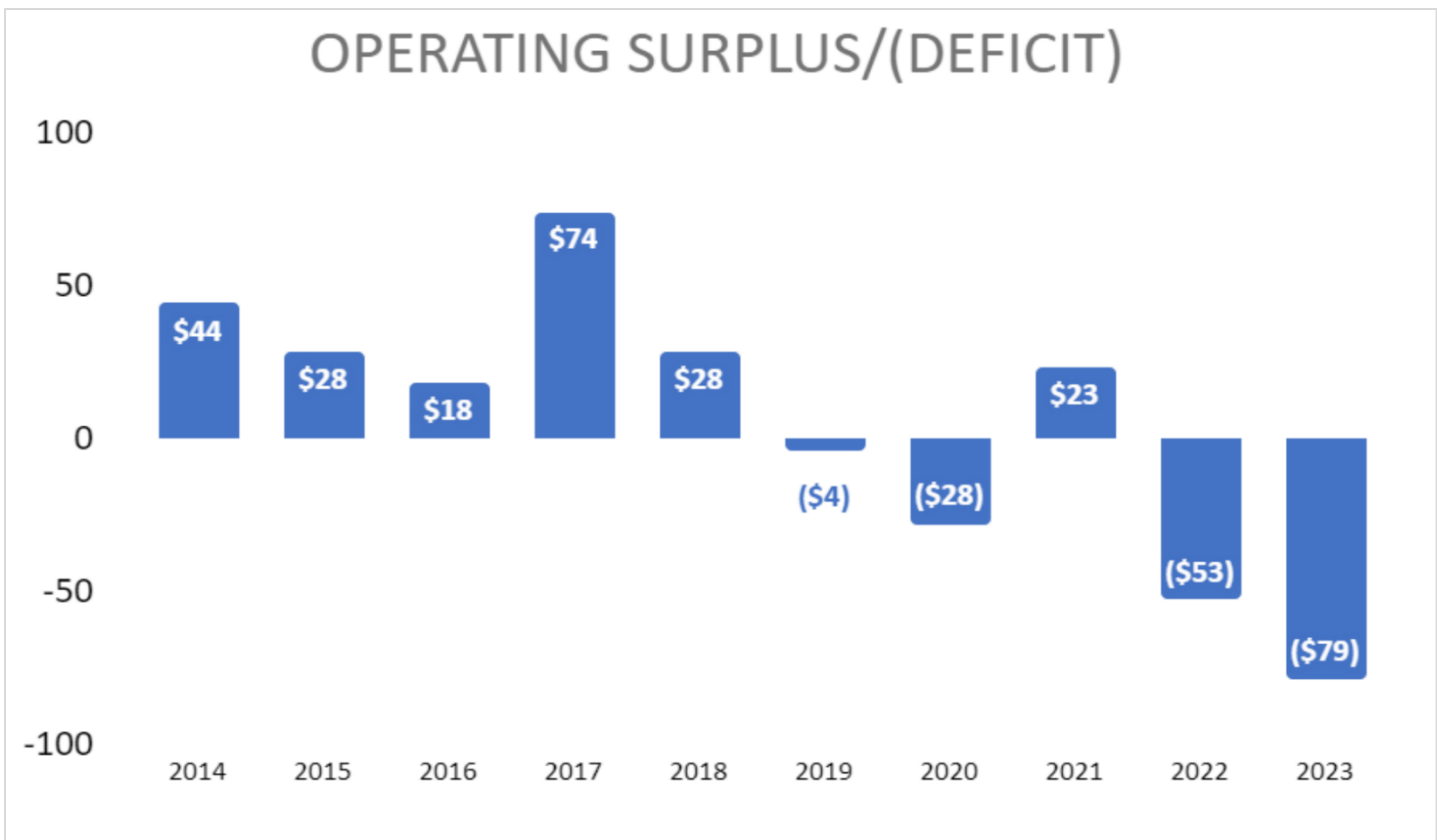
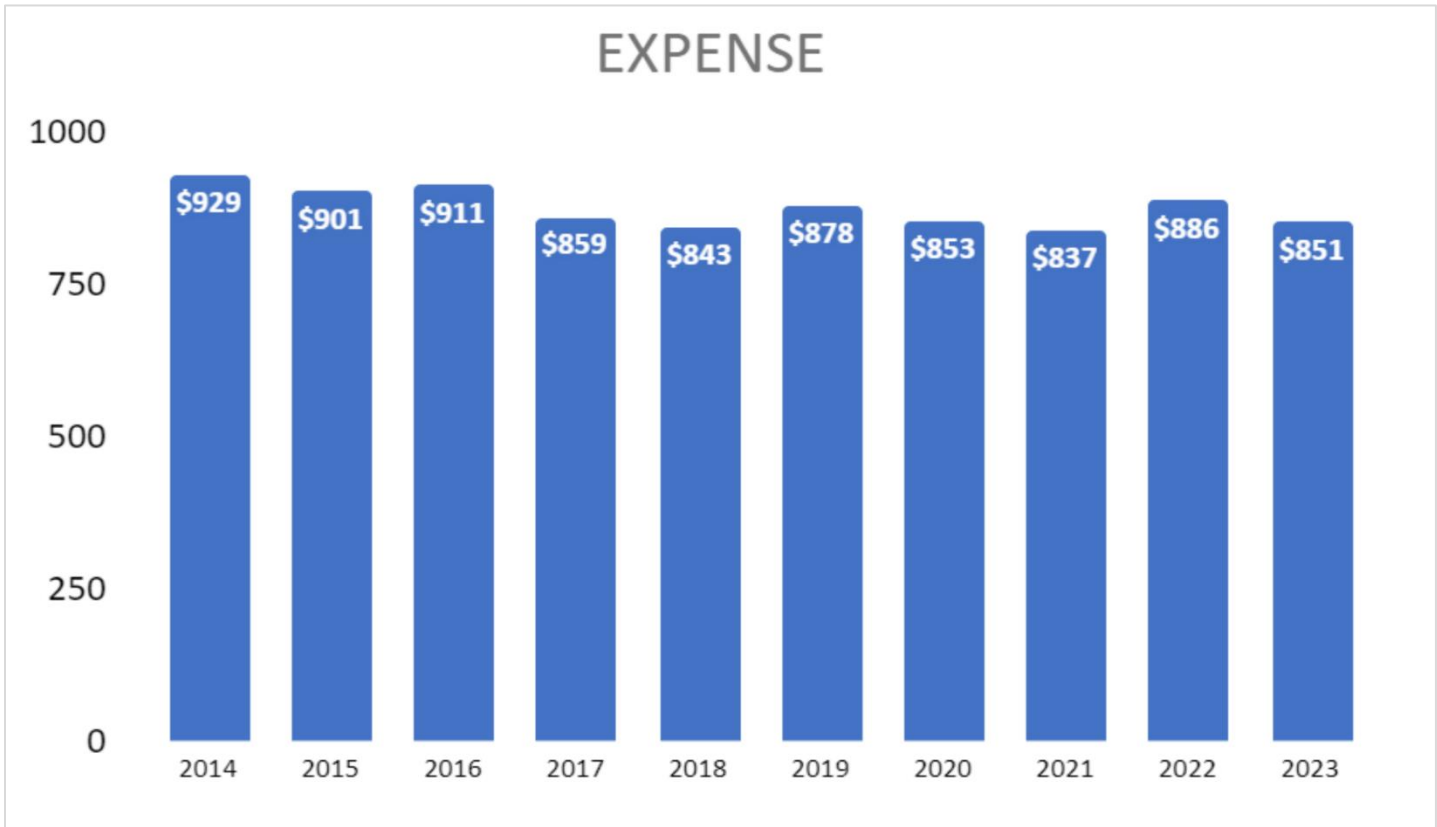
Financial Resources

FPC has outstanding financial information on which to base appropriate decisions. Our Business Manager is well-qualified and has been with FPC for 13 years. The Annual and Stewardship Reports explain in detail the financial position.

Since 2019 our expenses have exceeded revenue every year except for 2021. The Session recognizes that we are currently spending beyond our means and that action is needed. A Strategic Planning Committee has been formed to develop a plan to achieve a balanced budget for 2025, prior to the arrival of the new installed pastor and head of staff.

History of Operations and Surplus



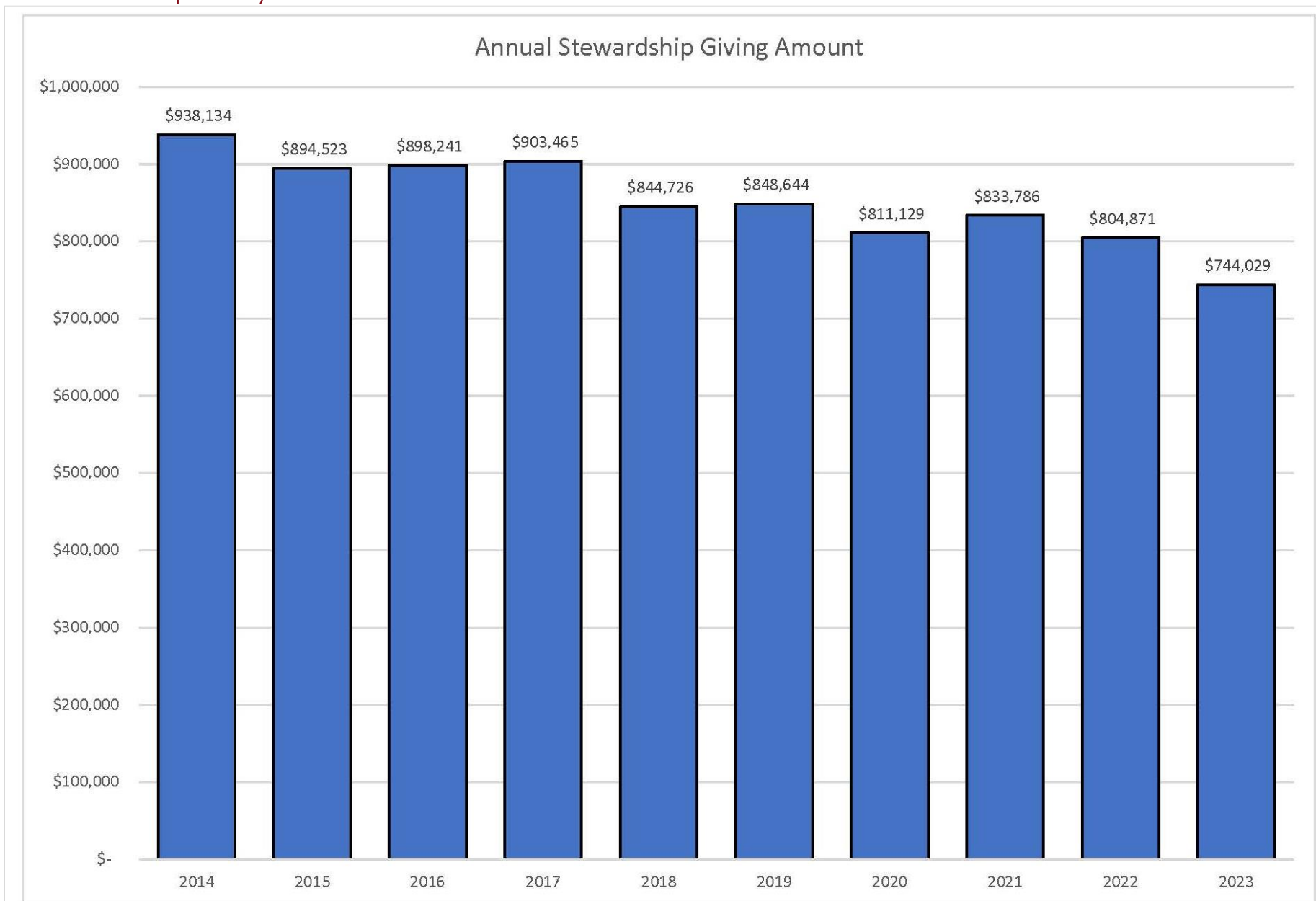


On a positive note, prior to the pandemic, a close non-member friend of a former pastor bequeathed \$250,000, with no restrictions on how the funds are used. This amount was received during the pandemic. The Financial Recovery Fund was established and is being used to offset the deficits we are currently experiencing. The balance in this fund was \$195,000 on June 1, 2024.

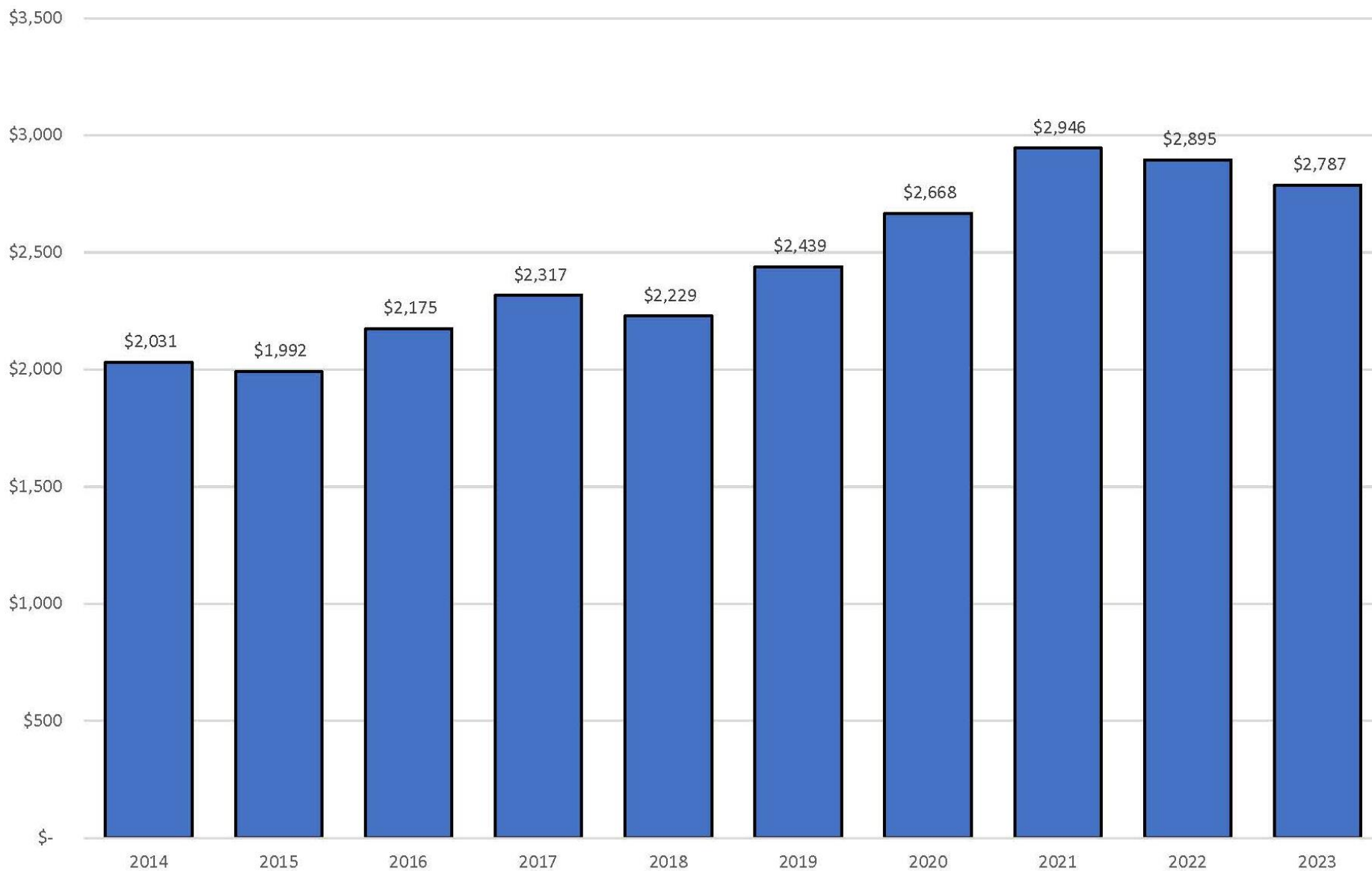
The Operating Fund (or "General Fund") has a goal of covering three months of operations. The balance has declined from \$268,000 in 2014 to \$172,000 at the end of 2023, but remains sufficient to maintain that cushion. Overall financial assets totaled \$1.88 million as of Dec. 31, 2023, up slightly from the 2014 total of \$1.6 million, but down from the 2021 peak of \$2.32 million.

FPC's total financial assets, including the Financial Recovery Fund, will carry us through as we align revenues with expenses.

The Stewardship History of FPC

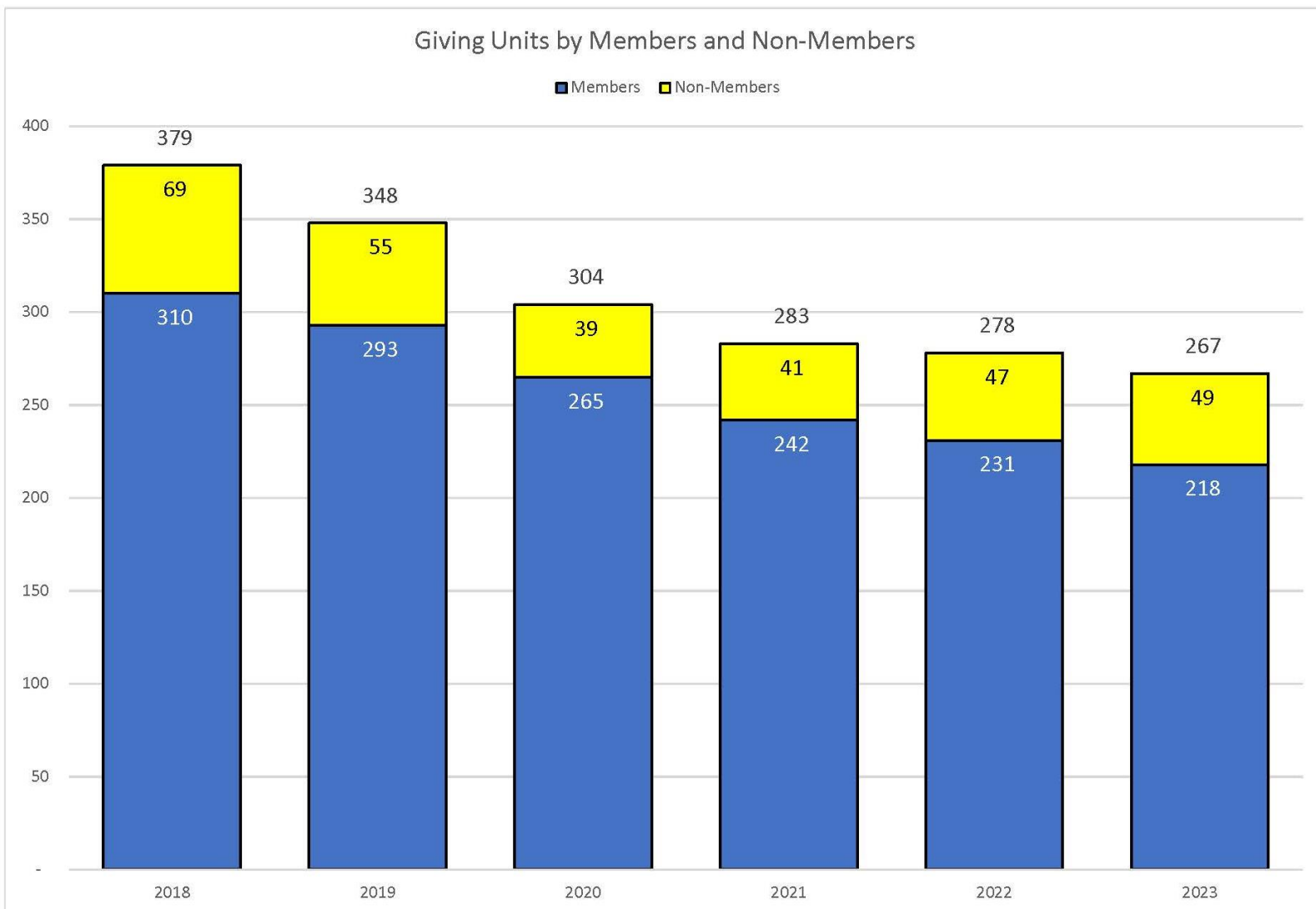


Average Donation Per Giving Unit



As noted elsewhere, membership has declined over the preceding 10 years, from 949 to 654. It is encouraging, however, that average weekly attendance, including online attendance, at 241, is nearly back to pre-pandemic levels.

The percentage of non-member giving units decreased slightly during COVID but has returned to the same percentage level as 2017. Currently 18 percent of giving units are non-members. Half the giving members participate in annual pledging, and this has remained steady over the last few years.



Above and beyond the consolidated budget, FPC contributes significantly to support specific local, regional, and international missions. In 2023 this amounted to over \$168,000, as detailed in the table below. In addition to what the funds generated from assets of \$1,475,000 restricted for their use, the general fund contributes close to \$50,000 per year.

Mission - Beyond the Budget

As of December 31, 2023	
First Presbyterian Church	2023
Additional Mission	
(Beyond the Budget)	
World Wide Programs	
<hr/>	
Christmas Joy	1,288.00
Disaster Relief	2,000.00
Ethiopian Related	1,831.32
Guatemalan Related	27,796.91
International Justice Mission	484.00
One Great Hour of Sharing	3,156.49
Pentecost	797.41
VBS Misison (School Supplies)	207.65
World Communion/Peacemaking	1,507.03
Sub Total	39,068.81
<hr/>	
Local Programs	
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Arbor Day Foundation	306.26
Bright Futures (School Supplies & Christmas Gifts)	4,051.57
Camp Scholarships	12,267.58
CCAP	6,816.17
Community Thanksgiving Dinner	5,691.56
Family Promise	1,306.26
FPC WATTS	1,460.23
Healthy Families of NSV	531.60
Highland Food Pantry	6,830.00
Jubilee Kitchen	5,750.55
Literacy Volunteers	2,000.04
Needy Family Assistance	42,643.80
Refugee Resettlement	13,171.10
Seminary/College Scholarships	10,605.72
Sherando Food Pantry	400.00
Valleyhaven Furniture Bank	1,000.00
WATTS	300.00
Weekday School Scholarships	7,623.00
Winchester Day Nursery	2,000.00
Youth Mission Trip Scholarships	4,634.88
Sub Total	129,390.32
Total	168,459.13

Balance Sheet & Summary

The Balance Sheet on December 31, 2023 reflects strength and details the fund balances that support our missions & ministries.

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of WINCHESTER, VA
BALANCE SHEET
December 31, 2023

<u>Assets</u>				<u>Liabilities & Fund Balances</u>			
<u>Cash</u>				<u>Liabilities</u>			
Fidelity Cash				Weekday School Prepayments	\$ 39,096		2.1%
Fidelity Government Cash Reserves	\$ 165,199			Advanced Pledge Payments	45,700		2.4%
		\$ 165,199	8.8%	Bank Loans	-		0.0%
				A/P & Payroll Benefits/Taxes	23,435		1.2%
						\$ 108,231	5.7%
				<u>Fund Balances</u>			
Truist Cash	\$ 108,864			Financial Recovery Fund	192,227		10.2%
Truist Payroll	100			General Fund	172,262		9.1%
Vanguard	39,986	148,949	7.9%	WDS Unrestricted Earnings	47,695		2.5%
				Living Memorial	55,381		2.9%
<u>Receivables</u>				Staff Scholarships	36,821		2.0%
Weekday School Accounts Receivable	\$ -	-	0.0%	Sheetz Endowment (Interest)	12,726		0.7%
				Facilities Designation	8,289		0.4%
<u>Prepaid Assets</u>				Playground	1,478		0.1%
	\$ -	-	0.0%	Church Van Maintenance	15,158		0.8%
				Mission Designation	24,962		1.3%
<u>Investments</u>				Laura Bell Witness	6,768		0.4%
Fidelity Investments				Ethiopia Gen'l Designations	1,605		0.1%
Stocks	\$ 571,784			Jubilee Kitchen	31,001		1.6%
Bonds	785,969			Organ Fund	37,840		2.0%
Mutual Funds	211,105	1,568,858	83.2%	Youth Mission Trip	20,314		1.1%
				W. Claytor Scholarship (Interest)	110,609		5.9%
				Helper Fund	28,854		1.5%
				Stine Fund (Weekday School)	39,948		2.1%
				Weekday School Scholarships	14,034		0.7%
				Lily Crum Trust, Endow.	44,473		2.4%
				Wilson Memorial, Endow.	10,000		0.5%
				Hottinger Scholar., Endow.	5,558		0.3%
				Keller Scholar., Endow.	1,000		0.1%
				Sheetz Memorial, Endow.	100,000		5.3%
				W. Claytor Scholar., Endow.	360,219		19.1%
				Other	95,360		5.1%
						1,474,582	78.3%
				Undistributed Investment Earnings		300,194	15.9%
Total Assets		\$ 1,883,007	100.0%	Total Liabilities & Funds		\$ 1,883,007	100.0%

Unaudited Statement prepared by Church Staff.

In summary: Our members are generous and with some help arriving at a crucial time, we have maintained our various local, regional, and international missions without major cuts. Recognizing that annual deficits are not sustainable; the Session has created a

strategic planning committee to investigate areas where we can adjust spending and achieve a balanced budget in 2025.

Conclusions

Over the past five months, the Mission Study Committee has gathered and reviewed data which provides a comprehensive picture of our congregation, our church governance structure, our financial, facility and human resources, our church history, our ministries and missions, and the current trends and challenges which must be confronted and managed as we move toward the future. The committee has also spent considerable time and effort gathering the thoughts, opinions, and attitudes of members of our church family who have voluntarily met in small groups with members of the committee in face-to-face exchanges and conversations. These conversations centered around a series of prepared questions designed to focus on who we are as a church, who and how we hope to be in order to carry out what we believe God expects of us, what we believe our mission is and what it should be, what our core values are and what we believe they should be, what elements of our worship experience are most important to us, what our church means to us and what responsibilities we have to one another in order to fully realize our intentions as professed in our mission statement. Gathering the factual data and assembling the responses from these varied personal conversations has been a sometimes tedious but at the same time enlightening and even rewarding undertaking. Discerning what all of this information taken as a whole is telling us is clearly the most important responsibility of our committee, and it has proven to be the greatest challenge. With considerable thought and after prayerfully seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we humbly offer the following conclusions based on the work we have done and the call we were given.

First, we believe our current mission statement, "Serving Christ and neighbor in the heart of Winchester and beyond," is substantially understood and supported by and believed to be a valid representation of our church family's intentions and their actual works as evidenced by the long-standing and expansive collection of service and mission projects and activities regularly undertaken by First Presbyterian Church at the local, national and international levels, with both significant financial and volunteer support. Our commitment to service is one of our greatest strengths as a church, including our designation as both a Matthew 25 church and an Earth Care Congregation, but we also recognize the need to do more for those in need in our immediate midst, especially the increasing and more complex population of homeless people whose physical

proximity to our downtown campus presents a challenge which demands our determined and creative attention.

Second, our conversations with our church family revealed strong support for a set of core values which are reflected in our mission statement but also in the history of our church and its connections to the community at large. We believe the evidence suggests that the core values of the First Presbyterian Church family include a commitment to serving Christ and our neighbors, with Christ at our center, the belief that our church has a significant and responsible role to play in the life of our community, a strong commitment to education in general with special emphasis on nurturing our youth, and the desire to be an inclusive church which welcomes and cares for all people.

Third, there was substantial agreement within the church regarding the elements of worship they most value. Those elements include: a scholarly sermon which is educational, uplifting and related to everyday life; time for prayer and reflection; music of varied styles which is both inspiring and motivational; regular observance of communion.

Fourth, our church family recognizes that we are blessed with a modern, expansive, attractive, and debt-free church facility which resulted from the vision and financial commitment of the congregation twenty years ago. Since then, however, our church has experienced the combined impact of an aging congregation, a significant change in pastoral leadership, a national trend of reduced participation in main-line churches, especially by young adults, and the Covid pandemic. The combined result of these and other possible factors has been a significant reduction in the size of the congregation and a corresponding reduction in financial resources available to support the extensive ministries and mission activities which emerged during the church's growth and expansion in the early 2000s. In recognition that this requires urgent attention, the session has created a sub-committee to address the issue.

Fifth, despite substantial agreement on the aforementioned core values, including a desire to be an inclusive church which cares for all people, our church family generally views itself as insufficiently welcoming to visitors and new members, not diverse, and not effective at actively nurturing each other. They agree that too little attention is paid to new member training and mentoring. A persistent theme in the many listening sessions conducted by the committee revealed an overwhelming desire for more social fellowship activities to strengthen ties among members of the congregation with attention paid to scheduling events so as to be more accommodating to modern-day lifestyles and schedules. A second persistent theme was the desire for examining the

potential role for deacons in our church, enhancing the capacity for reaching out to individual members as the need arises.

Sixth, the church family has indicated general agreement that the multiple worship services at different times, in different settings and with different worship styles on Sundays is an asset because of the choices offered, but along with this there is the understanding that this comes at the cost of community. Many expressed the desire to soften the boundaries between the three services and reduce the potential for the three services to view themselves as three separate congregations within the same church. The adult Sunday school program is generally viewed as a significant weakness and an untapped opportunity to help bring the church family together.

Seventh, there is general agreement that our church is blessed with capable and caring professional staff who serve our church well. However, there is also general concern that our church lacks a plan to systematically identify, train and encourage lay leaders to handle much of the work of the church. Additionally, there is no discernable leadership succession plan in programs like our music program.

Eighth, while appreciative of the opportunities provided by modern electronic media, there is also concern that communication methods have concentrated too much on electronic tools and strategies, ignoring more traditional, hard copy, face to face, and telephone-based efforts to reach out to many in our church family who are not as tech-savvy. It seems reasonable to conclude that the unintentional result of many being left out of the communication loop only tends to exacerbate a sense of social isolation, adding to the sense that we are not effectively nurturing each other.

Finally, despite the mixed nature of the conclusions just summarized above, honestly laying out both our strengths and our weaknesses, our many successes as well as the worrisome setbacks of the last few years, our aspirations and our worries about the future, we believe it is appropriate and important to end our report with what we learned about our church from some of its most important but sometimes overlooked members -- our youth. A listening session with over a dozen of our teenage youth in mid-June conducted by two members of our committee and assisted by our associate pastor and our youth ministry director made clear their energetic and unabashed commitment to service, especially the roll up your sleeves, hands on, real world helping other people kinds of service. This was truly inspiring. They expressed a desire to play a greater role in the life of the church, including more youth-led Sundays and involving more adult members to assist our youth in those roles. They expressed creative and fresh ideas about how to better communicate our church's activities to the greater community. They were excited about being involved with church activities throughout

the week, not just on Sundays. They valued their time in church both as a time for personal reflection and a time to be of service to others. They expressed the desire for a Sunday school curriculum that is more substantive. They placed particular emphasis on the importance of our church being more “green,” reflecting their understanding of and support for environmental stewardship. They were asked to describe their church in a few words, and they used words like outreach, inclusive, welcoming, fun, mission, fellowship, helpful, joyful, involved, serving, positive, and generous. They expressed a desire for more fellowship opportunities. When asked about what they would like to see in a new pastor, they expressed a desire for someone who will be truly involved with the congregation and the youth and one who would be committed to service to others, which they saw as both important and personally fulfilling. Our youth demonstrated their overwhelming positivity and their vibrant and caring nature. The members of this Mission Study Committee believe that our youth have portrayed for us the kind of church we aspire to be. We would be smart to heed their wise counsel.

