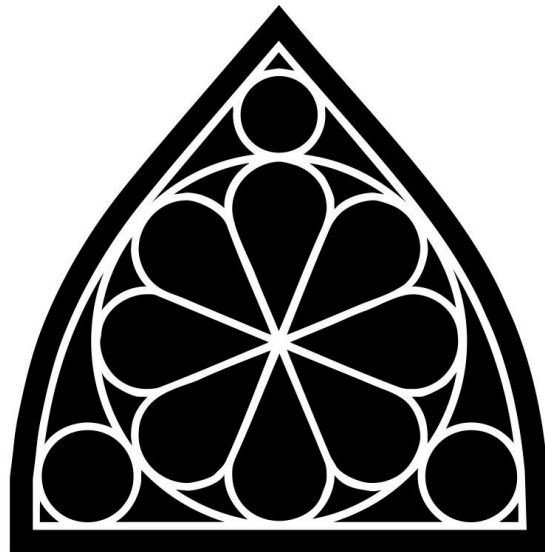


2023 Annual Report

**Annual Meeting
January 28, 2024**



First United Church of Christ
Congregational
Northfield, Minnesota

300 Union Street
Northfield, Minnesota 55057
www.firstucc.org

Church Covenant

“We covenant together with God and one another,
trusting in God’s continuing guidance,
to seek to understand and do God’s will
to explore the mystery of Christ
and to witness to God’s reconciling love.”

Staff

Rev. Cindy Maddox	Senior Minister	<i>seniorminister@firstucc.org</i>
Rev. Lauren Baske Davis	Associate Minister	<i>associateminister@firstucc.org</i>
Christopher Brunelle	Director of Music	<i>musicdirector@firstucc.org</i>
Catherine Rodland	Organist	<i>organist@firstucc.org</i>
Bob Gregory-Bjorklund	Worship Arts Coordinator	<i>worshiparts@firstucc.org</i>
Kathryn Kvasnak	Office Manager & Director of Communications	<i>church@firstucc.org</i>
Derek Melby	Finance Manager	<i>finance@firstucc.org</i>
Mark Fischer	Sexton	<i>sexton@firstucc.org</i>
Brynn Artley	AV Technician	

Agenda

January 28, 2024

The Year in Review

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Declaration of a Quorum and Approval of the Agenda

2023 Budget

Nominations Report and Approval of Candidates

Resolution on Becoming a Creation Justice Church

Resolution on Calling for Ceasefire in Palestine and Israel

Recognition of Ongoing and Outgoing Leaders

Closing Prayer

Adjournment

Table of Contents

Church Covenant	2
Staff	2
Agenda	3
Table of Contents	4
Annual Meeting Minutes - January 29, 2023	4
Report of the Senior Minister Rev. Cindy Maddox	6
Report of the Associate Minister Rev. Lauren Baske Davis	8
Report of the Moderator Gary Carlson	11
Report of the Clerk	12
Report of the Treasurer & Finance Manager	13
Report of the Treasurer	13
Report of the Finance Manager	14
Budget vs. Actuals: Proposed FY 2023 - FY 23 P&L	17
2024 Budget	18
Report of the Director of Music	21
Report of the Office Manager and Director of Communications	23
Ministry Reports	24
Beyond Land Acknowledgement Team	24
Immigrant Welcoming Ministry Team: 2023 Highlights for a Year of Abundance	25
Creation Justice Team	26
Open and Affirming Ministry Team	27
Racial Justice Team	28
ISAIAH	28
Special Functions	29
Membership Team	30
Prayer Shawl Knitting Ministry	31
Care Ministry Team	31
Meals on Wheels	32
Middle & High School Youth Group	32
Standing Committees of the Council	33
Facilities Committee	33
Stewardship Committee	36
Nominating Committee	37

Annual Meeting Minutes - January 29, 2023

Welcome and Opening Prayer - Pastor Cindy Maddox

Opening Hymn - "Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer"

Declaration of a Quorum - Deb Gottfried

Motion: Approval of the Agenda - First: Brad Hoff, Second: Nalani McCutcheon. Motion passed.

Motion: Approval of 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes - First: Linda Larson, Second: Margit Johnson. Motion passed.

Motion: Approval of all three 2022 Congregational Meetings - First: Nalani McCutcheon, Second: Dan Neuger. Motion passed.

Presentation and discussion of budget and OCWM overview led by Nalani McCutcheon. Budget discussion included:

- Overview of pledged vs. unpledged giving,
- Federal employee retention dollars related to pandemic,
- Difference in budgeted vs actual related to Lauren's position,
- Facilities expenses different than expected as result of increased utilities,
- Increased program expenses with resumption of in-person programming,
- Charitable contributions up,
- Overall financial situation is secure.

Motion: Approval of 2023 Budget - First: Elizabeth Olson, Second: Sarah Carlson. Motion passed.

Presentation and discussion of OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) led by Nalani McCutcheon.

Provides funds to support ministers (e.g. those who serve LBGTQ in military, where other ministers will not serve) or funds to support disaster relief. Note that 10% of pledged OCWM from our congregation stays here for causes that we want to contribute to; 90% goes to the conference.

Presentation of Nominations Report and slate of candidates (includes officers for council and committees) led by Margit Johnson.

Motion: Approval of candidates - First: Scott Richardson, Second: Jan Mitchell. Motion passed.

Recognition of Ongoing and Outgoing Leaders - Pastor Cindy Maddox

Closing Prayer - Pastor Lauren Baske Davis

Motion to Adjourn - First: Carol Rutz, Second: Scott Richardson

Report of the Senior Minister

Rev. Cindy Maddox

Last year was another powerful, slightly chaotic, wonderful year in the life of First United Church of Christ, Northfield! Here are just a few highlights.

Worship

For both Lent and Advent we purchased theme materials from “A Sanctified Art,” supplementing our worship with beautiful art and liturgy. In the fall of 2023 we kicked off a year-long focus on the power of story called “Unfolding Narratives: Finding Ourselves in God’s Story.” Due to difficulty getting hosts for Zoom, we took a hiatus from the platform for the summer (live-streaming only to YouTube), but when we looked at the numbers it seemed we were missing some folks so we brought it back in the fall with paid help. Ben Reister is currently serving in this capacity. In October Bob Gregory-Bjorklund and I attended a conference in Nashville with the Convergence Music Project. It was an excellent experience and we brought back some new music to enliven our worship experiences. I continue to be thrilled to work with such amazing staff.

Staff

Unfortunately, we had several turnovers in staff this year. We had to let our previous Office Manager and Director of Communications go at the end of 2022, but Grove Muth very capably took on the role in January while they were home from college. We then hired Kate Kvasnak for the role. She began with us in February and has been a delightful addition to the office staff. In April we learned that Pippa Younger, our Finance Manager, was leaving us to pursue full-time employment. In June we hired Derek Melby to serve as our Finance Manager and we have kept him very busy! Theo Wee announced her retirement, and we celebrated her generously before she left. At the suggestion of our Organist Search Committee, the church hired Catherine Rodland as our new Organist and have been thrilled with the way she is fitting in.

Pastoral Care

We have had many folks ill, grieving, or struggling emotionally this year, keeping both Pastor Lauren and I busy with providing care. It is an honor to be invited into people’s lives at such difficult times, and is a fulfilling part of my work.

Adult Education / Faith Formation

Pastor Lauren and I rearranged some of our duties for both logistical sense and to better fit our skills and interests. I have taken on Faith Formation for Adults (including Connect groups) while Lauren is now staffing the Nominating Committee.

Justice Groups

The Social Justice Ministries team continues our work as the hub of social justice efforts in the congregation, with each individual team providing many opportunities for learning and engagement this year. (See individual reports for details.) In addition to our established teams, I also have been working with Jenny Hartley and Fred Rogers to learn more about the devastating conflict in Palestine and Israel. We are blessed to have so many passionate folks leading us in these areas.

Finance & Facilities

I continue to staff both the Trustees and the Facilities Committee plus the Stewardship Committee. I also worked with the newly-formed Safety & Security Task Force who brought forth a number of recommendations for keeping our building—and more importantly, our people—safe.

Community Partnerships

In 2023 Northfield's Pride in the Park event separated from the library and became a community event rather than a library-sponsored event. I was asked to represent faith communities on the steering community, and we put on another very successful Pride in the Park. I have now become Chair of the newly formed Northfield Pride, which is sponsoring year-round activities in addition to Pride in the Park. I also continue to attend ISAIAH events as I am able, as well as NAIA and our local women's clergy group.

UCC & MN Conference Involvement

I completed Power & Boundary Training and Anti-Bias Training as required by the MN Conference to maintain my ordination standing. I am currently serving on the Committee on Ministry, which meets quarterly, and on a subcommittee which meets monthly.

Discretionary Fund

This year we spent \$402 on hotel stays for unhoused individuals, \$212 on gas and gas cards, \$1700 on legal assistance, and \$2208 for charitable donations (CAC, Habitat for Humanity, and Clean River Partners). We also took \$1000 to put a deposit on our upcoming Carrie Newcomer concert, but that money will be replaced when we receive payment for tickets. Our current balance is \$6569. We made other charitable donations from the Racial Justice budget line that had been rolled over from previous years.

I am looking forward to all that 2024 will bring, with prayers for guidance on each new adventure that calls to us.

With prayers for peace,
Pastor Cindy Maddox

Report of the Associate Minister

Rev. Lauren Baske Davis

*Kindness, where kindness has no business being, the smallest flower emerging from stone, a cool day in midsummer **and you**. Of course, you. I'm not sure when I first met God, I just know we keep meeting. -Lori Hetteen*

Dear First UCC,

So much happens in a year. It feels nearly impossible to sum up all of the ways in which we experienced and shared God's love this year—joining our voices in song, writing a card of encouragement, checking in over coffee hour or WFFF, delivering a meal, receiving deep listening, being nourished by adult education, feeling energized from the way your team or committee came together, affecting change through justice ministries, being cared for in a time of crisis, learning to see something new through the eyes of a young person—the list can go on! In each of these moments, we are building and being the body of Christ. I am honored to get to work alongside you and bear witness to God's presence right here. Instead of an exhaustive list of what 2023 entailed, I am sharing snapshots of the times I've noticed that “we keep meeting” God in each other and our ministries.

January

- Wednesdays for Food, Friends, and Faith (WFFF) continued through May, then started again in Sept. Bill Bruhiler, Sarah Dennett, Linda Larson, Hans Muessig, Bill Poehlmann, lead with creativity and courage. Creation Care Team members head up compost efforts. Special thanks to Joan Lindholm who is now co-leading WFFF and to all volunteers!

February

- Kate Kvasnak started work, bringing warmth and a can-do attitude to the front office.
- 3 Confirmation students chose intergenerational conversations with older members as their Confirmation project, and said they were a highlight of the class.

March

- With Council and Pastor Cindy's blessings, I submitted a sabbatical proposal for the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal program, for my scheduled sabbatical in summer 2024.
- Care Team, Pastor Cindy, and I coordinated support through the first half of the year, given a high level of care needs

April

- Children and Youth celebrated Earth Day with a trash clean up service project in town.
- First UCCers commented positively on 6 Confirmation students' projects: re-written Prayers of Jesus, used weekly in Lenten worship. Many said that students provided meaningful ways to reimagine their (adult) faith and prayer lives.

May

- Pastor Cindy and I swapped a couple of responsibilities to meet logistical needs and strengths. Being the lead on justice ministries, Pastor Cindy took on Adult Education, as justice groups often host education programs. I took on Nominating Committee.
- On Confirmation Sunday, we welcomed 6 of 9 students as full members of First UCC!
- Inspired by Earth Day, children made signs and led an Earth March to town. The Creation Care Team wrote them an encouraging note of thanks for their leadership!

June

- We welcomed Derek Melby on board as our new Finance Manager!
- It was the end of an era: we said goodbye to organist Theo Wee, sending her off with joyful worship, gifts, and her dessert of choice: root beer floats.
- 6 First UCC middle and high school youth, plus a First UCC chaperone embarked on a service-learning trip to Nashville for a week with St. John's and St. Peters churches.

July

- Laura Turek and Children's Team planned the faith formation year, and improved rooms for better faith formation class flow. The Youth Room was moved for space and windows. Jami Reister made it welcoming!
- OWL (Our Whole Lives) Facilitators Dena Stulken, Amanda Pettis Eastvold, Kathy Sandberg and I planned middle *and* high school OWL programs. Sam Steinberg and Steve Reuter became wonderful male leaders for these classes. OWL is growing!

September

- Children's Faith Formation Team recruited 6 new adults to volunteer for faith formation. Thank you adult leaders: Shari Wadleigh, Cheryl Rempel, Mary Carlson, Menk family, Tim and Marian McKone, and others!
- Caitlin Reuter of Children's Faith Formation Team, and her spouse Steve, painted and renovated the entire nursery at the urging of children and youth. It's gorgeous!

October

- Nominating Committee was in full swing, meeting and communicating Aug through Dec to confer on updates regarding committee and council positions.
- First UCC was granted \$51,000 in Lilly Endowment funds for the time of my sabbatical. The congregation and I will both engage in opportunities for rest, funded by this grant!

December

- We concluded the Sanctified Art Advent series, "How Does A Weary World Rejoice?" a theme we realized was very needed, especially given the war in Palestine and Israel.
- 7-8th grade OWL concluded a unit on sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, with a guest panel of 7 LGBTQIA+ adults.
- We said farewell to Conference Minister Shari Prestemon who spent her last Sunday in the MN Conference with us, preaching in worship.

Throughout the year, there are internal, wider church, and community ministries that are ongoing. I'd like to highlight and give thanks to those involved, as well:

- TORCH care packages are sent to first-generation college students from Northfield. Linda Burdell is heading up this ministry, and we send 10-12 boxes, twice a year.
- The Evening Gathering is providing a contemplative, nourishing worship experience.
- Linda Gagnon, along with Leona Openshaw and Barb Altstaetter, have worked tirelessly as a worship arts team, to make the sanctuary's paraments, plants, and flowers look fresh and welcoming.
- Coffee Hour was and is still going strong thanks to leadership by many households, in coordination by Annie Kramer and Sue Evans.
- Special Functions Team runs receptions, also keeping the kitchen tidy and linens clean!
- Knitters group lovingly created prayer shawls, delivered by Care Team members.
- Amanda Pettis Eastvold and her spouse, Matt, created a beautiful photo backdrop this year for those attending the Christmas Eve services.

In love and service,
Pastor Lauren

Report of the Moderator

Gary Carlson

The church council oversaw a vibrant congregation in 2023 led by our pastors and supported by our office, music, and ancillary staff. There were no large crises but many issues that the council had to weigh in on, mostly brought to them by active church groups. Some examples include focus on immigrant welcoming (our Peruvian family), climate care (Creation Justice Team), Native American reparations (Beyond Land Acknowledgement), and most recently Palestinian/Israeli issues. I think our biggest challenge as a council was to support and encourage active members who are passionate about their particular project while at the same time representing the larger congregation. How do we wisely use the time/financial resources that we have in an equitable and efficient manner? How do we provide stability but also not be afraid to be on the leading edge?

Along with the spiritual and ministry aspects of our church the council worked with the facilities committee, trustees, and the safety task force to make the church building safer, more ecologically appropriate, and maintained properly to last into the future. This is no small task when your building is over 150 years old.

Lastly, we said goodbye and thank you to Theo Wee, our >50 year-long organist and welcomed three new employees—Catherine Rodland, our new organist, Kate Kvasnak, our new office manager, and Derek Melby, our finance manager.

I am thankful for all who add their time and talents in making first UCC an authentic, compassionate, and progressive Christian community.

Gary Carlson
Moderator

Report of the Clerk

Active Full Memberships - as of 01/01/2023	440
Active Associate Memberships as of 01/01/2023	8
Additions to Full Membership during 2023	16
Additions to Associate Membership during 2023	0
Members / Associate Members Transferred	0
Retired Memberships	0
Deceased Members	6
Deceased Associate Members	1
Active Full Memberships as of 12/31/2023	450
Active Associate Memberships as of 12/31/2023	7

Member & Assoc Member Deaths (7):

Ed Frost - *October 15*
 Bob Kahn - *September 27*
 David Kamis - *January 9*
 Steve Openshaw - *January 17*
 Bob Reitz - *March 22*
 Peter Seitz - *September 21*
 Stan Stevens - *February 17*

Brian Perry
 Diana Postlethwaite
 Paul Thiboutot

December 2023 (7)

Dan McMahill
 Carol Reed
 Amy Weed
 Sophia Weed
 Polly Martin
 Michael Provancha
 Jessica Provancha

New Members (16):

May 2023 (9)
 Darlene Antony
 Laurie Deibert
 Margaret Huber
 Joan Lindholm
 Roger Lindholm
 Andrea Perry

Baptisms (2):

Will Henslin - *May 7, 2023*
 Lee Brian Perry - *June 11, 2023*

Report of the Treasurer & Finance Manager

Report of the Treasurer

One couldn't ask for a better first year to be a treasurer. Even though 2023 had its share of wrinkles, it was a fairly smooth year.

Much of the Trustees' discussions for the first half of the year centered around the roof. This included discussions around solar, insurance, structural issues, etc. Bill Szydlo, Chair of the Facilities Committee, led us through this process. There was a ton of information that he was able to pare down and highlight for us.

Trustees also worked with Facilities and Creation Care on Solar options and composting.

Turnover in the Finance role at the church is never fun, but Derek Melby has jumped into the role and done well. Thanks to Pippa Younger for helping make the transition smooth and Derek's willingness to learn a new system.

Beyond the anticipated expenses in the 2022 Annual Budget, additional tasks that were approved by the Trustees in 2023 include:

- Fire inspection and projects to bring the church up to code
- Composting service
- Upgrading the church's security with cameras and keyless entry

Included in this report is the End of Year financial statements for 2023 as well as the proposed budget for 2024.

Trustees want to recognize and thank Financial Coordinators Pippa Younger and Derek Melby for their efforts on behalf of the church.

Dan Neuger, Treasurer

2023 Trustees: Fred Rogers, David Beimers, Nancy Johnson Maloney, Fred Blaisdell, Randy Hachfeld

Pastor Cindy Maddox supported the Trustees in an ex-officio capacity.

Report of the Finance Manager

I am now into my seventh month as Financial Manager. It has been a bit of a challenge for me with a steep learning curve, but I feel that I am now getting settled enough in the job to begin looking towards the future. This position has seen a lot of turn-over in the last few years. I hope to be in the position long enough to establish more thorough and replicable procedures, and to seek ways to reduce some of the costs of doing business. I thank the congregation for allowing me to be at work when at work, and just a member when attending events and services.

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Melby
Finance Manager

2023 Balance Sheet

First United Church of Christ

Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2023

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
0101001 Merchants Bank Checking	141,963.03
0101002 Merchants Money Market	288,594.85
History Books	1,061.75
Total Bank Accounts	\$431,619.63
Total Current Assets	\$431,619.63
Other Assets	
0101006 Schwab LT Reserves	422,184.26
0101007 Charles Schwab Endowment	596,999.83
Total Other Assets	\$1,019,184.09
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,450,803.72
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
0105001 Accounts Payable	-3,522.86
Total Accounts Payable	\$ -3,522.86
Other Current Liabilities	
0109001 LED / Center Energy & Environ	1,537.09
0109002 Payroll Liabilities	-2,004.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$ -466.91
Total Current Liabilities	\$ -3,989.77
Long-Term Liabilities	
0301001 Short Term Reserves	-67,412.18
0308001 Intermediate Reserves	288,594.85
0309001 Long Term Reserves	422,184.26
0310001 Endowment	596,999.83
0311000 Restricted Reserves	
0311001 90% OCWM	6,100.07
0311002 Discretionary Fund	6,569.51
0312001 One Great Hour of Sharing	0.00
0313001 Neighbors in Need	0.00
0314001 Food Share	150.00
0315001 Christmas Fund - UCC	2,383.81
0316001 CAC Christmas Fund	2,658.55
0317001 CAC & Christmas Sharing (deleted)	240.90
0320001 Strengthen the Church	41.44
0325001 Relief Fund	50.00
0329001 Racial Justice & Equity Fund	0.00
0329050 Creation Care	2,869.50
0329100 Immigrant Welcoming	0.00

First United Church of Christ

Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2023

	TOTAL
0330000 Olive Oil	25.00
0340001 Children's Offering	4,747.70
0340007 Adult Ed Projects & Events	471.84
0344001 Youth Mission Trip	813.44
0344002 Youth Special Projects	-189.79
0350001 Congregational Care	381.76
0350050 Music Education Fund	9,067.49
0351001 WFFF	1,303.37
0352001 Flower Power	3,243.41
0352003 Courtyard Memorial Garden	3,285.71
0352004 Prayer Shawls	-153.70
0358001 Special Functions	785.17
0359001 Softball Team	479.65
0367001 Pilgrim Point	0.00
0368001 Minister Sabbatical	14,993.16
0369001 Reserved Housing Allowance	10,040.72
0380001 Organ Restoration	0.00
0380002 Theo's Retirement Celebration	0.00
0380003 Sabbatical Grant	41,018.47
0390001 Prepaid Local	77,776.35
0392001 Prepaid OCWM	11,132.77
0398001 Pride in the Park	8,531.70
0398010 Capital Projects Building	9,300.00
Total 0311000 Restricted Reserves	218,118.00
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$1,458,484.76
Total Liabilities	\$1,454,494.99
Equity	
0399001 Opening Balance Equity	2,887.68
0399003 Temp. Restricted Net Assets	-508,536.09
0399004 Unrestricted Net Assets	433,070.97
0399006 Unrealized Gains & Losses	42,343.57
Net Income	26,542.60
Total Equity	\$ -3,691.27
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$1,450,803.72

Budget vs. Actuals: Proposed FY 2023 - FY 23 P&L

First United Church of Christ
Budget vs. Actuals: Proposed FY23 - FY23 P&L
 January - December 2023

	TOTAL			
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	OVER BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
Income				
001 Pledged Donations	453,311.77	478,000.00	-24,688.23	94.84 %
002 Unpledged Donations	66,326.55	31,000.00	35,326.55	213.96 %
003 Investment Income	27,641.66	27,647.00	-5.34	99.98 %
004 Building Income	15,304.99	15,124.00	180.99	101.20 %
005 Miscellaneous Income	3,229.03	3,000.00	229.03	107.63 %
0401050 Transfer from Intermediate Res		9,520.00	-9,520.00	
Total Income	\$565,814.00	\$564,291.00	\$1,523.00	100.27 %
GROSS PROFIT	\$565,814.00	\$564,291.00	\$1,523.00	100.27 %
Expenses				
006 Staff & Support	364,186.80	371,804.40	-7,617.60	97.95 %
007 Office Operations	17,161.69	20,000.00	-2,838.31	85.81 %
008 Building Operations				
0501410 Grounds & Facilities	26,023.15	22,000.00	4,023.15	118.29 %
0501420 Repairs & Maintenance				
0501421 Organ	5,257.96	2,000.00	3,257.96	262.90 %
0501422 Elevator/Boiler/Furnace	3,959.99	3,000.00	959.99	132.00 %
0501423 Air Conditioning Unit		3,500.00	-3,500.00	
0501424 Fire/Safety Inspection	1,274.65	1,200.00	74.65	106.22 %
0501425 General Maintenance--Operating	5,354.25	8,000.00	-2,645.75	66.93 %
0501426 General Maintenance--Capital	21,796.15	20,000.00	1,796.15	108.98 %
Total 0501420 Repairs & Maintenance	37,643.00	37,700.00	-57.00	99.85 %
0501430 Utilities	21,468.30	25,626.00	-4,157.70	83.78 %
0501440 Insurance Expense	43,547.50	41,706.00	1,841.50	104.42 %
Total 008 Building Operations	128,681.95	127,032.00	1,649.95	101.30 %
009 Program Operations				
0501500 Committee & Program	12,062.37	16,400.00	-4,337.63	73.55 %
0501600 Dues, Subscriptions, Licenses	8,080.61	14,960.00	-6,879.39	54.01 %
0501700 Charitable Contributions	9,000.00	12,000.00	-3,000.00	75.00 %
Total 009 Program Operations	29,142.98	43,360.00	-14,217.02	67.21 %
0501800 Interest Expense	97.98		97.98	
Total Expenses	\$539,271.40	\$562,196.40	\$ -22,925.00	95.92 %
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$26,542.60	\$2,094.60	\$24,448.00	1,267.19 %
NET INCOME	\$26,542.60	\$2,094.60	\$24,448.00	1,267.19 %

2024 Budget

First UCC Northfield 2024 Budget As Proposed by Trustees and Church Council	2022 Budget	Actual 2022	2023 Budget	Actual 2023	Proposed 2024 Budget	% Increase
Income						
001 Pledged Donations						
0401001 Current Year	453,046	433,327	480,000	439,082	480,000	0.0%
0401002 Previous Year	4,000	8,441	6,000	14,230	10,000	66.7%
0401003 Pledged, Prepaid						
0401008 Uncollected Pledge Allowance	-8,000		-8,000		-8,000	0.0%
Total 001 Pledged Donations	449,046	441,767	478,000	453,312	482,000	0.8%
002 Unpledged Donations						
0401004 Gifts (Unpledged Local)	26,000	32,109	26,000	64,013	54,000	107.7%
0401006 Unrestricted Memorial Gifts	3,000	7,068	5,000	2,313	5,000	0.0%
Total 002 Unpledged Donations	29,000	39,178	31,000	66,327	59,000	90.3%
003 Investment Income						
0301010 Endowment Income			15,691		23,900	52.3%
0301015 Long Term Reserve Income			11,956		12,000	0.4%
Total 003 Investment Income	31,770	31,756	27,647	27,642	35,900	29.9%
004 Building Income				560		
0401020 Day Care Rent	12,960	12,960	14,124	14,027	14,477	2.5%
0401023 Miscellaneous Rent	2,500	585	1,000	718	1,000	0.0%
Total 004 Building Income	15,460	13,545	15,124	15,305	15,477	2.3%
005 Miscellaneous Income						
0401030 Miscellaneous Income	1,000	48,666	1,000	1,456	1,500	50.0%
0401051 Solar Panel Incentive Rebate	2,000	2,069	2,000	1,773		-100.0%
Total 005 Miscellaneous Income	3,000	50,735	3,000	3,229	1,500	-50.0%
0401050 Transfer from Intermediate Res	19,520		9,520		9,500	-0.2%
Total Income	547,796	576,980	564,291	565,814	603,377	6.9%
Expenses						
006 Staff & Support						
0501000 Payroll Expenses						
Total 0501010 Wages	194,804	223,602	202,858	232,511	217,300	7.1%
0501020 Housing Allowance	67,020	32,880	65,760	32,880	65,760	0.0%
Total 0501025 SS Allowance	13,745	13,714	13,979	13,979	14,352	2.7%
Total 0501030 Retirement	27,554	26,001	27,454	26,157	28,221	2.8%
0501040 Benefits	44,376	36,886	42,236	42,480	46,869	11.0%
0501050 Taxes	6,284	5,623	6,478	6,285	7,302	12.7%
Total 0501000 Payroll Expenses	353,783	338,706	358,764	354,291	379,804	5.9%
Total 0501060 Travel	4,000	0	0			
Total 0501070 Mileage	2,350	390	1,500	554	1,500	0.0%
Total 0501080 Education & Training	4,600	2,905	4,600	4,386	4,600	0.0%
Total 0501090 Conferences & Meetings	1,500	596	1,500	1,263	1,500	0.0%
0501100 Contractors/Professional Fees	8,190	6,879	5,440	3,692	5,440	0.0%
Total 006 Staff & Support	374,423	349,477	371,804	364,187	392,844	5.7%

First UCC Northfield 2024 Budget As Proposed by Trustees and Church Council	2022 Budget	Actual 2022	2023 Budget	Actual 2023	Proposed 2024 Budget	% Increase
007 Office Operations						
0501310 Advertising & Marketing	6,000	7,883	3,000	2,318	3,000	0.0%
0501320 Equipment & Computer		1,412	2,000	339	2,000	0.0%
0501330 Internet & Email	1,800	1,334	2,500	1,567	1,500	-40.0%
0501340 Telephone	2,040	2,752	3,000	2,618	2,800	-6.7%
0501350 Postage & Delivery	1,200	1,346	1,200	807	1,200	0.0%
0501360 Printing & Reproduction	2,000	2,767	2,000	1,276	2,000	0.0%
0501370 Rental & Lease	3,500	1,612	2,100	2,368	2,400	14.3%
0501380 Supplies	2,200	1,179	2,000	2,253	2,000	0.0%
0501390 Service Charges	1,150	1,763	1,200	2,389	2,000	66.7%
0501391 Miscellaneous	3,000	710	1,000	1,226	1,500	50.0%
Total 007 Office Operations	22,890	22,757	20,000	17,162	20,400	2.0%
008 Building Operations						
0501410 Grounds & Facilities	20,000	16,805	22,000	26,023	25,000	13.6%
0501420 Repairs & Maintenance						
0501421 Organ	2,000	2,124	2,000	5,258	3,000	50.0%
0501422 Elevator/Boiler/Furnace	3,000	4,794	3,000	3,960	3,500	16.7%
0501423 Air Conditioning Unit	3,500	1,558	3,500		3,000	-14.3%
0501424 Fire/Safety Inspection	1,218	621	1,200	1,275	1,300	8.3%
0501425 General Maintenance--Operating	400	1,164	8,000	5,354	9,000	12.5%
0501426 General Maintenance--Capital	28,000	7,623	20,000	21,796	23,000	15.0%
Uncategorized	0	680	0		0	0%
0501420 Repairs & Maintenance	38,118	18,563	37,700	37,643	42,800	13.5%
0501430 Utilities						
0501431 Gas	6,500	8,138	11,726	9,509	12,500	6.6%
0501432 Electricity	7,500	10,256	10,700	9,964	11,500	7.5%
0501433 Trash	980	959	1,000	956	1,440	44.0%
0501434 Water/City Utilities	2,000	4,114	2,200	1,006	1,340	-39.1%
0501435 Water Softener	100	73	0	33	120	
Total 0501430 Utilities	17,080	23,539	25,626	21,468	26,900	5.0%
0501440 Insurance Expense						
0501441 Workers Comp	2,000	1,904	2,000	2,099	2,000	0.0%
0501442 Property Liability	30,780	33,338	39,706	41,449	49,600	24.9%
Total 0501440 Insurance Expense	32,780	35,242	41,706	43,548	51,600	23.7%
Total 008 Building Operations	107,978	94,149	127,032	128,682	146,300	15.2%

First UCC Northfield 2024 Budget As Proposed by Trustees and Church Council	2022 Budget	Actual 2022	2023 Budget	Actual 2023	Proposed 2024 Budget	% Increase
009 Program Operations						
0501500 Committee & Program						
0501501 Worship	2,000	1,998	2,000	2,496	3,200	60.0%
0501502 Music	1,750	1,747	1,750	2,067	1,750	0.0%
0501503 Hospitality	600	1,364	3,000	2,906	3,000	0.0%
0501504 Adult Faith Formation	500	555	500	686	500	0.0%
0501505 Children, Youth, Confirmation	7,500	2,810	6,000	3,129	5,000	-16.7%
0501506 Stewardship	2,000	50	500	258	500	0.0%
0501507 Annual Meeting Delegates	500	828	900		900	0.0%
0501508 Membership	250	170	250	86	250	0.0%
0501509 Congregational Care	250	1,050	1,000	435	1,200	20.0%
0501510 Misc Committee & Program	300	1,575	500		500	0.0%
Total 0501500 Committee & Program	15,650	12,147	16,400	12,062	16,800	2.4%
Total 0501600 Dues, Subscriptions, Licenses	13,240	7,120	14,960	8,081	14,960	0.0%
Total 0501700 Charitable Contributions	7,000	13,650	12,000	9,000	12,000	0.0%
Total 009 Program Operations	35,890	32,917	43,360	29,143	43,760	0.9%
0501800 Interest Expense				98		
Total Expenses	541,181	499,299	562,196	539,271	603,304	7.3%
Net Operating Income	6,615	77,681	2,095	26,543	74	

Report of the Director of Music

Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear that music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul –
How can I keep from singing?

These words, which come from one of our church's most beloved hymns (see #476 in The New Century Hymnal), are sung to a melody entitled "Endless Song." What better way to encapsulate this year in our church than by acknowledging the music that, even in tumultuous times, never fails to lift our spirits? I hope that in the year to come music continues to find an echo in your soul and in your voice as well.

Theo Wee, our organist since 1969 and our choirmaster for nearly 35 years as well, played her last service (and what a service it was!) with us on June 11, followed by root beer floats on the front lawn and much fond rejoicing for her 54 years of dedicated artistry. Our good fortune in having her with us for so long has been matched by yet more good fortune in the form of Catherine Rodland, who arrived in September as our new organist. A member of the St. Olaf music faculty and a frequent performer of concerts around the nation, Cathy brings deep talent, local connections, and collaborative generosity to her role, and it is a delight to work with her in shaping and enriching the church's musical life. I am grateful to Pam Carlson, Jay Zoller, Shana Hodel, and Jane Turpin Moore, who filled in at the organ and piano over the summer, in between Theo's departure and Cathy's arrival. Thanks as well to my fellow committee members - Marty Hodel, Carrie Melby, Ben Gottfried, Mary Savina, and my colleagues Cindy Maddox and Bob Gregory-Bjorklund; we call ourselves the Organizers - who brought our search for a new organist to a successful conclusion.

In 2023 we continued a program from the previous year: payment for the use in worship of African-American spirituals, whose unknown composers never received compensation for their creations. As a form of musical reparations, our church's payments are meant to ensure direct support for local Black musicians and are thus being sent to Sounds of Blackness, the multiple-Grammy-winning ensemble based in the Twin Cities.

On December 10 the Senior Choir shared its annual chorapalooza. This year's theme was Peace on Earth, featuring several guest musicians from St. Olaf and anthems by Sasha Johnson Manning, Felix Mendelssohn, Errollyn Wallen, G.F. Handel, and John Gardner. Another annual tradition is the welcoming of other musicians and groups into worship. The Spirit Voices were joined by Lori Dokken and Steve Jennings on January 15 and by the Laura Baker Choir on May 21; the Northfield Wind Quintet (including our own Kathy Szydlo) performed on July 30; and the Northfield Handbell Choir performed on May 7 and November 12. It's worth celebrating the

fact that our church's handbells, acquired in 2003, are now 20 years old! (Thanks to Scott Richardson and Margit Carson Johnson for noting that fact along with many others about the musical life of our church in the book they created this year, *Our History Continues: The History of First United Church of Christ Northfield, 1965-2022*.) As it has for many years, First UCC also hosted one of the Northfield Noontime Organ Recitals on August 2 with Stephen May on the bench.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any church, and that is particularly true in the realm of music. My thanks go to the steadfast members of the Senior Choir and the Spirit Voices, without whom our church would be much less united in song and in spirit. Thanks as well to all the vocal and instrumental soloists from the congregation and the community who have contributed their talents this year: Annika Reister, Andrea Een, Mark and Holly Fischer, David Hougen-Eitzman, Kathy Szydlo, Donna McMillan, Brian Borovsky, Myrtle Lemon-Todd, Kathy Kanazawa, Kay Sahlin, Anne Sawyer, Joey Heinz, Marty Hodel, Janet Muth, Tom Niemisto, Ben Reister, Amelia McNeil-Maddox, Henry Beimers, William Beimers, Cate Carson, Caroline Flaten, and Faiz Wareh. And thanks to everyone in the congregation who joins in on the hymns and the service music. Keep it up!

Last and not least in the least, my thanks go to my talented, thoughtful, and generous colleagues: Theo Wee and Cathy Rodland at the organ, Bob Gregory-Bjorklund with Spirit Voices and much else, Brynn Artley at the audio and video controls every week, and Mark Fischer with his ear for a well-tuned piano. I am so grateful for Cindy Maddox and Lauren Baske Davis: not every director of music is lucky enough to enjoy such a fruitful collaboration with clergy who know about and care about music in worship.

Music is a gift from God to all of us, and the best way to enjoy that gift is to give it right back and to share it with each other. Come share your gifts.

Christopher Brunelle, Director of Music

Report of the Office Manager and Director of Communications

Thank you all for welcoming me so warmly into the First UCC family. I have greatly enjoyed my time here and am learning so much! I began my role as Office Manager and Director of Communications in mid-February 2022 and sprung into action learning the infinite number of duties and responsibilities that this position entails.

The summer months in the office were relaxed and allowed me the time and flexibility to learn the ropes and experiment with new organizational tools. Highlights of the summer included Pride in the Park, Theo Wee's retirement party, and several performances by local musicians. The re-shingling project began in May and we opened the Big Room up to the Northfield Narcotics Anonymous (NA) group that continues to meet weekly on Thursday nights.

The fall brought back many church groups including WFFF, OWL, Youth Group, and many book discussions. Larger planned projects began, including the installation of cameras around the church and rekeying the building. We also welcomed our new organist, Catherine Rodland, in September. We're delighted to have her at First UCC!

This Christmas season was full of hustle and bustle from all members of the staff and many congregants. December 24, 2023 showed the largest Christmas group in the past few years with a total of 504 people attending over all three services - either in-person or virtually. It has since slowed down and it seems as though everyone is reluctantly settling into the new year - both excited and suspicious about what lies ahead.

I have greatly enjoyed working closely with many justice team, committee, and church members including Judy Bond, Bill Bruihler, Sue Evans, Muriel Hachfeld, Randy Hachfeld, Jean Haslett, Jennifer Cox-Johnson, Margit Johnson, Annie Kramer, Nalani McCutcheon, Jackie McNiel, Elizabeth Olson, Jim Rafferty, Scott Richardson, Matthew Rohn, Kathy Sandberg, Bill Szydlo, Gina Washburn, and many others.

I am delighted to be here and to work closely with my colleagues: Pastor Cindy Maddox, Pastor Lauren Baske Davis, Derek Melby, Christopher Brunelle, Bob Gregory-Bjorklund, Catherine Rodland, and Mark Fischer. Many thanks to all!

I look forward to future projects and continuing to build relationships with current and future members of the church.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathryn (Kate) Kvasnak

Ministry Reports

Beyond Land Acknowledgement Team

Members: Nancy Carpenter, Barbara Crouter, Dick Crouter, Holly Fischer, Dorothea Hrossowyc, Margit Johnson, Linda Larson, Dean Paxton, Matt Rohn, Mary Savina, Gary Wagenbach

The congregation adopted a First UCC Land Acknowledgement statement in January 2022. The statement is framed and exhibited near the east door. As of September, a lawn sign that states “We Stand on Dakota Land” was added to our front lawn. Additional signs are appearing in front of other churches in town.

Throughout the year articles in the Social Justice Covenant Newsletter have featured resources and opportunities to learn more about and listen carefully to Indigenous voices and perspectives. Numerous books, podcasts, websites, art exhibits, and sites to visit were cited.

Dorothea Hrossowyc, Holly Fischer and Pastor Cindy led a Lenten reflection service of lament in March - a moment to share grief about the Indigenous people who lived here and suffered ethnic cleansing, forced removal, suffering and death.

During the legislative session the team lobbied our elected state representatives about bills related to programs for urban and rural Indigenous Minnesotans.

In May, former First UCC Northfield Minister and retired Conference Minister David McMahon spoke about the mission and contours of Congregationalism during the time of our church’s founding in 1855.

Throughout the summer the Beyond Land Acknowledgement team offered semi-monthly “field trips” to the MN History Center, Jeffers Petroglyphs, Red Wing’s He Mni Can/Barn Bluff, Historic Fort Snelling, Bdote, Shakopee Hočokata ti, and the Cannon River crossing at Waterford in the Lower Arb along a probable Dakota trail.

In July Senior Pastor Cindy and the team invited community members supportive of land acknowledgement statements to convene and discuss ways that we can share information, ideas and resources to support Indigenous people.

David Garelick of the Indian Land Trust Foundation spoke in December at a community forum about supporting American Indian nations and people in the recovery and control of their rightful homelands.

Anyone interested in supporting our ongoing efforts may contact Dorothea Hrossowyc at hrossowyc@gmail.com or Margit Johnson at margit@usfamily.net.

–Submitted by Margit Johnson

Immigrant Welcoming Ministry Team: 2023 Highlights for a Year of Abundance

A second year of advocacy on behalf of the residents of Viking Terrace has resulted in keeping the oppressive owner from evicting and displacing residents. This fall, Lakeshore was hit with a class action complaint for violating Federal law for conspiracy to price fix rents. In November, many members participated in a prayer walk through Viking Terrace organized by United Methodist Pastor Rachel Morey. A petition was circulated that day and to other churches and organizations, garnering over 200 signatures for Lakeshore to sell the park to the residents. An offer to buy the park to turn it into a resident-owned cooperative was sent to the company Lakeshore in early December.

We secured funding from Northfield's Housing and Redevelopment Authority to assist Viking mobile home owners with needed repairs, specifically installing window film and heat tape for winter weatherization and distributed smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

First UCC members participated in a day of labor with Rice County Habitat for Humanity building homes in Faribault for families from Somalia and Ethiopia.

Our church donated \$1,000 to Habitat for Humanity this year and \$500 to the migrant sanctuary House of Mercy in Nogales, Mexico.

We chose to help a family from Peru seeking asylum. Members have housed the family, provided transportation, food and medical needs, English language sessions and so much more throughout this year. A Special Offering was successful in raising over \$13,000 to support asylum-seeking families.

We lobbied and were successful in passage of law allowing for undocumented persons to obtain their driver's licenses and our Peruvian father got his.

Members spent a day learning and working at Regi and Amy Haslett Marroquin's Regenerative Agriculture farms.

We volunteered to help settle Afghan refugees in the Metro area.

After witnessing migrant conditions at the U.S. border, First UCC's members attended a lecture to learn how to become involved in this national tragedy. This information was also presented at St. John's Courageous Conversations and at the district meeting of the United Methodist River Valley Women in Faith.

Children's Spanish language books were distributed to Viking Terrace's Little Library.

This fall members volunteered to refurbish an abandoned house for the Valdez family - The Starfish Project. Starfish has been adopted as a program of Rice County Habitat and plans are underway for a second home to be worked on in 2024.

—Submitted by Gina Washburn

Creation Justice Team

In 2023, we spent much of our time looking into whether First UCC should covenant to become a Creation Justice church. Becoming a Creation Justice church formalizes and strengthens our mission to seek “justice for all of God’s creation.” Our team’s preparation for a congregation-wide vote has involved research and deep discernment on our part. In consultation with our pastors, we made a recommendation to Council that the church go forward with the formal processes involved. Council has agreed. We have been educating the congregation about creation justice, and members will vote at the 2024 Annual Meeting on whether or not to pursue this. As a result of our discernment, we have changed our team’s name from Creation Care to Creation Justice.

Our initial form of education on this was a three-week series in October led by Mary Savina. She directed participants in a discussion of UCC Minister for Environmental Justice, Brooks Berndt’s book *Cathedral on Fire*. These discussions followed a Sunday when Pastor Cindy delivered a moving environmental justice-themed sermon. Some thirty people attended one or more of the book discussions.

We have continued our zero-waste efforts and have been delighted this year to see ever-increasing, tangible results. Various people from adults to youth have begun to see the value of composting, growing comfortable with our practicing it at the church, and have increasingly taken the initiative to make it happen. Thanks to a very generous anonymous donation, the church found it possible to start purchasing new receptacles that make recycling and composting clearer and better. We now have compost pick-up service with Curbside Compost Cooperative and fill their 35 gallon institutional bin nearly every week. These organics now become usable

soil without creating the global warming gas, methane, that this material would generate at the landfill.

We ended 2022 answering a request from Mayflower Church for our congregation to formally vote to become one of the five in the Minnesota Conference needed for a version of the 2022 Minnesota Annual Conference “electrification” resolution to be considered at the UCC General Synod. The proposed resolution passed in 2023. Increasingly, electric power is generated from carbon-free sources, so this resolution calls on churches to plan ahead. Congregations are also asked to educate congregants to do this planning and make conversions to electrical power sources at home. We held a WFFF education workshop on this for congregants, used a Covenant article to promote it, and have been working with the Facilities Committee. With our help, the committee has been pursuing the resolution's call while also exploring other innovative means to make the church carbon-free as soon as possible.

Late in the summer, we offered congregants the chance to participate in the national UCC environmental justice Cards of Hope campaign. Nearly 200 congregants (almost everyone in attendance at two services) joined others nation-wide (some ten-thousand people) in petitioning the EPA to strengthen about a dozen regulations coming up for review.

–Submitted by Matt Rohn and Mary Savina

Open and Affirming Ministry Team

Members: Muriel Hachfeld, Joan Higinbotham, Linda Larson, Julie Maxson, Nalani McCutcheon, Jackie McNeil, Charlotte Melin, Anne Meyer Ruppel, Kathy Sandberg

During 2023, the Open and Affirming Ministry group hosted information sharing and discussion sessions including a brief history of gender in America (Jackie McNeil), understanding gender fluidity and transgender (Outfront Minnesota), and LGBTQ themes in children's, teen's, and adult books.

ONA also participated in community efforts including Pride in the Park and the U.N. International Day of Peace. ONA is an ongoing partner with Northfield Pride and provided space and set up for the group's first social gathering.

The group also adopted the church's theme of storytelling in its Covenant articles with members sharing their stories as LGBTQ+ people or as allies (parents, siblings, friends, etc.). Covenant articles have also shared information about policy issues affecting queer and transgender folks.

Finally, the group is committed to ongoing education, actions supporting the LGBTQ+ community and expansion of the ONA membership. The group is pleased and honored to be welcomed and well-supported by the members of First United Church of Christ, Northfield, and welcomes any and all feedback and questions.

–Submitted by Kathy Sandberg

Racial Justice Team

We are currently seeking a new person to lead our Racial Justice Team.

ISAIAH

Our congregation belongs to ISAIAH, a Minnesota faith-based coalition that works for a multi-racial democracy and an economy where everyone can thrive. This year many people in our congregation participated in our work with our chief contact people being Leota Goodney and Matt Rohn. Pastor Lauren and Pastor Cindy have provided support and continue to call us into action “to do justice, act with loving kindness and walk humbly ...” Micah 6:8.

Early in the year, ISAIAH at First UCC focused our efforts on the legislative session at the State Capitol. We joined other ISAIAH members in southern Minnesota and met weekly for updates from the ISAIAH-affiliated legislators representing Northfield, Rochester, and St. Peter. They provided updates on the status of bills and issues. A group of 35 from Northfield went to the state capitol in March to meet with legislators and advocate for housing, health care, child care, and paid family leave.

ISAIAH MN, in cooperation with other groups and allied legislators, was instrumental in getting a wide array of legislation passed that will improve people’s lives. Legislation passed includes 100% clean energy, paid family and medical leave, money for childcare, a start on improving the health care system, driver’s licenses for people without US papers, funding for housing, and much more.

Members of our congregation attended various statewide ISAIAH events including monthly central leadership team meetings to plan the actions of the organization. Several members of the congregation were part of a leadership assembly in June where we celebrated the successes of the legislative session and prepared for the work ahead. We also had a local celebration in Odd Fellows Park and brainstormed what needs to happen next.

Locally ISAIAH Northfield held several house meetings and forums, including a forum in our sanctuary to gather ideas and information about where we need to put our efforts next. We held a listening session with Representative Kristi Prusell in November where we talked about

transportation, health care, gun violence, housing and environmental issues. This was part of a statewide effort which involved over 5,600 individuals.

All of this listening work culminated in a statewide session in December attended by four people from our congregation. We reviewed a revised values agenda laying out our overall goals for a multi-racial democracy where everyone has a voice and an economy that supports everyone. We discussed the specific priorities for the next 18 months and the plan of action.

In December ISAIAH Northfield led a forum with five legislators to learn more about and support the MN health public option.

Members of our congregation are working with the ISAIAH Rural Organizing Project, led by Todd Lippert. This effort is to support people in rural Minnesota in advocating locally and at the state level for clean water, soil health, child care, health care, housing, and other issues that are important to their rural community. This effort includes research visits with County and City leaders and is ongoing.

–Submitted by the First UCC Northfield ISAIAH Leadership Team

Special Functions

Members: Sarah Dennet, Garda Kahn, Sheri McNally, Jan Mitchell, Connie Nuebel, Bobbie Peterson, Janette Stromley, Linda Wagenbach

The Special Functions Committee assisted with the lunches after memorial services for four (4) people. Many rotating volunteers assist in providing desserts and helping to service at these events. Thank you to each of you! Our group also regularly checks and cleans the church kitchen.

At the end of 2022 and into 2023 we were able to participate with the church in funding the new coffee making system. This was a significant purchase and upgrade for the church kitchen that makes it faster and much easier to brew large amounts of coffee. We no longer carry heavy pots of water and wait nearly an hour for percolators to perform! Thank you to Sarah Dennett, Hans Muessig, Sue Evans and Annie Kramer who have been especially steadfast in seeing this project through from imagining it to helping us all learn to use it.

–Submitted by Bobbie Peterson, Chair

Membership Team

Members: Marsha Kitchel, Pat Kriesel, Jean Haslett

Team members maintained the “Welcome Pads” with Welcome Pad inserts (ordered from Carleton College Print Shop), Prayer Request forms, blank name tags, and pencils. After worship, “Welcome Pad” pages with entries of worshipers were collected each week by two ushers. Visitors and potential members (Friends) were recorded in the computer database (currently Breeze) by the Office Manager, who notified Pastor Cindy of first-time visitors, to whom Pastor Cindy sent notes. Emails were sent to first-time visiting St. Olaf and Carleton students.

When requested, name tags were prepared by the Office Manager for members and frequent visitors.

The estimated attendance figures for Zoom worship services were derived by Jean Haslett from screenshots sent by Brynn Artley and forwarded to the Office Manager along with the names of any Visitors and Friends attending via Zoom to be recorded in Breeze. The current procedure relating to visitors is: Pastor Cindy sends a note for first-time visitors and the Membership Team sends a letter with a First UCC brochure and magnet after the third visit.

New Member Sundays were held during the Worship Service on May 21 and December 10: Darlene Antony & Laurie Deibert, Roger & Joan Lindholm, Margaret Huber, Paul Thiboutot & Diana Postlethwaite, Andrea & Brain Perry, Michael & Jessica Provanca, Carol Reed & Dan McMahon, Polly Martin, and Amy & Sophia Weed.

Two weeks prior to each New Member Sunday a Membership Orientation meeting led by one of the Pastors was held after worship. Sponsors were recruited for those planning to join. Photographs of the new members were taken by Hans Muessig and displayed in the New Member photo frame that is mounted on the bulletin board in the hallway near the entrance to the Assembly Room.

Although attending a Connect group is not a requirement for becoming a member, potential new members as well as current members and friends were encouraged via reminder emails to attend a Connect group. These groups are a wonderful way to have meaningful conversations and get to know a few people well.

We did not send any letters asking about retiring memberships. We plan to do some screening of the rolls in early 2024 in case there are members who wish to retire their membership.

—Submitted by Jean Haslett

Prayer Shawl Knitting Ministry

The Prayer Shawl Ministry gathers monthly during the school year. A prayer shawl is intended to be a reminder of God's ever present love. It is a gift for every occasion - joyful or sorrowful. Come join us as we knit for those we care about!

Prayer shawls are distributed by the Care Team. Each shawl is placed in a gift bag with a special note and finds its way to those who are ill, isolated and lonely, dealing with grief, facing surgery or in hospice, etc. Many people have given memorial money to assist in buying yarn for our projects. Jean Haslett has been diligent in finding yarn on sale for our shawls. We welcome monetary gifts to assist in buying the yarn! We encourage and welcome new people to join us!!

—Submitted by Elizabeth Hankins

Care Ministry Team

The Care Ministry Team at First UCC is a group of people dedicated to being God's feet, hands, heart and mind to all people in our church community. We seek to increase awareness of and witness to one another's struggles, foster connection among people, and provide ways for mutual support. The Care Team's mission continues to guide and direct our ministry.

The Care Team has continued to reach out to our church family through phone calls, visits and cards. Thanks to the ministry and beautiful work of the Knitters Group, we have been able to give out fifty (50) prayer shawls in 2023. Recipients of the prayer shawls are so touched and comforted by this special gift. The knitters make each shawl with love and prayers added to each one.

We have coordinated the delivery of over fifty (50) meals prepared by many people in our congregation and given about forty (40) rides to appointments and other activities. We have delivered groceries and other supplies to those unable to get out themselves. The Care Team has sent out 134 cards of appreciation, support and encouragement to different groups and ministry teams in our church.

We are grateful for all the ways our church community is strengthening and encouraging one another. If you or someone you know would like to connect with someone from the Care Team, please contact the Team by calling the Church Office or contact us through email: careteam@firstucc.org.

—Submitted by Linda Larson

Meals on Wheels

In 2023, First UCC completed five weeks of meal delivery for Northfield's Meals on Wheels program - a new record for us! Seventy-seven (77) routes were assigned to us and twenty-three (23) individual volunteers offered their time to cover these routes. The generous spirit of our volunteers is greatly appreciated!

—Submitted by Sue Evans and Annie Kramer

Landscaping Taskforce

Once the 2023 reroofing project was completed in June, the landscaping/gardening task force cleaned up all the gardens then re-mulched them. In fall the team replaced five grasses and a chokecherry bush plus trimmed trees and shrubs. Throughout the year Ed Langerak and Pat Malecha, our current lawn care person, kept a vigilant eye out for the occasional weed. The volunteers included: Tom Gagnon, Randy Hachfeld, Annie Kramer, Ed Langerak, Derek Melby, Dean Merrill, Leona Oppenshaw, MaryAnn Polley, and Bill and Kathy Szydlo. Margit Johnson continued her loving care and took pictures of the Memorial Garden.

—Submitted by Elizabeth Beery Olson

Middle & High School Youth Group

The Middle and High School Youth Group met regularly on Sunday mornings throughout the school year in 2023. Led by Jami Reister, the 6-12th grade students participated in community-building activities and once-monthly all-ages Service Sunday projects.

The group again utilized the Sparkhouse Re:form Ancestors curriculum and also enjoyed spending time with church members during our Congregational Connection days. During these gatherings, we learned a skill or hobby taught to us by a member of our congregation. We greatly appreciate this intergenerational opportunity to connect with our church family.

—Submitted by Jami Reister

Standing Committees of the Council

Facilities Committee

This year has been very busy and challenging for the Facilities committee.

Water damage repairs

The year began with repairs to Room 127. This classroom was damaged due to a water leak in 2022. The repairs included replacing drywall, trim, baseboard as well as painting the repaired items and parts of the ceiling.

Ceiling fans

The ceiling fans that were ordered in early 2022 were finally located from the vendor but turned out to not be suitable for our needs. We researched various models and have selected ones that will fit our needs in the Sanctuary. An installation date is still pending.

Steeple and bricks

In March brick fragments were noticed by the steeple entrance door. The cause of these fragments was loose brick on the sloped sections of the Southeast corner of the steeple. After consulting with various vendors and an architect it has been determined that the Southeast corner of the steeple is separating from the rest of the structure and will need to be addressed in the next few years. The cause is water permeating the brick and mortar.

A contractor was brought in to repair the loose brick as well as provide a temporary fix to the column. We have addressed the issue for the time being but within the next few years this corner will need to be rebuilt. We don't have a definite timeline as we have to see what develops with the repairs we have done.

While we are on the topic of bricks it should also be noted that the brick facades on the old portion of the building will need some tuck pointing as well as some brick replacing. There is no timeline for this work as we are developing a long-range plan to maintain the brickwork.

Lawn care

During the Spring we switched providers for our lawn care as well as our snow removal. We were very pleased with Malecha Landscaping for their work on our property. It should be noted that 90% of the work done by Malecha Landscaping utilizes electric/battery operated equipment.

Roof replacement

Our roofs (both sloped and flat) were damaged by a hail storm on April 12, 2022. In May of 2023 we began the first phase of the roofing project, which included removing the solar panels

and replacing the shingles on all the sloped portions of the roof including the steeple tower. This part of the project went well and was completed in May. There was some collateral damage to some screens and our retaining wall which was addressed.

Due to negotiating delays the second phase of the project - replacing the flat roofs - was not able to be completed before the cold weather moved in. The replacement of the flat roofs and the replacement of the gutters will happen during the Spring of 2024. The plan is to have the roofing replacement completed by next Summer.

Solar panels

The solar panels were removed in May to enable replacing the roof shingles. The panels and their inverters were originally installed in late 2014. In 2016 one third of the panels stopped functioning. In early 2017 the company that manufactured the inverters, tenK, went out of business. Initially the conjecture at the time was that the malfunctioning panels were caused by faulty inverters. Since the company that manufactured the inverters was no longer in business it was decided that the cost to investigate the cause of the failures was prohibitive.

When the panels were removed and inspected it was discovered that a squirrel had chewed through some of the inverter wires causing the failure. Since the roof replacement is ongoing and we are still negotiating with insurance, a final decision on the future of the panels will be coming sometime in the Spring. Currently the panels and all the components are safely stored waiting for our final decision.

Safety and Security items

This year we installed a number of safety items around the church including: severe weather signs, "No Exit" signs, first aid kit location sign, door numbers (both outside and inside) and glass panels to Pastor Cindy's and Pastor Lauren's office doors.

A component of improving the safety and security of our building involved considerable research for a new keyless entry system and three security cameras. We secured four estimates and decided to utilize Custom Alarm from Rochester, MN.

Over the years a considerable amount of keys have been given out to the church's outside doors. There were several unsuccessful attempts to recover or account for all of them. Considering the number of people that would potentially have access to the building we decided that a keyless entry system would be our best solution.

A card reader and keypad will be located on the handicap access pedestal by the office doors and another will be located by the Daycare door. Either key fobs or cards will be issued to individuals who need access. The advantage of this system will be that we can easily program when

individual cards will have access and the programming can be easily changed. In addition we have rekeyed the outside doors so old keys will not work. The old keys will still work on the inside doors. As part of this process we have begun looking into our policies regarding building access in addition to looking at our agreements with various groups who use our facilities.

As an additional security precaution we have installed three security cameras. One is located by the office doors looking over the parking lot entry path to those doors. Another is located above Pastor Cindy's office windows overlooking the rest of the parking lot and the third is on the East wall, above Pastor Cindy's windows overlooking the main entrance.

In addition, we will be replacing the Daycare entry door with a commercial door. This door has been in pretty bad shape and needed to be replaced.

The security cameras were installed in December 2023 with the rest of the items scheduled for installation in January, 2024.

In July we had a full fire inspection. It had been many years since the last inspection and as could be expected we had some issues. We have remedied a lot of the faults which included extending the Fire Department Connection (FDC) access pipe on the North side of the building, replacing FDC alarm/strobe, replacing all the exit signs with exit/lighted signs, adding occupancy limit signs, adding new signs for electrical room and sprinkler room, completing a sprinkler inspection, completing a 5 year hydrostatic sprinkler inspection, adding a Knox box to the North door, adding 4 additional smoke detectors, adding a monitoring panel for concealed duct smoke detectors, clearing landscaping by door 3, and removing four fire pulls.

Items still to be completed in January 2024 are rehang a fire door that would not close, completing a fire monitoring system inspection, mapping of all the smoke detectors in the building, adding door closure mechanisms to storage room doors, and conducting a final fire inspection.

Rooftop air conditioner

While the rooftop air conditioning unit continues to provide some challenges it functioned well during the past summer. This unit provides cooling for the Assembly Room and the Sanctuary. There was one Sunday when it was not functioning but we were able to troubleshoot the problem and remedy it fairly quickly.

Preparations for winter

Our committee had an October work morning this year when we attended to numerous items preparing our building for the colder months. We stored the green plastic chairs in the storage room, removed the screens from the Memorial Garden windows, checked all the various HVAC

filters, cleaned and started the air purifiers, modified the heating schedule in the building (we are reducing the temperature at night) to save energy and moved the bike racks to winter storage.

We also reviewed all our maintenance commitments and evaluated them based on cost and value. We continue to utilize some of the providers while others were not renewed and replaced.

Additional maintenance items

In addition, throughout the year there were numerous maintenance needs such as cleaning and changing filters on the electric furnaces, AC unit, air exchanger, lower level dehumidifier and air purifiers. There were also repairs to the lower level dehumidifier, interior and exterior outlets, modifying kitchen sink cabinet for rodent control, replacing a lawn pop up cover, boiler repair, and adding an expansion tank to the water heater.

Long term planning

Our committee also began planning for the future needs of our building and congregation. We have developed both a short and long term budget for the consideration of the Trustees. Many items have been identified that will need to be addressed over the next ten years. Considering the age of the building and the ongoing needs for capital improvements as well as maintenance we hope our initial planning will begin to outline a path forward.

The committee continues to be prudent in its use of its gracious resources, grateful for the members who volunteer on the committee or help along the way, and humble in serving this special place of worship.

–Submitted by Bill Szydlo

Stewardship Committee

Members: Elise Eslinger, Marie Gery, Brad Hoff, Annika Reister, Scott Richardson, and Pastor Cindy Maddox

The Stewardship Committee met in September to plan for the 2023 campaign. The theme this year was: “Because of you, our church changes lives.” We wanted to reinforce the idea that our ministries do make a difference in the church, the local community, and beyond. We identified messages for letters that went out to our congregants and for the inserts that appeared in the Sunday bulletins during the month of October. We also used photos of our children and selected graphics to support our theme.

During Sundays in October, we invited several members of the congregation to speak from the pulpit about how our church has made a difference in their lives. We thank Scott Richardson, Roger Lindholm, Julie Maxson, and Paul Thiboutot for sharing their stories.

Following the close of the campaign, we reached out to our members, thanking them for continuing to support First UCC and the many ministries that do change lives.

–Submitted by Scott Richardson

Nominating Committee

Members: Patsy Dew, Deb Gottfried, Margit Johnson, Pastor Lauren Baske Davis

The Nominating Committee worked from September through December to identify individuals for specific leadership positions on our standing committees. Email and phone call outreach was made to individuals to gauge interest and availability. Follow-up emails and calls were made to ensure they were still available to start in late January 2024 and that they were clear about their role and commitment details (meeting dates and times, congregational meeting processes, etc.). “Thank You” notes were sent to those that were ending service and going off committees.

Our nominees for the coming year are (new nominees and/or new positions are in **bold**):

Council (7)

- Moderator: Anne Meyer-Ruppel (2024 - term ends Jan 25)
- Vice Moderator: **Marty Hodel** (2024 - term ends Jan 25; moderator 25 - term ends Jan 26)
- Treasurer: Dan Neuger (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)
- Clerk: Anne Sawyer Heniz (2022, 23, 24 - term ends Jan 25)

At-Large Members - 3 years

- **Betsy Barrett** (2024, 25, 26 - term ends Jan 27)
- Steven Reuter (2022, 23, 24 - term ends Jan 25)
- Gretchen Gillis (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)

Trustees (6) - 3 years

- Treasurer: Dan Neuger (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)
- Fred Rogers (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)
- **Leota Goodney** (2024, 25, 26 - term ends Jan 27)
- Nancy Johnson-Maloney (2022, 23, 24 - term ends Jan 25)
- Randy Hachfeld (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)

- Fred Blaisdell (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)

Facilities (6) - 3 years

- **Laura Turek** (2024, 25, 26 - term ends Jan 27)
- Joan Higinbotham (2022, 23, 24 - term ends Jan 25)
- Dean Paxton (2022, 23, 24 - term ends Jan 25)
- Bill Szydlo (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)
- Derek Melby (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)

Stewardship (4) - 3 years

- **Shawn Nuebel** (2024, 25, 26 - term ends Jan 27)
- Brad Hoff (2024, 25, 26 - term ends Jan 27; second 3-year term)
- Annika Reister (2022, 23, 24 - term ends Jan 25)
- Marie Gery (2022, 23, 24 - term ends Jan 25)
- Scott Richardson (2023, 24, 25 - term ends Jan 26)

Nominating (3) - 2 years

- Patsy Dew (2023, 24 - term ends Jan 25)
- Deb Gottfried (2023, 24 - term ends Jan 25)
- + Council Representative (2024)