



First United Presbyterian Church Annual Report 2024

Mission

Called to be a light on the hill, we boldly proclaim and serve Christ, the Hope of our changing world.

Vision

Reaching out as a visible expression of God's grace, we will meet people where they are, inviting all into Christ's family through engaging worship, fellowship, learning, and service.

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Core Values with Guiding Scripture

Inspiring Worship

Prayerfully praising God together and being touched and changed by the Spirit. O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Psalm 105:1-3.

Spiritual Growth

Encouraging lifelong growth by prayerfully studying scripture, the Christian faith, and the world around us. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7.

Loving Relationships

Nurturing connections and deepening friendships in a joyful environment. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11.

Faithful Service

Working together to reflect and demonstrate God's love to all people. Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 1 John 3:18.

Generous Stewardship

Sharing our gifts, caring for the earth and community, and cultivating our resources for God's purposes. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. II Corinthians 9:8.

Welcoming Community

Striving to be an inviting, caring, and supportive Christian family. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also ourselves, because you have become dear to us. I Thessalonians 2:8.

Intentional Unity

Seeking common ground to bridge divides in church, community, and culture. Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3.

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Letter from Co-Pastors Phil and Jan Butin

We thank our God in all our remembrance of you, always in every prayer of ours for you, making our prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now....” (Philippians 1:3-5)

2024 has been a year of significant changes and transitions, prayerful refinement of our congregation’s long-range goals, and the embrace of important new initiatives toward accomplishing those goals.

As always, the heart of our life together has been our Sunday worship. Blessed by the strong music leadership and piano skills of Isaac Thomas, the organ and piano gifts of Hyun Kim, the choral accompanist gifts of Xiao Yang, a musically versatile team of college interns, and members deeply dedicated to choral and handbell ministries, music has been the highlight of each worship service. Since 2010, our worship has gradually reflected an intentional blend of traditional and contemporary styles, organized around a clear weekly worship theme based on the season’s scriptures. All ages lead us—whether through a call to worship, a prayer, the peace, a children’s message, a mission moment, or personal stories of God’s nearness. Through the years, this thematic approach to worship has become very meaningful. Through the spring and fall, we continued lively and interactive Sunday afternoon contemporary “Third Worship” (on third Sundays), supported by a band comprised of our college interns and high school and college students, and under Isaac’s guidance. We were also able to provide Butterfield Trail Village Vespers and resume Monthly Communion services there post-pandemic.

In January, our Epiphany worship theme was “God Has Spoken in Jesus,” based on the book of Hebrews. In Lent we focused on biblical qualities that help us move through difficult experiences to a deepening trust in God in a series called “Out of the Ashes.” We delved into a variety of Easter themes. Then our “Holy Moses” series highlighted primary sections of the book of Exodus. With the start of the fall, we asked, “What Are We Searching For?” and considered how a trusting relationship with God can fulfill our deepest longings. Our Stewardship theme was “Relying on God’s Faithfulness.” We experienced a quieter Advent/Christmas with “Into the Stillness, a Savior,” exploring how many of the main characters in the traditional seasonal texts help us welcome God’s deeper presence in our daily lives.

Laura Winburn, our beloved Financial Administrator, who served FUPC since 1999, retired after closing out our 2022 financial records in the first quarter of the year. Stacey Luebker was hired in this important position and has learned and assumed the responsibilities quickly and conscientiously. Laura graciously continued to train and support Stacey in all the complexities of the church’s finances throughout the year, with treasurer Tom Verdery also taking a major role in supporting this transition.

Amanda McDonald accepted our call to serve as our Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries in February, driving from Pine Bluff one Sunday each month through the Spring, until she and her family were able to move to Fayetteville on June 1. She has rapidly become an integral part of our church family and leadership. Amanda is currently an inquirer with the presbytery, preparing for pastoral ministry through the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

Over the summer, Hyun Kim, who served as a talented and dedicated organist and accompanist, accepted a university teaching position in Kansas City. She graciously continued to be our guest organist on a week-to-week basis through the end of the year, driving to her Bentonville home each weekend, and blessing us with wonderful keyboard support that inspired us.

Our Director of Music Ministries, Isaac Thomas, had previously served as a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) in another presbytery, so we were pleased to share in a glorious celebration on November 19 for his similar commissioning here by the Presbytery of Arkansas to serve in an enhanced position of “Minister of Music (CRE).”

At the end of August, our Office Manager, Tammi Kushner, resigned to attend to family needs. Church member Yesenia Nevarez graciously and professionally coordinated the work of the office as Interim Office Manager. In December, Elizabeth Wilkins Benham was welcomed to this important role, and has quickly earned the affection and respect of the congregation. Amy Rossetti and Amy McCann are also deeply appreciated in our office, in their respective roles as Communications Coordinator and Membership Coordinator, as is Audio/Visual Coordinator Chris Verdery who is here each weekend preparing for worship.

Throughout the fall, our Director of Christian Education, Kristi Button, continued to pursue training in Spiritual Direction at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. She completed the certification requirements in December. On January 1, 2024 she will be at FUPC for 15 years, coordinating everything educational from professional childcare with Mindy Mock to programing for children and adults.

The Outreach ministries of our church continued to be a major priority as we made commitments to provide meals and food supplies to combat food insecurity, supported and helped with the construction of a new block home for a retiring pastor in Honduras, and supported and participated in the work of community organizations seeking to empower those facing homelessness to gain employment and the ability to have a place of long term residence.

In pursuing “Our Course to 2030” (as we “sail” toward celebrating our 200th anniversary in six years), the Session continued to seek, discover, and implement best practices that enable congregations to flourish—to grow, attract, nurture, and serve younger generations after the dramatic changes in church participation that have followed the pandemic. We participated in a church revitalization cohort with leaders (pastors and elders) from some of the larger congregations in our presbytery, led by Rev. Jason Tucker, pastor of Tower Hill Presbyterian Church in Red Bank, NJ. Rev. In August, our Session invited Rev. Tucker to help us identify necessary changes that will enable us to reach our stated goals. We learned the concept of “pathways,” an approach to initiating needed changes by setting clear, achievable goals and then committing to specific and focused steps to achieve them. During the fall, to First School Director Cathy’s Hairston’s delight, we focused on the pathway of “Strengthening Connections with First School and Church Families” in line with our identified key result area of “Attracting, Nurturing, and Serving Younger Generations.” As pastors and staff who lead First School chapel experiences for our 150 preschoolers, we were present to meet, greet, and get acquainted with parents and children as they were dropped off or picked up, and to hand out cards encouraging family activities and conversations that reinforce chapel Bible stories at home. Special events like our outdoor “Fall Festival” with a band and a variety of fun family activities and “Celebration at the Manger” children’s Christmas program were well attended by church and First School families, and the love and concern shown by FUPC led to deepening interest in exploring additional church involvements among First School families. We are committed to continuing this pathway. A Session Task Force has also begun to develop plans to modify our Sunday morning schedule to include worship that would be specifically aimed toward the needs and expectations of younger generations.

After much prayer and reflection about what is best for the church, we let the Personnel ministry know a year ahead that we would like to retire on June 30, 2024. We have purchased a home about an hour from Chicago (where our son, daughter-in-law, and soon-to-be three granddaughters live) and will be mostly there to help as needed. We are prayerfully embracing this change and gearing up with elders, deacons, staff, and ministry teams for a positive and proactive transition to exciting new pastoral leadership here. These 14 years of shared ministry have been some of the most meaningful in our lives. We will always cherish wonderful memories of your partnership in the gospel. We count it all joy—what was done together with you here and what is yet ahead for you and for us. We are immensely grateful for each of you.

Our deepest thanks, *Phil and Jan*

FUPC Staff

Isaac Thomas, Minister of Music (CRE)
Xiao Yang, Choral Accompanist
Hyun Kim, Organist
Kristi Button, Director of Christian Education
Amanda McDonald, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
Christopher Verdery, Connor Button, and Drew Parker, Audio/Visual Team
Mindy Mock, Childcare Coordinator
Amy McCann, Membership Coordinator
Amy Rossetti, Communications Coordinator
Elizabeth Benham, Office Manager
Cathy Hairston, Director of First School

THE SESSION AND BOARD OF DEACONS

- 2023 Elders
- Clerk of Session Report
- Membership Changes
- Membership Update
- Our Session Structure
- 2023 Deacons
- Board of Deacons Report

Session Leadership

The FUPC Session is made up of 21 elders in three classes of seven members each.

Clerk of Session:

Roger Koeppe

Co-Moderators:

Revs. Phil and Jan Butin

Class of 2023

David Clay
Charles Cudney
Lupe Gonzalez
Cathy Henry
Don Johnson
Mark Power
Carol Van Scyoc

Class of 2024

Steve Adair
Lorraine Brewer
Shawn Daniels
Sara Eichmann
Howard Higgins
Frank Millett
Bo Morton (resigned 1/23)
Jane Steinkraus (began 9/23)

Class of 2025

Claudia Driver
Jim Gilbreath
Laurie Reh
Wendy Robbins
Leah Smith (resigned 7/23)
Rebecca Haden (began 8/23)
George Wardlow
Marti Woodruff

Clerk of Session

The Clerk of Session serves as clerk for the Session and secretary for congregational meetings. The Clerk is an ordained elder and is elected annually by the Session. Other duties of this position include:

- Coordinating Session meetings with the Co-Pastors to develop the agenda and identify matters requiring Session action, and to develop the consent agenda.
- Monitoring unfinished Session business and meeting Presbytery requirements.
- Working with the office staff to document information for church membership rolls and to maintain the records of the church.
- Submission of a Clerk's Report for Stated Session meetings that includes members received, transferred, removed, etc., and noting marriages, deaths, baptisms, and name changes of church members.
- Recording minutes of Stated Session, Called Session, and Congregational meetings.
- Communicating Session-related materials to Session members, moderators, and staff in advance of the monthly Stated Session meetings and as needed throughout the year.
- Submission of approved minutes for the permanent Church Registers.
- Working with staff in the completion of the Annual Statistical Report to the Presbytery.

Membership Changes

New Members

Joined at Called Session Meeting on March 12, 2023

Mark Brandon, by letter of transfer.
Renee Brandon, by letter of transfer.
Elizabeth Brunner, by reaffirmation of faith.
Ginger Kindig-Sparks, by reaffirmation of faith.
Lea Millett, by letter of transfer.

Joined at Stated Session Meeting on March 12, 2023

Caleb Cox, by profession of faith.
Chloe Cox, by profession of faith.
Luis Perez, by profession of faith.
Ashleigh Hemphill, by profession of faith.
Antonio Saldierna, by profession of faith.

Joined at Called Session Meeting on October 22, 2023

Nancy Cain, by letter of transfer.
Ginger Desoto, by reaffirmation of faith.
Linda Eichmann, by letter of transfer.
Jeffrey Kerst, by letter of transfer.
Tom King, by by reaffirmation of faith.
Alan Wolff, by letter of transfer.
Candy Wolff, by letter of transfer.
Doug Wright, by letter of transfer.
Terri Trotter, by letter of transfer.
Will Trotter Wright, by letter of transfer.
Evan Trotter Wright, by letter of transfer.
Allie Trotter Wright, by letter of transfer.

Deaths

Samuel Phil Wilson (born December 4, 1923) passed away on February 15, 2023.
Paulette G. Collins (born August 4, 1946) passed away on April 25, 2023.
James Donald "Jim" Sharp (born January 26, 1945) passed away on April 28, 2023.
Alice Garber (born June 8, 1931) passed away on June 16, 2023.
Judy Moseley Marino (born April 29, 1939) passed away July 8, 2023, in Frisco, Texas.
Preston "Gibby" Young, Jr. (born October 24, 1942) passed away August 19, 2023.
Douglas Duane Kuntz (born November 28, 1941) passed away August 21, 2023.
Saundra "Sandy" Jean George Parkerson (born February 6, 1943) passed away August 28, 2023.
Frank Logan Kerr (born April 27, 1937) passed away on October 2, 2023.
Linnette McClure Garber (born March 8, 1953) passed away on November 1, 2023.
Judy Gwyn Stokenberry (born April 14, 1940) passed away on December 13, 2023.
Oda Bartsch Mulloy (born November 2, 1927) passed away on December 13, 2023.

Transfers

Rita Manske, to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
Brien and Marjorie Hodge, to First Presbyterian Church, Sugar Land, Texas.
Fri Muma, to First Presbyterian Church, Del Rio, Texas.
Randy Garber, to Saint Mark Presbyterian Church, North Bethesda, Maryland.

Removal from the Roll (at their request)

Carolyn Ratliff
Robert and Nancy Umiker
John Cobb
David and Jenni Swain
Aiden Swain
Alexis Walker

Sacrament of Baptism

Miller Lee Vonnahme, son of Ethan Vonnahme and Shelby Daniels Vonnahme, was baptized on Sunday, November 26, 2023, with Rev. Jan Butin and Rev. Phil Butin officiating.

Luis Perez was baptized on Sunday, April 16, 2023, with Rev. Jan Butin and Rev. Phil Butin officiating.

Antonio (AJ) Saldierna was baptized on Sunday, April 16, 2023, with Rev. Jan Butin and Rev. Phil Butin officiating.

Membership Update

Total Active Membership on 12/31/2022 440

Gains in Membership

Reaffirmation of Faith	4
Profession of Faith	5
Letter of Transfer	<u>13</u>
Total Gains	22

Losses in Membership

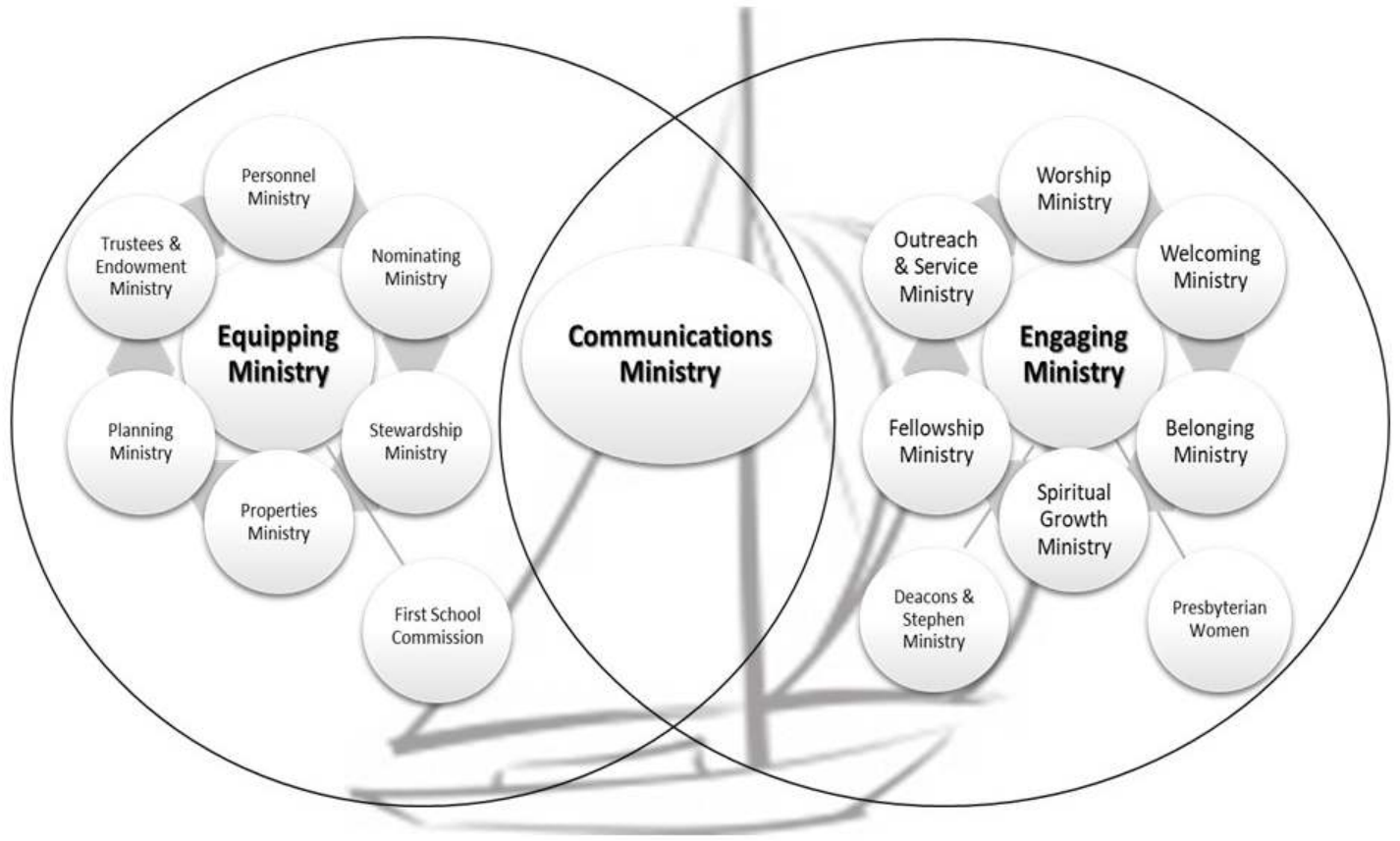
Transfer of Membership	5
Removed from Active Roll by Request	8
Due to Death	<u>12</u>
Total Losses	25

Total Active Membership on 12/31/2023 437

Baptisms

Children	1
Adults	2

Session Structure (2023)



ENGAGING MINISTRIES

- Board of Deacons
- Belonging
- Welcoming
- Fellowship
 - Men's Prayer Breakfast
- Outreach and Service
- Presbyterian Women
- Spiritual Growth
 - Director of Christian Education
 - Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- Worship
 - Minister of Music (Commissioned Ruling Elder)

Board of Deacons

Moderator:

Lisa Talbert

Pastoral Support:

Rev. Jan Butin

Class of 2023

Lisa Talbert
Dave Edmark
Roger Kennedy
Trey Rutledge

Class of 2024

Barbara Brown
Linda Cudney
Sharon James
Ruth Rodgers (resigned 7/23)
Dana Daniels (to begin 1/24)

Class of 2025

LeNelle Cagle
Eunice Millet
Yesenia Nevarez
Debbie Power

Board of Deacons Report

In 2023, the focus of the Board of Deacons was to continue to make connections with members, visitors, and friends of First United Presbyterian Church. We met monthly in person or via Zoom for those who could not make in-person meetings or wished to maintain a healthy social distance. Having an opportunity to meet via Zoom works well with this ministry.

The connections made in 2023 were in the form of cards, calls, texts, emails, visits, meals/morsels, coffee/meal cards, and memorial receptions. Deacons prepared and delivered communion element packets to those who were unable to attend communion at church. Monthly, Deacons met to prepare birthday cards for the congregation. During the Advent season, Deacons coordinated and assisted in delivering poinsettias and sent Christmas cards to families that had a challenging year. Deacons connected with young adults of the congregation – specifically those who have been out of high school up to five years – via cards/gift cards. Deacons, through the Stephen Ministry, coordinated the distribution of a series of four grief booklets for those who had recently lost loved ones. Additionally, Deacons responded to the requests for financial assistance from the Individual Assistance Fund as needed.

The Board of Deacons has been busy making connections and it is a gratifying experience. We offer our appreciation to members of the congregation who step in and assist us as needed.

Moderator

Lorraine Brewer

Members

Lorraine Brewer

Claudia Driver

Lupe Gonzalez

Carol Hanna

Cathy Henry

Elizabeth Houle

Yesena Nevarez

Angelika Will

Support

Jan Butin

Amy McCann

Belonging Ministry

The Belonging Ministry connects and integrates new members and actively supports their spiritual growth and involvement in the life, mission, and vision of the church.

Some of the ways in which our ministry team fulfills this role include visiting new members in their homes and delivering packets with information and gifts to new members, planning new member receptions, and continuing contacts with new members to ensure they are informed about upcoming events and opportunities for engagement. Belonging members resumed monthly contacts to assimilate new members into the life of the church and to support their growth and involvement.

At each monthly meeting of the Belonging Ministry Team those gathered discussed new strategies to fulfill the role described in our new ministry team description. Other ideas for strengthening connections with new members effectively in the months immediately after they join FUPC are considered at each monthly meeting. The team continues to work toward developing a Google form and/or QR code for visitors to “check-in” and to learn about the next event publicized in information provided in communication efforts. The ministry team also discusses responses to contacts with non-participating members. Updates from these contacts will be used to encourage re-engagement when feasible and to update the church roll.

The Belonging Ministry Team continued to cover both hospitality aspects, Welcoming and Belonging, until September when a new Welcoming Moderator began her service. We will continue to coordinate with Elder Jane Steinkraus for these events.

The Belonging Ministry Team provided a lunch and a “Look Before You Leap” Session on March 5 following the 11:00 worship service. After the new members were received in worship on March 12, a reception was provided to welcome them.

The Belonging Ministry also provided a reception on Confirmation Sunday, April 16, followed by a Confirmation Sunday Lunch with a fiesta theme. The Confirmation Class students, their families, Prayer Partners, Covenant Partners, and FUPC Staff were part of the celebration. A gift, note of welcome, and big cookie were delivered by team members to confirmands shortly after they were confirmed.

The Belonging Ministry Team proposed a name change for the “Look Before You Leap” sessions. There was a shared sense that “Exploring FUPC” would more clearly convey the purpose of inquiry into FUPC membership. The Welcoming Ministry Team conducted an “Exploring FUPC” lunch session in October and participants then joined FUPC during worship on October 22nd. A reception was provided by the Belonging Ministry Team after the service to welcome our new members, and ministry team members have followed up with visits and deliveries to them.

Following the recent “Course to 2030” strategic planning conversation, a focus on the potential of small groups became even more prominent. The Belonging Ministry Team will continue working on small group support and development with the Fellowship, Spiritual Growth, and Welcoming Ministry Teams. We are confident that working together, resourcing of ideas and materials, mentoring for leaders, and other support will be made available as new groups form. A large variety of groups currently exist focusing on physical exercise, social media, music, spiritual nurture, social experiences, service, children, youth, and young adult opportunities, and outreach into the community. We will continue to work with FUPC Staff and the Communications Team to make information about our many existing and varied small groups more available to facilitate involvement by all FUPC members in the life, mission, and vision of FUPC.

Moderator

Jane Steinkraus

Members

Chris Bell
Claudia Driver
Jo Rothrock
Barbara Rutledge

Support

Jan Butin
Amy McCann

Welcoming Ministry

The Nominating ministry invited a Welcoming Ministry moderator in the summer (following a vacancy) and was convened in September. The first task of Welcoming was to discern and navigate a new calling. I am so grateful to each person who said yes when asked if they would serve on this committee! I'm grateful for their ideas, wisdom and enthusiasm, and for the time and energy they've put into baking, writing, organizing and hosting our various events.

On October 1, the team hosted a catered lunch for the Exploring FUPC class which was taught by Jan and Phil Butin. The class was well attended, and on October 22, we welcomed 12 new members to our church.

One of the ministry goals was to recruit greeters to be present each Sunday at the 11:00 am service starting in Advent. This went well, and we continue to have greeters on a regular basis.

December 10, a cookie and punch reception was hosted following the Celebration at the Manger. This was fun, and a lot of people expressed appreciation for the hospitality provided by FUPC. We are grateful for the many congregation members who baked cookies for this event!

On December 24, cookies and beverages were provided in the Gathering Space while the Calvin Street Band played music prior to the Christmas Eve service.

Goals for 2024:

1. Continue having greeters at the 11:00 service, and hopefully develop a more efficient way to recruit greeters.
2. Envision ways we can help reach out and welcome visitors.
3. Consider having an informational flyer about FUPC that visitors can take home.
4. Continue hosting Exploring FUPC classes and other Welcoming events as needed.

Moderator

Carol Van Scyoc

Members

Jessie Koepp
Mary Ellen Moore
Libby Lizarraga
LaNelle Roberts
LeNelle Cagle
Scott Washam

Support

Jan Butin

Fellowship

The Fellowship Ministry nurtures connections in a safe and joyful environment, striving to be an inviting and supportive Christian family.

Gatherings, meals, festivals, and movies made 2023 a year of re-connecting with our church family as well as with friends at First School. We teamed with the Spiritual Growth Ministry on February 21 to prepare decorated pancakes and run silly pancake races in Fellowship Hall. Shrove Tuesday certainly gave an energetic start to the Season of Lent.

Tables were laden with home-made breakfast treats as we met for Easter Brunch on April 9. Coming together once again, folks caught up on stories, had a cup of coffee and gave thanks for the amazing gift of Jesus as He is Risen Indeed!

The next week, April 23, FUPC sponsored a concert given by the Texas Boys Choir. We provided a simple pizza lunch after the 11:00 service and a short reception after the concert.

Throughout the warmer months, a group of Happy Hikers walked or biked the local trails. The Brooks-Hummel Trail behind the church, Kessler Mountain, Fitzgerald Station, and Lake Fayetteville. Short devotionals at the rest/water stops highlighted that God's nature is certainly a marvelous place.

Isaac Thomas helped compile a list of songs for a Hymn Sing on July 9. All the music was requested by members of the congregation. Each person introduced their selection by revealing how it was special to them. Members of the choir encouraged the group as hearts and voices soared. A sandwich supper followed the music hour.

The Annual Picnic was held on August 20, a very hot day. We served chicken nuggets, oven fries and sides in the Fellowship Hall. Small pools and water slides were set up in the courtyard and down the west sloped lawn outside the sanctuary. The kids had a great time. We are considering a date change to September next year to avoid the extreme heat of August.

A Fall Festival was held on the afternoon of October 7. First School families and other friends came to enjoy Dead Horse Mountain Band, large inflatables, games, and snacks.

December was an active time. Something new was movie night, December 1. We watched "The Star," an animated story of a donkey who followed Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, as we lounged in pajamas and ate pizza and popcorn in Fellowship Hall.

A fine group of carolers headed out the afternoon of December 3 and sang to FUPC members and friends. A small bag of cookies and a pouch of hot chocolate were given to each.

Our final event was the Christmas Brunch on December 17. Warmed by the buffet of casseroles and pastries carried in by each family, we enjoyed biscuits and the sausage gravy lovingly made by Marti Woodruff.

Fellowship is supported by every church member who helps to set up tables, washes dishes, cooks for meals, stocks the kitchen, provides crafts and booths for Fall Festival, decorates, sings, hikes, talks to visitors and praises God! Thank you all.

Convener

James Moore

Secretary

James Johnston

Members

Dennis Brewer

David Clay

Charles Cudney

Ronnie Denn

James Harter

Ed Jackson

Kyle Jenner

James Johnston

Roger Kennedy

Bill Martin

James Moore

Conrad Odom

Vic Parkerson

Ron Talbert

Support

Phil Butin

Men's Prayer Breakfast

On December 27, 2023 the weekly Wednesday Morning Men's Prayer Breakfast met for the 1,239th time with 8 present. We have traditionally met at the Village Inn and our waitress knows each person's traditional order, usually communicated by "the same."

James Moore continues to serve as our Coordinator and Moderator graciously and competently, organizing the membership each to be responsible for one month's meetings and devotions. We continue to use Ken Mays' library (known as the book bag) and his format, but there is also more individual input. From the beginning, the month's presenter has listed significant notable events for that week. More recently following the lead of math prof Dennis Brewer the monthly presenters have turned the listing of notable events into a quiz and we have a surprising number of our attendees who answer the most obscure questions.

We still officially meet at 6:30 a.m., but all are usually seated by 6:15 a.m., and late comers miss their traditional seat. (Some are there at 6.) We enjoy the personal fellowship.

Moderator

Laurie Reh

Members

David Clay

Dennis Nelson

Elizabeth Houle

JP Peters

Leigh Woodruff

Bill Hart

Carol Hart

Support

Phil Butin

Outreach and Service

The Outreach and Service Ministry Team believes First United Presbyterian Church is the helping hands of Christ in the neighborhood, community, and the world. We are also people who believe and practice Matthew 25 directives to assist those in need.

In 2023, the Outreach and Service Ministry Team and FUPC provided a comprehensive level of support to:

Presbytery/Synod/G.A.	Lifesource International
CASA of NWA	7 Hills Shelter
Childrens House	Lifestyles
Peace at Home Shelter	First Scholarship
Cooperative Emergency Outreach	Heifer Project
Fernduff Camp	Special Needs
Honduras Ministry	Habitat for Humanity
Hands-On Mission	Honduran Worker Salary
AR Rice Depot	Healing Touch
Community Meals	New Beginnings
Vera Lloyd Home	Canopy NWA
United Campus Ministry	Circles NWA.
Hope NWA	

Other highlights include:

- In January, Rev. Phil Butin and Leigh Woodruff attended the Honduras Festival in Tampa, Florida.
- Community Meals were served on the third Fridays at 7 Hills Shelter, first Sunday's at Trinity Methodist Church, and occasionally at New Beginnings housing.
- A review of the Alternative Market event resulted in a pause for 2023.
- During March Spring Break, a Mission Trip to Honduras included Rev. Phil Butin, Leigh Woodruff, Dennis Nelson, Jeffrey Kerst (all of FUPC), Peggy Ward (FPC Springdale), and Jyham Fernandez (Honduran student attending University of Ozarks). Funding up to \$5500 was allocated for construction materials for Pastor Gloria's house in Nueva Suyapa, Honduras.
- Outreach approved 2023 Special Offerings and Minute for Mission opportunities to invite select speakers to present information in worship on their program's needs.
- Outreach focused on the upcoming 2024 budget in mid-year to prioritize FUPC levels of support being provided to each organization and program in the Outreach budget. We looked at the budgeted financial support as well as church member involvement during this discernment process in consideration of each of the currently funded programs.
- A Hygiene Kit Packing Party was planned, implemented, and evaluated in support of a Fernduff mission project for tornado damage victims on 9/24. Over 75 church volunteers participated to pack more than 300 Hygiene Kits and enjoy a delicious lunch provided by Outreach.

- The Outreach team was represented at the annual FUPC Session Retreat led by Jason Tucker and the FUPC Planning Ministry.
- Outreach supported the annual Fall Festival held at FUPC in October by providing a truck, candy, and volunteers to accept donated cans of food for CEO.
- At the October meeting, we invited Christina Williams, of Circles NWA, to provide an overview of the program and discuss how FUPC funding is being utilized. In November, we invited Solomon Burchfield, of New Beginnings, and in December, Khalid Ahmadzai, of Canopy NWA, to also present their program's information.

Community Meals: FUPC has continued to serve the undernourished residents of Fayetteville with two monthly community meals--the first Sunday of the month at Trinity Methodist Church and 7 Hills Day Center on the third Friday of the month. With the return of in-person meals, the number of clients needing a meal has increased. For the year 2023, we prepared close to 1550 meals with a cost just under \$4000 which is less than \$3/meal. Compared to 2022, we provided 1500 meals at a cost of \$3400. The increased food cost is mainly due to not being able to purchase proteins through the NWA food bank (mainly able to purchase canned vegetables, some pastas, and canned fruits), but also due to the general increase of food prices due to inflation and supply issues. For November and December we prepared a semi-traditional holiday meal of turkey, ham, and side dishes for 7 Hills which cost more than the \$150 per meal cost budgeted.

Barbara Verdery plans the menus, shops for the food ingredients, and guides the preparation of the meals. Twenty-nine church members, youth and friends helped prepare, deliver, and serve the meals. Twelve members helped with more than one meal. We prepared an average of four meals each month for FUPC members needing a meal as requested by the Deacon's ministry.

The church offers a link on the church's web page for volunteers to sign up to help. Regular announcements in the Weekly Update. Each meal requires four or five volunteers to prep the meal the day before and the day of. Neil Ingels, John Stitt, and John's brother are very willing to deliver and serve the meal at 7 Hills. Mt. Comfort Presbyterian Church has two or three volunteers that help serve the Sunday Supper meal along with Neil.

Moderator
Katie Jackson

Secretary
(position open)

Together in Service
Amy Rossetti

Circle Coordinators
Barbara Verdery
Katie Jackson
Janet Clausen
Jessie Koeppe

Treasurer (Jan – July)
Emily Bridges

Treasurer (Aug – Dec)
Diane Byars

Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Women is a mission-oriented group that donates to the church, community, state, national, and international needs through time and treasures. The organization is open to all women in our congregation and community.

The Coordinating Team of 2023 consisted of Katie Jackson (moderator), and Amy Rossetti (Together in Service). Circle Coordinators were Barbara Verdery, Katie Jackson, Janet Clausen, and Jessie Koeppe. Emily Bridges served as Treasurer from January through July, and Diane Byars assumed the role of Treasurer in August. The secretary and search committee positions are open. Katie Jackson performed the duties of secretary, including creating agendas, minutes, and the annual report. Amy Rossetti assisted in adding announcements to church emails and newsletters.

The Tuesday morning group (coordinator: Barbara Verdery) meets once a month in the church library (Zoom available, if needed). In the spring, they used the 2022-2023 *Horizons* study, *Celebrating Sabbath: Accepting God's Gift of Rest and Delight*, by Carol M. Bechtel. In the fall, they began the 2023-24 *Horizons* Study, *Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts*, by Olive Mahabir.


The Tuesday evening group (coordinator: Katie Jackson) meets in members' homes and is currently studying *Words of Love: A Healing Journey with the Ten Commandments*, by Eugenia Anne Gamble.

The Covenant Group (coordinator: Jesse Koeppe) has a new book every two-three months and meets on fourth Tuesdays at the church. This group frequently has members joining over Zoom.

Hooks and Needles (coordinator: Janet Clausen) meets weekly at the church on Fridays.

In early 2023 it was decided that our current Chrismons needed repair and/or replacing. A committee was formed to discuss the best method of creating new Chrismons. Leslie Johnson had valuable experience with this and demonstrated a plan. From April through December, Leslie Johnson, Quetta Wardlow, Teresa Weeks, Janet Clausen, Ginger Desoto, and Barbara Verdery met weekly to create new Chrismons. The Chrismons each have descriptions of their meanings on the back. They were placed on the sanctuary tree alongside older Chrismons. We are so grateful to this group of women that created Chrismons that will enhance worship for our congregation for a long time.

Presbyterian Women continues to serve our church family and community. In February, PW assembled over 45 care packages to send to our church family members ages 18-24. In December we asked for donations of hats/mittens/socks that were taken to Fayetteville Public Schools Outback to give to children and youth. The Hooks and Needles group donated three large bags of handmade items to this effort. PW members annually help with decorating/undecorating the Chrismon tree and the hat/mitten tree. A



memorial gift was made to the church library in memory of five church members that passed away in 2023. At the Presbytery, national, and international level, our PW contributed \$1,000 to promote an inclusive, caring community for women worldwide.

In August 2023, we were pleased to give a PW lifetime membership award to church member Michelle Price.

The FUPC Presbyterian Women have agreed to host the Synod of the Sun gathering at our church in July 2025. We will begin monthly and weekly planning for this event in January of 2024.

Moderator
Sara Eichmann

Members
Diane Byars
Nancy Waite (Librarian)
Wendy Robbins

Support
Kristi Button
Amanda McDonald

Youth Subcommittee
Moderator
Wendy Robbins

Members
Diane Byars
Lorraine Brewer
Jana Hemphill
Michele Price

Support
Amanda McDonald

Spiritual Growth

In 2023, the Spiritual Growth ministry team offered:

- Adult Ministry – offered three classes during Sunday School
 - The Bible Study class meets in person and via Zoom and uses the Present Word Study. It is led by Dennis Brewer and Jane Steinkraus.
 - Thoughtful Christians is a book discussion class that meets in person and via Zoom and is led by Phil Butin and Derrik Olsen.
 - The Open-Door class is also a book discussion class that meets in person and is led by Jan Butin.
- Children’s Ministry offered a full year of Spiritual Growth opportunities; Sunday School offerings included:
 - Joy-us group for 3 years to 2nd grade led by Ruth Rodgers and Lora Horne
 - The Bible Detectives for 3rd – 5th grade led Gayl Lippert Clay
 - Youth 6th – 12th grade – led by Amanda McDonald
- Special Events included:
 - Shrove Tuesday pancake supper in coordination with Fellowship.
 - Christmas Ornament Faire, including ornament making stations, a meal and a Chrismon Ornament hanging and educational opportunity.
 - Celebration at the Manger with cookies afterward in the Gathering Place.
 - Vacation Bible School was a three-evening event this year. Families attended for a meal and then programming was offered for preschool, younger elementary, older elementary and adults. The theme was *Creation Sings*.
 - Eleven FUPC children and youth attended Ferncliff.
- Youth and Young Ministry
 - Amanda McDonald started as our new Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries on June 1st.
 - A series of special events were held every few weeks this summer for the youth to come together and to get to know Amanda.
 - This fall youth group began to meet weekly and moved from Sunday to Wednesday night.
 - Once a month the youth group participates in special events with the other NWA Presbyterian churches.
 - This fall a young adult group started to meet for dinner, fellowship, and discussion every other Tuesday evening.
 - Special events this year included: two lock-ins, YouthQuake, preparing Sunday Suppers, Lake Day, a workday at the church, Youth Sunday, and volunteering in the community.
 - High school graduates were recognized in the spring during worship.
 - One FUPC young adult attended the Montreat College Conference in January.
 - The Youth Subcommittee will begin meeting again this spring.

Director

Kristi Button

Christian Education

In 2023, we were back together again. This year marked a full year of in-person Spiritual Growth programs. We resumed our Sunday morning Spiritual Growth with the Joy-us group for 3 years to 2nd grade and The Bible Detectives for 3rd-5th grade. Both groups flourished. We continued to sing together as part of our Sunday morning classes and the highlight was singing a two-part melody and descant of the song *Jesus Came as a Little Child*. This was a beautiful part of our annual Christmas Music Special Sunday. The Joy-us group was led by Ruth Rodgers and Lora Horne. The Bible Detectives was led by Gayl Lippert Clay. The 6th-12th grade group was led by Amanda McDonald, beginning in the fall.

The weekly Mailchimp emails for families continue and have been a wonderful way to get children and family specific information out. Many of these articles are then shared in the Friday all-church email. Many new families were added, including some First School Families. For my Certificate in Spiritual Direction program, I completed all my supervised practice and received my Certificate in Spiritual Direction in early December. In the future I will continue to meet with directees over Zoom and engage in group supervision with a certified supervisor in a group that includes five other people from my cohort. I also plan to become more involved in Spiritual Directors International and see what opportunities open there.

For Shrove Tuesday, we had a fun event with Fellowship and enjoyed made-to-order pancakes with many toppings. We learned about the traditions of beginning Lent with a fun party and we had a fun obstacle course in the north end of the Fellowship Hall.

Our VBS program was a three-evening program. We had families attend together and offered a meal and then programming for preschool, younger elementary, older elementary and adults. Our theme was *Creation Sings* and we learned together, hiked, made a snake out of painted rocks, sang, and praised God's creation. In 2024 we will be looking for the best time in the First School Schedule to offer VBS and other summer programming opportunities to appeal to First School and our church families. After a couple years of evening VBS, we may look at morning VBS again.

With new Chrismons for the tree and an extra week before Advent, we had a Christmas Ornament Faire on November 29th, with five ornament making stations, followed by a sandwich meal and then a presentation and Chrismon ornament hanging opportunity in the Sanctuary. It was a very well attended event and was a wonderful opportunity for people of all ages to make some ornaments and learn more about the meaning of some of our Chrismon (Christ-monogram) ornaments made this year by a wonderful group of women.

The annual Celebration at the Manger was in-person and involved many current and former First School families. The children could hear the entire story again as they played the roles. We enjoyed cookies in the Gathering Place afterward, which was wonderful.

Director

Amanda McDonald

Youth and Young Adult Ministries

Scheduling: In 2023, we moved weekly youth group meetings to Wednesday night. We have had success in having regular attendance of 8-12 kids that participate in the program. We have also tried to schedule one monthly event with the NWA churches. Those events have been going well with regular attendance.

In the fall of 2023, we added a young adult dinner with 3-6 in regular attendance. This group has taken a break for the holidays, but we plan to meet twice a month going forward.

Weekly Meetings: In the youth meetings, we have been watching *The Chosen*, a TV series based on the gospel that puts Jesus' life and ministry in cultural context of the time. After watching some of the show, we discuss the segment we watch and it's relevance to our lives, and then the kids play Jackbox Games.

In young adult meetings, we have been working our way through Matthew and discussing scripture, theology, and doctrine.

Fun Events: Since starting we have had two overnight lock-ins at the church. We grew from 5 kids and 3 adults in attendance in July to having 12 kids and 5 adults at the New Years Eve lock-in. At the July Lock-In we had a sunrise service with a theme of having a place to belong. At NYE we talked about bread, both the physical and spiritual necessity of bread. The kids baked bread together, and we had a communion service at 2am, celebrating our first meal of the new year around the communion table. We have also attended YouthQuake, Christmas shopping for elderly in our community, and we had a workday in Lower Witherspoon.

Personal Update: In October we were able to get moved into our new home! I have completed 27.5 hours of the Master of Divinity program I am enrolled in, and I should graduate in the spring of 2026. Everyone is getting settled into school and activities nicely, and we are so happy to be here!

Moderator
Francis Millett

Members:
Amy Bearbower
Rob Button
Itrel Monroe
Bruce Schlegel
Margaret Taylor
Barbara Verdery
Don White

Support
Jan Butin
Phil Butin
Isaac Thomas

Worship

We have had wonderful Worship services throughout the year 2023 and have successfully met a number of difficult challenges. Worship services were held both in-person at 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., and included livestreaming on YouTube at 11:00 a.m. This combination of in-person and livestreaming worship services has allowed many people to participate, including those that have had health problems, including COVID. The adult choir sang at the 11:00 a.m. in-person services, and the choir interns and other volunteers sang at the 8:30 a.m. services. The 8:30 a.m. service was held outdoors during the summer, weather permitting. Communion was served every week at the 8:30 a.m. service with Jeffrey Kerst preparing Communion.

The FUPC church initiated a new Third Worship service at 4:00 p.m. on the third Sunday of each month beginning in October 2022. This was a creative and inspiring service involving engaging music, relaxed liturgy, an interactive message, and table activities for children. The Planning Ministry has requested and established a task force through the Session for exploring revisions of the church worship services.

Organist Hyun Kim moved to a faculty position at the University of Missouri Kansas City Conservatory in the fall but continued to play the organ at the worship services through December. Xiao Yang was hired as Choir Accompanist to play the piano during rehearsals and the worship services. Xiao Yang holds a Master of Music from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a Master of Music in piano performance from the University of Arkansas.

Bells on the Hill (named in December) has been playing at the worship services under the direction of Pam Gilbreath. A fundraising drive was carried out to completely refurbish the church handbells and purchase a new Malmark 37 Choir Chime set.

Hyun Kim and Isaac Thomas organized a Light on the Hill Community Concert Series that was held during Spring 2023 in our Church. The first Light on the Hill concert was held on March 6, featuring a chamber quartet performing Mozart's Clarinet Trio in E flat, K. 498 "Kegelstatt", Schumann's Märchenerzählungen, and Selections from Bruch's Acht Stücke, Op. 83. Our former choir director Todd Prickett led the Texas Boys Choir in a concert at our church in April. The University of Arkansas Schola Cantorum gave a concert at our church later in the Spring.

Minister of Music (CRE)

Isaac Thomas

Choral Interns

Ceci Allen, alto
Cole Jackson, bass
Jeffrey Kerst, tenor
Isabelle Pennick, soprano

Audio/Visual Team

Christopher Verdery,
Coordinator
Connor Button, Sound
Drew Parker, Cameras

Chancel Choir

Ceci Allen
Amy Bearbower
Dennis Brewer
Lorraine Brewer
Rob Button
Jim Gilbreath
Pam Gilbreath
Rebecca Haden
Catherine Henry
Cole Jackson
Jeffrey Kerst
Hyun Kim, organist
Richard Lee
Mary Mann
Sabra Martin
Eunice Millett
Frank Millett
Itrel Monroe
Derrick Olsen
Julie Olsen
Victor Parkerson
Isabelle Pennick
Laurie Reh
Ruth Rodgers
Xiao Yang, pianist

Music

2023 was a fantastic year for our music ministry at FUPC. In the Spring, we had three *Light on the Hill* concerts. The first concert featured Nophachai Cholthitchanta, clarinet; Timothy McDuff, viola; Pecos Singer, cello; and Hyun Kim, piano.

The second concert was on March 30. It was *An Evening of Spanish Music* and featured two world-class musicians from Spain: Pedro Rubio, clarinet; and Ana Benavides, piano.

The third concert was held on May 4 and featured the U of A Schola Cantorum (of which three of our interns were featured: Ceci Allen, Cole Jackson, and Isabelle Pennick). The choir performed the music of the late African-American composer Florence Price and excerpts from *Considering Matthew Shepard* composed by Craig Hella Johnson.

On April 24, we showcased the U of A cello recital featuring the students of Dr. Pecos Singer.

We were honored to have the Texas Boys Choir sing in our worship service on Sunday, April 23. It was an honor to welcome back Dr. Todd Prickett and his wife Amy and their son Ethan. Amy and Ethan both sang solos at the 8:30 worship service.

On April 9, for Easter Sunday, our choir sang several beautiful anthems with brass ensemble including "Festival Jubilate" by Patti Drennan and "Easter Rejoicing" by Jonathan Willcocks. We concluded the service with G. F. Händel's *Hallelujah Chorus*.

On Good Friday (April 7), our choir sang the hauntingly beautiful anthem, "Forsaken" written by Dan Forest. Violinist Jana Burton and cellist Tom King accompanied our choir.

On Palm Sunday (April 2), our children's choir sang with our Chancel Choir on the antiphonal anthem entitled, "A Palm Sunday Processional."

Over the summer, our choral interns provided music for our 8:30 worship services as well as our Third Worship Services in the fall.

On September 28, our own Jeffrey Kerst gave a fantastic recital entitled, "To This Point." He performed a variety of songs by composers such as Benjamin Britten, Harry T. Burleigh, Eric Whitacre, and one of his own compositions.

On November 6, we hosted a U of A student recital for the viola students of Dr. Timothy McDuff.

On November 19, Isaac Thomas, our Minister of Music was commissioned as a Ruling Elder in our congregation. The service featured Taizé music from France.

Bells on the Hill**Director**

Pam Gilbreath

Bell Ringers

Deb Crawford

Dave Edmark

Jim Gilbreath

Katie Jackson

Deeg Mitchell

Laurie Reh

Ruth Rodgers

Jo Rothrock

Don Steinkraus

Jane Steinkraus

Marti Woodruff

Our handbell choir—Bells on the Hill—under the direction of Pam Gilbreath, performed gorgeous handbell anthems each month in worship. Three of the highlights were: “I’ve Got the Joy Down in My Heart” (on November 5), “The Angel Gabriel” (on December 10), and “Silent Night” at our annual Christmas Eve candlelight service.

During our Advent season, we were thrilled to have our children, youth and college students sing with our choir for our choral program *A Festival of Carols* on December 10 (which featured a brass quintet and a string quartet). A special thank you to Ruth Rodgers for her leadership of the children’s choir (and thank you to all the volunteers who helped). *Celebration at the Manger* was presented by our children on December 10 at 4:00 p.m. under the direction of Kristi Button. Thank you to many volunteers who helped with our children’s program.

On December 11 we featured the a cappella group The Northwestern Undertones from Northwestern University (featuring our own Evan Trotter-Wright). They provided a variety of outstanding music ranging from pop music to Christmas carols.

For Christmas Eve, we featured baritone Theodore Rulfs as he sang, “O Holy Night” and the Trotter-Wright family (Evan, Allie, and Will) sang “Do You Hear What I Hear?” Our Chancel Choir sang Craig Courtney’s composition, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night.”

Finally, our 11:00 worship band and Hyun Kim have continuously provided beautiful music for our worship services. We also want to extend a special thank you to all who helped run sound and video for our worship services: Christopher Verdery, Drew Parker, Connor Button, Connor Robbins, Liz Fulton, Sharon Taylor, and Caleb Cox.

COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY

- Communications

Moderator
Rebecca Haden

Members
Jill King
Jim Gilbreath
Renee Brandon
Darren Gould
Leslie Johnson
Amy Bearbower

**Church Notes in
Local Paper:**
Sally King

**Google Ads and
Video Creation:**
Rosie Haden Chomphosy

Staff
Phil Butin
Jan Butin
Christopher Verdery
Amy Rossetti
Amy McCann

Communications

The Communications ministry creates and coordinates communications with congregation and community to increase visibility, engagement, and connection.

Communication metrics

Average physical attendance during 2023 was 132 per week, compared with 128 per week in 2022. This includes both the 8:30 and the 11:00 services but does not include Third Worship or special evening services.

The livestream service has reached 283 subscribers. The number of viewers has fallen to an average of 52 per episode, perhaps because of increasing physical attendance, but the numbers may also be influenced by technical difficulties with the livestream over recent months.

The website received 32,493 Pageviews, a reduction compared with 2022. Facebook showed an organic reach of 117,109 (an 84% increase over 2022) and no paid reach, compared with 432,065 in paid reach in 2022. The group page had 4,738 views, about half as many as last year.

Accomplishments in 2023





We continued to support the website, social media, Google ads, and advertising in a local newspaper. We worked with the staff to improve the sound system.

In addition, we completed these projects in 2023:

- Publicity for the Light on the Hill concert series, which brought hundreds of community members to the church.
- A document to share at the Labyrinth, with a QR code connecting with the website post on the subject and a playlist provided by Isaac Thomas to use while enjoying the labyrinth as spiritual practice. We intend to place the printed documents into a realtor box at the labyrinth and have budgeted to do so in 2024.
- A welcome video using photographs provided by the church and music provided by Isaac Thomas, and a similar video on the new Chrismons.
- A second annual Devotional Booklet for Advent.

The Advent booklet and the new Chrismons were the focus of our Advent social media campaign, which reached 19,464 impressions in the month of December, a 127.2% increase over the previous year. The engagement rate was 9.9%, with 1,926 engagements, which was a 140% increase over the previous year. This included 206 clicks through the links to the website, which was a 203% increase over the previous year. By New Year's Eve, we had grown to 496 followers.

The screenshot below shows the four posts with the highest levels of engagement this year:

<p>Bill and Deeg Mitchell create these beautiful wreaths every year for the Hanging of the Greens at FUPC. We are...</p>	<p>Kristi Button shared some pictures from FUPC's ornament-making event last week.</p>	<p>To begin our daily Advent Devotionals, read Pastor Jan's inspiring thoughts on Isaiah 2:1-5.</p>	<p>A group of women in the church spent 8 months making a beautiful new set of Chrismons for teh Chrismon tree in the...</p>
		<p>Isaiah 2:1-5 - First United Presbyte...</p> 	
<p>Total Engagements 77</p>	<p>Total Engagements 66</p>	<p>Total Engagements 64</p>	<p>Total Engagements 53</p>
<p>Reactions 42</p>	<p>Reactions 22</p>	<p>Reactions 23</p>	<p>Reactions 33</p>
<p>Comments 6</p>	<p>Comments 0</p>	<p>Comments 9</p>	<p>Comments 17</p>
<p>Shares 0</p>	<p>Shares 2</p>	<p>Shares 2</p>	<p>Shares 3</p>
<p>Post Link Clicks —</p>	<p>Post Link Clicks —</p>	<p>Post Link Clicks 15</p>	
<p>Other Post Clicks 29</p>	<p>Other Post Clicks 42</p>	<p>Other Post Clicks 15</p>	

EQUIPPING MINISTRIES

- First School Commission
- Nominating
- Personnel
- Planning
- Properties
- Earth Care Task Force
- Garden and Grounds Subcommittee
- Stewardship
- Trustees and Endowment

Director

Cathy Hairston

Moderators

Jim Gilbreath (Jan – April)

Rev. Phil Butin (Interim)

Melissa Werner

(December)

Church Members

Erin Wilson

Melissa Werner

Quetta Wardlow

Cathy Henry

Teacher Representatives

Christian Hornwell

Miki Rousseau (spring)

Lee Pendley (fall)

Parent Representatives

Sarah Johanson

Kristen Mormon

Support

Kristi Button

Laura Winburn/

Stacey Luebker

Phil Butin

First School Commission

First School is a parents'-day-out program, preschool, and kindergarten. The school is an outreach of First United Presbyterian Church. We pledge to provide a safe and loving Christian environment while nurturing a love of learning.

First School Commission is the governing board which is made UP of parents, teachers, FUPC congregants and supported by staff.

Enrollment during the school year rose from 141 to 148 by December. The summer programs enrollment was 154 including elementary aged students. Events for the families and our church family included chapel in person with our pastors and staff Revs. Phil and Jan Butin, Kristi Button, and Amanda McDonald.

First School employs 22 teachers. In October Cathy and 18 teachers attended the Arkansas Early Childhood Association Conference in Little Rock for training. We have five teachers participating in the TEACH program to improve skills and achieve a higher level of certification or degree.

The Parents' Day Out classes piloted the U of A Early Childhood and Education program LENA which provided feedback on toddler-caregiver communication and support. This program is focused on boosting language and social emotional development, increasing teacher and parent satisfaction.

School and Church security has been a focal point this year. Security evaluations were conducted by Fayetteville Police Department officer Sgt. French and retired officer Eliot Luebker. Mr. Luebker trained teachers and FUPC Staff on A.L.I.C.E. (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate). This year security cameras, security film on windows and doors, and panic buttons have been installed in rooms children occupy, and around the entire church campus.

The ARA Grant money was used for security cameras in classrooms/FUPC campus, fiber optic, Cox network circuits, security film, panic buttons, five solid wood doors, and a wall in Knox.

Parent representative Kirsten Mormon was instrumental in getting the security film approved and installed. She brought the STAR program to First School which Fayetteville Public Schools uses to indicate a safe sheltering spot in every building on campus. Kirsten also created First School shirts, sweatshirts, and bags to sell as a fundraiser for the teachers. And she opened an Instagram account with upcoming FS and FUPC events and information. As parent representative, she began monthly popup coffee shops in the lobby that parents and church members can volunteer to provide for our school families.

The financial position of the school is strong. We ended the year with tuition over expenses, money allowing us to give \$15,000 to the Church for overhead and able to move to the school's building maintenance reserve. The Commission approved an hourly increase of .50 for all staff starting in January 2023, a move made necessary by inflationary pressures and competition for qualified teachers. We provided scholarships to nine families to assist with tuition expenses totaling \$5806 for the year.

A Session and ministry team retreat in August led to the prioritization of a pathway "to strengthen connections with First School and church families, to fulfill a broader FUPC priority of attracting, nurturing, and serving younger generations." This pathway launched in September and focused on chapel leaders and elders greeting parents every week on chapel days with information on the chapel Bible lesson and communicating news about upcoming events with the church. A variety of enhanced face-to-face connections between church leaders and members, and First School families has helped to foster a warm atmosphere of church love and concern for all First School families, which has created many positive responses and opportunities. Parents and church members cleared the area for the natural play space. Several First School families accepted invitations from the church to join us for the Fall Festival, Christmas events, and the Celebration at the Manger. More church members than ever have actively participated and helped with various First School projects and initiatives, and a record number of First School families and teachers have been involved in family and children's events planned by the church. Television screens at the entry of Calvin and Knox run slides of school and Church events. All Church events are also sent to families through Brightwheel and in flyers that go home.

Through a competition between classes, First School families contributed over 900 food items to C.E.O. this Christmas and hosted an angel tree for a Potter's House Christmas initiative to provide gifts to children and families.

Moderator
Don Johnson

Members
Rob Button
Pam Gilbreath
Jana Hemphill
Sharon James
Mary Mann
Itrel Monroe
Ron Talbert
Ron Woodruff

Support
Jan Butin
Phil Butin

Nominating

Through prayerful discernment, the committee filled all positions as listed below.

Elder (Class of 2024)

- Elder/Moderator of Welcoming – Jane Steinkraus

Elder (Class of 2025)

- Elder/Moderator of Communication – Rebecca Haden

Elders (Class of 2026)

- Elder/Moderator of Outreach – Sara Koenig
- Elder and Moderator of Stewardship – Don Johnson
- Elder and Moderator of Fellowship – Mary Mann
- Elder and Moderator of First School Commission – Melissa Werner
- Elder serving on Planning and Trustees – Julie Olsen
- Elder serving on two Outreach and Worship – Elizabeth Houle
- Elder serving on Personnel and one First School – Michelle Price

Deacons (Class of 2026)

- Larry Stubbs
- Jessie Koeppe
- Liz Blackburn
- Dave Edmark

Deacon (Class of 2024)

- Dana Daniels (following Ruth Rodgers)

Nine Members – Congregational Nominating Committee (to be elected by the congregation)

- Laurie Reh – elder
- Wendy Robbins – elder
- Eunice Millett – deacon
- Jana Hemphill – continuing
- Ron Woodruff – continuing
- Ron Talbert – continuing
- Barbara Verdery – new
- Megan Ober – new
- Jim Price -- new

Treasurer (One year renewable)

- Tom Verdery

Clerk of Session (One year renewable)

- Roger Koeppe

Two Members – Personnel Committee

- Jim Pickett (2026)
- Dwight Power (2025) - filling unexpired term of Michelle Price who will become Elder (Class of 2026) serving on Personnel

Two Members - First School Commission (2025 and 2026)

- Lora Horne (2025) – Replacing Melissa Werner - who will become Elder/First School Moderator (Class of 2026)
- Lea Millett (2026)

One Congregational Member - Endowment (2026)

- Mark Power

Five Members (and two alternates) - BTV Corporate Members (1-year renewable terms)

- Lyle Gohn - continuing
- Thermon Crocker - continuing
- Diane Warren – new
- David Rodgers – new
- Anne Booth – new
- Howard Higgins (Alternate) – continuing
- Karen Crocker (Alternate) - new

As outgoing moderator of the Congregational Nominating Committee, each committee member has my sincere and heartfelt appreciation for your cheerful and dedicated service. Thank you!

Moderator
Charles Cudney

Members
Shawn Daniels
Jessie Koeppe
Bill Mitchell
Michelle Price
Lisa Talbert

Personnel

The Personnel Ministry has focused on filling needed staff positions and making the necessary preparations for the retirement of our co-pastors on June 30, 2024. Stacey Luebker was employed to be the new Financial Administrator after the retirement of Laura Windburn's lengthy service at FUPC. Laura has given of her time during this year to mentor Stacey creating a seamless transition and ensuring that all financial management requirements were met. Amanda McDonald was employed beginning June 1 as the Director of Youth Ministry and Young Adults after a lengthy search.

Life circumstances have created vacancies among the office staff (Tammi Kushner), and Amy Rossetti, a church member, stepped up to fill office responsibilities as well as the position of Communications Coordinator. As the year ended Beth Wilkins Benham was employed to fill the Office Manager position, following Interim Office Manager, Yesenia Nevarez, completing the office staff needed as 2024 begins. Also, the Personnel Ministry supported/encouraged Issac Thomas in his desire to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) which resulted in Session approving his new title as Minister of Music (CRE).

Personnel provided a recommendation to Session that an interim pastor be employed to provide leadership following Phil and Jan Butin's departure, until it is determined that a search for a permanent pastor should begin. The recommendation was approved, and Session requested that the Personnel Ministry recommend a list of five people to serve as members of the Interim Pastor Search Committee with approval at the December Session meeting. The Committee consisted of three elders and two members at large. Also, Personnel provided Session with a recommended timeline for the interim pastor search with guidance from Stewart Smith, General Presbyter Arkansas Presbytery.

The annual evaluation of all staff was conducted in the summer with direct involvement of the Personnel Ministry individually and as a whole. An evaluation of the pastors was conducted through a sample survey of the congregation. The results were shared with them in conjunction with their self-evaluations.

In keeping with Personnel's request to be alerted a year ahead of any anticipated pastoral changes, Phil and Jan Butin let Personnel know ahead of their annual reviews that they were feeling led to end their call as co-pastors next June so that new leaders can help the congregation fulfill the "Sailing to 2030" priorities. They expressed deep joy in serving here these 14 years.

Moderator

Steve Adair

Members

Randy Anderson

Ted Belden

Shawn Daniels

Roger Koepp

Julie Olsen

Bill Waite

Support

Phil Butin

Jan Butin

Planning

Over the past few years, the church has focused on implementing our Mission and Vision during a time when Covid dramatically altered how we worship and while Christians nationwide are continuing to migrate towards non-denominational megachurches. The Planning ministry's focus for 2023 was to ensure that both the Session and congregation were familiar with the impacts at FUPC and across the evangelical landscape of the United States. During the Annual Congregational meeting, held February 26th in Fellowship Hall, the Planning Ministry hosted a roundtable discussion seeking to understand what is important to the members of our church in glorifying God and how to help each person grow spiritually. We had 68 people in attendance and received another 16 surveys electronically. We received some good feedback, with 175 responses, mostly reinforcing things we're currently doing, such as the Christmas Eve service, our music, deacon support, and the mixture of worship in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall.

Based on the feedback of the Annual Congregational meeting, Session approved having Jason Tucker rejoin us for our Session retreat in August. The purpose of the retreat was to focus FUPC's efforts in developing plans for long-term growth. With the enthusiastic support of the congregation, Session also agreed to open the retreat, inviting all current elders, incoming elders, all members of ministry teams, deacons, and staff. There were 68 people in attendance on Friday evening, and 55 in attendance on Saturday.

Following the retreat, Session approved an initiative to adopt a measurable Key Result Area (KRA) of "Attracting, Nurturing, and Serving Younger Generations." To enable the success of this KRA, two distinct Pathways were developed:

1. Strengthen Connections between First School and Church Families.
2. Evolve Worship Services to support the aspirations of our current and future members as well as our visitors.

There have been substantial efforts placed against both Pathways, with a robust plan of "stepping-stones" or activities and initiatives to support First School, and Session approved a special Task Force to gain additional information and insights to help modify our worship services that appeal to a broader group of our community.

Moderator
George Wardlow

Members
Steve Adair
Mark Brandon
David Clay
Al Hanna
James Moore
Ed Piper
David Rodgers
Philip Talbert
Charles Williams
Alan Wolff

Support
Phil Butin

Properties

Thanks to all of you who made this ministry so enjoyable the past two years. The Properties ministry is responsible for the maintenance of the campus so it can run smoothly, be well maintained, and glorify God. All meetings were held by Zoom.

The Properties ministry continued installation of the control system by Harrison Energy Partners for the new HVAC system for the Sanctuary. The control systems for the new units were completed and the system was paid for in 2023. Monitoring and evaluation continued in 2023. David Rodgers coordinated repair of HVAC units, including replacement of one unit in Calvin 201-202, and all maintenance and filter changes during the year. Al Hanna assisted.

After a campus-wide security assessment was conducted by a member of Fayetteville Police, security doors and frames were installed in classrooms associated with First School to meet enhanced security needs. Security window film was installed on all lower windows of the buildings. A second classroom door was permanently “blocked in” in Upper Knox for security reasons.

The video monitoring system for enhanced security throughout all buildings was upgraded to provide additional cameras and monitoring. This necessitated upgrading the internet access to the entire church. Numerous small upgrades were made to facilities, including lighting in bathrooms in Upper Calvin, kitchen range gas lines, new kitchen garbage disposal, roof leaks, decking on Upper Witherspoon, LED lighting upgrades, and electrical panels and outlets. Church signs on Old Wire Road were refurbished.

Moderator

Rebecca Haden

Members

J.P. Peters

James Moore

Support

Phil Butin

Jan Butin

Earth Care Task Force

In early 2023, we applied for and received our 9th annual recertification as an Earth Care Congregation from the PCUSA for 2023.

There are four areas of focus for Earth Care congregations:

Facilities: The Earth Care Task Force continued to work through Properties to improve energy use. We offered a Minute for Mission on solar energy and published James Moore's report on the solar energy progress at FUPC at the website: <https://www.fupcfay.org/solar-energy-at-first-united-presbyterian-church/>

We supported First School in removal of invasive species at the Nature Play Space, which is in the process of being built. Large quantities of bush honeysuckle and other harmful plants were cleared from the space. We intend to rebuild and plant the Butterfly Garden in 2024. We also plan to hold Cleanup Saturdays to continue to keep the invasive species at bay.

Worship: The Worship Committee and our Pastors planned a Creation Care Sunday Service in the spring with relevant music, sermon, and service. The Early Service met in the outside gathering space in agreeable weather. We intend to approach the Worship Committee in 2024 in hopes of holding an Earth Day service on Sunday, April 21. We plan to create a display on the Earth Care task force efforts in the Gathering Space at that service.

Education: We supported Christian Education in preparation and implementation of a Creation Care intergenerational spiritual growth opportunity (VBS). We intend to work with the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries in 2024 to involve the youth of the church in the annual grounds cleanup.

Outreach: J.P. Peters surveyed local churches and other faith-based organizations to determine what kind of earth care activities each was conducting and is still working to form alliances with these organizations so we can work together on projects in environmental stewardship. We added an Earth Care page to the website: <https://www.fupcfay.org/serve/earth-care/>.

In 2024, we are working on developing fact sheets on topics like recycling, invasive species, and energy conservation, which we will link at this page.

We updated the Earth Care bulletin board in Calvin.

We also intend to enlarge the task force in 2024.

Moderator
James Moore

Members
David Clay
Karen Crocker
Brad Henry
Sabra Martin
Philip Talbert

Also Assisting
Ted Belden
Dwight Power
Mark Power

Support
Phil Butin

Gardens and Grounds

Gardens and Grounds is a part of Properties, and acts through Properties with the Session. It has a small budget of \$3,000 that it spends carefully. Properties asks for financial assistance from Session when larger projects arise.

Gardens and Grounds was an active participant in the Spring Clean Up Day on April 1, 2023, working with the rest of Properties and the congregation to prepare the campus for Easter. We had a good turnout for the cleanup, and some special projects were done later, as needed. One project, the Labyrinth, was presented by Jim Gilbreath and the Communications Committee. They wanted a more freshened up appearance, which was done during Spring Clean Up Day, but more extensive improvements were thought to be needed after a plan is made.

One special project that G & G completed was due to the very fine help of a summertime employee, our very own Riley Button. Riley is a forestry major, and he participated in the removal of our dying old Redbud trees on campus, along with the grinding and removal of the stumps, in preparation for replanting in another season. The bare areas were covered with good Zoysia sod after soil preparation. We also removed a dozen dead trees which were carried off to the compost facility.

G & G also participated in a large project initiated by Cathy Hairston, the Director of First School, to start a large brush and tree clearing project to eventually build an Outdoor Nature Space for the children of First School. Many First School parents, teachers, church members, and members of the Earth Care Task Force participated in the clearing. Literally 20 large trucks and trailer loads of brush, including tons of brush honeysuckle and other invasive species were removed. The plan is on pause currently because of winter.

The Committee has continued all year with their divided responsibilities. Sabra Martin has continued to be the Master Gardener behind many of the projects to beautify the many gardens and plants around the campus. She worked hard to see those plans fulfilled, planting azaleas, junipers, boxwoods, daffodils, tulips, lantana, and native plants. David Clay has continued to care for the Columbarium, trimming the crepe myrtles and yaupon hollies. Philip Talbert has cared for the lawns, with fertilization, lawn care, and irrigation, and maintains the Peace Fountain. James Moore and others planted and cared for the pots, replacing potting soil and planting canna lilies, Mandeville, hydrangeas, and flowering annuals. Dwight Power, Mark Power, James Moore, and Ted Belden have cared for the Lee Power Garden, replacing hibiscus, dwarf butterfly bushes, lantana, fertilizing and watering. Sabra Martin has been studying the stains and wear to some of our concrete sidewalks. Ted Belden has been studying the Amphitheater and some of the concrete damage in that area. Matt Wantland continues as our contractor who does the year-round mowing and some leaf removal as needed.