

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Art by Carol Fields

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST – SARASOTA
ANNUAL MEETING: JANUARY 26, 2025 – 12:15 P.M. SANCTUARY/YOUTUBE/FACEBOOK

Call to OrderHarold Mezile, Moderator
Opening Prayer..... Carol McCloud, Vice Moderator
Confirmation of a Quorum Jim Crumel, Parliamentarian

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Review & Approval of 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes.....Susan Moore, Secretary
Approval of Team Annual Reports & Membership ReportHarold Mezile
Nominations Committee Report.....Harold Mezile
 Nomination & Election of Team Members
 Nomination & Election of Officers
Financial Reports:
 Endowment Fund..... Steve Combs, Chair, Endowment
 2024 Balance Sheet Robin Reich & Roxanne Schwoch, Treasurers
 2025 Budget Finance, Budget, & Stewardship Team
Recognition of Immediate Past Moderator, Nancy Morris.....Harold Mezile & Carol McCloud
Passing of Gavel.....Harold Mezile & Carol McCloud
Motion to Adjourn..... Carol McCloud
Closing Prayer Pastor Wes

**MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC OF SARASOTA
JANUARY 28, 2024**

Moderator Nancy Morris called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

Harold Mezile offered an opening prayer.

Jim Crumel, parliamentarian, confirmed quorum.

Approval of minutes of the 2023 annual meeting moved by Jan Andersen and seconded by Peggye Mezile. No discussion. Unanimously approved.

Approval of Membership Report and Team Reports in the 2023 Annual Report moved by Carol Fields and seconded by Sarah Melcher. No discussion. Unanimously approved.

Approval of Nomination Committee Report on pages 5-6 of Annual Report. All Team Members stood for applause. Additional nominations were asked from the floor. None received. Moderator: Harold Mezile; Vice Moderator: Carol McCloud; Immediate Past Moderator: Nancy Morris; Secretary: Lynne Woodman; Co-treasurers: Robin Reich and Roxanne Schwoch. Additional nominations were asked from the floor. None received. Nominations closed. Moved by Richard Wharton and seconded by Tim Toops. No discussion. Unanimously approved.

Dale Woodling, co-treasurer, was recognized to give an overview of the 2023 financials. Dale began by reminding the members that we have no debt. We have approximately \$250,000 in a major expense fund for maintenance of campus. We have \$250,000 in an operating reserve for deficit budgets. We receive donations from the Endowment and McNaught funds that help support our operating budget. He highlighted the major renovation project of the sanctuary without a capital campaign. Our Stewardship drive exceeded its goal. We have \$92,000 surplus from the 2023 operating budget. We made \$25,000 in interest income on our reserves. Our property insurance went up 14%, this was well below our initial estimate in October.

Robin Reich, co-treasurer, reported on 2024 budgeted income of \$764,464. 78% is from contributions. 17% from our saints, 3% from investment income on CDs, and 2% from outside the church. We received pledges totaling \$3302 over our Stewardship Goal. We anticipate anonymous and unpledged contributions in 2024 to stay the same. We expect \$30,000 on our investment income. Expenses are divided as follows: 39% goes to ministerial compensation; 16% to support staff compensation; 17% to program expenses; 16% to insurance and financial; 10% to Facilities and Grounds, and 2% to office expenses.

Robin brought a motion from the Budget, Finance and Stewardship Team moves to approve the 2024 Proposed Church budget with the following Amendment: to reduce the property insurance budget for 2024 from \$107,198 to \$94,198 and to move the remaining \$13,000 from property insurance to the

Church Council Contingency Fund. The motion was seconded by Susan Raines. The motion passed unanimously. Dale reported on how the \$92,000 surplus would be distributed.

Cindy Woodling, chair of the Endowment Committee, thanked everyone who is part of the Legacy Society. The current balance totals almost three million dollars. Cindy reminded the congregation that 4% of the Undesignated Endowment balance in October is given to the operating budget for the following year. In 2023, in addition to the 4% allocation, Endowment funded over \$17,000 in scholarships: over \$2400 in family emergency funding, and \$7500 to music programs. We recognized David Mitchell for his long service to the Endowment committee. The United Church Funds manage the Endowments. Cindy encouraged members and friends to become part of the Legacy Society by putting the church in their will or estate.

Nancy Morris recognized Jim Butterworth, past moderator, for his 3 years of service.

Nancy Morris passed the gavel to Harold Mezile, who adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m., and Pastor Wes closed in prayer.

NECROLOGY 2024

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Wes Curry | Lovette Harper | Carrie Metzger |
| Chris Pickett | Bill Grubb | Michael Carone |
| Alma Niemiller | Samuel Bryant | Christine Knupp |
| Michael Matles | Sandi Tinsley | Bill Brackett |
| Ken Geiger | Robert Kitterer | Julie Pennella |
| Jim Walsh | Mildred Huismann | Johnnie Williams |
| Karen Barber | Harry Bryce | Dr. Robert Bryant |
| Cynthia Lichtenstein | Colonel George Francis | Carl Hendrickson |
| Earl Alger | | |

2024 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Membership beginning January 1, 2024 | 382 |
| New members (full and associate) | 25 |
| Remove from rolls (full and associate) | 36 |
| Deceased Full/Associate | <u>16</u> |
| Total Removals | 52 |
| Total Membership year ending 2024 | 355 |

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT 2025

Moderator: Carol McCloud

Immediate Past Moderator: Harold Mezile

Treasurers: Robin Reich & Roxanne Schwoch

Vice-Moderator: Ray Baker

Recording Secretary: Susan Moore

MEMBERS AT LARGE ~ *One representative from each covenant and UCC Women*

BUDGET, FINANCE, & STEWARDSHIP

Ed Andersen
Judy Black
Steve Combs
Sue Fields
Leslie Petzing
Dale Woodling
Robin Reich (ex-officio)
Roxanne Schwoch (ex-officio)

GROWING & CARING

Kyle Booth
Christy Boyer
Evelyn Crooks
Jane Delgado-Semidei
Joy Kuhn
Vonda Leonard
Carol Seltzer
Dave Stewart

PEACE & JUSTICE

Dawn Alexander
Liz Alexander
Lee Brockmann
Maria Duprez
Laurie Etter
Carol Haggllund
Carolyn Habel
Ellen Marsey
Nancy McElroy
Carol Rescigno
Barbara Smith-Bacon
Nancy Taylor

COLLAGE EXECUTIVE

Sandi Armstrong
Richard Dilts
Valerie Fields
Pauline Geary
Carolyn Habel
Deb Hays
Michael Keane
Gerard Poisson

FACILITIES & GROUNDS

Dave Abel
Chris Cooper
Carol Fields
Don Hoy
David Kerrigan
Rich Rescigno
Bud Rives

MISSION

Jan Andersen
Terri Crawford
Carol Fredrich
Toska Strong
Laura Taylor
Nancy Taylor

STAFFING

Dennis Crooks
Mike Johnston
Dick Miller
Linda Pursley
Clarence Rogers

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION & GROWTH

Jim Crumel
Beth Hawkins
Charles Hawkins
Donna Papenhausen
Eric Terdal
Lois Wilkins (Res. Ctr.)
Pastor Wes (ex-officio)

GREEN TEAM

Cheryl Beller
Jim Butterworth
Kathy Combs
Taylor Davis
Alleyne Kess
Sarah Melcher
Susan Moore
Lucy Tobias

FELLOWSHIP & SPECIAL EVENTS

Bernie Gottschalk
Buck Greenlaw
Page McCloud
Nancy McElroy
Nancy Morris
Barb Ralph
Sandy Smith
Connie Toops

MUSIC & FINE ARTS

Ray Baker
 Donna Booth
 Lucy Hedrick
 Jane Hunder
 Jim Hunder
 Frank Roxby
 Jeff Smith

ENDOWMENT

Steve Combs
 Deb Hays
 Hal Kamm
 Jerry Long
 Gib Mitchell
 Nancy Morris (ex-officio)

WORSHIP

Donna Blakey
 Liz Early
 Frank Hallice
 Elaine Hallice
 Carol Hagglund
 Matt Jacobs
 Marsha Kindall-Smith
 Susan Moore
 Sheryl Overheidt-Smith
 Becky Rives

RACIAL JUSTICE MISSION

Jim Crumel
 Sheila Gossett
 Lindsey Huddleston
 Florence Jackson
 Peggye Mezile
 Lois Wilkins
 Lynne Woodman

LAY VISITATION MINISTRY

Janet Baker
 Jim Butterworth
 Craig Collemer
 Julia Detloff
 Hal Kamm
 Alleyne Kess
 Sara Little
 Dick Miller
 Jerry Oliver
 David Pitt
 Maggie Revere
 Barbara Shaver

PRAYER CIRCLE

Linda Butler
 Greg Chestnut
 Jane Delgado-Semidei
 Carol McCloud
 Sheryl Overheidt-Smith
 Linda Pursley
 Maggie Revere
 George Taylor
 RuthAnn Waid

FOOD & HUNGER GROUP

SURE
 Jim Butterworth
 Carol Hagglund
 Judy Jones
 Mike Keane
 Ellen Marsey
 Nancy Taylor

SAFETY TEAM

Richard Dilts
 Joan Faucher
 Jane Hunder
 Susan Moore
 Nancy Morris
 Bob Procter
 Bud Rives
 Dale Woodling

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024

May God's grace and love be with each of you as we begin our 11th year of ministry together! Looking back on 2024, there are many headlines on my heartline. In April, Greg Chestnut retired as our Minister of Music after 35 years. Working with Greg for the last 10 years has been an endless well of constant joy for me. You may have walked into the office one day when Greg, Sherry, and I were laughing hysterically about something silly. Or maybe your soul was moved on Sundays as Greg and I sought prayerfully and creatively to let words and music open you to God's presence. We continue to hold Greg in prayer and are grateful for the ways he continues to be part of the church.

We were blessed this spring, summer, and autumn with amazing substitutes. Stephen Fancher, Adam DeSorgo, and Glenn Priest each shared their gifts with us in meaningful ways. Our Search Team for a Director of Music worked hard this last year. They surveyed the choir and congregation for what you were looking for in a Director of Music ~ producing a four-page list of qualities! We compiled our top 400 hymns. The Search Team reviewed over 15 resumes, watched endless videos candidates sent, and conducted zoom interviews. Over the last nine months, our Section Leaders and choir continued to lead worship Sunday-after-Sunday with grace and commitment. As 2025 dawns, we continue to interview people for the position and pray that we will be able to announce and welcome a new Director of Music very soon.

In December, Mark Swain, our Campus Manager, also resigned. We wish Mark and Dawn God's love in the coming year. As we begin 2025, we have hired a cleaning service to make sure the space is warm and welcoming on Sundays. The Staffing Team and leadership continues to evaluate the next right step to keep our campus maintained. We have been blessed by Robin Reich, our interim business manager, helping us discern what is needed for office staffing. The bottom line is that 2024 was a year of transition and in 2025 there will be moments to welcome new people into leadership. I continue to give thanks to Sherry Glover, Douglas Kingsley, Heidie Heath, and Pam Gansch-Boythe who daily share and shine their light. I am so grateful to Harold Mezile, Carol McCloud, and Nancy Morris who have gone above and beyond as moderators. We have thoughtful and faithful leaders of Teams and people who do so much around the church. I am so grateful to you ~ each of you. It is easier to preach on God's love when I encounter such a feeling every day with you.

My prayers for 2025:

- † Warmly welcome and creatively collaborate with a new Director of Music
- † Decide what is needed to keep our campus looking beautiful, warm, and welcoming
- † Right-size our staff to meet the realities of being a church today
- † Develop discipleship/faith-growing opportunities for our whole community
- † Reach out to our neighbors at Alta Vista, YMCA, and Sarasota Pointe living the great commandment
- † Worship fully every Sunday
- † Welcome new people into our church through a variety of doors from small groups to Sunday mornings
- † Develop more ways people can engage their faith beyond Sunday mornings

You might think, "Why not add, 'Walk on Water' to that list!!" I know the above are ambitious, but I believe the world longs for a church that is inclusive, diverse, honors God's creation, worships joyfully,

and shares all of life's ups and downs. I give thanks that in the coming year we will live our values (worship, welcome, belonging, caring, justice, and faithfulness/discipleship) every day and in brand new ways we may not even know yet. Together, with God's grace, we go into the days ahead. With my heartfelt gratitude and God's love to be your pastor in such a time as this.

Blessings ~ Pastor Wes

MODERATOR & VICE-MODERATOR - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT ~ HAROLD MEZILE & CAROL MCCLOUD

Stewardship Theme ~ Celebrating Our Past and Faithfully Shaping Our Future

Annual Goal: To celebrate our past and build our future. We will review and improve our policies and procedures to strengthen our church operation.

- **Celebrations:**

- **70th Anniversary of First Congregational United Church of Christ** ~ Word cloud, PowerPoint of church highlights, Poem by Bill Moore (updated by Susan Moore)
- **35th Anniversary of Music Minister, Greg Chestnut** ~ Word cloud, PowerPoint of Greg's many accomplishments, reception luncheon honoring Greg and wishing him the best on his retirement
- **10th Anniversary of Pastor Wex Bixby** ~ Word cloud, PowerPoint of Wes' accomplishments (building upgrades and long-term replacement plans, Creation Justice Church Covenant, Covenant Statement on Inclusion, Racial Justice Covenant, living our Core Values of Worship, Welcome, Belonging, Caring, Justice and Faithfulness, livestreaming of services, opening of the Oasis Center for Renewal & Reflection, and Labyrinth . . .)

- **Policy and Procedures:**

- Compassionate Care ~ Memorial & Celebration of Life Services Brochure
- Wedding Information & Guidelines Brochure
- Special Events Guidelines and Worksheets (on and off-campus events)
- Rental Agreement for our Guests and Renters

- **Church Structure Statement:** (Now available on our website)

- Updating of tasks for all teams, groups, and committees
- Organizational chart for FCUCC

- **Church Council Initiatives:**

- Written Team Reports are broken into two categories:
 - (Members and Community Services ~ *Collage, Fellowship, Green Team, Growing & Caring, Mission, Music & Fine Arts, Peace & Justice, Racial Justice Mission Group, Spiritual Education, UCC Women*)
 - (Church Operations & Support ~ *Budget, Finance & Stewardship, Endowment, Facilities & Grounds, Safety, Staffing, Technology, Worship*)

- Consent Agenda Items: Review/approval of Minutes, Moderator Reports, Pastor's Report, Finance Monthly Update, Submitted Team Reports)
 - Action Items: Items requiring Council approval
 - Zoom Meetings ~ except the December Council meeting/potluck gathering
- **Stewardship Campaign 2025** ~ Have You Filled a Bucket Today?

~ TEAM REPORTS ~

BUDGET, FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP – ANNUAL REPORT 2024 ~ MICHAEL JOHNSTON

The Budget, Finance & Stewardship (BF&S) Team, consisting of Michael Johnston (chair), Ed Andersen, Judy Black, Steve Combs, Sue Fields, Leslie Petzing, Dale Woodling and our co-treasurers Robin Reich and Roxanne Schwoch had a very productive 2024 thanks to the tremendous generosity of our congregation. As reflected in the 2024 Income & Expense Statement, contribution income, including pledges and anonymous and unpledged contributions, exceeded projected budget levels by more than \$17,000. Total annual income exceeded budget projections by over \$42,000 due not only to increased contributions but also higher than budgeted investment and room rental income.

On the expense side, staffing, program, and operations expenses all came in under budget. Total expenses were more than \$57,000 under budget with most of those savings being in the staffing category. The greater-than-budgeted total income and the less-than-budgeted total expenses resulted in surplus income (total income minus total expenses) for the year of more than \$110,000.

The BF&S team had several major initiatives during the year. The first was to work closely with the Facilities & Grounds team to provide funding for two projects—one to bring the fire alarm and suppression system up to code, and two to support the church's efforts to recover from three back-to-back-to-back hurricanes. Thanks to exceptional effort by the Facilities and Ground team led by Bud Rives, and tremendous volunteer efforts the projects including hurricane cleanup were completed.

Once again, the team reviewed the church's insurance, including a thorough review of renters insurance for the non-church-related groups that use our facilities. The team recommended to the Church Council that all tenants should have liability insurance, as recommended by our insurance broker. After much study and discussion, it was decided that the church would pay for liability insurance for the seven AA-related groups in 2025. Other groups will be required to cover the cost of their insurance.

Another initiative was to ensure that income from the church's cash reserves was maximized in a safe and effective manner. In this regard, the Team worked with Morgan Stanley to build a CD ladder which generally yielded more than 5.2% interest for 2024. The Team also moved idle funds into the Morgan Stanley Preferred Savings accounts. As a result, the church realized over \$42,000 in income from its FDIC-insured investments, a significant increase from a few years ago.

The church is starting a Technology fund which will be funded in the 2025 budget. This fund, like the major reserve fund, will allow us to update our technology and continue the message of good news to those who are unable to worship in the Sanctuary.

The final initiative was the year-end stewardship drive based on the theme, Filling our Buckets. The stewardship team, along with Vice-Moderator Carol McCloud worked on the buckets filling theme.

In summary, the work of the BF&S team was made easier in 2024 by an exceptionally generous congregation that clearly loves and supports this church financially and spiritually.

FACILITIES AND GROUNDS - ANNUAL REPORT 2024 ~ BUD RIVES

Facilities and Grounds activities during 2024 began with planned replacements and improvements and ended in a scramble to recover from three major storms: the unnamed deluge of June 11, and hurricanes Helene and Milton.

Continuing an initiative begun in 2023, Chris Cooper, assisted by Lucy Tobias, Sarah Melcher, Alleyne Kess, and some volunteer weeders and diggers, completed the planting of native plant beds on either side of the Sanctuary and in the memorial garden. Additional plantings and plant replacement are ongoing. In conjunction with this effort, some invasive plant species were removed. In coordination with the Green Team, an area for an addition to the Butterfly Garden was prepared. In response to the new plantings, the irrigation system was upgraded.

New paper towel dispensers were installed throughout our space.

The steeple cross blown down by a December 2023 storm was replaced.

The fire suppression system in the Syster Hall kitchen was upgraded to meet the current code.

New A/C units were installed in the SURE office, Narthex, and North Sanctuary in accordance with the Long-Range Financial Plan.

Major palm and oak tree trimming were done, and a dead slash pine was removed.

In response to the Safety Committee's concerns, exterior lighting at the parking lot entry, bus garage, and office entrance were added.

In conjunction with the Safety Team, F&G investigated the status of required inspections of all fire alarm and fire suppression systems, only to discover that many had not been done for years. As a result, bids were solicited, and a contractor was selected. Numerous inspections were scheduled, and completed, and the required repairs were made.

Several improvements were made to the Outreach Building including new toilets, tile/grout cleaning in both restrooms, and new exterior doors for SURE.

Storm damage resulted in the need to repair drywall and restore carpet in the library, repair the SURE roof, and remove tons of tree debris from the campus. Most of the Helene debris was removed and piled by in-house help, especially Pastor Wes and Mark Swain and his family. The Council approved funds for post-Milton clean-up, which has been completed except for the replacement of a small amount of fascia on the northwest corner of the sanctuary.

As always, much of this could not have been accomplished without individual volunteers working on their schedules or during the organized efforts. Thanks to all of you who pitched in with a special thanks to Rich Rescigno and Lynne Kirchoff, who work on landscaping almost every Thursday!

FELLOWSHIP & SPECIAL EVENTS – 2024 ~ SANDY SMITH

This year was a year of celebrations for our church! In February we celebrated 3 anniversaries – 70 years for the church, 35 years for our former Minister of Music, Greg Chestnut, and 10 years for our Pastor Wes Bixby. In April we had a special luncheon for Greg who retired this year. In November, Pastor Wes had his own celebration of 10 years of serving First Congregational UCC. All these events were well attended. In addition, we also hosted our Annual Chili Cookoff with nine participating chefs, a summer ice cream treats Sunday, National Pie Day, and a Cookie Extravaganza with donations from many of our church family.

We continued Coffee Hour Fellowship time after the 11 a.m. worship service on the first and third Sundays of the month. Thank you to all the church teams who hosted Coffee Hour during your assigned month, and special thanks to many of our teams who offered an extra Sunday of Fellowship. Thank you to all the members of our congregation who donated food items for these events.

Many of our church teams and covenant groups were able to take advantage of the Coffee Hour gatherings to present special programs and willingly helped with refreshments, set up, and clean up. It was heartening to see the number who attended the Coffee Hours increase and witness the fellowship shared among the guests—welcoming newcomers, greeting old friends, and making new ones. I look forward to continuing to offer this opportunity in 2025.

I also thank my Fellowship Team members Buck Greenlaw, Mary Kukainis, Nancy McElroy, Nancy Morris, Barbara Ralph, and Connie Toops for their help in planning our events. We welcome anyone who would like to join us – “The Fun Team” in 2025.

GROWING & CARING – ANNUAL REPORT 2024 ~ CAROL SELTZER

Thanks to all the members of the Growing and Caring Team, we have had a busy and productive year. We are happy to add 3 more members in 2025. *We continue to care for our congregation* by contacting those who may not be able to attend services regularly. We do that by visits, phone calls, cards, or emails. There are about 60 on our list and more are added from time to time.

We spearheaded a gift card shower for a member who lost everything to the recent flooding. The congregation was very generous.

Thanks to the efforts of Jane Delgado-Semidei and Carol McCloud, we designed and implemented a very efficient method of receiving requests for prayer. A group of eight meets monthly to review the list. We know how important prayer is in the lives of our members.

For All Souls' Day, our team prepared angels and candles for every member or church friend who passed into the next life during the year. Family members or friends take the angel and candle home to remind them of their loved one.

We have placed strong emphasis on growing our congregation. We do this in various ways. One is to provide a light lunch and information session for those who may be interested in joining our congregation. This year, we welcomed 18 new members. Another way we reach out is to have gift bags available to any visitor to our services.

This year we joined with the Mission Team and their Alta Vista project and the Music and Fine Arts team for the after-Thanksgiving percussion and harp concert in our chapel. We greeted the guests with candy canes that included information about the meaning of the cane. Also, we made available a brochure about our church designed specifically for visitors to various events.

Also, in addition to Christmas and Easter ads in the Observer and Herald Tribune, we advertised on social media to market to younger people. We look forward to expanding our efforts in 2025 for both Growing and Caring.

MISSION – ANNUAL REPORT 2024 ~ JAN ANDERSEN

The Mission Team had an excellent intake in 2024 for our Love Offerings. The Christmas Love Offering was \$20,117.55 by the end of January 2024 which is the most we have ever collected. For Easter Love we brought in \$17,400. This was augmented by \$5000 from the finance team which made us able to be very generous with our gifts. The Alta Vista fund drive brought in \$5,781 which we supplemented with \$1,219 from the Heindl fund to keep our donation at \$7,000.

Evelyn Crooks, one of our members, investigated helping people with medical bills. After diligently researching it, she found Center Place Health and set up a talk on September 22 after church. Laura Taylor, a new member of our church who joined us in April, joined a subcommittee on outreach to Alta Vista. She spearheaded a project to make Peace Flowers for the first day of school. Peace Flowers were planted on the school property easily seen by the children as they came to the first day of school. We had members standing in our entrance with signs welcoming them. This subcommittee now falls under Mission. We are doing a parent-student pizza night in February 2025. We also did a Toy Drive for Alta Vista Students for Christmas. I worked with Ellen Marsey and Barbara Smith Bacon on a Mission Fair for October which had to be rescheduled for March of 2025 because of the hurricanes.

In December we had a tea with cookies and carols at Sarasota Point which was very well received. For Christmas Love we are concentrating on agencies helping hurricane victims. In September we approved

our updated Mission Statement. We said goodbye to John Ristow in September as he has an internship now. We are losing Gretchen Friend Jones and Evelyn Crooks in 2025 and will welcome Carol Fredrich.

MUSIC & FINE ARTS – ANNUAL REPORT 2024 ~ JANE HUNDER

Once again, it has been a busy year for the Music and Fine Arts Team. In February we were excited to host Keith Hampton as our Artist in Residence. It was a joyful experience for the choir to work under Keith's guidance and enthusiasm. Holy Week is always a beautiful time of reflection through music and work. Thanksgiving and Christmas included our brass and tympani, and string players from Sarasota Orchestra. On December 1st we welcomed Marcelina Suchoka on vibraphone and Phoebe Powell to the sellout concert as our artists for our Christmas by Candlelight Concert in the chapel. Our Music Sunday was December 17th, and the choir sang at both services. Our brass and tympani players were a part of these services. Christmas Eve, we welcomed Betsy and Fernando Traba as our guest musicians for our 4:00 service, with Natalie Helm on cello, Meghan Jones on violin, and Greg Stead on oboe at both our 7:00 and 11:00 service.

With the retirement of Greg Chestnut in April, the choir has held steadfast in their commitment to our church family, and we were fortunate to have Adam DeSorgo, Stephen Fancher and Glenn Priest serve as our interims. The MFA Team has continued to keep the music program going strong and is now preparing for next year's Artist in Residence.

Many thanks to Douglas Kingsley for his expertise in our livestreaming, audio and visual, and to Sherry Glover who is always there when we need her.

I am thankful for our team members—Ray Baker, Donna Booth, Lucy Hedrick, Jim Hunder, Frank Roxby, and Jeff Smith.

PEACE & JUSTICE – ANNUAL REPORT 2024 ~ BARBARA SMITH-BACON

Below are examples of how the P&J Team helped facilitate our church's justice advocacy in 2024.

BRADY SARASOTA: Carol Rescigno

- Continued Bayfront rallies (Thursdays at 4 pm), except during the volatile election season.
- April 11th, hosted Sgt. Robert Morrison of the Sarasota Police Department's Community Action Team at the Oasis Center, to speak about the City's Operation Armistice program, an anti-crime initiative.
- Collaborated with COLLAGE on wearing orange to church on June 2nd.
- Organized a vibrant Bayfront rally for gun safety on June 8th, despite the state canceling the Ringling Bridge lighting in gun safety orange. Brady SRQ engaged Moms Demand for this event.
- Co-sponsored a presentation at our church on October 16th, with the National Council of Jewish Women – Manasota, featuring Po Murray, Newtown Action Alliance (Newtown, CT).
- Hosted the 8th Annual Vigil for Victims with participants from both within and outside of our church, featuring Manny and Paricia Oliver, whose son Joaquin died in the Parkland massacre.

Food & Hunger Group: Ellen Marsey and Michael Keane (co-leaders)

- Managed FCUCC's participation in the Bread for the World Offering of Letters, with over 100 letters delivered to legislators. New partnerships were formed with other local churches to expand impact.
- FCUCC delivered 2886 tons of food to All Faiths Food Bank in 2024 and coordinated church participation in the AFFB Summer Walk for Hunger in April.
- Family Promise volunteers continued to provide meals to Francis House when needed.
- After the hurricanes, Family Promise volunteers helped run a table at the FEMA Disaster Recovery Center. And over \$1,000 in holiday gift cards have been donated by FCUCC congregants to help families needing housing and other assistance after these storms.
- Community Meal continued to serve healthy meals and offer conversation to participants, despite impactful renovations at St. Paul Lutheran, and the move out-of-state of a founding program member.

Project 180: Barbara Smith-Bacon

- Repeated our First Week Out backpack in-kind donations program.
- Organized participation for the October "Strong Voices" educational luncheon and fundraiser.

SURE: Laurie Etter

- Following ~18 months of staff turnover, SURE enjoyed a rousing re-start of the Nehemiah Action at our church on March 18th, under the passionate leadership of new Lead Organizer Mackenzie Grimes and Executive Director Ryan McBride. A new Associate Organizer was added in late summer.
- During the second half of 2024, SURE's Lead Organizer stepped away for health reasons. Also, SURE is currently sourcing a new direct-action national network, as SURE's relationship with DART was not working in all aspects for either SURE or DART.
- Despite the transitions, SURE continues its essential justice work in Sarasota County focused on two issues: affordable and attainable housing and the civil citation program.

Miscellaneous:

- Placed a letter to the editor of the Herald Tribune (also mailed to all relevant legislators), encouraging the State to accept Federal Summer Electronic Benefits Transfers for families of children eligible for school lunches. Also signed the UCC Conference letter on the same topic.
- Hosted a voting information session at church in June, shining a light on voter registration, new vote-by-mail requirements, and the Primary elections relating to Sarasota Memorial Hospital.
- Continued sending urgent action emails to all on the Peace & Justice Network email list, to inform them of potential action on various justice-based policy matters.

Peace & Justice Members: Lee Brockmann, Maria Duprez, Laurie Etter, Carolyn Habel, Carol Hagglund, Ellen Marsey, Carol Rescigno, Barbara Smith-Bacon (Chair)

Food & Hunger Group Members: Michael Keane (co-leader), Ellen Marsey (co-leader), Jim Butterworth, Carol Hagglund, Nancy Taylor

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION & GROWTH – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ ERIK TERDAL

The Spiritual Education and Growth Team had another active year. We are continuing to grow our Oasis Center for Reflection and Renewal.

We reviewed scholarship applications and were able to award several at a June Scholarship Sunday. We followed up with Fall semester midterm encouragement letters signed by many congregation members plus a gift for the students.

This year we continued to support the weekly gatherings of Sacred Conversations on Race led by Jim Crumel and two Bible studies led by Pastor Wes. We continued to support the twice-a-month gathering for Drumming as a Spiritual Practice led by Greg Chestnut, Lindsey Huddleston and Christine Hoffman. We supported the Artful Prayer Group's monthly gatherings led by Donna Papenhausen and others. We hosted FEAST classes in March focusing on Artful Prayer and Sacred Conversations on Race. From January through May, Pastor Wes led us to discuss a series of books: *Build the Life You Want* by Arthur C. Brooks and Oprah Winfrey, *Hope Leans Forward* by Valerie Brown, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen, *No Cure for Being Human* by Kate Bowler, and we listened to *The Seventh Story Podcast Series* by Brian McLaren in May. This was followed in November with a book conversation on *Falling Upward*. In November, we showed a documentary, *Hip-hop: Beyond Beats & Rhythms*, with a discussion by Byron Hurt. We look forward to 202C continuing to find ways we can grow our faith as a church.

STAFFING TEAM - ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ DICK MILLER

Staffing Team members are Dennis Crooks, Dick Miller, Linda Pursley, and Clarence Rogers.

Condition of Employment Job Descriptions have been updated as needed during annual reviews with staff members.

On March 31, Greg Chestnut departed on disability from the position of Minister of Music. This full-time position has been restructured as Director of Music. A Search Committee was formed to fill this position. Linda Pursley is the Staffing Team representative on this Committee. The Search is ongoing, and special thanks go to all Committee members for their hard work over the past nine months.

On December 10, Mark Swain resigned as Campus Manager. Discussions are underway to determine how this position will be filled.

Presently, there is one full-time staff member: Senior Minister Wes Bixby. Part-time positions are Office Administrator Sherry Glover, Media Specialist Douglas Kingsley, Bookkeeper Pam Gansch-Boythe, Financial Clerk Heidie Heath, and four Choir Section Leaders. Robin Reich is working as a part-time Office Manager through April, while the Team considers how best to configure the office staff.

WORSHIP – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ FRANK HALLICE

Worship is one of our core values and is central to the life of our church. This year our worship on Sundays was full of celebrations. We began the year by welcoming Artist-in-Residence, Keith Hampton, for Dr. King Weekend. We celebrated Black History Month through stories and spirituals. We kicked off our 70th Anniversary in worship. We celebrated Holy Week with worship on Maundy Thursday in Syster Hall and Good Friday in the Sanctuary culminating in a glorious Easter celebration. We celebrated Greg's retirement in April. We celebrated Earth Day and Creation Justice Month (September). We celebrated PRIDE month in June. Each month we celebrated communion as we gathered around Christ's inclusive and expanding table where all are welcome! We are grateful to our substitute organists and choir directors: Stephen Fancher, Adam DeSorgo, and Glenn Priest who have each blessed us in beautiful ways. We celebrate our choir who continue to nourish our souls every week. Our core value of worship is vibrant and vital! In the coming year, we look forward to welcoming a settled Director of Music (soon we pray!)

We look forward to another meaningful Artist-in-Residence weekend, Black History Month, PRIDE Month, and Creation Justice Month. Each Sunday, we will continue to join in prayer and praise. We also welcome your thoughts on ways our worship can expand and include more people. We will see you in church!

~ COMMITTEES & COVENANT GROUPS REPORTS ~

COLLAGE (OPEN & AFFIRMING COVENANT) – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 – PAULINE GEARY

- January—sponsored luncheon presentation LISTEN TO OUR YOUTH, Screening of film 1946
- February—Equality Florida presentation on Transgender issues and anti-trans FL State bills. Supported We Are Not Alone presentation of Transgender Speaker. Co-sponsored with Racial Justice Bayard Rustin Movie.
- March—Luncheon presentation Embracing Our Differences, Pet Blessing
- April—Sold Tickets for and attended Considering Matthew Shephard presentation. Several members attended and participated in public speaking time at Sarasota County School Board meetings. They supported LGBTQ+ students and gay board members as well as racial justice concerns throughout the year.
- May—Mother's Day discussion and hosting Social Hour for all of May
- June—Collage members participated in worship during June. Sponsored booth for outreach at Silver Pride. Luncheon presentation by ALSO Youth on Pronouns. Presented financial support or SEE ALLIANCE. Participated in marching giant Pride Flag across the Ringling Bridge. Participated in WUSF89.7NPR interview.
- July—Co-sponsored with Racial Justice team postcards for returning citizens. Met with Pink Haven leader from UU.
- September—Luncheon hosted India X Miller transgender storyteller
- (October/November luncheons canceled due to weather)
- November—Facilitated post-election support gathering. Financial support is presented to Ringling College students through the DEI department. Transgender Remembrance during and after service. Advocated for monthly meeting space for ALSO Youth Board of Directors.

- December – Provided financial support for ALSO Youth for hurricane recovery. Provided financial support for Support Our Schools. AIDS Awareness Day recognition during worship service. Some members advocated a continued 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service, especially for people who are alone.
- Supported liaison to PFLAG throughout the year with COLLAGE member attending each monthly meeting.

CREATION JUSTICE (GREEN TEAM) – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ JIM BUTTERWORTH

The Creation Justice/Green Team was very busy in 2024.

The team helped to raise the consciousness of the congregation about environmental issues in several ways:

- Wrote articles on environmental issues for every monthly newsletter
- Addressed the congregation about World Water Day and Earth Day as well as about Water Engineers of the Americas (Easter Love) and Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (Christmas Love)
- Led services in September as we celebrated Creation Justice month
- Supported the initiatives of the Mission Team and UCC Women

We took steps to help the church become more eco-friendly.

- Participated in all cleanup days
- Worked with the Facilities and Grounds team on plantings, weeding, fertilizing, and other tasks
- Maintained the butterfly garden and consulted with the Sarasota Butterfly Club on plantings
- Cleared and provided irrigation for an extension of the existing butterfly garden

We supported environmentally friendly initiatives in the community.

- Contributed to the Embracing Our Differences program in support of environmental justice
- Sponsored the local chapter of the National Citizens Climate lobby
- Supported the Sunshine Compost Program on our church grounds
- Contributed year-end contributions to various environmental non-profit organizations.
- Co-sponsored with Collage a Pet Blessing event for the community.

ENDOWMENT – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ STEVE COMBS

The Church Endowment Fund was established in 1973 with \$10. At the end of Fiscal Year 2024 (12 months ending September 30, 2024), the total value of the Church Endowment Funds was \$4,039,686 (\$2,562,180 in the Undesignated Endowment Fund and a total of \$1,477,506 in the seven Designated Endowment Funds). The administration of the Church Endowment Funds is guided by a Trust Agreement and Church Bylaws and is managed by a five-person Endowment Committee. The Church Endowment Funds are invested in equity mutual funds managed by United Church Funds, an investment management company affiliated with the UCC.

Undesignated Endowment Fund Distributions in FY 2024

By tradition and in accordance with the Church Bylaws and the Endowment Procedures, the undesignated portion of the Church Endowment Funds distributes 4% annually to the church's operating budget. In October 2024 and based on the 2024 fiscal year-end balance of the Undesignated Fund, \$102,487 was approved for distribution to the 2025 church operating budget. An Administrative Fee of \$500 was also paid in 2024 from the Undesignated Fund.

Designated Fund Distributions in FY 2024

During Fiscal Year 2024, distributions from the seven designated funds were as follows:

- Scholarship Fund - \$2,287
- York/Ellwood Scholarship Fund - \$15,713
- Greg Chestnut Music Fund - \$6,285

Gifts to the Endowment Fund in 2024

During Fiscal Year 2024 the Undesignated Funds received gifts totaling \$356,708 from 8 estates and trusts and one Legacy Society member.

Legacy Society

The Legacy Society started in 2015 with 35 members. There are currently 86 members who have notified the church that they have made a planned gift to the Church Endowment Fund. Endowment Sunday is planned for March 23, 2025.

FY Year Total Endowment Balance Comparison for the past five years (FY ending Sep 30)

| 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| \$2,792,395 | \$2,858,221 | \$2,310,082 | \$2,792,395 | \$4,039,686 |

Endowment Committee

Steven Combs—Chairperson, Hal Kamm, Deb Hays—Secretary, Jerry Long, Gib Mitchell
Treasurer - Nancy Morris

LEGACY SOCIETY, AS OF JANUARY 2025 ~ NANCY MORRIS

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| John Leland Adams | Vince Amoroso & Tam Milton | Warren Bacon & Barbara Smith-Bacon |
| Pat & Graham Barkhuff | Joan Beach | Thelma Becket |
| Susan Bolan | Edith Bowles | Dr. Fred & Lee Brockmann |
| Greg Chestnut | Fred Clark | Rev. Dr. Craig Collemer |
| Fran Collier | Phyllis Collins | Chris Cooper |
| Dennis & Evelyn Crooks | John DeMaster | Helaine Eckstein |
| Helen Enterline | Pauline Geary | William & Patricia Grubb |
| Carol Hagglund | Richard & Deb Hays | Lucy Hedrick |
| Florence Jackson | Rowena Janssens | Lynn Jones |
| Hal & Jan Kamm | Mel Kestner | Drs. Marsha Kindall-Smith & Hugh Smith |
| Billie Knauss | Francis Knight | Mary Kukainis |
| Bev Laier | Vonda Leonard | Marilyn Lewis |
| Margo Light | Dr. Sara Little & Barbara Shaver | Miriam Maeder |

Bruce & Judy McGowan
Robert Miles
Bill & Susan Moore
Len & Drue Murray
Marie Norton
Dr. Jean Porter
Maggie Revere
Norm Rouston
John & Connie Schaefer
Joan Sheil
Rev. Dr. Jean & Paul Simpson
Merry Texter
Jean Walker
Lori White
Dale & Cindy Woodling
(4) Anonymous

Rick & Patrice McDaniel
David & Susan Mitchell
Rev. Dale Moore & Dr. Steve Horowitz
Felix & Nancy McElroy
Scott Nutter
Susan Raines
Rich & Carol Rescigno
Gregg Royer
Marjorie Schmiel
Robert Carl Smith & Nydia Muniz-Smith
Audrey Shutters
Minton & Sandy Tinsley
Roger & Ellie Weiss
Elizabeth Wildhack
Bruce Wooley

Ginny McIntire
Gib & Jeannie Mitchell
Nancy Morris
Dr. Richard Miller
Barbara Peele
Larry & Charlaine Ream
Myron & Brenda Robinson
Betty Rundlett
Carol Seltzer
Ann Stormzand
Lucia Taylor
Dr. Tim & Connie Toops
Bill Wendling & Lynne Woodman
Dr. June Wolgemuth
David York & Ross Ellwood

LAY VISITATION MINISTRY – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ CRAIG COLLEMER & SARA LITTLE

“Listen carefully with the ear of your heart.”

These are the opening words of The Rule of St. Benedict. The Rule is simply the guide for those who choose to live a monastic life together. Listening with the ear of our heart is counterintuitive to our fast-paced society where we are constantly bombarded by messages. I’ve noticed lately that many online articles now tell the reader upfront how long it will take to read the article...so if you don’t have the time don’t even start! Most messages we receive today are designed to be 20 seconds or less in duration.

Our Lay Visitation Ministry Team (LVMT) is dedicated to something quite different. The purpose of the LVMT is to be truly present and deeply listen to the members and friends of our congregation who are generally unable to attend worship and other church events, find themselves in a nursing home, rehabilitation center, hospital, or hospice house or are currently experiencing a difficult time. We seek to be truly present and listen deeply to the members of our congregation who we visit, telephone, and reach out to in a variety of other ways. Often these individuals long for someone to simply listen with compassion and a caring heart. Deep listening is a precious gift we can freely give one another. These visits are a *ministry of presence and deep listening* wherein we bring the love of God and the congregation to these individuals and/or their families. During 2024 we were able to increase the number of members on our team and, thereby, increase the number of visits made this year.

Another dimension to our ministry is led by Sara Little and Julia Detloff who have organized a monthly mailing of over 60 cards with a message/prayer from Pastor Wes to each person on our list. This effort has shown to be a wonderful way for our church family to reach out in a tangible way to those unable to join us for worship or other church events. During our visits, those who have received these cards often mention how much they appreciate them. Sometimes they’re hanging on their walls or sitting beside their bed. The little things can mean a lot.

Our team continued to meet monthly for a one-and-a-half-hour time of education, support, and reflection in person and via Zoom. Our time together consists of an opening devotional, remembering church members who have passed from this life to their eternal life with God, a time for Pastor Wes to share with the members, checking in with each member regarding the visits/contacts they have made in the past month, a time of educational insights and/or spiritual reflection, and a time for refreshments! Everything shared in our monthly gatherings is kept in the strictest confidence.

The members of LVMT are Janet Baker, Jim Butterworth, Julia Detloff, Hal Kamm, Alleyne Kess, Dick Miller, Jerry Oliver, David Pitt, Maggie Revere, Barbara Shaver, with Craig Collemer and Sara Little as co-leaders. We were sorry to see one of our members leave our team due to health reasons. Sherry Mange had been a member of our team since we began this ministry ten years ago. We are grateful for her kind, sensitive, and faithful service with us. We are also grateful for the support and encouragement of Pastor Wes at our monthly gatherings and throughout each month.

RACIAL JUSTICE COVENANT – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ JIM CRUMEL & LINDSEY HUDDLESTON

Guided by the church's Racial Justice Covenant, the Racial Justice Mission Group has continued to facilitate, expand and participate in activities to promote racial justice within our congregation and the larger community:

- Approximately 20 members of our congregation participated in the MLK Unity March in Newtown on 1/15/24.
- In honor of Black History Month, the new RJMG banner has been installed outside in front of the church and the congregation applauded the revealing of the second banner which can be carried in future MLK marches, etc.
- Continued interviews of African American congregation members to capture the church's rich history of Racial Justice chaired by Warren Bacon.
- Priscilla Crumel performed a re-enactment of Mary McLeod Bethune on Sunday, 2/11/24.
- Commissioned Carol Fields to create a full-page church program ad for the 2024 Gamma Xi Boule Valentine's Day Gala to raise scholarship money and provide memberships to African American youth.
- On 2/5/24, RJMG chose to divide our Easter Love Offering between the Dr. Joseph Evan's Scholarship Fund supporting an African American seminary student and the current national UCC racial justice program called "Join the Movement".
- As a collaborative venture with COLLAGE, the film "Rustin" was viewed by 80 members of our congregation on 2/25/24, with an engaging conversation afterwards.

- We collaborated with COLLAGE on a presentation by Ben Jewell-Plocher, the Director of Learning and Engagement for EOD, after the 3/10/24 service about the “Embracing Our Differences” billboards in Bayfront Park.
- RJMG collaborated with the Manasota Anti-Racist Coalition and the National Council of Jewish Women to co-sponsor a program entitled “Take a Walk in My Shoes” held in Syster Hall on 3/21/24. There were 50 attendees.
- RJMG organized a tour of the “Embracing Our Differences” exhibition led by Ben Jewell-Plocher in partnership with the Unitarian Universalists on 4/3/24. Twenty-one participants from First Congregational UCC attended. Page McCloud drove the church bus. Our church was one of three sponsors of a panel entitled “Are My Roots Showing?”.
- On 4/28/24, we celebrated Pacific Islander and Asian American Heritage Sunday. Laura and George Taylor shared stories of their life and affiliation with a Japanese UCC church on the Island of Kauai.
- Clarence Rogers spoke at the Juneteenth Sunday service on 6/16/24 and was well received.
- Gregg Mathews facilitated two very successful Postcards to Returning Citizens (formerly known as Ex-Felons) events on 3/24/24 and 7/21/24, in partnership with COLLAGE, bringing our total number of postcards sent to approximately 500 Returning Citizens.
- RJMG donated \$500 to the conference organized by Bud Friend-Jones entitled “EARTH’S TAPESTRY: Interweaving Nature, Community and Climate” scheduled for 9/27/24-9/28/24. The conference was canceled because of the weather; RJMG left the donation in place for a reschedule.
- Hispanic Heritage Month was celebrated in October when Jane Delgado Semidei read the scripture from her mother’s Bible in Spanish.
- A screening of the documentary “Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes” followed by a Q&A with producer Byron Hurt was attended by 47 people on 11/14/24. This was a collaborative effort with SEG.
- Lindsey Huddleston maintained the RJMG bulletin board in Syster Hall.
- \$1000 was donated to the Sarasota chapter of the NAACP.
- \$1000 was donated to the Manasota chapter of ASALH towards the Freedom School.
- \$2000 was donated to the “Embracing Our Differences” sponsorship fund.
- Lindsey Huddleston and Priscilla Crumel decorated the communion table for the 12/29/24 Kwanzaa celebration. Barry Wells provided an overview of Kwanzaa; Dr. Marsha Kindall-Smith led the congregation in a Kwanzaa song; and Shavonda Griffin presented the Kwanzaa principle of the day Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics). Coffee hour featured sweet potato bars by Rosalind Hill and music by DJ Paul Ruffin.

- Continued to build the RJMG resource center materials.
- Continued to work closely with the church's other two covenant groups.

The Racial Justice Mission Group sincerely thanks the congregation for the emotional, intellectual and monetary support for our efforts. As we move into 2025, we will continue to foster understanding, partnership and, to paraphrase the late Congressman John Lewis, promote "Good Actions".

Sheila Gossett, Florence Jackson, Gregg Matthews, Lois Wilkins, Lynne Woodman, Co-Chairs Jim Crumel and Lindsey Huddleston

SAFETY COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ GREGG MATTHEWS

The church's Security Taskforce was assembled in August 2022 following some incidents of violence around the country by active shooters.

The Sarasota Police Department was invited to meet with the taskforce, toured the campus and gave us helpful hints to safeguard the church and our members. The committee has held a total of 14 meetings since forming in August 2022.

Written Greeters procedures were updated to help ensure Greeters secure the church's entrances, contact 911/EMS staff, alert Pastor Wes if necessary, and systematically take action in the event of perceived threats.

We attended an "Active Shooter Preparedness" Webinar.

We sought feedback from other churches to help further develop our safety plan, including Regional UCC on "Protecting Your Church" hosted by Emmanuel UCC in Sebring, and Sarasota Bayside Church.

The formal Safety Plan was approved by the Church Council and presented to church members in an October 2023 briefing in Syster Hall.

A '911' plan was developed to handle medical emergencies and has been used effectively for recent medical emergencies. There will be four members of the team who will be in the congregation on a rotating basis to assist in the event of a medical emergency.

Guidelines for UCC bus drivers were developed to ensure the safety of church members riding the bus.

Working with Bud Rives, a light was installed at the entry driveway to prevent vehicular accidents. In addition, the church fire protection, alarm and sprinkler system inspections have been updated.

We met with the pastor of St Boniface church to share to share a copy of our Safety Plan.

Two (2) CPR training programs were conducted to help train church members in resuscitating other members who may need assistance. Other CPR training programs have been scheduled for 2025.

AED units and First Aid kits will be fully installed and visible in Syster Hall and the Sanctuary by January 2025.

In the past year, there were 3 instances of choir members needing assistance. The committee will place water and cool towels/pads near the front of the sanctuary to assist any choir members in need. In addition, a fold-up bed has been secured and reserved for individuals needing rest during service.

In 2025, new and current Greeters will be trained on the revised procedures to ensure all are aware of the new procedures.

The committee will continue to meet bi-monthly unless other circumstances dictate, or special issues arise.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC WOMEN – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 ~ JANE HUNDER, PRES.

The First UCC Women's Association is open to ALL members and friends of the church. We meet in Syster Hall on the first Tuesday of the month from October to May for fellowship, luncheon, and a program. The monthly programs provide an opportunity for attendees to get first-hand information about many of the non-profit and help agencies that provide services in the community for the betterment of the environment, the homeless, and current societal problems that are prevalent. These programs are well received with an average attendance of 30-40 each month.

Our 2023-2024 programs included:

Environmental Concerns: Invasive Plants and the Havoc Wreaked Environmental Panel, SAS (School Attendance Support), Filling Christmas Bags for Orchard Place and Meals on Wheels, Learning About Ukrainian Culture, Constructive Solutions for Community Problems of Addiction, Drugs and Alcohol, and Homelessness through the Salvation Army, Praying with Color, Gentle Yoga and Balance Yoga and a Tea with Music and Poetry.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY GROUP – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024

The Prayer Shawl Ministry gifted 23 hand-knit or crocheted prayer shawls to recipients in 2024. Each shawl and recipient received this blessing:

*May God's grace be upon this shawl
Warming, comforting, enfolding and embracing,
May this mantle be a safe haven...a sacred place of security and well-being
sustaining and embracing in good times as well as difficult ones.
May the one who receives this shawl be cradled in hope, kept in joy,
graced with peace, and wrapped in love. Blessed be!*

Jack Botelho, Florence Jackson, Carol Hagglund, Lindsey Huddleston, Judy Jones, and Carol Millar