

**FOREST LAKE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
**2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF SESSION TO THE CONGREGATION**

**STAFF**

The year began with a staff of Dr. Ellen Skidmore as Senior Pastor, Rev. Ed Black as Associate Pastor for Care and Discipleship, Dr. Eric Skidmore as Parish Associate for Stewardship, Jodi Beckham as Director of Mission and Community Engagement, Bill Wannamaker as Director of Youth Faith Formation, Shannon Fancher as Business Manager, Adele Wyatt as Office Manager, Dr. Beth Mears as Director of Music, Sylvia Trimmier as Organist, Laura Wannamaker as Kitchen Coordinator, Sissy Ervin as Nursery and Preschool Coordinator, Ebony Eaddy as Church Sexton, and Stacy Rivera as part-time outsourced Finance Director. There were no staff changes in 2023.

**MEMBERSHIP**

On January 1, 2023, Forest Lake Presbyterian Church had 575 active members. During 2023, 18 members joined the church triumphant, 5 members transferred to other churches, and 3 members moved to the inactive roll. 31 new members joined our congregation (19 transfers and 12 profession or reaffirmation of faith). There were 3 infant baptisms and 1 adult baptism. On December 31, 2023, Forest Lake had an active membership of 580.

**BUDGET**

The Session approved a balanced budget for 2023 of \$825,672. The Church received \$837,335.40 (or 101.41% of our projected revenue) in pledges and revenue and ended the year with a surplus of \$31,691.45. This surplus was due to strong financial support from our members and guests, and careful stewardship by our Session Ministries and the Board of Deacons.

**OVERSIGHT ISSUES**

In September 2022, the Session held a retreat to review and to plan for the Church's life and mission. At that retreat, five initiatives were identified and discussed. Each initiative was either already underway or was an initiative that would shape our future life and mission and was ripe for strategic review and prayerful planning. The Session agreed on the purpose or outcome that would guide each initiative and assigned follow up work to ensure continued adaptation and progress.

**Faith Formation**

Faith Formation (Transformation) is focused on deepening our knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ and teaching us spiritual practices to live that faith.

Education drafted a 2023-2024 Theological Education Blueprint and then appointed a small working group to review and provide feedback. David Hunter (Moderator), Tom Leclair, and Mandy Pigeon are reviewing the blueprint to ensure we know both what we do and what outcomes are expected or anticipated from each activity/initiative.

## **Worship**

The Worship Ministry asked Dr. Beth Mears, Stuart Hunter, and Ellen Skidmore to propose a process to receive input from the congregation, and to identify the values and purposes that guide worship at FLPC. The Ministry agreed that while our worship is not “broken” in any way, the culture around us has changed significantly in the last five years and that a review of the “Why” as well as the “How” we worship is a proactive and faithful task to undertake. Worship approved a proposal, submitted by the task group, to contract with Rev. Mark Tidsworth, [who had helped to lead the 2022 Session Retreat] to produce an outline for a listening session or focus group that could be used throughout the congregation. The intention is to hold listening sessions for our whole congregation to ask for feedback. The feedback will be synthesized and studied to reveal the values that guide our corporate worship and that may serve to guide any/all experiments or changes that may help us deepen our ability to worship God more faithfully.

Beth, Ellen, and Stuart have planned to hold eight separate, but identical, listening sessions within our congregation. Two of these Listening sessions, February 18<sup>th</sup> and March 17<sup>th</sup>, will be held immediately following worship for any in the congregation who wishes to give input (and has not already participated in one of the other group sessions). Once all eight listening sessions have been completed, Rev. Tidsworth and the planning team will consider the feedback and bring recommendations back to The Worship Ministry, The Session, and the Congregation.

## **Review of Structure and Organization**

The purpose of this initiative is to evaluate how we may more effectively, efficiently, and sustainably organize FLPC to encourage people to serve by using their gifts to show God’s love. We want everyone to: know who to go to, do intentional work guided by our theology, minimize duplicate effort, and avoid unnecessary conflict. Of the five initiatives identified by Session, this one remains to be addressed. While our congregation is well organized and our structure is working, we want to be proactive, rather than reactive, so that we will be the best stewards of our members’ time and energy. Once the Faith Formation and Worship Initiatives are completed, the Session will be asked for guidance on how to approach this initiative.

## **Capital Campaign**

In July 2022, this congregation voted to allow the Session to pursue the completion of capital projects that could leave the congregation in debt not to exceed \$250,000. Since that meeting, all approved capital improvements have been completed. You received by email, and we have hard copies here today, a handout that summarizes all of the projects (both the 3 that were delayed and the 14 that were completed), and the cost of their completion. The “Before” and “After” results are amazing. The construction is now complete. What is not complete is the payment for all of this good work.

The pledges from the Capital Campaign are set to be completed by the Summer of 2024. The payment of these pledges is critical for our quest to minimize our debt. The Capital Campaign is

still open for gifts. And, in addition to pledges and gifts from members and guests, the Church has received two bequests – given through planned estate gifts – that will be used to reduce the church’s debt on this capital improvement work.

We expect still to receive over \$57,000 in pledge payments that are still outstanding from our membership. These pledges will be paid by the summer of 2024. Once all pledges and gifts have been received, the Session will update the congregation on the residual debt. The Session knows that the projects that were delayed have not gone away, and that a plan to address issues of aging HVAC units and carpet will be needed. We know that the upkeep of our property is important to our members, and we will continue to evaluate how best to ensure the integrity and beauty of our church facilities. And we also celebrate and are grateful for the important improvements and repairs that have been accomplished through our Capital Campaign.

### **COMPASS Site Partnership with Serve & Connect**

Our long-term partnership with Serve and Connect made big progress in 2023. Our mission is to promote safety in the Decker Boulevard community by building trust, strengthening connections, and increasing access to local resources. Serve and Connect has provided us a summary of the work we have accomplished in the last year [Handouts summarizing our accomplishments and our immediate goals are available in the front of the sanctuary]:

- Listening sessions continue to be held twice a month to build community and to surface both needs and resources within our target area. Out of these listening sessions, a Leadership Team has emerged that includes community members, representatives from local churches, local non-profits, and governmental agencies (eg: RSD2, Richland County Public Library, Richland County Sheriff’s Department, etc.).
- In October, Serve and Connect, with help from FLPC, negotiated and signed a lease-to-own agreement for the property that was formerly the home of Petersen Presbyterian Church [8131 Brookfield Rd.]. Serve and Connect has made that location their organizational headquarters, as well as the site for our partnership.
- A new name or brand was created for our work. Our partnership is now *The Decker Collective: Bridging the Boulevard*.
- A community visioning event was held in the gym of Richland Northeast High School, on October 28<sup>th</sup>, to build excitement and to begin to envision how to impact our community. Ideas were generated in three areas:
  - Safe Spaces for Youth
  - Building Bridges
  - Community Pride
- In November, funds and volunteers from FLPC and the community helped to pack over 125 boxes of non-perishable food that was given to the local community. This drew a large crowd to the property on Brookfield and allowed for conversation and a sharing of the vision and possibilities for the site and the community.

- Through the tireless work of Dr. Kassy Alia Ray and her team, Serve & Connect has received multiple grants that will assist with the renovation of the buildings on Brookfield Rd and make it even more of a resource for the community.

Everyone is invited to participate in the work of getting to know and to love our neighbors. Contact the members of Compass Task Group (appointed by Session to serve as the liaison between FLPC and Serve & Connect). The members of this Task Group are Jeff Binnicker, Anne Fowler, William Hunter, Mark Huguley, and Rebecca Van Wyke. Ellen Skidmore and Jodi Beckham serve as staff liaisons.

**Conclusion:** The Session remains committed to work in 2024 on these five initiatives in our ongoing commitment to focus relentlessly on our Mission: *Transforming Head, Heart, and Hands in the service of Jesus Christ.*

### **THE BOARD OF DEACONS**

**Moderator: Deacon Rebecca Williams-Agee**

**Deacons: Emma Behymer, Peggy Ann Burr, Peggy Carey, Melissa DiSilvestro, Sissy Ervin, Gene Fisher, Lori Hancock, Sally McKenzie, Val Schulz, Travis Taylor**

**Staff Liaison: Ed Black**

- Sponsored a new “happy birthday team,” which is a small team of members who call members on their birthdays.
- In February, each deacon either mailed or emailed communication with their contact information to everyone within their care group.
- Continued to mail the series of grief books to the relevant members of the church family.
- Sponsored Ed Black to attend Stephen Leader training in summer 2023.
- Sponsored a weekly grief group in fall 2023.
- In coordination with the Education Ministry, helped launch a new mental health discussion group that met for 8 weeks in fall 2023.
- Held a social for all incoming and current deacons in October.
- In coordination with John 1:5 Day, baked cookies in the fellowship hall on December 17 to give to those in our church family who have experienced loss.
- All members have received at least one handwritten note from the note writing team since January 2023.
- Created meal trains when needed.
- Sponsored the “memory tree” placed in the Connecting Point to remember individuals we have lost.

## **THE MINISTRIES OF SESSION**

### **Ministry of Care and Connections**

**Moderator: Elder Rebecca Timmons**

**Staff Liaison: Jodi Beckham**

**Committee Members: Wayne Harris, Emily McRae, Adriane Radeker, Rebecca Timmons, Laura Wannamaker**

The function of the Ministry of Care and Connection is to build community among members and guests by cultivating a culture that is hospitable and offers a low-threshold way to enter into the life and activities in the congregation. Intentional small group opportunities that help people get to know others and provide a safe place to share their stories and meet a need are a priority. The goal is to generate living, loving and serving disciples of Christ through community. This ministry helps build authentic connections between people and engages in forms of care for the congregation not already accomplished through the Board of Deacons.

This ministry is responsible, but not limited to, the following groups and activities:

- FLPC Presbyterian Women
  - PW retreat
- Senior Ministry
  - Senior Luncheons
  - Daytrippers
- FLPC Men's Breakfast
- FLPC Youth Basketball
- FLPC Church Congregational Retreat
- First Responders Appreciation Luncheon
- Wellness Activities
- Congregational Fellowship Luncheons and Dinners
- Guest contacts and New Here classes
- Men's retreat

Events from this year:

- Yoga classes throughout the year
- Senior Lunches throughout the spring and fall
- Three New Here classes were held throughout the year for prospective new members
- Daytrippers trips, spring and fall
- Men's Prayer Breakfast has been meeting on Tuesday mornings
- A second Men's Prayer group meets on Thursday mornings
- Coffee fellowships has returned on Sundays
- PW Retreat was held Feb 4-5 at Camp Fellowship, 27 ladies attended
- Palm Sunday breakfast was held April 2nd
- Fireflies Church Night, June 9, 46 registered
- Technology classes – Realm

- Sponsored a nutritionist during VBS
- Rally Day luncheon
- Walking group during Kirk night
- Fishing at Hudgen's Pond, Oct 22
- 1<sup>st</sup> Men's group retreat was held at Camp Fellowship Oct 27-28, 11 attended
- First Responder's Luncheon was held November 9 serving 250 people
- Youth basketball teams formed in the fall for the 23-24 season. 47 players are playing

## **Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team - Forest Lake Presbyterian Church** 2023 Year End Report

Officers: PW Coordinating Team Officers were Ginny Jones, Moderator; Adriane Radeker, Moderator-Elect; Beth Rozek, Secretary-Treasurer. Val Schulz, Missions and Giving Leader. The position of Faith and Fellowship Leader remains unfilled. Circle Representatives were Sally Templeton, Circle 1; Beth Rozek, Circle 2; Margaret Haymaker (spring) and Sandy Helfer (fall), Circle 3; and Erlinda McCoy, Circle 4.

### Accomplishments

1. PW supported benevolences with gifts in the amount of \$1615.00
2. PW held a retreat at Camp Fellowship on February 24-25, 2023. This was the first retreat held at Camp Fellowship since February 2020, just before the Covid pandemic closed activities down. About 25 women ranging in age from the teens to the late seventies attended, thus bringing greater intergenerational interaction to the event. The fellowship among attendees was excellent. The movie, "The Two Popes," encouraged participants to think about Who God is and what His will for us might be. Ellen worked extremely hard to prepare the material and structure in-depth and thought-provoking discussions on Friday evening and Saturday morning.
3. PW awarded the 2023 Mary Gooding Smith Scholarship in the amount of \$500.00 each to Emily Bowman and Will O'Bradovich.
4. PW offered two meals, prepared by volunteers from all four Circles, to UKirk students at USC, one on April 9 and one on November 1, 2023. Both dinners were enthusiastically welcomed by the UKirk students and staff.
5. On Sunday, August 27, Women's Sunday, the worship service focused on the gifts of women in the church, celebrating that in the PC (USA) both women and men can serve at all levels of leadership in the church. Ginny Jones gave the Welcome. High school senior Anna Pigeon led the Prayer of Confession. Stuart Hunter conducted the Time with Young Disciples. Erlinda McCoy offered the Prayer for Illumination. Sermons were given by Erlinda McCoy (Romans 12:9-18) and Janyce Collins and Laura Collins Easterling (Hebrews 10:19-25). The Rev. Ellen Skidmore and Ginny Jones installed the officers of FLPC's Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team. Val Schulz presented PW Lifetime Membership Awards to Stuart Hunter and Erlinda McCoy. Jessica Agee led the Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer. Adriane

Radeker conducted the offering. Prior to worship, PW held a women's covered dish breakfast in Fellowship Hall.

#### Plans for 2024

1. PW will hold a Winter Retreat at Camp Fellowship on Saturday and Sunday, February 24-25, 2024.
2. PW has decided to offer two dinners a year to UKirk students and USC, one in the spring and one in the fall. These dinners are eagerly awaited by UKirk students. Other churches have now decided to join this effort, following FLPC PW's example.
3. PW has decided to increase the Mary Gooding Smith Scholarship to \$1,000.00 to each of two graduating high school seniors who are members of Forest Lake Presbyterian Church.

Ginny Jones, Moderator  
PW Coordinating Team

#### **Ministry of Education**

**Ministry Moderator: Elder Ray Nix**

**Staff Liaisons: Ed Black and Bill Wannamaker**

**Committee Members: Jessica Agee, Sandra Allison, Jennifer Catoe, Lydia Clary, Beth Elliott, Sissy Ervin, Barbara Holbrook, Ray Nix, Liz Roberts**

- In January 2023, we hosted "Created by God," a sexual education workshop for students ages 10-12. More than 20 students attended this weekend program.
- Jodi Beckham led a class on Amy-Jill Levine's *Witness at the Cross* during Lent. She averaged 15.6 attendees per class.
- We designated the weekend of March 19 as "peace making weekend" and included a screening of *Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* on 3/19 in the sanctuary (with pizza beforehand).
- We edited (and Session approved) the FLPC Child Protection Policy in March.
- During Lent, we sponsored a "station of the cross" video series that enabled our congregation to take short videos of each station. As of December 2023, the playlist of all videos had 437 views.
- We held two Easter egg hunts for students on April 2.
- A 2023-2024 faith formation blueprint was approved and submitted to the Faith Formation Task Group led by David Hunter.
- 5 church family members became Disciple I graduates and helped lead worship on 5/14/23.
- We continued our "Bible Basics" Sunday school class for second graders before awarding Bibles on 6/4/23. The second graders also helped lead worship on 6/4/23.

- Eleven FLPC children attended “FLPC Week” at Camp Fellowship in June. Ed Black served as the camp’s chaplain during the week.
- We hosted our first “Bible Boot Camps” for elementary students in summer 2023. 16 children graduated from Old Testament boot camp, and 11 graduated from New Testament boot camp.
- Ellen Skidmore led a special Sunday morning class in August, “Start Here.” She averaged 26.3 attendees per class.
- We hosted a church-wide, intergenerational Vacation Bible School from 8/20-8/23. Almost 100 church family members attended, and more than 30 church members volunteered. The theme was “Reset,” and separate programming was available for children, youth, and adults.
- In coordination with Laura Wannamaker, our Kitchen Coordinator, we brought back Kirk Night for eight weeks in fall 2023. Children, youth, and adults had programming after dinner, and the average attendance was 45.
- Bill Wannamaker and Ed Black hosted a child protection/emergency evacuation meeting on 10/1/23 for all faith formation leaders.
- We hosted a fun Trunk or Treat on October 29.
- Podcasts: Ellen Skidmore continued her interfaith podcast, “Abraham’s Table,” with Rabbi Jonathan Case (Beth Shalom) and Imam Omar Shaheed (Masjid As-Salaam). As of 10/23/23, 35 episodes have been produced. We continued the FLPC podcast, “Transforming Faith,” and produced 3 episodes in summer 2023.
- Nursery: Sissy Ervin, our Nursery Coordinator, revitalized our nursery, which included updating the artwork and pictures around the room. In addition, new playground equipment was put together and is now being used!
- Ed Black continues to write and distribute devotionals to our church family. 31 devotionals were emailed in 2023.
- All elementary lesson plans are written/produced in house instead of purchasing elementary curriculum, and we provide “children’s worship companions” for each worship service.
- We have begun revitalizing the library thanks to a few dedicated members. We also have placed bookshelves in the downstairs lobby and outside the sanctuary that highlight new or special topic books.

### **FLY (Forest Lake Youth)**

- February 12: Youth Sunday - Forest Lake Youth (FLY) led worship.
- January 23: 6 youth attended a confirmation service retreat through Charleston (SC) Youth Mission.
- April 23 Confirmation Sunday: 6 youth completed Confirmation
- In May, Bill Wannamaker attended the Arts, Recreation Conference in Montreat for continuing education.
- In June, Bill served as a small group leader for weeks 1 and 2 of the High School Conference at Montreat.



- In July, 8 youth attended the Montreat High School Conference.
- In July, 17 youth attended the Montreat Middle School Conference.
- Forest Lake Youth used the *Faith Questions* curriculum for Sunday Morning Faith Formation.
- Forest Lake Youth continues to meet on Sunday nights through the school year.
- December 1-3: 9 youth will participated in a weekend service retreat through Cross Mission in Charolette, NC.
- December 10: Pre-Confirmation class kicked off with a lunch for students and their families.

### **Goals for 2024**

- Scripture knowledge: We hope to launch new small accountability/support groups based on Magrey Devega's *The Bible Year: A Journey Through Scripture in 365 Days*.
- Sunday morning faith formation class attendance increase
- Continue to refine Kirk Night: We are excited about bringing back Kirk Night! How can we best engage our congregation on Wednesday night so Kirk Night can continue to grow?
- FLY goal: To better prepare 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students for Confirmation through Pre-Confirmation classes.

### **Ministry of Personnel**

**Moderator: Elder Erlinda McCoy**

**Staff Liaison: Ellen Skidmore**

**Committee Members: Drew Radeker, David Hunter, Katherine Lockwood, Cheri Taylor, Dave Precht, Shirley Fawley**

In January of 2023, the church employed the following persons:

Rev. Dr. Ellen Fowler Skidmore – Pastor, full-time

Rev. Ed Black – Associate Pastor for Care and Discipleship, full-time

Rev. Dr. Eric Skidmore - Parish Associate for Stewardship, part-time

Jodi Beckham – Director of Mission and Community Engagement, part-time

Bill Wannamaker, Director of Youth Faith Formation, part-time

Shannon Fancher, Business Manager, part-time

Adele Wyatt- Office Manager, full-time

Dr. Beth Mears – Director of Music. part-time

Sylvia Trimmier – Organist, part-time

Sissy Ervin – Nursery and Preschool Coordinator, part-time

Laura Wannamaker – Kitchen Coordinator, part-time

Ebony Eaddy – Church Sexton, part-time

Stacy Rivera – Outsourced (contract) Finance director, part-time

There were no staff changes in 2023.

Personnel Ministry was chaired by Elder Erlinda McCoy. Other members of the Ministry were: Drew Radeker, David Hunter, Katherine Lockwood, Cheri Taylor, Dave Precht, Shirley Fawley and Ellen F. Skidmore (ex-officio). The Ministry met every month except for July and accomplished a great deal. Highlights from the Ministry's work in 2023 include:

- The Personnel Manual was updated to include a revised paid time off policy.
- Completed outcome-based employee reviews for Ellen Skidmore and five of our other staff members.
- The church was able to give all staff a 1.5% increase. The 1.5% increase for Ellen and Ed was a mandatory increase to the cost of their insurance costs through the PC(USA).
- Updated the position description for the Office Manager as a result of the employee review process.
- Recruiting efforts were made for the Nursery Worker position. The position description was updated to include candidates who are at least 16 years of age to open the applicant pool to high school students.
- Funds were raised to support a 10-week summer internship. A position description was created to include help in worship, VBS and other areas. Katie Pittman accepted and completed that summer internship position before returning to Queens University for her senior year of college.
- FLPC provided funds to allow our staff the benefit of continuing their education. Shannon Fancher continues to pursue certification as a Church Business Administrator. Bill Wannamaker attended a Montreat Conference to help him with youth ministry. Ed Black completed the Stephen Ministry Leader Training online. Ellen Skidmore participated in two weeks of continuing education.
- Safety Preparedness. Personnel takes safety seriously and did the following things to enhance safety and security at FLPC.
  - Updated the Staff Emergency Policy and Procedure Guidelines to include current staff positions and other updates.
  - The church staff completed bomb threat/suspicious package training.
  - Building Evacuation Drills – Staff held two weekday building evacuation drills. One was scheduled and the other was in response to the fire alarm being set off by HVAC workers in the building.
  - Security Cameras and doorbell. The staff have taken full advantage of the new security cameras and the downstairs doorbell/camera that were installed as a part of the Capital Campaign. Those cameras have allowed the staff both to keep tabs on the building (for example, we have learned how much of the community uses our dumpster and have gained an appreciation for how many individuals benefit from our 12 step programs in the Community Room!), but also to scan for security. We can see who comes to the door and can determine if they are known or unknown and react accordingly.
  - Paid for our Business Manager to participate in an online webinar “Cybersecurity in our Churches” to help us identify potential security weaknesses.

## **Ministry of Property**

### **Moderator: Steve Hyman**

The Ministry of Property's function is to review and approve of the routine and non-routine needs of the church building and grounds. Property Committee members included: Wendell McCoy, Skip Slaughenaupt, Cindy Welborn, Judy Timmons, Sissy Ervin, Tommy Stallings, Crawford Young, William Hunter, Justin Hunter, Cathy and Steve Hyman. Members retiring prior to year's end were Crawford Young and Judy Timmons. Properties Committee approved of, and the Business Manager carried out:

- Transfer of surplus 2022 Properties budget funds to Capital Improvements Designated Fund;
- Established Woodshop Committee with Properties oversight and redrafted the Woodshop Designated Fund to align with the new committee;
- Shingle roof maintenance by local roofer;
- Added water bottle filling feature to the office area fountain;
- Routine HVAC, plumbing, lighting and fire alarm repairs and maintenance;
- Three replacements for Memorial Garden Committee vacancies;
- Modifications to the Facility Use Application and creation of a Facility Use Policy;
- 2023 Budget of \$109,060
- 2024 Budget of \$111,610;
- Terminated existing dumpster service vendor and hired an alternate provider;
- Replaced defective motor on HVAC unit serving E102;
- Added Pelican Wireless Adapter to Workshop;
- Tinted Nursery windows and 2 windows in the Kitchen;
- Hired Dominion Energy to replace many remaining interior incandescent bulbs and exit lights to LED at substantial savings versus contractor pricing;
- Purchase of Portico light bulbs;
- Repaired Connecting Point HVAC unit;
- Replaced AC units in S211 and woodshop;
- Replaced tires on the bus and worked with the Dealership to fix a continuous battery issue;
- Purchased AED for lower level.

The FLPC Wood Shop Committee accomplished the following:

- Published FLPC Woodshop Safety and Operations Manual and Woodshop Membership Agreement;
- Had a successful fund raiser which provided funding for a new 8" jointer, 20" planer, band saw circle jig, and two cyclone chip collector front ends;
- Added 7 new members and a number of others are in the process of joining;
- Made 30 advent candle holders, there were 8 wood shop members who participated in this project;
- Repaired a member's chair that was broken, to be refinished as a training opportunity for one a woodshop member;

- Made an end table for a member who is paying for the material. This was a great learning project which uses the table saw, band saw, Jointer, planer, sander, drill press, and domino floating tenon machine;
- Installed cyclone devices to the chip collectors so the wood sawdust and chips can be used by FLPC gardeners as mulch;
- Held a number of training sessions on various tools: table saw, band saw, compound miter saw, lathe, etc.;
- Scheduling of a class in January 2024 on how to prepare a garden dibbler for planting seeds at the correct depth;
- Scheduling a Class in March on how to refinish antique furniture. The class will be taught by Steve Brantley, the owner of Colonial Woodworks, Inc;
- Added the 220 V outlets required for the new Jointer, Planer, and Drum Sander

The FLPC Memorial Garden Committee included following members: Lydia Clary, Pick Ellerbe, John Hudgens, Rebecca Krueger, Linda Murphey, and Carolyn Wright. Pick Ellerbe died to this life and John Hudgens and Carolyn Wright are rotating off in 2024. There are currently spaces for 44 plaques and 18 interments.

### **Ministry of Service and Benevolence**

**Moderator: Joan Dickinson**

**Elders: Tom Leclair**

**Staff Liaison: Jodi Beckham**

**Committee Members: Pam Appleby, Linda Byrum, Jackie Cominotti, Bettianne Davenport, Frank DiSilvestro, Sissy Ervin, Lucy Leclair, Tom Leclair, Lisa Lencke, Julie Lott, Tommy Stallings, Cindy Welborn**

### **Unumb Center for Neurodevelopment Summer Camp**

From July 24 – 28, the Unumb Center held a summer camp using FLPC facilities. Activities were directed toward skills development for participating campers. Each day 15 – 18 campers and 10 – 12 Unumb Center staff and volunteers engaged in classes and skills training. Classes included a session in the newly refurbished wood shop. Several congregation members conducted classes and training session as part of the week's program.

### **Elf Tree**

In 2023, FLPC continued the annual Christmas gift program in coordination with social workers at six local schools. Participating schools included: Condor Elementary; Dent Middle; Forest Lake Elementary; Jackson Creek Elementary; Keels Elementary; and Windsor Elementary. Gift cards were provided for students at Richland Northeast High Schools. One hundred twenty-eight (128) children received gifts and twenty-four (24) youth received gift cards through this year's program.

### **Homeless Kits**

Five homeless kits were distributed this year. Each kit contained a \$5 food gift certificate, an all-day bus pass, socks, water bottle, tooth brush and paste, towelettes and information card for local services available to those in need. The homeless kit program was suspended midyear as demand for the kits had waned.

### **Midlands Organized Response for Equity and Justice (MORE Justice)**

FLPC continued participation with twenty-six (26) other midlands congregations in MORE Justice activities in 2023. Following months of research, refinement, and planning, MORE Justice crafted specific requests for public officials for the 2022 - 2023 annual cycle. At the Nehemiah Action Assembly held in March, and attended by 800 members of MORE Justice, MORE Justice made specific requests to public officials. Thirty-eight (38) FLPC congregation members participated in the Nehemiah Action Assembly. Elected officials present at the Nehemiah included the mayor of Columbia and two Richland County Council Members.

### **Food Drive for Richland School Districts One and Two**

In April, the congregation contributed to a food drive for the summer food pantries of Richland School Districts One and Two. Over two hundred (200) bags (approximately three thousand (3000) pounds) of nonperishable food was collected for the food pantries.

### **COMPASS Project – The Decker Collective**

In coordination with Serve and Connect, the COMPASS project continued to grow and develop throughout 2023. Several community events including 2 Summer Fun Days and a community clean-up took place. The project reached milestones in transitioning from the COMPASS Project to the Decker Collective and in assisting in securing the former Peterson Presbyterian Church as a permanent space for Serve and Connect. That space also has potential hub for Decker Collective initiatives. A community visioning activity took place on October 28. A Greg's Grocery event on November 12 provided one hundred fifty (150) food boxes and hotdogs and hamburgers for approximately 200 members of the Decker Collective community.

### **Home Works**

On Saturday, October 14th, a team of 13 volunteers from FLPC helped a homeowner in Columbia with minor home repairs, exterior painting, and landscaping. The project was conducted in partnership with Home Works America, a non-profit ministry that provides home repair services to low-income homeowners.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

FLPC continued to maintain and encourage all of our congregation to participate in caring for God's Earth.

Certifications/memberships:

We renewed our certification as an Earth Care Congregation with PCUSA in January 2022.

**Awards:** The Kids Garden was selected as "Best Vegetable Garden" by ReSoil in their Garden Photo contest (June 2023). We received a Compost Gift Bundle consisting of 3 bags of ReSoil Compost and 2 bags of Compost Concentrate, which we used to help amend the garden beds.

**Community Service and Participation:**

- Our twice-yearly Gills Creek Waterway Cleanups (done through Keep the Midlands Beautiful) were canceled for both spring and fall 2023 due to the ongoing construction of the bridge and Forest Acres park. We expect to resume our waterway cleanups in Spring 2024.
- We collected 270 pairs of shoes in April for Keep the Midlands Beautiful Shoe recycling-by-reusing project.
- FLPC hosted a group of you at UCamp (offered by the Unumb Center for Neurodevelopment) during the last week of July. Among other activities, we held a gardening classes for about 12 teens in the Kids Garden. We gave them a tour of the vegetable beds and a hands-on activity where we planted snap pea seeds in peat pots that they could take home along with instructions for growing.

**Recycling:** FLPC's recycling (paper/plastic/aluminum) was collected by Forest Acres, and we added a new collection to our Terracycle program. We now collect plastic "solo" cups (#6 plastic only) and dental hygiene products (toothbrushes, used toothpaste tubes, dental floss containers and dental product packaging). We are also adding a collection of used socks and razors to be recycled through Terracycle. These collections are products that are not recyclable in the city/county curbside recycling program.

**Gardening:** Our three gardens – SCWF certified Habitat Garden, Raingarden, and Kids' Garden were maintained by our Green Garden Team of volunteers. The Kids' Garden got four new raised beds that were filled with new soil from ReSoil. We had wonderfully productive spring and summer plantings, and we donated all produce of fruit and vegetables to Rehoboth UMC Food Pantry - approximately 184 pounds total. Three garden work/planning days were held (1 in winter, 1 in spring and 1 in the fall).

**Education:** We held our 15<sup>th</sup> annual Earth Sunday celebration on April 30th with the theme "Growing God's Garden". We had 10 exhibitors in the upstairs hallway (relocated from Fellowship Hall due to kitchen construction). Lots of enthusiastic visitors attended from our congregation.

### **Family Promise**

Family Promise of the Midlands opened its doors in December 2014, after more than two years of multi-denominational effort. FLPC was one of the first (of 16) churches to commit to this mission, helping deal with families in need because of homelessness.

FLPC served the Family Promise by providing support three weeks in 2023 for housing and living expenses of homeless families through the Family Promise organization. The Christmas Eve offering is designated to support Family Promise of the Midlands.

Linda Byrum and Christi Cooper were co-coordinators for the program and attended bi-monthly zoom meetings for all church coordinators in the program. Some highlights of the program this year:

- Continue to support families who have completed the program to ensure they do not slip back into homelessness.
- Tomorrow's Promise provides enrichment activities (Sports, music, art, dance) for students of homeless families.
- Midas Muffler provided used cars for each family in the program.
- Family Promise has adopted a new model for 2024. Three supporting churches will be responsible for one month. FLPC will be responsible for June with Frances Burns UMC and Northminster Presbyterian.

### **Backpack Buddies**

The Backpack Buddies program officially started at FLPC in September of 2018 for Forest Lake Elementary School (FLES). For 2023, the spring semester started in January with providing bags of food weekly for 32 students and quickly grew to 36 students for the rest of the semester. When the fall semester started this year, we were made aware that the social worker at FLES was not only new to the district, but students no longer had to apply for free lunches, so it was harder for her to identify which students were considered to be "food insufficient." We started in September with only 10 students. We are now serving 16 as of Thanksgiving.

Our goal is to provide food that is as nutritious as possible with the limitations of it not being refrigerated, not too heavy to carry, and being difficult to prepare. We send home breakfast for two days, two lunch portions and two dinner proteins, along with side dishes of rice or potatoes. We also send two fruits and vegetables each weekend. We meet bi-weekly to pack bags to send home with the children from school and Sissy Ervin delivers bags to the school every week. We provide extra food for long weekends and longer holidays. We started the 2023 year with a budget of \$8,000. We have been able to stay within budget, and not use the designated fund, because of so many less students this year. In the past we have provided meals for those living in hotels, and are happy to report that all of "our kids" have homes this year.

### **Gleaning with the Society of St Andrew:**

In June a group of 9 gleaned strawberries in Pomaria and November 3-4 ten people from FLPC attended a two night gleaning retreat in Chapel Hill, NC where we gleaned 240 lbs of greens and bagged 8,000 lbs of apples with the other church teams.

**Red Cross Blood Drive:** FLPC hosted a blood drive in March that collected 12 pints of blood.

### **Benevolences**

Service and Benevolence donated to the following organizations in 2023: Family Promise of the Midlands, Oliver Gospel Mission, Vital Connections Children's Garden, Salvation Army Woodyard Fund, Centennial Church Soup Kitchen, Harvest Hope, Washington Street UMC Soup Cellar, Sister Care, Women's Shelter, Medical Benevolence Foundation, Ministry of Hope, Frontera de Cristo, Camp Fellowship, Live Oak Counseling, Montreat Conference Center, MORE Justice, and The Cooperative Ministry. We also support PC(USA) mission co-workers: Mark Adams and Miriam Maldonado Escobar on the border of Mexico in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico and Shelvis and Nancy Smith Mather, South Sudan.

## **Ministry of Stewardship and Administration**

**Moderator: Elder Marshall Brown**

**Staff Liaisons: Ellen Skidmore, Shannon Fancher, Eric Skidmore, Stacy Rivera**

**Committee Members: Corky Clark, Steve Etheredge, Jamie George, Amanda Green, Bill Hancock**

**Treasurer: Natalie O'Bradovich**

### **2023 Budget**

The session approved a balanced budget for 2023 of \$825,672. The Church received \$825,672.00 (or 101.41% of our projected revenue) in pledges and revenue and ended the year with a surplus of \$31,691.45. This surplus was due to strong financial support from our members and guests, and careful stewardship by our Session Ministries and the Board of Deacons.

### **2024 Budget**

In the December Session meeting, session approved a balanced budget for 2024 of \$851,879.

### **Capital Campaign**

The capital campaign project work concluded in 2023 with the completion of the Kitchen Renovations. As of December 31, 2023, pledges paid and interest accrued were \$956,405.

### **S&A 2023 Highlights**

After a successful Stewardship Campaign, the 2023 operating budget was increased to \$825,672. After Church membership growth in 2023, the operating budget was increased \$851,879.

The Capital Campaign project work concluded in late 2023 with the completion of the Kitchen and Community Room renovations.

Due to uncertainty of the banks in the country, S & A set up a Sweep Account with South State Bank to ensure funds were FDIC insured. They also directed Abacus to invest funds from the Line of Credit in US Treasuries to receive interest on the funds before being needed to complete the above renovations.

In January 2023, the Endowment Fund began the year with a balance of \$1,428,600. Session approved setting \$78,280 aside from the FLPC Endowment Fund grants in 2023. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Endowment Committee met to review the 25 projects that were submitted by the various organizations. Grant requests totaled \$198,601. The amount available for distribution was \$78,280. Both S&A and Session approved the Endowment Committee's recommendations. The Endowment Fund ended with a balance of \$1,563,695

The endowment approved projects awarded were:

Camp Cole- \$3,116

Christian Assistance Bridge- \$2,614

Cooperative Ministry-\$5,000

EMS Closet-\$1,200

Epworth Children's Home-\$2,500

Family Promise of the Midlands- \$7,000

FLPC Property Ministry- AED-\$1,850

Greg's Groceries- \$4,000

Homeworks of America- \$5,000

Live Oak Counseling- \$2,000

Lutheran Services- \$7,500

Rehoboth Food Pantry- \$7,500



Richland 2 Education Foundation- \$10,000  
Senior Resources- \$10,000  
Thornwell- \$5,000  
Unumb Center- \$4,000

The Stewardship Campaign began in October and has received 215 pledges totaling \$788,874 towards our 2024 church budget. There are currently 302 total giving units (individuals and families) in our congregation. 71% of those church giving units have made a pledge of financial support as of December 31st.

### **Ministry of Worship**

**Moderator - Elder Craig Collins**

**Staff Liaison: Ellen Skidmore, Beth Mears**

**Committee Members: Patti Eckhardt, Margaret Harris, Stuart Hunter, Karl Maddox, Michele Osenga, Liz Roberts, Debra Slaughenhaupt**

We continued having a single worship service at 10 a.m. on Sundays. Services are livestreamed for viewing via Vimeo, YouTube, and Facebook.

Highlights of the year:

- All Saints Sunday – January 1.
- Myron Wilkins, President of Thornwell, joined us on January 22.
- Mark Adams and Miriam Maldonado Escobar joined us on January 29.
- Youth Sunday – February 12.
- An Ash Wednesday service was held on February 22.
- Palm Sunday (April 2) and Easter (April 9) services were well attended. An Easter sunrise service was also held.
- The Confirmation Class was recognized during worship on April 23.
- Earth Sunday was celebrated on April 30.
- Transforming Faith Sunday – May 14.
- Wills Emphasis Sunday led by Eric Skidmore was May 21.
- The Summer Mission Trip team reported was commissioned during worship on May 28.
- Vacation Bible School Sunday – August 20
- Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday – August 27
- World Communion Sunday – October 1
- A Blessing of the Animals was held on the church grounds the afternoon of November 5.
- On November 19, FLPC participated again with our Jewish and Christian neighbors along North Trenholm in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service.
- Bundles of candles were made available to the congregation to encourage the spiritual discipline of lighting the Advent Wreath at home.
- On Christmas Eve, worship at 10:00 a.m. was followed by a 5:00 p.m. worship service featuring Christmas puppets and a Candlelight Service at 8:00 p.m.