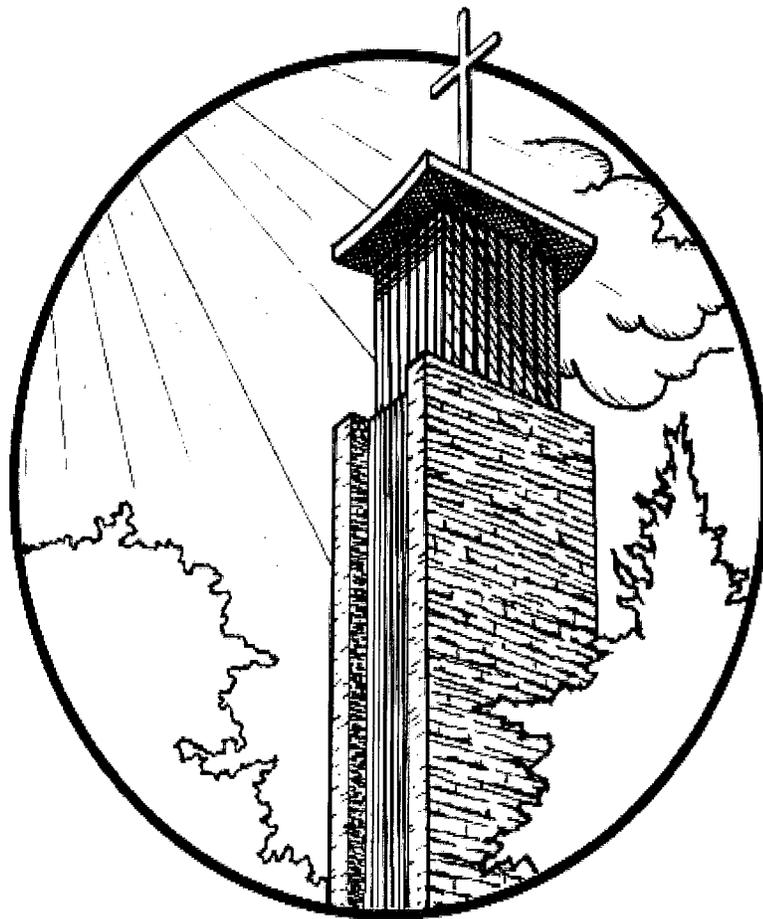


# First United Church Bloomington, Indiana



Annual Report  
2024-2025

## Senior Minister's Annual Report 2024-2025

It is good and right and proper that we record and remember all that we have done together and how we have impacted one another and our wider community over the past year. Many such reports listing and describing the multitude of ways we have engaged in ministry during the 2024-2025 program year follow my words offered here. This year, rather than repeating the information shared in those reports, I would like to highlight the why, at least from my perspective. That is, I have chosen to share with you why I engage in all of this ministry from worship to education, from immigrant support to welcoming and celebrating LGBTQ+ folks, from collaborating with local colleagues and communities to wider church work, and so much more. Perhaps sharing with you what drives and inspires my ministry will provide an answer to any of you who have ever wondered, "Why in the world does Jessica do that?" or "Why does she do it that way?" (And, if you still have questions, please, please come talk with me! I LOVE talking about ministry!)

I am called to a ministry that embodies the presence of the gospel in word and deed—a ministry rooted in the love, justice, and peace of God made known through Jesus, whom I experience as the decisive revelation of the Divine. I believe ministry is about showing up fully with and for God's people in every circumstance of life: in the sanctuary, in the streets, and in the statehouse; in joy, in grief, and in the mundane; in teaching, in praying, and in action. It is a sacred calling to meet people where they are, to affirm their worth and belovedness, and to challenge all of us to live more fully into the reality of God's just and compassionate reign.

My vision for ministry is grounded in the radical life and teachings of Jesus, who broke boundaries, welcomed those pushed to the margins, and proclaimed a new way of being that lifts the lowly, challenges the powerful, and invites all into God's beloved community. Inspired by Jesus, I understand justice not as an abstract ideal, but as the tangible, lived experience of shalom—where dignity, equity, and the thriving of all creation are central.

To that end, I seek to cultivate a ministry that is courageous, compassionate, and collaborative—one that calls forth the gifts of our congregation, nurtures spiritual depth, and partners with others in the wider community to address systemic injustice. Whether preaching, presiding, organizing, teaching, or accompanying someone facing a challenging situation, I strive to be an "earthen vessel," bearing the transformative presence of God and helping others to see themselves as beloved and empowered co-creators of God's vision for the world.

In all things, I envision a church that is not only a place of worship but also a force for justice, renewal, and radical welcome—a community committed to learning, growing, and serving together and through their individual lives in the name and way of Jesus. This is the ministry I feel deeply called to live each day, with hope, humility, and joy. This is the ministry I seek to live out as your Senior Minister here at First United. I continue to invite you to join me on this journey as together we empower, challenge, and encourage one another to live out the ways of Jesus (rooted in compassion, truth, and justice) authentically as human beings in community to create a better world.

With tremendous gratitude to you, First United's staff, dedicated lay leaders, amazing volunteers, and community partners,

Respectfully Submitted,  
Rev. Jessica Petersen-Mutai

## President's Annual Report 2024-2025

As the 2024-25 leadership cycle began, our congregation considered a vision for a future state: becoming a Community Hub—a space that is welcoming, inclusive, creative, sustainable, and resilient. This idea emerged not from a single conversation, but from the collective feedback of our members. Through survey responses and leadership discussions, a common theme emerged: a desire for our church to be more than a place of worship but rather a vibrant center for spiritual growth, social connection, and faithful action.

This vision guided the work of several newly launched working groups. One group began pursuing an “Accessible to All” (A2A) designation, committed to evaluating and improving our physical and programmatic accessibility. Another group focused on environmental stewardship, initiating plans to earn Sacred Grounds designation by implementing native plant and rain garden projects. A third group turned its attention to strengthening our digital presence, ensuring our message of welcome reaches beyond our walls.

To further turn vision into action, we convened a Leadership Retreat in early 2024. More than 30 lay leaders participated, representing every board and committee of the congregation. Through collaborative brainstorming and breakout discussions, we identified strategic goals across six ministry areas: Music and Worship; Stewardship and Finance; Building and Grounds; Outreach; Education and Member Engagement; and Personnel. Several new initiatives have already grown from this retreat:

- A geocache now installed on our church grounds, engaging the wider community through outdoor exploration
- A finals week study hall offered December 2024, offering a supportive space for local students
- A music literacy workshop in development to broaden participation in worship arts
- Design planning for handrails and other accessibility upgrades to the chancel
- An exploration of a student internship in digital media to support outreach while mentoring young talent

As is our tradition, we began the new calendar year by drawing Star Gifts and chose a congregational Star Gift: Appreciation. While *appreciation* suggests gratitude, it also speaks to value and growth. It reminds us to recognize the abundance already present in our community, and to act intentionally to nurture and build on it. Where last year's word, “Transform,” challenged us to imagine bold change, this year's word calls us to sustain and expand the good we are already doing.

To that end, Council spent a large portion of the first half of 2025 building on strategic planning initiatives around the use of space, the formation of partnerships, and of our governance structures. Governance work took up the majority of the time and centered on three priorities:

- Streamlining our board and committee structure to 24 elected positions, better aligned with our current capacity
- Elevating essential responsibilities like finance, personnel, and lay leadership to the board level
- Adopting a consensus-based model for congregational decision-making in place of Robert's Rules of Order

The proposed restructuring consolidates existing committees into mission-aligned boards. Pastoral Relations and Search remain independent committees, preserving important boundaries. The potential move to consensus-based decision-making reflects our values of inclusion, shared power, and collaboration. The adjustment of quorum requirements reflects the reality of our post-COVID churchgoing environment and allows us to move forward with the important work of the church without removing important safeguards.

These updates are more than administrative. They reflect our commitment to clear, faithful leadership that values broad participation, sustainability, and collaboration. The transition plan honors current commitments while creating space for new opportunities to emerge.

As we move into the year ahead, I am filled with appreciation—for your engagement, your trust, and your dedication. What we have done together this year is remarkable. What we are becoming is even more so.

We are the church.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Mitchell Farmer  
President, First United Church

## Pastoral Relations Committee Annual Report 2024-2025

The Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) is comprised of four members. The PRC meets with the Senior Minister a minimum of four times a year. Four church members serve staggered terms, with one person rotating off the committee each year. Two members are elected by the council and two are appointed by the minister.

Per our bylaws:

Odd years are to be appointed by Pastor

Even years are to be appointed by Church Council

One a year and to be replaced by July 1

Members rotating off may not be reappointed to the Pastoral Relations Committee until one year has elapsed.

Members of the PRC, their term lengths, and how they were appointed are as follows:

Laurie Eynon	July 2021-June 2025 Minister
Eric Sader	July 2024-June 2026 Council
Micheal Shell	July 2023-June 2027 Minister
Mary Peckham	July 2024-June 2028 Council

The council appointed both Eric and Mary in 2024; Eric's term is shorter because he replaced a member who resigned mid-term as she was leaving the country on sabbatical.

Meetings were held February 22, March 7, and October 30, 2024 and March 11, 2025; a June 2025 meeting is currently being scheduled.

A special Monday Musings was written in March 2025 to inform congregants on the function of the PRC and encourage service consideration.

The PRC assisted with encouraging (at Jessica's request) the Personnel Committee to conduct a performance evaluation, which was completed.

March 29 is Jessica's ordination anniversary, and 2025 marked her 16th year of ordained ministry. In addition, Jessica earned her MBA degree in August 2024. These events were celebrated on Sunday, March 30, 2025 at the Fifth Sunday Potluck with a cake provided by her sisters and festive poster; special thanks to PRC member Mary Peckham for her contributions to this celebration.

The focus of the PRC is a proactive and supportive environment, in which the minister can discuss concerns of a congregational nature, as well as concerns of her family. The PRC aspires to offer honest feedback to the minister, as well as affirmation of strengths, constructive criticism, and thoughtful and candid observations. Because of the confidential nature of the PRC, no minutes are kept of the meetings.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Laurie Eynon, Committee Member

**Clerk's  
Annual Report 2024-2025**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
<b>Transfer</b>	None	
<b>Terminations</b>	None	
<b>Resignations</b>	None	
<b>New Members</b>	Dawn Faris	08/27/2024
	Jesse Letourneau	11/01/2024
	Craig Dalrymple	11/22/2024
	Vickey Allen	12/15/2024
	Blake Martindale	12/15/2024
	Kristin Martindale	12/15/2024
	Emily Mathes	12/15/2024
	Jessica McIntosh	12/15/2024
	Megan Merrick	12/15/2024
	Christina Ruiz	12/15/2024
	Daniel Salvat	12/15/2024
	James Stroman	12/15/2024
<b>Baptisms</b>	None	
<b>Deaths</b>	Pat Briggs	07/21/2024
	Lora Johnson	01/11/2025
	Fran Martin	05/07/2025
	Marie Webster	05/08/2025
	Miles Kanne	05/23/2025

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ben Ale-Ebrahim, Clerk

## **Displaced Immigrant Support Program (DISP) Annual Report 2024-2025**

The DISP committee of the Board of Outreach met regularly during the year. Last summer we began working with a new refugee family of five from Syria. We continue to regularly work with the Syrians as of this writing. The Nicaraguan siblings that we were assisting prior to that moved on to become stable in the community.

Meanwhile, we continued to work intermittently with the original Afghan family that we sponsored starting at the end of 2021 and with the Honduran family that we began sponsoring in 2023. These earlier families are stable and remain close by both physically and spiritually to us. We arranged and paid for the Afghan family's adults swimming lessons at their apartment's pool (the children received lessons previously with our active assistance).

The following are some of the year's accomplishments of DISP in working with the current Syrian family.

- Helped the oldest son achieve a full scholarship in the Intensive English program at IU
- Assisted the family in finding local doctors and dentists
- Coached the family on health insurance and retirement benefits
- Provided driving practice for the mom who has a learner's permit
- Obtained a full club soccer scholarship with Cutters Soccer Club for the youngest son so that he could continue playing after his high school soccer season concluded
- Coached the family on rental assistance options in Bloomington
- Arranged and took the father to multiple dental appointments at the IU School of Dentistry in Indianapolis
- Met regularly with the family to ascertain needs and progress (or regression)

### Other Key Activities

- Organized and executed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Refugee Holiday Party (attended by 80 refugees, volunteers and friends in First United's Fellowship Hall)
- Organized and executed the 4th Annual Refugee Picnic (attended by 120 refugees, volunteers and friends at Cascades Park)
- Applied for and received a grant from the Bloomington Thrift Shop to support all expenses for both annual refugee social events
- Performed a Moment for Ministry on refugee support in October

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dave Meyer

## **Building and Grounds Annual Report 2024-2025**

Replacing the sanctuary roof, replacing the sanctuary tile, moving the sanctuary pews, and adding railings to the chancel were among the notable events of the last year for the board.

The sanctuary roof was replaced in December 2024 at a cost of \$70,000. Two-thirds of this cost was paid for by a grant from Sacred Places Indiana which several church members had been working on for several months.

In March 2025, the pews in the sanctuary were removed, the old asbestos tile was removed and replaced with a lighter vinyl tile. Some of the pews were permanently removed to allow for increased spacing between the pews and increased access for wheelchairs and walkers.

Permanent railings were also added to both sides of the chancel steps to improved access to the chancel.

Much of what the board does involves mundane things, such as: keeping up the grounds including Spring and Fall workdays, mowing our five acres, making fiscal decisions, managing contractors, reviewing contracts, and making simple repairs on the building. I am deeply grateful to the board members I have served with in the past year: Emily Mathes, Herbert Sizek, and Lewis Williams. I am also grateful to Herbert and Keith Gerber for mowing. And, a special thanks to our Office Manager Lisa Stanger who does most of the day-to-day management of building maintenance issues with dedication and enthusiasm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ted Wininger, Chair

## **Worship**

### **Annual Report 2023-2024**

Board Membership: Vickey Allen, Rachel Caswell, Siri Loescher, Malissa Sparks, Michael Shell, Rev. Jessica Petersen-Mutai (ex-officio). We give a heartfelt thank you to each member for your thoughtful, gracious and dedicated service.

#### **In Gratitude:**

Every worship service, every communion service, every special service and worship event relies on volunteers who play various roles to make worship more personal and meaningful. Ushers and greeters welcome us into the worship space and into community. Scripture and liturgy readers give voice so we all (in person and on Zoom) can hear, speak, listen, meditate on the message. Volunteers pass the plate for offertory gifts. Sponsors of flowers add vibrancy to the Sanctuary and ambiance for worship. Communion Servers bring our “open table” to all among us so we may both individually and collectively partake in communion. To each and every one who has served in these roles—thank you!

A special thank you to Kyle Hetrick and Jim True for their Audio/Visual work—every Sunday—to make sure that the sound works throughout the Sanctuary and that the service is carried live on Zoom and can be uploaded to Vimeo for later viewing. Thank you. Also, thanks to Dave Meyers and Herbert Sizek for filling in with the Zoom hosting.

Thank you to our music community from the leadership and service of Eric Meincke and Hansol Kim to our Choral Scholars and the members of our adult vocal choir and bell choir. And, thank you to Rebecca Keith, Sandra Meder, and Megan Merrick who worked with our wonderful young people to offer extra special music a few times throughout the year. You add depth and beauty to our Worship lives at First United.

A thank you to all who contributed in various ways to our special services and events:

- World Communion Sunday (October)
- All Saints’ Sunday (November)
- Hanging of the Greens (November)
- Candlelight and Carols (December)
- Christmas Eve Service (December)
- Cozy Christmas (December)
- Lenten Daily Devotional/Meditative Readings\*
- Ash Wednesday (March)
- Maundy Thursday (April)
- Good Friday (April)
- Easter Sunday (April)
- Pentecost Sunday (Today! – June 8)

\*A special thanks to Malissa Sparks for inspiring, finding, and arranging the readings for the Lenten Daily messages, to each of those who gave the readings, to Pastor Jessica, and to Martin Mutai for the hours of video taping, production and editing.

#### **New in 2024-25:**

The Board of Worship has focused on ways to personalize the worship experience during Sunday Service at the invitation of Jessica. We considered the periodic incorporation and format of a “Prayers of the People”

portion of the service where congregants and attenders could add individual requests for prayers and concerns, and we recommended the inclusion of the text of the scripture reading into the bulletin.

Reflecting on last year's during-the-week Lent virtual services: they were contemplative and sustaining, but poorly attended. The Board of Worship landed on the idea of having accessible, daily video messages for the season of Lent. This became the daily devotional videos during Lent.

In what now looks like foreshadowing for the council and congregation, last fall the Board of Worship recognized that, due to our current size, it had been increasingly challenging to populate, coordinate and facilitate a separate Music Committee. Instead, the Board recommended to the council that the roles be incorporated into the work of the Board of Worship with the ability to form working groups to tend to emergent issues as needed. Currently such a group—Music Hiring Committee—has been appointed and is working on the process of searching for a new Music Director to replace Eric Meincke and new Organist to replace Hansol Kim.

The Board of Worship looks forward to 2025-2026 and the future as we continue both our traditional and newfound ways of worshipping together and growing spiritually as the First United Church community. We welcome feedback and ideas for meaningful individual and collective experiences. On a personal note, thank you all for granting me the privilege of serving on the Board of Worship and as Chair for the past six years. I'll still help out with logistics—as a non-board member volunteer (with ushering, flowers and the like), but I am proudly handing over the direction to the newly renamed/focused Board of Worship, Art and Music.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Siri Loescher, Chair

## **Education**

### **Annual Report 2024-2025**

#### **Board Members**

The following individuals served on the Board this year: Jessica McIntosh, Ann Marie Kersten, Steven Knipp, Megan Merrick, Justin Plank, Lena Stosberg, Rev. Jessica Petersen-Mutai (ex officio).

#### **Young Children's Education – Children's Learning Time (CLT) and Nursery Care**

Building on the previous year's format, CLT has been largely staffed by a rotating cast of volunteer teachers. To ensure smooth operations, each CLT session consists of a main instructor and a secondary instructor. In recent months we have adjusted this format so that one of the nursery staff is always assigned to CLT while the other nursery staff is always assigned to nursery care. We made the decision to adjust staffing because the nursery care was hardly being utilized (the majority of the children in the congregation fall between the ages of 5 and 8 years old). With this new structure in mind, the congregational volunteers mainly sign up to assist with CLT and nursery care (an "on call" position). Jessica McIntosh has graciously offered to lead the majority of CLT sessions (when she is available). This adjusted structure has allowed more parishioner volunteers to assist with the children, as the commitment takes less preparation for teachers in these assistant roles. This year, Megan Merrick has worked to ensure that all voluntary childcare positions are filled, while Jessica McIntosh has scheduled our paid nursery workers.

In terms of CLT curriculum, during fall of 2024 we continued to use the curriculum "A Joyful Path" as the base upon which to build weekly lessons. In 2025, we adjusted this model, moving away from "A Joyful Path" (having used all of the available lessons) towards utilizing a broader scope of curricular resources. The utilized Bible story resources in 2025 have included "The Book of Belonging," "The Family Story Bible," "The Spark Bible," and "The Usborne Book." While we have adjusted some of the resources used to develop the curriculum, the structure of CLT remains largely unchanged from last year. The lessons generally involve a theme which is revealed through a read-aloud story and reinforced through group discussion. There is then a craft or activity which helps the children enact some aspect of the lesson. Jessica McIntosh has been instrumental in finding or designing craft/activity ideas which are relevant to that week's lesson.

The CLT community has also developed a service activity in which children participate approximately every other month as the day's activity. The service activity is creating care packages for those experiencing homelessness. This project idea was brought forth to the committee by Molly Koontz, an actively supportive CTL teacher. Members of the congregation have donated supplies, and the children assemble these care bags during CLT time. Children then take these care packages home and distribute them in the community with the help of their caregivers.

While all of the wonderful folks who work and volunteer with our young people are celebrated each year during Education Sunday (this year held on May 18, 2025), we continue to extend a heartfelt thank you to all those who gave their time, energy, and resources to supporting our nursery and CLT in various ways.

#### **Youth Education**

Rev. Jessica continues to offer youth group activities approximately once each month. Megan Merrick also assists with this group when she is available to do so. Each month about a half dozen youth (ages 11-14) meet to engage in faith formation, fellowship, food, and fun. The meetings begin with a check-in aimed at building community. The meetings then typically shift to discuss questions of faith. During 2024, the youth participants continued to read through and discuss together: "Living the Questions: The Wisdom of Progressive

Christianity” by David Felten and Jeff Procter-Murphy. The youth have been actively engaged and bring many of their own ideas into the conversation.

In order to create a space where the youth have more agency surrounding the time they spend together, the youth gathering has shifted away from discussion spurred by the “Living the Questions” book towards a youth-lead agenda. In January 2025, Rev. Jessica led the youth in developing the why, how, and what of their group. The “whys” included being with friends, food, faith, asking questions, and thinking deeply. The “hows” included respecting others by letting and listening to each other speak, being fully present, and acting in an appropriate manner. The “whats” included field trips, exploring the Bible, engaging in ice breakers, and cooking. Each meeting this spring has started with an icebreaker, involved sharing food together (pizza or cooking), followed by a discussion on a topic previously agreed upon. Overall, these meetings have been a great success as they encourage our youth towards spiritual growth and foster enduring relationships.

### **Adult Education**

Weekly Monday (Off-Topic Scripture Circle) and Tuesday (Morning Café and Discussion) meetings continue to be offered by Rev. Jessica and are meaningful and appreciated by all who participate. Additionally, congregants have been invited to participate in shorter commitment study series. For example, in December, Rev. Jessica offered a four-week Advent Study series prior to Sunday morning worship based on the book “The Birth of Jesus” by John Shelby Spong, which had around a half dozen participants each week. Because of this interest, the Board sent out a survey to the congregation to determine their educational interests and availability so we could best serve congregants’ needs in this area. The survey concluded that parishioners prefer shorter study series commitments (e.g. 4-8 weeks) and are interested in learning more about Jesus’s life and teaching (though a number of other topics also received interest). Given this information, Rev. Jessica is planning on hosting another study series in the fall (potentially about parables). In general, the Board is working diligently to meet the faith formation needs of adults beyond Sunday morning services.

### **Scholarships**

The Board of Education also oversees the awarding of the two scholarships First United is blessed to offer those engaging in continuing education. The Weigand Family Scholarship is to be used to support college tuition costs of graduating high school seniors at First United Church. The Walling/Troxal Scholarship requires a beginning or continuing undergraduate or graduate student be engaged in studies in education or a closely related field with preference given to applicants who are studying the arts in connection with education; are members of First United; identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; are the child of LGBT parents; or are a long-time supporter of/ally to LGBT people.

This year, two individuals were each awarded a Weigand Family Scholarship: Donovan Keith-Reeves and Eden Yoder. Megan Merrick was the sole recipient of the Walling/Troxal Scholarship. All scholarships were awarded during Education Sunday, May 18. Additionally, on that day, the congregation celebrated the upcoming high school graduations of both Donovan and Eden.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Megan Merrick, Chair

## **Outreach Annual Report 2024-2025**

The Board of Outreach carries on its mandate to oversee giving to local missions and non-profits, plan special offerings and speakers, receive reports from the Displaced Immigrant Support Program (DISP), plan participation in annual events such as PRIDE FEST and respond to other opportunities that come to Outreach.

This year, the Outreach Board has included Bill Perkins, Sandy Keller, Dave Meyer, Keith Gerber, Kim Yaussy Albright, and Julia Bebeau.

In addition to our budgeted giving, together, we planned special offerings with accompanying speakers on the third Sunday of each month. Since June of 2024, we have highlighted: First United's Love Fund three times, collecting a total of \$2,412; Refugee Support Network twice for a total of \$1,221; New Leaf New Life—\$894; New Hope for Families—\$606; Mother Hubbard's Cupboard—\$644; My Sister's Closet—\$509; One Great Hour of Sharing—\$405, an emphasis of both the United Church of Christ and the American Baptist Churches-USA. Our special Christmas offerings, received during Candlelight and Carols and Christmas Eve services, of \$1951 went to Hotels for Homeless, and the Angel Tree brought in \$300 for the Monroe County Foster Closet in addition to clothing and toys. We have learned that speakers for each special offering make the difference. Total giving to special offerings was \$11,356. The people of First United Church are clearly mission-minded and generous!

We also encourage bringing non-perishable food, cleaning supplies and personal hygiene items for Pathways (formerly MCUM) on a monthly basis. Additionally, each November, we invite a Harvest Ingathering of the above items for Pathways.

In September and October of 2024, we had a presence at the Pride Fest events in Bloomington and Spencer, respectively. Also in September, anticipating the 2024 election, we led a low-key effort for Voter Registration leading up to the deadline for registering to vote.

Outreach also hears reports from Pastor Jessica Petersen-Mutai regarding the newly-formed Bloomington Community Care Coalition, dealing with ways to support immigrants given recent federal and state changes in policies and practices. We have also been sharing information about how to respond to the changes in our government as part of our Christian faith and witness.

The Board of Outreach always has a full agenda and finds joy in this good work.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Julia Bebeau, Chair

## Member Relations Committee (MeRC) Annual Report 2024-2025

The ministry of the Member Relations Committee is defined as welcoming, celebrating, and inviting/integrating new members into community, as well as nurturing the growth of the congregation. We seek to be responsive to evolving congregational needs and society-wide changes in patterns of community involvement, as well as supporting Pastor Jessica as she serves our congregational needs. Per our bylaws, MeRC reports to the Church Council. MeRC membership includes Mary Peckham and Molly Koontz as Co-Chairs, with Rev. Jessica Petersen-Mutai, Rebecca Keith and Malissa Sparks; Hopi Stosberg and Siri Loescher offer support as available. We meet on Zoom to plan as needed.

Coffee hour is one of our main community building actions, always greatly appreciated. We are eager to recruit and support new hosts as they “learn the ropes”; since we stock supplies and work alongside new hosts, this is an easy way to feel more integrated into the community. Special thanks to superstar coffee hour hosts Ted Wininger, Dave Meyer and Cindy Neidhart, Fiora Pizzo, Mary Peckham, Laura Kao, Malissa Sparks, Lisa Green, Du Huynh, Noel and Molly Koontz, Rebecca Keith and the Lane Family, and all who help in various ways.

We support live communal gatherings—especially around food—whenever possible, including “Fifth Sunday” potlucks after worship; pre-worship breakfast potlucks for Cozy Christmas/New Year’s Eve on December 29th and Easter morning on March 20th; a fun and successful September 29th Rally Day/Fifth Sunday Potluck with taco bar; an October 27th pumpkin carving coffee hour; the November 24th Hanging of the Greens chili dinner; and the traditional post-Candlelight and Carols cookie reception and candy cane distribution (with 1stUC welcome messages attached) on December 8th. We hosted a special March 30th Fifth Sunday potluck celebrating Pastor Jessica on the “sweet 16” anniversary of her ordination and her recently completed MBA from Drake University, and we supported the choirs in offering a beautiful farewell “Kaffee Stunde” for outgoing Music Director Eric Meincke on May 4th.

In February, we facilitated our Valentine-sending initiative and Kindness Calendar, hosting coffee-hour valentine-making opportunities in late January and early February. We hope to carry on this loving tradition but need more writers to continue in 2026! Malissa updated our February Kindness Calendar, providing inspiration all month. For Easter, Molly spearheaded an extremely well-attended and successful Easter Egg hunt for children on March 20th. Malissa continued our Team Cards effort, sending cards by USPS to congregants for birthdays, sickness or death, and special occasions, through March, and we are actively looking for writers to carry on this outreach. We continued to assist Siri, as Worship Chair, in offering gift bags to visitors.

MeRC again attempted to help form new “covenant” groups, small social groups that meet regularly in a format and schedule determined by the groups that coalesce. These groups can be a transformational experience in building friendships and community in the congregation. If this format sounds attractive to you and/or you have an idea for forming a group, contact a MeRC member!

MeRC is a great way to connect with our community, requiring minimal or no meeting time and welcoming participation for one event or many—as kitchen helpers, coffee hosts, valentine senders, egg-stuffers, pumpkin carvers, or you-name-it. Try us out!!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Mary Peckham, Co-Chair

## **Music Annual Report 2024-2025**

The 2024–2025 program year has been a vibrant and fruitful season for the Music Ministry at First United Church. Through thoughtful collaboration and dedicated preparation, both the Bell Choir and the Vocal Choir have offered meaningful musical contributions to worship, deepening the spiritual life of our congregation.

Under the direction of Hansol Kim, the Bell Choir offered meaningful musical leadership throughout the year, with performances during Candlelight and Carols, Christmas Eve, and Marty Haugen’s Evening Prayer. In the spring, the ensemble continued to grow in musicality and expression, presenting anthems for Epiphany, Lent, and Easter. A special highlight this year was the Bloomingbells concert, a short program the Bell Choir presented at the First United Community Dinner. This outreach event allowed us to share the joy of handbell music in a more informal and welcoming setting while connecting with the broader Bloomington community.

Under the direction of Eric Meincke and accompaniment of Hansol Kim, the Vocal Choir was active throughout the program year, presenting anthems. The choir performed music in German, French, Latin, and English, continuing our commitment to musical diversity and exploration. A special highlight this spring was our participation in a collaborative ecumenical performance with churches from the Bloomington community, where we came together to present music by Mozart. This event was a meaningful expression of unity through music and a wonderful opportunity to build connections across congregations while offering something beautiful to the wider community in addition to raising funds for Pathways. We welcomed several new members to the Vocal Choir this year and are encouraged by the ensemble’s continued growth. The dedication of our singers and their openness to a wide range of repertoire has been truly inspiring.

We also extend heartfelt thanks to the many soloists who offered their musical gifts in worship this year. Our congregation is richly blessed with talented individuals whose contributions greatly enhance our shared worship experience.

Even as I anticipate the end of my time with First United (with August 17th as my final Sunday), I remain deeply grateful for the ongoing support of our church community. It is a joy to serve in a place where music is valued not only as performance, but as a form of ministry.

I also want to thank Eric Meincke, former Director of Music, for his mentorship and guidance throughout the year. Although Eric has now moved on from our church (his final Sunday was May 4th), his leadership greatly contributed to making my transition into the expanded role of Assistant Music Director & Organist both smooth and fulfilling.

A vibrant music ministry is possible only through the support of a congregation that believes in the power of music in worship. We are grateful for your continued encouragement and look forward to continued music-making, service, and community into the future.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Hansol Kim  
Assistant Music Director & Organist

## **Finance & Memorial Endowment Committees**

### **Annual Report 2024-2025**

This year's Finance Committee members were Kyle Hetrick, Treasurer and Chair; Patty Williams, Assistant Treasurer; Harold Fiscus and Megan Betz, Members-at-Large. The Council appointed Megan to the committee in February 2024. Regular attendees of the Finance Committee meetings were Donna Smith, Volunteer Accountant; Lisa Stanger, Office Manager; and Rev. Jessica Petersen-Mutai, Senior Pastor. The Finance Committee meets monthly.

Notable issues and events in 2024:

- Income for the 2024 operating budget totaled \$338,000. This income includes pledges and other regular giving of \$171,000 and supplement from the Memorial Endowment Fund of \$150,000. This endowment distribution is an additional \$25,000 beyond what was initially authorized and \$10,000 more than was withdrawn from the endowment for the regular budget in 2023.
- The 2024 expenses totaled \$358,000, which is 97% of the approved expense budget. Therefore, total expenses were \$20,000 greater than total income. Contributing factors to this deficit included:
  - the loss of the Head Start lease in August 2024,
  - increased salaries/wages to all positions, but especially to the Organist (previously unable to be paid until May 2024), and
  - increases in health insurance and comprehensive liability insurance.
- In 2024, the comprehensive insurance policy through Church Mutual involved both a 10% increase in deductibles and an increase of 38% in premiums. The finance team is exploring alternatives.
- Cash flow became an issue in early 2024 and again in late 2024. This resulted in the delay of some Outreach payments in order to make payroll and pay utility/insurance invoices.
- The Church continued the new outreach funding model from last year, which involved monthly opportunities for congregants to support external entities and extra-budgetary initiatives. Over \$26,000 went out to local, regional, and national ministries and agencies through the Outreach budget. Beyond the budget, however, members contributed a total of \$5,491 to the church's Love Fund, including \$2,300 in response to three monthly mission moments. Giving to external agencies in response to monthly mission moments included:
  - Bloomington Refugee Support Network (\$921)
  - Hotels for Homeless (\$2,572)
  - New Hope for Families (\$606)
  - New Leaf, New Life (\$804)
  - One Great Hour of Sharing (\$1,270), including \$1,000 from the Hollis Fund

These funds do not include the roughly estimated \$300,000 of in-kind value that the church donates in the form of space provided for community organizations such as the Area 10 Agency on Aging, addiction support groups, and the People's Cooperative Market.

- The Fiscus Memorial Bell Fund was used to purchase much-needed new bell pads for the Bell Choir.
- A Sacred Places Planning Grant was used to develop a facility improvement plan with the help of Halstead Architects. The Sacred Places program from Indiana Landmarks contributed two-thirds of the \$10,000 planning fee. The remainder of the funding came from the Ken Sparks Memorial Fund (\$1,000), the John Werner Memorial Fund (\$1,000), and the Endowment (\$1,333).
- Completion of the improvement plan made the church eligible for a capital improvement grant through the Sacred Places program. The church's proposal to replace the leaking roof in the Sanctuary was approved. This project cost \$69,700, of which the Sacred Places program funded \$46,467. Most of the remaining \$23,233 was funded by two anonymous donors.

- In response to an inquiry from family of the original Derrick Ping Memorial Fund donor, this scholarship fund was closed out with a final distribution to Organist Hansol Kim, to go towards her graduate studies in the Organ Department at the Jacobs School of Music.
- The Endowment was used to pay the first half of a \$14,000 contract for the church website development firm Abundant. Work from this contract continues into 2025.
- As an experiment, the 2024 and 2025 Stewardship Campaigns ran from mid-February through mid-March of each year, *after* the annual budget was passed in December. Mitchell Farmer, Malissa Sparks, Rebecca Keith, and Rev. Jessica Petersen-Mutai organized the 2024 stewardship campaign and selected its theme: “Transformative Stewardship” based on the congregation’s Star Gift for 2024. The 2025 stewardship theme of “Our Wider Reach” focused on the impact we, collectively and individually, make on our wider community. The adjusted timing has not resulted in increased pledges, so the Finance Committee is reverting to scheduling the stewardship emphasis for each year back to the fall of the year prior.
- The Memorial Endowment Fund along with several other funds are maintained in a Combined Investment Account at United Church Funds. Below is a summary of these funds for 2024.

<b>First United Church – Combined Investment Account at United Church Funds (UCF)</b>							
<b>Summary by Fund 2024</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Memorial Endowment Fund</b>	<b>Hollis Fund</b>	<b>Weigand Fund</b>	<b>Ping Fund</b>	<b>Ash Garden Trust</b>	<b>Walling-Troxal Fund</b>
Beginning Balance	<b>2,123,236</b>	1,959,111	102,174	33,743	5,531	11,344	11,333
Earnings and Sales	<b>50,230</b>	47,476	2,471	815	21	275	274
Change in Value	<b>268,860</b>	248,411	12,938	4,273	367	1,436	1,435
Withdrawals, Budget	<b>-151,000</b>	-150,000	1,000	0	0	0	0
Withdrawals, Non-Budget	<b>-42,585</b>	-35,666	-1,000	0	-5,919	0	0
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>2,249,841</b>	<b>2,069,330</b>	<b>115,582</b>	<b>38,832</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13,055</b>	<b>13,042</b>
Change in value	<b>126,605</b>	110,220	13,408	5,089	-5,531	1,711	1,709

So far in 2025, cash flow has been a continual concern, and as of early May, the church has already withdrawn \$93,000 from the Endowment Fund (\$100,000 from the Combined Investment Account in total) in order to pay for budgeted expenses and extra-budgetary projects. The church is very fortunate that some extra-budgetary projects, such as the placement of new floor tiles and re-positioning of pews in the Sanctuary, as well as the replacement of a custom heating coil, are being entirely funded by anonymous donations. However, another major project on the horizon may be the refurbishing of the church’s organ. The builder for the organ, Shantz Organ Company, has made urgent repairs and assessed what needs to be done to maintain the instrument’s longer-term operation. This project could cost upwards of \$200,000, and the church would need to determine how to fund the repairs. It is worth noting that installation of a new organ would cost well over \$1,000,000. The Finance Committee is grateful to everyone who has given to First United Church in 2024 and is thankful for all who continue to financially support the operations and ministries of this faith community in 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,  
 Kyle Hetrick  
 Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair

First United Church Income Budget (Estimated)					
Income	Acct. No.	Budget	2024		2025
			Actual	% of Budget	Budget
Identified Giving	4030	155,000	170,807	110%	175,000
Unidentified Giving	4040	2,500	2,489	100%	2,500
Endowment Distribution for Budget	4521	125,000	151,000	121%	125,000
Building Use/Miscellaneous	4610	7,500	14,084	188%	7,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>290,000</b>	<b>338,381</b>	<b>117%</b>	<b>309,500</b>

First United Church Expense Budget: Final						
	Expense	Acct. No.	Budget	2024		2025
				Actual	% of Budget	Budget
Employee Salaries/Wages	Senior Minister Salary	5061	47,178	47,178	100%	48,593
	Senior Minister Housing	5062	41,394	41,394	100%	42,635
	Office Manager	5155	36,402	36,408	100%	37,494
	Nursery Workers	6210	2,068	2,957	143%	3,000
	Pizza & Play Coordinator	6225	0	0	-	1,900
	Music Director	6279	17,046	17,040	100%	17,557
	Organist	6280	10,352	10,670	103%	15,994
			<b>154,440</b>	<b>155,647</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>167,173</b>
Senior Pastor	Pension	5063	12,400	12,400	100%	12,772
	Medical (Dental, Vision, Life Insurance)	5064	31,357	32,862	105%	33,552
	Social Security/Medicare (FICA offset)	5065	6,843	6,792	99%	7,048
	Mileage/Entertaining Expenses	5066	1,000	2,274	227%	1,000
	Cellular Phone Expense	5067	420	420	100%	420
	Books/Continuing Education/Meetings	5068	1,500	238	16%	1,500
			<b>53,520</b>	<b>54,986</b>	<b>103%</b>	<b>56,292</b>
Administrative	Office Manager Medical Benefits	5156	14,670	14,749	101%	15,697
	Office Manager Christmas Bonus	5270	250	250	100%	250
	Workers Comp. Insurance	5310	800	777	97%	1,104
	Publicity	5410	1,000	398	40%	1,000
	Bank & Brokerage Fees	5419	1,250	1,182	95%	1,250
	Office Supplies - General	5430	1,500	1,294	86%	1,500
	Internet	5450	700	523	75%	1,700
	Computer Expenses	5453	1,000	2,509	251%	1,600
	Leased Equipment	5457	500	1,137	227%	1,100
	Social Security & Medicare for Staff	5461	4,730	5,168	109%	4,872
	Comprehensive Insurance	5480	11,400	14,619	128%	15,732
	Professional Services	5490	250	148	59%	250
Lay Leaders' Travel/Meetings	5496	250	218	87%	250	
			<b>38,300</b>	<b>42,971</b>	<b>112%</b>	<b>46,305</b>
Building & Grounds	Utilities	5630	20,000	19,291	96%	20,000
	Cleaning Service	5710	16,000	13,350	83%	16,000
	Trash & Recycling	5720	1,500	1,754	117%	1,500
	Bldg. Maintenance & Supplies	5730	5,000	5,811	116%	5,000

**First United Church Expense Budget: Final**

	Expense	Acct. No.	2024			2025
			Budget	Actual	% of Budget	Budget
Building & Grounds	Bldg. Equip & Maintenance	5740	5,000	0	0%	2,500
	Heating/Cooling Maintenance/Repairs	5750	12,500	11,300	90%	12,500
	Fire Alarm Maintenance	5760	6,000	3,571	60%	6,000
	Lawn & Grounds Maintenance	5810	6,000	5,829	97%	8,500
	Shared Areas Maintenance	5830	8,000	5,895	74%	8,000
				<b>80,000</b>	<b>66,802</b>	<b>84%</b>
Outreach	ABC Support	6010	6,000	6,500	108%	6,000
	UCC Support	6011	6,000	6,500	108%	6,000
	Pathways (formerly MCUM)	6012	5,000	5,000	100%	5,000
	Community Kitchen	6014	1,000	1,000	100%	1,000
	Habitat for Humanity	6016	1,000	1,000	100%	1,000
	Hoosier Hills Food Bank	6017	1,500	1,500	100%	1,500
	Middle Way House	6018	1,000	1,000	100%	1,000
	Other Local Funding	6026	1,000	664	66%	1,000
	Outreach Supplies	6020	500	477	95%	500
	Beacon (Shalom Center)	6024	1,000	1,000	100%	1,000
	My Sister's Closet	6021	2,000	2,000	100%	2,000
			<b>26,000</b>	<b>26,641</b>	<b>102%</b>	<b>26,000</b>
Education	CE Programming - Children	6211	500	196	39%	500
	CE Programming - Youth	6212	250	201	81%	250
	CE Programming - College	6213	100	0	0%	500
	CE Programming - Adults	6214	800	120	15%	400
	Supplies & Equipment	6216	200	87	44%	200
	Library / Books / Bibles	6218	250	128	51%	250
			<b>2,100</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>2,100</b>
Music	Section Leaders Compensation	6281	5,600	5,355	96%	5,600
	Special Music	6282	1,000	300	30%	1,000
	Literature & Supplies	6283	400	340	85%	400
	Tuning & Repairs	6284	1,700	1,375	81%	1,700
	Bells	6285	400	370	92%	400
	Substitute Expense	6287	0	100	-	960
			<b>9,100</b>	<b>7,839</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>10,060</b>
Worship	Nametags	6461	240	250	104%	350
	Pulpit Supply	6470	900	0	0%	900
	Special Worship Service Exp	6480	1,100	177	16%	1,100
			<b>2,240</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>2,350</b>
MeRC	MeRC: Hospitality	6553	2,500	2,341	94%	2,500
	MeRC: Supplies	6554	500	38	8%	500
			<b>3,000</b>	<b>2,379</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>3,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>368,700</b>	<b>358,425</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>393,280</b>
<b>Difference</b>			<b>-78,700</b>	<b>-20,044</b>		<b>-83,780</b>