

Annual Report to the Congregation

First Presbyterian Church—Newark

Annual Congregational Meeting

February 16, 2025



*A nurturing community in Jesus Christ
reflecting God's love for the world as we Worship, Grow, and Serve*

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Foreword

Welcome to the 2024 Annual Report of First Presbyterian Church of Newark, DE. In these pages you will find the reports of the many committees, organizations and groups which comprise and support our church community. Of course, the reports are more than just recitations of events, facts and figures. They tell the story of a year in the life of a vibrant Christ-centered community called by God and blessed with Christ's grace to be a beacon of love, hope and charity to a world in desperate need.

What is contained herein is a message of faith, a message of conviction, a message of determination and a message of unfailing belief in the goodness of God and God's creation. First Presbyterian is waking to a dawn of new possibilities, new beginnings and new adventures. It is a dawn filled with yet to be realized dreams and the challenges that come with them. It is an exciting time for the church. With patience, love, forgiveness, hope and joy we look fondly upon the year past and we embrace the years ahead.

Enjoy the report, reflect upon the gospel you find within the pages, and celebrate the joy of a church marching forward!

Christ's peace to you all.
Pastor Dan



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Pastor's Report

Rev. Daniel Mckenty

Well, it has been quite the year here at First Presbyterian Newark! If I had to encapsulate the year into one phrase, I would say it was a year of exciting new beginnings.

The church began 2024 in the very capable pastoral hands of Rev. Eric Markman who had led the church through years of exciting and sometimes difficult transformation. Rev. Markman is owed a heartfelt “thank you” for his dedication to this church and to the way in which he graciously welcomed me into the church as your new pastor. Because I speak with Rev. Markman frequently, I know of his continuing love for this congregation.

Sometime in late 2023, the Pastoral Nominating Committee of First Presbyterian extended an offer to me to be called as the next installed pastor. I began my new role as pastor on February 15th and was officially installed on June 2nd, 2024.

From the moment I was offered the call, Tina and I have been met with overwhelming support and love from this congregation. It has been almost exactly one year since I first started filling my office with my many books and Knick Knacks and first climbed into the pulpit and I have never felt more at home than I do at First Presbyterian. We are going to do great and exciting things in the name of Christ now and in the future!

I would be remiss if I did not mention that my work here at First Presbyterian is made easy with the splendid help of our Office Administrator, Grace Laughinghouse, our Office Administrator, Megan Connell and all of the front desk volunteers who so warmly greet any and all who walk through the doors of Memorial Hall.

To continue the theme of “new beginnings,” the church welcomed its new Director of Music, Christian Hendricks, in August. Christian brings with him a wealth of musical talent, knowledge of music history, and a passion for both music and the gospel. It is difficult to express the enhancement to worship Christian gives this church. He’s also a lot of fun to have around the office! We also thank Leia Gibson who so lovingly directed our choir prior to Christian’s arrival. Somewhere around the middle of 2024, the session and the congregation embarked on an exciting and challenging new beginning when it decided to rehabilitate and bring back to life Westminster House. Westminster had sat dormant for a couple of years and had suffered some of the ravages attendant thereto. Because the renovations will cost money, and because the ultimate use of Westminster House is still undecided, the decision to bring it back into the ministry of this church is certainly one brought about through prayer and discernment and shines forth as a wonderful next step in faith for the congregation. I can’t wait to see what God has in store for Westminster House! It is a genuine new beginning.

Another wonderful new beginning for the church was its commitment to establish an on-site food bank with the focus of bridging the gap between stipend and living expenses for University of Delaware graduate students. The program is called “Food for Success” and is certainly turning out to be a success for both the students and the church. Staffed by church volunteers, the food bank serves all who are in need. It is difficult to overstate the amount of time, planning, training and overall dedication which was needed to make this dream a reality, and we thank all of you who are involved.

Worship at First Presbyterian was joyful and well attended during 2024. Innovations initiated by Larry Benson and the praise band as well as by Christian, brought our musical worship to new levels of excellence.

We are blessed with a beautiful choir and praise band and so many visitors have commented to me on the excellence of our music program. There is nothing better than making a joyful noise to our Lord! Of course, none of this would be possible without our excellent video and audio team who help get our message out to the world!

We are blessed that worship continues after the Sunday service with Adult Education in the parlor of Memorial Hall offering new and challenging insights into all of our faith journeys.

Children's Sunday School adopted a brand-new broad-based curriculum from Spark House Publishing which is providing both teachers and students with innovative and creative ways to learn and understand the gospel. Another new beginning!

Apart from all of the formal gatherings, we have discovered that we really like hanging out with each other. Thanks to the efforts of Laura Sievert and others, the church has begun a regular routine of social gatherings with an emphasis on fellowship and fun. Dare I say it, another new beginning!

In some churches it is the church leadership who drags the congregation into worship and mission, but here at First Presbyterian, it is the leadership who has trouble keeping up with the congregation! The commandment to live a Christ-centered life is taken seriously by the many committees and worship and service groups here at the church. Session, Deacons, Presbyterian Women, Band of Brothers and others all contribute to a wonderful Christ centered community which is so much more than a building to gather on Sundays.

The fact that we are able to host the recovery community with respect to both their meetings and First Saturday Breakfast is as much a blessing for us as it is for the recovery community and stands as a shining of example of both grace and new beginnings. Our ability to be home to a Boy Scout Troop gives us joy and serves as a blessing to the community.

We remember fondly those, who in 2024, left us to join the church triumphant and we pray for their family members and friends: Delia Kirwin, Martha Tappen, Murvin Reese, Janet Myers, Evelyn Hogenson, Dorothy Keim, Richard Putscher, Doris Brewer and Rosalie Mc Murtry.

Finally, I wish to thank all of you for your love, your grace and your commitment to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have all given us a wonderful year and have equipped us to go into the new year with joy in our hearts and thanksgiving upon our lips spreading the gospel, blessing the community and providing sanctuary and hope to all of God's children.

Christ's peace to you all,
Pastor Dan

Session

Clerk's Report

Nancy Lewis (Clerk of Session)

We started the new year signing a Covenant of Closure with our interim pastor, Rev Eric Markman and starting with our new pastor, Rev Dan McKenty.

We also met with our Presbytery representative from COMC, Rourke Moore, (Committee on Ministers and Congregations) and discussed the challenges we have faced going through the process of finding a new pastor.

Session has tackled many projects this year:

Session, led by Don Tancredi, worked with the City of Newark to get agreement to install a new sign on our property. Unfortunately, due to the protests of neighbors, the sign project was not approved.

Other projects have had more success. The Westminster House Building was not in use and fell into disrepair. We are working with a contractor to replace the fire suppressant system, and have discarded broken and dirty furniture and carpet, and also treated the building for termites. We are investigating ideas for using the building to enhance our church activities and those of the community. This project is being led by Melody Bock, with assistance from Don Tancredi, Dave Evers and Ron Olson.

We approved updating Servant Keeper, which is the database containing information on our church membership and activities. This update enabled us to improve the system used to send electronic communications to the congregation. This project was led by Harvey Connor.

Our commitment to the Recovery Community is strong. All the meetings have moved to Memorial Hall. The church, led by Bob and Sandy Wenner now holds monthly Breakfasts for the Recovering Community on the First Saturday of each month.

Our church recently opened a new Food Pantry, called Food for Success, focusing on helping UD Graduate students who have difficulty living on their meager stipends. We have also opened it to the community, and are currently open 4 days each month, for 2 hours each time. It has been very successful, and the students and others are very grateful for the assistance. This project is led by Marianne Piser, Sandy Wenner and Francis Kwansa.

Our work to improve the Sanctuary, including better acoustics, have led to more groups utilizing the Sanctuary for musical events. We are also very happy to have a new Musical Director, Christian Hendricks, who enhances our musical experiences.

Our church treasurer, Bob Black, decided to retire and Session encouraged HR to find a replacement. We are pleased to be hiring Anthony Condoluci-Smith, who will be starting soon. On a more somber note, we worked with the Delaware State Police to bring VIPR (Violent Intruder Preparedness and Response) training in October.

We are also working to make sure our Remembrance Garden is deeded correctly to protect it in the future. Mark Sisk is leading this effort.

First Presbyterian Church continues to support our Sister Church in Dinanga. We regularly pray for their success, and assist them with funding to purchase new Bibles, and to pay tuition fees and provide supplies for their students. We also helped them build a cistern to help supply clean water to the village.

We are also still supporting the refugee families from Afghanistan and the Ukraine.

These families have suffered set backs over the years, but we have helped with things from car

accidents to dental expenses and food for the holidays. The families from Afghanistan continue to need our prayers as they try to bring their families here to the US.

Your Session is dedicated to helping this church bring the message of Jesus Christ to our community, and making the best decisions we can to support our membership and our community. If you have any questions about this report, please contact me.

Nancy Lewis
Clerk of Session

CHURCH OFFICERS

SESSION

CLERK — Nancy Lewis

Class of 2025: Joe Kowalski, Nancy Lewis, Ron Olson, Mark Sisk

Class of 2026: Lois Huggins, Mimi Lovelace, Jim Pierson-Perry, Don Tancredi

Class of 2027: Stanley Blair, Melody Bock, Pat Nelson, Bob Wunder

DEACONS

MODERATOR: Greg Hills

Class of 2025: Judy Agnello, Stephanie Birdsall, Jan Huckleberry, Bob Wenner

Class of 2026: Julia Blair, Willee Short, Vickie Pierson-Perry, Jennifer Dube

Class of 2027: Kaitlin Douglas, Greg Hills, Darlene Newsom, Melanie Sipko

ECCLESIASTICAL EVENTS – 2024

BAPTISMS

(Infant) Franklin and Winston Delorenzo
Cindy Miao
Fara Soliman

IN MEMORIAM OF OUR MEMBERS

Doris Brewer
Charles Cox
Chuck Cox
Evelyn Hogenson
Dorothy (Dot) Keihm
Delia (Deedee) Kirwin
JoAnne McNeely
Rosalea (Lea) McMurtry
Janet Myers
Richard (Dick) Putscher
Murvin Reese
Martha Tappan
Elizabeth Ann Todd

NEW MEMBERS FOR 2024 3

Tina McKenty
Dave Myers
Lizzy Myers

TRANSFER OF CERTIFICATE 1

Mallory Kerin Hill- Transferred membership to New Castle Presbyterian

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

Active Members as of December 31, 2023:	227
Total Active Members as of December 31, 2024:	233
Average Worship Attendance for 2024:	100

Belonging Ministry

Board of Deacons

Greg Hills (Moderator)

Members

Greg Hills (Moderator), Judy Agnello, Stephanie Birdsall, Julie Blair, Jan Huckleberry, Darlene Newsom, Vickie Pierson-Perry, Melanie Sipko, Willee Short, and Bob Wenner.

Moderator's Statement (Greg Hills)

When I became a Deacon last year, I was surprised that I was elected to be Moderator, which I gladly accepted. Jane Moore, the previous Moderator, helped me transition into my new role with grace and patience. It did not take me long to realize how dedicated, efficient and kind every member of the Deacon's committee is.

Each member participates in delivering flowers, serving as a liturgist, visiting homebound members, giving Communion to those who are homebound, organizing and serving at our Strawberry Picnic, Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper, Harvest Festival and other special events. Deacons also provide rides to members when needed. The Board of Deacons has given funds to individuals in need on different occasions.

Pastor Dan

At every Deacon's meeting, Pastor Dan has given us a report on the church members he has visited and any news he had about church business. He also reviewed with us a training book on the Deacon's role in the church.

Writing Notes to Members (Darlene Newsom, Melanie Sipko)

Deacons sent out a total of 179 "Thinking of You" or sympathy cards in 2024. These included cards to our homebound friends, those experiencing illness or injury (long term and short term), and those grieving. Melanie and Darlene have sent such heartfelt messages of prayers for hope, healing, comfort, strength, support, faith, peace and love.

Hospital and Home Visits and Offering Rides (Coordinators: Jennifer Quarles, Katlin Douglas)

Home visits provide regular contact with our homebound church members and hospitalized patients, when needed. We can see the impact through the smiles on each face as we visit. Rides: One person has requested a ride.

Funeral Reception (Coordinator: Jude Agnello)

The Board of Deacons has cared for grieving families by responding to their loss with a reception after the funeral service. Judy oversees preparations before the funeral reception, monitors volunteer help, sees that punch and cookies are served during the reception, and organizes clean up. This past year we held five funeral receptions for families who lost loved ones. The food is usually provided by the family and cookies / drinks by Deacon and church volunteers.

Delivering Flowers (Coordinator: Stephanie B)

Flowers are one of the many ways of showing we care about our church family. After each Sunday service, Deacons deliver the flowers from the communion table to people in our church community. On the card accompanying the flowers is written the following:

They have heard the hymns that have been sung, the prayers that have been said, and the sermon that has been preached. Now they come to you and in their silent way are telling you of God's great love and healing power.

Flowers are given as encouragement, congratulations, thinking of you, thank you, sympathy, and special occasions.

Flowers are like friends; they bring color to your world -unknown

Homebound Friends, Special Gifts (Coordinator: Rosemarie Baron, Vickie Pp.)

With the information given by Rosemarie Beron, Vickie has created a list matching Deacons with homebound church members, or our homebound friends. Deacons try to visit or call their homebound friend as often as possible. Since June 2024, Rosemarie coordinated the giving of treats and gifts to these members for Christmas and Easter. This year, the Deacons filled their own bags for their homebound friend with items pertinent to the season. This Christmas, the Girl Scout decorated bags for us to give to our homebound friends.

Strawberry Picnic - June 8, 2024

Fellowship: (Coordinator: Janet Huckleberry)

The Strawberry picnic on June 8th was a great success. We had people from the community come to join us. We hosted people inside Memorial West and at the picnic tables outside. We will learn from our mistakes.

Harvest Festival – (Coordinator Janet Huckleberry and team)

October 20, 2024

Deacons went to Memorial West kitchen on Saturday to carve the turkeys, prepare side dishes along with setting up and decorating the room and tables. About 80 members attended this wonderful meal. The desserts were delightful and without calories (ha ha).

Pancake Dinner (Fat Tuesday) - March 4, 2024

Fellowship: (Coordinator: Janet Huckleberry)

The entertainer for Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner was Mark Cable, a Christian singer/storyteller. Everyone enjoyed his songs about Jesus's love, which had inspired him. Pastor Dan and his wife, Tina, attended. We had 14 tables and about 80 people. Bob Wenner cooked 420 sausages, and we flipped about 300 pancakes.

Saturday Breakfast for the Recovering Community (Coordinator: Bob Wenner.)

First Saturday Breakfast was canceled for a couple of years due to Covid. It was restarted by Bob Wenner, along with the Deacons, and now serves 20 to 45 people every first Saturday of the month. About eight church groups take turns cooking and serving a breakfast of scrambled eggs, sausages and pancakes. Jan H. many times makes an egg casserole and a breakfast treat. Bob W. has witnessed that eating with the recovery community has made a positive impact and allows us to know the people we serve.

University of Delaware Community Day (Greg Hills and Darlene Newson)

Community Day was on September 18th. We had volunteers, Pastor Dan and some church members visit. A tent and two tables were set up with pictures illustrating our church. The children were enticed to come in to play different games, bringing their parents with them. We had limited success, and few people actually looked at our posters that illustrated our church activities. Participating in Community Day is important for our church as we relate to the community. If we do this next year, we need to have serious consideration in changing its content and having more church involvement and interest.

Delivering Communion (Coordinator Vickie PP)

Every Communion Sunday, two Deacons take Communion to homebound members. The Communion kit has church blessed juice / bread, and a guide with a sequence of prayers and statements related to the Communion.

A church bulletin is also given. Many times, the Deacons stay with church member(s), to have pleasant conversation.



Presbyterian Women

Laura Sievert

Presbyterian Women, Inc., is the women's organization in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We are a community of more than 200,000 women who participate in Presbyterian Women (PW) and align our ministry and hearts around a shared purpose, the PW Purpose. The Purpose of the Presbyterian Women:

Forgiven and freed by God in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves:

- To nurture faith through prayer and Bible study,
- To support the mission of the Church worldwide,
- To work for justice and peace, and
- To build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (USA) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom.

The First Presbyterian Church of Newark (FPCN) PW is open to all Christian women (FPCN members and non-members). Our 61 active members are divided into 4 Circles. The Lydia Circle is led by Nancy Black and Jackie Evers and has 16 active members. The Elizabeth Circle is led by Rosemarie Beron and Anne Lewis and has 15 active members. The Ruth Circle is led by Lorraine Conner and Donna Thachik and has 15 active members. The Rachel circle is led by Judy Baker and Beverly Stoudt and has 15 active members.

The 4 circles meet at 10 am, 1 pm, and 7 pm on the third Tuesday of each month. Each of the monthly meetings consist of Bible study, fellowship and support of one another. This is the second year that we are reading Max Lucado's book [They Walked with God](#). We stay connected with 11 special sisters who are no longer able to participate.

The PW provides greeters and liturgists for Sunday worship services and aids many church functions such as staffing First Saturday Breakfasts, providing rosebuds for Baptisms, assisting with funerals, and nurturing the congregation with cards.

Our June general association meeting was held in Memorial Hall. Everyone enjoyed a musical presentation by the Songbirds. We ended the evening with our general meeting featuring the passing of our by-law revisions, the recognition of the 2023-2024 officers and the election and installation of officers for 2024 -2025.

Our October program featured Mark Puican who established the 1in7B Foundation. The Foundation is a faith-based nonprofit serving those experiencing homelessness in Delaware. We had a free-will offering and collected \$1,241.

Our Fall Fundraiser receipts totaled over \$2,830. This amount included proceeds from Raffle baskets, Soup/Chili, baked goods and contributions from our congregation and PW sisters.

Our PW has made generous donations to the following organizations in 2024: FPCN Little Food Pantry, FPCN Food for Success, Hope Dining Room, Door of Hope, Habitat for Humanity, Young Moms, Newark Area Welfare, Sean's House, Child Inc (Rapid Rehousing), Empowerment Center, Exceptional Care for Children, Compassion International and the Star Foundation.

The PW participates in mission projects that include:

Knitting caps and prayer shawls, sending cards to local nursing care centers, collecting can tabs for Ronald McDonald House, collecting stamps for the Stamp Alliance for Bible lesson translation. Groceries were purchased several times throughout the year for the Little Food Pantry. The PW also supported the Presbytery PW World Thank Offering, Birthday Offering and Least Coin Offering. PW members made "to go" bags and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the Newark Area Welfare Committee (NAWC) and worked at the NAWC Christmas "pop-up" grocery store in Memorial Hall.

Our Christmas program, "Finding Meaning in Christmas" featured music by our music director, Christian Hendricks, that was interwoven with scripture reading by various PW members. Hot cider, cookies and fellowship followed. We had free-will offerings for Shoes that Fit and Warriors helping Warriors.

Coordinating Ministry

Human Resource Committee (HR)

Jerry Holt (Chair)

The Human Resources Committee (HR) recognizes the continuing efforts and thoughtful initiatives of our entire staff in 2024: Pastor Daniel McKenty, Director of Music Ministry Christian Hendricks, Praise Team Music Leader Larry Benson, and Office Administrator Grace Laughinghouse, as well as the Praise Service Musicians, Nursery Worker Jules Stevenson, Office Assistant Megan Connolly, and all volunteers as the church completes another year.

In March of 2022, Rodney Cleveland resigned after less than two months as Choir Director, Organist, and Handbell Director. During the search for a replacement, we had the directing talents of Leia Gibson, a UD student, thanks to our relationship with Dr. Paul Head of the Music School. In August, the search was successfully completed with the hiring of Christian Hendricks as our Director of Music Ministry.

At the end of 2024, Session directed HR to secure the services of a bookkeeper as long-term Treasurer Bob Black expressed his wish to set down this responsibility after 16 years of dedicated service. We have secured the services of Anthony Colduci-Smith, who is the treasurer for New Castle Presbytery and bookkeeper for several other Presbyterian Churches. The transition will begin in early 2025.

Annually, HR makes budget recommendations to the Session and works with the Finance Committee to complete the Session-approved Human Resources Budget for the year. Now that FPCN has a unicameral board, HR represents the congregation to the Session.

In 2025, HR's main efforts will concentrate on strengthening on our sexual misconduct and child protection policies to better assure we have a safe environment in our church community. On a continuing basis, the Committee works to resolve personnel issues and concerns within the church in a timely, effective manner. We welcome your feedback, comments, suggestions, and concerns regarding staff personnel.

In alphabetical order, the present committee members are, Evelyn Hayes (on leave), Greg Hills (representing Deacons), Jerry Holt (Chair), Nancy Lewis (representing Session), and Jane Moore. Pastor Dan is also a member. More volunteers will be very welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Holt, Chair

Church Officer Nominating Committee (CONC)

Bob Wunder (Chair)

The Church Officer Nominating Committee found leaders to serve as deacons and elders of First Presbyterian Church of Newark –

For Session

Class of 2027 – Stan Blair began a first term. Melody Bock, Pat Nelson and Bob Wunder continued in office for a second term.

Class of 2026 – Lois Huggins began a first term

For Deacons

Class of 2027 – Kaitlyn Douglas, Greg Hills and Melanie Sipko began a first term. Darlene Newsom continued in office for a second term.

Class of 2026 – Jennifer Dube began a first term. Willie Short began a first term filling a later vacancy.

Nominating Committee of Bob Wunder, Sandy Wenner, Dave Berkebille and Jane Moore will be looking for elders and deacons in the coming months.

Stewardship

Mimi Lovelace (Chair)

Stewardship Committee David Berkebile, Bob Black, Mimi Lovelace

In September, the Stewardship Committee began reviewing the income and expenditures to date with the idea of determining the budget for the upcoming year. Throughout November and December, great care was taken to formulate a budget that meets anticipated needs without either leaving us strapped or having asked for too much. It is the intent that the congregation not be repeatedly asked to contribute additional funds for one thing after another.

Beginning in October and lasting through mid November, the Communicator shared the stories of how First Presbyterian Church-Newark played and continues to play an important part in the lives of some of our members. That culminated in the November collection of Venture in Faith commitment cards, where the Grace - Gratitude Rhythm of Faith is acted upon.

For 2024 our Venture in Faith goal was to raise \$336,000. This congregation contributed \$337,000 and that along with our investments and gifts raised \$495,000. Our expenditures were \$456,000 leaving us with \$38,000 in income.

Our VIF contributions contributed 73% of our operational budget. Our mission contributions from income along with the wonderful work of the ladies of PW allowed this congregation to use more than 10% of our funds for mission.

Our 2025 Venture in Faith is now underway and presents a new challenge. We have taken on a new mission with our Food for Success Program. We have decided to improve the condition of Westminster House so that it may be occupied and utilized. We have wonderful new staff members, have hired a book keeper, and our worship services reflect our love of God through music and the proclamation of the gospel. And, of course, we have some debt to repay.

After countless hours of review with cuts here and increases there, our 2025 operational budget is projected to be \$582,000 with 10% of that planned for mission. We think that asking our small congregation to cover close to 75% of our operating budget is too heavy a burden.

That said, we are planning to utilize a larger percent of our invested funds (7%) and asking the congregation contribute an additional \$15,000 over our 2024 request, \$351,000, which will help cover about 60% of our projected operational expenses.

Our task is to step to out in faith together, be attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and see what great things the Lord has in store for his faithful flock here at FPCN.

Special thanks go to Bob Black and Dave Berkebile and their committees for their financial watch care and for the consideration each has given to my point of view. They have spent an incredible amount of time monitoring financial details. Our congregation is blessed to have them serve the Lord and us.

Mimi Lovelace

Strengthening FPC-N/UD/Newark Community Linkages Team

Pat Nelson, Francis Kwansa, Ann Roybal, Kern Piser

Strengthening FPC Community Engagement 2024 Annual Report

Quality community engagement is key for moving toward FPC's vision and mission.

"We seek to be vibrantly active messengers of hope, bringing the caring presence of Jesus Christ and love of God into our community and the wider world."

We are indebted to the stalwart members who have been volunteering (some for decades) with the Newark Empowerment Center, Habitat for Humanity, Hope Dining Room, Meals on Wheels, Afghan and Ukrainian Resettlement, and the Congo. **We are continuing to build on their advice to...**

- 1. Develop a network to identify needs in the Newark and UD community that FPC might be especially well suited to address.** How can FPC have the greatest enduring positive impact on the needs of the marginalized? We are prioritizing opportunities with the potential for developing personal relationships with those in need AND working collaboratively with individuals and other organizations addressing these issues.
- 2. Use a multi-pronged approach to encourage greater community engagement.** We will use spoken, written AND personal "asks." We strive to listen when FPC members come with a passion for a volunteer opportunity and support their efforts. We're planning regular *Moments for Mission* to share stories and quickly summarize current volunteer opportunities.
- 3. Provide support for developing the skills and expectations for volunteering in ways that effectively meet community needs.** In today's environment, it can be intimidating to approach those from different perspectives and cultures. We will identify and/or develop opportunities/resources to meet this goal.

In 2024, the UD/FPC/Community Engagement team sharpened our focus to (1) identify doable, tangible community needs, and (2) broaden congregational awareness, engagement and support in addressing those needs.

- 1. Food for Success:** See a more complete description of this exciting project following this report. Thank you to all of the volunteers providing the energy to propel *Food for Success* forward -- ensuring its smooth operation and effective service delivery. Thank you, everyone, for supporting this program! Special recognition goes to the *Food for Success* Leadership Team – Francis Kwansa, Sandy Wenner, Marianne Piser and Stan Blair. Don Tancredi has been a rockstar contributor and we were much enriched by Dave Meyers' contributions.
- 2. Six Brainwise sessions** were led by a team from [UD's Center for Cognitive Aging](#). Participants from FPC, the United Church of Christ and other community members learned how to increase their health span; each developed a plan to improve and sustain their brain health. Nearly all of us are following our plan!
- 3. Read Aloud:** Kern Piser volunteered for Read Aloud at the Newark Christian Child Care Center and Pat Nelson volunteered at KinderCare. The Head Start kids were extra appreciative of Kern! Kern's *Moment for Mission* inspired others to get involved. Both Kern and Pat agree that reading to children is a fantastic idea for everyone – but it's extra helpful to be able to get UP out of chairs designed for 3-year-olds. ☺☺

Looking ahead, we want to do everything possible for *Food for Success* to live up to its name.

As we strive to refresh and enhance our skills in listening and discussing difficult issues with others from different cultures and perspectives, we are reaching out for UD community engagement resources.

Francis Kwansa, Ann Roybal, Kern Piser and Pat Nelson want you to know that you are extremely welcome to join our team. We welcome kindred souls in this exciting work. To join us, speak with one of our team members or email ptnelson@udel.edu

Learning Ministry

Adult Christian Education

Melody Bock (Chair)

Adult Discipleship class met the entire year without a summer break, which was a change from years past. Class attendance is growing, topping close to 20, which is encouraging.

Children's Education

Greg Hills and Darlene Newsom (Co-Chairs)

Sunday school teachers started a new curriculum last September. It is from Sparkhouse and has a lectionary approach. This way, the church service has the same topic as is taught in Sunday school. Hopefully this provides parents and children opportunities to discuss what they heard in church. Sparkhouse has a children's Bible to be used with each lesson in addition to a short video that explains the concept to the children. Furthermore, there is a colorful booklet with interesting activities, one to be completed during Sunday school and the other activities to be completed at home. Teachers, assistants, and children all seem to like this curriculum.

Children come to the 10am service with their parents. They participate in the service until Pastor Dan invites them up for the Children and Youth Message. Afterwards, they leave with the teacher for the Sunday School classroom in the Lower Sanctuary. After the service, parents pick up their children downstairs. Last fall, the children witnessed a baptism during the service in the sanctuary. We have two to four Sunday school children each Sunday.

The Children's Learning Committee is comprised of teachers and assistants. Each member has passed a background check and agreed to the Child & Youth Safety Policy. There is one Sunday School classroom with one teacher and one assistant each Sunday. The teachers are Greg Hills, Mimi Lovelace, Sandy Wenner, and Mallory Kowalski. The assistants are Ann Ferreira, Ann Roybal, and Pam Wunder. **The Sunday school is in need of one more assistant.**

There is also a nursery available for children four years old and younger. Jules Stevenson, a trained employee, is in the nursery each Sunday along with an adult church member, Jan Huckleberry. The nursery has the Sparkhouse lectionary curriculum for their age group and also abides by the same safety rules.

Respectfully submitted by Greg Hills and Darlene Newsom
Co-chairs of the Children's Learning Committee

Boy Scout Program

Matt Reyne (Chartered Organization Representative)

The Boy Scout Program of First Presbyterian Church – Newark continued throughout 2024. Troop 56 continued to have weekly Troop meetings and monthly Adult Committee meetings in Memorial Hall. The Scouts participated in a number of outdoor service projects and all of the Scouts went to Summer Camp. Troop 56 was very proud to have six Scout attain the rank of Eagle Scout in 2024.

Cub Pack 56 also continued monthly Den and Pack meetings in Memorial Hall. The highlight of the year was the Blue Gold Dinner in January and the very successful Pinewood Derby held in Memorial Hall in March 2024.

The Boy Scout Program at First Presbyterian Church has successfully completed its 80th consecutive year of providing a traditional and relevant learning experiences for young girls and boys in our local community. And once again, First Presbyterian Church – Newark has continued its' commitment to our local community by supporting and re-chartering Cub Pack 56 and BSA Troop 56 for the calendar year 2025.

Witnessing Ministry

Mission & Outreach

Bob Black, Jim Annett, Sarah Huckleberry, Ted Koser, and Mimi Lovelace, with frequent help and advice from Laura Sievert and Ann Roybal

Hope Dining Room

Hope Dining Room is an outreach to the community that provides food for those who are hungry and in need. It is supported by donations of time, money, and food from our church, as well as others in the community. We are grateful for the contributions from our Mission and Outreach committee and the Presbyterian Women of this church, which allowed us to serve 377 meals in 2024.

On the second Monday of every month, a crew of people representing our church gathers at Kingswood Methodist Church to prepare and serve what is affectionately known as Presbyterian Pasta. Our guests' meals include a salad, mixed vegetables, a roll, fruit and a dessert. Seconds are often available for those requesting them.

Our team members take turns shopping for the month. Paul Short, Steve Hardwick, Greg Hills and Jim Pierson Perry are the chefs, and Stephanie Birdsall, Jane McAlpine, Willee Short, Kathleen Jolly, Vickie Pierson Perry and I get the salad, rolls, and desserts ready and complete other needed tasks. Stephanie uses her amazing talents to create a lovely sign with the menu for our guests to read when they enter.

Hope Dining Room is located at 300 Marrows Road and is open Monday - Friday, from noon to 1pm. Anyone who needs a good hot meal is welcome.

Helping Hands

Sheila Anderson, Steve Hartwick, Amanda Kurian and Jynx Stevenson

Collections and distribution for helping hands was discontinued as of November 24, 2024.

Food For Success

Francis Kwanza

In August of 2024 we applied to the Food Bank of Delaware to become a Distribution Center, and we were approved in October. Our objective is to serve international graduate students and Newark residents who have food insecurity. We are open 4 days a month -- biweekly (on Monday and Friday every *other* week), from 4-6 p.m. We collaborated with the Office of International Student Engagement & Success at UD to organize an Open House in November prior to our opening on November 11. This office sends out weekly newsletters to all international students and they remind students of the services we provide at the Food for Success pantry. Overall, about 95% of our clients so far have been UD international students and the rest are from the Newark community. We plan to develop marketing strategies this year to attract more Newark residents to the pantry.

Highlights:

1. We opened the pantry on November 11, serving Mondays and Fridays every 2 weeks.
2. We served a total of **154** families over the 2 months. This includes: **321** adults and children.
3. Most of our food is non-perishable and some of it is supplied free of charge by the Food Bank of Delaware. We supplement the Food Bank supplies with perishable foods such as bread, eggs, milk, and margarine which we purchase from local grocery stores. Our initial order for the Food Bank on 10/30/24 was \$368.09. We spent **\$483.72** in November (which included \$37.87 for cost-sharing to the Food Bank) and **\$465.84** in December (which included \$115.26 for cost-sharing to the Food Bank) for these perishables.
4. Members of First Presbyterian Church-Newark have generously donated non-perishable food, paper bags, and empty egg cartons for which we are most grateful.
5. We also received a large amount of perishable and non-perishable foods donated by the Newark Area Welfare Committee from their December food drive.
6. The Pantry has been supported by our dedicated volunteers who assist with client intake and help clients with shopping.

Month	#of Families	# in Home	Adult	Children
Nov 24	75	175	138	37
Dec 24	79	146	124	22
Total	154	321	262	59

The Food for Success pantry is managed by: Sandy Wenner, Marianne Piser, Stan Blair and Francis Kwansa. The pantry is in the process of establishing a Governing Board to oversee the activities of the pantry; this is required by the Food Bank, and it will be chaired by Stan Blair.

Dinanga Parish—Our Sister Church

Jim Annett (FPC-N Contact) and Pastor Lazare Tshibuabua (Dinanga Church)

Letter from Rev. Lazare Tshibuabua

This is an opportunity for me to present you the best wishes from Dinanga Church at the beginning of this new year 2025. We pray to God to keep you, protect you. Beloved in Lord, our wish is that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers, during this year and the years to come. Dinanga Church presents you with the most sincere thanks for all that we do together so far. During the past year 2024, with your support, the students were able to study, the bibles were received, widows and orphans were comforted in one way or another. We had additional support to purchase of a drum kit for the church, a cistern and gutters were installed to collect rainwater in the process of combating erosion that threatens the church of Dinanga. We cannot forget the exchange of various information, prayer... The acquisition of a new pastor at the First Presbyterian Church Newark was also good news for us and for you. This was an answer to our prayers. In all we ask God to continue to strengthen us, and that our friendships be comforted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us love one another. Pray for our country the DR Congo and the Presbyterian Church in Congo. The prophet Micah tells us this: "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8) And the Apostle Paul, addressing the Galatians, says this: "Let us grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9) To God alone be the glory! Alleluia! Amen. MAY GOD BLESS OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF FPCN.

Yours in Christ, Rev. Lazare Tshibuabua from Dinanga Church in DR Congo.

Worshiping Ministry

Worship

Carol Olson (Chair)

Larry Benson, Steve Breffitt, Christian Hendricks, Pastor Dan McKenty, Carol Olson and Jim Pierson-Perry

In February 2024 we welcomed a new pastor Dan McKenty. He arrived in the height of the Lenten Season. Pastor Dan was installed as our new pastor June 2, 2024 in a memorable worship service. In 2024 we have seen a growth in attendance by 25 percent.

Early 2024 we reposted the job for Director of Music Ministry. We quickly realized that Christian Hendricks was a good fit for First Pres. That realization was confirmed when we brought Christian to First Pres. For an interview and practices with the choir and handbells. Christian's first worship service was August 4, 2024.

GOD DID PROVIDE!!!! We are truly blessed to have Pastor Dan and Christian leading our worship service.

Many hands go into preparing our sanctuary each Sunday and making sure the worship service runs smoothly.

I want to thank Carolyn Morton who has come in during the week for many years to organize the pews. This entails filling and straightening the pew pads, sharpening pencils, replenishing prayer cards and making sure the hymnals and bibles are in their proper place.

Carol Aftosmis prepares communion and sets up the Lord's Table and finds servers every month. Thank you, Carol.

A big thank you to our twenty ushers who do many visual duties but also behind the scene tasks too. They truly keep the flow of our worship service running effortlessly.

I am looking for volunteers to be on an usher substitute list. Our ushers travel and get sick from time to time and need to call for a substitute. Please email or call me if you are interested.

I wish everyone a healthy and happy 2025.

Director of Music

Christian Hendricks

It is an honor to report to you all for the first time as Director of Music of First Presbyterian. While I have written such reports in the past, I wanted to read through previous annual reports from this church to get a feel for how such things are done here. In doing so, I learned more about the long journey it took for First Pres to get a permanent person for the post; with renewed humility, I hope I have proven and may continue to prove myself worthy of your trust, and endeavor to serve the congregation and its musical mission. I thank my predecessor, Leia Gibson, for keeping the choir strong during the interim, and we wish her success in her studies in the UK. Further thanks to Steve Breffitt, for volunteering to lead the handbells and getting me set up for success. Finally, thanks to each and every one of you who helped me transition from being a lifelong Midwestern boy to an East Coast lad, and for welcoming me into the church with warmth and guidance.

My main goal in my first year is to understand where the church and its music program currently stands, and to see to what new dimensions it could go—or old dimensions it could reinvigorate. As such, I have kept mainly with continuing practices in place when I arrived. Some minor changes, though, include:

- Formalizing a schedule in which “traditional” and “praise” worship alternate weeks. On “traditional” Sundays there are the standard three hymns and a postlude given by the organist or pianist; on “praise” Sundays, the third hymn and postlude are left out in favor of a song of sending by the praise team.
- Changing the Gloria to the gospel-infused “Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me,” which has been quite well-received.
- Beginning service with the prelude before announcements, in the pursuit of streamlining service. While it is hoped folks will take the time of the prelude to enter themselves into the mindset of the service, it also serves the practical purpose of letting everyone know we are about to start.

The choir continues to sing every service (weather permitting...), taking up on their own the Offertory, while joining with the praise team for the Anthem. Numbers continue as they have, with a core of singers who attend Thursday evening rehearsals being reinforced on Sundays by members of the praise team and those whose commitments preclude them from making it to rehearsal, but still want to lend their voice in praise. Thanks to Allen, Annette, Carol, Fe, Jackie, Jane, Jerry, John, Judy, Jynx, Kern, Lois, Melody, Teyton, and the praise team for singing! While the section leaders previously hired from the university have moved on to other posts, a search for replacements—one for the upper voices, one for the lower—has commenced following budget approval for hiring two section leaders. Section leaders, as paid professionals, provide a solid foundation for our volunteer choir, and can be called to sing solos as needed. They also provide further connections with the broader community.

Handbells have returned to regular performance for services, playing about once a month. With members from both within the congregation and from beyond, the Carillon Ringers maintain an invigorating mix of abilities that are all dedicated to ringing out divine music. They have taken on some more challenging pieces, and continue to rise to meet them. For Advent, they combined with the choir to perform “Gesù Bambino,” a personal highlight of the season. Thanks to Dave, Jackie, Annette, Cait, Carol, Vicky, Beth, Stephanie, Eleanor, and Brenda for your dedication!

Our praise team maintains its strengths under the caring and dedicated leadership of Larry Benson, who has been a great co-leader of the music program. I echo his praise of and gratitude for each member of the band, as he wrote to me: "I sincerely thank everyone who contributes to our contemporary worship music on Sunday mornings. A big thank you to Dave Baker (bass and vocals), Melody Bock (vocals), Karen Baker (vocals), Mark Sisk (guitar and vocals), Myles Thompson and Jim Pierson-Perry (piano, strings, and vocals), and Clinton Nanji (drums)." It has been a lovely new endeavor for me, a classical musician trained to read thoroughly-written sheet music, to learn to play from little more than chord symbols and melody, and to create the music as a whole ensemble. Thanks to the praise team for their guidance and patience as I learn this. Finally, a great highlight for the praise band was performing their first concert program under the name Crossfire. As Jim Pearson-Perry relates: "We played for 1-1/2 hours at the Brandywine Summit Camp Meeting in Chadds Ford, PA on August 10th to close out their program season. We had a wonderful reception from the audience, many of whom sang along with us. It was especially gratifying to see almost 20 members of our church there who came to support us." I was one of those who attended, and as it took place the first weekend after my move here, it was a delightful way to become more personally introduced to the church.

With 2024 now a distant memory, we begin 2025 planning for Lent, Easter celebration, and the year beyond. We seek to maintain and increase our community bonds: the UD choirs performed their annual Christmas concert (twice!) to great acclaim; the Newark Community Band made our Christmas spirits bright; and a concert in March this year by a choir from the University of Pretoria, South Africa is in the works. And as always, anyone who wishes to join the choir, handbells, or praise team are encouraged to get in touch with me to talk about possibilities.

With gratitude,
Christian Hendricks

Staff, Worship, and Administrative Team

Pastor

Rev. Daniel Mckenty

Worship Team

Larry Benson, Praise Team Music Leader

Christian Hendricks, Handbell Director

Christian Hendricks, Music Director

Administration Team

Grace Laughinghouse, Office Administrator

Megan Connell, Office Administrator

Bob Black, Treasurer

Harvey Conner- Financial Secretary

Nancy Lewis, Clerk of Session

Greg Hills, Moderator Board of Deacons

Laura Sievert-Moderator, Presbyterian Women

Nursery Staff

Julles Stevenson

Missionary Co-Workers

South Sudan: Bob and Kristi Rice

Israel & Palestine: Doug Dicks

Sister Congregation

Dinanga Presbyterian Church, Democratic Republic of Congo