

# First Presbyterian Church

## 2024 Annual Report







**Our Pastors (from left):** Rev. Dr. Anne Epling, Pastor and Head of Staff, Rev. Ann Pitman, Parish Associate for Pastoral Care, Rev. Carrie Winebrenner, Associate Pastor, Rev. Dr. Youngsoo An, Associate Pastor, Korean Language Ministry

## **Our Mission**

*Transforming lives through the love of Jesus Christ. In Christ, we experience the love of God that accepts us as we are – not as we're supposed to be. In turn, this unconditional love transforms our lives and empowers us to offer the same transformation to others.*





**Dear First Presbyterian Church Members and Friends,**

**As I look back on 2024, I am filled with gratitude for the many ways God has been at work in and through our church. This has been a year of growth, connection, and generosity—a year in which we have deepened our faith and expanded our ministry together.**

**We worshipped in both familiar and innovative ways, embracing creativity in how we gather as a community of faith. We strengthened our relationship with our Korean-language brothers and sisters, joining together more often in worship, service and fellowship. We also launched our first annual Hands on Fort Wayne day of service, living out our call to love and serve our neighbors in tangible ways.**

**Our children's ministry saw exciting growth, with more young people filling our Sunday School classrooms and more families engaging in the life of the church. And through it all, we had fun—whether in worship, service, or fellowship, we experienced the deep joy that comes from being part of this church family.**

**Your generosity made all of this possible. The congregation gave faithfully and abundantly, allowing us to end the year on a strong financial note. We also took important steps to strengthen our internal systems, ensuring that our church remains vibrant and well-equipped for the future.**

**Above all, we have experienced the love and joy of God in our life together. As we move into a new year, I look forward to seeing how God will continue to guide, challenge, and bless us in the journey ahead.**

**With gratitude and blessings,**

**Rev. Dr. Anne Bain Epling  
Pastor/Head of Staff**





*Seeking the Heart of God in the Heart  
of the City!*



# *Worship*

Worship is at the center of the church, the place where God's call and our response comes together in Word and Sacrament, as we gather to sing, pray, and hear the Word preached.



In 2024, we worshipped in new and innovative ways including: Church in the Park at Shoaff Park; a joint PC(USA) worship service with the other Fort Wayne churches; and African drums and a big feast on World Communion Sunday. We even worshipped with our hands and feet for Hands on Fort Wayne.





# ***Faith Formation***

*Seeking the Heart of God...*



## **Children, Youth & Families**

**First Pres offered a wide range of programs in 2024 centering on children, youth, and families. Highlights include:**

- **Annual Ice Skating Party**
- **Student Backpack Blessing**
- **New Level Up middle school Sunday School Class**
- **Teen Youth Group**
- **Family Christmas Caroling at the Towne House Retirement Community**





# ***Faith Formation***

*Seeking the Heart of God...*

## **Adult Small Groups**

Gathering in small groups enriches our faith and encourages deeper relationships with Jesus Christ and one another. From Bible study groups to social gatherings, we gathered together in 2024 to encourage and equip one another. Highlights include:

- New English-Korean Small Group focusing on the PCUSA's *Family Community: Service*
- Touchy Topics Book Club
- New Growing & Gaming Club
- Men's & Women's Bible Studies
- Faith, Fibers, & Fellowship Crafting Group
- Wired Word
- Table Talk Women's Book Study
- Advent by Candlelight Women's Gathering





# ***Faith Formation***

*Seeking the Heart of God...*



## **Building Relationships**

FPC members and friends love to gather around the table! From the annual Chili Cook-Off, to a picnic at Shoaff Park, our World Communion Sunday feast, or December's Gingerbread House Party, we make time to build relationships with each other and enjoy a good laugh.

Support and care for one another is a key component to our mission. Deacon Friends connect with those who are no

longer able to physically attend church or may need additional support, while the Stephen Ministry provides confidential support to members walking through difficult times in life.







# *Engagement & Outreach*

*...In the Heart of the City*

## **FPC Day School**

The FPC Day School saw a year of growth and achievement in 2024. At the end of 2024, 65 children were enrolled representing 57 families, an increase from 54 children representing 50 families in 2023.

For the first time ever, the Day School was nominated in the “Best Childcare” category in the annual Fort Wayne Reader’s Choice Awards, and placed third overall in the voting.

Supporting and including the families of our students through special events, parents nights out after hours care, and our Day School Chaplain ministry are vital components of our Day School outreach.







# *Engagement & Outreach*

*...In the Heart of the City*

## **Missions**

**We are Christ's hands and feet in the world and we believe that we are called to meet the needs of the world around us. We do that through:**

### **Green Team environmental initiatives:**

- **Bag of Bags Project**
- **Fair Trade Chocolate Sale**
- **Earth Day Wild Church & Animal Blessing**
- **Fort Wayne EcoFest Participation**

### **Schools Team student support:**

- **2800 bags of food packed**
- **572 care bags distributed**
- **100 pairs of sweatpants donated**

### **The Social Justice Team initiatives:**

- **Help Not Handcuffs**
- **Reproductive Rights**







# *Engagement & Outreach*

*...In the Heart of the City*



**Helping the Hungry & Homeless (HHH) projects:**

- 3600 Served at the Rescue Mission
- 264 Served at St. Joseph's Women's Shelter
- Provide a pallet of food monthly to three local food banks at Wellspring, United Faith, and East Wayne Street Center, serving approximately 10,000 members of our community.



**Project 216 Meal Packing event:**

- FPC provided the food and the labor to pack meals to be shipped for distribution in areas impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton:
- 125 volunteers
- 25,000 meals packed
- 250,000 served (6 served per meal)





# *Engagement & Outreach*

## *...In the Heart of the City*

### Hands On Fort Wayne

FPC's first ever Hands On Fort Wayne was held in 2024. The Sunday after Easter, FPC volunteers went out into the local community together and shared the good news of Christ through our actions—serving hands-on in a variety of settings with many of our community partners. Over 120 participants worked on eleven different projects, including:

- Wellspring on Broadway – Outdoor Spring clean-up and landscaping
- St. Joseph's Women's Shelter on Lake Ave. – Interior Spring cleaning and landscaping
- The Towne House Retirement Community– Visiting residents to share food & fellowship
- Moody Park in West Central – Outdoor Spring clean-up and landscaping





# *Engagement & Outreach*

## *...In the Heart of the City*

### **MAD2 Camp**

FPC's annual MAD2 Camp summer arts program for children in grades K-5 welcomed nearly 100 campers! Music, Art, Drama and Dance (MAD2) classes were taught by instructors from our local arts partners, including Fort Wayne Dance Collective and Fort Wayne Youtheatre. At the conclusion of camp on Friday, the students performed in the annual MAD2 Camp Showcase, highlighting the artistic skills learned throughout the week in the program.

MAD2 Camp is inclusive to all children, and provides scholarships to those unable to attend without financial assistance. In addition, the investment of time and talent by many FPC volunteers impacts each child enrolled.





# ***Fine Arts***

## ***Faith Enriched by Art...***

The rich tradition of the arts at FPC continued in 2024. Our congregation and the Fort Wayne community enjoyed:

- Three Music Series Concerts
- Four Gallery Exhibits
- Four Theater Productions
- Taste of the Arts Theater Performance and Craft Booth



FPC also held the 62nd round of the National Organ Playing Competition, the oldest organ competition in the United States. Seventeen outstanding young musicians applied to compete for three spots at this prestigious event in April.



## **Lenten Series Arts Panel**

FPC held the fourth event of the four-week series “Seeking the Heart of God in the Heart of the City”, hosting an arts panel moderated by Pastor Annie Epling. She was joined by Charles Shepard, President and CEO of the Fort Wayne Museum of Art, John O’Connell, Professor of Theatre at PFW, and Brittany Hall, President and CEO of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic. The panel shared their recent successes and exciting developments in their respective areas of the Fort Wayne arts community, as well as their future goals, needs, and suggestions for the arts ministries at First Pres.



# *Giving*

*Transforming lives through the love of Jesus Christ*

The congregation's generosity in 2024 was truly inspiring. Our "Five for the Future" stewardship campaign, which invited members to increase their annual pledge by 5%, resulted in an incredible 17% increase over 2023 pledges. This alone added nearly \$50,000, with an additional \$45,000 in new pledges. While some pledges decreased due to members moving, life changes, or passing away, our overall total still increased by \$80,000. In addition, we were blessed to receive two generous bequests in 2024.

Your annual stewardship pledges make everything we do at First Presbyterian possible. Whether you are worshiping, serving a meal at the Rescue Mission, or engaging in one of our many ministries, it is all made possible through the faithful financial support of our congregation. Thank you for your generosity and commitment to the mission of our church.







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