

# 2024 Annual Report

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The First Presbyterian Church  
of New Vernon

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# Dear FPCNV Family

When writing his second letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul says, “We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith...

(2 Thessalonians 1:3-4a)

Reflecting on our ministry at FCNV, I echo Paul’s enthusiasm and pride for the many ways our congregation is putting its faith into action. It is hard to believe that eight years have passed since our family moved to New Vernon and I began serving as your minister. Over these years, we have seen much change in the life of our congregation. We have faced numerous challenges together, and it is with a grateful heart that I share this year’s annual report with you and look ahead to a future of continued vibrancy and growth.

The pages that follow provide us with a snapshot of the many ways FPCNV is serving our members and community—providing opportunities for people to grow their faith, and engage in meaningful service to others. Behind the numbers and photos in this report stand countless hours of volunteer work, thoughtful planning, and prayer.



We continue to be an intergenerational church, with people of all ages contributing to our worship services, taking part in service projects, and attending both social and educational events. Alongside this participation, we also see members of all ages making tangible contributions of support and leadership to our programs and ministry.

This is truly a blessing without which, our church could not have the impact it does. As we look ahead, and plan for the future, I encourage you to reflect on how God is inviting you to use your gifts and talents to support our ministry.

With Hope and Peace,

*Bill*

# Children, Youth & Families

Our ministry to children, youth, and families offers a robust experience of worship, fellowship, and service. At FPCNV, we support children in multiple ways: as they grow in their spiritual lives, connecting deeper in their relationship with God; as they grow in their relationships with our church family, offering regular events for all-age fellowship; and as they grow in their relationship to our community at-large, encouraging ongoing, hands-on opportunities for mission and service to others.

We were excited to offer Sunday School year-round in 2024. This is in marked contrast from previous years, and we are already looking to expand with a middle school class in 2025. Our current Sunday School ministry has grown to include multiple classes: nursery (ages two and under), a class for preschoolers, a class for kindergarten through second grade, and a class for third through fifth graders. Beyond this, children are active participants in our weekly worship, including leadership roles as acolytes and ushers, as well as all-age communion, a new initiative last year that now takes place quarterly.



FPCNV's ministry continues to see the value in hosting events for children, youth, and families that are geared towards our wider community. Toddler time, our weekly play group for young children and adults, in addition to beloved annual traditions like our Easter Egg Hunt, Back-to-School Kona Ice, Fall Festival, and Deck the Halls, continue to grow in numbers and welcome new faces. These inclusive, community-oriented ministries have encouraged new membership in the church and deeper relationships with current church members. Last year we were also thrilled to host "The Impact of Social Media and Screens," recognizing that part of our family ministry includes equipping parents with resources and connection with one another.

2024 also saw increased growth in opportunities for children, youth and families to participate in service projects in the community. Our families are intentional about including their children in donating Easter backpacks in the Spring, backpacks in the Fall, and Christmas shopping for children and their families in December.

Beyond this, FPCNV was thrilled to team with More Perfect Union+ to create additional opportunities for service designed with youth in mind, such as the Raritan River Clean-up, packing breakfast bags for Nourish, NJ and toiletries for Homeless Solutions, and a sponsorship walk in Bayne Park to raise funds for hurricane relief. Youth also took the lead last year in hosting many of FPCNV's onsite events like our MLK Day of Service, the Mental Health Association Dinner, and our All-Age Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. In addition to service opportunities, youth also met frequently for Bible study during the school year at the Conine-Carifa family's home.



# We celebrate:

- Continued growth and engagement of children, youth, and their families
- Robust Sunday School programming for all ages
- Creative partnership with More Perfect Union+
- 50 Easter baskets delivered to the Neighborhood and Infant Child Center in Montclair
- 50 backpacks filled with school supplies donated to Project Readiness
- 77 families sponsored for Holiday Hope
- 95 children and youth on our rolls

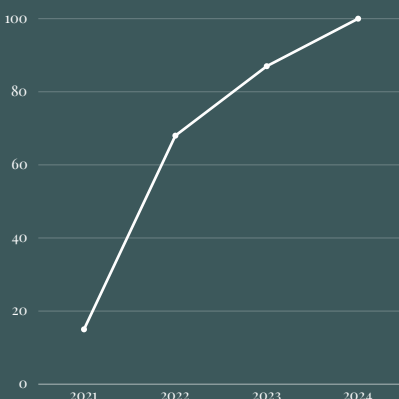
# We anticipate:

- The re-launch of confirmation with a revised program
- Increased opportunities for our growing youth group
- New musical opportunities for all ages, including handbells and a musical performance for youth

# We acknowledge:

- Emma Hastrup, Rachael Gareau, and Tess Ducey for their teaching and support of our children's ministry
- The Conine-Carifa family in hosting our Fall Festival, as well as our youth group for middle-schoolers
- Sam Lanasa, FPCNV elder and Chapter Leader of Morristown MPU+, for his creative partnership
- Susan Fischer, for her leadership in special service opportunities with Holiday Hope
- Rev. William Stone, along with elders on Session, for their ongoing support and promotion of children and youth ministry

## CHILDREN ACTIVE AT FPCNV



## NUMBERS OF NOTE

**100 children on our rolls**

**25 average Sunday attendance of children  
(often 1/3 of worshipping congregation)**

**14 youth participating in middle-school &  
5th grade Bible studies**

# Session: 2024

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## **CLASS OF 2024**

TERM ENDING 1/31/25

DONNA MILLER  
BRENDA MYERS  
SCOTT NOYES  
MATT TARANTO

## **CLASS OF 2025**

TERM ENDING 1/31/26

SARAH CONINE  
ROBERT LECKY  
DON RICHARDSON  
MICHELLE VINCE

## **CLASS OF 2026**

TERM ENDING 1/31/27

SUSAN FISCHER  
SAM LANASA  
BEN THOMPSON  
CANDACE WEEKS

## **MEMBERSHIP STATS**

Active Members 12/31/23 - 274

New Members 0

Reinstated 0

Confirmation Class 0

Baptisms 4\*

Removed by Transfer 0

Removed by Death 5

**ACTIVE MEMBERS 12/31/24 - 269**

## **Church Leadership:**

Members of Session: 6 men, 6 women

Board of Deacons: 2 men, 10 women

\*Baptisms are not included in the count of communicant members

# Deacons: 2024

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## CLASS OF 2024

TERM ENDS 1/31/25

ELLIE BURD (1ST)  
LISA CHAPMAN (2ND)  
SANDY FINLAYSON (2ND)  
BARBARA GILL (1ST)

## CLASS OF 2025

TERM ENDS 1/31/26

NANCY BURROWS (1ST)  
BARBARA COE (2ND)  
CRAIG GRANT (2ND)  
SUSIE MORRIS (2ND)  
MEG RICHARDSON (1ST)  
RANDY STODARD (1ST)  
TWINKLE TONG (1ST)

## CLASS OF 2026

TERM ENDS 1/31/27

CAROL CONGER (2ND)

## DEACONS SERVE OUR COMMUNITY IN MANY WAYS

- preparing the communion elements (bread and juice) each month
- accompanying the pastor to serve communion to those unable to leave home
- granting scholarships from the HERB Fund to those pursuing higher education
- providing financial assistance to those in need from the PIN Fund
- delivering flowers after each Sunday service to those who are ill, bereaved, or celebrating a joy.
- visiting and delivering a special gift to those on the church's Care and Concern list during the Christmas and Easter seasons
- coordinating Coffee Hour each Sunday after worship.
- providing additional pastoral care through phone calls, visits, home cooked meals, cards and more
- hosting pantry sales to raise money for the PIN Fund, and to supplement their budget

Lisa Chapman, Moderator

**\$20,000**

IN SCHOLARSHIPS  
GRANTED FROM HERB  
FUND

**\$3,700**

AID DISTRIBUTED  
FROM THE PIN FUND

**150+**

VISITS TO MEMBERS AND  
FRIENDS OF FPCNV





# Faith & Society

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The Faith and Society Team was established by the Session in mid-2022 to provide opportunities for learning and conversation about the intersection between our faith and contemporary issues in our society. Given the historic commitment the FPCNV has had to non-profit organizations dealing with human needs, this also is a means of better understanding the underlying causes of the challenges facing people like those served by our non-profit partners.

The Team's programming continued to evolve in 2024 as we added service activities to our efforts to inform our community, prompt reflection, promote the respectful exchange of sometimes diverse opinions, and stimulate action. Our emphasis encourages listening to and learning from one another rather than pushing any specific point of view.

The number of participants in the events listed below ranged from 10 to 50, an increase from levels in 2023. Given additional publicity to the wider community and a concerted effort to reach out and extend personal invitations, our participants often included those outside our church community.

**January** – Screening of the movie, *BARBIE*, a multi-generational event.

**February** – Screening of the movie, *Inundation District*, about the impact of climate change in Boston. Thanks to Ted Blanco, co-creator of this award-winning documentary, for supplying the film and leading a Q&A session.

**February-March** - Planned the Prayer Chalk Board in Fellowship Hall for Lent. Thanks to the Conine-Carifa family for implementing the plan.

**March** – Screening of the movie *Oppenheimer*.

**April** – Supported +MPU's\* service project to clean up the headwaters of the Raritan River in recognition of Earth Day.

Arranged joint visit of our youth and STEM students from the Newark Boys and Girls Club to Rutgers School of Engineering.



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**October** – Offered the presentation, “The Impact of Screens and Social Media: What All Parents Should Know and Do.”

Supported +MPU ‘s screening of the movie, *Join or Die*, which documents the loss of social connectedness, the decline of social organizations, and the resulting negative effects on individuals and our society.

**November** – Invited Rev. Ellen Clark Clemot to preach in worship and lead an after-church program on *Welcoming the Stranger*. In both roles, she addressed the issues of the law and our faith in relation to immigrants.

With +MPU we ran an All-Age Walk and Fund-Raiser for Hurricane Helene Disaster Assistance. Raised \$350.

**December** – Cosponsored an American Red Cross Blood Drive with +MPU. Donations will be sufficient to save 78 lives.

Supported Bill Stone’s three-week Advent Study of Marcus Berg’s book, *The First Christmas*, which looks at Jesus’s reaction to the political arena of his time.

I am indebted to the members of the Team whose ideas and behind-the-scenes support have made these programs possible. In addition, Pastors Bill Stone and Hayley O’Connor have enriched and supported our work with their ideas, their connections, and their leadership.

Respectfully submitted,  
Candace Weeks,  
Chairperson

**Team Members:** Sam LaNasa,  
Sally Noyes, Don Richardson,  
Meg Richardson, Christine Taranto,  
William Stone and Hayley O’Connor.



+MPU is a non-partisan, non-profit organization with Veteran leadership that seeks to bring people together through social connections, service, and civic engagement to build stronger, more resilient communities. F&S Team member, Sam LaNasa, is the Captain of the Morristown chapter.

# Music & Worship

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## **Worship and Music Team Members**

Barbara Coe, Susan Fischer, Stephen Fox, Rachael Gareau, Bill Stone, Carol Conger, Candace Weeks, Faith Winow

## **Flower Committee Members**

Lisa Chapman, Marjatta DiSerio, Ann Talcott (chair), Carol Conger, Patti Wood

Our church is truly blessed by our worship and music leaders. Bill and Hayley continue to serve and support our growing congregation with vision, faith and unending enthusiasm. Our worship services are welcoming and thoughtful. As we gather together each Sunday, Bill and Hayley lead us to grow in faith, join in community and to hold our church and others in prayer. Stephen leads our adult choir with creativity and dedication, and the variety of music we experience each Sunday complements and enhances our worship. We are thankful for Rachel's role in leading our children and youth in music, and we delight in the opportunities to hear young voices and young performers share their talents in praise of God. We also continue to be blessed by our choir's section leaders, who not only faithfully lead our volunteer choir, but also serve the church in a variety of generous ways. Thank you to Cate Webber (alto), Maddie Bufanio (soprano), Theron Cromer (tenor) and Luke Basile (bass).



# Highlights from M&W

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- A Disney Sing-Along concert in January.
  - 50 people attended; 20 children; \$340 collected in donations.
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner in February
  - 57 people attended; 28 children.
- Ash Wednesday: Drive-through imposition of ashes and evening prayers
  - 10 people attended drive-through ashes; 10 people attended prayers
- Children and youth leading our Palm Sunday Worship Service
- All-Age Worship Services, including Easter Sunday, World Communion Sunday, the first Sunday in Advent, and Christmas Eve.
- A String Quartet played for Easter Sunday service. The decorations were beautiful and 189 people attended.
- Our Concerts @ the Crossroads series including:
  - A Choral Concert featuring Stephen Fox and our choir's section leaders, and an Organ Recital by Joseph Hill, on 11/17/24.
  - Average attendance of 40, raising over \$1,000 for the Music program.
  - The series will continue in 2025
- The continuation of our Acolyte program, led by Rev. Stone.
- Our annual Blessing of the Backpacks and Blessing of the Animals services.
- Hand chimes and shakers were purchased to support the growing children's music program and to offer new ways for children to participate without singing.
- Completing construction to raise the organ console out of the pit, close the pit and place the organ console on a movable dolly. The organ console can now be placed anywhere in the chancel area for services or concerts. This move also makes it possible for Stephen to conduct the choir while playing the organ.
- An All Souls Vesper Service
  - Four people attended
- Our Holiday Lessons and Carols Service & Christmas Pageant
  - 30 children participated in the pageant
- Our candlelight Christmas Eve evening service with a string quartet performing.
  - 270 people attended that service with another 45 watching online.

Our warm appreciation goes to Sarah Conine and her family for the beautiful outdoor and indoor decorations at Easter, during the fall season, and for Christmas.

The Flower Committee's thoughtful planning and careful implementation of decorations continued to grace our worship space throughout the year.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Susan Fischer

# Stewardship

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## DONNA MILLER

The 2024 stewardship campaign, “From Generation to Generation,” focused on providing the needed resources for our Church to thrive and expand to benefit our congregation and our community. We are very happy to report that 2024 saw more and varied programs offered to our members as well as a marked increase in participation. In addition, our Children and Youth program continues to grow and thrive. Both of these areas, as well as the daily operations of the church, require additional resources and, because of your time, talents, and generosity, we were able to meet these demands and strengthen our church.

We received pledges from 80% of our member households and from 68% of our friends of the church households totaling \$387,541 a dollar increase of 13.1% over 2023. The total dollar value of pledges paid was \$386,650, or 99.8%.

Below is a summary of the results as compared to our goals.

## ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN

**Stewardship for 2024**  
**\$386,650 RAISED**  
**FROM 117 HOUSEHOLDS**

	Goal	Actual	Achieved
Dollars	\$387,541	\$386,650	99.8%
Participation	157 households	117 households	80%

# Mission & Outreach

## TEAM MEMBERS

BRENDA MYERS (LEADER), JANE COYLE, JANE KENDALL, NANCY BURROWS, MIKE LUCARELLI

## OUR 2024 PARTNERS

The Chaplaincy Program of MCCF  
Children on the Green Preschool  
Nourish NJ  
Cornerstone Family Programs  
Deirdre's House  
Homeless Solutions  
The Mental Health Association  
Mrs. Wilson's



**In 2024 FPCNV committed to donate 15% of its qualifying revenue to our non-profit partners. This totaled \$62,630! In addition to this, we collected \$10,314 in “pass through” donations for special causes.**

This year, FPCNV was honored by Nourish NJ with the Founder's Award at their 40th Anniversary Celebration

We also hosted events & collections

- A dinner for guests of The Mental Health Association
- Collecting backpacks for NJ children in need
- Collecting Easter baskets for Children on the Green
- Baking and bagging 500+ cookies for our prison ministry
- A Souper Bowl Lunch for Nourish NJ
- Collecting donations for the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance relief efforts in Israel/Palestine & Hurricane Relief



# Operations

**SARAH CONINE, PETE FINKLE, JAMIE MILLER & BROOK MILLER**

## **Major projects in 2024 included:**

- Replacing one of the AC condensing units on the fellowship hall roof
- Re-laying the brick walkway along Lee's Hill Road
- Replacing rot at 16 Lee's Hill Road, and painting areas that needed it
- Improvements and repairs to various electrical wiring in Fellowship Hall
- Repaired old water damage on the Sanctuary ceiling
- Construction of a third ceremonial to hold ashes in the cemetery memorial garden
- Replacing the water heater at 16 Lees Hill Road

## **Projects planned for 2025:**

- Repair sensors in sprinkler system cistern
- Replace garage door & rotting wood at 6 Lees Hill Rd
- Re-lay bricks of Fellowship Hall Terrace
- Cleaning and touch-up of church signage
- Update security for buildings (locks & cameras)
- Re-lay patio area in front of Fellowship Hall
- Install mini-split heating in basement classrooms of Fellowship Hall
- Update lighting in kitchen and church basement
- Replace sun-damaged carpet in Sanctuary
- Update bathrooms at 16 Lee's Hill Rd
- Explore replacing diesel generator with gas
- Epoxy coating sanctuary basement floor





# Finance

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**TEAM MEMBERS:** Scott Noyes (Leader), Matt Taranto, Robert Lecky, Craig Grant, Todd Claytor, Don Richardson, Ron Ponder, Donna Miller (Clerk), William Stone (Pastor)

**Mission:** To provide FPCNV with the financial resources to support the needs of the congregation as directed by the Session.

**Process:** The Finance Team coordinates a number of sub-teams, each of which is assigned areas of focus. These areas include audit, financial reporting and banking, insurance, investments and strategic planning. Additionally, the operations, stewardship and personnel teams serve as liaisons to the finance team.

**Operating Results:** The church finished the year with a slight net operating loss of (\$449). Both income and expenses were slightly higher than budgeted. Revenues were \$19k above projected due to increased donations and a new member pipeline. Insurance and building related expenses were greater than projected but within a normal range. Personnel expenditures were well below projected due to departures and should rebound in 2025. We continue to emphasize generous treatment for the Minister and Associate Minister. Capitalized expenditures were lower than normal and included \$19,112 for building related expenses, \$26,291 for a new memorial garden and \$6,450 for the completion of the organ upgrade project. These latter expenses were capitalized and do not show in the operating P&L.

**2024 Operating Budget:** Session has approved a budget showing a loss of (-20,725) for 2025. Total revenues from offerings, rental income and transfers from the Youth Ministry Fund are projected to increase from \$632k to \$694k, an 9.7% increase. This reflects a 7.4% increase in pledge-related income and the full year rental of the brick manse. Operating Expenses are projected to increase from \$632k to \$715k, a 12.9% increase. Session has taken the position that a substantial investment in support staff is essential to support the ongoing growth of the church. To ensure we have a financially satisfactory year, Session plans to review the 6-month results and adjust revenues and expenses if needed.

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**Mission and Outreach Donations** - The church views Mission and Outreach Donations to be an important component of our church's mission. For decades, the church has given 15% of the current year's pledges and plate offerings to a list of charities approved by Session upon recommendation of the Mission and Outreach Team. In 2024 the church donated \$62,630 to charities, assisted others with \$10,314 of pass-through donations and gifted \$20,000 for HERB fund scholarships. Our target for charitable giving in 2025 is \$65,700. This amount is aspirational and is dependent upon the overall financial health of the church. The actual amount to be donated at the end of each year will be approved by the Session every November or December considering FPCNV's budget situation at that time. If no changes are made or no vote is taken, the percentage to be donated will remain the same as in the prior year.

**Investment Accounts** - It was a rebound year for the financial markets and the Church's investment accounts performed very well. With the S&P 500 up over 26% and the bond market earning 4%, our investment accounts performed well. The Church's investment accounts participated in this success and earned on average over 12%.

However, please note that our Capital Improvement Fund has been fully depleted with a balance of \$507. This year we were forced to pay building related capital expenses from our endowment fund, the Crossroads Fund. Also of note is that the Youth and Family Fund, which pays for the Associate Pastor and related youth expenses has less than 2 years of remaining funding. A Capital Campaign is essential to replenishing these account balances.

## Consolidated Result

	(\$449)	OPERATING DEFECIT
+	\$210,483	NET GAIN OF INVESTMENTS
	<hr/>	
	\$210,034	CONSOLIDATED RESULT

# 2025 Finance Projects

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**Update Fiscal Policy and Procedures Manual** – The church continues to maintain a document that details how the church handles its finances. Drafted in 2021, our new manual helps ensure consistency with our processes and therefore with our financial reporting. This is critical for meaningful year-over-year comparisons, the basis for determining our church’s financial health. The manual also helps us identify more efficient and less costly processes, as this can only be done when one fully details current processes. Finally, the manual will solve the problem of getting interested members up-to-speed on the church’s finances. The church benefits the more its members understand the church’s finances.

**Depreciation Policy** - After trying an alternate methodology, the church has reinstated an annual depreciation policy In line with most churches In the Presbytery. Instituted for 2022, the church only depreciates expenses over \$5,000 and does so at the end of the fiscal year. We believe this to be the more conservative approach.

**Secure Payment Procedures** – While speedy payment processes are essential, secure payments are essential. Our outsourced bookkeepers, BrandK, use an online payment program called Bill.com. While we appreciate its speed and efficiency, we have realized there are security limitations. While we pay most vendors electronically, payments exceeding \$5,000 are paid by check with multiple signatories. We recognize the limitations of online processes and are taking a more conservative approach.

**Systematic Quarterly Portfolio Rebalancing and Adjustments** - Since the church migrated from third party portfolio management to internal management, there has been insufficient attention to portfolio rebalancing and internal reconciling transfers. Programs have been Instituted to reconcile the investment accounts on a quarterly basis and ensure that the investment allocations are within their tolerance ranges.

**Investment in Excess Cash Balances** - As short-term interest rates have increased over the last two years, we are using several strategies to receive higher Interest rates on excess cash balances.

# Summary Budget

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	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	2025 Budget
<b>Income</b>			
Administrative	\$153,000	\$158,982	\$175,000
Offerings & Pledges	\$465,470	\$473,917	\$519,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$618,470</b>	<b>\$632,899</b>	<b>\$694,300</b>
<b>Expense</b>			
Administrative	\$101,800	\$104,838	\$108,700
Buildings & Grounds	\$93,350	\$107,775	\$124,000
Christian Ed: Adult	\$1,200	\$276	\$690
Christian Ed: Youth	\$13,000	\$8,529	\$11,500
Congregational Life	\$2,000	\$87	\$2,000
Membership	\$700	\$49	\$1,000
Music & Worship	\$75,600	\$73,442	\$79,300
Outreach	\$61,000	\$72,944	\$75,735
Personnel	\$277,548	\$265,579	\$312,100
Total Expenses	\$626,198	\$633,348	\$715,025
<b>Net Result</b>	<b>-\$7,728</b>	<b>-\$449</b>	<b>-\$20,725</b>

