

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



The 158th Annual Report of the
Community Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Benicia, California

Community Congregational Church, United Church of Christ Benicia, California

Contents

Leadership Team 2024 _____	4
Co-Pastor's Report – Rev. Renie Kirk _____	5
Co-Pastor – Rev. Bladimer Paeste _____	6
Co-Pastor Rev. Kim Kendrick _____	8
Search and Call Committee Report _____	9
Music Ministry _____	10
Moderator _____	11
Vice Moderator _____	12
Vice Moderator/PPRC Annual Report _____	13
Clerk _____	14
Financial Secretary _____	16
Treasurer _____	17
Building and Grounds _____	22
Welcome and Growth _____	25
Christian Education _____	27
Mission and Outreach _____	28
Worship _____	30
The Rolling Tones – Handbells _____	33
Congregational Care _____	34
Fellowship _____	35
Stewardship _____	36
Leadership Team 2025 _____	38

Leadership Team 2024

STAFF

Co-Pastor	The Rev. Bladimer Paeste
Co-Pastor (Retirement Date: 05/29/2024)	The Rev. Renie Kirk
Co Pastor (Call Date: 10/13/2024)	The Rev. Kim Kendrick
Minister of Music	Dr. Barbara Hamm
Office Manager	Susan Slater
Children's Education	Parand Banagar

OFFICERS

Moderator	Liz Cleaves/Shelby Riddle
Vice-Moderator	Shelby Riddle
Church Clerk	Kathy Berry
Financial Secretary	Leslie Lessenger
Treasurer	Dale Olm

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Building and Grounds	Dale Olm and Shelby Riddle
Christian Education	Open
Congregational Care	Marilyn Scrutchins
Fellowship	Lilibeth Paeste and Leah Bleasdale
Mission & Outreach	Kathy Berry and Nancy Gilman
Stewardship	Deborah Shanks
Welcome and Growth	Billie Munds
Worship	Priscilla Lane and Marilyn Scrutchins
Members At Large	Dandesa Martin
Youth at Large	Jayden Bleasdale
Pastor Emerita	Rev. Renie Kirk

Co-Pastor's Report – Rev. Renie Kirk

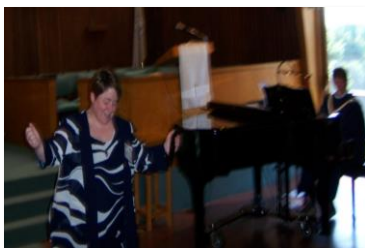
This is the last annual report for Rev. Renie Kirk who served as our pastor for 17 years and retired on May 19, 2024. This report represents a summary of her last five months, but in many ways represents her contributions for the last 17 years. During 2024, Rev. Renie stepped back from acting as Sr. Pastor, to Co-Pastor with Rev. Bladimer Paeste. This allowed for a transition while we began our search for a new co-pastor.

Here are some of the highlights: Attendance at regular activities included Dogs and Dominoes, Game Night and regular meetings with co-pastor Rev. Bladimer and the Moderator; as well as meeting with new visitors, members and those in the community, including continued work with the Bay Association. Technical accomplishments that enhanced the church included updating numerous web pages, adding a New Directory, and working on resolving issues with Zoom and the video/sound system.

She spear-headed our Lenten season with the theme, UP, from the movie. We had a movie & popcorn night on Ash Wednesday (which was also Valentine's Day) to watch UP and discuss it. We decorated the sanctuary with hot air balloons and then she thematically preached on various concepts of being UP. This culminated with a great Easter!

Her retirement service and party were held on May 19, 2024 during which time we presented her with the status of "Minister Emerita" having been unanimously voted such by the congregation in recognition of her 17 years of full-time ministry (one of the longest) in our church's recent history.

The following are her remarks from her last Council meeting: "This is my final report and my final council. You are the finest people one could ever imagine doing ministry with. The thing you need to remember is that you will always be a part of me and I will always be a part of you. Thank you for all of your patience, kindness, mercy, grace, generosity and love that you have shown me! You are a great group of people and I wish you all the best in this new season that you are about to begin. May you continue to grow in faith, mind, body and soul and remember to do everything for the glory of God!"



Co-Pastor – Rev. Bladimer Paeste

The year 2024 was a year of transition, celebration, and opportunities. We granted the Rev. Renie Kirk the title of Pastor Emerita of the church. We also celebrated Rev. Renie's retirement in May 2024 for having served CCCUCC for more than 17 years. As I was given the opportunity to temporarily assume the fulltime pastoral responsibility from May 2024 to October 15, 2024 while the church was in transition and in the process of calling the Rev. Kim Kendrick. We are blessed that the Rev. Kim Kendrick said yes to CCCUCC's call as Co-pastor and the congregation acted and celebrated her welcome on October 13, 2024. Sincere gratitude to the Pastoral Search Committee who worked diligently and tirelessly during the call process.

2024 has been an exciting year as CCCUCC embraced the co-pastor leadership model. Added to it is the welcoming of two pastors of color working as a team and co-equal. This is unprecedented and something the CCCUCC community should celebrate and be proud of.

CCCUCC is blessed to be able to help, support, and assist our folks who are food insecure. Through the Pastor's discretionary fund, we were able to give gift cards and gas cards to our folks in need. Thanks to the generosity of those who donated monies for the pastor's discretionary fund.

We lost two of our beloved church members Ed Dieden (February 21, 2024) and Darlene Peterson (Nov. 25, 2024). Both of them blessed our CCCUCC community with their gentle presence, generosity, and love. We celebrate all that they were and we will keep them in our hearts.

I had opportunities to celebrate lives and conduct a memorial service (July 29, 2024, Arsenio "Jun" Capulong) and inurnment (July 20, 2024, Christopher Andrew Fleming, July 20, 2024) of folks beyond our CCCUCC community. These events help in spreading the news about our welcoming church family. This ministry will continue in 2025.

There are a number of church folks who sat down with me to break bread. These fellowships, lunch or dinner, are pastoral in nature or simply checking in or getting to know each other in a deeper way. These meetings help build and nurture relationships and also opportunities for me to hear feedback, suggestions, and hopes for the church.

Our nurturing opportunities have grown. We have the Listening, Study, and Prayer group for Filipino folks every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month. Starting January 15, 2025, we will venture into a comprehensive study of the Bible.

We have grown as a community in 2024 in terms of number. We conducted two (2) New Member's classes, and we have 8 folks in total attendance and all of them were received or enlisted as new members of CCCUCC. There are about 30 individuals, both children and adults, who have attended church regularly or irregularly. Some of them indicated interest in joining our community while others simply come, get involved, but have not decided to become members yet. Co-Pastor will continue to encourage folks to become official members. Obviously, it is a concerted effort because providing hospitality and a sense of home for everyone who walks into our community is everybody's business.

There has been obvious excitement in our midst. There are new folks in our community. There are new things happening. We will continue to stay in this momentum as we journey on to 2025. I call on every member of the church to joyfully share their gifts, time, talents, and treasures. Let us be one in our quest

to tell the world that in this community God's hospitality exists, God's unconditional love is shared, the passion for God's justice and righteousness is embraced, and the willingness to serve the least, the lost, the last, and the lonely never ends.

To God be all the glory!
With much joy, excitement, and gratitude,
Sincerely in Christ,
Rev. Bladimer Paeste



Co-Pastor Rev. Kim Kendrick



Dear Community Congregational Church,

Grace and peace family and friends of Community Congregational Church UCC. I thank God for you and for all that the Divine has done in and through us in the past year.

My first 90 days as your Co-Pastor has been a joy!

On November 13th I was overjoyed when voted as your new Co-Pastor. It is an honor to journey alongside this church as a witness to God's unfolding miracles.

Worship and preaching have been an important focus for me to share and to get to know you. Together with Pastor Bladimer and the phenomenal Worship Committee, my prayer is that we will continue to give our highest and best.

Your radical hospitality is evident and strong. As a lifelong learner, I planned the first months of my time with you so that I could get better acquainted with the congregation.

I am discovering several things, including: 1) there are deep and dear connections to CCC for both long-time and newer attenders, 2) As is typical of many UCC congregations, a variety of religious and spiritual paths led folks to CCC, 3) A hallmark that has drawn many people here is a sense of welcome and what has kept them here is a sense of belonging. These are just some of the things I have learned.

From our "Chat & Chew" over coffee meetings, LGBTQ+ Lecture Series, the Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas Concert and Christmas Eve Service we are a vibrant church, and I love it!

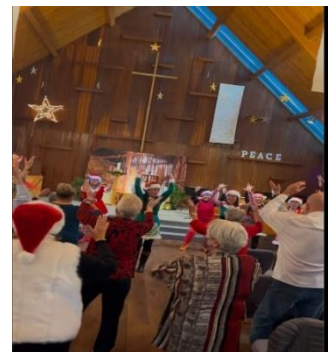
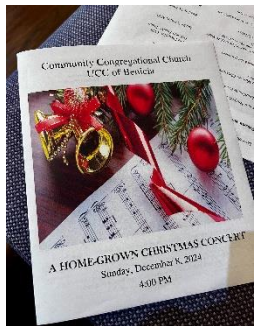
I am grateful for all the many ways you serve the community with an assortment of generosity. As a community of faith, serving and remaining open to the creation of a Beloved Community will be our firm foundation. CCC is a strong community of people with Juicy Faces who show up for each other, support each other and is at her best

when engaged together.

Thank you, Community Congregational Church UCC, for putting your Faith into Action! Thank you Divine for entrusting us to tend to this part of Your vineyard called Community Congregational Church United Church of Christ.

Thank you, Community Congregational Church UCC, for putting your Faith into Action!

Thank you Divine for entrusting us to tend to this part of Your vineyard called Community Congregational Church United Church of Christ.



Search and Call Committee Report

- The Search & Call Committee was organized on January 31, 2024 in anticipation of the retirement of Pastor Renie Kirk.
- The committee met regularly, usually once a week to prepare our Church Profile and Position Posting statement using the following:
 - The current Constitution and Bylaws, especially the mission statement and membership requirements
 - The Website
 - The Congregational Survey for a New Settled Co-pastor that was prepared by the Transition Team in December 2023.
 - A demographics survey of the congregation prepared by the committee
 - The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry (UCC)
 - The previous church profile prepared in 2006
 - Annual reports (financial & membership)
 - Introducing the New Local Church Profile
- Profiles of candidates for our search for a settled 50% co-pastor were received and evaluated. A short questionnaire was sent out to candidates for written responses. References and “sub-references” were called. Where possible, recordings of sermons and worship services by candidates on YouTube and elsewhere were watched. In-person interviews by the committee of the top two candidates were completed. Committee members attended a “neutral pulpit” to observe our final candidate “in action” preaching and leading worship.
- The Search & Call Committee concluded their mission to search for a candidate for the position of 50% co-pastor with Pastor Bladimer.
- The Rev. Kimberly Kendrick (Pastor Kim) accepted our offer of call for this settled position.
- Her Letter of Call was approved at the September Council meeting.
- An open house was held on Saturday October 12, 2024, for congregants to meet Pastor Kim.
- Pastor Kim led the worship service on October 13. At the congregational meeting following the service, attending members (plus those on Zoom) voted unanimously to call Rev. Kimberly Kendrick as our new, settled co-pastor (50%).
- I would like to thank the committee of 12 and our counselor, Pastor Bladimer Paeste, for their diligence, cooperation, spirit of consensus and hard work since January 31, 2024 on this mission. It has been an honor to have served as their chairperson.

Dale Olm, chairperson

Members:

Jaden Bleasdale
Carla Goad
Priscilla Lane
Leslie Lessenger, Corresponding Secretary
Billie Munds
Dale Olm, Chairperson
Lillibeth Paeste

Marilyn Scrutchins
Deborah Shanks, Recording Secretary
Todd Wolf
Andy Zinkevich
Liz Cleves & Shelby Riddle, ex-officio (Moderators)
Pastor Bladimer Paeste, Counselor

Music Ministry

Dr. Barbara Hamm, Minister of Music



Music plays an integral role in the life of Community Congregational Church, and the musicians were kept quite busy in 2024. The Sanctuary Choir was comprised of Chol  McGraw, Priscilla Lane, Deborah Shanks, Nancy Gilman, Susan Stofan, Pat Obendorf, Todd Wolf, Andy Zinkevich, Rev. Bladimer Paeste, and Lisa Dwiggins, who began singing with the choir in the fall. The choir sang on average every other Sunday and had a varied repertoire, some of which was adapted by Deborah Shanks from 4-part to 3-part music, often with instrumental accompaniments.

We really pulled out all the stops in the spring, singing a couple of Rev. Renie Kirk's favorite anthems, one of them a lively gospel Easter anthem and another on May 19 for her last worship service with CCC. We also sang a moving piece called "Friends" at her retirement party that same day.

The choir performed some challenging pieces during Advent and Christmas, among them "Christmas Is Coming" and Gloria in Excelsis Deo." At a time when fewer churches have choirs that regularly rehearse and sing, our small but mighty group of volunteers still rehearses weekly and sings regularly throughout the choir year, September through May.

Several vocal soloists also provided special music for worship services and/or the annual Christmas Concert: Mary Susan Gast, Nancy Gilman, Chol  McGraw, Rev. Bladimer Paeste, Deborah Shanks, Todd Wolf, and Barbara Hamm. Liz Cleves and Marilyn Scrutchins also occasionally played guitars and sang for gathering music and/or special music during a service. Our children do not sing regularly, but Jessie and Avery Aldritt-Goad, Ayaan Patiram De La Roz, Jack Olsen, and Dylan and Aiden Stanger practiced after church to learn "Away in a Manger" for the Christmas Concert. Dale Olm also worked with them during Sunday School and led them when they performed – to loud applause.

An Instrumental Ensemble consisting of Leslie Lessenger on flute, Shelby Riddle on clarinet, Lisa Dwiggins on cello, Deborah Shanks on harp, Dale Olm on mandolin (and sometimes percussion), and Barbara Hamm on piano provided music for gathering/worship most Sundays of the year as well as occasionally accompanying choir anthems. They sometimes performed as soloists (all of them!), as duos (Lisa/Deborah; Lisa/Leslie; Leslie/Deborah; Shelby/Dale; Shelby/Barbara) or a trio (Leslie/Lisa/Deborah) at various times. A small church like ours is fortunate to have such a skilled cadre of musicians, and I do not take them for granted! Barbara and Shelby also played jazz Christmas carols for the Vallejo Disciples of Christ Global Faire in December.

Another instrumental group, The Rolling Tones Handbell Choir, directed by Leslie Lessenger, is comprised of Nancy Gilman, Chol  McGraw, Pat Obendorf, Deborah Shanks, and Kim Webb. Leslie chooses all the music and trains newcomers who wish to learn to play handbells. They performed for worship services and for the Christmas Concert, adding inspiration and beauty to the musical life of CCC. They also performed in December at an event in Fairfield for North Bay Hospice and Bereavement.

We offered a well-attended Taiz  service on Good Friday, accompanied by the Instrumental Ensemble. The positive response encouraged us to offer 3 more Taiz  services on June 21, October 4, and December 31 (New Year's Eve!).

This year marked the 20th year of CCC's Concert Series, which began in 2004. Our concerts this year included the Dultones, self-described as the "only all male, all Chinese Doo Wop group you will ever google," performing hits from the 50's and 60's at our Chinese New Year's dinner; the 10-piece brass chamber music ensemble Brazzissimo; and our own annual Homegrown Christmas Concert. The Benicia Chamber Players also continued their series of Sunday afternoon concerts.

My position includes a fair share of behind-the-scenes work: selecting music, practicing, rehearsing with individuals and groups, typing lyrics, proofreading bulletins and slides, writing reports, reporting copyrighted song usage to our 2 copyright licensing agencies, CCLI and One License—all of it in the service of making the music happen. I am blessed to work with all our dedicated singers and instrumentalists, grateful for their willingness to use their gifts in music ministry at CCC.

Moderator

Dr. Elizabeth Cleves

2025 was a challenging year in the life of Community Congregational Church. As new Moderator, I began the year as our church was in the process of preparing a heartfelt farewell to our pastor of 17 years, Pastor Emerita Renie Kirk. The first half of the year was busy, hectic at times, and on occasion, quite challenging for me as a first time Council member.

In January we welcomed a few new members into the church leadership. With the help of our dedicated Worship Committee we packed up Christmas 2023, finalized our budget for 2024 and began the new year. Our special *Transition Team* made recommendations for a new Co-Pastor, and we also began work on a new *Release of Call* for Rev. Renie.

From January until the end of August, I attended meetings and participated in the work of the Building and Grounds Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee and participated in several events throughout the year. I also wrote a few articles for our weekly online newsletter "News From the Pews".

February was an especially busy month. With my catering skills, I was involved in our lovely Valentines Day event featuring not only dinner, but a special showing of the film "Up" in the church sanctuary. At the end of the month we ushered in the Year of the Dragon for a Chinese New Year celebration complete with entertainment and song from the fabulous Do-Wop group *The DulTones*.

Each month I met weekly with Pastor Renie and after her departure, I met with Pastor Blademir to discuss church activities, timelines and various projects for the church. During the *Children's Time* portion of our church service each Sunday I happily facilitated by teaching the children about the scripture we focused on each Sunday. When needed, and with the help of Marilyn Scrutchins, I also provided gathering music with song and guitar.

Various money making and social events were held during the first six months of the year including the *Brazzissimo* Concert, the St. Patrick's Day Dinner, and ticketed raffles during events. During the Lenten season we continued our tradition of donating funds for 'Lilies' that would go to help teens who were aging-out of the foster system. We continued our traditional Maundy Thursday Simple Super, Good Friday Taize Service and Easter Egg Hunt for the children of our church. Pastor Renie's Retirement Party at the end of May was a great success.

June included our annual Philippine Independence Day Celebration that was attended by many church members (and some who were not members!) and at the end of the month, I also facilitated a Leadership Retreat for council members.

In July we assembled an outdoor July 4th *Ice Cream Social* for church and community members. At the end of July and with the talents of Deb Shanks on piano, Nancy Gilman, Chole and Todd Wolf we performed a special puppet show to the song "So Long, Farewell" from the *Sound of Music* to bid farewell to our lovely childcare staff member Parand as she left for college in Chicago.

In August, we held a *New Members* class with Pastor Baldimier that was offered to people who were interested in becoming members of the church.

At the end of August, I learned that I had developed serious health concerns that were strongly affected by stress. I had tried my best to sustain a demanding full-time job and perform my duties as Moderator. So, on the advice of my primary doctor, on September 1, I had to step down from my role as Moderator. Thankfully, our Vice Moderator Shelby Riddle gracefully and graciously stepped up to finish the year in my place. To all the people who provided direction, encouragement and sincere friendship along the way my heart says, "Thank you!"

Vice Moderator

Shelby Riddle

I started the year as Vice-Moderator but took over the Moderator position from Liz Cleaves about the time that Pastor Kim joined CCC. It has been an interesting year. One of the more memorable moments for me was the “burning of the mortgage” where we paid off the parking lot loan this year, and then literally burned the loan papers in a ceremony outside the church with Pastor Renie and Pastor Bladimer. Jim Lessenger and Dale Olm officiated, with the handbells playing.



As Moderator I joined the Search Committee (the Moderator is an ex-officio member) for their final meetings as our church called Pastor Kim, which was a unique experience for me.

We had a nice open house meet and great for Pastor Kim, then the next day she did our sermon and we had a homemade Philadelphia Eagles cake by Kim Osborn during Fellowship, to help Pastor Kim feel at home in her new church family.



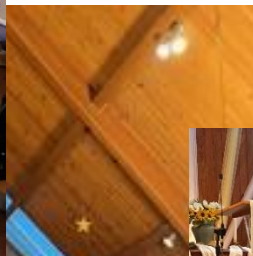
Vice Moderator/PPRC Annual Report

The projected slate of officers for 2025 are:

- Moderator Shelby Riddle
- Vice Moderator Deborah Shanks
- Financial Secretary Leslie Lessenger
- Treasurer Dale Olm
- Clerk Kathy Berry

Committee Chairs:

- Buildings and Grounds Dale Olm & Shelby Riddle
- CE Acting Chair – Dale Olm
- Congregational Care Marilyn Scrutchins
- Fellowship Lilibeth Paeste & Leah Bleasdale
- Mission and Outreach Kathy Berry & Nancy Gilman
- Stewardship Open
- Welcome and Growth Billie Munds & Nora Gauger
- Worship Priscilla Lane & Marilyn Scrutchins
- Member at Large Jayden Bleasdale



Clerk

Kathy Berry

Active Member Name Join Date

Stofan, Susan02/20/1974
 Hammonds, Maryo09/15/1974
 Hammonds, Sam 09/15/1974
 Martin, Pam 10/22/1978
 Osada, Carolyn 06/08/1980
 Scrutchins, Marilyn06/07/1981
 Lane, Priscilla12/05/1982
 Read, Laurie02/17/1985
 Read, Keith 02/17/1985
 Sayles, Jackie.....04/05/1987
 Olm, Dale.....09/27/1998
 Murrell, Janet 11/14/1999
 Taylor, Penny..... 11/14/1999
 Mason, Carl..... 11/14/1999
 Mason, Gail.....11/14/1999
 Thomas, Jett01/16/2000
 McGraw, Chol 02/25/2001
 Sindt, Cassidy.....05/12/2002
 Hamm , Barbara06/30/2002
 Gilman, Nancy 07/20/2003
 Watson, Jim07/20/2003
 Thompson, Sarah01/25/2004
 Kirk, Rev. Renie 06/03/2007
 Riddle, Shelby06/03/2007
 Olm, Adam.....06/03/2007
 Lessenger, Jim06/01/2008
 Lessenger, Leslie06/01/2008
 Ensminger, Veronica10/04/2009
 Gauger, Eleanor (Nora).....01/24/2010
 Aldritt, Nancy 03/20/2011
 Goad, Carla03/20/2011
 Dolter, Bill03/20/2011
 Cavagnuolo, Michelle 04/08/2012
 Mitchell, Deanna..... 04/08/2012
 Daffern, Tracy..... . 04/08/2012
 Hill, Donna04/08/2012
 Pyles, Laura04/08/2012
 Gast, Rev. Mary Susan..... 01/18/2015
 Straw, Rev. Roger..... 01/18/2015
 Cleves, Liz..... 09/30/2015
 Dieden, Kathy..... 4/01/2018
 Obendorf, Pat..... 4/01/2018

Purtle, Nancy.....04/01/2018
 Shanks, Deborah.....04/01/2018
 Wolf, Todd..... 03/03/2019
 Padilla, Michelle.....03/03/2019
 Gieg, Carol..... 03/03/2019
 Bovey, Dona..... 03/03/2019
 Berry, Kathy..... 11/03/2019
 Monroe, Katrina.....11/03/2019
 Osborn, Kim.....11/03/2019
 Prael, Leslee..... 11/03/2019
 Webb, Kim.....11/03/2019
 Zinkevich, Andre..... 11/03/2019
 Smith, Judith..... . 11/03/2019
 Waters, Susan..... 10/30/2019
 Meade, Dennis.....10/30/2022
 Jennifer Otero.....04/08/2012
 Pastor Bladimer Paeste... 02/19/2023
 Billie Jo Munds.....02/19/2023
 Lisa Dwiggin..... 02/19/2023
 Jonathan Carpio.....02/19/2023
 Carlos Mendez.....02/19/2023
 Lilibeth Paeste.....05/21/2023
 Leah Bleasdale.....05/21/2023
 Madison Bleasdale..... 05/21/2023
 Jaden Bleasdale.....05/21/2023
 Dandesa Martin.....05/21/2023
 Taylor Bagonoff..... 05/21/2023
 Hanazel Hariman..... ..05/21/2023
 Patrick Munds.....09/17/2024
 Frances Fields.....09/17/2024
 Rev. Rhea Gonzales..... 09/17/2024
 Rev. Kim Kendrick..... 11/03/2024
 Jeanne Gilpatrick..... 11/19/2024
 Becks Salentes.....11/19/2024
 Daphne Dustan.....11/19/2024

79 ACTIVE MEMBERS

New Members:

Darlene Peterson

Patrick Munds

Frances Fields

Rev. Rhea Gonzales

Becks Salentes

Jeanne Gilpatrick

Daphne Dunstan

Transfer – Out

Rev. Celestine Fields – July 16, 2024

Transfers - In

Rev. Kim Kendrick – November 13, 2024

Deceased Members:

Ed Dieden- February 21, 2024

Darlene Peterson – November 25, 2024

Internment – non-Member

Pastor Bladimer

Christopher Andrew Fleming - April 28, 2024





Financial Secretary

Leslie Lessenger

Community Congregational Church, UCC - Benicia CA	
Donations Account Balances (01/01/2024 - 12/31/2024)	
Thursday, January 2, 2025	Page 1 of 1
Account	YTD Balance
Giving Accounts	
060 - Pledges - Current Year	209,078.67
065 - Parishioner Contributions	17,340.32
067 - Unreimbursed out-of-pocket expense	3,754.07
071 - Building Use - Other	1,775.00
073 - Building Use - Playing To Learn	41,482.00
074 - Bldg Use, PTL Utilities	7,273.00
075 - PTL - Building Use - Property Tax	816.00
076 - PTL Reimbursement for Maintenance/gardening	808.00
077 - TULIP Insurance Reimbursement	330.00
085 - Fundraiser - Stewardship	5,318.90
086 - Fundraiser - Misc	6.00
097 - Grants	10,000.00
098 - Refunds & Misc Deposits	1,136.85
110 - Mission & Outreach Funds	416.88
209 - Special One-time Missions	5,187.50
411 - Christmas Families (Share the Blessings)	434.07
412 - Christmas Fund (Vets/Cross) (UCC)	1,025.25
600 - Capital Imp/Bldg Fund - Pledge	29,126.26
605 - Capital Improvements	403.70
68 - Child Care	1,583.68
704 - Music Program Fund (Barbara's)	550.00
708 - Pastor Restricted Fund	5,708.00
710 - Gift Funds	11,842.09
714 - Xmas & Easter Flower Fund	2,224.88
718 - Handbells	95.00
721 - Memorial Funds-Recent Contribu	1,000.00
725 - Special Renovation Projects	1,485.00
900 - UCC Cornerstone Loan Payoff	51,484.39
Total Giving Accounts	\$411,685.51
Count: 28	
Period: 01/01/2024 - 12/31/2024	
Year: 2024	

Treasurer

Dale Olm

- **2024 Budget:** We began the 2024 fiscal year with a balanced budget. Unfortunately, we ended the year with a deficit of -\$30,342, due to unexpected wind damage to our trees and solar parking lights, City of Benicia required tree trimming along M Street, increased cost of utilities, a delay in grant dispersal, and accumulated backpay to retired staff.
- **Grants:** We had anticipated receiving \$17,500 in grants (\$15,000 from the UCC and \$2,500 from the Bay Association). However, due to delays in the funding agencies, we only received \$9,754 in 2024. The remainder is expected in 2025.
- **2024 Financial Status:** Budget deficits influence our unrestricted cash reserves which were -\$13,253 at the end of December. Cash flow is not a problem at this time since we have \$81,838 total in our bank accounts. Most of these funds are in restricted accounts.
- **2024 Pledges:** We actually received 100% of 2024 pledged revenue to Operations and Ministries and 117% of pledges to the Capital Improvement/Loan Payment Fund despite the need for some pledgers to reduce their contributions. Contributions from non-pledging parishioners also exceeded our expectations. Our congregation is awesome and generous! All pledges to the Capital Improvement Fund go into a restricted fund for major renovations and improvements and are not used for regular operating expenses.
- **Parking Lot/Campus Loan:** Although we anticipated paying off the parking lot loan early (in September of 2026) due to an accumulation of bequests, fund raisers and additional individual donations, we were able to pay off the loan with a generous personal donation in January of this year. The original payoff date on this 30-year \$350,000 loan was in 2045. Not only does this save significant interest expense, but it also allows us to start rebuilding our Capital Improvement Fund for future renovation and major repairs (i.e., new roof, painting the buildings, etc.).
- **The Bookkeepers,** a professional bookkeeping service in Vallejo, has continued to enter financial data and maintain accounts in Quickbooks. The Treasurer continues to prepare financial reports, pay bills, manage insurance (UCCIB), manage the pension plan (UCCPB), and oversee the budget. The Treasurer also continues to prepare and report payroll data to MinistryWorks, our payroll company.
- **The Budget and Finance Committee** (Liz Cleves, Leslie Lessenger, Dale Olm, Shelby Riddle, Deborah Shanks, Rev. Renie Kirk (before retirement), Rev. Bladimer Paeste and Rev. Kimberly Kendrick) plus guests met monthly to review the budget, revenue, and expenses. The committee meetings are open and anyone interested is welcome to attend.
- **2025 Budget:** The committee prepared the 2025 budget to be presented at the congregational meeting in January for approval. Currently, we are anticipating a deficit of -\$15,437 in 2025, so we are slowly reducing our yearly deficit and increasing our unrestricted cash reserves.
 - **Anticipated revenue for 2025** is \$12,580 less than budgeted in 2024.
 - **Anticipated expenses for 2025** is \$2,857 less than budgeted in 2024.
 - Although **pledges** to operations and ministries are down \$3,350 from 2024, we had anticipated a decrease of about \$25,000 in pledges from former congregants moving away, transferring membership, etc.

Respectfully,
Dale Olm, Treasurer

Summary Budget Snapshot

Community Congregational Church UCC - 2024 Fiscal Year to Date Financial Summary
YTD as of: 12/31/2024

BUDGET	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Difference	% Act/Bud
Budget Revenue from Donations	259,748	246,970	12,778	105%
Revenue from Grants	9,754	15,000	-5,246	
Other Revenue (Building use, etc.)	64,996	62,183	2,813	105%
TOTAL REVENUE	334,498	324,153	10,345	103%
TOTAL EXPENSES (including loan)	364,840	324,053	40,787	113%
YTD Budget Surplus (+) or Deficit (-)	-30,342	100	-30,442	

PLEDGES				
for Operations and Ministries	210,423	209,840	583	100%
for Capital Improvement	23,586	20,130	3,456	117%

RESERVES	Year to date	End Last Year		
	12/31/2024	12/31/2023	Difference	% change
Unrestricted reserves	-13,253	22,250	-35,503	-160%
Loan Balance	0	50,958	-50,958	-100%

1. Revenue is 103% of anticipated budget, and expenses are 13% higher than anticipated in budget (wind damage, increased cost of utilities, accumulated back pay).
2. Revenue from pledges caught up to budget for Operations & Ministries. Pledges for capital improvement are 17% above expected due to extra donations.
3. Due to the above factors, ytd deficit is currently \$30,342 more than anticipated.
4. Unrestricted cash reserves are negative (in the "red") (-13,253)

Pledges and contributions may be met via check or cash, individual bank "bill pay", on-line Vanco ACH or credit card payments, or RMD transfers from retirement accounts (either as cash or stock). Please see the Treasurer for questions or assistance.

BALANCE SHEET

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Community Congregational Church UCC, of Benicia December 20									
2	Balance Sheet Summary (Current vs End of Last Fiscal Year)									
3	As of December 31, 2024									
4										
5						Dec 31, 24		Dec 31, 23		\$ Change
6	ASSETS									
7	Current Assets									
8	Checking/Savings									
9				Cornerstone CD		11,541		11,110		431
10				Demand Plus UCC Cornerstone		3,396		39,685		-36,289
11				Payroll Services Direct Deposit		0		0		0
12				US Bank 5063		12,791		20,849		-8,058
13				Vanguard Federal MMF		54,110		3,427		50,683
14				Total Checking/Savings		81,838		75,071		6,767
15				Total Current Assets		81,838		75,071		6,767
16	Other Assets									
17				Campus Renovation 2015		0		50,958		-50,958
18				Total Other Assets		0		50,958		-50,958
19	TOTAL ASSETS					81,838		126,029		-44,191
20	LIABILITIES & EQUITY									
21	Liabilities									
22	Current Liabilities									
23	Other Current Liabilities									
24				Payroll Tax liabilities		-549		-549		0
25				Total Other Current Liabilities		-549		-549		0
26				Total Current Liabilities		-549		-549		0
27	Long Term Liabilities									
28				Cornerstone Loan - Parking Lot		0		50,958		-50,958
29				Total Long Term Liabilities		0		50,958		-50,958
30				Total Liabilities		-549		50,409		-50,958
31	Equity									
32				Capital Impr. Special Projects		17,149		3,462		13,687
33				Capital Improvements - General		14,645		970		13,675
34				Other Restricted Funds		17,862		7,823		10,039
35				Pastor Restricted Fund		4,004		1,831		2,173
36				Pledges Paid in Adv (use sub)		18,728		20,000		-1,272
37				Sabbatical set aside (accrued)		9,371		6,881		2,490
38				Total of All M&O Funds		13,882		12,371		1,511
39				Unrestricted Net Assets		16,994		48,969		-31,975
40				Net Income		-30,247		-26,686		-3,561
41				Total Equity		82,388		75,621		6,767
42	TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY					81,839		126,030		-44,191
43				Unrestricted cash (reserves)		-13,253		22,283		-35,536

Revenue and Expenses 2024

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1				Community Congregational Church UCC, of Benicia December 20							
2				Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual							
3				January through December 2024							Cash Basis
4											
5					Jan - Dec 24		Budget		\$ Over Budget		% of Budget
6				Ordinary Income/Expense							
7				Income							
8				Cap Improvement Fund - non-pled	5,229.50						
9				Child Care	1,583.68		2,550.00		-966.32		62.11%
10				Cornerstone Rebate on Interest	823.62		1,000.00		-176.38		82.36%
11				Fundraisers	3,247.31		5,000.04		-1,752.73		64.95%
12				Grants	9,754.18		15,000.00		-5,245.82		65.03%
13				Loose Offering - Parish Contrib	17,186.88		12,000.00		5,186.88		143.22%
14				Other sources of funding (int.)	3,693.80		480.00		3,213.80		769.54%
15				Pledges - Cap Improvement Fund	23,586.26		20,130.00		3,456.26		117.17%
16				Pledges - Operations & Ministri	210,422.89		209,840.04		582.85		100.28%
17				Refunds & misc. deposits	75.00						
18				Reimbursed Expenses	9,262.38		9,110.04		152.34		101.67%
19				Transf Equity/Reserves to Rev.	5,630.27		5,361.00		269.27		105.02%
20				Use of Building	44,002.00		43,681.92		320.08		100.73%
21				Total Income	334,497.77		324,153.04		10,344.73		103.19%
22				Expense							
23				B&G- Maintenance & Supplies	6,995.12		4,247.04		2,748.08		164.71%
24				B&G- Taxes	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.0%
25				B&G - Gardening & Yardwork	3,640.00		3,710.04		-70.04		98.11%
26				B&G - Utilities	20,263.50		19,283.04		980.46		105.09%
27				B&G - Taxes	851.38		831.00		20.38		102.45%
28				B&G Custodial	4,134.00		3,816.00		318.00		108.33%
29				Cap Improvement Fund - Set-aside	30,321.71						
30				Christian Education / Youth	0.00		99.96		-99.96		0.0%
31				Congregational Care (Diakone)	48.67		99.96		-51.29		48.69%
32				Council & Discretionary Funds	174.00						
33				Covid-19	0.00		99.96		-99.96		0.0%
34				Fellowship	2,007.58		1,200.00		807.58		167.3%
35				Finance & Administration & IT	10,421.82		10,514.96		-93.14		99.11%
36				Insurance	8,809.25		7,700.04		1,109.21		114.41%
37				Loan Payoff	1,666.60		20,130.00		-18,463.40		8.28%
38				Mission, Outreach & UCC Support	10,818.48		10,492.08		326.40		103.11%
39				Music Programs and Licenses	1,045.33		1,710.00		-664.67		61.13%
40				Nursery & Childcare	1,627.51		2,550.00		-922.49		63.82%
41				Office/Computer/Copier Supplies	3,073.08		3,099.08		-26.00		99.16%
42				Other Committes & Ministries	9,603.39		12,530.04		-2,926.65		76.64%
43				Professional Expenses	3,898.41		1,999.92		1,898.49		194.93%
44				Sabbatical budgeted set aside	5,289.50		5,361.00		-71.50		98.67%
45				Staff Payroll & Benefits	236,850.30		210,075.00		26,775.30		112.75%
46				Welcome (Growth)	969.95		594.96		374.99		163.03%
47				Workers Comp. Ins. Staff & IC's	1,320.04		2,234.04		-914.00		59.09%
48				Worship	1,009.73		1,674.92		-665.19		60.29%
49				Total Expense	364,839.35		324,053.04		40,786.31		112.59%
50				Net Ordinary Income	-30,341.58		100.00		-30,441.58		-30,341.58%

2025 Budget

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Community Congregational Church UCC												
2	of Benicia				Approved	Actual	Proposed						
3	Budget for Fiscal Year 2025				2024	2024	2025						
4	(January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025)				Budget	R&E	Budget						
5													
6													
7	Funding (Operations and Ministries)												
8	Refunds & misc. deposits; special programs				0	75	0	contributions for church programs					
9	Child Care Donation				2,550	1,584	3,198	for child care/ Sunday School director					
10	Loose Offering/Non-Pledged Donations				12,000	17,262	12,000	estimated non-pledged contributions					
11	Pledges to Operations & Ministries				209,840	210,423	206,490	Pledges as of 11/17/24 for Ministries and Operation Expenses					
12	Capital Improvement/Loan Pledges & donations				20,130	23,586	16,240	Pledges for Capital Improvements as of 11/17/24					
13	Cap Improvement Fund - non-pledged contrib.				0	5,230	0						
14	Use of Building				43,682	43,927	45,128	Playing to Learn; 12 Step Groups, Outside Choirs					
15	Fundraisers				5,000	3,247	5,000	Auctions/Dinner Fundraisers					
16	Reimbursements				9,110	9,262	9,304	reimbursements for expenses by PTL and indiv. Donors					
17	Transfer from Reserves & Restricted accounts				5,361	5,290	5,959	to cover set-asides for future sabbaticals, other restricted accounts					
18	Loan Principal Reduction from Reserves				0	341	0	to accelerate loan payoff (from reserves)					
19	Transfer to(-)/from(+) Cap Imprvmt/Parking Lot				0	0	0						
20	Other funding (interest +)				1,480	4,518	3,255	CD Interest in 2025					
21	Grants				15,000	9,754	5,000	Outside grants for new joint ministry (not yet approved)					
22	Total Revenues				324,153	334,499	311,573						
23	Expense (Operations and Ministries)												
24	B&G - Utilities				19,283	20,265	22,012	shared by PTL (share included in revenue)					
25	B&G - Custodial (contract)				3,816	4,134	3,816	once a month in 2024					
26	B&G - Maint. & Housekeep				4,247	6,995	2,998	Supplies, TP, paper towels; tree services, building repairs					
27	B&G - Property Taxes				831	851	851	Paid by PTL (included in revenue)					
28	B&G - Property & Liability Insurances				7,700	8,809	9,428						
29	B&G - Genesis House/Gardener				3,710	3,640	3,900	landscaping maintenance, weed control; PTL contributes					
30	Parking Lot Loan Pay-off				20,130	1,667	0	Paid off in 2024					
31	Capital Improvement Set-aside					30,322	16,240	from capital improvement/loan pledges					
32	Additional Reduction in Loan Principal				0	0	0						
33	Christian Education / Youth				100	0	400	curriculum & supplies for Sunday School					
34	Congregational Care				100	49	100	supplies					
35	Covid-19 Pandemic Expenses				100	0	0	tests and masks					
36	Fellowship				1,200	2,007	1,420	food and supplies; 2024 budget in line with historical expenses					
37	Music Programs and Licenses				1,710	1,045	1,710	sheet music, copyright fees, piano tuning, streaming license					
38	Stewardship				100	0	100	postage and paper					
39	Mission&Outreach (incl. OCWM)				10,492	10,818	10,325	5% of pledges rec'd; for missions & OCWM (UCC Support)					
40	Welcome				595	970	1,970	banners, flags, advertising					
41	Worship				1,675	1,010	1,851	including on-line worship expenses					
42	Other committees & Ministries				12,530	9,603	0	search committee expenses TBD					
43	Council & Discretionary Funds				0	174	0						
44	Finance & Admin Expenses				10,515	10,422	9,296	Bank fees; Bookkeeper; IT; AB306; HR					
45	Office/Computers/Copier Supply				3,099	3,074	3,408	Routine office & computer supplies, copier lease					
46	Pastor Expenses				2,000	3,898	9,750	required Pastor training & expenses					
47	Sabbatical set aside				5,361	5,290	5,959	for future sabbaticals (funded from reserves)					
48	Child Care during Worship				2,550	1,627	3,198	Child Care/Sunday School director					
49	Staff & Workers Compensation Insurance				212,309	238,171	218,278	Co-pastors, Office Manager, Music director					
50	Other				0	0							
51	Total Expense				324,153	364,841	327,010						
52	NET INCOME				0	-30,342	-15,437	Revised 1/21/25					
53													
54													
55													

Building and Grounds

Dale Olm and Shelby Riddle – Co-Chairs

The Committee was very active and productive during 2024. The members of the committee were Dale Olm and Shelby Riddle (Co-chairs), Jim Lessenger, Leslie Lessenger, Deborah Shanks and Liz Cleves. Rev. Renie Kirk & Rev. Bladimer Paeste participated in committee meetings. Chole McGraw and Todd Wolf were project managers for specific gardening and landscaping projects. Jim Lessenger was our archivist and maintained the church archives. Leslie Lessenger, Jim Lessenger and Deb Shanks were project managers for our structural projects and building use by outside groups. Nancy Gilman maintained our housekeeping & janitorial supplies. Thanks to Nora Gauger, Jaden Bleasdale, Barbara Hamm, Pastor Bladimer Paeste, Patrick Munds and Roger Reaber for their regular contributions to the upkeep & repair of grounds and buildings.

Thanks to our many additional volunteers throughout the year.

Projects and repairs completed in 2024

- **Christmas lights** were strung on the Labyrinth rosemary bushes, the Peace pole and the bushes at the front of the church.
- **Mulching Mania Event:** the hillsides and the recycling/garbage area
- **Roof:** An area where the flat roof over the offices joined with the roof over Fellowship Hall was resealed to fix the roof leak.
 - The southside eavestrough was vacuumed and cracks resealed to extend its life.
 - A new restricted Fund called the “Holey Roof Fund” was set up. \$1,430 will be set aside from the Capital Improvement Fund in anticipation of needing \$120,000 in 2032 for roof replacement.
 - Three of the gutter downspouts on the sanctuary building were removed, unclogged of roof gravel and a shuttle cock, corroded & leaking areas sealed over with gutter tape and reinstalled.
- **Trees:** C&W Tree Service was called in to remove wind damage to the pepperwood tree by the bell. Later in the year, they pruned and trimmed pepperwood trees overhanging M Street. PGE removed the palm tree endangering overhead wires on the corner of West 2nd and M streets.
- **Parking Lot:** The solar parking lot luminaries were all inspected and tightened in the parking lot by Butler Electric. One of the globes fell in a windstorm and was damaged beyond repair. A replacement was installed by Butler Electric.
- **Signage:** The marquee sign at the end of the main driveway was taken down, refinished and reinstalled. Leslie Lessenger designed and made a stained-glass panel to replace the old UCC panel.
 - A lightweight, **printed sign** (by Office Max) was used to replace the hanging letters sign in the Marquee. The hanging letters sign was heavy. The printed sign will be easier to update and provides a more modern look.
- **Portico:** Fascia and trim were removed from the west facing side of the Fellowship Hall portico to assess dry rot. Extensive deterioration was found. Contractors were consulted about replacing the beams. It was decided to wait until 2025 to attempt repair and reinforcement of the current structure.
- **Doors:** The locking mechanism for the Fellowship Hall double doors failed and could not be repaired. Replacing the doors with new doors and hardware proved to be cost inhibitive due to the size of the doors and the need to have them custom-fabricated. The doors were removed and are in the process of being repaired and refinished. Early in 2025 they will be re-installed and Concord Locksmith will install new hardware and mechanisms. After the doors were removed temporary, plywood doors were installed by Jim Lessenger, Dale Olm and Adam Olm.
 -

- Keypad door locks were installed on outside doors to the office, the Pastors' office and the outside choir room door.
- The doors to the pastors' office were trimmed to resolve sticking and were refinished.
- **Gardening: Native Plant Garden** - Two retaining walls were installed on the native plant garden slope facing West 2nd Street. The upper area was levelled and covered with weed cloth and wood chip mulch.
 - Our gardener was retained to rebuild the **paver path** in front of the CE Building with decomposed granite. The pavers were reused to expand the paver path between the 2nd level of the parking lot and the patio staircase.
 - Our gardener was retained to reset & repair the **labyrinth** surface and borders.
- **CE Building:** Three aged thermostats were replaced in the CE Building.
 - 3 electrical outlets in the CE Building were repaired.
 - The outside door to the CE Building was repainted.
 - Deteriorating letters were removed from the outside wall, and the wall was repainted. A new sign for "Playing to Learn" was designed & painted by Deborah Shanks and made by Jim Lessenger was installed over the entrance way to the CE Building.

On-going routine maintenance:

- Weed whacking, pruning, palm tree sprout removal, spreading wood chip mulch; wildfire weed control.
- Maintenance of the native plant garden on the upper hillside facing 2nd Street, outside the PTL fence. (designed and planted by Chole McGraw).
- Restocking paper, trash bags and cleaning supplies; monitoring of custodial services; cleaning the kitchen/refrigerator; dusting and cobweb removal; cleaning chairs in Fellowship and sanctuary; window cleaning; vacuuming the Sunday School room; cleaning bathrooms on weeks when custodians are not present
- Light bulb and smoke alarm battery changes as needed.
- Replacement of the flutter flag when faded (twice a year). Waterproofing with UV protectant helps prevent the flag from fading.
- Quarterly furnace MERV 11 filter replacement in the sanctuary furnace and CE building furnaces
- Monthly B&G workdays for landscaping and building maintenance.
- Inspection and repairs to the underground drip irrigation system as needed
- Campus litter, garbage (and other) patrol
- Application of vinegar spray (15% vinegar, Dawn, Epson salts) for weed control in the patio, retaining walls, rocks and labyrinth areas to control weeds. It is non-toxic. It is not a systemic poison, so touch-up reapplication is required (Fall & Spring)
- Preen pre-emergent application in Spring and Fall for control of vetch and other weeds.
- Repairs to the old, original retaining walls along the driveway and street as needed
- Repairs as needed to infrastructure of the church buildings.
- Upkeep and monitoring of security cameras.
- Monitoring for roof leaks and flooding in organ pit.



Projects in progress:

- Revisions of the facility use policies, insurance requirements, and the hold harmless statement are in progress.
- Repair/refurbish doors to Fellowship Hall.
- Repair & re-paint the portico outside Fellowship Hall.
-
- Install 2 additional picnic tables on the patio.
- Evaluation of wifi controlled thermostats in the Fellowship Hall & Sanctuary.
- Installation of water leakage monitors in the furnace room and the organ pit.
- Fill & seal cracks in driveway.

Future projects (2025 and beyond) not yet scheduled:

- Roof replacement of CE Building and Sanctuary 2032 (~\$120,000)
- Replace gutters 2032 (with roof)
- Dig out foundation on east side of CE Building to assess damage to foundation.
- Reseal the parking lot (2027)
- Repair/replacement of the leaking irrigation manifold next to the Fellowship Hall doors.
- Repair/support the wooden sign on the N Street driveway entrance.
- Location and capping of the leak in the labyrinth irrigation zone.
- Dry rot repair of the CE Building.
- Preparation of a photographic archive of the Green membership book
- Evaluation, excavation & replacement of the underground gutter drainage system on the north side of the CE Building.
- Replace the smaller TV monitor in the sanctuary with larger screen; install audio monitor in ensemble area; re-configure Zoom cameras for new video streaming angle; review sound system
- Repaint the buildings (last done in 2016).
- Roof exhaust fan for sanctuary for Summertime cooling.
- Resurface the 4th tier of the parking lot (not done during renovation by Westgate).
- Replace the cement block retaining wall along sidewalk on West 2nd Street (when/if it fails).





Welcome and Growth

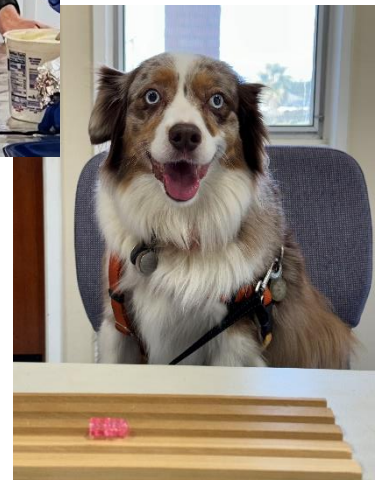
Nora Gauger & Billie Casey

Welcome and Growth this year has seen some new faces and returning faces that have lifted my spirits and continue to warm my heart with the strong and bonded fellowship we all share at our church. The most exciting welcome of course was for our newest Pastor joining us and what a breath of fresh air and lifted spirits she has inserted into our lives. Welcome Co Pastor Kim Kendrick. Wow. What a beautiful experience and every week brings

something new and exciting to our services.

Nora has continued to do the greeting and counting of attendance each week and I appreciate her continued support.

As you all have witnessed I am sitting at the tech table presenting the slides for the service. But I never miss an opportunity to greet each and everyone who walks into our church because that is just who Jesus made me. I will continue to share the warm greetings I was given as a new member of your church and I know our fellowship greets all and welcomes all. It is true: No Matter Who You Are Or Where You Are On Life's Journey, You Are Welcome Here.





2024 ATTENDANCE SUMMARY Guests and Children

	IN PERSON	ZOOM	Live(L) & Zoom (Z)
January	164	12	176
February	160	16	176
March	172	18	190
April	145	12	157
May	165	12	177
June	221	23	244
July	134	151	179
August	177	29	206
September	157	26	206
October	209	29	267
November	204	28	242
December	284	36	290



Christian Education

Dale Olm

Children go up to the Sunday School room after the Children's Story Sermon in the Worship Service. Currently we are a "One-room Sunday School" for all ages from pre-school up to middle school. There are always at least 2 adults present. On the first Sunday of each month, the children return to the service to participate in Communion.

During November and December, the children practiced singing Away in a Manger and performed the song during the Christmas Concert and participated in the Christmas pageant (see separate committee reports for those events). Our childcare provider, Parand Banagar, assisted the teacher(s) with lessons and helped supervise the pre-school children until she resigned to attend graduate school in Chicago. Kristen Coleman briefly replaced her. After Kristen left, it was decided to pursue hiring a Sunday School teacher to lead classes with assistance by church volunteers. A job description was prepared with anticipating searching for a candidate in 2025.

Attendance varied from 0 to 9, typically 2 to 4 children, with an average of 3.5. Nineteen different children attended during the year, of which 9 children attended regularly, ages 1 to 9 years. Lessons were created from Children's Worship Bulletins (<https://www.childrensbulletins.com>), the Family Story Bible (Milton), the Lectionary Story Bible (Milton), Growing in God's Love – a Story Bible (Caldwell & Wehrheim), the Complete Children's Liturgy Book (Thompson), Rfour.com and sermons4kids.com, as well as other books and websites.

As requested, we emailed at-home lessons and activities to guardians, parents and grandparents each week prior to Sunday class.

Thank you to adult volunteers Nancy Aldritt, Liz Cleves, Nancy Gilman, Jim Lessenger, Adam Olm, Dale Olm and Marilyn Scrutchins for their assistance in Sunday School and childcare.

Compliance with the new California law, AB506 for child abuse prevention in youth organizations continues to be implemented.

Dale Olm

Acting Chairperson



Mission and Outreach

Kathy Berry, Lisa Dwiggins and Nancy Gilman

This past year the Mission and Outreach Committee had two co-chairs, Lisa Dwiggins and Kathy Berry. The committee's first act was to reaffirm our commitment to Our Church's Greater Mission (OCGM) of a \$5,000 annual pledge. In addition, the committee approved our standard donations of \$400 each to One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need and Strengthen the Church.

In late February, our committee started collecting for the Lilies Fund to support foster youth who have aged out of the state system. The funds collected purchased the many basic items needed to set up new apartments. Lisa Dwiggins and Leslie Lessenger did the shopping and used the items to decorate our altar at Easter in lieu of lilies. The items were then delivered to First Place for Youth in Fairfield to be distributed. After much discussion and research, the Mission and Outreach Committee decided to donate \$200 to World Central Kitchen in honor of their volunteers who were killed while volunteering in Gaza during the Israel-Gaza conflict.

In June our church became a sponsor of the Solano Gay Pride event held in Suisun. Our church logo was printed on the event's flyer and we paid for a table so our church members could sit and talk to the event's participants about our welcoming, inclusive church. Pastor Bladimer Paeste, Shelby Riddle, Dale Olm, Nancy Gilman, Billie Casey, Roger Reaber, Leslee Prah, Jaden Bleasdale and Becks Salentes attended the event.



Even though school had just let out in May, in June the committee started collecting funds for our Back-to-School backpack project to provide basic school supplies for kindergarteners from local low income families. Backpacks were ordered, supplies were donated and at the end of July an assembly line of church members filled each pack. During the second week of August the backpacks were handed out at Steffan Manor Elementary School in Vallejo. Michelle Cavagnuolo was very helpful in getting the list of needed supplies and the distribution date. Pastor Bladimer Paeste, Nancy Gilman, and Kathy Berry handed out the backpacks.

This past fall, Hurricanes Helene and Milton devastated parts of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The Northern California Nevada Conference set up a Hurricanes 2024 Appeal. The Mission and Outreach Committee donated \$500 to the appeal together with an additional \$4,550 donated by our generous congregation. September, Lisa Dwiggins stepped down as co-chair and Nancy Gilman stepped in as the new co-chair. Announcements were made in church and in The News from the Pews for our church members to support the Benicia Public Library's winter coat drive.

This year Nancy and Kathy purchased 22 fresh turkeys from Costco and delivered them to the First Baptist Church of Vallejo for their annual community Thanksgiving dinner. On Thanksgiving itself, from 9 am to 11 am, six people from our church volunteered to help carve turkeys, mash potatoes and pack over 200 Thanksgiving dinners for the unhoused and housebound seniors. Those volunteers were Jaden and George Bleasdale, Nora Gauger, Michelle Padilla, Billie Munds and Kathy Berry.

The Mission and Outreach Committee had to find a new charity for our Christmas outreach project as the Family Resource Center of Benicia, who usually gave us a Christmas family to adopt, was closed for restructuring. After some research, Nancy Gilman found Share the Blessings, a charity in Vallejo serving those in need. As requested, our congregation generously bought toys, pajamas and gift cards. Nancy delivered the items and helped the Blessings people set up for the distribution event.



The committee started collecting for our annual Poinsettia Fund in November. Church members could donate to the fund "in memory of" or "in honor of" someone dear. With the funds collected Nancy and Kathy went shopping for items of warmth for our friends on the street. They spent \$1,400 on socks, underwear, sweatshirts, ponchos, jackets, hats, gloves, tarps and sleeping bags. The items were placed under the Christmas tree and across the altar for the Sunday, December 22nd service in lieu of poinsettias. Afterwards, the items were given to Vallejo Together to be distributed to the unhoused.



In December the Mission and Outreach Committee donated \$500 to Planned Parenthood of Northern California and \$200 to the Solano Pride Center, worthwhile local charities.



The Mission and Outreach Committee would like to extend a big thank you to all who served on the committee and all the other church members who contributed their time and or their money to our worthy causes. Special thanks to Lisa Dwiggins, Kathy Berry, Nancy Gilman, Nora Gauger, Leslie Lessinger, Michelle Cavagnuolo, Fran Fields, Kathy Dieden, Chole McGraw, Deb Shanks and Dennis Meade.

Worship

Priscilla Lane and Marilyn Scrutchins (co-chairs)

What everyone sees and hears on any given Sunday begins weeks before with planning, discussing, and studying by our pastors and the Worship Committee. We had a spirited, spiritual, dedicated group of people this year of 2024 for whom we are grateful. The group, that met monthly or more, included Pastor Renie Kirk (January-May), Co-Pastor Bladimer Paeste, new Co-Pastor Kim Kendrick (October- December), Kathy Dieden, Nancy Gilman (Jan.-August), Minister of Music Barbara Hamm, Leslee Prah, Becks Salentes (Minister in Discernment, September-December), Deborah Shanks, co-chairs Marilyn Scrutchins and Priscilla Lane.

Beginning in January, the team decided on a Lenten theme “What Are You Up To?” All of our themes this year came from a company called Worship Design Studio (WDS) begun by a minister, Marcia McFee. The Worship Committee has used WDS for themes over many years. Our congregation started the Lenten season with an Ash Wednesday potluck dinner, marking our heads with ashes, and watching the movie Up that tied into our theme of What Are You Up To? Decorations for Lent were multiple hot air balloons hung from the ceiling, and a backdrop of hot air balloons.

Other action items and discussions: a Welcome Kit for visitors were discussed. Leslee Prah then took on the development of a beautiful brochure with information and goodies that is now being handed out to visitors. Thank you, Leslee.

We had an interesting discussion on the use of “you belong here” versus “you are welcome here.” Should we change our message to you belong here? Off to council this question went. In the end, we concluded that using the phrase “you are welcome here” was appropriate for us.

The use of song leaders for the first and last songs/hymns of our Sunday services began in March. Thank you to all those involved in helping us sing out.

There was a well attended faith study in March that tied into our Lenten theme.

On Good Friday, a Taizé service was held and that service prompted requests for additional, quarterly Taizé services this year.

From **May through August** we addressed the following issues.

The congregation said good bye in May to Pastor Renie Kirk after 17 years of leadership and devotion to us. She was honored on her last day in the pulpit and later in the day with a remarkable, fun, but sad party in the afternoon. No other pastor had served us for that length of time. May God bless her,

Pastor Renie informed us that all 17 years of her services are archived on the church computer. Pastor Bladimer brought up the subject of more celebrating together in order to build and deepen relationships and foster feelings of belonging. When Pastor Kim arrived in October she was on board to celebrate more, also, so currently the second Sunday of the month is Celebration Sunday. In addition, Pastor Bladimer would like us to celebrate, dance, laugh, and sing Karaoke outside of Sunday services. In order to improve the flow of the worship services, we will provide bulletins to all participants in the service, have them meet 15 minutes before the services with the pastors, and eventually hold a workshop for all lay participants. No date for instituting the last idea was decided.

In August, Becks Salentas, our new Minister in Discernment, was introduced. She is a student at Pacific School of Religion and will be working with us for 8 hours a week September through May.

With the presidential election approaching, the committee decided to present another WDS 5 week theme relevant to the divisive attitudes surrounding the election. The theme, “Do Unto Others” was to be presented October 20 through November 17.

The Worship Committee discussed and implemented the following items from **September through December**.

Becks Salentes began her MID journey with us in September. She will be preaching the last Sunday of each month.

We planned, in detail, our 5 week fall theme of Do Unto Others. Within that theme, each week we addressed different attributes of how to come together through kindness, compassion, humility, respect, and love. Several committee members wrote articles about those attributes in News From The Pews. A visual art effect to show what occurs when opposing views come together was created in the front of the chancel. We hung long strips of red cloth on one side of the cross and blue strips on the other side. Where they overlapped, the color purple was created, a new neutral color, one that we strive to be in a loving world.

In October, we vigorously and warmly welcomed our new co-pastor, Kim Kendrick, as she began her pastorate with us. What a joyous event!

An important but not talked about issue is that of accessibility to the chancel area in front of the sanctuary. Thankfully, it was brought to our attention by Pastor Bladimer. We would need to find a funding source for installing a ramp and the needed remodeling before any plans can be made.

In November, we watched the WDS’s advent/Christmas theme, “On the Way to Bethlehem”, that we wanted to use. This theme happened to match Deborah Shank’s pageant she had written. In addition, Deborah composed a threshold song that we sang each week during advent and Christmas.



December featured the Greening of the Church and the beginning of our On the Way to Bethlehem theme. Though this theme involved a lot of participants, creativity, time, and planning, we went on a meaningful journey to Bethlehem. The pageant, held on the third Sunday of Advent, was written and produced by Deborah Shanks. We even had a darling baby, Poppy Olson, portraying baby Jesus. Thanks to Deborah and her assistants, Marilyn Scrutchins and Lisa Dwiggin, for the time they contributed to the pageant

We ended the year with a hymn sing Sunday, December 29 and a Taize service on New Year’s Eve.

It has been quite a busy, remarkable year made possible by the best committee we could ask for. We are grateful for all of them with their special gifts. It has been a busy, productive year for this worship committee. Like minds with an eye on our spiritual purpose has provided us satisfaction and energy.



The Rolling Tones – Handbells

Leslie Lessenger, Director

2024 was a year of celebration and remembrance for the Rolling Tones. On February 11th, the Rolling Tones played a bell peal in celebration of burning the parking lot mortgage papers. On May 19th we played *Calypso Cantic* by Kurt Meyer to celebrate the retirement of Rev. Renie Kirk. On December 7th we played for the Tree of Memories with North Bay Hospice and Bereavement.

Other repertoire included:

My Lord, What a Morning . Afro-American spiritual, arr. John Muir

Introspection by Jason Krug (with piano)

Morning Joy by Linda Scholes

Celtic Farewell by Linda Lamb (with flute and piano)

Hearth and Home by Jason Krug

Carol of the 3-8 bells arr. by Kathleen Wissinger

Deck the Halls (flash mob) by Tim Waugh

Away in a Manger by Jason Krug

Elegy by Jason Krug

Our dedicated musicians were: Nancy Gilman, Chol  McGraw, Pat Obendorf, Deborah Dahl Shanks and Kim Webb. The director is Leslie Lessenger.



Congregational Care

Marilyn Scrutchins

This committee is composed of numerous individuals who are officially or unofficially on the committee in that they provide care and support for those in need.

In an official capacity, we send out birthday cards along with get well cards and sympathy cards on a monthly basis. We make phone calls and check in with those who are ill or recovering from surgery. We may pick up groceries or run other errands.

Unofficially, our congregants care for each other by way of staying in touch, delivering a meal (soup is a favorite!), and reaching out as needed. If the pastors let us know of a need, we do our best to help out. We know that more caring gestures and acts take place between our members than we are even aware of...we truly are a caring church family.



Fellowship

Lilibeth Paeste and Leah Bleasdale

The year 2024 has been a beautiful one in terms of fellowship. Our fellowships were festive. We have seen a variety of food from Filipino dishes and desserts to American favorites. More and more folks bringing in food. More and more people stay and had conversations. Leah and Lilibeth tried their best to be sensitive to the dietary needs of our folks. We also make sure to especially take care of our seniors and offer them food to go when they need them.

Gratitude to Nancy Gilman for taking care of the food during special events and occasions other than the regular Sunday fellowships. Thanks to Kathy Berry, Dandesa Martin, and Edyli Portugues, who always help the upkeep of the kitchen. Special gratitude to Susan Estofan for her endless supply of beef. Thanks to Barbara Hamm for regularly bringing food and to Madi Bleasdale for occasional homemade desserts. There are also others who donated some monies to make sure that there will be food for everyone every Sunday. All contributions are very much appreciated. We expect that our fellowships will be livelier in 2025.

Special gratitude to Jim Lessenger and Dale Olm for the two brand new picnic tables in the patio to provide for a needed space especially for the young families with kids.

We encourage everyone to stay for fellowship every Sunday and go home with a complete Sunday experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve all of you. Joy and pleasure is ours.

To God be the glory!

Leah Bleasdale and Lilibeth Paeste



Stewardship

Deborah Shanks

In the immortal words of Winston Churchill: *"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."*

Our church is the example of giving of both time and talents by helping with our various fundraisers throughout the year. We started off the year with a Chinese New Year Dinner with entertainment by The DulTones on February 25 and our usual raffle. This was a catered event using the Szechuan Chinese Cuisine Restaurant in Vallejo. Our Fellowship chair, Lilibeth Paeste, also made rice and some other contributions of food with help from Marilyn Scrutchins and various other handy helpers. The Sanctuary was turned into a dining room decorated with Chinese decorations by Nancy Gilman and Liz Cleves. Barbara Hamm acted as our host to The DulTones. The dinner was a huge success with over 80 people in attendance and with fun singing by The DulTones, the only all Chinese Doo Wop Group in the Bay Area (and probably beyond). We brought in \$2812 and after expenses we cleared \$1462.



Our next major event was our Filipino Independence Day Dinner on June 9 with Line Dancing and Karaoke singing. Again, we transformed the Sanctuary into a dining hall with room to dance in the middle. With over 79 people in attendance, everyone enjoyed great food, lots of songs, dancing and laughter. We also had a raffle, which was also a big success due to the help of Liz Cleves. Also, lots of thanks goes to Shelby Riddle for selling raffle tickets, Nancy Gilman for running the computer desk and Lilibeth & team for working on the food. A special "thank you" goes to Julius Ballesteros who donated the use of his karaoke machine, and to Pastor Bladimer for hosting the evening. Between the dinner sales and raffle sales our total income was \$2300, with a net of \$1500.



Our last big event of the year was a concert by Brazzissimo, a 10-piece brass ensemble, on October 27. As usual we split the ticket price with the band and offered cookies and coffee at intermission. There were over 40 people in attendance of the concert. The group never ceases to impress and it was a great concert. We raised an additional \$450 for the year. So, in total Stewardship raised \$5562 and netted approximately \$3412, all while having lots of fun.

In November we started a LGBTQ+ free lecture series starting with a lecture by the Rev. Mike Ellard on understanding the current terminology being used in the LGBTQ+ community.

The 2024 Fall Stewardship Theme was "Together we can do anything!" The Pledge Drive was kicked off in September, and the pledge cards were blessed on November 3. All in all, it was a very good year!



Leadership Team 2025

STAFF

Co-Pastor	Rev. Kim Kendrick
Co- Pastor	Rev. Bladimer Paeste
Minister of Music	Dr. Barbara Hamm
Office Manager	Susan Slater

OFFICERS

Moderator	Shelby Riddle
Vice-Moderator	Deborah Shanks
Church Clerk	Kathy Berry
Financial Secretary	Leslie Lessenger
Treasurer	Dale Olm

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Building and Grounds Ministry	Dale Olm & Shelby Riddle
Christian Education Ministry	Acting Chair – Dale Olm
Congregational Care	Marilyn Scrutchins
Fellowship	Lilibeth Paeste, Leah Bleasdale
Mission & Outreach	Kathy Berry & Nancy Gilman
Stewardship Ministry	Open
Welcome and Growth	Billie Casey
Worship Ministry	Priscilla Lane & Marilyn Scrutchins
Member at Large	Jaden Bleasdale

Pastor Emerita	Rev. Renie Kirk
----------------	-----------------