

THE OLD STONE CHURCH

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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Cover Photograph by Michael Murphy

In their book **The Courage Way**, Shelly Francis and the Center for Courage and Renewal have identified eleven “ground rules” to help move groups into greater trust, belonging, and understanding:

Give and Receive Welcome

Extend hospitality, and presume welcome, too. This includes welcome and support for diverse perspectives, opinions, and approaches.

Be Present as Fully as Possible

Bring all of yourself—your doubts, fears, and failings as well as your convictions, joys, and successes, your listening as well as your speaking—to the work.

Extend Invitation, Not Demand

Participation by listening with care is no less a contribution than participation by speaking with care.

Speak Your Truth in Ways That Respect Other People’s Truth

When you’re getting to know people, it’s vital to share stories across lines of difference, not to debate who’s right or wrong, and not to cast blame or shame.

No Fixing, Saving, Advising, or Correcting Each Other

Good leaders point their team in a direction where they can find answers, and also instill the belief that team members have the gifts and capacity to make good decisions the leaders will support.

When the Going Gets Rough, Turn to Wonder

If you feel judgmental, or defensive, ask yourself, “I wonder what brought her to this belief?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?”

Practice Asking Open, Honest Questions

Open, honest questions are the ones you cannot possibly know the answer to in advance; they are meant to elicit insights, to help people access their own resourcefulness.

Attend to Your Own Inner Teacher

As you listen to and interact with others, pay close attention to your own reactions and responses.

Trust and Learn from the Silence

Silence, or stillness, is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself.

Commit to and Maintain Confidentiality

People are more likely to trust each other when they know that their words and stories will remain with those with whom they choose to share them, and will never be passed on to others without permission.

Know That It’s Possible for the Seeds Planted Here to Keep Growing

We stand in many tragic gaps in life, and recognize that our vocation lies somewhere between what is real and what can be.



Senior Pastor, Stephen C. Blonder Adams

Greetings Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

2024 seemed to go by in a blink of an eye,
I have now been Senior pastor for two and a half years.

I continue to be grateful to have been called to be a part of the life and ministry of Old Stone, First Presbyterian Church at this time in my life and in the life of this congregation.

I was blessed to baptize Elizabeth Ashdown (daughter of Stephanie and Michael), Luca Bricillo (son of Megan and Carmen), James and Thomas Hakos (sons of Allison and Patrick).

We honored and remembered the lives of those that have gone before us.
I officiated the funeral/memorial services of: Jim & Jean Cooke; William M. Cairns; Nova Kordalski, Leonore Rutti, and Rev. Donald Oglesby.

We invested in the lives of couples committing their lives together in Holy Matrimony.
I officiated the weddings of: Kevin and Alyssa Maloney, Bob and Elizabeth Reid, Ross and Gabrielle McHenry, Tony and Katy Machnik, Timothy and Courtney Knapp, and Shane and Melissa Print. I am already in premarital counseling relationship with our first scheduled wedding for 2025.

We welcomed nine new members into the church: Peggie and Stephen Willett, Ted and Kristy Sawicki (I officiated their wedding here five years ago.), Anna Masica and Alexander Wright (I will officiate their wedding here in May 2025), Eric Gratton, Cierra Jackson, and Brad Oglesby.

I made pastoral calls and visits throughout the year. Speaking to parishioners on the phone, seeing them in their homes as well as hospitals, rehab centers, and hospice facilities.

Worship continues to be central to my life and ministry. We reintroduced the Mid-Week Communion Service on Wednesdays at 12:15pm. Though attendance is small in number, those that have come to us through the year have found it very meaningful. Individuals coming downtown and those visiting from out of town/country have expressed gratitude and have often been very moved emotionally. I take great care in sermon preparation each week. I continue to enjoy adding my voice in worship through singing from time to time. I am very prayerful and intentional about crafting the liturgy for each service and choosing the imagery that is used in our bulletins.

As we established the lighting of prayer candles during the prayer time of Sunday Worship service, the need for a permanent table became evident. When I discussed this with my husband, he volunteered to build a table especially for our need. That table now fittingly beautifies our historic sanctuary. The Blessing of the Animals, Blue Christmas and New Year's Eve Service continue to meet the needs of people beyond our church membership.

Working with Frank, CAM and FPS, I was so happy that we were able to increase the beauty of our sanctuary by restoring the covering behind the ornate woodwork behind the pulpit area to blue.

The blue unified the domed area and truly sets off the woodwork.

I work closely with the staff throughout the year. I moderate the Session and Congregational meetings, attend First Presbyterian Society board meetings and participate in the life of the Presbytery thru committee work and Presbytery meetings. I led a retreat at the beginning of the year for the Session and Deacons.

I led New Members retreats in April and September. As representative of Old Stone, First Presbyterian Church I attended the Fenn Distribution Meeting in March.

As Head of Staff, I work daily with the staff and volunteers and support the Personnel Committee, which meets monthly. We have weekly staff meetings, and I meet weekly and more often as needed with Beth Buchanan, Clerk of Session and Jo'Anna Thomson, Treasurer. All staff members had an annual review. This past year, it was a blessing to not have any staff changes and to deepen the staff relationships, raising the effectiveness of all. I am so proud of each of the staff and depend upon their expertise in each of their fields.

Nancy Lopilo, the contracted finance person, has become an integral part of the staff. Outsourcing this position to Millette Inc., rather than a full-time staff member, has proven successful.

I had the opportunity for continuing education: Festival of Homiletics in May, in person this year and attended the Henderson Lectures at my alma mater Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in September. Through the Synod of the Covenant, I have continued to have virtual Clergy Coaching, concluding our sessions in November.

My family has been through many joys and challenges this year. My Mom has done incredibly well this past year. The move to assisted care with an apartment mate was the right decision. She turned 101 in July, so many blessings. Memory loss or not, she lets me know that I don't get to PA enough to visit her. Our regular FaceTime chats just aren't the same as hugs and back scratches. My eldest sister Mary Lou has survived her pancreatic cancer post-surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. Shockingly, her youngest son was diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer this past summer.

He is in experimental treatment. My sister Becky continues to benefit from her treatments. These strong women of faith continue to inspire me with their resilience. In November, Bruce and I celebrated our 31st Anniversary.

Though the litigation between the First Presbyterian Society Board of Directors and the Session representing the congregation continued this year without a final judgement from the Judge, we have moved forward in strengthening our relationship between the two governing bodies. We are healing and restoring broken relationships and functioning in a healthier way as one body in Christ.

I truly believe that as a church, we are continuing on the right path and that God will continue to bless this remarkable family we know as Old Stone, First Presbyterian Church of Cleveland.

Many Blessings,

Pastor Stephen
Rev. Stephen C. Blonder Adams
Senior Pastor





Rev. Denise Clark-Jones, Parish Associate

It is hard to believe I am now only starting my second year as Parish Associate at Old Stone! The warm and gracious welcome I have received gives me a sense of belonging, which often takes years to feel in a new congregation.

When I retired in June of 2023 from full-time parish ministry and moved to the Cleveland area, I knew I wanted to find an urban church in which to worship and serve. I believe churches closest to the mission field... the places the most vulnerable population often reside... have the best opportunity to serve as Christ calls his disciples to serve. Having been a solo pastor my whole career, I also hoped to find ways I could serve both a congregation and assist a pastor in fulfilling their own calling. After visiting other churches, I felt called to Old Stone. I have been blessed with becoming part of a wonderful church staff that supports the church faithfully and works in unity and harmony with one another. As the psalmist wrote: *"How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!...For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore."* (Ps. 133, vs. 1, 3a) I am also grateful to be serving a church with faithful ordained officers who take their jobs seriously. Working with people genuinely concerned for the welfare of this congregation is a delight.

During the past year I have enjoyed getting to know members of the congregation, both the ones in the pews regularly and those who, due to disability, are no longer able to attend worship in person. I have served as a clergy consultant to the Deacons and done home and hospital visits. I also have served on the Worship and Music Committee. I have preached, on occasion, so that Pastor Stephen can get some much-needed time away for both rest and study. Hopefully, knowing that I can fill in, when needed, makes Pastor Stephen's job a bit less stressful. I have been an active member of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve, serving on two committees.

I feel privileged to labor with and among you. I pray that our work together, no matter where it leads us, will bring ultimate honor and glory to the Kingdom of God.

Blessings!
Rev. Denise Clark-Jones



David L. Dettloff, Minister of Music

The Old Stone Singers' membership has remained quite stable in 2024. This has given us the opportunity to refine our balance, our overall choral sound, and artistry. Our schedule included the 3rd annual performance of "Messiah," special seasonal liturgies, and Winterfest.

Sadly, we said goodbye to Frederick Peterbark, tenor. Frederick and family moved to California, where he is employed at the University of the Pacific. Frederick has gifted the Old Stone congregation with his joyful presence and wonderful solos throughout his time here. This year, we greeted Sam Jungman, tenor, and Reese Henrick, alto, to the Old Stone Singers.

During the Summer of 2024, J. Zamberlan & Co. removed the tracker action and keydesk from the loft area. This keydesk was built into the organ casing and was no longer utilized. A beautifully crafted wood panel was created to fill the open void in the organ casing. J. Zamberlan did not disappoint! They were meticulous about color and sizing to the millimeter. All components removed from the organ have been saved and stored and may someday prove valuable to a builder creating a "historic" instrument.

We presented a recital in October featuring Andrew Sords, violinist, and myself as the pianist. Andrew is a local violinist who enjoys an international career. Andrew offered up some very challenging repertoire and good doses of charm and humor. This recital was the impetus to purchase the beautiful new piano we have in the sanctuary.

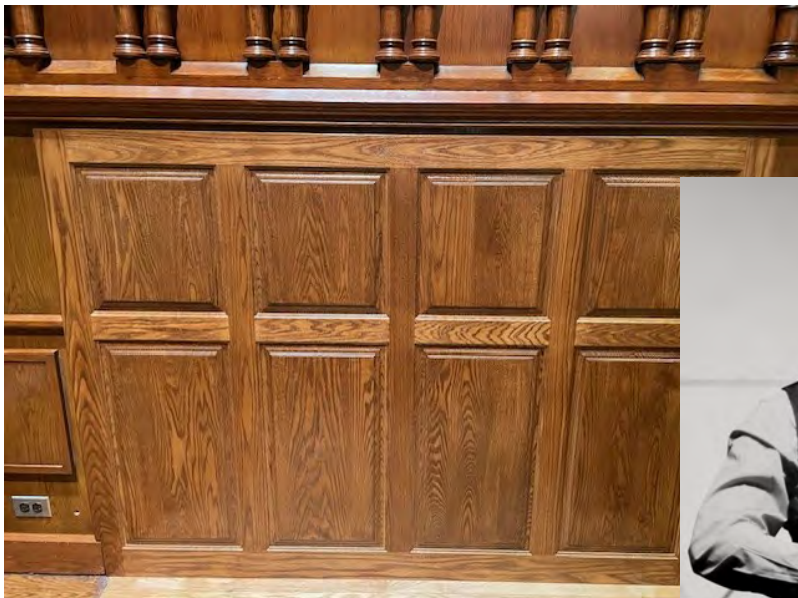
The Steinway, although wonderful, could not keep up with the artistic demands of Beethoven and Mozart, specifically the speed and delicacy needed. The new piano is an artist level piano from Yamaha. The purchase was completed in 2024 through allocated funds for the music ministry and very generous donations from members. In fact, members covered the expense before we could officially ask the congregation! The Yamaha will serve Old Stone Church for many decades to come. The Steinway is now in the Chapel, and it is a great relief to have a fine instrument in that location as well.

Although it was a bitterly cold day, we had many visitors during Winterfest. Guests enjoyed warmth, cookies and organ music. Four singers helped close out the evening. This was a joyful event, our visitors could not have been friendlier, or more respectful of the space. We have plans for an "artistic expansion" in 2025!

Speaking of bitterly cold...we are experiencing some minor oddities with the organ, sticky keys, ciphers (pipes that won't stop singing) and other mechanical miss-fires. They "come and go" with the low temperatures. J. Zamberlan will address these specific instances; however, others will appear...no worries, January will be over soon!

Members and friends, it is an honor to be the Minister of Music of Old Stone Church and participate in prayerful, thoughtful liturgies. Thank you for the many blessings you have shared.

Respectfully submitted,
David Dettloff, Minister of Music





Tom Sarago, Director of Marketing & Community Engagement

2024 was a great year to build on my service as the Director of Marketing and Community Engagement for Old Stone Church.

I was pleased to see us continue our partnership with the Cleveland International Film Festival for the second year with the in-kind sponsorship of *Mourning in Lod*, a remarkable documentary that examines the lives of three individuals living in the border community of Lod, Israel whose lives are intertwined in a vicious cycle of violence yet come together to find solace through faith, compassion, and a shared commonality in each other's loss. These no-cost partnerships continue to raise Old Stone Church's profile throughout Northeast Ohio.

We continued to rely on the website as the central point for communications and marketing. Our website saw more than 15,000 visitors in 2024, with an engagement rate that was within the top 10% of churches in the United States. Each week, the staff are contacted through the website for prayer requests, potential partnerships, pastoral matters, or general inquiries. Each communication is going to the appropriate person with little need to forward messages, which not only preserves the need for confidentiality but also allows for efficiency.

Our social media presence continues to grow, with more than 4,400 followers on Facebook and more than 2,000 subscribers on YouTube. Our Livestream has never looked better, and the over 200 views of our weekly service each week are a testament to the worship service and the convenience of being able to watch on mobile devices, which constitute more than half of our viewers each week. Our outdoor video screens continue to feature compelling content from within the church and provide vital resources provided by our Mission Partners.

Access to our Sanctuary has increased to levels not seen since the pandemic with both the weekly Communion Worship Services and the open doors that our Welcoming & Fellowship Committee provides. I commend all who take the time to drive to Old Stone Church to volunteer and welcome new faces to our historic church each Wednesday.

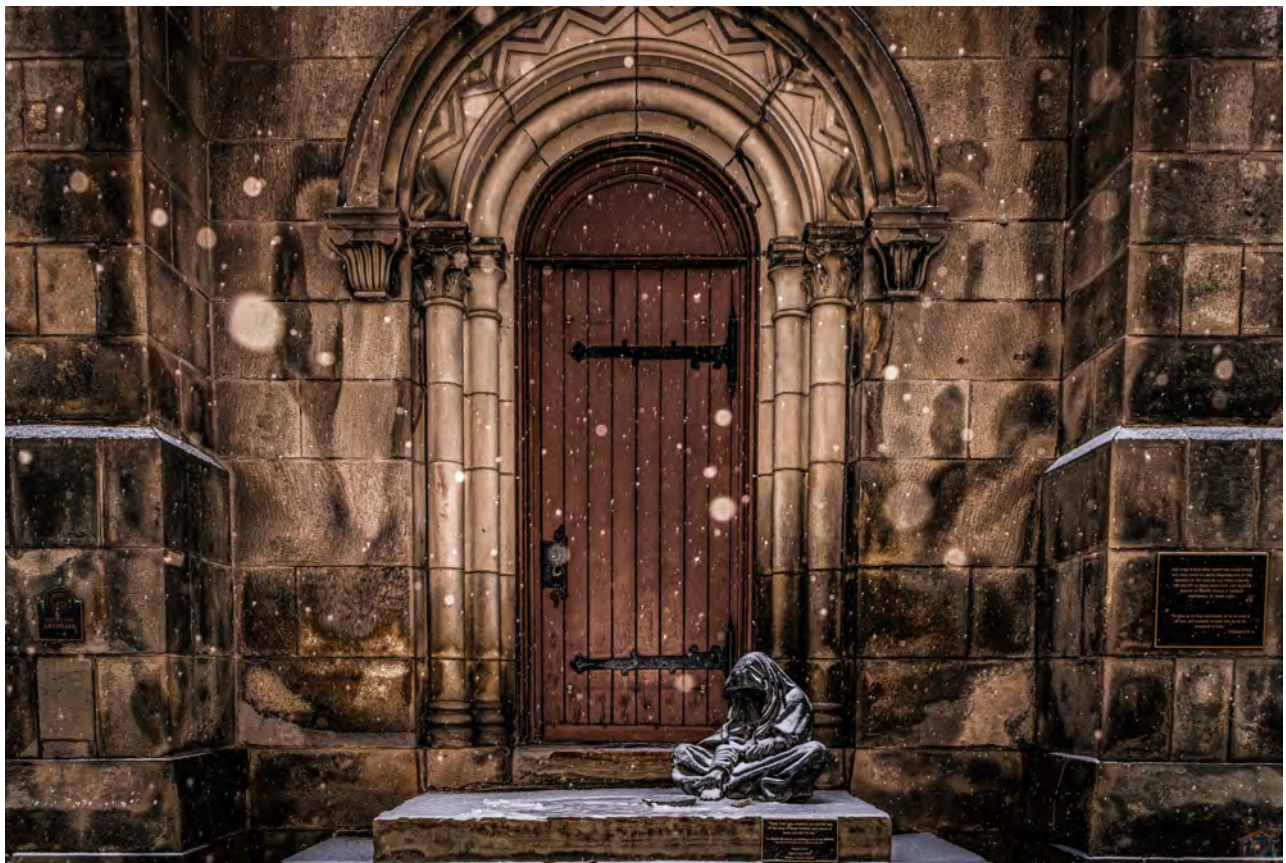
Our Mission & Urban Outreach committee's work continues to significantly impact our community and position Old Stone Church as a pillar of support to "the least of these." This committee works diligently to support more than a dozen nonprofit organizations each year, and I am incredibly pleased to see the relationship between Old Stone Church and our Mission Partners continue to grow.

I firmly believe that one of the most significant paths forward for our congregation is to leverage and champion the work of this committee.

This past year, the staff and Personnel Committee collaborated to rethink the need for a traditional receptionist and create a Resource Navigator role by leveraging our relationship with our long-standing Mission Partner, The Metanoia Project, to have their Program Manager, Renee Brickman, at Old Stone Church three days per week to help the unhoused and underserved. Many within the Presbytery reached out, acknowledging this work, and the Presbytery of the Western Reserve supported this initiative with a \$5,000 Vision Fund grant, positioning Old Stone Church as an innovator in addressing Matthew 25 issues.

I look forward to a new year of embracing the challenges and collectively celebrating the successes that 2025 has for us at Old Stone Church.

Tom Sarago
Director of Marketing & Community Engagement



Photograph by Doug Tayek

Stewardship Committee



A Priceless Invitation

The Old Stone Church Stewardship theme this year was “A Priceless Invitation” which refers to the opportunity Jesus offers each of us to commit to a personal relationship with God. Our hope is to inspire members to participate in the mission of the church through stewardship and giving, reciprocating the love and generosity of Christ. The committee worked closely with the congregation this year to stress the importance of members sharing their treasure, as well as their time and talents. Our goal is to foster a greater attitude of generosity and to dispel the belief that Old Stone Church does not need monetary contributions.

As of January 1, 2025, our Stewardship Drive resulted in 53 pledges (individuals and couples/families, termed “units”) totaling \$111,325 for the 2025 OSC Budget. This included 12 new (6 net additional) pledging units for which we are grateful. In response to our Fall 2023 Stewardship Drive, only 47 units pledged \$100,285 (last year’s effort was augmented by donations of \$10,000 each from 6 generous donors, but those were one-time gifts). Thus, we experienced an improvement of 11% over last year’s comparable results.

During the year, we also encouraged members to pay the \$38 Per Capita fee for 2024 that was required of all Presbyterian Church USA members in the Presbytery of the Western Reserve. That resulted in \$2,408 of the required total \$11,326.

Our strong endowments are essential to our mission, and cover a large share of our budget, but church members play a vital role in financially supporting the mission as well. Even with the Fenn and Dickie endowment funds, together with investment fund earnings managed by the First Presbyterian Society, as well as a very good investment climate, balancing our budget will, by some estimates, still depend on tithes and offerings, above what is pledged.

The committee is grateful for all pledges for 2025, and we hope other members will help support this church as they are able. Pledges can still be submitted at any time.

2024 Stewardship Committee

Elizabeth Buchanan, *Chair*
David Finley Esq., Fred Heider, Robert Hubert Jr.,
Judy Macuga, Martha Vassel, Jayne Zborowsky

Pastor Stephen Blonder Adams, *ex-officio*, Anthony Kastellic, *staff*

Welcoming and Fellowship Committee

Mission Statement:

It is important that the Fellowship events at OSC provide opportunities to experience the fellowship of kindred spirits in such a way that we become as a family following Christ's teaching and love. This committee seeks to further and deepen the spiritual and personal bonds that are formed in the midst of worship. Fellowship activities strengthen the spiritual fabric and manifestation of a loving and caring family

- Such activities bring us together, gives us a sense of belonging, a sense of sharing our talents and life experiences, and a sense of personal acceptance and worth.
- OSC has a diverse congregation, and some are without families or even a place in our society. From our togetherness grows a loving spiritual family, motivated to grow, and finding hope and purpose for all.
- Out of these experiences will grow the desire to "spread the good news" and encourage further commitment to the Faith and our responsibility to Evangelize

Some of the considerations re selection of projects

Our audiences – Congregation and their networks (friends, relatives, neighbors) and some downtown residents

Consider including other Presbyterian churches and other faith churches to our activities

Consider possible events that represent low hanging fruit that don't require significant commitment of money or resources

Emphasize activities that are revenue neutral to OSC or generate revenue for OSC

Activities can be educational or recreational in nature. All activities should provide financial support and transportation where individuals require either so that no one is precluded from participation

The events this year included Art Museum tour, Holden Arboretum tour, Celebrity Chef demonstration with Rocco Whelan, coordinating and staffing Open House during Public Square Christmas tree lighting, Cleveland Guardian baseball game outing, Annual Harvest Table event the Sunday before Thanksgiving, coordinating a Lenten project that involved decorating crosses for display during Lent, gave various tours of Old Stone Church to outside groups, conducted Open House tours for general public every Wednesday, talk by Western Reserve Hospice representative entitled "Getting your House in Order", and coordinating meals preceding programs where appropriate.

2024 Welcoming and Fellowship Committee

Bob Reid, *Chair*

Peter Baron, Bram Chisholm, Eleanor Cicerchi, Mark Corey, Pam Daly, Forest Diehl,
Ruth & Dave Finley, Fred Heider, Elie & Bernard Medie, Charlene Thornton,
Amy and John Wheeler, Jayne Zborowsky

Mike Murphy, *staff*

Mission and Urban Wellness Committee

We are pleased to report that MUW succeeded in supporting the needs of the homeless, the underfed, the sick, the unclothed, and those without power: people who are near to our church and in need of our attention and help. We are grateful to be able to distribute ten percent of the Old Stone Church's annual budget.

The committee is adamant that this percentage should remain in the Church's budget because it is how we witness to the greater community our commitment to Christ's mandate. We choose to do this not because it's easy or convenient but because it is necessary. It is a necessary spiritual practice to support those in our midst who are in need of our support.

Specifically, our donations were distributed accordingly:

Presbytery – general fund	25,000
Presbyterian Disaster Relief Fund	2,500
North Church Pres.	2,900
Love, Inc.	1,200
200 Homes Project	50,000
Journey Center for Safety and Healing	11,000
Other housing programs	24,900
Food	3,720
Mental Health (NAMI)	5,500
Green Corps.	2,500
Random Acts of Kindness	3,000
Police Memorial	500
TOTAL	132,720

We also conducted a Food Drive for the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and held a Christmas Party for the Front Steps that included gift bags of household necessities. Several members also participated in a Cleanup Day for Habitat for Humanity.

2024 Mission and Urban Wellness Committee

Bob Heath, *Co-Chair*, Bernard Medie, *Co-Chair*

Dorothy Baunach, Judy Geraci Brown, Dave Eifert, Joe Geraci, Edie Horvat,

Rev. June D. Jones, Janet Lowder Kinkaid, Christopher McKinley,

Michael Rekoric, Peggy Schaffer, Jayne Zborowsky

Tom Sarago, *staff*

Finance and Planning Committee

During the year the initial emphasis of the Finance and Planning Committee was on securing a successful implementation of the Budget, which promised a large reduction in the operating deficit. Efforts to control expenses at or below Budget levels were successful. While final figures are not yet available, it appears the deficit, if any, will be less than anticipated.

Most of our efforts were focused on developing a multi-year view of our financial opportunities. The strong growth of financial markets and the related impact on likely future endowment distributions enabled us to identify an opportunity to generate a surplus - at least temporarily. Future scenarios indicated the likely return of deficits if financial markets flattened or receded. A decision was reached to reduce our traditional commitment to Mission giving. This reduced the deficit risk and would perhaps support the growth of our other ministries in good times.

The sustained high growth of financial markets enabled us to reexamine the high-priority effort to hire and sustain an Associate Pastor. The current focus of Finance and Planning is on building the financial capacity and reserves to support that goal and others. Our Budget calls for a significant surplus but much more is needed. We are searching for ways to get added resources. We are pleased to learn that FPS embraces our goals and has increased its support for 2025.

2024 Finance and Planning Committee

Fred Heider, *Chair*

David Finley, Sandy Kuban, Bob Reid, Jo'Anna Thomson, Jayne Zborowsky

Rev. Stephen Blonder Adams, *ex-officio*

Elizabeth Buchanan, Clerk of Session, *ex-officio*

Christian Education Committee

Old Stone Church had several Christian Education opportunities in 2024, some of which are continuing into 2025.

Pastor Stephen offered a six-week Lenten Book Study on the Psalms in 2024. The book was *Pause: Spending Lent with the Psalms* by Elizabeth Caldwell. Pastor Denise Clark Jones, Parish Associate, offered copies of *A Journey to the Cross with Mark, a Lenten study* that she wrote. She also offered a time on Sunday mornings at 9am to gather, discuss and reflect on the week's study offering. In the Fall, Pastor Denise offered a 9am Sunday morning study on the lectionary reading. Pastor Stephen offered Wednesday evening Zoom online study of *Romans: A Letter for Today*, that will continue into 2025. Bob Heath offered an online Zoom Bible study on the Gospel According to John on Tuesday evenings that is continuing into 2025.

2024 Christian Education Committee Members:

Willie Brown, *Chair*

Pastor Stephen Blonder Adams, *ex officio*, Pastor Denise Clark-Jones, *ex officio*

OSC Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee is pleased to report that no staff were lost during 2024 and there were no new hires. The current staff were granted a 4 percent cost of living raise for 2025. We approved a Section 125 Employee Benefit Plan to allow employees to pay premiums pre-tax effective Jan 1, 2025. We transitioned our employees' 2025 Health Savings Accounts (HSA's) to Health Equity, the HSA provider for PC USA Board of Pensions. We cancelled our HSA agreement with PNC Bank.

PC USA Board of Pensions has qualified retirement plans available for employees. The employer match under BOP plans is governed by terms of employment, and our personnel manual sets the match as follows: OSC employees are eligible for Employer Contributions after completing one year of service with a minimum of 1,000 worked hours during that first one-year period. The contribution from OSC is set at 50 cents on the dollar up to an employee's contribution of 6% of wages.

Staff reviews were performed in the Fall of 2024 by Pastor Stephen Blonder Adams and Personnel Chair Beth Buchanan. All reviews went well, and employees were satisfied with their positions and looking forward to 2025.

A Secondment Agreement with Metanoia Project was set up in the Fall of 2024 to allow Renee Brickman from Metanoia to assist folks at OSC and in the area who need services related to homelessness and other special needs.

We continue to pursue ex-employee Kathleen Gus for repayment of \$4,509.23 (current amount in garnishment) for her misuse of an OSC credit card.

2024 Personnel Committee

Elizabeth Buchanan, *Chair*
David Finley, *Esq.*, David Eifert

Rev. Stephen C. Blonder Adams, Senior Pastor

Board of Deacons

In the year 2024, the Board of Deacons enhance the ministry of Old Stone Church's care and compassion. The major event for the year was the all church picnic, that afforded an opportunity for fellowship and good food, while raising money for the Compassionate Fund of the church. This year the picnic was held at the North Olmsted Community Cabin in August. The Deacons made and donated baskets which were raffled, raising \$600 for the Compassionate Friends Fund.

The Deacons are continually blessed to have Reverend Denise in our midst to help lead the group and provide information concerning the church members.

Cards were sent throughout the year to our homebound or members who have not been in church to maintain a personal contact. For Valentine's Day cards were sent expressing our love and care to various members as well. For Easter we delivered a small floral arrangement in a church mug to about a dozen members. At Christmas, amaryllis bulbs and a small box of candy were taken by Deacons to about 10 members to maintain our care and compassion.

In addition to delivering the various gifts, the Deacons have built or enhanced friendships with various homebound members or those with health or mobility issues. When visiting them, the Deacons pray with them before leaving. The Deacons are in attendance with clergy to administer communion if desired. Reverend Denise has also added that we can anoint members if desired in our visitation.

For the coffee fellowship time after the church service, Elie has organized greeters at the entrance and individuals to help serve beverages at the table. In doing so visitors and members have the opportunity to individually meet and be greeted.

The Deacons are dedicated to the ministry work they have been ordained to do. We consider it a blessing to have been entrusted to do this.

Respectfully submitted,
John M. Wheeler
Moderator, Board of Deacons

Class of 2024

Anand Bandari
Bernie Bischel
Amy Wheeler
John Wheeler

Class of 2025

Valorie Hempstead
Eileen Kelly
Elie Medie
Mark Pichler

Class of 2026

Mark Corey
Forrest Diehl
Pam Daly
Ruth Finley
Alyssa Niepokny
Charlene Thornton

Worship Committee Report

Worship is at the very heart of the church's life.

All that the church does is rooted in its worship.

The community of faith, gathered in response to God's call, is formed in its worship. Worship is the principal influence that shapes our faith and is the most visible way we express the faith. In worship, through Word and Sacrament, the church is sustained by the presence of Christ and empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Joined in worship to the One who is the source of its life,
the church is equipped to serve God in the world.

[The Book of Common Worship]

2024 provided many opportunities for congregant participation in the worship service. Lay liturgists allowed for different voices to be heard which offered opportunities for involvement and enriched the worship service. Communion was configured to seamlessly combine the receiving of the elements with lighting of memory candles. Pastor Stephen or Pastor Denise offered Communion in the Chapel, following worship, on all Sundays in which Communion was not held in the Sanctuary. Pastor Stephen and Pastor Denise also led a Wednesday noontime Communion service which was attended by both parishioners and community members. Lenten and Easter services were well attended with a Tenebrae service being very impactful.

Throughout the Summer, a quartet was utilized as opposed to the full choir. The quality of the music program continues to enrich the worship experience. A Blessing of the Pets was held again this year, in October. Due to an issue with parking on a Saturday, attendance wasn't as good as it could have been. Consideration is being given to hold this service on a Sunday, next year.

Advent and Christmas concluded the year with meaningful services and music, and communion. David Detloff led the annual presentation of the Messiah. We have been blessed to be inspired and enriched by the worship experience at Old Stone Church.

2024 Worship Committee

Michelle Baron, *Co-Chair*, Willie Brown, *Co-Chair*
Ian Atwood, Janie Chambers, Elizabeth Harris, Melissa Mafia, Harriet Niles

Pastor Stephen Blonder Adams, *staff*, David Dettloff, *staff*, Anthony Kastellic, *staff*

2024 Nominating Committee

The 2024 CNC members began the process of seeking candidates for Elders and Deacons for the Class of 2027 in July. The process concluded successfully in November with the committee presenting its nominations to the congregation at a called Congregational Meeting on November 24th.

Five members of the session class of 2024 renewed for three-year terms, and five deacons were elected to three-year terms with three in the Class of 2024 renewing and two new additions, one a nomination from the floor.

Thanks to Bernie Bischel who completed her term of service as a Deacon.

All members of the Congregational Nominating Committee were reelected to serve in 2025.

The committee encourages members who want to become more involved at Old Stone Church to consider being an elder or deacon. A good way to start is to join a committee and become more involved to learn more about the workings of the church. Our church depends upon your time and talent in the various aspects of church life whether that is as an officer on the Board of Deacons, an Elder on Session, or a member of one of the many committees that keep the church viable and relevant in the heart of Cleveland.

2024 Nominating Committee

Dorothy Baunach, *Chair*

Peter Baron, Elizabeth Buchanan, Mary Eifert,
Melissa Maffia, Penni Rolen, Clinton Scaggs

Rev. Stephen C. Blonder Adams, *ex-officio*

First Presbyterian Society

The First Presbyterian Society in Cleveland (FPS or the Society) was incorporated in 1827 by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio. The Society has continued, uninterrupted through today, as a distinct Ohio non-profit corporation and recognized IRS tax-exempt organization. The Society owns and manages the beautiful building, complex, and land in the heart of downtown Cleveland at 91 Public Square, which we and the community fondly call Old Stone Church, and since 1955, has registered and renewed the trade name “Old Stone Church.”

In addition to shouldering the costs of maintaining the beauty and functionality of the Sanctuary and related property for worship and use by other entities, the Society has continuously provided significant financial support over the years to the First Presbyterian Church congregation. On behalf of the Society and its members, FPS contributed or directed distributions of \$1,048,099 to the congregation in 2024.

The important work of the Society revolves around maintenance, and major projects, of the Church facilities, and management of the investment portfolio.

The 196th Annual Meeting of the Society was held in a hybrid format on April 1, 2024. Tom Allen and Peter Baron were elected to serve three year terms on the Board of Directors. Officers were elected following the meeting, and remained the same: President – Margaret Wetzler, Vice President – Tom Allen, Secretary – Eric Dunn, and Treasurer – Sandy Kuban. Currently, FPS has 45 members, an overwhelming majority of whom are also congregants of Old Stone Church.

The work of the Capital Assets Millennium Committee is critical to the preservation of the facilities. The committee meets regularly (first Monday of each month), and those interested in the work of the group are welcome to attend. In 2024, they stewarded the following projects:

- Replaced a tower pan on the roof, associated supports and fill media;
- Repaired plaster in the Sanctuary;
- Removed the old organ keyboard;
- Repaired the handrail on the main steps of the Sanctuary; and
- Replaced the scrim in the cove of the Sanctuary.

In addition to these larger projects, there were many smaller, but equally important, “behind the scenes” projects that were completed:

- Replacement of the Sanctuary air diaphragm;
- Replacement of corroded pipes on condensate feed pumps;
- Repaired a leak in the flashing on the roof;
- Repaired kitchen tile floor in Memorial Hall;
- Replaced all three amplifiers in Sanctuary;
- Tweaked, repaired and replaced various parts on air conditioning units and boilers, including cooling tower, as needed;
- Sanded, washed and painted front Sanctuary doors; and
- Replaced one outside screen that was vandalized.

The budget for 2024 was \$110,000; total expenditures of the projects was \$89,829.

While 2024 delivered positive returns for most asset classes in the stock market, it was a year that heavily rewarded risk takers – growth over value, tech over energy, and high yield over investment grade. In order to mitigate risk, working with our investment partner Clearstead, both of the large conglomerate funds were solidly balanced, and produced returns of approximately 12.3% for 2024. From a macro perspective, 2025 appears to be in a strong position to be a repeat of 2024 – solid labor market, stable inflationary environment, and strong households and corporate balance sheets. Valuations could be the challenge to the 2024 winners repeating in 2025. The market is expected to once again deliver attractive returns for investors in general, but the underperformers in 2024 may be the outperformers in 2025.

Legal counsel for the Society filed a Motion for Summary Judgment in the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas in March, 2023, asking for a declaration that the Society owns all rights, title and interests to the trade name and mark “Old Stone Church”; that the Society is neither a trust nor a charitable trust and the First Presbyterian Church is not a trust beneficiary; and that the Society, as a non-profit corporation, is entitled to act, or refrain from acting, in any matter consistent within its governing documents and that right is not altered by the incorporation of the First Presbyterian Church. The matter continues to rest before Judge John O’Donnell.

Members of the Society have been kept apprised of the work of the Board via the electronic distribution of the minutes of the monthly meetings, thanks to Communication Chair, Gary Richter.

Outside of our walls a new, exciting project was brought to FPS/FPC this year through DC Illumination, which involves lighting up the facade of the buildings on Public Square. Much thought and work went into the idea; contracts have been executed and work has begun on the installation of the fixtures. The church will assume costs related to increased monthly electric bills.

The Sherwin-Williams Company continues to work on their new headquarters just outside our doorstep. This exciting project will bring new life to the Square upon its completion, which is projected for mid-2025.

Thank you to those who have served faithfully beside me throughout the past year – Tom Allen, Peter Baron, Eric Dunn, Sandy Kuban, Ngozi Nkemere, Gary Richter, and Clinton Scaggs. Each of these people brings their unique gifts to serve God collectively – what a joy it is to serve with them. They are intelligent, committed, faithful people who support me, and the work of the Society, and I am grateful for each one of them.

Onward on to 2025.

Margaret Wetzler, President

The First Presbyterian Society in Cleveland

New Members:

Eric Grattan
Cierra Jackson
Anna Masica

Bradley Oglesby
Kristy Sawicki
Ted Sawicki

Peggie Willett
Stephen Willet
Alexander Wright

Children Baptisms:

Elizabeth Ashdown
Luca Bricillo
Jameson Hakos
Thomas Hakos

May their memory always be a blessing:

Nova Kordalski +*February 27, 2024*
Carol Hoagland +*April 12, 2023*
Lenore Rutti +*May 29, 2024*
Tony Kordalski +*August 22, 2024*
William Fawcett +*October 7, 2024*
Rev. Donald Oglesby +*November 19, 2024*
Caroline Poirier +*December 14, 2024*

Weddings:

Alyssa Heitkamp/Kevin Maloney
March 2, 2024
Gabrielle Gentile/Ross McHenry
May 25, 2024
Katie Banchek/Tony Machnik
June 15, 2024
Courtney Baron/Timothy Knapp
June 28, 2024
Melissa Czyz/Shane Print
September 28, 2024

Anniversaries:

20 years (Joined 2004)

Carol Brown
Becky Joyner
Debbie McLaughlin
Robert Reid

35 years (Joined 1989)

Helen Kuban
Clinton Scaggs

40 years (Joined 1984)

Margaret Wetzler

25 years (Joined 1999)

Alan Ciarlillo
Harry Hatters
Patti Hatters
Bruce Hyland
Joyce Hyland
Jo'Anna Thomson

45 years (Joined 1979)

Paul Nelson
Winifred Nelson

50 years (Joined 1974)

Jim Duxbury
Judith Macuga
Elizabeth (Lil) Reid

30 years (Joined 1994)

55 years (Joined 1969)

55+ years

Don Guenther, 59 years (1965)
Forrest Diehl, 59 years (1965)
Janet Czar, 60 years (1964)
John Young, 61 years (1963)
Dianne Young, 61 years (1963)
Mary Jane Sykora, 63 years (1961)





THE OLD STONE CHURCH

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