

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



As presented on February 2, 2025

Our 2024 Teaching

Who is Jesus?

January 6–June 2

The Sermon on the Mount
Life On Earth as It Is In Heaven

June 8–September 1

1st Timothy:
Constancy Amid the Chaos

September 7–November 17

Advent & Christmas 2024

O Worship the King

November 23–December 29

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Christ Church Fox Chapel

Annual Meeting of the Congregation held January 21, 2024 in the Parish Hall

Welcome and Introductions

After a brief celebration of the ten year anniversary of Alex and Kat's ministry at Christ Church (and recognition of Alex recently becoming a US Citizen) Rev. Alex Shuttleworth (Chair) called the meeting to order at 9:55. Tiffany Gray was introduced as the Judge of Elections and Anne Malone as Secretary.

Alex gave a brief devotional from Titus 1:7-9: ⁷For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. The word "overseer" is translated "bishop" or could refer to a church leader. The list of qualities includes a number of dos and don'ts for leaders but overlooks that an overseer is a steward of God, therefore charged with serving and looking after God's interests. Alex commended the Vestry members for their work on the budget and stewardship of the church's our resources. Alex followed his devotional with a prayer.

Minutes

Upon a motion made by Courtney Myhrum and seconded by Nicole Shirk, the minutes of the Annual Meeting held in January 2023 were approved.

Matters for Decision

Election of New Vestry Members

The Nominating Committee voted to recommend Catherine Parham and Matt Beresik to serve a second term on the Vestry. A motion was made and seconded (Bill Gordon, Sean Elwell) to conduct the voting by a show of hands rather than written ballots. The motion was approved. A motion was made by Matt Beresik, seconded by Gail Simpson to elect Catherine Parham to a second term. The motion was approved. A motion was made by Terry Shirk, seconded by Sean Elwell, to elect Matt Beresik to the Vestry. The motion was approved. A question was asked as to why an additional person is not being nominated to replace Joe Nawrocki who is rotating off. The By-laws indicate that the size of the Vestry can be 6 to 9 members. With Joe rotating off and Catherine and Matt returning for a second term, the size of the Vestry would be at 7. The Vestry voted to keep it at that size for 2024. If additional persons had been nominated from the congregation, they would have been considered by the Nominating Committee and presented to the congregation

Alex expressed sincere thanks to Joe Nawrocki for his leadership on the Vestry during his two terms.

Matters for Information

Finance/Treasurer's Report – Zachary Gray

Treasurer Zack Gray reported 2023 was in many ways a year of sustained growth for our church. With expenses in line with budget, we saw increases in membership, attendance and giving. As a result, we finished the year with a surplus. Capital reserves and restricted assets were used for property improvements without an impact to the operational budget.

Our church’s daily operation is funded almost solely by our members. Pledged amounts are helpful to the Vestry for planning purposes because they historically and predictively come in around 93 percent of target. Actual pledged giving in 2023 was \$509,718 vs. a budget of \$532,800. Donations are defined as monies above one’s pledged amount or traceable giving that is not a pledged amount. Donations for 2023 were \$302, 639 vs. a budget of \$199,500.

Combining some categories, and using rounded figures for the sake of simplicity; Zack summarized the 2023 and 2024 Budgets as follows:

INCOME	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Planned giving	\$532,800	\$509,718	\$477,000
Donation, plate & other	\$199,500	\$302, 639	\$216,500
Legacy & memorial	\$1,700	\$445	\$1,500
Cell tower & rental	\$51,300	\$52,705	\$51,800
Investment income	\$31,900	\$30,971	\$37,500
Other	\$18,800	\$2,358	\$1,800
Vestry Reserve Fund	\$0	\$0	\$34,000
Total	\$819,000*	\$898,836	\$786,000**

*Actual budget total, not from rounded figures

**Total does not include use of Vestry Reserve fund (a savings account for deficit years)

Additional income was also received from the rental income from the SSA trailers (\$100,000), Proceeds from the sale of the plow truck (\$18,409), and Building Fund gifts (\$190,894),

With regard to expenses, the church continued to operate slightly below budget throughout the year. Bridget, Niki and Alex consistently look for ways to trim costs, renegotiate contracts for office expenses like our renegotiated utilities and lower contracted grounds costs. As a result, the church’s expenses for 2023 were \$813,886 vs. a budget of \$813,000. Projected expenses for 2024 total \$820,000.

EXPENSES	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Pastoral	\$274,000	\$272,789	\$296,800
Music, Office & Education	\$191,400	\$190,183	\$200,000
Buildings & Grounds	\$174,000	\$182,811	\$167,300
Inside Parish Events	\$42,700	\$43,590	\$28,500
Outside Parish Costs & Tax	\$131,000	\$124,513	\$127,000
Total	\$813,000*	\$813,886	\$820,000*

* Rounded from actual total, not from rounded figures above.

Although our investments outperformed the market marginally, 2023 was a better year. Unrestricted assets increased by \$92,626. Costs for the road (\$179,341) were covered by a \$90,000 budget surplus, \$100,000 income from the SSA trailers, and market performance on our investments. Additional \$190,894 income to the Building Fund is not included in these figures.

Our 2024 budget is \$820,000 compared to a budget of \$813,000 in 2023. The net increase is based solely on inflation and is not due to any new operational spending. That said, 2024 pledges are slightly down from last year to resulting in a deficit in the new budget. In the Vestry’s opinion, some savings have been achieved and wish list items added, the 2024 budget is what it will cost to run a church this year and includes additional spending for items vital to the church’s ministry in the upcoming year.

Overall, the finances at Christ Church indicate we are functioning as a healthy church. Budget, expenses, and assets are watched carefully and excess resources are put back into the facility and deferred maintenance. Maintenance in 2023 included:

- Repaired entrance
- Repaired roof (again)
- Repaired ice machine
- Repaired and painted exterior walls on the rear side of the Meeting House
- Completed new trash area
- Installed condensers for Sanctuary HVAC, completing the project that started in December 2022
- Replaced damaged exterior trim around parish hall exit door to lawn

The following improvements were also made for better accessibility and safety:

- Improved signage to help locate school vs. church as well as directional road signage
- A new, free fire hydrant
- Removal of dangerous fire escape
- Additional security camera
- Replaced rotting exterior door at rear of sanctuary
- Installation of all new exterior faucets & shut-off valves

The road was by far the biggest improvement. Costs for this project were shared with Shady Side Academy. Improvements included in this project were:

- Widening the road in key areas
- Milling out the existing road
- Installing a new 8-inch base
- Installing new 4 ½ inch asphalt
- New accessible sidewalks
- New landscaping
- An increase of 20 new parking spaces

We give thanks to God for the church's financial health at this time. Further details of the Treasurer's report can be found in the 2023 Annual Report

Membership and Attendance – Alex Shuttleworth and Ben Hughes

Alex and Ben gave a summary report on membership and attendance. Membership at Christ Church involves three things:

- **Commit** to Jesus as Lord, the authority of scripture, & the historic creeds
- **Connect** in worship, study, & fellowship, cultivating a loving community
- **Contribute** time & money towards our gospel mission

Overall membership is up 50% since the pandemic and people are involved in a variety of small group and service opportunities. Statistics show that Christ Church has made almost a complete recovery since the pandemic while other places struggle to regain their membership. There are many signs that point to our church being a healthy church and for that we are grateful.

Ben gave an overview of what is happening with the small groups and youth ministry. Small groups include Women's Group, Men's Group, Home Groups, Moms Groups, Adult Forum, as well as Bible studies and other small groups.

In addition, members are involved in mission outreach through Urban Impact, Uncommon Grounds, Shepherd's Heart, and Kairos Prison Ministry. A highlight for Ben and the youth was a mission trip to Youth Works in Charleston, WV. Money was raised through the sale of Belgian blocks unearthed in the road project. It was a remarkable experience for all who were involved.

There are a number of ways the church ministers to and provides opportunities for children and youth. They include:

- Children's Ministry (ages 4 through 5th grade)
- SWAG (Saved with Amazing Grace) – grades 6 – 12
- CCYM (Christ Church Youth Ministry – grades 9-10)
- MDC (Mere Discipleship Cohort) – grades 11-12

These ministries equip the youth with a stronger foundation for knowing Christ and growing in their faith to face what is ahead of them in the world.

Other church-wide fellowship opportunities such as the Summer Picnic and Fall Festival have provided fellowship opportunities for the entire church family. Thanks to those who organize those events. Service Teams also have opportunities available for Greeters (Bill Gordon and Joe Nawrocki), Readers (Jim Edwards), Servers (Jane Flaherty), AV Team (Matt Beresik), and Coffee Ministry (Desa Voelker). A new Prayer Ministry will be starting up soon as well. Leaders for that team are Corrie Passavant, Catherine Parham, Becky Lowe, and Tami Fire. Anyone wishing to be involved on any of these Service Teams can do so by contacting the team leaders listed.

Building Development – Alex Shuttleworth

A non-aggressive capital campaign for building development was launched last Spring with multiple options presented for methods of giving. Members who contributed received a custom Yeti mug or cup as a thanks for their contributions. The overall costs to renovate the Sanctuary and the Parish Hall is \$1.1M. The campaign raised approximately \$525,000. Contributors were surveyed to get a sense of which project the congregation thought was more important. Opinions between the Sanctuary and Parish Hall were pretty evenly split, but the majority either had no preference or did not respond. The first \$5000 was given to put a roof on a church in Tanzania. That project has now been completed.

Other Business

There were no other issues or questions raised from the floor.

Adjournment and Closing Prayer

The meeting was closed in prayer at 11:16 am and the congregation present prepared to worship following the meeting.

Respectfully submitted

Approved by the Congregation on February____, 2025.

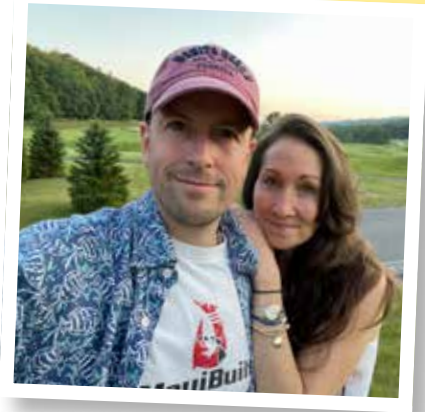
Anne B Malone

Anne Malone, Secretary

Rector's Report

In 2024 we saw an increased hunger for the Word. We tackled some of the more complex, even controversial passages of scripture, and more than before, we did so together. As my favorite bishop once observed, this is an encouraging sign. Writing in 1877 (using Victorian language) he said:

“The man whose soul is growing, takes more interest in spiritual things every year. The amusements and recreations of the world... have a constantly diminishing hold on his own affections and gradually seem smaller and more trifling in his eyes. Spiritual companions, spiritual occupations, spiritual conversation are of ever-increasing value to him. Would anyone know if he is growing in grace? Then let him look within for increasing spirituality of taste.” (J.C. Ryle)



Our Teaching in 2024

We began the year with a challenge, studying one of the more difficult books in the New Testament. It's difficult because it's long, complex, and references so many Old Testament situations, concepts, and themes, that often we had to remind ourselves of the original detail, before we could see how Jesus is like these things, only greater.

In ***Hebrews: Who is Jesus?***, over five months, we were able to see how Jesus is the ultimate creator, judge, rescuer, sabbath rest, priest, king, temple, mediator, sacrifice, shepherd, and authority until it became clear that He really is the fulfillment of everything the people of God had been hoping for. We even spent four weeks on Melchizedek, an obscure but significant figure. If you had told me when I was at seminary that we would talk about an apparently minor character like that for so long, and people would enjoy it, I would have said you were crazy.

Next, over the Summer, in ***Life On Earth As It Is In Heaven*** we studied a much more familiar part of the bible. But just because something is familiar, does not mean we know it all. In fact, often the more familiar a passage is, the more we tend to overlook some things about it.

From the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5, we found that when a person recognizes they are spiritually bankrupt and thus needs to be rescued by God, they cry out for help, begin to be changed, and then as they live a new life, this brings both personal freedom but conflict with others too.

Becoming a believer, or maturing in the faith in any notable way, is always liberating personally, and it tends to draw us closer into community with others in the faith, but it can also bring us into conflict with those who feel left behind. So, a major aim of our Summer series was to explore how to grow in the faith without making people think we're becoming a stereotypical snooty Christian! Whether we were successful in that enterprise or not, we'll be returning to this series for part two (Matthew 6) in the Summer of 2025.

Continuing with the themes of conflict and disputes, in the Fall, in ***1st Timothy: Constancy Amid the Chaos*** we saw that Timothy's world was chaotic and often overwhelmed with competing visions just like ours. There were disputes over doctrine, gender, politics, and money. In the middle of our study, our nation went through a divisive election campaign that seemed to cover all of those themes as well. So it was good to remind ourselves, (whether we were delighted, dismayed, or disinterested in the results) that our only consistent hope is Jesus Christ alone.

1st Timothy also enabled us to tackle one of the more complex and controversial subjects in the church, which is the role of women in teaching ministry. It was good to spend multiple weeks on this subject in the pulpit, but what

I'm starting to value at least as much is the ability to dive even more deeply into things like this on the Podcast, in the Adult Forum, and in our small groups.

As you'll see later on in this annual report, increasing engagement in smaller groups (and the launch of several new ones) is another encouraging sign, very much like the vision J.C. Ryle set in his quote above.

Finally, we completed 2024 with our Advent series ***O Worship the King*** in which we inveigled against the default religious idea that we must win favor with God first, in order to experience blessing from Him second.

Every major character in the Advent story finds the opposite; that God approaches them with unmerited, uninitiated grace, and then, when they receive it, they respond in worship. On Christmas Eve, we illustrated it as simply as possible by two "angels" bursting out of a giant present and giving gifts to two children who clearly were not expecting it.

I really enjoyed this year of teaching from the pulpit, on the Podcast, and in some of our small groups. But more importantly I learned a lot. I'm especially grateful for the teaching of my colleague Ben. He loves the word even more than he loves banter and 70's-90's rock music (see the Podcast). There's biblical precedent for the value in ministers going out in pairs. I love the whole team!

Renovations and Repairs

I joined this church in 2014 and it feels like we've been under construction ever since. 2024 was probably the quietest year so far in this regard. Even so, we still made extensive repairs to the office bathroom, and to the broken pipes running down from it, through the Parlor and into the basement. We fixed a lot of rotting wood above the portico, re-pointed brick-work at the rectory, repaired the Meeting House roof, saved two lawns from three droughts, and with a generous donation, started a significant upgrade to the Columbarium, making it beautiful, more maintainable, and accessible to all.

Bringing our building and grounds up to a safe and usable standard might seem like a lesser spiritual job than all the teaching, pastoral meetings, and worship we do, but the better things get, the more we are able to use this place to reach our community and grow together in love. It's right to point out how hard Bridget works on this and how well she casts and implements the vision of what we're trying to achieve for the Kingdom of God.

As you will see in the section on the Building Development project, we still have two significant jobs left to do (the Sanctuary and Parish Hall) but we are likely to begin at least one of those rooms very soon.

Vision for 2025

Our church has never boomed, but it has slowly and steadily grown, against the backdrop of a long and slow decline in Christian worship in Pennsylvania over many years. Meeting with other pastors of growing churches across the city, from urban, to suburban settings, with different denominations, age profiles, style, and size, it has become increasingly obvious that to grow one must preach the gospel and provide opportunities for members to meet, serve, and support one another well.

The larger a church becomes, the more deliberate everything has to be, especially in welcoming new members, planning small groups, and providing pastoral care. Even good churches stop growing because they reach a size they can no longer sustain.

Two common inflection points come when total weekend attendance reaches about 200 or when a sanctuary becomes about 70% full. Therefore, if the Lord continues to bring new people here, we are likely to reach a ceiling in just a few years one way or the other.



We will need to think about the size of our sanctuary (yes the planned renovations are a necessary step before adding something even bigger in the future). We also need to review the size of our pastoral staff team. We've launched three ministers in recent years who have gone on to lead their own churches and the Vestry would love for us to do that again. I've been serving the Diocese by helping interview and select new ministers but next adding to our pastoral staff team, even with a temporary curate (or trainee) would be a major goal.



Personal Note

It's been a great year for us as a family. Ben started learning to drive. Hannah moved up to the High School and got her first job babysitting for a church family. Both are getting a huge amount out of the youth group, and Kat and I are loving the weekly "after party" at our house (most of the time). We've also settled into having Kat's mum, sister and nephew right here in Pittsburgh where, in my view, they belong.

Being an American citizen, I celebrated 4th July properly for the first time and members of the church were kind enough to furnish me with some authentic American clothes. I also filed a

visa application for my parents to move here permanently. Those who journeyed with me through my own visa application twelve years ago (Courtney and Jane) will tell you that these things are rarely straightforward but my major hope for 2025 is that two of our longest-distance on-line members (Mum and Dad) would be able to move here permanently and worship with us in person.

At the very end of last year, I also discovered that my closest living relative in the USA lives in Fox Chapel! And since then, I've been getting to know my Aunt Molly (technically third cousin once removed Molly) who is a solid believer, a truly wonderful lady, and often worships with us here too.

When I moved here 11 years ago, I had no idea what a rich blessing it would be, and how it would become such a great family and spiritual home for us. Christ Church is in a healthy place. We love the Lord. I have amazing colleagues, a godly vestry, a proper spiritual home for my children, and I love my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Yours in Christ,
Rev'd. Alex



CCFC Podcast: Celebrating 5 Years!



In 2020, we started the Podcast as a substitute for small groups during the pandemic.

We initially assumed that it would be a temporary solution at best, but in it's fifth season we celebrated our 47,000th download. Whilst this hardly competes with the top Podcasts of our age, it does mean that we sometimes reach more people on-line in a week than we do in the room on a Sunday.

Speaking about this phenomenon, Jordan Peterson (who also has a Podcast!) suggests that there is value in dialogical thinking, or listening to people form their ideas out loud in a conversation.

I think the sermon, as a well-prepared exposition of the word, and exhortation to do something practical, should still be our focus (the bible says a lot more about preaching than it does about podcasting), but it has given us the chance to model bible study, and sometimes cover subjects that we simply don't have time for in a worship service.

In recent months we've spent several extended episodes speaking about money, gender, church governance, the end times, politics, and even Formula One. The latter being something that at least three of our members would argue is sadly lacking in what we do on a Sunday.



Alex & Ben welcome Rev. Ben Wulpi for a guest appearance

Building Development

In 2022 we shared a vision to repair and renovate the Sanctuary and the Parish Hall. Both have poor décor, rotting windows, water damage, outdated electrics, and problems with the lighting, heating, and sound.

Our plan will also improve the functionality and accessibility of both spaces. In the Hall this will mean creating a dedicated Children's Ministry space behind the current stage; in the Sanctuary, removing the steps before the communion rail and preparing the whole room to enable us to add a larger worship space south of the existing building in the future. At 2022's prices, and with a small contingency, the total cost of both rooms is \$1.2 million.

The Vestry discerned that we were being called to run a deliberately brief and low-key campaign and we always felt that a non-anxious, and non-pushy approach might do something positive for our faith. We initially raised pledges totaling \$525,000, which was enough to complete one room but several of us still had faith for the whole amount so, in May 2024, the vestry asked me to write a long letter to the existing donors and it's worth quoting the conclusion because what God is doing is so amazing. I wrote:

What next? The short answer is that I don't know. But I cannot shake the feeling that there's more to come.

Suppose we manage to complete one room with a little value-engineering or patience on a few aspects of the plan, and everyone sees how great it is. Or suppose it becomes known that the school is keen to do more in the hall and contribute a sizable sum. Suppose we get a grant around that time or a small year-end surplus and then suppose one person makes a matching challenge gift to us as well, or we are named in someone's estate. I could easily imagine any of these being valid reasons to go before the body to ask for what might only be a comparatively small sum to complete it all.

I know it sounds naive when we only received pledges of half what we needed, but God is consistently faithful to us as a body. I could not be happier with this church or more enthused about what God is doing here.

So if you are looking at us only raising about half what we needed and feeling disappointed, don't be. It is forcing us to maximize every kingdom dollar, rely on God, and invite those who missed out into what He is doing here.

When organizations push too hard for money, they can become grasping and anxious, and that spirit can ruin the very thing that drew people in the first place. Our situation is making us more prayerful now, and it will make us more thankful in the end when God does something amazing.

An Amazing Blessing from God

Since then, several new people have indeed joined in the campaign, our investments have performed well, we received a legacy gift of \$125,000, and we have added some operating surpluses to the building fund. As I write, we are in discussions with the school next door, and we anticipate another legacy gift in 2025. Someone is even selling a vintage, first edition *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comic book, and is giving the proceeds to this campaign, showing how inventive people can be when the Spirit is moving. All of this means that we might receive nearly double the amount we first were able to raise and that we are now only about 20% short of doing it all.

With so many new people joining the church since the campaign, and with some people unable to participate at the time, we are asking those who missed out on the three-year campaign, to consider joining in symbolically for just one year so that our entire building can be ready for the next season of ministry here.



Our Vestry



Matt Beresik, Zack Gray, Alyssa Campbell, Richard Cagley, Jane Flaherty, Anne Malone & Catherine Parham

2022-2025 Term	2023-2026 Term	2024-2027 Term
Zachary Gray <i>Treasurer</i>	Richard Cagley	Matt Beresik <i>Junior Warden</i>
Anne Malone <i>Secretary</i>	Alyssa Campbell	Catherine Parham <i>Senior Warden</i>
	Jane Flaherty	

Vestry Nominating Committee

Members of the 2025 Nominating Committee, Matt Beresik, Zack Gray, *Chair*, Anita Kim, Catherine Parham, and Nicole Shirk, met on January 19, 2024.

We unanimously voted to nominate Brad Gray to a first term & Anne Malone to stand for a second term, serving from 2025-2028. No other nominees were presented either before or during the meeting.

Respectfully,
Zack Gray

Brad Gray has been a member of Christ Church Fox Chapel since 2017. He was born and raised in Gibsonsia as the third of five boys and graduated Geneva College in 2012 having studied Computer Engineering.



Having accepted Christ as his savior at a young age, he has had to return to the feet of Jesus many times and plans to never forget all that he's done for us. He currently works as an IT Manager for FedEx Corporation. Brad and his wife Lam are enjoying their third year of marriage and have a four month old son, Elisha! Now having a son of his own, Brad has been overwhelmed with what a powerful act of love it is for God to give up his only son for our salvation. In his free time, Brad enjoys his wife, his son, camping, reading, and video games.

Reports from the Wardens

I continue to feel grateful and privileged to be serving both as part of vestry and as warden; thank you, Alex. Let me provide brief follow ups to my report of last year:

1. The Building campaign launched last year has received some legacy gifts to add to all the money already pledged; 2025 should be the year we start to see physical results. I love that we have new members who may not have been around for the campaign, so be on the lookout for updates!
2. Shady Side Academy has shown some interest in contributing to aspects of the maintenance of the property and improving our working relationship. This also may affect the building development plans.
3. Last year we were aware that mission was on the minds of people. This year we personally met with our mission partners to understand their goals and needs more deeply. We plan to increase our missions budget.
4. We have continued to set aside time to pray for each other, for His presence and wisdom as we try to do our best for His kingdom, CCFC and you, our church family.

Our discussions this year have ranged from what to do about the state of our lawns, poison ivy and broken water pipes all the way to liturgical issues/questions. Some of these were raised by our church family, such as the Prayer of Humble Access. We also heard from Bishop Alex that he wanted us to be able to drink from the common cup at communion if we want to.

We all agreed that youth ministry is vital to the life of our church and hired Lam Gray to be a part-time assistant, allowing Ben time to branch out.

One of our goals for 2025 is to continue to look at the issue of crisis preparation and safety.

I am thrilled to see our newly ordained deacons having placements with us and hope we continue to provide this opportunity. I believe it is helpful for them to be part of a working team in a parish church, especially if they dream of being rectors themselves. I also love that it gives Alex a chance to be a teacher and mentor.

Thank you to Matt for his support as we try to be there for Alex and the staff team.



Catherine Parham,
Senior Warden



Matt Beresik
Junior Warden

I'd like to again express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to serve our church family alongside such wonderful people. I look forward another engaging year on the Vestry. Welcome to our newest church members and attendees. Thank you to Alex and Ben for their wisdom and leadership; to Kat and Alex for their years of dedication and service to CCFC; and to all those who serve on the church staff and leadership team.

We to look forward to continued growth and activity in our home groups, service teams, and various ministries. To all our gents, in whatever life stage you may be—cowboy, warrior, king or sage—I want to challenge you dig into the blessed opportunities God has created for you, to strengthen, support and sharpen one another in community. The new year is a perfect time to plug in with our monthly Saturday Men's Group and/or weekly Sunday morning WordGo Bible Study. It is my continued prayer for us to come together, step up, and invest in our relationships at home and at church. I encourage us all to engage more deeply and meaningfully in our connections with one another. Please uphold in prayer all of our church leaders, ministers, operations staff, vestry members, and their families in 2025.

Report from the Associate Minister

Jenna and I have now been at Christ Church for five years. While I like to think that we are still in the early part of our ministry here, we have already seen God create deep bonds of friendship and trust. It feels good to be rooted in a healthy community.



The Rev. Ben Hughes

Our church has grown significantly this year. We are doing quite well by the standard “ABC” metrics – Attendance, Buildings, and Cash. Attendance is up ten percent over last year, the dream of renovating our building is starting to become a reality, and we finished the year with significant budget surplus. The numbers suggest what many of us have intuitively known to be true: CCFC is a healthy, growing church.

In this report I would like to attend to some less-obvious trends. I believe that God is at work among us and that He is growing our community in ways beyond what you can capture in a spreadsheet.

Here a few trends I noticed in 2024:

More Prayer

We still have a long way to go, but I have noticed that our staff team and our congregation are learning to rely more on God and less on ourselves. This spring we started a prayer ministry to provide group prayer for anyone who seeks it after each service. Special thanks to Tami Fire, Becky Lowe, Catherine Parham, Cory Passavant, and all others who worked to make this happen. Similarly, Alex and I started intentionally meeting to pray together every week. We brew a cup of coffee or tea, sit on the sanctuary steps, and spend a few minutes praying for our congregation. The practice has enriched our friendship and our ministry partnership. I think God is using it to remind us that we can do nothing apart from him.

More Laughter

I don’t have hard data to corroborate this claim, but I have noticed a lot more goodhearted joking and ease, both around the church office, and among our congregation. Anyone who has listened to the CCFC podcast knows what I mean. We take the gospel seriously, but we laugh at ourselves.

I have noticed that people in our community seem to be at ease with one another. Humor naturally makes its way into our worship and into our everyday conversations. We are having fun. When the Christian philosopher Dallas Willard was asked to describe Jesus of Nazareth in word, he chose “relaxed.” Willard is not my man on every point, but I think he got it right with this. Jesus isn’t anxious, so when we follow him and trust him, we begin to settle into His exuberant joy. Humor inevitably follows the experience of grace.

More Biblical Exposition

Our congregation also seems to have grown in their hunger for God’s Word. Alex and I have learned to worry less about fancy sermon introductions or cute illustrations, and more about making the Biblical Gospel clear. We practice *expository preaching*: unpacking a Biblical passage together and exploring how it points us to Christ.

I have enjoyed being a part of our congregation’s rhythm of study, prayer, and preaching. God is using it to renovate my heart and increase my joy. Our spring series on the book of Hebrews helped me to understand Christ’s finished work of atonement in a deeper way, and our summer series on the Sermon on the Mount (part 1 of 2) helped give me a renewed zeal for prayer. Our fall series on 1 Timothy was challenging. We took a hard look at some controversial texts and tried our best to understand them. I learned that God’s Word is reliable even when Christians disagree on minor points. Throughout the series I was impressed by the humble curiosity that our people exhibited. It gives me a sense that the Gospel really is increasing among us.

More Bible Studies

In a similar vein, we have more weekly Bible studies than ever before. We now have lay-led Bible studies for men and women every Sunday morning between the services, home groups, multiple mid-week men's and women's Bible studies, and a monthly forum discussion on Sunday mornings. While some of these studies are casual, others are quite intense – even involving homework! Members of CCFC have shown that they are not afraid to dig in and learn.

More Money and Time Spent on Mission

I've also noticed a growing emphasis on mission in our church. This year the vestry voted to increase our giving to mission partners, and many of our members serve in ministries throughout the city. Our people serve through Kairos prison ministry, Urban Impact, Shepherd's Heart, Lower Valley Community Food Bank, Church Army, and other outreach organizations.

In June our youth group went on a mission trip to Chimney Rock, North Carolina. We spent the week serving with the Salvation Army, a local food bank, and a local trail-building coop. It was not an easy trip, but our students grew as God pulled us out of ourselves and drawn into His redeeming work. We learned that mission has a galvanizing effect. God uses it to change us and hone us for His good purposes.

This coming summer we are planning to take our students on a homegrown mission trip in and around Pittsburgh—you can read more about that in the Missions & Service section of this report.

More Coffee

We've had to buy a lot more coffee lately. While I'm not entirely sure that increased caffeine intake is a good thing, at least it shows that we've been getting together more. I see church members lingering in the parlor after services to chat, and visitors being welcomed. This is the environment where trusting relationships are built week after week.

A member of our congregation recently gave me an espresso machine, and my office has been transformed in a community latte bar. Students frequently stop in to drink a caramel latte and talk about whatever is on their mind. These conversations are one of my favorite parts of pastoral ministry. If you have read this far in my annual report, I cordially invite you to stop by and have a cup. My door is open.

Home Life: Fewer Diapers, More Date Nights

Jenna and I continue to settle into our new house in Cheswick. We have painted a few walls, tried to plant a garden, and built lots of Legos with our kids. Samuel, age six, is now in first grade. He has a beautifully creative mind and he constantly fills our home with imaginative artwork. Asa, age three, is our resident scholar. Even though he is too young to read, he spends hours looking at books and recounting stories. Junia, age two, loves to tell jokes and join in whatever her brothers are doing. We baptized her last summer, and now she loves to dip slobbery, half eaten communion bread into the chalice of wine. I encourage all members to go up for communion *before* she does. I am deeply grateful for the love and partnership of my wife Jenna. She is my in-house Bible scholar, sermon editor, youth group game creator, parenting expert, and best friend.

Thank you all for your friendship and partnership over the last year. I look forward to seeing what God has for us in 2025.

Love in Christ,
Pastor Ben



Ben & Jenna with their children,
Junia, Asa & Samuel

Ministries & Mission



Josh, Tami & Grace

2024 Attendance

Overall: 650

Weekly Average: 12

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

2024 has been a wonderful year of growth and challenging students on who the person of Jesus is and who they are in Jesus. We are working through the whole Bible in order. We started in Genesis and are working through all the Old Testament and into the New Testament. This has been a great opportunity for all of the students hear about all of the different books and stories in the Bible and see how the whole Bible points to the person of Jesus! One of my favorite activities we do with the children are called "sword drills". We give a child a fake sword and then I will have one as well. I will "battle" the child with lies and they will respond and "defend" themselves with truth from God's word.



It is a continued blessing having both Tami and grace on this team. Tami has such a heart for music worship and giving the children coloring pages that fit with the scripture they are going over. Grace serves these children in a wonderful and loving manner. She can connect with them in different ways than Tami and I can.

Thank you and God bless,
Josh Gerdes, Tami Fire & Grace Lowe
Children's Ministry Staff

Missions & Service



Christ calls us to serve the poor, hungry, homeless, and imprisoned with our time and money. In addition to all the time that our members spent working with our mission partners, it was also a privilege to help fund the following organizations in 2024:

- Church Army (Uncommon Grounds Café)
- Kairos Prison Ministry
- Shepherd's Heart
- Trinity School for Ministry
- Urban Impact Foundation

Involving Youth in Mission

In June our youth group went on a mission trip to Chimney Rock, North Carolina. We spent the week serving with the Salvation Army, a local food bank, and a local trail-building coop. It was not an easy trip, but our students grew as God pulled us out of ourselves and into His redeeming work. We learned that mission has a galvanizing effect. God uses it to change us and hone us for His good purposes.

This coming summer we are planning to take our students on a homegrown mission trip in and around Pittsburgh. We will stay at Camp Guyasuta and serve with CCFC's mis-



sion partners. While we enjoyed traveling to new cities over the past few years, this year I want students to see what God is doing in our hometown.

Affluent suburban churches like ours run the risk of growing complacent. We need to guard against self-centered growth—against ingrowth. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury in the early 1900's, wrote that "the church exists primarily for the sake of those who are still outside it." We need to remember that Jesus cares more about one soul than he does about a thousand buildings. He on the move to seek and save the lost. I hope we will continue to walk with him.

Dedication to Missions

With the exception of the pandemic year, I am pleased to say that the mission and outreach budget has increased every year for the last 11 years. This year we were able to give more to all of our partners and especially increase what we give to Kairos for the additional weekends they are leading in prison, and for the increased study materials they need.

The Vestry hopes to keep increasing the budget every year until, ideally, we tithe to external mission out of everything we bring in as a church.



Service Opportunities

We partner with several organizations and we encourage YOU to get involved in their programs—your gift of time is equally as important as financial support! Occasionally, other opportunities are also encouraged, such as *Amen to Action*. This community-wide event aims to pack 1 million meals at multiple locations throughout the month of November. Our CCFC "team" was part of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary event—we hope more can join in 2025!

Rev'd Alex

Kairos Prison Ministry

Christ Church Fox Chapel bountifully supported Kairos Prison Ministry in 2024. We gave financial aid to support the presentation of five four-day Weekends in three Western Pennsylvania state prisons—two men's prisons (SCI Greene and SCI Fayette) and one women's prison (SCI Cambridge Springs). CCFC also contributed Study Bibles in a choice of translations for all graduates of the two men's Kairos program weekends.

CCFC members Jim Edwards, Susan Tusick and Stu & Gail Simpson also volunteered to share the transforming love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ with participating residents on the Weekends. The men even continued to return to the prisons throughout the year, providing encouragement and reinforcement of the Weekend message. Many more CCFC members participated in the Weekend Prayer Vigils and some also attended Weekend Closings. Residents on the Weekends were especially touched by the joyful artwork by our youngest church members.

Every year the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections at each SCI gives a special award to the Volunteer of the Year in recognition of selflessness and dedication. ***This year at SCI Greene, the Kairos Ministry program—instead of an individual—received that award!*** It was given in part for the role of Kairos in bringing volunteer service back to the prison system after the COVID shutdown.

Stu Simpson
Ministry Leader



Stu



Gail



2024 Camp Stats

Students: 155

Meals Served: 7,600

Baptisms: 9

Overall Youth's Served by
UIF Programs: 2,282

Urban Impact: Summer Camp Program

This year's program included two weeks of training for interns and seven weeks of Camp with students. This year Camp was held at Allegheny Center Alliance Church (ACAC). Returning to ACAC was a blessing. Being back in the center of the North Side put us within walking distance of various places that we were unable to take students to the past few years. Because of this, we were able to take each class to the pool twice a week, as well as take students to the Children's Museum, a Pirates game, and other local places on the flats of the North Side. Each morning was filled with math, literacy, and Bible classes. This summer, over 86% of students maintained or improved their skills in math and 95% of students maintained or improved in reading fluency. Spiritually, 16 students made a first-time commitment to Christ and 43 made re-commitments!



Thank you so much to everyone who prayed for the program, donated resources, provided a meal, or served as a volunteer. It's because of you that this program can happen.

Josh Gerdes
Urban Missionary



Robert Fire
Music Minister

Music Ministry

Christ Church Fox Chapel is a singing church—thank you! It is a joy to gather each week and hear the room filled with enthusiastic, passionate singing. I believe our musical worship continues to change because we are growing, not just in numbers, but in maturity as we walk together with Jesus. We are responding as one does when confronted with who God is and what He has done for us, and He is moving and working in us as we worship. God inhabits, intervenes, empowers, fights, and speaks in our worship. That's one of the reasons it is so important to gather regularly. Tim Keller said, "The secret to freedom from enslaving patterns of sin is worship. You need worship. You need great worship. You need weeping worship. You need glorious worship. You need to sense God's greatness and to be moved by it—moved to tears and moved to laughter—moved by who God is and what he has done for you". God is on the move at CCFC!

I would like to thank Chuck Gerdes for faithfully and joyfully serving most weeks at both services. He is an excellent musician, a friend, and a brother. Thank you to Amy Beresik and Nicole Bright for planning, preparing, playing, and leading on several weeks so that the Fire Family could enjoy some time away. Thank you again to Kirsten Gerdes for another wonderful year of beautiful singing and leadership. We are blessed to have such an excellent, professional singer who also loves Jesus!

Please join me in praying that in the year ahead God would have more & more of us as individuals and as a congregation. Please pray that as we gather to worship, He would continue to change us to be more like Him and less like us. He wants to give us more of himself. We certainly need more of him. Simon Ponsonby says, "Holy Spirit does not want to be a marble statue at the entrance of our souls—he wants to fill every room, he wants to articulate himself, and he wants to distribute all his gifts to and through us. When I pray, 'Come, Holy Spirit', or ask for more, I am not thinking of external visitation, but an internal total occupation and expression of the Spirit". May it be so!

Pastoral Care Ministry

And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” *Matthew 25: 40*

“It is a privilege and a joy to serve as Pastoral Care Minister at Christ Church, and I continue to work with gratitude to Alex and the Vestry for giving me the opportunity to officially represent our congregation in a part-time role. I give thanks to God, who equips me for this work daily.

Over the past months, I have visited current and former members of our congregation who live at residential care centers in Verona, Oakmont, and Cabot. I have also visited parishioners in their homes. During our visits, we read the Bible, sing, talk, and pray together. We also share in ministering to each other simply by being together. This time spent together is a quiet but powerful reminder that God is present with us; that we don’t need to always be doing, doing, doing; that there is holy silence and space to simply be His beloved.

Our visits may be informal or may include prayer services from our Book of Common Prayer. On several occasions, I have waited and prayed with those who are seriously ill and nearing death, and it is a solemn, grace-filled privilege to be present with those who are dying and with their loved ones.

At Longwood Care Center, God has allowed me to develop more relationships with residents and caregivers in three neighborhoods, including the Memory Care area. Singing and talking with these dear people every week is a blessing. Please know that I do not “sentimentalize” ministry to those in need. I do recognize the power, grace, and love of God that is shared when we simply show up.

In addition to making visits and phone calls, I send cards and letters to members of our congregation, and these notes often include colorful Scripture pages that the youngsters in Children’s Ministry have created. We share these encouraging, Scriptural messages from our Children’s Ministry with those in prison as well. We thank Gail and Stu Simpson for the opportunity to extend pastoral care to those in Kairos Ministry and to involve the children in living out Hebrews 13:3. This year, I attended another Kairos Weekend Sunday night celebration service and look forward to doing so again.

Corrie Passavant, Becky Lowe, Catherine Parham, and I were blessed by all those who participated in the four-week training to become Lay Prayer Ministers. These Prayer Ministers make themselves available at the front of the church after our Sunday worship services, and they pray with anyone who desires prayer. Corrie, Becky, and Catherine have such love for Jesus and for His church, and their vision and leadership in this area has blessed so many.

My seminary studies continue as I progress on the path of discerning God’s will regarding possible ordination to the office of deacon. Many of you know that our beloved Archdeacon, the Rev. Betsy Rodewald, died in April 2024. She was such an encouragement and teacher to me, and I know that her prayers made a big difference in my life. Recently, her daughter gifted me with Betsy’s stoles, symbols of her ministry in the Name of Jesus. I was so blessed and encouraged by that gift, especially after a particularly difficult seminary course had left me feeling a bit discouraged.

Thank you so much to every person who is praying for me through these days that are full of work and worship. Many thanks also for your prayers for our family.

If you would like me to visit, or if you know someone who would like me to visit, you are heartily encouraged to contact me at tami@christchurchfoxchapel.org.

I love you, church. May God bless all yinz richly with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus! (Ephesians 1:3!)



Tami Fire
Pastoral Care Minister



Youth Ministry

This year we started a new tradition in CCYM. Whenever a newcomer attends, I welcome them by drinking a shot of hot sauce in their honor. The silly little ritual helps kids to feel welcomed and seen without putting them on the spot. I assumed from the outset that I can handle the occasional shot of Frank's Red Hot, but I wasn't prepared for the day that we had seven newcomers at once. CCYM is growing. I hope that my gut biome can adapt.

Last spring Jenna and I noted that we had a substantial group of incoming sixth graders. Since our youth group is quite close-knit, we knew that it would not be easy to integrate the new students. We wondered how the older kids would respond to the arrival of younger members. Would they welcome them, or complain? Would they show hospitality, or hide behind a facade of cool detachment?

Looking back, I am very proud of our group. Older students welcomed the newcomers with genuine kindness. Newcomers showed courage and maturity by jumping right into the mix. Adult leaders have been intentional to build relationships and bridge social gaps. As a result, our group now has an average of nineteen students and five adults every Sunday night. The meetings are lively, to say the least.

As I reflect on the past year it occurs to me that two initiatives have especially helped us to grow: SWAG and Cohorts.

SWAG

SWAG is the official name for our middle school Bible study. The name is an acronym for Saved-With-Amazing-Grace. I asked Jenna to take over the program two years ago, and she has worked to provide a space where middle schoolers can engage spiritually and intellectually with the big questions of life. She writes:

In SWAG we have had wonderful year of studying the Bible, wrestling with spiritual questions, and playing the occasional card game. Our middle school Sunday School program meets every other week during the 11 am service. We have 8 regular attenders with many others popping in when they can.

In 2024, we dove into some interesting topics about our faith, with discussions based off the book *10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) about Christianity*, by Rebecca McLaughlin. Throughout the summer, we studied the parables of Jesus, learning the different themes and structures that help us with interpretation. We started off the fall with a study on the book of Ruth, and then moved into some seasonal teaching on Advent and Christmas. We are now diving into questions about the Bible that the students themselves have submitted.

The questions, thoughtful discussion, and genuine engagement these students have shown in our time together are both remarkable and refreshing. We do not shy away from hard topics, but we also have moments of fun and fellowship with each other. Our favorite way to wrap up each teaching series is to play some games and eat cookies. These kids are a delight, and I am blessed to spend time studying Scripture with them.

Cohorts

Additionally, we placed a renewed emphasis on small group "cohorts." Two years ago, Mike Starz and I invited a group of five high school boys to engage in a year-long discipleship process. Our aim was to call these young men up into a community of friendship and accountability where they could learn what it means to follow Christ. The experiment, which we called the "Mere Discipleship Cohort," has done a lot to shape the youth ministry program.



We have learned that you don't have to be cool or entertaining to be a youth minister. Students are amused by coolness and entertainment, but they don't crave it. They crave *belonging*. The cohort worked because it provided a space with intimacy and structure where students can belong.

So, this past fall we expanded on the initial idea. We put all students in cohorts and dedicated a whole week out of every month to them. In a typical cohort meeting, students gather with a few peers and adult leaders to share a meal, play, and open the Scriptures. Big crowds can be fun, but we found that students are hungry for the unstructured time and informal conversation that only a small cohort can provide.

This intensive model of ministry would not be possible without dedicated thoughtful volunteer leaders. I'm grateful to serve with a team of competent people who love Christ and genuinely care about our students. As a bonus, two of our leaders are medical professionals with extensive skills in orthopedics and wound care. It comes in handy on occasion.

Also of note, this summer we took a trip down to the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina where we spent a week serving with local outreach groups. Most of our students would agree that the trip was not without its complications and hiccups, but we banded together as a group and learned a lot. It was a true community bonding experience.

Teaching

All of the games, pizza, special events and trips that we do are ultimately aimed to make the Gospel clear and help students encounter Jesus. Our weekly meetings culminate in a chapel service where we sing, learn, & pray.

We have found over the years that teenagers respond better to interactive forms of learning than they do to lectures and sermons. We usually teach using a Socratic method where interruptions, rabbit trails, clarifying questions, and other contributions are welcomed. Although this can sometimes feel chaotic, it helps students engage Biblical truth on a deep level. This year we also used theater, visual art, music, and games to help students experience the Scriptures in new ways. Our hope is that by the time they graduate our students will know and love the Biblical Gospel.

Throughout the spring we taught a series of lessons to help students understand the Gospel, live by the Gospel, and proclaim the Gospel. We have noticed over the years that many Christians (including pastors) lack a basic comprehension of what the Gospel is and what it means for them. We want to equip students to know how to express the gospel in various contexts, from a sentence to an elevator pitch, and even an in-depth conversation. We talked about the four "movements" of the biblical story: creation, rebellion, redemption, and new creation, and we sought to help students articulate the Gospel in their own words. The series showed me that the work of Christ is deeper and further reaching than I knew.

Over the summer we studied the Psalms and noted how God's Word encourages us to engage our emotional life through *prayer*. The Psalms offer an antidote to a culture that treats emotions as the ultimate arbiters of reality. We want our students to cultivate what Pete Scazzero calls an "emotionally healthy spirituality." He claims that "it is impossible to be spiritually mature and emotionally immature at the same time."





Throughout the fall we worked our way through Paul’s letter to the Philip-
pians. The title of the series was “Unshakable Joy.” Paul wrote Philippians
from a Roman prison cell, but you wouldn’t know it from his tone. The
letter is dripping with joy. We believe that the gospel has the power to
transform our hearts in such a way that even difficult times are illuminated
by God’s joy.

In everything we do, we want students to engage Christ not only with
their intellect, but also with their energies, their relationships, their hearts
and souls. We pray that they would know the transforming power of
Christ.

CCYM has a lot of momentum as we begin 2025. God has blessed this
vministry, and we hope to steward it well in the coming year.

Special Thanks to Caleb Campbell, Catherine Parham, Mike Starz, Lou
Antosz, Erik & Airen Germesin, and Jess Mullen for their efforts to point
students to Jesus.



In Christ,
Pastor Ben
Youth Minister

Jenna Hughes
Asst. Youth Minister

Lam Gray
Asst. Youth Minister



Catherine

Lou



2025 Highlights

Parents’ Night | Feb. 2, 5-7pm | CCFC

Students & parents are invited. We will play a short group game, eat together, and talk about CCYM’s vision, mission, and values.

Winter Weekend | Feb. 28 -Mar. 2 | Seneca Hills Camp

A weekend of fellowship over warm fires, good food, comfy lodging, and lots of fun activities including paint ball and indoor rock climbing.

Diocesan Youth Gathering | May 18 | Location TBA

Students from across the city all together in one place, playing great games, eating good food, worshipping and learning together.

Summer Serve | June 9-14 | Camp Guyasuta

Our group will stay at Camp Guyasuta and serve with CCFC’s mission partners. We have lots of amazing evening activities and outings planned.

Small Groups & Studies

Adult Forum

The Adult Forum is a popular meeting that Ben and I really enjoy. It's usually a group discussion where we dig more deeply into the scriptures of the day, but, for me the highlights were the special meetings in 2024 where we explored some of the more complex or controversial topics.

For example, in the Fall, Ben gave a great presentation about the role of women in church and was able to explore a broad spectrum of views from four distinct Christian perspectives.

Christians can legitimately disagree on secondary points of doctrine like this, they can even agree on ideas but disagree why. Part of our hope in the Adult Forum is to unify around the central hopes of the Gospel, but also learn why others might not agree with us on everything.

It can be tempting to shy away from the more controversial subjects for fear of dividing the church. But we have found that people are keen to engage with the biblical arguments honestly and in fact those days seem to draw larger numbers than most. If that was because you were hoping for a fight, you would have been disappointed in 2024, but don't worry, there will be many more opportunities in 2025.

Rev'd Alex



Blawnox Senior Bible Study

What a gift to me this ministry is! We meet about every two weeks and have a group of about ten, some of whom are very regular. Over this year, we have been joined by three new members, while some members have been much less regular for a variety of reasons, mostly ill health, the continuing episodes of interpersonal conflicts and the frustrations of living with a plague of mice. We try to stay in touch by phone with everyone.

While their community room was unavailable, members of the group took turns hosting us in their apartments, which was wonderful.

We are now back in the community room and have made it to the last few chapters of Revelation. I was initially anxious about their choice, feeling rather unqualified to lead any discussion about a book I had never studied. I shall be forever grateful to them for picking it; digging into it has been a blessing.

We again spent an afternoon singing carols on each floor; thank you to Nicole Bright for leading us with her guitar. Thank you also to Mary Reina for her suggestions and enthusiasm.

I am, as always, very thankful for my fellow leader, Gail Simpson; for her faith and wonderful insights as we adventure on.

Many thanks also to Alex and Ben for their support in all kinds of ways.

Catherine Parham
Ministry Leader





Home Groups

Christ Church's home group ministry is now well into its third year, and it continues to have a formative influence on our church community. In light of the frantic busyness and isolation that often characterizes modern American life, the practice of gathering in one another's homes is counter-cultural. This ministry of hospitality has provided a stable foundation of friendship and affection that has helped our community to grow.

Mike Starz, one of our home group leaders, writes,

Being in a home group means that 'church' is now where we go to see our friends. The simple act of gathering monthly with food, fellowship, worship, prayer and devotions has drawn us closer to the Body of Christ than we have ever experienced in our 13 previous Anglican/Episcopal congregations. We each yearn for conversations deeper than we experience over coffee in the parlor, but once we have them, all of the other ministry experiences deepen (even coffee in the parlor!) Give one a try ... and if it's not the right fit, try another or coordinate to explore starting a new one.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that this ministry faces right now is a need for more home group leaders. Please pray that the Lord of the Harvest would raise up people who are willing and equipped to serve in this ministry.

Special thanks to all who have helped to make home fellowship a reality in our church. If you are not yet in a Home Group or other small group, I encourage you to join one by signing up on the church app or website or by contacting one of the leaders: Phyliss & Mike Starz (Tuesday nights), Alyssa & Caleb Campbell (Wednesday nights), or Nicole & Adam Bright (Thursday nights.)

Rev. Ben



Men's Ministry

Our monthly men's bible study is now in its fourth year. Men of all ages gather to open the Scriptures, speak honestly about their lives, and pray for one another. The formula is simple but Biblical. This is an "open door" kind of group. Any and all men are welcome.

This year we finished our study of Paul's letter to the Romans. The study sparked some great conversations about God's sovereignty, a Christian's role in government, and how to live the gospel out in community. Our gatherings are informal, full of laughter, and unafraid to go deep.

Additionally, thanks to the initiative of a few of our members, Men's Ministry has expanded to Sunday mornings. Men now meet three times a month between Sunday services for a short study that employs Bible Study Fellowship's WordGo App.

Our first Men's Overnight Retreat is coming up on March 22-23. All men are invited to join us for food, fellowship, hiking (optional), and Gospel conversation. Be on the lookout for a sign-up link in the announcements.

Rev. Ben



Allegheny Valley MomCo

Allegheny Valley MomCo (formerly Fox Chapel Mothers of Preschoolers) is a program designed & led by mothers with children of all ages. It's a place for friendship, authentic community, and support. A MomCo Meetup includes practical teaching through speakers, demonstrations, small groups, and videos.

Light refreshments and childcare are provided, but more importantly, you'll get to have honest and vulnerable conversations with other moms who understand the highs and lows of motherhood!

We meet bi-weekly on Wednesdays in the Parish Hall from 9:30-11:30 am. We also offer a Bible study that meets on the intervening Wednesday mornings, also from 9:30-11:30 am. Childcare is also provided for this group.

We welcome new moms at any time—please stop by at a Meetup, or reach out to us on Facebook. As always, we are grateful to Christ Church for providing us with a home.

2025 Theme: Wild Hope

Do you ever feel like your pilot light has gone out? Like the spark that once fueled your passion, clarity, and energy has been dimmed under the mental load of motherhood? Perhaps it's the need to make 1 million decisions a day (so many decisions!) that causes you to never really feel confident you're doing it right. Maybe you are in a season where you feel you are not showing up well for yourself or others; just going through the motions, trying to get to the end of the week.

That is about to change because we're declaring this the year of new things. A new season needs a new strategy, and we choose wild, contagious hope. Hope is not a passive exercise in wishing; it's an active approach to living life engaged. Hope is generative. Hope provides clarity, vision and vitality. God is doing something new, and we can get our hopes up.



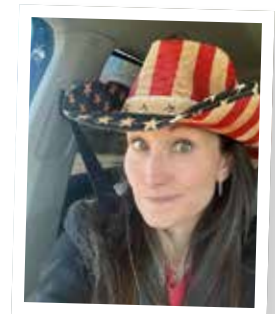
Women's Group

In 2024 the CCFC Women's Group moved from being a group of fabulous women who read books written by human authors **about** God to a group of women who deeply long to study The Book written **by** God (Himself). One of the highlights of my year was when the Tuesday group asked if it was OK to 'just keep studying the bible' rather than anything else.

As with each year past, 2024 brought another rich season of growth, learning, and fellowship. Together, we read and discussed (among others): *A Severe Mercy* (by Sheldon VanAuken), Beth Moore's study on Luke 6, and the books of Colossians, Titus, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians. These studies have deepened our understanding of God's Word and strengthened us in our walk of faith.

Our times together have been filled with joy, prayer, lots of coffee, and deep connection. We've experienced God's presence and power through answered prayers—both in small, everyday matters and in remarkable instances of healing and restoration. Through shared laughter and heartfelt conversations laced with scripture, we've become more aware of the importance of and need for raw and vulnerable sharing with one another as well as the absolute necessity of applying the Word of God to the complicated intricacies of our lives.

This year has been marked by significant life events for many of us so we have struggled and celebrated together. These moments have drawn us closer as we've supported one another in prayers and rejoicing. We have lost and memorialized and we have praised God for healthy births as well as personal milestones for our loved ones.



Kat Shuttleworth



One highlight of the year was our annual Christmas party which is always marked by lighthearted fun and camaraderie. The White Elephant Gift Exchange, as always, brought silly, feisty, and memorable moments.

As a group, we are so grateful for the time we've spent getting to know God and one another better. The CCFC Women's Group continues to be a space of encouragement, growth, and faith, and we look forward to what God has in store for us in the coming year.

Serve



The Service Team

We believe that everyone who know the Lord is equipped by the Holy Spirit to serve in His church, albeit in different ways.

In 1st Corinthians, Paul writes:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

Joining the service team is by no means the only way to serve, but it is perhaps the simplest. We have about 100 people signed up to join one of the five ministries below. Some serving just a few times a year when they're able, and others serving every month, even in multiple different ways.

I am especially grateful to our team leaders who write below:



AV Ministry

We amplify the sound in the sanctuary, broadcast, record, and provide assistance to those with hearing loss, and even sometimes use sound monitors for our musicians. We have an excellent team and team leader Matt Beresik writes:

Thanks to all who have worked on this team over the past year. If you have not yet considered the opportunity to sit behind the sound desk during weekend service, we strongly encourage you to give it a try! With a little bit of training/shadowing, you will find this job perhaps less intimidating than you might think. No previous sound experience is required! As with all of our ministry teams, many hands make light work. We could truly use the help. Please consider joining the rotation and help the Gospel to literally be heard both here at church and by those who tune in on-line each week. Thank you!



Coffee Ministry

If greeters are key to making a good first impression, Coffee Ministers are key to making a lasting one. Clearly people appreciate this ministry because it feels like our members are arriving earlier and staying longer every year. We thank longtime team leader Desa Voelker for her leadership and service, and welcome new co-leaders Valerie Angerman and Lisa Bowden.

The Coffee Ministry is one of the most important ministries in the Church—and it is definitely the most fun one! Preparing the coffee is great way to be of service and also to get to know your fellow parishioners. Chatting over a cup of coffee and watching the children enjoy a snack is such a nice way to spend time after or before one of the worship services.

There is a fabulous group of people who serve on the Coffee Ministry team—about 20 team members in all. Several new volunteers have joined the group this Fall, and more are always welcome. A recent change to the Coffee Ministry is that you can either sign up to do a 3-hour stretch that covers both the 9:30 and 11:00 am Sunday service or you can sign up to do just one of the services—either early or late. This flexibility has allowed more people to easily serve.

Val & Lisa are very grateful for all of the wonderful members of the Coffee Ministry team and, also, for Bridget, who keeps us well-stocked with coffee, tea, snacks and supplies!

Greeters

Greeters hand out materials, let new people know where things are, and set the tone of the day, making sure that the first experience anyone has is a positive one. Leaders Bill Gordon & Joe Nawrocki write:

Greeters are usually the first people folks see when they enter the church so it's important that team members are ready to warmly welcome old friends and make new ones each Sunday—and they are! We currently have about 30 team members but there is always room for more. If you are interested in serving as a greeter or just want more information about what's involved, please feel free to contact either of us.

Readers

Readers have a liturgical role in reading scripture and prayers. Because we believe in the priesthood of all believers, and we have very few clergy here, it's important for our congregation to see a variety of people leading worship. I'm very grateful for Jim Edwards leading this ministry. As he steps down to concentrate more on his work with Kairos and Church Army, Marion Ahlers kindly takes over.

This team has been a shining example of dedication, with so many enthusiastic individuals committed to publicly proclaiming God's Word.

Heartfelt thanks to my sisters and brothers for being the faithful readers who bring to life the love of Christ in our CCFC family. Thank you for your continued faithfulness and support—if you are interested in joining please sign up today!

Servers

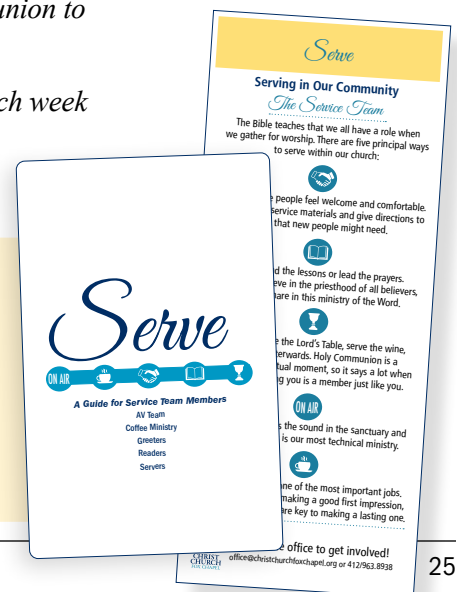
Servers share in a sacramental ministry serving Holy Communion (also known as the Lord's Supper), as well as helping to prepare and clear the table. Often this is the moment where people respond most emotionally to the movement of the Spirit. Jane writes:

Setting up the Lord's Table is a heartfelt endeavor carried out by the Server Team. While the actual preparation is fairly simple, the joy we experience in serving communion to our CCFC Family is truly priceless.

Our team has grown into a committed group of 10 members who take turns each week for the 9:00 and 11:00 services. The process is easy to follow, and there are experienced mentors ready to assist anyone who may need guidance! We invite anyone interested in participating in this uplifting experience to join us.

How to Find Out More & Get Involved

The best place to start is by reading a serving card, which you can find around the lobby. If you'd like to know more about a specific role, please take a guidebook (located on the table under the TV just outside the Sanctuary), or ask one of the pastors or team leaders for more information and then simply give it a try. We are big on experiments here, so if you try something and aren't sure how you feel about it, try something else!



Operations



Bridget Michael
Operations Manager

Our mission is to serve God and our members and to deliver the Gospel. So what does Operations mean? In general, operations supports the ministry staff to create an environment where they can focus on the mission. A lot of planning and brainstorming is done at a team, but at the end of the day, operations is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day tasks of running the business that is a church. Over the past 11 (!!) years our practices have been modernized to ensure efficient and smooth functioning via planning, managing, and optimizing processes across various areas, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing these changes to minimize costs.

These tasks are applied in a number of areas of focus at CCFC. While none of them are glamorous or sometimes even obvious, they are important to the health of the organization and those it serves.

Buildings & Grounds

In general, the area of Operations that has the most visible impact is Buildings & Grounds. We strive to make our facilities comfortable, safe & functional for the many individuals and groups that we welcome here. The challenge here is to balance preventive and corrective maintenance. We are very fortunate to have good relationships with our service providers (i.e. we make sure that brownies are available) who treat us fairly, provide quality work with minimal disruption to our operations, and help us troubleshoot when needed, specifically Doug Morris of DLC Contracting, Brian Zimmerman of

Zimmerman Landscaping, Matt Drake of Drake's Landscaping & Tree Service and Don Lauer of Coffey Contracting.

Interior Projects

The only significant projects this year were to address water damage issues stemming from two bathrooms. As usual in an old building, fixing one problem reveals another and a wall had to be removed in the Parlor to fully address the issue, but the work was done quickly and didn't impact Coffee Hour.

Exterior Projects

The 17-acre campus is always in need of attention. Fortunately we didn't experience any major structural issues this year, just the restoration of a rotting portion of the porch roof. However, numerous grounds projects were addressed, a number of which in cooperation with Shady Side Academy per the requirements of their lease. This included:

- extensive tree pruning & removal
- oak tree preservation
- installing a privacy hedge above the Rectory
- improvement of planting beds in multiple areas
- establishing a chemical lawn treatment program
- establishing a multi-phase improvement plan for several large areas and implementing phase 1 along Christ Church Lane; phase 1 will be completed in the main parking lot in 2025
- installation of deduct meters on all exterior faucets
- improvements to Meeting House and front lawns
 - installation of four additional exterior security cameras
- creation & installation of additional directional signage



- establishing a multi-phase plan to the Columbarium landscaping to improve accessibility & aesthetics and simplify maintenance
- water line replacement after rupture

Work done at the Rectory included rebuilding a rotted entryway, including the installation of a new door and glass sidelights, and extensive re-pointing of the brick. Several other restoration projects to the sun room and walkway/patio were identified and research completed in order to plan for the future expense.

Looking Ahead ...

Minor projects for 2025 include:

- asphalt preservation, both to address some damage caused during Shady Side Academy's summer renovation project and to prolong the life of our new road
- additional exterior signage
- installation of wind sails over the courtyard
- preservation of teak benches

Last, but certainly not least, the renovation of the Parish Hall will be the most important and impactful project of the year. We are already working with engineers, the contractor and other service providers in preparation for a June start on construction. After many years of dreaming and planning, we are excited to be able to move forward to make this a beautiful, functional multi-use space (*that has it's own heat and light switches!*) that will serve a variety of needs.

Other Areas of Focus

Operations is also responsible for managing several other areas (again, not glamorous, but key to a smooth-running operation):

Administration & IT: evaluating & maintaining internal systems & materials to ensure efficiency; budget oversight alongside Finance Manager; maintaining office equipment & computer systems; contract negotiation/vendor relations; and event planning

Communications/Graphics: developing engaging, consistent & clear communication utilizing print & electronic platforms, and keeping them up-to-date

Facilities Management: working with the school and increasing requests from outside organizations using our space, ensuring that the needs of varying groups are met with available resources

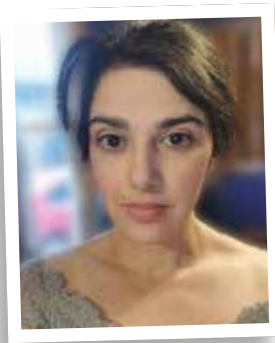
Human Resources: ensuring compliance with labor laws & practices, facilitating child safety protocols for staff & volunteers & maintaining employee records



it took two to prune this tree!



I am blessed to be a part of what God is doing here, and to be part of an incredible team who make it fun to come to work every day—there is never a dull moment! If you haven't visited the second floor, please stop by for a coffee or tea. You might even be treated to a bit of entertainment in one form or another ... (*wink, wink!*)



Niki De Luca

Finance Manager's Report

Monthly budget and investment reports are being provided to the Vestry for review, and physical documentation of expenses are kept readily available to be reviewed at their choosing. We continue to look for both practical and financial efficiency in streamlining processes, utilizing on-line payment methods and electronic delivery of statements to reduce time and cost associated with hard copy. We have continued to process payroll in house rather than outsourcing to reduce overall costs to the church. We work closely with our financial advisor to be sure that we are being good stewards of our reserve funds, and have adjusted practices to meet needs of specific funds.

Thank you to the volunteers who helped with our lay audit of financial records for 2023 to the Diocese. Our accounts were found to be in good standing.

2024 was a year marked by record income for our church due to increased giving as well as some one time non-operational income streams. We finished the year with a surplus even after deducting those one-time expenses, which is a remarkable feat in the current financial climate. We have put these funds in restricted categories for Vestry use to cover large capital projects that cannot be funded through normal operational giving, and to help balance the upcoming budget.

Financial Summary

In 2024 we projected a \$33,000 deficit. On top of that, operating costs increased by about \$13,000. But income was about \$82,000 more than expected, giving a surplus of just under \$35,000 by year-end.

As you will see from the summary of revenues and expenses on the next page, committed giving is fairly predictable for us. Donations, (being traceable gifts, not communicated in advance) are much harder to predict, especially as this includes people who might join the church mid-year. We take a conservative approach to this kind of income, and as you can see, this category largely explains the surplus.

Expenses were a little higher than budget, partly due to the cost of growth. As the church grows we are serving more coffee and snacks, printing more bulletins, and using more consumables in the building. Inflation also hit several of our vendors, and we've seen some of those cost increases passed on to us, for example in building maintenance and repair costs.

Our budget for 2025 is encouraging. More people communicated with us this year than last and many increased their giving. You can see that reflected in the larger committed giving and lower donations numbers on the adjacent page.

As for expenses, we had to make as many savings as possible whilst being realistic about what it actually costs to run the church. This budget accounts for inflation, growth, and cost of living raises to the staff. Because projected giving is so good, we've also been able to increase mission giving again and set aside \$11,000 for a new hire.

In 2024, our investments performed well. They are invested conservatively in mutual funds. We also used some of last year's surplus to fund unexpected repairs to the building via our Capital Reserve Fund and we received nearly \$400,000 in giving to our building campaign, which we expect to use to begin work in the hall this year.

Summary of Revenues & Expenses

	2024	2024 Budget	% of Budget	2025 Budget
Income				
Giving				
Committed Giving	473,517	486,000	97%	650,000
Donations	290,453	207,500	140%	150,000
Crown Castle	47,806	47,800	100%	47,800
Other Income	56,432	45,579	124%	54,607
Total Income	868,208	786,879	110%	902,407
Expense				
Clergy	301,822	296,881	102%	315,611
Music	56,125	55,852	100%	58,019
Office	102,398	102,412	100%	117,813
Education	39,226	41,815	94%	46,025
Building	126,774	114,310	111%	131,100
Grounds	53,256	53,204	100%	53,504
Inside Parish	28,155	28,450	99%	30,749
Outside Parish	110,607	111,958	99%	122,131
Payroll Expense	14,943	15,200	98%	16,140
Total Expense	833,306	820,082	102%	891,092
Net Income	34,902	-33,203		11,315

Capital Reserves Spending	
Major Building Repair	30,983
Major Grounds/Landscaping	11,841
Kitchen- Dishwasher	5,735
Rectory Repairs	10,880
Computers	1,775
	61,214

Building Reserve Spending	
Historic Foundation Membership	35

Assets & Fund Balances

PNC Operating Acct	\$	105,723	\$	105,723
CRF				
Dollar Bank- Operating	\$	226,078	\$	31,507
Columbarium			\$	14,386
MomCo			\$	8,309
New Building Fund			\$	141,448
Youth Savings Fund			\$	1,128
Prepaid Pledges			\$	29,300
 Dollar Bank- Discretionary	 \$	 337		
Dollar Bank- Electronic Giving	\$	63,841		

Cetera		
Account x50	\$	762,074
Account x51	\$	106
Account x52	\$	-
	\$	<u>762,180</u>

Investment Fund Breakdown

Total Unrestricted	\$377,970
Unrestricted- New	\$195,068
Capital Reserve	\$42,288
Vestry Reserve	\$140,615

Total Restricted	\$384,210
Music Interest	\$24,551
Music Fund	\$13,063
Building Reserve	\$334,392
Settlement Reserve	\$12,203



Bacon Sunday Crew



Anniversary!



Baptism



Fall Festival

2024



Youth Mission Trip



Adult Forum

commit



Maudy Thursday Meal



Summertime Children's Ministry



"Time Out" for Ben



Christmas Caroling



Fall Festival

contribute