



THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH IN CLEVELAND
2025 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,

2025 seemed to go by in a blink of an eye, I have now been Senior pastor for 3.5 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 Gurleen Kaur, as she left her home and family in Canada, to marry Darren Rolston and begin her path to US citizenship. I so enjoyed the months of providing premarital counseling for them.

We honored and remembered the lives of those that have gone before us. I officiated the funeral/memorial services of: Marjorie Potts, Billy Augustus, Jean English, Louise Leathers, Kathleen Lambacher, Tony Kordalski, Larry/Lori Lippert, Harry Hatters, and Otto Frederick Heider.

We invested in the lives of couples committing their lives together in Holy Matrimony. I officiated the weddings of: Alexander and Anna Wright, George and Emily Williams, Bridget and Paola Barrios Corrigan, Alexander and Maria Rigot, Timothy and Jordan Connell, and Joseph and Erin Peters. I am already in premarital counseling relationship with our first scheduled wedding for 2026.

We welcomed seven new members into the church: Gurleen Kaur, Bruce Kranicz, Prabjot Kaur, Ashwani Kumar, Cherice May, Daniel May Jr., and Robert Rose III.

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 continued the Mid-Week Communion Service on Wednesdays at 12:15pm. Though attendance is small in number, those that continue to come to us through the year find 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. The Blessing of the Animals, Blue Christmas and New Year's Eve Services continue to meet the needs of people beyond our church membership.

I continue to offer educational opportunities throughout the year. I lead a Kerygma Bible Study via ZOOM on the Book of Romans. Our Lenten Book Study via ZOOM was Turning Over Tables by Kathy Escobar.

Once again, I was proud to walk alongside members of our church, clergy & congregants from numerous other churches in the presbytery, denominations and faiths, in the annual Pride March.

Throughout the year, I moderate the Session and Congregational meetings and attend First Presbyterian Society board meetings & Annual Meeting. I led a retreat at the beginning of the year for the Session and Deacons. I led the New Member retreat in September.

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 JoAnna Thomson, Treasurer. Along with the members of the personnel committee I oversee staff members annual reviews.

Sadly, David Dettloff, our Minister of Music, had to leave us due to personal family matters. Yet as God has always done, God provided us with ample candidates. And as you have already know, the committee hired Evan Collins to be our newest Minister of Music. He has been a wonderful addition to our staff and community, fitting in seamlessly.

We said good-bye and thanked Todd Salvi, our Sunday morning audio person, who retired after 25 years with us to allow himself more free time, given he still has a full-time job with Cleveland State University. Our deacon Sunny Kunche stepped in and has been handling the audio portion for Sundays, Wednesday Communion and other special services. He has been a wonderful addition to the worship team.

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

Due to my hip replacement surgery in May, I could not attend my usual offsite continuing education opportunities this year. Though I was able to complete my required Boundaries Training for our denomination via ZOOM-Boundaries Training—Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse.

I continue to serve the Presbytery of the Western Reserve as a Clergy member: I was elected as Co-Vice-Moderator of the Presbytery in 2025, along with my colleague Rev. Merrideth White. We co-moderate the Presbytery's Vision Fund Committee. My position requires me to attend the Moderators meetings and Coordinating Cabinet meetings as well. I had the privilege of leading worship for the September Presbytery meeting in Independence, where Evan joined me providing music leadership.

I joined an Interfaith Clergy group on the Eastside of Cleveland earlier this year. We get together for support, conversation and study on a bi-monthly basis. I also attend the Interfaith Sukkot and Passover celebrations each year.

I gave a lecture in October at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation to their Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Interns. And have been asked to return in the new year to provide a lecture to the CPE Residents.

As Senior Pastor of Old Stone FPC I attend the yearly Fenn Distribution Meetings at Key Bank, along with the leaders of the YWCA and the YMCA. Likewise, I am often asked to serve ceremonial functions in the city. I have had the privilege of speaking for the Soldiers & Sailors memorial celebrations again this year. As well as, giving the Invocation and Benediction at the Front Steps “Home For All Ball,” where they announced their name change—Rising Well. I gave the Invocation and Benediction at the Cleveland Gay Invitational Fellowship Bowling Tournament Banquet. Throughout the year I attend forums at the City Club of Cleveland where I am able to listen to and meet people from all over greater Cleveland and the nation. I also was invited to and attended the Isaiah Awards Breakfast held at Tri-C.

My family has been through many joys and challenges this year. After turning 102 in July, my Mom continued to decline and died on the 29th of November. My eldest sister Mary Lou continues in treatment for pancreatic cancer. Her youngest son who had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer after her, died suddenly on the 14th of December. My sister Becky continues to benefit from her treatments for breast cancer. These strong women of faith continue to inspire me with their resilience. In November, Bruce and I celebrated our 32nd Anniversary. We continue to be grateful for and enjoy our life and travels together.

The litigation between the First Presbyterian Society Board of Directors and the Session representing the congregation continued this year with an Advisory Jury Trial in August. We are moving forward in coming to a mutually agreeable understanding of the judges’ final judgement as it had been influenced by the Ohio Attorney General’s office. We hope to continue strengthening our relationship between the two governing bodies. There has been progress in healing and restoring broken relationships and functioning in a healthier way as one body in Christ, yet individuals willing, there is much work to be done in our congregation.

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 the Old Stone, First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland.

Many Blessings,

Pastor Stephen C. Blonder Adams



Rev. Denise Clark-Jones, Parish Associate

I am honored to serve the awesome community that is Old Stone, First Presbyterian Church! I feel blessed to work with the faithful congregation and staff here. Each year the church becomes more active within and outside its walls.

Working with the deacons to minister to people in need mentally, physically and spiritually is very rewarding.

This year we celebrated the arrival of new members and a new minister of music, who have brought their gifts to share with the church.

When I look back on this past year, I am reminded of watching an interview with Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, an oncologist and medical ethicist, who has studied positive aging. Although healthy lifestyles are important, he proposes that mental and spiritual challenges which widen our perspectives, social interaction, and feeling one's life has purpose and meaning for the betterment of the community and the world are essential to our overall well-being. Our relationship with God through Christ in a community of faith offers all of these. Regardless of the challenges every church faces today, Old Stone remains faithful to its mission, and I am thankful to be a part of this vibrant church.

My goal this past year has been to assist the congregation and the pastor, Rev. Stephen Blonder-Adams, in any way I can. My hope for 2026 is to get to know more of the wonderful people in the church and to find new ways I can serve the congregation and the Cleveland community.

May God be with us in the new year!

Rev. Denise Clark-Jones.
Parish Associate



Evan M. Collins, Minister of Music

I began serving as the minister of music at Old Stone Church this August. I appreciate your warm welcome as I left my positions teaching choir in the Midview Local Schools and coordinating the music ministry at Pilgrim United Church of Christ. I am thankful for the support of the congregation, staff, and choir helping to make my transition smooth.

On Sunday November 9th, we re-launched the pop-up vocal choir. Fifteen people sang musical selections in collaboration with the Old Stone singers for Sunday worship. Nada Montgomery accompanied the choir on piano. I will organize this ensemble throughout the coming year to provide our congregation with additional ways to support the music ministry at Old Stone.

Following this worship service, we hosted a recital featuring the guitar studio from the Cleveland Institute of Music. A group of six performers provided a program featuring solo guitar works from the Baroque Era to the Twentieth Century. I look forward to welcoming them back for future collaboration.

We enjoyed a packed sanctuary this year during the WinterLand Cleveland event on November 29th to launch us into the advent season.

On Sunday December 7th, The Old Stone Singers performed part one of Handel's Messiah in the Sanctuary. I was pleased to welcome Dr. J.R Fralick as a tenor soloist, who once served as the director of music at Old Stone. Dylan Sazenbacher, the director of music at First Congregational Church of Elyria Ohio played the organ and harpsichord along with the chamber orchestra. We concluded the concert with the hymn; "Let There Be Peace on Earth" followed by "The Lord Bless You and Keep You". This concert also featured the use of a new synthesizer and condenser microphone for worship services.

Christmas Eve worship featured a chamber orchestra including pedal harp, percussion and Tom Clark-Jones at the organ. The singers began worship in the balcony and processed into the sanctuary isles singing "Angels We Have Heard on High". This year, the offertory anthem was Candlelight Carol by John Rutter.

For the upcoming year, I am planning the launch of a handbell ensemble at Old Stone Church. Stay tuned for information regarding our first practice! Thank you for your support and participation in the life of this community. Each of your time and talents bring us to a more profound Alleluia!

Sincerely,

Evan M. Collins, Minister of Music





Tom Sarago, Director of Marketing & Community Engagement

2025 was a *transformational* year for community outreach and marketing efforts at the First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland – The Old Stone Church. During the first quarter, we saw significant physical changes to Public Square with the debut of the *Illuminate Cleveland* lighting project, which transforms our church and the surrounding businesses with modern, vibrant lighting displays. The project was the culmination of many hours of work by all associated partners. It truly depended on our relationship with Downtown Cleveland, Inc. – the organization that manages Public Square and serves as the hub of all Downtown activity.

In July, I worked with several volunteers, comprised of church members and community volunteers, to transform an unused Sunday school classroom into a hub providing free essential items every Wednesday, including clothing, hygiene and other essentials to those in the community who need them the most, mostly donated by church and community members and offset with additional dollars from our Mission & Urban Outreach committee. This ministry effort is referred to as “The Community Closet” and to date, has served dozens per week.

The most significant transformational community outreach effort began in October with the launch of our weekly *Stirring Up Hope* citywide soup ministry, a partnership with Old Stone Church and longtime Mission Partner EDWIN’s Leadership and Restaurant Institute. This exciting, volunteer-driven ministry effort centers on delivering 50 gallons EDWIN’s crafted soup each week to six area churches and community centers. Old Stone Church, through its Mission & Urban Wellness committee, purchased kettles and start-up supplies and delivered them to each partner. The program was set to run through the fall, but after three short weeks, we received the necessary funding (\$40,000) from one community member to ensure that the program runs each week throughout the year. *Stirring Up Hope* now serves over 400 people in Cleveland each week. The ministry has garnered significant press for Old Stone Church and its partners and provides an ideal opportunity for the on average, six volunteers and staff who work to serve the community each week. This project is truly remarkable, and I believe it is the ideal community outreach initiative against which to measure all others.

We continued to deepen our relationship with the city of Cleveland, investing in the lives of individuals who need help the most through our generous support of the city’s housing project, *A Home for Every Neighbor*. To date, it has provided permanent housing to more than 200 individuals who were previously unhoused.

In 2025, I worked to schedule more than a dozen “minute for missions,” which provides community members a chance to share relevant, mission-focused information with our congregation during Sunday worship service. These talks provide unique opportunities for those worshipping with us and are a key value proposition, and truly what makes the Old Stone Church community unique as an urban church. You do not receive this information directly from the source in the suburbs.

From a marketing standpoint, in 2025, we continued to rely on the website as the central point for communications and marketing. Our website saw more than 18,000 visitors in 2025 (up from 15,000 in 2024). This resulted in 320 new website contacts. Our engagement rate was once again within the top 10% for churches nationwide.

Website enhancements were made to create a revamped leadership page featuring photos of all members who serve on committees and on Session. Additionally, pages were created to support our *Stirring Up Hope* and *Community Closet* ministries, as well as a page highlighting our organ. Our website’s engagement rate is once again within the top ten for churches nationwide.

Our social media presence continues to grow, with more than 4,500 followers on Facebook and more than 2,100 subscribers on YouTube. Our Livestream has never looked better, and the over 225 views of our weekly service each week are a testament to the worship and the convenience of watching from home. 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, through a mix of worship offerings, open doors led by church docents, and community outreach efforts. 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.

I look forward to a new year of embracing the challenges and collectively celebrating the successes that 2026 has for us at Old Stone Church.

Tom Sarago
Director of Marketing & Community Engagement

Stewardship Committee

Stewardship is...



Love in Truth
and Action

Stewardship is...



Love in Truth
and Action

Stewardship is...



Love in Truth
and Action

The First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland Stewardship theme this year was “Stewardship is Love in Truth and Action. Every week in worship we proclaim that God’s love is wide enough for all, and that together we are called to live out that love in our community. As a congregation we have witnessed Spirit moving in powerful ways this past year: sermons and music that lift our souls, shared meals advocacy for justice, mission work in the community and quiet prayers that sustain us in difficult times. This all happens because of God’s grace working through us – our prayers, our presence, our service and our generosity. Members’ giving is not just about keeping the lights on and the bills paid. It is about fueling a ministry that is open, inclusive, and courageous enough to embody Christ’s welcome in a world that hungers for hope. Each pledge to The First Presbyterian Church is a tangible sign of our shared commitment to be a church where all belong and where love overflows into action.

To date, we have received 42 pledges totaling \$85,000.00. Four of those pledges are from non-members as a commitment to The First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland. We are especially grateful for several members who increased their pledge from last year. It is never too late to pledge.

During the year, we also encouraged members to pay the \$40.00 Per Capita fee for 2025 that was required of all Presbyterian Church USA members in the Presbytery of the Western Reserve.

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 still depend on tithes and offerings, above what is pledged

The committee is grateful for all pledges for 2026, and we hope other members will help support this church as they are able. Pledges can still be submitted at any time.

2025 Stewardship Committee

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

Pastor Stephen Blonder Adams, *ex-officio*, Anthony Kastellic, *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 in our neighborhood. We are grateful to be able to distribute **ten percent** of the congregation's annual budget. We, choose to do this not because it's easy but because it is a necessary spiritual exercise to support those in our midst.

We continue to be concerned that the congregation initially passed a budget that represented merely 7 percent. To us that indicates that Mission and Urban Wellness is of diminished concern. Fortunately, it was promised that as funds became available the MUW budget would be increased to the ten percent that has been the hallmark of this congregation for many years; that promise was kept. Also, Mr. Tom Sarago succeeded in acquiring additional funding externally in two grants of \$5,000 apiece. At the beginning of each committee meeting we prayed for discernment on how best to distribute these funds. We believe that prayer was answered affirmatively to the benefit of all concerned. Attached is a spreadsheet of all of the devoted funds.

We continued to support some organizations and activities as we have in the past: the Presbytery's general mission work, the Presbyterian Disaster Relief Fund, North Church Presbyterian Church, Front Steps, Journey Center for Safety and Healing, Northeastern Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH), BVU Homeless Stand Down, Habitat for Humanity, Greater Cleveland Food Bank, Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Green Corps, Random Acts of Kindness, Love, INC., and the Police Memorial.

This year we supported some organizations and activities for the first time.

We devoted funds to the Redeemer Crisis Center, Home For Every Neighbor, LGBTQ+ Center, The Metanoia Project, Providence House, and the Cleveland Animal Protective League (APL). We especially want to bring your attention to our support of ReSource Cleveland; these funds will enable Ukrainian refugees to have auditory electronic translating equipment to translate English into Ukrainian. Notably, in collaboration with Brandon Chrostowski and EDWINS we began Stirring Up Hope – where fresh soup is served to all who request it on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Soup is served here and four other places in Cleveland. This has attracted a great deal of attention in the community, resulting in a grant of \$20,000 to provide bagels as well as soup. Finally, we have been able to re-open the Community Closet. These last two activities have involved consistent volunteer support from our congregation.

2025 Mission and Urban Wellness Committee

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

Dorothy Baunach, Judy Geraci Brown, Dave Eifert, Joe Geraci, Edie Horvat,
Christopher McKinley, Michael Rekoric, Peggy Schaffer, Jayne Zborowsky

Tom Sarago, *staff*

Welcoming and Fellowship Committee

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 amid worship.

Fellowship activities strengthen the spiritual fabric and manifestation of a loving and caring family.

Such activities bring us together, give 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 considerations for selection of projects;

Our target audiences - Congregation and their networks (friends, relatives, neighbors). 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

All activities should provide financial support and transportation where individuals require either so that no one is precluded from participation.

Activities completed this year:

Lent Cross Decorating – 75 crosses were passed out after church services.

Congregants took the crosses home and decorated them, and they were displayed on the large cross in the sanctuary during Lent.

Plant Exchange - was held on June 8th immediately following service.

Red, White & Blue Luncheon – This event was a large success. Fred Heider purchased fried chicken and desserts/side dishes were potluck. Elders of Jazz provided entertainment. A raffle was included.

Cleveland Museum of Art tour – Sunday, July 13th 2025 at 2:00 PM The tour focused on religious works. Four people had lunch together and enjoyed the tour this year.

Open Door – held every Wednesday 11:00 am until 2:00 pm. Docents were Bob Reid Bruce Kranicz, Brad Oglesby, Charlene Thornton and Mary Musson.

We participated in Cleveland's Pride Parade on June 7th.

Dementia seminar - Held on Sunday, October 12, 2025. Jim Traxler presented on Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia in Memorial Hall at 2 PM. We had a potluck luncheon prior to the presentation. 15 people attended the seminar, which was recorded, and we had plenty of food.

Celebrity Chef – Li Wah Restaurant provided dumplings. 41 tickets sold (one through the scholarship), nineteen online; Rocco Whalen of Fahrenheit on July 20th. 88 people attended the event with 35 tickets sold through Eventbrite and 53 purchased by congregants (one ticket was through the scholarship). The menu consisted of Kobe Beef Short Rib with Lo Mein Noodles. Chef Eric Wells demonstrated and served Moroccan over Jeweled Basmati Rice on November 2nd. 19 tickets were sold on Event Brite and 26 from the congregation, for a total of 45. One ticket was through the scholarship.

Tour of Old Stone building – The tour was scheduled around pledging time so people can see the whole church. Frank did a wonderful job and even took us out on the roof for a gorgeous view!

Harvest Table – November 23rd Bob and Elizabeth send thank you notes to Eddie's Fruit Farm who provided most of the items. The table was a huge success.

10.Christmas Tree Lighting in – November 29th. Evan provided organ music while the choir sang Christmas carols and Mike streamed the words on outdoor monitors so the public could join in. Cookies were served. Estimated attendance at 450.

Events for 2026 include the above as well as plans for Playhouse Square Tour, a musical production, NOYO musical performances and Holden Forest and Gardens.

2026 Welcoming and Fellowship Committee

Pam Daly, *Co-Chair*, Forest Diehl, *Co-Chair*
Peter Baron, Michelle Baron, Valorie Hempstead, Mary Musson, Brad Oglesby,
Bob Reid, Elizabeth Reid, Peggie Willett, Jayne Zborowsky
Mike Murphy, *staff*

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee helps Session fulfill elements of its strategic plan by maintaining proper staffing and ensuring staff understand their roles in affecting the priorities outlined in the strategic plan.

The Committee is pleased to report that the church is effectively staffed and that everyone understands their roles. Staff members are consistently diligent and productive, and work well as a team.

Sadly, Music Director David Dettloff resigned in the Summer due to family issues. After a careful search and interviewing several candidates for the Music Director position, we hired Evan Collins. Evan started in August and is an excellent addition to the team and a blessing to the church's music ministry.

Kathleen Gus (former employee) repaid the full amount of her charges on the church credit card.

Renee Brickman, our Resource Navigator (funded through the Vision Fund of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve), resigned her position at Metanoia and thus her position at Old Stone Church. Kai Saga, the Executive Director of Metanoia, temporarily stepped in to serve in this capacity until they hired Stephiana Rogers, who is currently serving in this role.

We are working with staff to hire a part-time staff member to assist at the front desk. This has been approved by Session, but no one has been hired to date.

David Finley has updated parts of the OSC Personnel Manual to comply with the current Board of Pensions issues related to the Employee Retirement Savings program. The changes were approved by Session.

Staff reviews were performed in the Fall and went well.

The current staff was granted a 3 percent cost-of-living raise for 2025.

In summary, we have an excellent staff that works well together and are efficient and productive employees.

2025 Personnel Committee

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

Rev. Stephen C. Blonder Adams, Senior Pastor

Board of Deacons

In the year of 2025 the Board of Deacons continued to be the lifeblood of this congregation with their ministry of 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 again 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 evolving condition of various members of the church.

Cards were sent throughout the year to our homebound or members who have not been in church to maintain a personal contact. Pam Daly does a superb job of keeping up with this and sending flowers or cards upon the death of members or on various suitable occasions. Cards were sent for Valentine's Day expressing our love and care to various members as well. For our Easter contacts a potted plant that had adorned the sanctuary found a second purpose in being delivered to our shut ins as well. For Christmas, a floral arrangement in an Old Stone mug was delivered as well as a gripper for their personal use.

In addition to delivering various gifts, the Deacons have built or enhanced binding friendships with various homebound members or those with health or mobility issues. When visiting them, the Deacons offer a prayer before leaving. Additionally, the Deacons can offer communion if desired or can anoint members if wanted during our visitation.

For the coffee fellowship time after the church service, Elie has organized greeters at the entrance and individuals to serve beverages. 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 to be a blessing to have been entrusted to do this.

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

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

Class of 2027
Anand Bandari
Eric Grattan
Sunny Kunche
Amy Wheeler
John Wheeler

Worship Committee

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]

2025 continued to provide multiple opportunities for congregational participation in worship. Lay Liturgists were utilized to allow different voices to be heard from the pulpit. Additionally, Communion services were formatted to allow for a seamless process of receiving the elements and lighting of the memory candles. Communion was offered in the Chapel by either Pastor Stephen or Pastor Denise, on Sundays when it was not offered in the Sanctuary. Pastor Stephen offered a mid-week noontime Communion service to both parishioners and community members.

Lenten and Easter services were well attended, including a memorable Tenebrae service. Throughout the summer, a quartet of singers provided music, as opposed to the full choir contingent. The quality of the music program continued to be a rich enhancement to our worship experience. Following the resignation of David Detloff, Evan Collins joined our Old Stone staff as Minister of Music and continued to provide quality leadership to the music program.

This year's Blessing of the Pets was well attended and appreciated by all that participated. Dog treats were provided to pets in attendance. Bible studies were offered throughout the year.

Advent and Christmas concluded our worship year with meaningful services and Communion. Once again, we were blessed with a moving performance of Handel's Messiah in December. We continued to be blessed with inspirational and meaningful worship experiences throughout the year.

2025 Worship Committee

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

Pastor Stephen Blonder Adams, *staff*, Pastor Denise Clark-Jones, *staff*,
Evan Collins, *staff*, Anthony Kastellic, *staff*

2025 Nominating Committee

The 2025 CNC members began the process of seeking candidates for Elders and Deacons for the Class of 2028 in October. Session approved reducing the number of session members from 15 to 9 to better reflect the size of the congregation. Session also approved adding a class of three Trustees to oversee the church's finances. The Trustees will replace and lead Session's Planning and Finance Committee, prepare Session's annual budget and work closely with First Presbyterian Society on financial matters. The nominating process concluded successfully in January 2026.

Each year the committee encourages members who want to become more involved at Old Stone Church to consider becoming 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.

2025 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 land and buildings at 91 Public Square, known colloquially as the Old Stone Church, and since 1955, has owned, registered and renewed the trade name “Old Stone Church.”

In addition the financial responsibilities 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 to the First Presbyterian Church congregation. On behalf of the Society and its members, FPS contributed or directed distributions of over \$1M to the congregation in 2025.

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

The 197th Annual Meeting of the Society was held in a hybrid format on April 7, 2025. Eric Dunn, Sandy Kuban, Clinton Scaggs and Margaret Wetzler 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. Membership of the Society stands at 47, most of whom are also members of the congregation.

The work of the Capital Assets Millennium Committee is critical to the preservation of the facilities.

In 2025, the CAM Committee oversaw one large scale project: replacing the cooling tower collection basin on the roof of the Old Stone Center to ensure continued proper functioning of the HVAC system at a cost of over \$50,000, as well as the following smaller projects:

- Switched out controller on HVAC system from mechanical to electronic;
- Refit a chiller in the HVAC system;
- Replacement of kitchen dishwasher; and
- Replacement of the bottom edge of garage door

All of these projects help to ensure the facilities are in the best working order to serve the congregation and the community.

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, which was before Judge John O'Donnell, came to a conclusion this year in two steps: a Summary Judgement issued by Judge O'Donnell in May, and a trial presided over by Judge O'Donnell in August.

On May 5, 2025, Judge John P. O'Donnell issued a series of Orders on the pending motions. The Court accepted and confirmed all of the Society's declarations as to questions of law and legal determinations:

1. The Society owns the land and Old Stone Church building and related building on Public Square, and all the funds and assets in the accounts titled in the name of the Society.
2. The Society is an Ohio nonprofit corporation and is obligated to abide by its missions and objectives as stated from time to time by its own governing documents.
3. The Society is a separate entity from the Congregation and from FPC, Inc. and is not a trust under trust law, not a trustee, and does not hold assets in trust for FPC and/or the congregation, or any other entity. The Congregation, its Session, and The First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland are not trust beneficiaries of property owned, held, controlled, or managed by the Society now or hereafter, and the Society does not hold property in trust for any Council of the Church, including the Congregation, its Session, or First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland.
4. The Congregation's forming of its own corporation in 2018—FPC Inc.—did not change the Society.

The Court found that it could not rule on two discrete factual questions or disputes of fact without a trial: first, the ownership and use of the trade name Old Stone Church and similar names; and second, the right to donations and bequests to Old Stone Church or similar names. As such, a trial date was set for August. Attempts to settle fell apart at the last minute, and the trial proceeded on August 4th. Following the conclusion of the trial, the advisory jury reached an unanimous verdict that the Society is the owner of the trade name Old Stone Church, and, the Society holds the rights to donations and bequests to Old Stone Church. Judge O'Donnell affirmed these findings in his August 22, 2025 Order:

"The court, having independently considered all the evidence of record and the arguments of the parties, finds, as a matter of fact, that the trade name 'Old Stone Church' is owned by" the Society.

The Court further found that because the Society owns all right, title, and interest in and to the trade name "Old Stone Church", (1) the Society has the right to control and permit other organizations to use the "Old Stone Church" trade name as the Society "deems appropriate in its discretion" and, (2) any past or current use of the OSC Name by the congregation worshipping at the Society's OSC Land and in the Society's OSC Facility has been under an implied license from Society and the use has in the past and continues today to inure to the benefit of the Society.

With this matter being settled, the Society looks forward to working collaboratively with Session and FPC to support of the congregation in carrying out God's work in Cleveland and beyond.

Thank you to the board: 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 2026.

Margaret Wetzler, President

The First Presbyterian Society in Cleveland

Capital Assets Millenium Committee

The responsibilities of the Capital Assets Millennium Committee (CAM) are to maintain and improve the property and address any needs that arise, both inside and outside the buildings.

Large projects budgeted and completed in 2025 include:

Replace N. tower pan, media, supports, clean condensers, change sand in filter, replace two top feed pan

Change chiller 2 controller from mechanical to electronic

Replace bottom edge of garage door due to rust

Change oil in chiller one and new fittings

Replace old kitchen dishwasher with manual fee unit

In addition to the above projects there were many smaller, but equally important, “behind the scenes” projects that were completed.

Mr. Frank Schwartz orchestrated and/or completed most of the above projects, thus allowing for all projects to come in either on, or under, budget. As always, Frank's dedication and time are greatly appreciated. Thank you, Frank!!

This committee meets regularly on the first Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

If you would like to be part of this wonderful group, please contact any of the members listed below.

I wish to extend a special “Thank You” to my committee for their participation, dedication, and willingness to share their expertise and time.

Marty Vassel, *Chair*

Eric Dunn, Bob Hubert, Jr., Clinton Scaggs, Charlene Szaller, Jim Szaller

Frank Schwartz, *staff*

New Members:

Gurleen Kaur
Ashwani Kumar

Prabjot Kaur
Cherice May
Robert Rose III

Bruce Kranicz
Daniel May, Jr.

May their memory always be a blessing:

Louise Leathers +*January 8, 2025*
Billy Augustus +*January 23, 2025*
Harry Hatters +*June 12, 2025*
Lori (Larry) Lippert +*June 27, 2025*
O. Frederick Heider +*August 24, 2025*

Weddings:

Anna Masica/Alexander Wright
April 26, 2025
Emily Zupan/George Williams
May 3, 2025

Gurleen Kaur/Darren Rolston
July 26, 2025
Bridget Corrigan/Paola Barrios
September 6, 2025

Anniversaries:

20 years (Joined 2005)

Barbara Allen
Nolamae Bailey
Scott Baily
Eric Dunn

35 years (Joined 1990)

Annabella Carlos
Dr. Antonio Carlos
Scott O'Donald

25 years (Joined 2000)

David Breudigam
Anna Colon
David Eifert
Mary Eifert
Cindi Lorenze
Steve Lorenze
Scott Stoops

40 years (Joined 1985)

Jayne Zborowsky

45 years (Joined 1980)

Michelle Baron
Peter Baron
Phillip Sykora

30 years (Joined 1995)

Judy Geraci Brown
Willie Brown
Amanda Rector
Brian Rector

55 years (Joined 1970)

60+ years

Don Guenther, 60 years
Forrest Diehl, 60 years
Janet Czar, 61 years
John Young, 62 years
Dianne Young, 62 years
Mary Jane Sykora, 64 years



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