



Congregation Approves Record \$ 1/4 Million 2023 Budget

At the annual Winter Congregational meeting on January 29th following worship, the FBC Congregation voted unanimously to pass the \$249,753.10 proposed 2023 budget. Prior to the Congregational meeting there had been an introduction and discussion of the proposed budget after worship on January 22nd.

Treasurer David Caughey presented a motion from the Trustees for disposition of excess monies from the 2022 budget to St. Cecilia window restoration (\$3,250.00) and masonry repair (\$4,461.34). This was approved by the congregation. He then introduced the the proposed budget and highlighted salient changes made from the 2023 target budget to the 2023 proposed budget via a Powerpoint presentation that he shared onscreen. The targeted pledge income was exceeded by more than \$10,500 for a total of \$225,732. The projected additional income from pledges and other sources from pledges allowed:

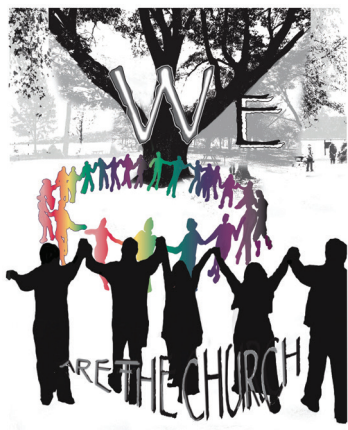
- Proposed office manager position salary increase to \$19,777.87 in salary from \$19.11 per hour to \$25.00 per hour, and an increase in hours per week from 12 to 16.
- \$1,000 was added to the proposed budget for a native plant specialist (36 hours at \$30 per hour).
- Special events line item increase to \$4,000 from \$1,500 in the target budget.
- Proposed budget ABC Mission Support was increased to \$8,500 from \$8,000 in the target budget.

Other items of interest:

- \$225,732 in pledges represented 48 pledge units from 71 persons. Three more pledges came in since the proposed budget was finalized.
- 2022 Mission offerings of \$10,500 exceeded the previous year by two and one-half times due to \$7,500 given to One Great hour of Sharing for Ukranian Relief. It represented over 15% of last year's total budget.
- David Caughey announced his retirement in June as Treasurer after 13 years. His announcement sparked a spontaneous standing ovation by the congregation in gratitude for his many years of dedicated service as treasurer.

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*What does the Lord require of you?
To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6:8

Save the Date!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

**March 5th:
Retirement
Party for
Shella Chase**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

**Community
Room - FBC**

Did Your Know?

By Susan Eymann

Do you know that FBC members and friends supply the Friendship Center with one thousand four hundred and forty lunches (1,440) lunches each year. Yes! That is a lot of lunches. On the first and third Thursday of each month a crew gathers in the kitchen at First Baptist to assemble the lunches and then delivers them to the Friendship Center.

FBC lunches have a reputation of being good and that they are! Bill Abeles, member of the third Thursday group states that a good lunch consists of five elements, a sandwich, a drink, a piece of fruit, a snack and a dessert. (I'm glad that my children did not know this as I was preparing never ending school lunches for them.)

Team members supply the ingredients for the lunches so no monies come out of FBC coffers. Some of the sandwiches (ham and cheese, turkey) are made on site while others, such as Leslie Schultz's famous egg salad sandwiches, are delivered to be packed in labeled brown bags. It's a "feel good" activity to be making sandwiches for those down on their luck and needing support.

If you are interested in joining one of the prep teams or donating food or money to allay the costs of the lunches, please contact Steve Farrell, Barb Fry or Bill Abeles.

Sheila Chace Retires

By Anne Farrell



Sheila Chace

For more than ten years, FBC's Office Manager Sheila Chace has been the cheerful voice on the phone and

the smiling face behind the desk who has greeted members, friends, and visitors. On January 31, Sheila retired for the second time, the first time being from the Department of Social Services in 2011.

She has been uniquely qualified to serve on the staff of First Baptist because of her big heart and generous spirit. Beyond the typical duties of an Office Manager, which Sheila has performed admirably, her previous experience as a social worker has been invaluable in helping people coming through First Baptist's doors looking for assistance with food, rent, transportation, and other needs. She has collaborated on the downtown faith community's response to these re-quests and has helped countless people navigate the network of human service agencies.

Her empathy, optimistic attitude, and infectious laugh will be hard to replace. FBC has been blessed by her years of dedicated service.



Flowers February 5th by Barb Fry.

Photo by Tony Lister

From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Dear Friends,

I am writing this on February 1. Tomorrow is Ground Hog Day, and I must admit I feel a bit of a ground hog day effect happening – not from a day ago, but from 3 years ago. In February of 2020, we were finishing our consultation with Arlen Vernava and talking about the next moves forward, such as strategic planning based on the Core Values we had claimed and updating our Bylaws to better serve our life together. Then COVID shutdown hit, and we realized pretty quickly that coping with the effects of the pandemic had become the top priority.

We've done well as a congregation in getting through the last 3 years. We adapted to all virtual and then hybrid worship and programs. We were intentional about nurturing and supporting each other and found some creative ways to be together, even when we are apart. We worked with each other around COVID restrictions to be inclusive and honor our differences. We kept working on things we could - a native plant pollinator garden, projects in the building, seeking the best option for a new heating system, and continuing service projects in our community. Now, we're moving ahead as a hybrid congregation – with members and participants in other places geographically, but all of us united in our love for God and for each other in First Baptist. I am extremely grateful that we celebrated 200 years of life together last year as a strong, vibrant church in spite of COVID 19!

Continued on page 6.



Rev. Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Labyrinth Reflection

By Anne Farrell

Steve and I were the hosts one evening to greet people coming to walk the labyrinth. We arrived early to light the candles and ensure all was ready. We weren't sure what to expect and had prepared for the possibility that we would be the only ones there—we thought we would might be a long two hours of waiting for nothing to happen. But something did happen from the moment we walked into the sanctuary. There is something extraordinary about that space, especially at night when lit only by candlelight and the spotlights on the Christ window. My sense of God's presence was profound.

We greeted our first walkers precisely at 7PM. After whispering brief instructions and offering materials to prepare for walking, they entered the labyrinth, with peaceful music play softly in the background. In a few minutes three more guests arrived, followed a bit later by a single walker and finally two couples. I've walked a labyrinth several times but sitting silently, watching as others walked was a new experience. Some moved gracefully, some walked more quickly, while others were hesitant, taking slow deliberate steps. One person finished and immediately began again. In many ways it was like watching an unchoreographed liturgical dance. I was moved to pray for each one and especially for a couple whose son we were told is fighting cancer. For all, I prayed they would find peace and joy.

As people finished walking, we invited them to write a reflection about their walk in the guest book, and Steve quietly visited with them as they were leaving. They all seemed so grateful that First Baptist opens its doors and invites all to experience the labyrinth. Some were so touched that they planned to come back to walk it again. It occurred to us as we drove home that in the larger Ithaca community, First Baptist is probably the only space where a full-size, indoor labyrinth can be laid out. The experience of walking a labyrinth during the Christmas season is a unique gift we can offer. This First Baptist tradition began many years ago and is one I hope we will continue for years to come.

I was the last to walk the labyrinth that evening—I came weary from the overcommitted days leading up to Christmas and found solace in the stillness and renewed hope for the coming year. What a blessing—certainly, a highlight for me this Christmas season.



South African Travels *By Andrea Mooney*



The doors to the Constitutional Court, with the Bill of Rights carved into the entry.



Statue of a girl named Hope outside the former women's prison from the apartheid era.



Newly hatched red-beaked hornbill.

Photos by Andrea Mooney

I have been fortunate to have traveled to South Africa six times. Two of the trips were with friends to a game lodge to view the wildlife, including the "Big Five": rhino, buffalo, lion, leopard and elephant. www.pondoro.co.za. Take a look!

The other four times have been with my friend and law school colleague, Muna Ndulo. I collaborate with Muna on a course called: "Law and Social Change in Contemporary Africa." The course focuses on the rich history of African nations, particularly on South Africa. We address issues such as land rights, the role of customary law, the effects of colonization, and the rights of women in a developing nation. Muna is ideally suited to teach this course as a scholar of African law and on constitution making. In fact, he was part of the group that wrote the South African Constitution, widely regarded as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world.

As part of the course, we travel to South Africa for three weeks in January. The first two weeks are spent in Johannesburg, where we visit sites such as the Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill, and the Cradle of Mankind. The students also attend classes at the University of Johannesburg, where law faculty lecture on labor and property law, and explain the concept of "Ubuntu" ("I am because you are"), which is an underlying principle in S. African constitutional law. My favorite site in Johannesburg is Constitution Hill, which houses the Supreme Court and an extensive art collection. It is built on the site of – and with some bricks from – the old apartheid prison. You can watch a video narrated by Albe Sachs, one of the first Supreme Court Justices in the "new era." Justice Sachs was a member of the ANC, fighting with Mandela and others against apartheid, and in the struggle lost an arm in a car bombing in Mozambique. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSH7ToW1NsM>



Zoe, the giraffe, sticks her head into the tour truck to get some peanuts.

In the third week, we travel to the northern province of Limpopo, where we stay at the Mogalakwena River Lodge. <https://www.mogalakwena.com/>. This is a research park where students from around the world study hornbills, giraffes, the baobob tree, and vervet monkeys. We visit schools (over 50 children in a classroom, with not even an overhead fan), an arts center for women that enables them to create crafts that are sold in Capetown, and a botanical factory making products from the moringa plant.

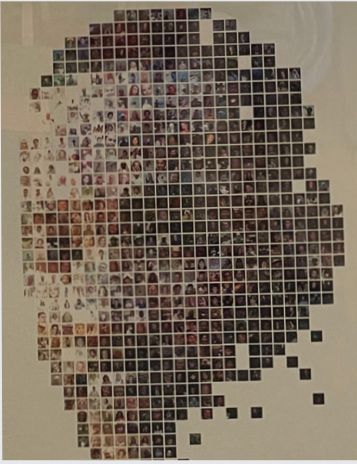
The purpose of the trip to S. Africa is for the students to see in action what they have been studying all semester. It is one thing to study apartheid, and another to meet with a woman whose brother was killed in the Soweto uprising at age 12. It is one thing to read about Nelson Mandela, and another to visit the home he lived in when he was first released from prison, and see the bullet holes in the rooms where his children slept. We all get to see the process by which this beautiful country is moving from its painful history of colonization and apartheid to its struggles and successes as a developing nation.



Students and faculty at the Constitutional Court

Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard Update - January 2023

From Amanda Ufford and Sue Hemsath



"The time is always right to do what is right."

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

History of MJK Day

It took 15 years of persistence by supporters to designate Martin Luther King Day as a holiday. A bill to recognize King's birthday as a national holiday was first introduced on Apr. 8, 1968, just four days after he was assassinated, but Congress ignored initial pleas to pay homage to King's legacy. The King Memorial Center in Atlanta, which was founded around the same time, sponsored the first annual observance of King's birthday, Jan. 15, in 1969.

Reverend Ralph Abernathy collected letters of support and directed a drive to collect signed petitions supporting the idea. By April 1971, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) has collected over 3 million signatures, and Abernathy led a march on Washington to deliver the signatures and letters to Congress.

The bill finally came to a vote in the House in 1979 on what would have been King's 50th birthday. Despite having a petition with 300,000 signatures in support, support from President Jimmy Carter, and testimonials from King's widow, Coretta Scott King, the bill was blocked by five votes in the House led by Missouri Rep. Gene Taylor.

Public support for the bill continued to grow. Singer and songwriter Stevie Wonder became a vocal advocate for the bill and worked hard to spread the message. Wonder made regular appearances alongside Coretta Scott King at rallies and ended a four-month tour with a benefit concert on the National Mall 18 years after King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech there.

Finally, In 1983, the proposition passed both houses and President Ronald Reagan signed the holiday into law. It was first observed three years later on January 20, 1986. By 2000, all 50 states had made it a state government holiday.

Excerpted from the Week online January 17th.

First Baptist has long supported the food pantry at Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard. It is housed in the Salvation Army building at 150 North Albany Street and a number of First Baptist members and friends work there regularly, taking a turn to pack food donations every third Friday between 12:45 and 2:30 pm. In the last year these have included: Sue Hemsath, Priscilla Walker, Barb Fry, Bill Abeles, Bill Fry, Tina Hilsdorf, Amanda Ufford, Linda Caughey, Andrea Mooney, Marney Thomas, Thomas Trigueros Ufford, Judy Kennison, Ken Frost, Anna Gibson, and Mariana Morse. We are always happy to have new volunteers, even if you can only help one time. Contact Sue Hemsath pacratsu00@aol.com or Amanda Ufford at ajaufford@gmail.com.

The use of the Cupboard changed significantly during the pandemic. IKC moved to help its clients not only through once a month pantry orders selected from a daily menu, but also free daily choices from donated items offered on tables in the Salvation Army gym (first come first served). The latter food comes from donations from the Friendship Donation Network, from big box stores, and individual donations to the Cupboard, whereas pantry order food is largely from items IKC buys weekly at very

advantageous prices from the Food Bank of the Southern Tier. In 2022 the pantry served some 4,610 people and almost 10,000 people came to the tables in the gym.

During the pandemic much of the cost of IKC's purchases from the Food Bank was covered by government grants which meant they were no longer spending about \$4,000 a month to restock the pantry. This allowed IKC to accumulate checking account funds from a variety of donors, individuals and organizations, including the parent company of P & C Fresh which has been very generous for several years. As a result, IKC's checking account balance at the end of 2022 was \$67,390.49. In future, IKC expects this balance to be used up as the number and size of grants has dwindled.

First Baptist makes an annual donation of \$300 to the Cupboard. Last year individual donors brought that total up to \$1,330. Thank you for this generosity of both funds and service. We very much appreciate all your support for this important outreach to our community.



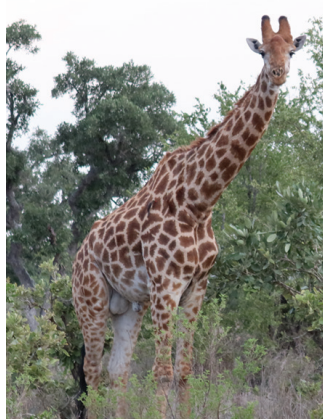
Rehearsal: Each Thursday evening intrepid choir members led by Belinda Adams and accompanied by Christopher Morgan Loy, meet in the Community Room to practice for their offerings during Sunday worship

Golden Anniversary Celebration - Barb and Bill Fry

To celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary two years ago Barb and Bill Fry decided to take their children, spouses and grandchildren to South Africa on safari. Postponed twice due to COVID, they finally took the family trip in late fall 2022. Here Bill shares a few of the more than 2,000 photos he took on the trip.



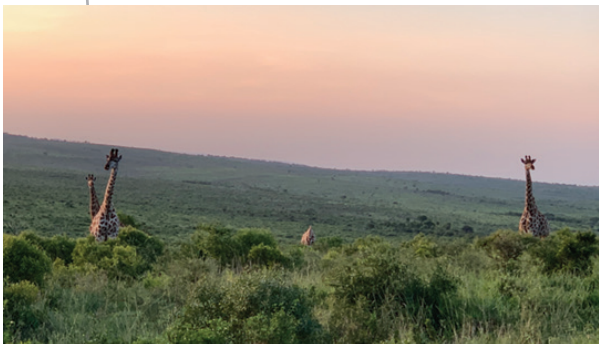
South African landscape



Who are you?



Barb and Bill



Giraffes at dawn



Leopard on branch



Elephants dueling it out



Rhinos



The lion king



Water buffalo



Bill and Barb with children katie and Abby, their spouses and children.



The lioness

Revelations from Space Travel

By William Shatner

After dreaming of space flight to experience what he thought would be the splendor of the universe up front and personal, 91-year-old actor William Shatner, discovered what the opposite during his 2021 spaceflight on Blue Origin.

To his surprise, rather than finding splendor he anticipated, he writes, "But when I finally arrived out there, the splendor was absent, The feelings were not of warmth and glow that required poetry to express it, it was ominous. It was the opposite of life. It was among the strongest feeling of grief I have ever encountered.

It reinforced tenfold my own view on the power of our beautiful, mysterious collective human entanglement, and eventually, it returned a feeling of hope to my heart. In this insignificance we share, we have one gift that other species perhaps do not. We are aware - not only of our insignificance but of the grandeur around us that makes us significant. This allows us perhaps a chance to rededicate ourselves to our planet, to each other, to life and love all around us-if we seize the chance."

(Excerpted from an article in December 2022 AARP which was adapted from Boldly Go by William Shatner and Joshua Brandon 2022, Atria Book, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc.).

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First Baptist Church in Ithaca is a nurturing and inclusive community. Guided by Jesus' Teachings, we strive for Social & Ecological Justice and embrace the Baptist tradition of Bible, Soul, Church and Religious Freedoms.

From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Continued from page 2.

As we move into 2023, we have the energy to return to some of those 2020 organizational issues. We'll begin discussing proposed Bylaws changes Feb 12 (see below). Another question we're addressing is how we use undesignated bequests. The very generous bequest of over \$120,000 from Janet and Betty Brown in 2020 raised this issue at the October 19, 2022 meeting of the Cabinet. \$50,000 has already been set aside by congregational vote for new heating system needs. While the Trustees continue to seek our best options there, the Cabinet endorsed Andrea Mooney's suggestion that felt it would be appropriate to use some of the money for other programs and projects in line with our Core Values beyond "brick and mortar needs".

A proposal from the Cabinet brought to the November 6 meeting raised lots of discussion and ideas. A follow up meeting was held on Zoom on January 31. I have been asked to summarize what happened there for this Visitor. The 14 participants talked through and came up with a modified proposal that we commit "at least 25 % of undesignated bequests over \$5,000 for projects and programs that serve our Core Values." The Cabinet will appoint an Ad Hoc Committee, beginning with the Brown Bequest, to come up with guidelines for how we want to "serve our Core Values" and then guide the congregation in brainstorming and discerning how to want to use the money. Margie Latham, Leslie Schultz, Linda Nicholson, Biz Pia-Miller, and Barb Fry volunteered for the Ad Hoc Committee for the Brown Bequest. Anyone else interested in serving should contact Margie Latham.

We were energized by our conversation at the meeting, expressed our trust in this congregation's wisdom and discernment to be good stewards of gifts we are given. We anticipate that creative ideas that will emerge. Let's all be praying together about how God wants us to use Janet and Betty's generous gift and let's be open to what God's Spirit is seeking to do in and through us in 2023.

*Love and blessings,
Debbie Bennett Reynolds*

Bylaws Primer - Part 1

What are "Bylaws"?

"Bylaws" are a written document that spell out how churches in the "free church" tradition govern themselves. (The Methodists have their "Book of Polity-the Discipline." Other churches have published rules for governance as well.)

Why does FBC have them?

As an American Baptist Church, First Baptist honors the four Baptist Freedoms one of which is Church Freedom, where each individual church has both the right and the responsibility to choose their own congregational polity. "The local church is free to determine its membership and leadership, to order its worship and work, to ordain whom it perceives as gifted for ministry, male or female, and to participate in the larger body of Christ. The authority and responsibility for governing the affairs of the Church are vested in the membership."

When were the FBC Bylaws last revised?

The Bylaws were adopted on January 20, 2013, and amended on June 14, 2015.

What were the major changes in the last revision?

Move from organization by four committees (Trustees, Worship; Education and Christian Concern) to organization by Ministry Teams: Worship and Prayer; Hospitality; Local Christian Concern; Global Christian Concern; Circle of Care; Adult Christian Education; Children's Christian Education; Parable of Talents, and the possibility of additional Ministry Team formed with approval by the Cabinet.

Look for the expanded Bylaw Primer along with a copy of the new proposed Bylaws within the next few days.

Winterscapes



Burr.



Bobcat in Margie Latham's yard.



Field behind Pastor Debbie's house in Spencer



Pieris Japonica



Crab apple and spruce



The Latham's Middlebury, Vermont barns



View from Pastor Debbie's house



A driveway waiting to be cleared



Taughannock Falls, Feb 5th



White pine laden with snow



Vermont Holsteins out to pasture



Please keep in your prayers:

- Kris and Danny Scott & Zetta
- Jokebed Keita & family
- John Gross
- David Evans and family
- Biz Pia-Miller and Dan
- Suzanne Kilgore
- George Damp
- Kendrick Kemp
- Ron Drummond
- The Phelan family
- Anthony Halman & family
- Marge Hansel

Willing to experience aloneness, I discover connection everywhere; Turning to face my fear, I meet the warrior who lives within.

JENNIFER WELWOOD

~~~~~  
Gratitude is liberating. It is subversive. It helps us realize that we are sufficient, and that realization frees us.

JOANNA MACY

~~~~~  
If in our daily life we can smile, if we can be peaceful and happy, not only we, but everyone will profit from it. This is the most basic kind of peace work.

THICH NHAT HANH



The Visitor -February 2023

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Photos: Tony Lister, Judy Kennison, David Caughey, Bill Fry, Margie Latham, Debbie Bennett Reynolds



Communion Table Arrangement of Candles and Poinsettias: By Barbara Fry, Photo by Tony Lister

How We Are Involved (updated November 2022)

First Baptist Staff

Pastor: Rev. Debbie Bennett-Reynolds
Office Manager
Organist: Christopher Morgan Loy
Choir Director: Belinda Adams
Youth and Children's Ministries
Coordinator: Laura Ward
Nursery Caregiver: Carol Fleming
Sunday School Aide: Sarah Zipfel
Custodian: David Hopkins

Elected Leaders

Moderator: Margie Latham
Vice Moderator: Andrea Mooney
Membership Clerk: Tina Hilsdorf
Recording Clerks: Rich Barron/Susan Eymann

Treasurer: David Caughey
Assistant Treasurer: Bill Fry
Financial Secretary: Marlene Sack

Board of Trustees

Bill Fry, chair (2024); Baruch Whitehead, (2023); Bill Phelan (2023); Josie Zanfordino, secretary (2023); Elizabeth Pia-Miller (2024); Steve Hilsdorf (2024); Kris Scott (2025); Marlene Sack (2025); Carolyn Young (2025); David Caughey, (ex officio)

Trustees' Subgroups

Finance & Endowment
David Caughey, chair; Bill Fry; Marlene Sack; Curt Ufford; Janet Hansel

Interior Decoration: Barbara Fry; Julie Dean; Tina Hilsdorf; Bill Abeles; Anne Farrell; Andrea Staffeld; Susan Eymann

Church Archivist: Linda Caughey

Affiliate Organizations

Two Delegates each for **Rochester Genesee Region & ABC-USA** Rich and Lil Barron, co-chairs; Anne & Steve Farrell.

AWAB: Shella Chace

Baptist Peace Fellowship: Meg Gillard,
Cornell Campus Ministry: Linda Nicholson; Anne Farrell; Brian Baker

Kitchen Cupboard: Amanda Ufford; Sue Hemsath

Tompkins County Workers Center: Bill Abeles

Sanctuary Alliance: Bill Abeles; Bill Fry; Leslie Schultz

Pastoral Relations

Tony Lister; Regi Carpenter (2023); Mark Lawrence (2024); Amanda Ufford (2024); Judy Kennison (2025)

Nominating Committee

Leslie Schultz; Meg Gillard; Tina Hilsdorf; Susan Eymann

Personnel Committee

Bruce Chandler (2023); Lou Carlucci (2024); Judy Kennison (2024)

Constitution/By-Law Committee

Bill Fry; Susan Eymann; Anne Farrell; Judy Kennison; Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Ministry Teams

Worship & Spiritual Life:

Barbara Fry, Amy Chaffee, co-chairs; Biz Pia-Miller; Tony Lister; Kris Scott; Edie Reagan; Alice Grow; Regi Carpenter; Debbie Allen

Worship/Spiritual Life Subgroups

Flower Committee: Barbara Fry; Tina Hilsdorf; Andrea Staffeld

Labyrinth: Kris Scott

Sound/Audio Ministry: David Caughey; Curt Ufford; Bill Fry; Bill Phelan; Leslie Schultz

Education Children's and Youth:

Leslie Schultz, chair; Carol Fleming.
Christian Ed Teachers: Baruch Whitehead; Sarah Zipfel; Meg Gillard

Christian Concern

Baruch Whitehead, chair; Bill Phelan; Bill Abeles; Amanda Ufford, Marge Hansel, and others

Christian Concern Subgroups

Circle of Care: Coordinators: Linda Caughey, chair; Amanda Ufford; Sue Hemsath

Hospitality Ministry:

Anne Farrell, chair; Shella Chace; Meg Gillard; Tina Hilsdorf; Adrienne McNair; Andrea Staffeld; Steve Farrell; Bay Ward/Aittama; Alice Grow

Communications Ministry: Shella Chace (convener); David Caughey; Mark Lawrence; Craig Riecke; Susan Eymann; Amy Bean Stowell; Lisa Kilgore

Green Team

Louise Mudrak, Lisa Kilgore (co-conveners); and others

Ad Hoc Reopening Committee

Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds; David Caughey; Amy Bean Stowell; Barbara Pease; Barbara Fry