the Visitor

June 2024 **First Baptist Church**

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First Baptist Church

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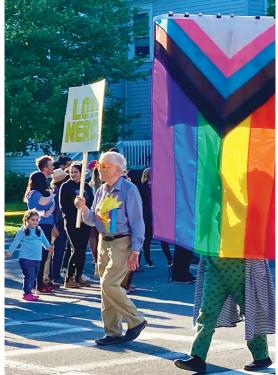
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2023-2024 FBC Annual Report **Chronicles Busy Year**

The First Baptist Church 2023-2024 Annual report was disseminated to the congregation before the annual Congregational meeting on June 16th. The 20-page report, beautifully compiled by Anne Farrell, included the slate of officers/leaders for the 2024-2025 church year presented by the Nominating Committee, the Pastor's report (excerpted on page 2 & 7 of this Visitor), reports from the chairs of Church Council (Margie Latham), the seven Council Committees, and the Pastoral Relations Committee. It also included reports from the Staff, the Membership Secretary, and the Financial Secretary.

We learned that total membership at First Baptist increased during the year by six persons from 141 to 147 members; Pledges for the year increased from \$225,732 (48 pledging units) to \$244,900 (55 pledging units).

Excerpts from the staff reports include the following: "Working with and for this loving and wonderfully talented congregation continues to be a wonderful commitment for myself and my family. This congregation's continued support of their "people is palpable and thoroughly appreciated ... " (Belinda Adams, choir director); "My ongoing musical service to First Baptist is a true blessing to me..." (Christopher Morgan Loy, organist/pianist); "Love is in the air at all times here at First Baptist! It is



Ninety-four-year-old Dr. Jud Kilgore marching for First Baptist in the annual Ithaca Festival parade May 30th. Photo by Edie Reagan

palpable. What a blessing to work in a loving, kind, environment ... " (Janice Nigro, office manager); "I am continually grateful for my role with First Baptist. Now in my 15th year, I have numerous wonderful friends in the congregation and enjoy an important grounding point in the Ithaca community..." (David Hopkins, custodian).

FBC is likewise blessed to have such a loyal committed staff.



Introduction of FBC New Members: Tony Lister (at the mike) introduces his longtime friend from Eden Seminary Bruce Chandler (plaid shirt); Josie Zanfordino (standing behind Tony) introduced Hope Decker (standing next to Bruce; Bronwyn Evans introduced Cindi Zorokong (4th and 5th from left); Elizabeth Pia-Miller introduced Linda Myers (7th and 6th from left); Pastor Debbie Reynolds introduced Joe Haines (8th from left), and Barb Fry, at end, introduced Anne Horst. Photo by Judy Kennison



May 16th Communion Table Bouquet

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.



In the Wings: Jud Kilgore waits along with Steve and Tina Hilsdorf to march for First Baptist in the annual Ithaca Festival parade. See other pictures on pages 1 & 8.

From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds (Excerpted from the June 2024 Annual Report)

Dear Friends,

What a full year it has been! We have so much to be thankful for as we close out this "program year" and enter into summertime. I continue to be blessed by my role as your Pastor – you are a loving, gifted, committed congregation of people. We have a staff of highly responsible,



Rev. Debbie Bennett Reynolds

dedicated people who always do their jobs with care and that is such a gift to all of us. I am so grateful for all the ways the Spirit continues to work in us and through us. God is good!

Having finalized our new Bylaws last spring, we have lived into them this year, and I believe we are finding the changes in structure are serving us well. We have had several significant financial decisions to make around the heat pump project and the tower roof repair, and it has worked well to have the Resource Committee doing the hard work to get estimates and work with contractors but then to have the Council, as Trustees, take the leadership responsibility to finalize decisions and bring recommendations to the congregation. I also felt the new format of having the Council meet with me for my pastoral evaluation was a big improvement, helping us have constructive conversation not just about my ministry but about our work together.

Thanks so much to Margie Latham for her hard work as Moderator, living into the hybrid world we are in post-Covid and doing an excellent job in guiding us and working with me as Pastor. Thanks to all the Council members and to every one of you who serves in church leadership in any way!

A special event last fall was our second annual All Church Retreat at Casowasco. This is now established as an event that we really value! Having an extended period of time together for singing, learning, playing, dancing, talking, eating, and worshipping is a wonderful opportunity to grow together. We had a great ad hoc committee led by Biz Pia-Miller that planned and led our time to-gether but also involved many others in leadership. Our theme was "Better Together," as it was for our Stewardship emphasis. Several folks who were quite new to our congregation chose to join us on the retreat, which was great for getting to know each other more quickly.

This spring we saw the continuation of the more than 30-year tradition of the Women's Retreat, again this year at Light on the Hill. This year we paid more, and we had food prepared for us, which we all enjoyed. Again, some new participants chose to get involved—in the planning and leadership, as well as attending. Along with the Abbey Retreat after Easter, I am pleased to see the increasing ways that we are enhancing our spiritual life and community connections through re-treats.

I am so grateful for our worship life together. I believe there are many moments in worship when we have felt the Spirit's presence and been touched and inspired. I always love our picnic worship times, and last summer, I again had the privilege of performing a baptism in Cayuga Lake. Bay Aittama and I got a good splashing from the wake of a boat before we were able to have the baptism. A great moment always to remember! I am excited to have talked with Arabella Sanford this week and are planning for her baptism at our picnic coming up on June 23.

Another highlight for me was our Christmas Eve celebration of caroling in the community room with a "live nativity" by the young people (with a somewhat older Joseph and Mary!), followed by our more traditional Christmas Eve service. I also hope to never forget our Easter worship celebration – finished off by the large number joining together to sing the Hallelujah Chorus, which inspired Elenna Adams to do cartwheels in front of the cross decorated with flowers.

Hallelujah! It has been so good to have more young people attending and getting involved in a variety of ways from holding the chalice during communion to lighting candles for the Tenebrae Service and helping set up for brunches.

This year, our youth has focused on fundraising for the Guatemala Cross Cultural trip the end of June. We have seen the creativity, commitment, and abilities of our youth, led

Spring Blooms

Photos by Judy Kennison









West African Dinner Fundraiser A Success

To raise money for the Youth's upcoming cross-cultural trip to Guatemala, Maimouna and Bill Phelan, along with help from the youth and their parents, put on a dinner of West African fare on April 27th. The hundred and five tickets were sold out, some by those who ordered pick-up and others that came to eat the ethnic dishes in the Community Room of FBC.







Fellowship abounded at West African fundraiser dinner April 27th.



Soliciting Walking for the Parade: Steve Farrell used the following "show and tell" of signage to solicit walkers for the upcoming Ithaca Festival Parade.

First Baptist Welcomes New Members cont.

On Pentecost Sunday, May 19th, First Baptist welcomed six new members: Bruce Chandler, Hope Decker, Joe Haines, Anne Horst, Lynda Meyers, and Cindi Zorokong. Each was presented by a FBC member/friend to the congregation and then Flower Committee's Barb Fry presented a long stemmed rose to each new member. Below are profiles that the new members submitted about themselves. Absent was Laura Peters who passed tragically before she could be officially welcomed as a member into FBC. The single rose in a vase commemorated her memory.

Bruce Chandler

I grew up a preacher's kid in the United Church of Christ (UCC), sometimes referenced as 'Unitarians Considering Christianity." After college, seminary, and five years as a UCC Pastor, I went to Medical School and practiced as an anesthesiologist in Pennsylvania and Illinois. I retired to Kendal is 2019. Janet and I have two children. Our daughter is in Colorado with two of our grandchildren. Our son is in the Boston area with his spouse and our other grandchild.

Hope Decker

I landed at First Baptist after a difficult year of transitions and loss. I felt welcomed and included immediately and my soul felt at ease. I found a home. After spending 40 years in a conservative church, it was important to me to find a vibrant and LBGTQIA-affirming faith community. I'm very grateful to be here.

Joe Haines

I was blessed from birth to be nurtured in Anabaptist faith in the Brethren in Christ church. Baptized as a lad of 8 or 9, I well recall my baptism in a stream used by my congregation. During two years of Pax service I worked in Hebron, Jordan, and finished college where I met Elaine Miller, and with whom I shared an interest/call to overseas service in Jordan/ Israel. We began about 2 decades in Palestine and Israel as a family, serving with MCC and MMN.

In the mid 1980s we moved on to pastor a succession of four Mennonite churches in eastern states. The first decade of the new millennium brought growth to our family and finally retirement.

Elaine and I had planned to make membership at FBC just as the pandemic hit. Elaine died last year in August. I am ready to make formal membership with FBCI after attending here for almost a decade.

Anne Horst (pronounced Hearst)

Anne Horst has always been a spiritual seeker and has been part of churches throughout her life. She and her husband, Andy Turner, have explored a wide variety of churches. Anne is grateful to have found at First Baptist an "amazing and abundant and joyful love of God and Christian life." When she came to First Baptist she was inspired by the people and activities here and felt it was a good fit. Anne is very grateful for the spiritual community she finds here, and community is very important to her.

Anne loves gardening, biking, and speaking Spanish (her "inner Latina"). Anne and Andy have a 23-yearold daughter, Madeline.

Rev. Lynda Myers

Rev. Lynda Myers is an Ithaca native who grew up on South Hill and worked for many years in the family's business, Ithaca Paint and Decorating. She holds degrees in Interior Design and Elementary & Early Secondary Education along with a Master

of Divinity. Lynda recently returned to the area, accepting a position as Spiritual Care Chaplain at the Arnot Ogden Medical Center in Elmira. In addition to her work as



In Memory of Laura Peters

chaplain, Lynda provides pulpit supply to various churches within the greater upstate area.

Lynda came to the American Baptist tradition while in seminary. In the Four Baptist Freedoms she found the freedom to practice her faith and in her home church, Ebenezer Baptist Church in Rochester, NY. She found not just community, but a family who accepted and supported her through the ordination process, ordaining her in October 2021. Recognizing that we are not just better when we live in/as community but that we are called to be a community that strives to love as Jesus loved, Lynda looks forward to using her gifts to further the work of this community.

Cindi Zorokong

In 1990 I was substitute teaching at Belle Sherman School with Grace Evans. I asked her if she could recommend a local church and she said "First Baptist." I began regularly attending and found a wonderful community and joined the church. I continued my journey with First Baptist until my family moved to Massachusetts in 2004. I tried but never found a church with the same feeling of beloved community that I had experienced at First Baptist. After retiring from the VA as a Registered Nurse, I decided to move back to Ithaca and share a home with my sister, Regi Carpenter. Upon returning to First Baptist I reconnected with old friends and felt that I was home again in a beloved community. I am able to join committees and activities to share fellowship with other members that was lacking in my church experiences in Massachusetts. I am thoroughly enjoying the education hour as it allows me to explore my faith journey in a non-judgmental and accepting atmosphere. One word I can use to describe First Baptist is LOVE.

I am happy to be home again!

Busy, Productive Year for Resource Committee

The Resource Committee, chaired by Bill Fry, had a busy, productive year – primarily with the care and maintenance of our old stone building. The committee made progress on a series of projects: heat pumps, the boiler, the second-floor fire escape, stone repair/repointing, the steeple roof (and the fir tree), the southwest door, alarm system and uses of the building.

The summer of 2023 began with preparations for the installation of heat pumps. The project was initiated in the fall of 2023, with a "hoped-for" completion of May 2024.. In April 2024, the Committee recommended to the Church Council that we contract with Sure Temp to install a new boiler. The Committee interacted with two stone masons concerning the stone repair and repointing. Thanks to Josie Zanfordino, liaison with Duffee Masonry, a nice set of photos of the tower was obtained in the early fall via a drone. However, upon further inspection, the Duffee's determined that the tiles on the steeple roof needed repair, and no work on the stone could be done until that work was completed. Ultimately, with congregational approval, Fred Dennis Steeple Jacks was hired to replace the steeple roof with slate tiles from Vermont. The roof repair necessitated removal of the stately concolor fir that had been in front of the building for nearly 100 years. The tree was removed in early April. See pictures below of replacing the steeple tiles with Vermont slate taken by David Caughey, Bill Phelan and Tony Lister.



Two Years in the Making, Unrestricted Bequests Resolution Passes

At the June 16th Congregational meeting, Moderator Margie Latham introduced the motion for the congregation to accept the recommendation of the following approved by the Church Council om May 13, 2024. The resolution was the culmination of at least two years of work by an *ad hoc* committee and Margie hoped that it could be resolved before she vacated the Moderator position.

"Whereas the receipt of a bequest is often a sudden and an unexpected resource that has not been planned for;

Whereas a sudden influx of unrestricted funds through a gift or bequest provides an opportunity to envision with intentionality how the First Baptist Church in Ithaca (FBC) might move into the future in ways that align with FBC's core values;

Be it therefore resolved that for every unrestricted gift (other than annual pledges) or bequest over 2% of the FBC annual budget, at least 25% will be set aside for new programs or projects that support the FBC core values."

There was discussion about the need for the adjective "new" for "new programs and projects." Anne Farrell provided some useful background information saying that this resolution evolved from the church receiving a large bequest and, since our old building will always need expensive repairs, the intent of the resolution is to assure that all monies left to the church not simply go to repair or maintain the building.

After a motion was made by Bill Fry to remove the word "new" from the resolution, a vote was taken with 20 voting for the its removal and eight voting against. The modified resolution then passed.

Leaders Elected for 2024-2025 Church Year during June 16th Congregational Meeting

At the June 16th FBC Congregational Meeting the Nominating Committee consisting of Andrea Mooney, chair, Bill Fry, and Susan Eymann, presented the following slate of officers for election by the congregation. Each group or person was elected separately by unanimous vote of those present (28 in person, 4 on zoom):

Officers (Trustees): Rich Barron (Moderator – one year term); Carolyn Young (Vice Moderator – one year term); Brian Baker (Treasurer– one year term); Margie Latham (Clerk – one year term).

Chairpersons of Council Committees (Trustees): Josie Zanfordino (Ecological Justice Committee); Debbie Allen (Education Committee); Anne Farrell (Hospitality and Nurture Committee); Bill Fry (Resource Committee); Bill Abeles (Service and Social Justice Committee); Steve Farrell (Welcome and Outreach Committee); Tony Lister (Worship, Music, and Spiritual Life Committee). **Council (Trustee) Member-at-Large:** Susan Eymann

Assistant Treasurer: David Caughey

Pastoral Relations Committee: Barb Fry was reelected to serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee; Baruch Whitehead volunteered to serve as the sixth member of said committee and was elected separately.

Nominating Committee: From the floor, Bill Fry suggested that Susan Eymann chair the next Nominating Committee and that he serves on that committee. Margie Latham, Louise Mudrak, Josie Zanfordino, and Alice Grow volunteered to be on that committee. The congregational vote was unanimous in favor the prospective members.

Delegates and Representatives: The following were elected to continue serving as delegates and representative of First Baptist Church for the next year. Anne & Steve Farrell; Rich & Lil Barron: ABC of Rochester Genesee Region Shella Chace: Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists Shella Chace: Area Congregations Together. Leslie Schultz: Baptist Peace Fellowship

"Many Hands Make Light Work"

Many turned out on May 28th to clean and spruce up of First Baptist. Custodian David Hopkins reflected, "Once again, I was impressed by the work of our annual Spring Cleanup. We prove again, ' Many hands make light work.' In a 3-hour work session we completed a long list of cleanup tasks and enjoyed the camaraderie of group work."

Those that helped were: Judy Kennison, Marlene Sack, Hope Decker, Andrew Decker, Steve Nunby (Transpose), Gale Miller (Rock Voices-Ithaca), Anne Meuller (Rock Voices-Ithaca),

Brian Fontana (Rock Voices-Ithaca), Sheila Grant (Rock Voices-Ithaca), Eiena McCabe (Tween Day), Carolyn Young, Richard Gerber, Bill Phelan, Mai Phelan, Anne Farrell, Josie Zanfordino, Linda Nicholson, Lou Carlucci, Bill Fry, Barb Fry, Amanda Ufford

Bruce Chandler, Tina Hiilsdorf, Steve Hilsdorf Jason Wilson, Jan Butler, Elizabeth Pia Miller, Linda Caughey, and David Caughey.



Jason Wilson edges the sidewalk.

Photo by Barb Fry

Anne Lamott on Love

What does love mean to you?

I always think of what Mr. Einstein told us: There's really only one thing moving at different speeds, and it's energy. Because I'm a believer in a different reality besides the visible, I believe that there is this energy inside of us and surrounding us that we're all made of, and we're made for it, and we're called to it. We have it to offer to those who are feeling frightened or empty. I think of love as this tender-hearted gentleness of feeling from the heart in the world.

What does being a Christian mean to you?

To be a Christian means to follow this revolutionary, brown-skinned leader from the Middle East. I just happen to really love Jesus and to have found a home in him.

Has your understanding of God changed? It changed when I got sober. ...I just see God as love. That's what I teach my Sunday school kids. Love is God. When you see loving, generous acts between people, that's God. That's the movement of grace in our lives. When you feel generosity

lives. When you feel generosity and surrender and stamina, that's the movement of grace. It must be really nice to be that

sure of yourself. I'm not. Like I tell my Sunday school kids, whatever age they are, I say, "You are loved and chosen as is. You don't have to do anything different for God to love you or me to love you. You don't have to become who everybody thinks you should be when you grow up. You are loved and you are chosen to be surrounded by kindness and really safe, healthy adults and all the beauty the world has to offer. And when you're sad or you've made a horrible mistake, hallelujah. Come sit down with me. Boy, have you come to the right person."

Excerpt from an article that was originally published on TODAY.com

From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds (Excerpted from the June 2024 Annual Report)

Continued from page 2

by Laura Ward, Amy Aittama, and Bill and Maimouna Phelan with fundraising events like the Haunted Church Night, the West African Dinner, and the Garage Sale. These people are a force! Thanks to everyone for all the ways you have supported these efforts! I am excited to hear about and learn from what the group going to Guatemala experiences on their trip!

There is much more I could say about our learning together through adult education, the Lenten series "Going Deeper," and our regular Bible study times on Zoom, as well as all the ways we are involved in service projects and outreach to the larger Ithaca community. All these opportunities enhance our spiritual lives and our connections with each other–and many share light and love to others. Let us continue to be open to the ways God is leading us to learn and grow and serve.

I also want to name another blessing of the Spirit happening in our midst. Over the past few years, and especially this year, we have seen a number of new folks connecting to our church family. Each of them is a blessing! They bring their energy, their spiritual wisdom, their gifts and creativity, and it is great to see how they are getting involved. Receiving six new members on Pentecost Sunday was just the most obvious way of celebrating how we are being renewed by the Spirit by these folks becoming part of us. Laura Peters was one of these new people, and she had told me on Easter Sunday she was ready to become a member. Her sudden death was a shock to us all! As we have grieved her passing, we have been reminded of the preciousness of each day and the importance of valuing each other each time we are together. Thank you, Laura, for your gifts of love and light to us.

On a personal note, I want to express my deep gratitude for your on-going support and care for me and my family. This has been a hard year for us in many ways, with Bill's heart attack last August and his health-related ups and downs, as well as the continued declines and subsequent deaths of his parents in November and February. Thank you for your prayers, your cards, and your generosity in encouraging me to take time and take care of myself. The good news is our daughter Anna's pregnancy! If only they were closer! So, I also want to thank you for the sup-port I am being given to take time in late September and October to go to Saudi Arabia for the birth and to spend a couple of weeks afterward. Fortunately, we have many gifted preachers and leaders, so I know all will be well while I am away.

God is at work in and among us. Thanks be to God for all the goodness and graces of our life together! With gratitude, Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

DCJS Graduates Provide Special Music

On May 5th, after Ithaca College graduating members of the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers (DCJS) treated the congregation to memorable special music "Oh Glory," traditional arr. by Jeff Stark, with soloists: Madison Almonte, mezzo soprano, and Sam Schorer, bassoon, and "Goodness of God" by CeCe Winans with soloist Michelle Peterson, the singers were feted with a brunch planned by the Hospitality Committee in their honor in the Community Room.





A beautiful bouquet graces the May 5th communion table. Ithaca College colors were used for table settings for the brunch for DCJS graduating members.





Please keep in your prayers:

- Kris and Danny Scott & Zeta Pederson
- Suzanne Kilgore
- Kendrick Kemp
- Ron Drummond
- Adrienne McNair
- Iosie Zanfordino
- Abraham Phelan
- Anthony Halman & family
- James (Nico) Schultz
- Bill Reynolds



The Visitor - June 2024

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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

First Baptist Church marchers in the annual Ithaca Festival Parade

First Baptist Staff

Pastor: Rev. Debbie Bennett Reynolds Office Manager: Janice Nigro Organist: Christopher Morgan Loy Choir Director: Belinda Adams Youth and Children's Ministries Coordinator: Laura Ward

Nursery Care Coordinator: Carol Fleming

Nursery Care Assistant: Sarah Zipfel Custodian: David Hopkins Native Plants Garden Specialist: Sarah Zipfel

Elected Leadership

Council Trustees

Rich Barron: Moderator Carolyn Young: Vice Moderator: Margie Latham: Clerk Brian Baker: Treasurer

Council Committee Trustees

Josie Zanfordino: Ecological Justice Debbie Allen: Education Anne Farrell: Hospitality and Nurture Bill Fry: Resource Bill Abeles: Service and Social Justice Steve Farrell: Welcome and Outreach Tony Lister: Worship, Music and Spiritual Life

Council Member-at-Large Susan Eymann

Non-Council Officers

David Caughey: Assistant Treasurer Marlene Sack: Financial Secretary Elizabeth Pia-Miller: Assistant Financial Secretary

Nominating Committee

Susan Eymann (chair), Bill Fry, Margie

FBC Organization (updated June, 2024)

Latham, Louise Mudrak, Josie Zanfordino, Alice Grow

Pastoral Relations

Judy Kennison (chair),Bill Abeles, (2025) Carolyn Young; (2026): Lil Barron, Barbara Pease; Barb Fry, Baruch Whitehead (2027).

Reps to Affiliate Organizations

Two Delegates each for Rochester Genesee Region & ABC-USA Anne & Steve Farrell. Rich and Lil Barron; ACT (Area Congregations Together): Shella Chace AWAB: Shella Chace Baptist Peace Fellowship: Leslie Schultz Cornell Campus Ministry: Brian Baker Kitchen Cupboard: Amanda Ufford; Sue Hemsath

Tompkins County Workers Center: Bill Abeles

Sanctuary Alliance: Anne Horst (chair), Bill Abeles; Bill Fry; Tony Lister, Jan Butler and others

Council Committees Ecological Justice

Josie Zanfordino, Louise Mudrak (Co-chairs); Barbara Pease, Alice Grow, Amanda Ufford

Education Children's and Youth:

Debbie Allen (chair), Debbie Allen. Christian Ed Teachers: Baruch Whitehead; Sarah Zipfel; Meg Gillard

Hospitality and Nurture:

Anne['] Farrell['] (chair); Shella Chace; Meg Gillard; Tina Hilsdorf; Bruce Chandler, Andrea Staffeld; Steve Farrell; Alice Grow, Craig Riecke

Resource Committee

Bill Fry (chair); Brian Baker, Rich Barron, Lou Carlucci, Dave Caughey, Steve Hilsdorf, Mark Lawrence, Bill Phelan Marlene Sack, Kris Scott, Carolyn Young Josie Zanfordino

Photo by Julie Costie

Service & Social Justice

Bill Abeles (chair); Bill Phelan, Amanda Ufford, Marge Hansel, Shella Chase and others

Subgroup

Circle of Care: Linda Caughey (chair) Amanda Ufford; Sue Hemsath

Welcome and Outreach:

Steve Farrell (chair). Anne Farrell, Alicia Dixon-Garrard, Baruch Whitehead, Joe Haines.

Subgroup: Communications:

David Caughey; Mark Lawrence; Craig Riecke; Susan Eymann; Amy Bean Stowell; Lisa Kilgore

Worship, Music & Spiritual Life:

Tony Lister, Biz Pia-Miller (Co-chairs); Barb Fry, Kris Scott; Edie Reagan; Alice Grow; Regi Carpenter; Debbie Allen, Bronywn Evans

Subgroups

Flower Committee: Barbara Fry; Tina Hilsdorf; Andrea Staffeld, Carrie Stearn Labyrinth: Kris Scott

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

To correct listing, contact Susan Eymann (susan.eymann@transonic.com)