

First Baptist Church in Ithaca

Contents

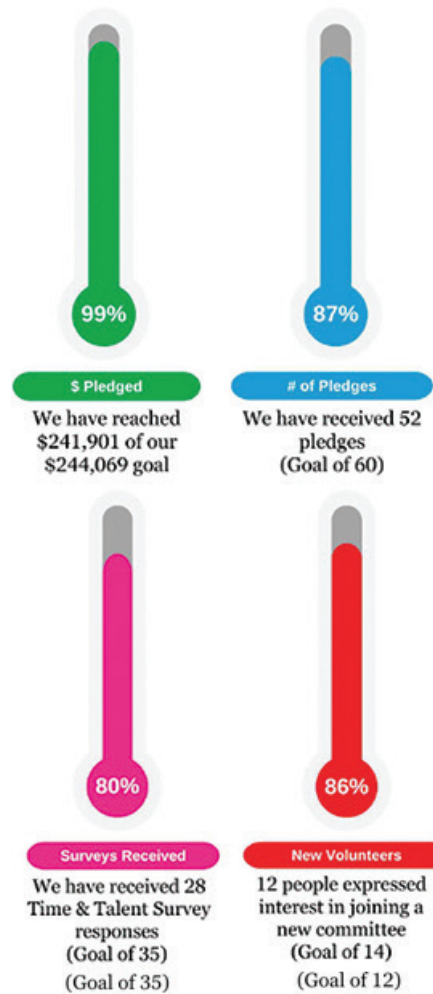
- Draw the Circle Wide - 2025 Stewardship Update 1, 2
- A Message from Your Pastor 2
- Daylight Saving Poem 2
- Advent, Christmas, Epiphany Calendar 3
- Concolor Fir Wood Stacked & Drying 4
- Missions of FBC Committees ... 4
- Haba Na Haba Hujazu Kibaba 5
- Kenyan Sojourn Photo Essay 6
- Opportunities to Give This Season 7
- November 5th Peace Vigil 7
- Keep in Our Prayers 8
- 2024-2025 FBC Organization 8



Lily, on the right, Elena and their mom Belinda Adams light the first candle of Advent - Hope. Photo by Bill Phelan



FBC's 2025 Stewardship Goals Progress



"Draw the Circle Wide" 2025 Stewardship Update

As of Tuesday Dec. 3rd, we have reached 99% of our monetary stewardship goal of \$244,069 from 52 Pledges submitted to our Financial Secretary Marlene Sack. The number of pledges represents 87% of our goal of reaching a total of 60 pledges.

Twenty-eight of you have submitted their response to the Time and Talent survey and 12 new volunteers have expressed interest in joining a new committee. They will be contacted by the Committee Chair.

However, if you haven't as yet submitted your Time and Talent survey response, there is still time to do so. Also, the Finance Committee will soon be meeting to finalize the 2025 Budget so please pledge if you haven't already done so.

Thank you.

The Stewardship Committee: Janet Hansel, Andrea Mooney, Sarah Fishel, Judy Kennison, Susan Eymann



How We Describe First Baptist

Graphics by Janet Hansel

See Page 3 for Advent, Christmas Eve, Christmas and Epiphany events Calendar

"A poem for daylight saving time in the shadow of the Great Lakes "

By Hope Decker 11/2/24

There are a dozen shades of brown at my feet
These noisy feet
Shoosh-shooshing through retired leaves
I cannot stop the colors from leaving or command the insects to sing
I cannot stretch the days longer
or wipe the heavy gray from the skies
But I can love the grays and browns and reverence winter's quiet lullabies
There are so many many things
I cannot control
but always, always
I can tend to my own soul.



2025 FBC Stewardship Cont.

\$ Pledged

Your pledged \$ supports our leadership, music, youth, education, missions and so much more. It supports our leadership to plan confidently and responsibly for the future.

Time & Talent Surveys

A pledge of your time & talent assures that we can sustain and grow our ministries, outreach programs, and community support efforts, supporting a wide range of social justice efforts.

of Pledges

All of our pledges are important, regardless of size. Pledging is a way of showing up for each other, of expressing congregational commitment and of strengthening our ability to serve collectively.

New Volunteers

Our committees support youth and adult education, service, social justice, worship, outreach and more. We are grateful for your contribution of time, skills and voice, the seeds of our thriving faith community.

From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Dear Friends,

December has arrived, and the cold, snowy weather is right on time this year. As I see the chickadees and sparrows, woodpeckers and pigeons on our bird feeders this cold day, I am prompted to pause, to be still - to spend some time with a hot drink, just sitting and watching and waiting today.

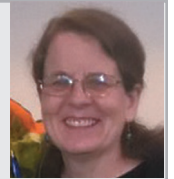
Advent is here. A time that urges us to stop and listen, to watch and pay attention to what God might be up to in our world. I need a lot of Advent reflection right now. The world can feel full of so much uncertainty and anxiety, so much violence and war, so much grief and pain. Where is God in this time? Where is divine love? Where is peace? In what - in whom - do I put my trust?

The birds remind me to live today, one day at a time. Look for the beauty and joy of the present moment. Enjoy the small, precious gifts that make life good and sweet. We can never know what tomorrow will bring. We are not in control. Life is a gift; this day is a gift - let's try to live each day with open and thankful hearts! "Be not afraid," the angels say. "Fear - NOT!" "And the peace of Christ which passes all understanding will keep your minds and hearts in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

May this Advent time fill your hearts and lives with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love through the power of Christ's Spirit present with you. Emmanuel - God With Us.

Blessings,

Debbie



Rev. Debbie Bennett Reynolds



Communion table decorated with samples of ancient moss by Tina Hilsdorf.



2024

Advent & Christmas

First Baptist Church in Ithaca

Advent

1st Sunday of Advent — HOPE (Luke 1:5-25)

Dec. 1st, 10 am, Worship & Communion

11:30 am Adult & Children's Education

Dec. 3rd, Tuesday, Advent Bible Study, 6:30 pm (on Zoom)

Dec. 5th, Thursday, Compline Even Song, 8:00-8:30 pm

Dec. 7th, Saturday, Sanctuary Decorating, 10:00 am – noon

2nd Sunday of Advent — PEACE (Luke 1: 26-38)

Dec. 8th, 10 am, Worship,

11:30 Adult, Youth, and Children's Education

Dec. 10th, Tuesday, Advent Bible Study, 6:30 pm (on Zoom)

Dec. 14th, Saturday, Tim Hembrooke Community Dinner, 5 pm

3rd Sunday of Advent — JOY (Matthew 1:18-25)

Dec. 15th, 10:00 am, Worship,

11:30 am Adult & Children's Education

3:30-4:30 pm Longview Holiday Party, led by our young people

Dec. 17th, Tuesday, Advent Bible Study, 6:30 pm (on Zoom)

4th Sunday of Advent — LOVE (Luke 2:1-15)

Dec. 22nd, 10 am, Worship,

11:30 am, Christmas Brunch

Christmas Eve: Dec. 24th

6:15 pm, Caroling & Live Nativity

7:00 pm, Worship Service

Christmas Sunday: Dec. 31st

10 am Worship in the Community Room

Labyrinth in the Sanctuary

Dec. 28th - Jan. 1st (Sat. - Wed.) , 4:30-6:30 pm

Jan. 2th, (Thurs.) 10 am–1 pm

Epiphany Sunday: Jan. 7th (Matthew 5:2-12)

10 am, Worship & Communion,

11:30 am, Adult & Children's Education



Missions of FBC Committees

From the 2023 Bylaws

ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE:

Its mission is to guide the Church to be stewards of the earth within the Church community and beyond. This includes leadership in environmental projects, educational programs, and worship. The Committee will also provide input to other committees on environmentally sound practice for building projects and maintenance.

EDUCATION:

Its mission is to plan and coordinate all the Church's educational programs, including Sunday School for all ages and youth and children's activities.

HOSPITALITY & NURTURE:

Its mission is to create an atmosphere of inclusion and to promote community by organizing regular Church gatherings and special events and celebrations.

RESOURCE:

Its mission is to oversee facilities, finances, and personnel. The Committee cares for the Church's physical assets, arranges for routine maintenance and repairs, plans and executes capital improvement projects.

SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

Its mission is to promote the flow of God's all-inclusive love through the Church and into the world. This Committee coordinates service, outreach, and actions to address social injustice and support needs within the local community and beyond.

WELCOME AND OUTREACH:

Its mission is to reach out, welcome, and introduce persons into FBC's community of faith. The Committee coordinates the Church's creative engagement within the larger community. It recruits and trains greeters/ushers and coordinates visitor follow up in collaboration with the Pastor.

WORSHIP, MUSIC, & SPIRITUAL LIFE:

In collaboration with the Pastor and the music staff, its mission is to create rich worship experiences that inspire deeper spiritual connections. It arranges and sets-up monthly communion services and offers special programs that enhance the spiritual life of the Church.

Would you like to volunteer to help on one of these committees? Please indicate on the 2025 Stewardship Time and Talents online survey.

Concolor Fir Wood Stacked and Drying

From Steve Hilsdorf

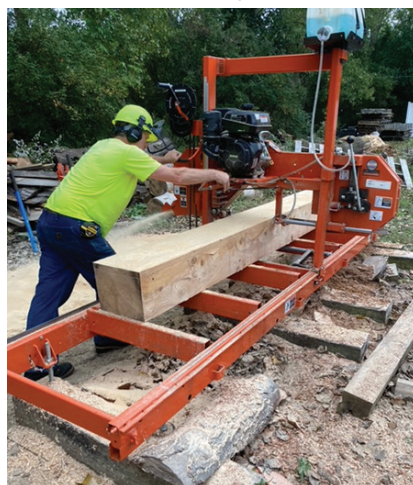
Steve Hilsdorf and his team tackled the huge trunk of the historic concolor fir that was felled April 15 from in front of First Baptist to enable repair of the steeple and roof. The result are 10 foot long boards of three thickness 1, 1 1/4, and 2 inches of various widths. They also cut cookies from the stump. Now, those who have ideas of what they might want to do with the wood should contact Steve to request wood for their projects



Historic Concolor Fir



Stump



Boards being cut.



Rolling the trunk



Tackling the trunk



Boards stacked to dry

Haba Na Haba Hujazu Kibaba

By Hope Decker



Librarian Kennedy Odero at St. Joans in a tea field, Eldoret.

Kenyan KEYS

(Knowledge Empowering Youth)

We believe all people have the ability within themselves to solve their greatest challenges and education is the most valuable tool we can use against poverty.

Opportunity fosters personal growth and learning. There should be no hand-outs that increase dependency, invites discontent, or isolates the givers from the receivers.

Local leadership teams should make all essential decisions, giving the community crucial ownership, accountability, and governance.

Cultural exchange is vitally enriching for Americans and Africans. Volunteerism is crucial to a vital, dynamic organization fostering global citizenship.



Andrew being presented with a rungu in Intolish by the chief and a respected elder.

In a crowded Kenyan conference room my seatmate Irene taught me to say “Haba na haba hujaza kibaba,” or “Little by little the pot gets filled,” in Kiswahili. Each of us contributes something.

I had just presented on my research studying the impact of rural public libraries on social wellbeing (<https://rurallibraries.org/findings-summary/>) at a conference for school librarians in Kenya. I talked about the things that mattered (contribution and being connected) to rural American inhabitants

we interviewed. Primarily though, I listened. The Kenyans I spoke with had a deep understanding of social wellbeing and communities and I was eager to learn. In fact, I changed my presentations (“School Libraries and Social Wellbeing,” “Raising Readers,” “Communicating the Value of School Libraries”) once I was in Kenya and had talked to Kenyans. I realized my content was not applicable to the library experiences of the conference attendees.

I had been invited with three other Americans to speak at the first Knowledge Empowering Youth (KEY) Libraries (<https://keylibraries.org/>) conference. We joined librarians, school administrators, politicians, and library leaders from across Kenya in Nairobi for three days. I have never been to a conference where every participant attended every session. I was struck by the palpable sense of belonging. During the tea break, everyone immediately fell into lively conversation and strangers quickly became friends. Each person cared about the lives of those around them, and let one another know they mattered. I found the individual travel mug I brought with me, a stark and lonely contrast to the collective nature embedded in Kenyan culture and the daily sharing of tea.

Before and after the conference, Nyakundi Nyambane, Director of KEY Libraries, guided Andrew, me, and the other Americans throughout the country. We visited school libraries in a variety of settings and did some touristy things along the way.

In a remote Maasai village on the Masai Mara wildlife preserve Andrew was honored as an elder with a small beaded club called a rungu. We saw zebra, giraffes, elephants, and rhinos up close, and a sleepy lioness in a tree a comfortable distance away. We visited Lamu, an island on the coast, its old architecture reminiscent of North Africa. In the library I sat down with a group of girls who described the lego robots that they were working on. At sunset we ate dinner on a traditional sailboat only to discover an even more elaborate dinner awaited us on the rooftop of the home where we were staying. In the morning, before sunrise, we were awakened to the Muslim call to prayer.

Eldoret is the high altitude home of the best distance runners in the world. There we walked through a tea field and the barn yard that sustains the school, to peek over the fence at Eliud Kipchoge’s (marathon world record holder until last year) training facility. Afterwards we drove for hours down a twisty road along the side of a spectacular rift valley to visit a small village. Its library in a shipping container. We were honored with a large meal, songs and dances, gifts, speeches, and each of us planted a tree.

We marveled at a Nairobi high school library that was as large and much nicer than my college’s library. Each village and school were different but the generosity and hospitality of our Kenyan hosts was evident everywhere. The greeting karibu means welcome. On our last night our host and my friend Nyakundi invited Andrew and me to his home for a meal. To meet his family and share a meal was an incredible honor and my favorite part of the trip.

I often think back to my time in Kenya. When things feel overwhelming and the weight of everything seems too massive to carry, I think about “Haba na haba hujaza kibaba” little by little the pot gets filled. I cannot do everything, but can do something. I can do that next right thing. If other people are doing that next right thing along side of me, eventually the pot will get filled.



Students gathered in a Lamu library working on a Lego robot.



Lamu architecture - We stayed there.

Kenyan Sojourn Photo Essay From Hope Decker



Zebra - Lewa Wildlife Conservation Preserve



Sunrise at the Lewa Wildlife Conservation Preserve



Giraffe - Lewa Wildlife Conservation Preserve



Lioness sleeping in tree



Roofs and bougainvillea



Elephant at the Masai Mara Wildlife Preserve



Street scene

Opportunities to Give This Season

• **Tim Hembrooke Community Dinner:**

12 noon, December 14. Donations of side dishes are needed. We also need your time and energy if you can help with set up and serving, hosting our guests, and cleaning up afterward. Gifts for the children attending are being provided with funds from the Welcome and Outreach Committee budget. Please sign up on the poster at the church or contact Anne Farrell at farrellanne00@gmail.com.

• **McCormick Residents Care Items**

For the third year the Service and Social Justice Committee is helping provide personal care items (toothpaste), white socks and snacks for the 41 young adults in detention at the McCormick Center. We have funds in the Local Projects budget. But, if you would like to help donate items, please contact Bill Abeles at wabeles@gmail.com.

• **Kenya Education Fund – Peter and Mary’s School Expenses for 2025**

For the past 2 years we have assisted with the costs of high school education for Peter and Mary, the younger brother and sister of “Rolex” Mirindo. Their new school year begins January 6. Mirindo has shared a detailed budget of their expenses for the coming year, which includes, tuition and fees, school supplies, new uniforms since they have outgrown the ones they bought two years ago, a new pair of shoes for Peter, transportation home for holidays and personal care items. The total budget for the two of them for the year is \$2800. We need to let Mirindo know by December 22 what we have raised and will be sending them. If you would like to contribute to this cause, please make your donation by Dec 22 (sooner if possible) and mark it Kenya Education Fund.



Peace Vigil held at First Baptist on November 5th.
Photo by Bill Phelan

Nov. 5th Peace Vigil (Excerpts)

Ojibway Prayer

Grandfather, look at our brokenness. We know that in all creation only the human family has strayed away from the sacred way. We know that we are the ones who are divided, and we are the ones who must come back together to walk in the sacred way.

Grandfather, sacred one, teach us love, compassion and honor that we may heal the earth and heal each other.

Sufi Prayer for Peace

by Hazrat Inayat Kahn

Send Thy Peace, O Lord, which is perfect and everlasting, that our souls may radiate peace.

Send Thy Peace, O Lord, that we may think, act and speak harmoniously.

Send Thy Peace, O Lord, that we may be contented and thankful for Thy bountiful gifts.

Send Thy Peace, O Lord, that amidst our worldly strife, we may enjoy Thy bliss.

Send Thy Peace, O Lord, that we may endure all, tolerate all, in the thought of Thy grace and mercy.

Send Thy Peace, O Lord, that our lives may become a Divine Vision and in Thy light, all darkness may vanish.

Send Thy Peace, O Lord, our Father and Mother, that Thy children on Earth may all unite in one family, Amen.

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

Be still and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds.

Timothy 1:7

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power and love and self-control.

Blessing from Yogananda

Do not be afraid of anything, even when tossing on a wave in a storm. You are still on the bosom of the ocean. Always hold onto the consciousness of God’s underlying presence.

Be of even mind and say, I am fearless. I am made of the substance of God. I am a spark of fire of the Spirit. I am an atom of the cosmic flame. I am a cell in the vast universal body of the Creator. I and my God are One.



Please keep in your prayers:

- Lil Barron
- Kris and Danny Scott
- Suzanne Kilgore
- Kendrick Kemp
- Ron Drummond
- Abraham Phelan
- Anthony Halman & family
- James (Nico) Schultz
- Hope Decker

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By accepting and learning to embrace the inevitable sorrows of life, we realize that we can experience a more enduring sense of happiness.

SHARON SALZBERG

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Table of Thanksgiving bounty of this earth. Created and arranged by Carrie Stearns of the Flow Committee.

Photo by Tony Lister

FBC Organization (updated December, 2024)

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 Specialist: Sarah Zipfel

Elected Leadership

Council Trustees
Moderator: Judy Kennison
Vice Moderator: Carolyn Young
Clerk: Margie Latham
Treasurer: David Caughey
Ecological Justice: Josie Zanfordino
Education: Debbie Allen
Hospitality & Nurture: Anne Farrell
Resource: Bill Fry
Service & Social Justice: Bill Abeles
Welcome & Outreach: Steve Farrell
Worship, Music & Spiritual Life: Tony Lister
Member-at-Large: Susan Eymann

Non-Council Officers

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

Nominating Committee

Susan Eymann (chair), Bill Fry, Margie Latham, Louise Mudrak, Josie Zanfordino, Alice Grow

Pastoral Relations

Judy Kennison (chair), Bill Abeles, Carolyn Young, Lil Barron, Barbara Pease, Barb Fry, Baruch Whitehead.

Reps to Affiliate Organizations

Two Delegates each for Rochester Genesee Region & ABC-USA
 Anne & Steve Farrell; Rich & Lil Barron;
ACT (Area Congregations Together): Shella Chace
AWAB: Shella Chace
Baptist Peace Fellowship: Leslie Schultz
Cornell Campus Ministry: Mark Lawrence
Kitchen Cupboard: Amanda Ufford; Sue Hemsath
Sanctuary Alliance: Anne Horst (chair), Bill Abeles; Barb Fry; Anne & Steve Farrell, Tony Lister, Jan Butler

Council Committees

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

Education

Debbie Allen (chair), Debbie Allen, Leslie Schltz
Christian Ed Teachers: 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

Subgroup

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

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

Subgroups

Finance Committee: Brian Baker, Janet Hansel, Marlene Sack, David Caughey
Stewardship: Janet Hansel, Andrea Mooney, Sarah Fishel, Susan Eymann, Judy Kennison

Service & Social Justice

Bill Phelan, Bill Abeles (co-chairs), Amanda Ufford, Shella Chace, Hope Decker, Cindi Zorokong, Bud Dolch

Welcome and Outreach

Steve Farrell (co-chairs), Anne Farrell, Alicia Dixon-Garrard, Baruch Whitehead,

Subgroup: Communications

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

Worship, Music & Spiritual Life

Tony Lister, Biz Pia-Miller (Co-chairs); Barb Fry, Kris Scott; Edie Reagan; Debbie Allen, Bronywn Evans, Tina Hilsdorf

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

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Autumn Bouquet



Moss and painted rocks

Photo by Tony Lister

The Visitor - December 2024

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