



Annual Report

2025-2026

as of 6/5/26



Christ Church

* SUMMIT *

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Spring 2026



Winter 2025



Fall 2025



Senior Minister's Report – Rev. Chuck Rush

This was a consequential year that started off with our first and only mission trip to Namibia, on the West Coast of Africa. Our youth minister, Ashley Kile, organized a fantastic trip for 25 youth, led by 6 college kids, with high schoolers, middle schoolers, and Elementary kids, along with 5 senior citizens. We served an orphanage and organized a day camp for kids on their July break who lived in a migrant shanty town outside Swakopmund. All of us rode camels in one of the world's largest deserts and went on safari at Etosha National Park and Omururu. All I can say about the trip is 'wow'. And we have a bigger group of 50 going to Kuai, Hawaii, this July. Hats off to Ashley, whose vision of service is coming to fruition.



Also, we celebrated my 30th anniversary at the church. Julie has been here 27 years as well. Long tenure is rare and becoming rarer in this generation. It is testimony that the congregation and the staff are both working in harmony to make this come to pass.

In October, we hosted a night of music on the organ and song with the piano to celebrate the restoration of the organ, which was finally complete. It gave us a chance to honor our biggest patrons, Hank and Charlotte Stifel, as well as Bob Kelly, who were the anchors that made the restoration financially possible. Mark dazzled with his usual flair. Every week, he shows off by leading the opening hymn and processing with the choir while the organ's computer plays a pre-recorded composition. Very cool.

In January, twenty-five of us from Christ Church headed to Rome for a short week of organ recitals. Mark played a memorable concert at Saint Paul's Outside the Wall, one of the oldest churches in Christendom (dating from 300). We toured the Vatican Museum, the Catacombs, and had memorable meals every evening, topped by great Roman wines.



In the late winter, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of Christ Church, with a host of events planned for the coming year under the able direction of Terry Baker. Guest preachers will be returning, including Mark Wakefield, Caroline Dean, Rusty Eidman Hicks, and Tom Martinez. Next fall, we will host some of our former musicians, like Wayne Bradford and Holly Chatham. A gala event will be planned with a fundraiser attached to kick off an endowment drive led by Cary Hardy and Mary Dickey. Our theme is "Join us, we are just getting started."

Salia Kamara was our intern this year. He started as a 'tech dude' running our livestream every week and proved to be an able children's story-time leader, a solid preacher, and even hosted a wonderful concert with Drew Seminary students. Salia will be serving three Methodist churches in South Jersey next year. We will miss his warm spirit and delightful African accent.

Julie heads on sabbatical this summer and early fall, with a trip out West and another up the California coast. Mary Beth Doctor, our former Director at Cornerstone School, will be filling in for her, doing children's sermons and leading us in prayer every week. Mary Beth recently graduated from Drew and is under care at Christ Church, looking towards a call to a church in the fall.

Finally, Barry Pilgrim has joined us, helping to set up for various events, with charm and a bright smile. And that leads me to a final note that Rocio Restrepo settled with the State of New Jersey for the wrongful death of our beloved Juan Restrepo several years ago. She and her son Danny have moved back to Colombia to be closer to family. We wish her well, even as the rest of the staff still grieves the loss of Juan.

The Rev.

Associate Minister's Report – Rev Julie Yarborough

In my capacity as Associate Pastor, I serve as staff resource person for Membership, Deacons, Board of World Fellowship, Quest and Faith Formation. Working with the Board of Faith Formation, I helped to institute a new safe church policy and set up a new system for acquiring background checks from all adults over the age of 18 who work with our children and youth. We also worked to plan various programs for intergenerational involvement throughout the year. We started the year with the Fall Fun Day at Johnsonburg Camp and Retreat Center on the first Sunday in October, with over 30 participants from Christ Church, ranging in age from 5-85! Other events throughout the year included service projects for all ages as well as fun gatherings like the Halloween Party and the Advent Workshop.



I was a mentor to Sala Kamara this year while he served as our ministry intern. It was inspiring to watch Salia grow in his confidence and abilities as he helped to lead worship at Christ Church throughout the year. I am grateful to Frank Bolden, Debra Trisler, Daryl Lubin and Abiola Fasehun, who served on an advisory board for Salia throughout his internship.

In January, I led a delegation of young adults to Washington, DC for a few days, along with Rob and Daryl Lubin and Andrew Sfiris. Our group visited sites of social justice and civil rights work, learning about important work being done in the city by the Church of the Savior and other religious organizations and volunteered our time with one of those non-profits to rake leaves for elderly residents. We spent a morning with the UCC office of Justice and Witness, learning about the work they do and going through training in how to speak to our congressional representatives. The afternoon was spent meeting with staff members of Sen. Kim and Sen. Booker to talk about issues of immigration. One highlight of the trip was sharing a meal with several Christ Church members who live and work in DC.



In February, our annual women's retreat was held at the Trinity Retreat Center in West Cornwall, Connecticut. We joined with some other folks for the theme of *Practices to Deepen Your Spiritual Life* led by Kathy Bozzuti-Jones. Although our retreat was cut a little bit short due to a snowstorm, we all had a good time and came home with lots of spiritual resources to use and share with the congregation.

In August 2025, I started serving on the pre-ordination commission for the NJ Association. Members of that commission work with Members in Discernment (MID's) who are considering a call to ordained ministry in the UCC. As part of my responsibilities, I am serving as advisor to Marybeth Doctor, a member of Christ Church and a graduate of Drew Theological School, who is in the process of discerning her call to ministry as an ordained pastor. Marybeth preached at Christ Church on May 10 and will be filling in for me on Sunday mornings when I take sabbatical from July - September of this year. You will be in very good hands while I'm away.

My sabbatical will take place from July 1 - September 25. During part of that time, Jeff and I will travel to see friends, spend time in retreat centers and explore the natural beauty of California and the Pacific Northwest. Thank you for allowing us to take this time for rest, reflection and revitalization. I am very grateful!

Rev. Julie Yarborough
Associate Pastor

Director of Children and Youth Ministries Report

What an incredible year of ministry beyond the walls of Christ Church. This past year, we reconnected with ministry partners in Farmington, Maine and Yardley, PA. In addition, we sent an intergenerational service teams (ages 7-70) to Swakopmund, Namibia. Our children continue to grow and learn about the scriptures on Sunday and fill our sanctuary with beautiful music. This fall, we were able to connect with our larger church family at the All Church Day at Camp Johnsonburg, as we soared through trees on the zipline, paddled on the lake, and communed together in the new open dining hall. It was a year of new experiences and building lasting memories.

Below is a small window into the Children and Youth (and Young Adult) Ministries at Christ Church.

Sunday School-

Our Sunday School had a wonderful year and we are so grateful that Kate Speer has returned to our leadership team. The kids learned about the Good Samaritan, Joseph, Noah's Ark, The Prodigal Son, Jesus' birth and resurrection, the Creation Story, and so much more. They also enjoyed God's creation by spending time in our native garden and with Travis' animals. Through music, art, cooking, and playing, our Sunday School kids are learning foundational bible stories that will continue to shape their moral compass.

Bev York continues to help behind the scenes and has found new ways to love our kids. Her beautiful art show raised over \$6000 for our youth programs (particularly scholarships for service trips) and is now adorning the homes of many who have been blessed by her years in ministry.

Finally, a special thank you to our shepherds Naima, Guiliana, and Tia and all our dedicated teachers who make our Sunday school program a success. Thank you to Christina Froelich for leading our Faith Formation Team, and Ms. Ali for bringing the gift of music to our youngest disciples.

Service Projects-

Youth Service Trip to Maine: Our team returned to Farmington, Maine and we partnered with Mission at the Eastward (MATE) for the second year in a row. We had 20 youth and adults dedicate hours of time and love, as we returned to the homes of Ms. Linda, and Anthony and Caleb. Highlights from the trip included riding ATVs, praying with Ms. Linda after ice cream, playing games, late night cooking, dancing in the street, searching for Moose, and white-water rafting. My heartfelt gratitude goes out to Doug and Krist Witkowski, John Nanavati, Derik Bracke and Chris Kile for ensuring that our team was safe, well cared for, and able to pick up a few new skills along the way.

Intergenerational Service Trip to Namibia: Our team of 24 spent two beautiful weeks in Namibia last summer and it was truly life changing for all who attended. Our time at the Baby House, preschool and market provided ample opportunities for personal/spiritual growth, relationship building, and cultural exchange. We tried new foods, learned to speak a bit of a new language, and remembered how genuine connection feels when it isn't hindered by electronics. Days were spent playing rugby and soccer on sandy roads, washing loads of baby laundry, and polishing carved animals while sharing stories. Our nights were spent searching for the Southern Cross and playing cupcake while we huddled on beds or around one heat lamp to stay warm. It was a beautiful two weeks of adventure with a few majestic animals crossing our path along the way.

Winter My Calling! in Yardley, PA: Our youth returned to Yardley for a weekend of service. They painted locker rooms and built benches at an inner city high school in Philadelphia, partnered with Cradles to Crayons, and prepared meals for families. It's a great weekend to reconnect with friends from Yardley United Methodist Church and support local communities. Thank you to John and Stina Nanavati, Natalie Fidlow, and Chris Kile for leading our youth.

High School Service Trip to Hawaii: On July 3rd, a team of 40 youth and 10 adults from Christ Church (our largest team yet!) will be venturing to the island of Kauai as we partner with Praying Pelican Ministries. We will be pouring a lot of love and care into the home and family of a young girl named Gia, who was paralyzed in a swimming accident. Please lift Gia and her family in prayers as our team works to create a safe, handicap accessible home for her. In addition, we will be partnering with local churches to assist with VBS, and engaging in a food ministry which helps local high school students raise money for college.

Youth Group-

Youth group continues to meet twice a month during the school year, and our youth enjoyed time together as they participated in scavenger hunts, ate ice cream, played gaga, and built new friendships. In addition, fifteen youth enjoyed a night at Camp Johnsonburg and a beautiful day of skiing/snowboarding at Shawnee Mountain. Thank you Ben Fidlow, Andrew Sfiris, Krista and Doug Witkowski, and Salia Kalmara for chaperoning our trip.

While enjoying fellowship with one another is a focus in youth group, we also look for opportunities to serve in the community. Last month, we ventured to the Summit Farmer's Market to purchase items for a meal prepared for Family Promise.

Confirmation Class-

Confirmation Class will be returning this year with all 7th through 12th grade students invited to join. I will send out an email over the summer for registration. I look forward to a fun and faith filled journey with this group of incredible young people.

In closing, I am so grateful for each and every one of you for the continuous support of our Children and Youth Ministries. As we grow and expand to incorporate more opportunities for children, youth, and young adults, and those with a heart to volunteer in our community and around the world, I am reminded that it truly takes a village of dedicated believers to make this ministry possible. Each of you have contributed to this work by offering your time, gifts, donations, and prayers- thank you! I look forward to seeing what this next year brings our way.

Blessings,

Ashley Kile

Director of Children and Youth Ministries



Report of the Minister of Music

*“And when the time for parting comes
God’s love will still be flowing
So let us join that song of love
Which even now is growing*

*When it feels like I’m lost, sing me home
In this place, we belong and are known
Come together and help make the song
Sing of love, sing of God, sing me home.”*

- Excerpt From “Sing Me Home”

The music of Christ Church helps to ‘sing people home’, providing a creative way for us find a deeper belonging, a richer meaning to what it is to be a child of God and part of God’s creation. The year 2025-2026 was a thriving time for the ministry of music at Christ Church! Annie Salorio continued this year as our Music and Fine Arts chair, and her report will list many of the wonderful happenings throughout the year at the church. Thank You, Annie for all your work in shepherding so many of our events! On Sept 27, 2025, members of the Chancel Choir participated in a 100+ voice gathering in a program of my music centered on justice and resilience at Morristown United Methodist Church. Our choir also participated by singing in an Interfaith musical celebration on May 11, 2026, with seven other neighborhood faith communities at Temple Sinai in Summit.

In January 2026, in a first for our church, twenty-five of us traveled to Rome, Italy, where I performed two organ concerts and led music for worship at the English-speaking Methodist church in Rome. It was a big success, and we hope to return for another ‘organ crawl’ tour.



Throughout the year we had many guest solo vocalists and instrumentalists offer their gifts in worship. Our Christmas Sunday and Christmas Eve services as well as our holy week services, in particular feature some of the highlights of our church year. Other mountain-top experiences include our “Let Justice Roll” concert (March 15, 2026) and the popular Juneteenth Gospel Brunch celebration on June 21, 2026.

The beating spiritual heart of our worship experience is the dedicated singers of the Chancel choir! We rehearse on Wednesday nights from 7:30-9:00 p.m. then arrive at 9 a.m. to warm-up and rehearse on Sunday morning. They just keep getting better year by year! The choir in 2025-26 is: Leslie Adler, Emilie Bishop, Mia Grizutti, Jillian Tundidor, Hedy Tukey, Penny Vigilante, Liz Markay, Jill Bernstein, Brinna Kolitz, Salia Paul Kamara, Nancy Mion, Kaden Quinn, Annie Salorio, Laura Willet, Beth Quick, Ken Grispin, Dean Nielsen, Jeremy Nielsen, CJ Fassl, Deb Trisler, Paul Tukey, Frank Bolden, Tim Dalton, John Houston, Matthew Markay, and Julian Wamble.

Ali Caravano, our fearless Children's Choir Director, inspires our young people in Genesis and Church Mice choir week by week with her energy and enthusiasm and encouragement, a consummate music educator! Matthew Chi Lee is a dedicated and brilliant collaborator with me as assistant music director, conductor and accompanist. I am always thankful for his generous spirit, willing to go with the flow!

Final shout outs to Andrew Sifiris and the tech team that works to bring our Sunday morning services to people around the planet. Their passion and commitment is helping to carry our church into the emerging worship of the 21st century. And to my wonderful colleagues, Brenda, Ashley, Chuck and Julie; it is an honor and pleasure (and a lot of fun!) to dream, plan, discuss, organize, strategize and pray with you on behalf of this precious congregation. Here's to another year!

Faithfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Miller', with a stylized, flowing script.

Mark Miller
Minister of Music

Ministry Intern Report

2025-2026

Introduction

My internship experience at Christ Church has been one of growth, learning, challenge, and affirmation of my calling to ministry. Coming from a Sierra Leonean United Methodist background and entering ministry in a North American church setting gave me the opportunity to learn new ways of leading worship, engaging with children and youth, and understanding ministry within a different cultural context. Throughout this internship, I was able not only to contribute to the life of the church but also to grow personally, spiritually, and professionally.

Worship Leadership in a North American Context

A central part of my internship was learning how to lead worship in a North American church setting. My responsibilities included offering children's messages, help with the Youth Ministry, starting a young adult group, reading scripture, singing in the choir, helping with the tech ministry, doing a concert, and preaching once during the internship.

These opportunities allowed me to observe and participate in the rhythms of worship leadership in a multicultural and intergenerational congregation. Coming from a strong music ministry background in Sierra Leone, I appreciated the opportunity to see how worship is organized and expressed within this context. Serving in worship also strengthened my confidence in public ministry and leadership.

Children's Ministry and Creativity

One of my major learning goals during this internship was learning how to become more creative in children's ministry. As part of this responsibility, I assisted with Sunday School once or twice a month and regularly offered children's messages during worship services. This became one of the most meaningful parts of my internship experience.

Working with children challenged me to communicate faith in simple, relatable, and engaging ways. I learned that children's ministry requires creativity, patience, and authenticity. Through storytelling, humor, and examples from my own Sierra Leonean background, I was able to connect with children in ways that made worship more interactive and memorable. These experiences gave me confidence and helped affirm my growing sense of call toward pastoral ministry.

Learning to Work with Youth

Another important learning goal was developing new skills for working with youth. During the internship, I assisted with the youth group once or twice a month. Although I had previous leadership experience working with young adults in Sierra Leone, I quickly learned that youth ministry in a North American context comes with different challenges and expectations.

Building trust and maintaining engagement requires consistency, creativity, and patience. Even though the opportunities were sometimes limited, the experience helped me better understand the importance of relationship-building in ministry and reminded me that effective ministry is rooted in presence and genuine connection.

The Ubuntu Multicultural Worship Event

A particularly meaningful experience during the internship was coordinating and leading the Ubuntu multicultural worship event in April 2026. One of my learning goals was incorporating different cultures and worship styles into an inclusive worship concert, and the Ubuntu concert became a practical expression of that goal.

The event brought together multicultural expressions of worship and allowed the congregation to experience music, culture, and faith from different communities. For me, Ubuntu represented more than just a concert; it represented the idea that worship can unite people across cultural and racial differences. I believe this event gave the church an opportunity to experience the beauty of multicultural ministry while also allowing me to share part of my identity and background with the congregation.

The Challenge of Young Adult Ministry

Another significant responsibility during my internship was working to establish a young adult group for individuals between the ages of 18 and 28. This was also one of the most challenging parts of my internship.

I entered the experience believing that working with young people would be relatively easy because of my past leadership experience. However, I quickly realized that ministry of any kind is not easy. Many of the young adults connected to the church were studying out of state, which made engagement difficult.

Although the process was challenging, it taught me valuable lessons about persistence, patience, and the realities of ministry. Ministry is not simply about having good ideas; it also requires relationship-building, timing, consistency, and understanding the needs and realities of people's lives. Even though the group is still developing, the experience helped me grow as a leader and taught me not to become discouraged when ministry does not immediately produce visible results.

Digital Ministry and Social Media Growth

One accomplishment that I am especially proud of during my internship was helping grow the church's social media presence. During my time at Christ Church, I helped grow the church's Instagram page from approximately 150 followers to over 1,300 followers, with engagement and view rates exceeding 60,000 views.

This experience demonstrated the importance of digital ministry in today's church context. Social media became a tool not only for communication but also for outreach, visibility, and engagement with both members and the wider community. Through this experience, I learned that ministry today extends beyond the walls of the church building and includes digital spaces where people connect and engage daily.

Personal and Ministerial Growth

Reflecting on this internship experience, I believe one of the greatest areas of growth for me has been confidence in pastoral ministry. Through preaching, worship leadership, children's ministry, and engaging with the congregation, I felt affirmed in my sense of calling.

Christ Church created an environment where I felt supported and encouraged to grow. The internship helped me move from simply seeing myself as a music leader to also recognizing my gifts for broader pastoral ministry. This affirmation has encouraged me as I prepare to pursue my pastoral license next year.

Appreciation

As I conclude this internship journey at Christ Church, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported, guided, and encouraged me throughout this experience.

First, I would like to thank Chuck Rush and the entire Christ Church congregation for welcoming me warmly and allowing me the opportunity to complete my internship within the church community. Your openness, kindness, and support created an environment where I was able to learn, grow, and serve confidently.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to Ashley Kile, Ali Caravano, Kate, Andrew, and Brenda for working with me throughout this process. Your support, patience, and willingness to assist me in different areas of ministry made this journey smoother and more meaningful.

I am especially grateful to my Teaching Committee: Debra Trisler, Abiola Fasehun, Daryl Lubin, and Frank Bolden. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me every month, for your wisdom, encouragement, thoughtful advice, and for continually supporting me, especially during moments when the journey became difficult. Your mentorship and care helped shape my growth throughout this internship.

Finally, I would like to thank my Site Mentors, Mark Miller and Julie Yarborough, for meeting with me regularly and guiding me throughout this journey. Your mentorship, insight, encouragement, and commitment to my development helped me gain confidence in ministry and leadership. I am deeply grateful for the time, wisdom, and support you invested in me throughout this internship experience.

Conclusion

My internship at Christ Church has been transformative. I came into this experience hoping to learn about ministry in a new context, and I leave with a deeper understanding of leadership, worship, multicultural ministry, and the realities of working with young people.

I also believe that while I learned from Christ Church, the church also learned from me, my background, and my experiences as an international student and worship leader from Sierra Leone. The internship became a mutual exchange of learning, culture, faith, and ministry.

As I move forward in ministry, I will carry the lessons, relationships, and experiences from this internship with me. This experience has strengthened my commitment to ministry and deepened my understanding that effective ministry requires patience, humility, creativity, and a willingness to grow continually.

Salia Kamara

The Executive Board

The 2025-2026 year has been a year of wonderful reinvigoration and renewal for our church community. Your board is here to serve you and our mission, and I hope you will join me in thanking them for their dedication and commitment. They put in countless hours behind the scenes, organizing Sunday School, evaluating local charities for donation opportunities, hanging an art show, preparing food, praying for those who need healing, delivering flowers, making signs, filming videos, writing minutes, counting pennies, paying bills, replacing ceiling tiles, planting a garden (both literally and figuratively, in some cases), and filling those tiny little cups full of grape juice. We are who we are as a community because of those acts of service and generosity.

I'd like to highlight just a few noteworthy items from the past year:

- For the first time in many years, we have balanced our budget. Woo hoo!! This is incredibly encouraging and a testament to the hard work of our Stewardship committee. We had many first-time donors and many donors who made significant increases in their pledges. All of it mattered. We will continue to focus on prudent cost management while investing in our historic building, and supporting the music, arts, and other programs that make this place so special.
- As part of planning for the future, under Cary Hardy's leadership we have launched the Legacy Giving Society. If you'd like to include Christ Church in your estate plans, we would be glad to help.
- We have re-energized our relationship with, and management of, the Cornerstone School. This is beneficial to both organizations. Many of our members are now serving on the preschool's board; if you're interested in learning more, please speak with Robin French, Ginny Jordan, or Terry Baker.
- We have a wonderful new website that better showcases what we have to offer, and it's much easier to navigate. Check it out! We hope it puts our best foot forward in attracting prospective members. Or better yet, tell your friends about us!
- Attendance at our events and in the sanctuary is strong. Our small groups are thriving within the bonds of the larger church, and all of them are open to anyone who would like to participate. Consider joining Choir, LAFA, Quest, Prayer Group, Green Team, and more.
- We are also entering our 150th Year. We're already memorializing and celebrating, with more to come. The Progressive Dinner quiz was just a teaser!
- Not a particularly sexy topic, but your board is also hard at work updating the church bylaws, which haven't been revisited in over a decade. We're clarifying governance structures, modernizing a few outdated provisions (including the one requiring us to post meeting notices

on the front door), and improving overall readability. We are targeting early fall to share the updated bylaws for your review.

- We remain indebted to our wonderful staff. We're thankful for Chuck's successful surgery, for Julie's upcoming sabbatical, for Mark's earworms, and for Ashley, Ali, Matthew, Andrew, and of course, Brenda. To a person they are kind, fun, inclusive, and inspiring.

If there's anything you'd like to discuss about the above, or anything else the board can be helpful with, give a holler (908-418-8413). And if you would like to join a fun and interesting group of people on the board or a committee, we'd be delighted to have you.

When the world outside us seems ever-more divided and fraught, I'm grateful to be part of a community where everyone is welcome. We don't always agree, and even within the board we have had some meaningful and deep conversations about the issues we care about. But what keeps me coming back is the assurance that well-meaning people with love in their hearts can accomplish wonderful things, especially because of our different upbringings, points of view, and individual priorities. We are making it happen.

With gratitude and thanks.

Respectfully,

Deanna Smeltz
Executive Board Chair

Church Clerk's Report

Christ Church Congregational Meeting – 2026 Budget Presentation and Review- Feb 1, 2026

An informational meeting was held to review the proposed 2026 operational budget for Christ Church and provide an opportunity for questions from the congregation. The meeting was held in-person, immediately following the church service on Sunday February 1 at 11:25AM.

Steve Jones, Treasurer of the Executive Board, opened the meeting by thanking the congregation for the successful 2026 pledge campaign. He also thanked Karen Harrison, Hedy Tukey, and Debra Trisler for their invaluable assistance with the church financial operations. Steve then reviewed the proposed operational budget for 2026, which was distributed to the congregation via email and also handed out during the meeting.

Steve's review included a summary of 2025 performance: On the revenue side, pledges came in as budgeted and contributions were ahead of budget. Building use was up due to a special \$70,000 payment from Cornerstone School, representing back rent and surplus funds. On the expense side, Steve noted that 90% of our expenses are attributed to staff compensation and maintenance of the physical plant. Compensation was under budget due to underuse of the Sexton position. Property Managers' expenses were also under budget. In 2025, we had an overall surplus of \$46k.

As to the 2026 proposed budget, Steve explained the following: On the revenue side, the 2026 Stewardship Campaign resulted in pledges of \$760,000 – a dramatic increase over previous years. Contributions have been budgeted a bit less than in 2025. Building use is budgeted for \$175k and represents rent from our current tenants. On the expense side, compensation includes a cost-of-living increase for staff as well as increased hours for the Sexton. Steve noted that thanks to the diligent work of Lou Blanco, Property Managers expense is under control. The \$300k budget includes \$40k for major repairs. There is not much change in other expenses. As a result, the budget reflects a \$13k surplus for 2026. Following a brief question and answer period, Steve reported that an online vote for the budget will be emailed to the congregation this week.

Addendum: the 2026 budget was approved by a quorum of members as of 2/11/26

Respectfully submitted,
Jayne Graepel, Clerk

New Members

November 16, 2025

Jake Nobles
Dexter Barahona

March 15, 2026

Ben Stein
Elle Conde
Barbara Quinn
Kaden Quinn

Confirmation Class – No Class for 2026

Deaths

Vincent Mount – August 23, 2025

Allen Cheng – October 7, 2025

Baptisms

Ana Kincaid – October 12, 2025

Ainhara Miel Barry Godín – October 26, 2025

Noah Ambre-Mathias - November 2, 2025

Donovan Francis Pronko – December 21, 2025

Audrey Marilyn Cohen – April 19, 2026

Adeline Smith – May 17, 2026

Alexandra Perry Stein – May 31, 2026

Slate of Nominees

A. EXECUTIVE BOARD

<i>Chair</i>	Deanna Smeltz
<i>Vice Chair</i>	Robin French
<i>Cornerstone Liason</i>	Terry Baker
<i>Clerk</i>	Jayne Graepel
<i>Treasurer</i>	Steve Jones

Chairs of Boards

<i>Board of Membership</i>	Erica Malik
<i>Board of Deacons</i>	TBD
<i>Board of World Fellowship</i>	Patty O'Neill
<i>Board of Property Mgrs</i>	Lou Blanco
<i>Board of Music & Fine Arts</i>	Annie Salorio
<i>Board of Resources</i>	Mary Dickey

B. BOARDS and COMMITTEES

1. DEACONS

Robin French Krista Witkowski Hedy Tukey Tony Forman	Trudy Noonan Dolly Blanco Laura O'Rourke Suzie Wall	Barry Pilgrim Pam Morse Andrew Froehlich Paul Judicke

2. FINANCE

3. MEMBERSHIP

Erica Malik, chair Lynn Richardson Laura O'Rourke	Ginny Jordan Sue Salsberry Carol Angle	Jeff Andrienas Chuck Gelber Andrew Miller
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4. PROPERTY MANAGERS

Louis Blanco Stewart Trisler Chuck Gelber	Chuck Mixon Frederick Taylor-Kincaid Peter Richardson	Al Pastino

5. RESOURCES

Mary Dickey Debra Trisler (design)		
TBD		
Patty O'Neill, chair Rob Morse Anne Kennison	Mila Trigos Roz Kendellen	Yesenia Reichart Bill LaCurtis Dean Nielsen

6. RETF**7. WORLD FELLOWSHIP****8. FAITH FORMATION**

Christina Froehlich John Ross, co chairs Caroline Love Lauren Van Orden	Krista Witkowski Kate Speer Christine Ciano Mark DeMillio	Bev York Lynn Richardson Lisa Cardinal

9. MUSIC & ARTS

Anne Salorio, chair Manish Ambre Brina Kolitz Ed Walter	Kim Reynolds Patty O'Neill Lizanne Ceconi	Cary Hardy Nancy Mion Rosemarie Gelber

10. CHURCH LIFE

Penny Vigilante Claire Rupkey		

**11. ASSISTANT
TREASURERS**

Karen Harrison Hedy Tukey		
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12. MEMORIAL GARDEN	John Houston
13. GREENFAITH COMMITTEE	Jennifer Nielsen Jill Berstein Nancy Davies
14. USHERS	Terry Baker Annel Mitchell Chuck Gelber Roz Kendellen Lou Blanco Lynn Richardson Chuck Mixon Anne Kennison Jim Carson Ashley Campisano Daryl & Rob Lubin David & Lindsay Rosoff Erica & Khurram Malik
SUNDAY SCHOOL PLANNING	Ashley Kile Kate Speer
FINANCIAL SECRETARIES	Brian Angle Tom Cummins John Ahlbeck Stewart Trisler
PAYROLL	
ALTAR FLOWERS	John Houston (Need Volunteers)

Financial Secretary/Board of Resources 2025-2026

Financial Secretaries Report

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>
Number of Pledges	128	132
Total Amount Pledged	\$656,435	\$770,054
Total Received on Those Pledges	\$658,564	
Number of Pledges Met	103	
Number of Pledges Exceeded	16	
Number of Uncompleted Pledges	9	
General Contributions (non-pledgers)	\$218,680	
Donations to SOS	\$16,755	\$17,275 (to date)

The pledge drive for 2026 resulted in an increase of 17%, after the stewardship committee requested larger increases.

Automatic recurring online donations are used by 39 donors, with another 8 donors sending recurring checks directly from their bank accounts. 17 pledgers paid their full pledge in advance of the calendar year.

Statements were sent via email in February of 2026 to all donors that contributed \$250 or more in 2025, and included amounts paid as pledges, general contributions, and SOS contributions. During 2025, emails were sent mid-year and again before year-end to all pledgers showing all payments received. Giving statements are available at any time on-line, via a secure, password-protected account.

Brian Angle, Tom Cummins, John Ahlbeck and Stewart Trisler

Treasurer's Report for the Year 2025-2026

Please refer to the page showing Christ Church's financial performance in 2025 and the approved budget for 2026.

2025 Performance

The church recorded a surplus of approximately \$46,000 in 2025, lower than the \$70,000 surplus generated in 2024, which was bolstered by \$114,000 of Matching Challenge funds.

Pledges in 2025 were \$650,100, modestly below 2024 levels of \$667,500, while Contributions increased to \$119,600 compared to \$104,100 in 2024, reflecting strong congregational support outside of formal pledges.

Building Use income was a significant positive contributor in 2025, totaling \$218,400, well above prior year levels of \$135,900, although it benefited from one-time catch-up rent payments from Cornerstone School.

On the expense side, total expenses were \$957,600, slightly lower than 2024 expenses of \$967,700, reflecting continued discipline across most categories. Compensation & Benefits were essentially flat year-over-year, Property Managers expense declined, and other operating categories remained generally in line with expectations

2026 Approved Budget

The 2026 budget reflects a projected surplus of approximately \$13,000, compared to the \$46,000 surplus in 2025, as we plan for both higher expenses and a reset in certain income categories.

Most notably, we ran a highly successful pledge campaign to achieve budgeted pledges of \$760,000 for 2026. **This represents a record level of pledged support for Christ Church, and the congregation should be congratulated for this outstanding accomplishment.**

Contributions are conservatively budgeted at \$90,000, and Building Use income is budgeted at \$175,000, below the elevated 2025 level and reflecting contracted rent for 2026.

On the expense side, total expenses are budgeted to increase to approximately \$1.03 million, driven primarily by higher Property Managers costs and modest increases across most categories. Compensation & Benefits and Property Managers continue to represent the substantial majority of church expenditures.

Christ Church Summit
Income & Expense - Budget vs. Actual
Year Ended December 31, 2025

Income	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Pledges	650,100.00	760,000.00	109,900.00
Contributions	119,600.00	90,000.00	-29,600.00
Matching Challenge	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash in Plate	15,900.00	15,000.00	-900.00
Building Use	<u>218,400.00</u>	<u>175,000.00</u>	<u>-43,400.00</u>
Total Income	<u>1,004,000.00</u>	<u>1,040,000.00</u>	<u>36,000.00</u>
Expense			
Compensation & Benefits	585,700.00	605,000.00	19,300.00
Property Managers	259,500.00	300,000.00	40,500.00
Music & Fine Arts	30,200.00	30,000.00	-200.00
Board of World Fellowship	7,500.00	10,000.00	2,500.00
Denomination Payments	10,000.00	10,000.00	0.00
Christian Education	8,200.00	10,000.00	1,800.00
Office Expenses	16,500.00	18,000.00	1,500.00
Information Technology	17,900.00	18,000.00	100.00
Video Production	17,400.00	18,000.00	600.00
Deacons	2,100.00	4,000.00	1,900.00
Church Life	1,600.00	3,000.00	1,400.00
Race Equity Taskforce	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Expenses	<u>1,000.00</u>	<u>1,000.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Total Expenses	<u>957,600.00</u>	<u>1,027,000.00</u>	<u>69,400.00</u>
Net Income	<u><u>46,400.00</u></u>	<u><u>13,000.00</u></u>	<u><u>-33,400.00</u></u>

Board of Deacons 2025-2026

Deacons Committee

Submitted by Paul Judicke - May 27, 2026

Committee members for 2025-2026

Dolly Blanco
Vinny Caravano
Tony Forman
Robin French
Andrew Froehlich
Paul Judicke
Trudy Noonan
Laura O'Rourke
Barry Pilgrim
Dave Rosoff
Hedy Tukey
Krista Witkowski

Committee members for 2026-27 to be finalized in June 2026

Committee Activities

Deacons supply, prepare and administer the Eucharist and deliver Easter lilies, Christmas poinsettias and altar flowers to parishioners; facilitate Holy Week services; support members of our church family; and change the paraments according to the church calendar.

The Deacon group has distributed over 160 flower bouquets to parishioners, visitors, guest speakers, and performers, sharing Christ Church's support for those in recovery or grief and celebrating achievements.

In June 2026, the Reverends and the Chair will finalize the 2026-2027 Deacon roster. New and existing Deacon training will commence in late summer/early fall after the 2026-2027 Deacon roster has been finalized.

Board of Faith Formation

Achievements:

- Successful Sunday School program each week for children pre-k-sixth grade
- Developed a Safe Church Policy and Background Check System for all volunteers with youth
- Multiple service-learning trips- intergenerational trip to Namibia, high schoolers to Maine, middle schoolers to Pennsylvania
- Consistent youth group meetings and trips
- Two successful retreats- Women's Retreat in March 2026 and All-Church Family Fun Day in October 2025
- Intergenerational events- Halloween Event, pre-Thanksgiving Day of Service, Advent Festival, two Meals for the Homeless Events, Youth Led Worship service
- Adult education events included a visit from Fletcher Harper from Green Faith, and monthly Quest meetings.

Goals:

- Confirmation Class and Service
- Increase adult education opportunities.
- Increase attendance at intergenerational church events.
- Recruit more active members to the Faith Formation committee

Respectfully Submitted,
Christina Froehlich and John Ross, co-chairs

Board of Property Managers 2025-2026

Christ Church property managers are responsible for the maintenance, repair and operations of the sanctuary, Cornerstone School and the parsonage, including buildings as well as grounds. Property Managers oversee the services of numerous outside contractors who provide the many services required by the Church such as sanitation, grounds maintenance, cleaning, inspections, elevator service, electrical, plumbing, etc.

The property managers also oversee and approve the rental of the church's facilities to outside organizations.

Projects completed year include:

- After entertaining various solutions to heat portions of the church including Lile Hall, the connector between the sanctuary and Barnwell and the choir room. It was decided that replacing the old steam boiler and repairing the steam piping where needed was the most practical and cost-effective solution. The installation and repairs were completed by R.A. Dill & Sons for a total cost of approximately \$13,500.
- Stucco was repaired on two sections of the Barnwell building where the Stucco was either separating from the building or otherwise damaged. The work was completed by ZD Stucco Repair at a cost of \$11,175.
- Two defective sump pumps in the Barnwell basement were replaced at a cost of approximately \$650. The work was done in house. Various other plumbing and heating issues were also handled in house as needed.

Pending projects, with fairly high priority include:

- A proposal by Novalis Roofing, to seal the atrium roof and skylights with the AcryLabs System, for \$28,129, has been accepted. Work should commence within the next few weeks.
- The kitchen grease trap remains an issue. Several companies have provided acceptable quotes however, getting them to actually do the work is proving difficult.
- Masonry Repairs – there are many areas, most notably the driveway drain grates and the steps on New England Ave. that are in need of repair for which I am beginning to get estimates.
- Identify a company to provide a maintenance contract for the church's three boilers, two of which have not been serviced in several years.

Long Term Goals and Projects

- All building entrances, with the exception of the Cornerstone School are in need of extensive repair and upgrading as they deteriorate and become hazardous with the passing of time. This will be a major capital expense.
- Providing air conditioning in Lile Hall is an improvement that would be appreciated by many.
- The exterior of Barnwell Hall should be painted with elastomeric paint to seal hairline cracks and extend the life of the stucco.

Maintaining the church's facilities is a monumental and often expensive task. The aim of the property managers is to prioritize our many needs, select reliable, qualified vendors and maintain our facilities in pristine condition while staying within budget.

I would be remiss if I didn't credit Brenda Dodds for her day to day involvement with the many people who use our facilities and the many vendors that provide us with services.

Respectfully submitted by:
Louis Blanco

Finance/Stewardship Committee

Pledge Campaign- We exceeded our goal of \$750,000 by achieving total pledges totalling \$770,054. This is the largest amount collected in a pledge campaign in the church's history. The average pledge was \$5,834 up 14% from last year. Please see attached for more details.

Legacy Campaign-Stewardship has joined with the newly established Legacy Committee on a planned giving campaign which launched in May of 2026. This will be an ongoing effort to obtain bequests to the church.

Respectfully submitted,

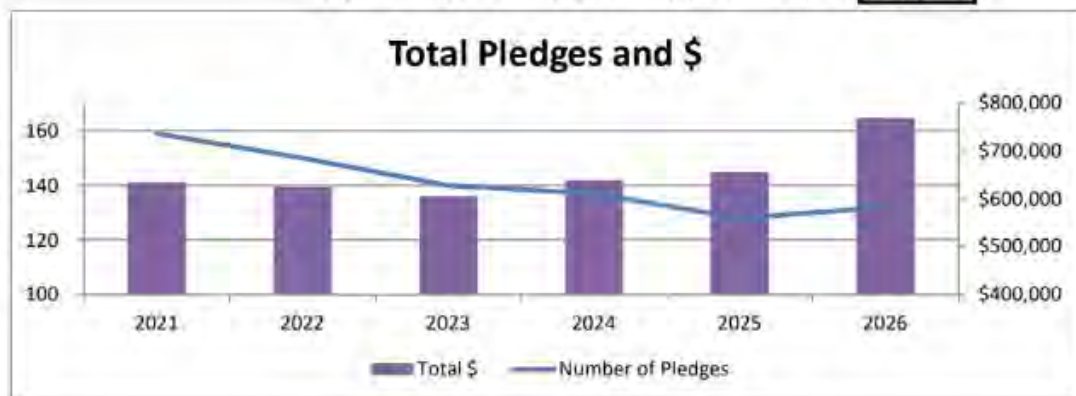
Mary Dickey
Chair-Stewardship

2026 Pledge Campaign

Highlights

- This year there was a big push to ask donors to step up their pledges. This was successful!
- There were 132 pledges, 4 more than last year, for a total of \$770,054. This is the highest pledge total ever.
- Overall, total pledge dollars were up 17%, and the average pledge increased 14% to \$5,834.
- The increased total was due to increases in pledge amounts from 47% of existing members.
- The top 30 households provide 60% of total pledges.
- 88% of last year's pledgers made a pledge for 2026. We lost 15 pledgers, and gained 19.
- The 19 new and returning pledgers totalled \$34,490. Lost pledges totalled \$40,700.
- The number of brand new pledgers was 8. Their average pledge was only \$857.

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>
Number of Pledges	159	150	140	137	128	132
Total \$	\$634,308	\$624,770	\$605,905	\$639,071	\$656,435	\$770,054
Average \$	\$3,989	\$4,165	\$4,328	\$4,665	\$5,128	\$5,834



Distribution of pledges-Summary

	Count						
	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>'26 v '25</u>
Under \$3000	73	68	62	59	48	53	5
\$3000 - \$4999	48	47	46	29	28	27	(1)
\$5000 - \$6999	21	19	18	27	31	22	(9)
\$7000 plus	17	16	14	22	21	30	9
Total	159	150	140	137	128	132	4

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>			<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	
	<u>Dollars</u>	<u>Dollars</u>	<u>Change</u>		<u>Average</u>	<u>Average</u>	
Under \$3000	\$73,690	\$74,780	\$1,090	1%	\$1,535	\$1,411	-8%
\$3000 - \$4999	\$107,224	\$106,874	(\$350)	0%	\$3,829	\$3,958	3%
\$5000 - \$6999	\$167,521	\$122,850	(\$44,671)	-27%	\$5,404	\$5,584	3%
\$7000 plus	\$308,000	\$465,550	\$157,550	51%	\$14,667	\$15,518	6%
Total	\$656,435	\$770,054	\$113,619	17%	\$5,128	\$5,834	14%

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>% of pledges</u>
Pledgers increasing by 20% or more	21	16	13	30	21	30	23%
Pledgers increasing by 10% to 20%	14	10	15	16	16	24	18%
Pledgers increasing by 1% to 10%	13	14	11	10	12	8	6%
Pledges equal to last year	60	79	69	53	55	45	34%
Pledges less than last year	32	18	17	11	11	6	5%
Returning Pledgers	140	137	125	120	115	113	86%
Returning: Pledges from prior pledgers	3	7	12	6	5	11	8%
First-time Pledges	16	6	3	11	8	8	6%
	159	150	140	137	128	132	100%
Dropouts, from prior year pledger	(19)	(22)	(25)	(20)	(22)	(15)	

Supplemental Data

Distribution of Pledges

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>'26 v '25</u>
Up to \$499	8	8	7	8	4	7	3
\$500 - \$999	12	9	8	7	5	8	3
\$1000 - \$1499	18	18	16	15	12	12	0
\$1500 - \$1999	14	14	8	10	10	11	1
\$2000 - \$2499	16	10	13	14	14	9	(5)
\$2500 - \$2999	5	9	10	5	3	6	3
\$3000 - \$3499	14	17	10	7	6	7	1
\$3500 - \$3999	16	14	11	10	8	3	(5)
\$4000 - \$4999	18	16	25	12	14	17	3
\$5000 - \$5999	15	13	11	22	24	14	(10)
\$6000 - \$6999	6	6	7	5	7	8	1
\$7000 - \$8999	4	3	2	8	5	9	4
\$9000 - \$10000	5	4	2	3	4	6	2
Over \$10k	8	9	10	11	12	15	3
	159	150	140	137	128	132	4

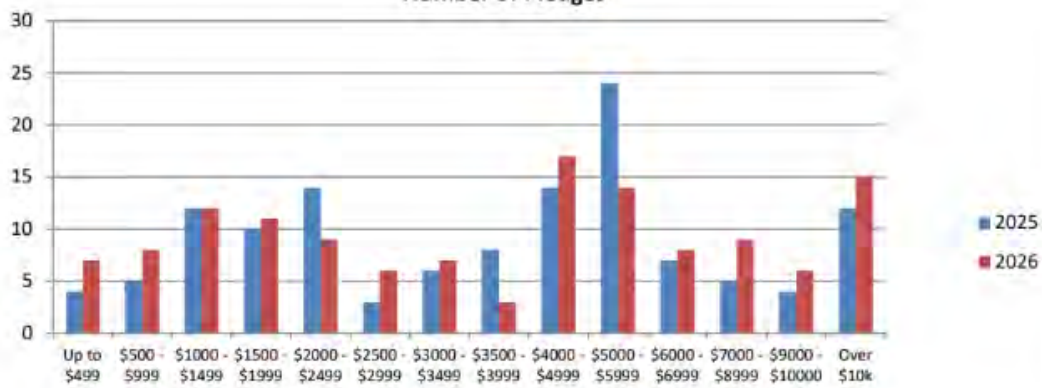
Distribution of Pledges



Distribution of Dollars



Number of Pledges



Board of World Fellowship 2025-2026

The Board of World Fellowship (BWF) is the outreach arm of Christ Church, charged with the oversight of funds that benefit from the generosity of our congregation. All donations by World Fellowship are made to charities to advance their missions, as well as the mission of Christ Church.

Christ Church Annual Budget World Fellowship has been allotted \$10,000 from the Christ Church 2026 budget, an increase from 2025. To date BWF has used \$7,500 for the **2026 3Kings gifts**. Each of the following three organizations, which were nominated by church members, received \$2,500: **The Empowering Kids Organization** (Summit); **Moms Helping Moms** (Warren); and **World Organization for Positive Action** (Pompton Lakes). In addition, World Fellowship also sent \$500 to **Family Promise Union County** in April. World Fellowship will allot other grants from the church's 2026 budget will be spent later this year.

SOS – Seasons of Sharing World Fellowship administers the church's SOS fund, which was established around 80 years ago, and is currently the largest source of outreach funding at Christ Church. Each year during Lent, the congregation is asked to support SOS. In spring 2026, members gave over \$17,000 to SOS. (Note that much of the money was donated in April and May, after BWF had announced to the congregation that we had collected over \$11,000 through Easter.) SOS Funds are held in a separate account that is not part of the church budget.

World Fellowship uses SOS to help non-profits that respond to acute situations (like hurricanes and wildfires) and to those dealing with ongoing problems (like climate change and food scarcity). BWF members research and recommend organizations, using a resource like Charity Navigator, to make sure the organizations are responsible. The entire board votes on each recommendation.

Between May 1, 2025, and May 5, 2026, World Fellowship used SOS money to support 12 organizations with 14 grants, totaling \$21,800.

International: Gifts to international organizations total \$13,800, with individual grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000: **BRAC USA** (an international nonprofit) to help in Myanmar after earthquake in March 2025; **International Refugee Committee** (IRC) towards vaccination program in Africa; **World Central Kitchen** (2 separate grants, each for Gaza); **Save the Children** (earmarked for South Sudan); **United Church of Christ Global Ministry** (to help in Jamaica in the wake of Hurricane Melissa); and Ecosources Sustainable Initiatives, a US nonprofit which raises funds for the **Kitale Children's Home** in Kenya.

Local and National: Gifts to organizations in the United States totaled \$8,000, with individual gifts ranging between \$500 and \$2,500: **A Sense of Home** (a nonprofit in Los Angeles that helps kids who age out of foster care and which also helped people who became homeless after the wildfires in LA in 2025); **Moms Helping Moms** (Warren, NJ); **Family Promise of Union County** (two gifts from SOS); **Grace Kitchen** (Summit); **First Friends of New York and New Jersey** (service to immigrants in our area); Churches Improving Communities (New Brunswick area) for **DIRE Legal Services** [DIRE = Deportation & Immigration Response Equipo].

Margaret Baker Fund Margaret Baker was a teacher and long-time member of the church whose generous bequest to Christ Church created the Margaret Baker Fund in the 1990s. The Margaret Baker gift funds a three-year grant to a nonprofit, usually for an educational project. At present, the gift is \$4,000 a year. The current recipient is **Keys2Success**, which brings "quality music education to students starting in Pre-K in the most underserved areas of Newark." Keys2Success is headquartered at the New Providence Methodist Church.

Direct Help In 2025-26, World Fellowship asked Christ Church friends and members to contribute to some local projects: a drive for **Books for Babies**, a program of Moms Helping Moms; school supplies for **Family Promise of Union** County; and, thanks to Cynthia Matthis, friends and members were offered a chance to volunteer at the **Community Foodbank of New Jersey's** warehouse in Irvington in March.

We also collect musical keyboards for Keys2Success, our current Margaret Baker recipient. The donated keyboards are given to students in the Keys2Success program so they can practice at home. Four keyboards were donated in 2025-26. *If you have one you'd like to donate, please contact World Fellowship.*

BWF Members The members of the Board of World Fellowship for 2025-26 were: Roz Kendellen, Anne Kennison, Bill LaCurtis, Dean Nielsen, Patty O'Neill and Jessie Reichart. World Fellowship is looking for new members to help Christ Church continue to respond to those in need.

Submitted by Anne Kennison, Chair
May 2026

150TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

The 150th Anniversary Committee was formed under the authority of the Executive Board of Christ Church to organize and coordinate activities to commemorate the founding of the church in 1876.

Among the activities/events in the planning or discussion stages are:

- Formation of a Legacy Society to encourage members to include Christ Church in their estate planning.
- Creation of a book about the church's stained-glass windows for sale or distribution to members or donors as well as a coloring book for the children.
- Writing of a history of the church updating the one completed for the 100th anniversary in 1976.
- Having former ministers come to preach during the period of Pastor Rush's medical leave.
- Planning for a 'Homecoming' in the fall.
- Reaching out to descendants of those memorialized on the stained-glass windows or in the Memorial Garden.
- Preliminary planning for a Capital Campaign for the spring of 2027.
- Various other 'Fun-raising' activities.

Anyone interested in participating in any of the above activities should contact Brenda at the church office.

Terry Baker
Chair

Membership Board

The Membership Committee organizes New Member Sundays and small gatherings to introduce new and prospective members to the church. During New Member Sundays, the Congregation welcomes new members into the church during worship service. Small Gatherings are held off-site with a limited guest list to enable new joiners, as well as prospective members, to meet existing members in a casual and relaxed social setting.

We held one small gathering this year as well as New Member Sundays in the fall and spring. In October, we hosted an informal drop-in gathering at The Office, open to all Christ Church members, as a pilot for a new type of community-building event.

This year, the committee worked on a new church website, launching it this spring as a first step in broader outreach efforts. With the website now in place, the committee looks forward to focusing its energy on new member recruitment and community-building events in the coming year.

New Christ Church Households

Fall 2025: Barahona/Nobles Family (Dexter and Jake)



Spring 2026: Stein/Condé Family (Ben, Elle, and Alexandra), Quinn Family (Kaden and Barbara)



Finally, we are grateful for the continued dedication of our committee members. Erica Malik will serve as Chair beginning next year. The Committee consists of: Jeff Andrienas, Carol Angle, Chuck Gelber, Erica Malik, Andrew Miller, Laura O'Rourke, Lynn Richardson, and Rev. Julie Yarborough.

Sincerely,

Laura Anne, Chair

Board of Music & Arts 2025-2026

Committee members for 2025-26

Mark Miller, Minister of Music
Anne Salorio, Chair
Lizanne Ceconi
Rosemarie Gelber
Cary Hardy
Ed Walter

Musical Programs

Sunday, June 15, 2025 – Juneteenth Gospel Brunch – The return of a favorite in the Christ Church calendar! Once again, the community gathered for a special Sunday worship service featuring a delicious spread of breakfast foods and uplifting songs of joy and resistance from Christ Church members and friends.



The majority of the breakfast was provided by a volunteer crew from AA, who wanted to thank the church for providing their meeting space. We are so grateful for their generosity and good cooking! Other elements of the breakfast included fried chicken from local favorite, Tonydoms, and grits from Rev. Rush. As expected, it was an uplifting day of fellowship and celebration — attended by nearly 150 people!

Donations were collected at the door. Suggested donation \$40.00 for adults, \$15.00 for children under 12.

Saturday, September 6, 2025 – Bobby Jo Valentine Concert - After connecting and corresponding with us over email, singer-songwriter Bobby Jo Valentine gave an outstanding concert in the sanctuary. Church members and friends were deeply moved by his kindness, openness, compelling story-telling, and moving songs. He was also able to join our worship service the next morning, allowing those who couldn't attend the concert to experience his music! This was a wonderful new connection, and we would love to have him back if he is ever in the area again.

Donations were collected at the door. Suggested donation \$25.00.

Sunday, December 21, 2025 – *Hope for the Holidays: Annual Holiday Cabaret* – This cozy concert has established itself as a Christ Church holiday must-see. Talented members and friends performed festive songs and holiday classics, along with a few songs exploring themes of finding hope and happiness through challenging times. The audience enjoyed light refreshments and enthusiastically supported the performers.

Suggested donations of \$20.00 (\$10.00 for kids) were collected to help cover costs of food and drink.

This was the most well-attended cabaret in recent memory, and we have almost outgrown Lile Hall. We will explore possible new locations for next year.

Sunday, March 15th – *Let Justice Roll* – Another concert highlight of the year featuring the Chancel Choir in collaboration with invited singers and instrumentalists. As always, the concert culminated with the titular “Let Justice Roll”, a musical adaptation of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “*Letter from a Birmingham Jail*,” composed by Mark Miller.

Donations were collected at the door. Suggested donation \$20.00

Visual Arts

May and June 2025 – *Kathy Havens Solo Art Show* - Longtime member and local artist Kathy Havens served as our springtime artist-in-residence, with paintings displayed in Barnwell Hall. Featuring many landscape and still life paintings, the art was a beautiful and welcome addition to the space. The show was launched on May 18th, with coffee hour in Barwell to encourage the congregation to view the artwork. Kathy was also available to answer any questions.

Early October 2025 – *Bev York Art Show and Sale* – Beloved member Bev York displayed paintings in Barnwell Hall for the first half of the month. Members were invited to bid on the paintings, with proceeds from sales benefitting the youth group. The congregation enthusiastically and generously participated, raising nearly \$6,000.



November 2025 – *Neela Pushparaj Solo Art Show* - Local artist Neela Pushparaj, who specializes in watercolor, filled Barnwell Hall with her art throughout the month of November. We are eager to expand these “artist-in-residence” opportunities at the church going forward.

We are so grateful for this community that loves and supports the arts!

Church Life Committee

30th Anniversary of Rev. Chuck Rush - On behalf of the Church Life Committee , I am happy to report that we hosted a 30th Anniversary Luncheon in December to celebrate Chuck Rush's 30 Years as Sr. Pastor of Christ Church. It was a wonderful celebration, involving local and area former members, neighbors and current members, as we spoke about our time together as a congregation.

Annual Progressive Dinner - In order to give a bit of time between celebrations, and to avoid sometimes slightly harsh winter weather conditions, we opted to hold Progressive Dinner 2026 this year on April 18th. This turned out to be a very good move, as our usual time of very early February this year ended up being devastatingly cold and icy, such that we may not have been able to hold the event safely. As it ended up, we had beautiful, safe weather, 125 attendees, a delicious meal prepared by church member and Summit restaurant owner Mary Cummins and her team, great gathered Appetizers at the home of church members Lauren and Michael Garvey, then delicious dinner at the homes of thirteen of our church members who opened their homes to groups of six to twelve for the balance of the evening. We are thrilled that more and more people from our congregation opt to try out this invigorating event where we get to know others in our midst.

Respectfully,

Penny Vigilante

Ushers

Ushering continues to be one of the most enjoyable ways of meeting people, assisting members of the community and participating in the worship service.

During the past year 14 individuals and family groups – as well as an occasional volunteer – participated in ushering.

In addition to providing a welcoming smile as people enter the sanctuary, ushers also get to hang out with the choir before they process which is about as cool as a non-singer can get at Christ Church.

Thanks to all the volunteers who joined in!

Terry Baker
Usher Coordinator.

Cornerstone School

Board of Trustees

In August 2025, Cornerstone School installed a newly constituted Board of Trustees to provide governance and strategic oversight in support of the school's mission. The Board is chaired by Robin French, Esq., who has served for 13 years as a board member with Advocates for Children in New York City, a non-profit dedicated to educational achievement for all students in NYC. Additional trustees include Virginia Jordan; Terry Baker, Treasurer; Lauren Mozer, Secretary and Cornerstone parent; Karen Harrison, Assistant Treasurer; and Kelly Mokkaapati, Cornerstone parent.

Fiscal Review

Cornerstone School closed the 2025–2026 fiscal year in a stable financial position. Revenue remained diversified and on target, supported by tuition and enrollment fees as the primary source of income, supplemented by community fundraising and grant awards secured during the year. Operational expenditures were managed responsibly within the approved budget, with the largest share directed toward instructional programs and staff development in direct support of students. Facilities and operations were fully maintained, and the school's reserve fund grew in accordance with board fiscal policy — ensuring continuity and readiness for future investment. The Board of Trustees reviewed year-end financial statements.

NJ GROW Inspection — Rating: 3 STARS

This year, Cornerstone School successfully completed the New Jersey Growing, Reaching, and Offering Wellness (NJ GROW) inspection — a comprehensive quality assessment administered by the New Jersey Department of Education — and achieved the target rating of 3 Stars. This achievement reflects the school's demonstrated strengths in curriculum alignment with New Jersey Student Learning Standards, qualified and professionally developed teaching staff, health and safety compliance, and inclusive family engagement practices. The rating equally serves as an honest benchmark and is the first private pre-school in Summit to achieve a NJ GROW rating.



Memorial Garden

We still hope to see the plaques containing nameplates removed from the exterior walls of the atrium and returned to the Memorial Garden area at the top of the stairs, where they were housed for decades before Barnwell Hall construction required their removal. Funds have not been available.

The Memorial Garden continues to be a place for quiet meditation, reflection and prayer, and provides a final resting place for former members and friends of Christ Church. It is supported by donations and fees: \$1000 per member and \$2000 per non-member, which includes an inscribed bronze nameplate. Spaces can be reserved by sending a letter of intention, with payment, to the Christ Church Administrator, Brenda Dodds.

John Houston, Chair

Shawl Ministry

The shawl ministry is a virtual group at Christ Church. We do not have meetings. We are a group of women who knit or crochet shawls at our leisure to be donated to members of Christ Church or to other people in need of comfort. They are given to Rev Julie Yarborough to give to the people who need them. She knows the needs of the congregation.

We are listed with the national group Prayer Shawl Ministry. <http://www.shawlministry.com/>
We could use more members. We have the directions for the basic shawl or they can be obtained from the Prayer Shawl website. We also have yarn that has been donated that people can use.

Trudy Noonan and Rev. Julie Yarborough
Shawl Ministry

In Remembrance

Together we remember the vital contributions of those members of Christ Church who died this past year.

***Requiem aeternam donei, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Requiescant in pace. Amen***

Vincent Mount – August 23, 2025
Allen Cheng – October 7, 2025