



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

January 2024



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Roles

Rev. Dr. Stephen M. Cady, Senior Minister

Chief among the many missional successes of 2023 was the completion and launch of our new Community Outreach Center. After years of planning, fundraising, and dreaming together, we finally opened the doors to a fully accessible and humanizing space for the most vulnerable of our community. Watching our neighbors and volunteers create a welcoming community through the various ministries has been a highlight of my entire ministerial career. Each week the programs seem to grow and deepen as we work toward becoming that outpost for the kingdom of heaven we envisioned. I can't thank the congregation, staff, and leadership teams enough for their hard work in bringing this dream to life.

Another highlight of this year was witnessing the launch of the Asbury First Community Theater. While I am admittedly biased, watching the production of *The Sound of Music* in our sanctuary was a transporting experience. Watching the intergenerational relationships that formed between the more than one hundred people who participated in the cast and crew, however, was truly transcendent. The research is clear, one of the greatest predictors of lasting faith in young people is their ability to form meaningful relationships with faithful adults beyond their parents. That occurred in this production in spades. One needs only to watch the weekly interactions that still happen in the Gathering Center following worship to understand the lasting effect this has on community building in our church. I can't wait to see how this kind of experience continues to deepen the bonds that have already begun. Thank you to all who made it possible and supported this event.

There are other highlights. During this year, we took in the largest new members classes in recent memory and forged a new connection with a refugee church in Rochester that brought our children together for Vacation Bible School. We took the next faithful step as a congregation, leaning into the future of methodism and resolved to begin holding same-sex weddings. Our worship attendance has slowly begun to return to pre-pandemic levels while our online worship has remained strong and even deepened. (One example: in the spring, I received a call from a gentleman who worships with us weekly from Florida who asked me to come and do a funeral for his husband.) In the late spring, Emily and I led a special class called, *The Gospel According to Ted Lasso* that saw over a hundred people each week gather to grow in faith and fellowship. It was a lot of fun. This fall, we began to dream together again as a congregation about who we are and who God is calling us to be.

There have been challenges this year as well. We continue to try to navigate a congregation that seems as though it will forever have both a virtual and in-person contingent. Early in the pandemic, I mentioned that we may never again have more people physically with us than with us virtually. To date, that appears to be true. Although in-person attendance has grown, our virtual worshippers (both those who worship in the moment and later in the week through the archives or podcast) have continued to outpace the people we see in person. While it is wonderful to connect with so many people, it is difficult to not know who those people are with whom we are in regular connection. I recommend that Asbury First continues to look at strategies for engaging our virtual members in the years ahead.



Another challenge is financial. While we are blessed with a giving and generous congregation and congregational giving has remained strong, we did not bring in as much as we anticipated through grants this year. Or rather, we did not receive grants that were for general operations of our Community Outreach Center. The totals of our grants met our target, but most of the grants we received were targeted toward new initiatives and didn't offset our operational expenses. This will be a learning process moving forward and we will budget less anticipated income from grants in the year ahead, but it creates a very real budget challenge this year. As counter-intuitive as it might sound, my recommendation is to hire a Director of Development, even if it is a part-time position. I would imagine that this person could help steward the relationships with outside donors and foundations and raise money for the Community Outreach Center. We have already formed many relationships during this last year, but will need to nurture them in order for them to continue to bear fruit.

As I reflect on my time here, I am so grateful for all that we have been able to accomplish together. That said, here are a few things that I wish I had gotten done:

Accessibility of 1050: While it was a part of our original plan for Better Together, we never quite got to that last phase. My prayer is that the congregation can make this happen. Not only is it the right thing to do for our siblings with mobility challenges, but it opens access to the third floor which is lovely space that we could use for vital ministry. There is even a room that could function as a lovely chapel.

Endowing the Community Outreach Center Positions: I would love to see us endow the Director and Social Worker positions at the Community Outreach Center so that we can ensure those positions in perpetuity.

Director of Connectional Ministries/Volunteer Coordinator: I always envisioned a position whose main purpose was to connect members of the congregation into the life of the congregation.

Digital Ministries: I hope that Asbury First will continue its connection with people all over the country/world. Some churches have added a new ministerial position called the "Digital Minister". Regardless, I pray that you continue to foster that connection.

While there is always more to do, Asbury First is in a strong position as a congregation. Emily, Ellie, Charlie, Hannah, and I have been so blessed to be a part of Asbury First and I am confident that the person who follows me will come to love this congregation as much as I have. It has been a good twelve years. As I said when the announcement about my departure was shared, outside of being a husband and father, serving as the Senior Minister of Asbury First has been the greatest honor of my life. Week by week, we have done our best to love God and neighbor, live fully, serve all, and repeat.

My prayer and my confidence is that you will continue to do that work as we do our best to take the skills we have learned here to do more good in Fort Worth. Though we will be far away, you will never be far from our hearts.

In Christ's love,

Stephen

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Rev. Kathy Thiel, Minister for Congregational Care

The year of 2023 was full and busy. There continued to be many more opportunities to adjust to the wave of life in a pandemic. It was good to experience more in person home visits, hospital visits, and hospice visits. Our first and foremost prayer continues to be for the health and well-being of all people, and for the end of suffering.

The well-being of all people in body, mind, heart and soul continues to be the focus of the work that I do here at Asbury First. It has been a great joy to be able to visit you in person, to see you here in the sanctuary, the office, and even out for a meal in a restaurant. What a joy to share physical space, and also to now have Zoom so that we can continue to be present to each other when we cannot be together in person.

I continue to lead small groups in prayer, in fellowship, and in study. The people in these groups are dedicated to the church, to God, and to each other. Relationships continue to deepen and strengthen. When we are unable to meet in person, cards, phone calls, emails and texts are still good ways to stay in touch, remind each other we are not alone, and continue to spread the love of God throughout our community and the world.

I was reminded in a new members class of one of my favorite parts of this community, and I offer this as an invitation to anyone who is reading this report: if you have an idea for something we are not doing and you think we should be doing, then please call or text or email so we can talk about how to get your idea off of the drawing board and onto our church schedule!

As always, we pray that you are well in body, mind, heart and soul.

*Love,
Kathy*

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Mike Mullin, Minister for Youth and Discipleship

In 2023, I was once again honored by Asbury First United Methodist Church to be recommended to re-enter the process of ordination in The United Methodist Church. And this year, the Genesee Valley District Committee on Ordained Ministry agreed to meet with me. I first had the opportunity to meet with the committee on April 19, and then I got to meet with a subset of the committee on May 16. Each of these conversations seemed to go well. Unfortunately, I received word at the end of May that the committee had determined that “[I am] not a good fit for candidacy in The United Methodist Church.”



The reasoning they provided for this decision was, “[my] theological and doctrinal beliefs, [my] understanding of the divinity of Christ and resurrection, are outside the broad parameters of the United Methodist Church as outlined in our Doctrinal Standards and Articles of Religion.”

As you may imagine, this was disappointing news. This is especially true since I have spent the past five years asking for clarity and specifics on how my theology is outside the broad parameters of The United Methodist Church—and this request remains unanswered. I recognize that some of my colleagues read the Bible, our Doctrinal Standards, and our Articles of Religion more literally and rigidly than I do; and I also believe that both Jesus and John Wesley tended to prefer a more inclusive and gracious approach to these types of things.

While these decisions of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry continue to impact my livelihood and potential trajectories of ministry—within and beyond The United Methodist Church—I celebrate that they do not reflect my realities and experiences at Asbury First United Methodist Church. Here, I continue to be welcomed. Here, we are all encouraged to explore, question, and seriously engage all aspects of our theology and faith—including how these various approaches impact how we live and show-up in the world. It is for these reasons that I remain United Methodist. I see the potentiality and positivity of places like Asbury First, and I want to help continue to bring these realities to the local and global church.

Following the May decision, I had the opportunity to connect with our District Superintendent and our new Bishop. Both were gracious listeners, and offered their feedback and perspective, for which I am grateful. Based on United Methodist polity, neither were able to do anything more. Presently, I am once again on the Asbury First charge conference docket to be considered for re-entry into the candidacy process of The United Methodist Church. I do not know what the future will hold, but I will continue to pray that Upper New York—and all of United Methodism—might be able to find space for disparate hermeneutics and theologies; so that, like Asbury First, we might allow our similarities and our differences to coalesce into a vibrant and harmonious body of Christ seeking to do more good in this world.

Beyond the saga of ordination, my ministries at Asbury First continued with myriad highlights. 2023 saw two Disciple Bible Study groups that began in 2021 continue on with Disciple III. These individuals spent the year reading the Old Testament prophets and the Letters of Paul. We also saw a return to regular Wednesday evening and Sunday morning programming with lay-led classes on topics like Banned Books and Gun Violence; additionally, we had the opportunity to highlight scholars and authors from our community, like Dr. Jeff Brubaker and Dr. David Carr. Various small groups also continued to meet and discuss books like *Your Children Are Very Greatly in Danger*, *Near the Exit*, *The Women of Easter*, and *Poverty, By America*. If you would be interested in participating in a Bible study or small group series, please reach out to me at any time. Each of our programs strive to be open to all.

For highlights on our Youth Ministries from 2023, I encourage you to check out the Youth Ministry Annual Report. And for those that might not turn to that page, let me simply state here that our youth programs continue thanks to the commitment of our families. Through youth group, youth choirs, youth



theater, youth mission trips, etc. our youth and families have found something worth committing to at Asbury First. There is a sense of family present among our youth that takes time and effort to foster, and we look forward to continuing to nurture this in the years ahead. We are still impacted by the losses and adjustments of the pandemic, but we are also seeing and experiencing opportunities of new growth.

As I look forward to 2024, I recognize that we will be undergoing quite a bit of change with the transition of our senior minister. While we cannot be sure of what the future will bring, I am confident that our community will continue to grow and thrive. We are already doing great work, and I know that we will continue to push ourselves even further. As you consider your dreams for 2024 (and beyond), I would love to hear how these dreams fit in with our vision for discipleship at Asbury First. Specifically, if you have dreams about new programs and initiatives for Asbury First, please reach out. I would love to connect with you to see how our dreams and vision might align. We truly are better together, and I am thankful for your continued support throughout this past year.

May there be Peace,

—Mike

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Rev. Rachel Ann Dupont, Minister for Christian Formation
and Director of the Discipleship Project

It is surprising to think that our family has been in Rochester for two and a half years now. In many ways, it feels like we've been here much longer. We love Rochester, our neighborhood, and Asbury First!

Over the last year I've served as a pastor and fulfilled my ordination vows in the church and community. I've officiated several weddings and funerals, as well as the sacraments of baptism and communion, preached, offered care and education, and participated in connectional ministries of order. I led several retreats over the last year, including a congregational development retreat for Memorial AME Zion and a Leader's Retreat for The Discipleship Project. In September, I began working half time, and greatly appreciate the flexibility as I pursue continuing my education and professional growth.

The Discipleship Project

In the beginning of 2023, we had 12 leaders and 8 classes running weekly for The Discipleship Project. Over the summer 4 of our leaders stepped down due to personal reasons, so we have fewer weekly groups meeting (5 total). I have continued to write weekly discussion guides for our Class Leaders and provide leadership development throughout the year.

One of my goals in 2023 was to develop an expansion of the Project for developing new class leaders from Asbury First and other congregations that wish to replicate it. Over the summer, I developed a "Rising Leaders" proposal and pathway, met with several congregations, pastors, and conference



leadership to gather a cohort of Rising Leaders for 2023-2024. It proved a valuable learning experience, though not fruitful in the way I had hoped. We have a small handful of Rising Leaders from our congregation and one from Penfield UMC, though not enough for a weekly cohort. Most people see the value of the work and yet find they are already overbooked with work, family, travel, and community opportunities.

This fall I led our Leaders Retreat at Casowasco and we decided together that regular bi-monthly or monthly workshops, open to all within the project, could potentially serve as a leadership development and community building opportunity. I led our first workshop in December, and it was well received. I plan to lead more in 2024.

Our leaders and I are excited that this year our small groups are able to dive deeper into our faith. Despite the fact that the 'total' numbers are slightly less than last year, the commitment, trust, and intention of these groups has grown significantly, and we are experiencing great strength in the Spirit.

Racial Equity

I am so proud of our Racial Equity team. Pursuing racial equity at Asbury First is so important to our core group of leaders that we met weekly all summer long to build relationships and develop a common understanding for this work. Racism is so pervasive that there are countless ways to address it. I led this team over the last year to come together, to reflect on and clarify our purpose, to goals, and to start meeting those goals.

This fall I developed and offered trainings for Implicit Bias and White Privilege to staff and volunteers. The first team so far that accepted the offer was our Storehouse leadership team. Our RE team regrouped and redeveloped our offerings to reach more people with a series of Vital Conversations beginning in January. Team members are organizing additional educational opportunities, including an upcoming program on housing equity. We are also developing a network of Asbury First members who are interested in pursuing racial equity with us. We hope to build momentum as opportunities arise.

Connectional and Community Ministry

I continued to serve on the Genesee Valley's District Committee on Ordained Ministry, and as a delegate to General Conference this coming April and May. I am helping our team by leading our January delegation retreat. Looking ahead to the upcoming General Conference, I am aware that we will be making decisions that will impact the future of the United Methodist Church, and I will be sure to share updates with our congregation.

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Rev. Pat Dupont, Minister for Outreach

Reflection:

There is much to celebrate in the last year of Outreach ministry at Asbury First! Details are included in the reports below, but it is safe to say it was a landmark year. Our leaders and volunteers accomplished herculean tasks with faithfulness and grace. It was also, of course, only a beginning.

While 2023 was primarily about relocating and relaunching our on-campus outreach efforts, I believe 2024 will be about deepening them. Notice that I intentionally say 'deepening' and not 'growing.' This is because while I think serving more meals, harvesting more produce, and providing more clothing, healthcare, and groceries are admirable goals (and ones we almost certainly will achieve), I believe we are currently most called to the more difficult and less immediately visible work of fostering community, building relationships, nurturing a spiritual presence, lifting up new leaders, educating, equipping and organizing a movement.

When I interviewed for the Director position I named that one of the greatest strengths of the Community Outreach Center is it's potential to become a meeting place of all different kinds of people from all different walks of life, and how such diversity could be leveraged to right the injustices our outreach ministries combat on a daily basis. Well, two and a half years later I think we are well-positioned to lean into this work.

Here are the questions on my heart at the start of this year:

How can we share ownership of our outreach ministries with our neighbors? How can we loosen our grip so that other members of our community might also hold the reins? How can we build a movement to end poverty led by those who are most directly impacted that incorporates both works of compassion and justice in equal proportion? How can we blur the lines between our church and our community, between our volunteers and our neighbors, between our discipleship, our service and our activism? How is God calling us to lead? How is God calling us to follow? How can we resist the urge to do more and more and instead expend our energy in going deeper and deeper?

Mother Theresa said, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love."

I look forward to discerning and journeying together in the year ahead.

Grace & Peace,
Rev. Pat Dupont



Reports

The Asbury First Community Outreach Center

The Community Outreach Center opened! As of Easter 2023 all five of our on-campus outreach ministry efforts were operating out of the newly renovated and expanded 1010 East Avenue space. Since the first few months of the year, our operations have steadily grown in terms of services offered, volunteers engaged, and neighbors served. In 2023 we served over 7,000 meals; serviced over 150 bicycles; provided over 230 loads of laundry, over 600 showers, and over 100 haircuts; provided over 3,800 people with clothing and/or household goods; saw over 300 patients in our clinic; sent over 800 bags of groceries into the community, and provided meal programs around the city with a plentiful harvest of fresh produce.

Off-Campus efforts

Our off-campus efforts continued to operate throughout the year. We continue to consider **Project Chacocente, Miracle Garden, Habitat for Humanity, Cameron Ministries, Help Me Read, Keeping Our Promise, and Family Promise** our adopted off-campus ministries. I am hopeful that as we transition our governance and make decisions about how we handle outreach funding, we can more fully integrate our off-campus and on-campus outreach efforts under one theological and missiological umbrella.

Staffing

In 2023 we hired two part-time employees in order to help run the Community Outreach Center. After serving for months as an extremely dedicated volunteer, Robert Saturno was hired as our meal program dishwasher. He is a great presence in the kitchen, working diligently behind the scenes. Shannon Coleman was hired as Outreach Associate. So far, her primary responsibility has been managing the day to day work of the meal program. She chips in wherever is needed on any given day, keeps the operation running smoothly, and is consistently able to nurture deep trust in her relationships with our neighbors. Her presence and work in the C.O.C. is invaluable.

Freedom Church of the Poor

I was fortunate to be invited to participate in a 12-week online minister's training cohort in the Fall. The goal of this training was to equip faith leaders to plant Freedom Church of the Poor communities around the country. I learned a great deal from the program as well as from the colleagues who were also participating. This experience led to us holding our first ever Community Outreach Center & Freedom Church of the Poor Christmas Service after breakfast on December 22. The goal of this service was to gather with our neighbors to worship God, to celebrate Christmas, and to reclaim the revolutionary nature of Jesus' ministry, economic teaching and political activity. I look forward to continuing this organizing work in the new year, perhaps with a similar lenten or Easter service.



Pentecost

For the second year in a row, on Pentecost we held a lay-led celebration of outreach worship service. A number of volunteers representing many of our different outreach ministries participated in the leadership of the service.

Continuing Our Way Forward

Our Outreach Task Force authored and presented [*Continuing Our Way Forward*](#), a document that sets a vision for our Outreach ministry for the next 5 years. One of the most notable recommendations to come from this report is a consolidation of our Outreach Governance. Reflection upon how the outreach committee/team structure has functioned since the church adopted a new governance model led the task force to suggest a more streamlined approach. This new structure will go into effect in January 2024.

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Rev. Dr. Robert Allan Hill

Boston University, Dean of Marsh Chapel, Professor of New Testament and Pastoral Theology, and Chaplain to the University

January 1, 2023—December 31, 2023

A. Dean of Marsh Chapel: Preacher

1. Regular Sunday Sermons and Services, Marsh and elsewhere: **64**.
2. Annual Special BU Services: **25**

ML King Observances (2), This I Believe, BU Baccalaureate\Commencement (8), Marsh and BU Matriculations (4), BU Alumni Weekend Service, Lessons & Carols (2), Annual Spring Term Prayers\Invocations (10).
3. Guest Speaking Events 2023: **26** (inc. M Robinson, BU Baccalaureate, Hillel Vigil)
4. Regular Meetings: Weekly, Monthly, other: **26**
Marsh Staff, Marsh Advisory Board, Faculty BUSTH, Faculty Area A and Area D BUSTH, Deans' Council, University Leadership Council, University Leadership Group, BU Faculty Assembly, Religious Life Council, BU University Chaplains, New England Annual Conference Foundation (and Executive Committee), Harvard Memorial Church Board of Visitors (in hiatus), Learning Project Board of Visitors, BU Hillel Board.
5. Visits: **914** (office, home, hospital, other, not including daily 45min campus walk, which allows various brief, informal conversations, usually 5-8 a day)
6. 2023 New Marsh Chapel Chapter Members Received **1** (Cavanaugh Tang).



7. Seasonal Program Initiatives, largely Staff led: **21** (see website)
8. 2023 Baptisms **7** (Hadley Berg, Ella McBride, Rory McBride, Saxon McBride, Quenton McBride, Charles Dalton, Jesse Dalton)
9. 2023 Weddings: **5** (Brides: Alfonse Charles, Katharia, Bard, Sorensen, Thain)
10. 2023 Deaths/Funerals: **11**: Xiaozhu Liu, Engineering, China; Xiaou Mia Jin, GCAS, Beijing, informal memorial in CAS; STUV2 fall loss 2/23; Professor CAS, Dr. Royce Wates; Professor Robert Volk; Dr. John Shafer; Professor Otto Lerbinger; DD Almeda; Sally Jones; Rev. Charles Cloy, BUPD Daniel Borgeois. (The normal RAH\Staff\Marsh responses at death include: 1. Prayer and Visit. 2. T: Boss\Dean. 3. T: Widower\Widow. 4. Flowers sent. 5. Counsel session. 6. Funeral\Wake\Memorial)

B. Tenured Full Professor, New Testament/Pastoral Theology, STH: Professor

1. STH monthly faculty meeting, annual STH Faculty Retreat
2. 2023 RAH Publications: 1. Sunday Sermons, BU website (at 2500 words a sermon, the collection for 2023 would be 125,000 words, or two 200 page books); 2. Autumn 2023 Sermon Series; 3. Lenten Series 2023: Augustine of Hippo (this is year 17 of the Lenten series, the first ten in conversation with Calvinists, this second ten with Catholics); 4. In publication now: Salt City Prayers; ongoing work on Partnership in the Gospel: Seven Exercises in Liberal Biblical Theology; 5. Various op-eds, interviews, other.
3. Courses taught 2023: The Gospel of John (fall) and ITP (Integration of Theology and Practice (spring); (since 2006 two courses\year offered gratis in STH, part of Hill family tithe.)
4. Doctoral\Masters Defense Committees **3**
5. STH Methodism Committee
6. STH Areas A and D Monthly meetings **2** (though D irregularly attended)
7. Pastoral contacts\calls with fellow clergy\others at Christmas: **116**
8. At something of a late date in my academic career, some scholarly work is being based now, in part, on my own work in *New Testament* (e.g. Greylyn Hydinger, STH 2022 dissertation) and in *Preaching* (e.g. Mark Baker, Centered Set Church), which is very gratifying. Jan and I are at that stage where our children are raising children, our students are leading churches and choirs, our assests are producing assets, our writings are producing writings, etc., the last of life for which the first was made!).

C. Chaplain to the University and Office of Religious Life: Pastor *Ministry (1)

1. Daily 45-minute walks on campus and conversations.
2. BU Today Articles, other Religious Life Articles (see Marsh Website, 'In the News' collection).



3. BU Matriculation, Service\Retirement Recognitions, Senior Breakfast, Baccalaureate, Commencement, Multi-faith Dinner, and other events (see above)
4. Pastoral Counseling: 58 (including sacramental and personal hours, part of total visits).
5. Annual Open Houses\Receptions\Dinners in 96 Bay State Residence: 8
6. BU Faculty\Staff Deaths 2023: (see also above): (Wates, Lerbinger, Volk, Almeda)
7. Sampling of authors read in 2023: McWorter, Frye, Baldwin, Stanley, Brown, Guide, Backhaus, Caird, Eby, Lende, Clinch, Robinson, Twenge, Haigh, Boss
8. December Christmas\Holiday events 2023: 22
9. Travel, personal\ work: Venice, Tampa, New York, Maine, San Diego
10. Tithe (details available on request).
11. Regular Continuing Education Events\Retreats Annually 10: 2 UMC Annual Conferences (UNYAC, NEAC), 2 AAR\SBL (national, regional), 2 NHTDG (spring, fall), 2 BU retreats (Provost, STH), 2 Marsh staff mini-retreats.
12. PhD, DMin, and other degrees, reader-advisor-committee-other: 1.
13. Last year (2022) also included the positive outcome of a five-year BU decanal review, with encouragement for further growth in two key areas: student outreach (including interreligious life and interfaith work) and continuous improvement in staff management. (*Note hence the new subdivision in this Part C, in this annual report, ministry and management*).
14. Goals 2023: *Voice* (a summative research project *Excercises in Liberal Biblical Theology*, in process); *Visitation* (personal visitation goal: pastoral conversation, 2 dozen a week); *both will continue as goals and foci in 2024*; Also; ***Marsh 75th Anniversary of Chapel Dedication (1950)(multiple)*.
15. Events: 35 Pre Commencement and Commencement Events (back to normal, more or less)., 116 Christmas telephone calls, 22 BU Christmas parties.
16. We have happily filled our last open Marsh staff position, for the role of Associate Chaplain for Student Outreach, Mr. Jonathan Lee (Davidson, Yale), (along the lines of the 5 year review suggestions).

****Management (2)***

1. Staff: 33 (mostly part-time) staff at Marsh Chapel; 25 Religious Life (self-funded).
2. Marsh Board of Advisors (22), meetings in May and September.



3. Administration: Oversight *through Chapel Director* of 6 University Chaplains and 25 Campus Ministers, 33 internal Marsh Staff (see sign boards and web site).
4. Marsh Chapel oversight of Religious Life brings \$4M\year to BU in self-funded chaplaincies and campus ministries. Also, as an administrative change, on 2/18/20 we instituted an annual required written request for STH use of Marsh Chapel space, with needed signatures of STH dean or designee and Marsh Chapel director.
5. Annual Marsh income target set (and annually met) at 1/14 of expenses, 2015, w\Chris Goss, (after discussion, retained at this level, 12/18 w\Pat O'brien).
6. Monthly meetings with direct reports (4) rather than semester only (10 rather than 2). Chapel Director, Monday; Music Director, Monday; Chaplains (2) Wednesday.
7. We need to make sure Religious Life Policy is communicated at least once each year, throughout the University (as done this September through the Provost's office). Also, Rev. Dr. Jessica Chicka has offered and volunteered to engage in more administrative work in 2024, a request I am delighted to honor.



Administration and Property

Governing Board

Our Governance Model is designed to help us carry out our mission as disciples of Jesus Christ, to love God and neighbor, live fully, serve all, and repeat. In conversation with the congregation, the board sets policy and direction, and empowers the committees and ministry teams to carry out the work of the congregation. The board also has fiscal responsibility, acting as the Trustees of Asbury First.

In addition to its Disciplinary and Fiduciary responsibilities, each year the Governance Board focuses on several “Big Questions” that are vital to Asbury First’s mission and ministry. In 2023, the board continued to focus on: (1) what kind of congregation do we intend to be as we emerge from the pandemic, (2) how we should respond as a church community at a moment when diversity and inclusion are major themes in our society, and what impact we should seek to have on the lives of our members and our neighbors, and (3) how to ensure that the first year of the Community Outreach Center is as successful as possible and prepares us well for its future success? Among others we considered communications support and technology infrastructure needed for closer connection, with both those who are physically present with us and also the growing community of those who worship with us entirely remotely. In consultation with the congregation, we renewed our commitment to inclusion, opened our sanctuary to all for weddings, and became a lighthouse church for others whose church homes are leaving the denomination.

The board recognized that much has been accomplished since approval of our strategic plan, the Dreamscape, in 2018, but also that much has changed. A new strategic planning process has been launched, led by a new Dream Team. Work has started, gathering updated dreams from the congregation as a whole, and the Team is working toward an updated strategic plan. Leading in to the general planning process, a separate Outreach Task Force developed “Continuing Our Way Forward, a Strategic Approach to Outreach at Asbury First,” which was endorsed by the Governance Board and submitted to the Dream Team.

In administrative matters, the board approved the Columbarium Proposal for submission to the congregation, periodically discussed the church’s financial condition, and monitored capital needs as developed by the Property Stewardship Committee. The board continues to work on a detailed privacy policy for the church, the precursor to creation of an online directory of members.

The board continues to work to create transparency around discussion and decision-making. Three all-Church information and Q&A sessions were hosted by the board, direct mail communications to church membership provided status on various activities, and monthly board summaries were posted to the website (www.asburyfirst.org/governance/). Inquiries and comments also can be sent to governance@asburyfirst.org.

With Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady’s announcement of his pending departure, the board’s attention has been focused on communication with the Bishop and District Superintendent regarding the replacement



process, coordination with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC), appointment of a Transition Team to assist the board and PPRC with coordination, an ongoing process of communication with the congregation and various smaller groups, and development of our church profile and a detailed Asbury First description to assist the Bishop as he considers candidates for appointment to Asbury First.

Submitted by Beth Ela Wilkens, Chair

Financial Report

Items of note related to the 2023 results:

- **OVERALL GIVING:** Individual giving to Asbury First in the last year remained very strong, particularly giving to the Community Outreach Center. While the end-of-year numbers reflect a slight decrease in giving from the plan, this is more reflective of the loss of a couple of major donors before their pledges were fulfilled. Thank you!
- **2023 OPERATING FUND (RESERVES) SPENDING:** As a result of several factors, including unanticipated major maintenance (the lower level restroom in 1040) and smaller than expected foundation grant income for general Community Outreach Center operations (we received several grants for designated or new initiatives), we spent more of our operating fund balance in 2023 than expected. We began 2023 with an operating fund balance of \$487,862 (designated and undesignated) and are ending the year with a balance of \$193,540. To be clear, the 2023 AOP anticipated spending much of this amount (some of which was designated for particular ministries or programs). However, the overall difference was roughly \$200,000 off of the plan. Clearly, this is not a sustainable differential and we have crafted the 2024 Budget to balance without use of reserves.

Items of note related to the 2024 budget:

- **CLOSED THE GAP:** We recently advised you that we were facing a budget shortfall in 2024. Although the shortfall was only about 5% of our total budget, we knew we could not sustain it. We are very blessed that many of you came forward with special gifts aggregating more than \$80,000 to help close the gap. We also have taken other actions as well, and are presenting a balanced, and what we believe is a realistic 2024 budget. Although the budget contains some cuts, we are confident that we will be able to continue unabated our momentum in Doing More Good.
- **HEADWINDS FOR 2024:** We faced several major headwinds going into 2024, including among others:
 - deaths of some of our largest donors
 - flat rather than increased contributions to operations from the endowment due to down markets in recent years
 - continuing impact of inflation



- a large increase in the apportionment of our share of support for the Upper NY Conference. This increase was not due to any changes at the Conference level. Instead, we discovered that we had incorrectly calculated our share for several prior years and needed to correct the error moving forward. Since the time of our recent budget message, calculation of our increase has been clarified and reduced from \$80,000 to \$65,000.
- **STAFFING ADJUSTMENTS:** Among other reductions, we have determined we can sustainably support no more than four pastoral positions at this time. Unfortunately, this means the elimination of the position of our Minister for Christian Formation after July 1. We have been blessed to have the Rev. Rachel Dupont with us during these last couple of years and will find opportunities to thank her for her ministry in the months ahead. Our Preaching Associate, the Rev. Jackie Nelson, is not a salaried staff member and is paid per diem when she preaches. Other staffing adjustments include the elimination of our choral scholars program, the generous transition of our Director of the Asbury Ringers to a volunteer role (with the possibility of a return to a paid position when a specified bequest for instrumental music is received), the freezing of a position in the Community Outreach Center that was expected to increase, and several adjustments to our property care team. While none of these adjustments are easy, we believe this will help ensure a sustainable path forward for doing more good in the days ahead.
- **OTHER ADJUSTMENTS:** In addition to the staffing adjustments, we have made several other shifts that have enabled us to balance the budget. Instead of giving an additional \$22,000 to the Outreach Funding Team this year, we will have them continue to use the balance they currently hold (\$23,000) for outside funding opportunities. We have also reduced the contribution from the AOP to the Capital Improvement Fund back to 2022 levels. In addition to these, we made several other minor adjustments after a careful, line-by-line review of expenses.
- **COMMUNITY OUTREACH CENTER:** We are so pleased with the work being done at the Community Outreach Center and are thrilled for the lives that it has already impacted. After a full year in operation, we now better understand the full cost of Community Outreach Center (COC) operations, including data driven allocations of shared operating costs. For example, a portion of the Property Care Director's time is spent on the COC, and for that reason a portion of her salary is now allocated to the COC. The budget team is internally tracking all those shared costs and has included fully allocated costs in the 2024 budget. The net effect of these allocations shows the COC running a deficit for 2024 while combined operations break even. We are one church and stand behind the funding of the COC. That said, being able to show the COC operating deficits to foundations and other funders helps demonstrate that need for their funding.

As noted in the cover email, questions you would like to have answered in the budget presentation at the Annual Conference can be emailed to governance@asburyfirst.org.

Notwithstanding some of the difficult decisions we are making, we believe the robust activities of Asbury First will continue to be vibrant over the coming months. We are fortunate that our Dream Team continues to actively work toward defining our priorities as we move into the future. Their work will help us better define how we use our resources as we go forward to continue our growth in Doing More Good.



Asbury First United Methodist Church Consolidated Income & Expense Statement for the Year Ended 12/31/2023				
	AOP	Budget	Variance	Notes
Beginning Fund Balance	\$ 487,862			(1)
<u>Revenue</u>				
Individual Contributions	1,547,397	1,559,475	(12,078)	(2)
Foundations/Grants	78,118	181,500	(103,382)	(3)
Endowment Draws	382,416	382,416	0	
Property Usage	107,916	120,000	(12,084)	
Other Income	108,485	92,450	16,035	
Total Revenue	2,224,332	2,335,841	(111,509)	
<u>Expenses</u>				
Personnel				
Clergy	560,348	578,758	18,410	
Non-clergy	967,168	965,071	(2,097)	
Total Personnel	1,527,516	1,543,829	16,312	
Non-Personnel				
Worship & Arts	24,604	20,010	(4,594)	
Youth & Discipleship	27,328	34,330	7,002	
Congregational Care	2,843	3,720	877	
Outreach (Direct Program Expenses)	128,035	91,999	(36,036)	(4)
Finance & Admin	233,313	223,864	(9,449)	
Property Expenses	333,803	272,177	(61,626)	bud
Conference Connectional	241,214	239,226	(1,988)	(6)
Total Non-personnel	991,138	885,326	(105,812)	
Total Expenses	2,518,655	2,429,155	(89,499)	
Net Income/(Expense)	(294,322)	(93,315)	(201,008)	
Ending Fund Balance (12/31/2023)	\$ 193,540			

Notes

1. We began 2023 with a total Operating Fund Balance of \$487,862. This included approximately \$300,000 from the Employee Retention Tax Credit that was earned in late 2022.
2. Overall donations were within 1% of budget. Giving to general operation was down due to the deaths of several members who had not yet completed their pledges but giving that was directed specifically to our Community Outreach Center operations was higher than anticipated.
3. Support from foundations for general operations proved to be much less than anticipated. For 2024 we are revising down our expectation of support from this source. We did, however, receive additional foundation support not shown here because it was restricted for specific uses.
4. Direct expenses for both the Dining & Caring Center and the Storehouse were higher than budget due to expenses related to the opening of the Community Outreach Center. There were moving expenses for the Storehouse and both operations needed to purchase additional equipment and appliances. For 2024 we expect these expenses to revert toward their historical averages.



Asbury First United Methodist Church Consolidated Income & Expense Statement for the Year Ended 12/31/2023
<p>5. Property expenses were significantly above budget in 2023 for several reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. \$11,000 in unbudgeted expenses that were separately funded from special, donor-restricted gifts.b. Roughly \$17,000 in excess cleaning and maintenance supplies expenses that were incurred when we stopped using a third-party contractor for our janitorial needs. It was necessary to purchase some machinery to replace what the contractor had been providing, plus we had to stock up on certain consumables.c. We had about \$21,000 in unexpected maintenance/repair to our heating and plumbing systems. We don't expect this level of expense going forward.d. Utilities came in about \$6,500 over budget this year.e. We incurred roughly \$4,000 in expenses related to the installation/upgrade of our campus security systems.
<p>6. This is our full share of support for the Upper NY Conference as calculated prior to 2024. However, by agreement with the Conference we withhold \$70,000 and transfer it to the Better Together campaign as payment of the Conference's pledge in support of that campaign.</p>

Prepared by John Ormsbee, Financial Administrator

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Investment Committee Annual Report

Role in Church Governance

The Investment Committee is charged with setting investment policies for the Church's General Endowment and Restricted Funds, subject to approval by the Governing Board. It also provides oversight as outlined in the policies, including for the General Endowment, fourteen Restricted Funds, and the Better Together capital fund.

Financial Overview for 2023

As of December 31, 2023, \$6,459,151 was held in the General Endowment, an aggregate of \$3,053,426 was held in various restricted funds (ranging in size from \$17,176 to \$764,612). Accordingly, total General Endowment/Restricted Funds are valued at \$9,512,577. This represents a \$764,363 increase from 2022 year-end levels. This increase occurred after distributing \$418,698 to the AOP, Capital Improvement Fund & other Restricted Fund donor designations.



Key Activities in 2023

The Committee uses three investment advisors, Manning & Napier, Alesco, and Canandaigua National Bank. It receives investment reports from the advisors at each quarterly meeting and each advisor meets in person with the Committee at least twice per year. The Committee monitors advisor performance against benchmarks, and performance is near benchmark targets, varying quarter by quarter among the advisors.

The Committee continues a long-term investment strategy that has returned well in excess of the Committee's strategic goal of a minimum 6.5% return over time. Studies of market swings over numerous cycles show that long-term market returns are dramatically better when investors ride out downturns rather than trying to time the market.

The Committee distributes 4.5% of the 20-quarter average balance of each fund (or the rough equivalent for newer funds) for the Annual Operating Plan, capital funds and restricted fund-designated purposes. This is a strategy generally accepted by endowments as a way to smooth distributions through market swings but also provide for long term principal growth. Thus, when the market spikes, distributions do not correspondingly increase, and when the market turns down, distributions are not decreased as much. The 4.5% rate used is more conservative than the 5% distribution rate most commonly used by endowments. As previously stated, these distributions totaled \$418K in 2023.

ESG Discussion

Over the past several years the Committee has added an ESG component to our Investment Policy. ESG stands for investments that are positive from an Environment, Social, or Governance perspective. This positive focus is in addition to investments in a number of areas (such as tobacco, alcohol, and defense) already prohibited by our policy. Although ESG is still an emerging field, heavily nuanced, and without broad market acceptance of standard measurements, the Committee is interested in using our investments in an ESG-positive manner to the extent prudent. In 2023 the Committee continued to ask our advisors to report on ESG status within our portfolio on a pilot basis, using one available measurement tool. Our portfolio's ESG scores have seen a modest upward trend. The Committee will continue to monitor progress and opportunities in this emerging field.

Dreamscape Goal

Several years ago, the Committee established a Dreamscape related Goal of an aggregate of \$10,000,000 for endowment and restricted funds. That goal was achieved in early 2021. While the 2022 market correction dropped us below that goal, the 2023 market rebound has brought us much closer and we now stand just \$487K away from the \$10M mark. The Investment Committee will continue to focus on managing our Endowment to support its return to the \$10M level and beyond.

Submitted by Patrick Fulford, Chair



Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC)

Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) Role in Church Governance

The Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) is the successor committee to the committee previously known as the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC). As a standing Governance Board committee, the PPRC assists the Board in developing employee policies, liaising with the Bishop on clergy and pastor evaluations, ensuring compliance with applicable laws, and carrying out the staff grievance process as defined by the Governance Board policies. The PPRC has no staff management authority and does not participate in supervision of staff or staff decision-making. The PPRC's role and functions are guided by The Book of Discipline.

PPRC Activities during 2023

The most important task of the PPRC during 2023 began in the fall when our Senior Minister, the Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady, announced his plans to depart in early 2024 to assume the presidency of Brite Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth Texas. In November, the PPRC, along with Lay Leader and Governance Board Chair Beth Wilkens (an ex officio member of the PPRC) began providing input to Bishop Burgos and District Superintendent Block in connection with their efforts to identify an Interim Senior Minister, and a permanent Senior Minister. The Bishop and the DS confirmed that their search process for a permanent senior minister will be nationwide, and that the PPRC will have an opportunity to meet with, and provide feedback about, any finalist before they are selected. Representatives of the PPRC and the Governance Board and members of the congregation active in the Church's various ministries formed a Transition Team to provide input in the process.

Numerous listening sessions with key constituencies were conducted. The Church Profile, a document kept on record by the Conference, was extensively updated, and an additional document more particularly describing the Church, and its mission, values, ministries and activities was created. Both documents will be useful in providing the Conference with information about the background and qualities the Church is seeking in a new Senior Minister and in providing candidates with relevant information about the Church. The names of several potential candidates for Senior Minister were provided to Bishop Burgos. (In early January, Rev. Ted Anderson was named Interim Senior Minister, a decision that was met with enthusiastic approval by the PPRC.)

During 2023 the PPRC conducted an annual review of the Rev. Dr. Cady as Senior Minister, obtaining input from within the committee and from the Governance Board and members of the congregation. The PPRC also engaged in compensation benchmarking for the senior minister's position. In addition, the committee also had confidential discussions with Rev. Dr. Cady regarding the duties, compensation, and performance of the other clergy members.

In 2023, the PPRC continued its unwavering support of Mike Mullin in his career aspirations for ministry in the UMC and of Rev. Kathy Thiel toward her goal to becoming a Deacon in Full Connection within the Conference.



The PPRC continued its “Pastor-PPRC Member (“Buddy”) Support Program.” This program assigns a PPRC member/s to each of the AFUMC ministers to serve as a sounding board and to enhance communications with the ministers.

At her request, in order to pursue a PhD, Rev. Jackie Nelson’s role was changed to that of Preaching Associate, with compensation paid on a per diem basis. This arrangement has worked well from the PPRC’s point-of-view. Her prior duties in the areas of digital ministry and grants have been shared among the other clergy and staff members.

In the Summer, Rev. Rachel Dupont requested to transition to a half-time position in order to more readily pursue studies in the counseling area. She began this half-time position in September 2023.

The 2024 budget process proved difficult for the reasons more fully outlined in recent communications from the Governance Board and the Finance Committee. One outcome of the budget process was the realization that, for the Church’s finances to be structurally sustainable over time, the budget could support no more than four pastoral positions. This resulted in the decision to eliminate the position of Minister for Christian Formation effective July 1, 2024. The PPRC will join with the congregation and staff to find the best opportunity to thank Rev. Rachel Dupont for her ministry among us.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Parish Relations Committee:

Frances Bryniarski

Alex Hunt

Helen Johnson

Christy Leshner

Jonathan Carroll-Nellenback

John Nutter

James Quinn (Chair)

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Property Stewardship Committee (PSC)

Role in Church Governance

The Property Stewardship Committee (PSC) is charged with managing the physical assets of Asbury First in such a way that these assets are preserved, maintained, and enhanced in support of the total ministry of the church. Physical assets include the buildings and everything in them such as furniture, equipment, etc. As a committee of the Governing Board, the PSC is a strategic body which commissions work by architects, engineers, contractors, and volunteers. We are not the body who does the actual work, but we manage it.

The PSC creates, manages and maintains a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which identifies and prioritizes expected projects. The CIP looks out a minimum of five years



and is presented to and approved by the Governing Board annually. All changes to church property must be approved by the PSC.

The PSC manages the Capital Improvement Fund to pay for on-going capital improvement needs and the prioritized items in the Capital Improvement Plan. Each year a small percentage of the church budget goes toward capital improvement and is held in this fund. The PSC also oversees the church's insurance needs and serves as the Building Committee when needed. The PSC has oversight of the IT infrastructure Team as well, which presents added funding challenges due to shorter equipment life cycles. In 2024, PSC will also oversee a revitalized Safety and Security Team.

Activities in 2023

PSC oversaw the following projects:

- Completed details on the Outreach Center
- Completed a key-fob/camera system for 1040 and 1050 main entrance doors. \$13,000
- Continued investigation into the eventual replacement of the original 1960 Ed Wing windows – We have worked with architects and the Preservation Board to specify a window and expect to do a trial project in 2024 on up to three windows.
- 1010 Window restoration project continued with 8 windows restored. \$8000
- Decommission non-functional Narthex Elevator. \$5000
- Seal and Stripe Parking Lot \$14,000
- Smart Meeting Room equipment (2 Maxhub Zoom monitors) \$15K
- Overseeing preparations for construction of the Columbarium
- Approved and worked on location for Beekeeping Project
- Researched, applied for, and won a \$20,000 Grant – 1050 Foundation stabilization
- Five Year Technology Project plan was established by Tech Team
- 1050 downspouts and underground storm drains were jetted
- Door security – Replaced entry system for Day Care main door
- Live Stream technology (encoder) hardware

2024 Goals:

1. Improve accessibility, signage and way-finding across the campus. Owner: Chuck Hanrahan
 - a. Work with Safety & Security on signage for 1010
 - b. Review and redefine 1050 Elevator project with updated costs reflecting redefined scope
 - c. Work to define large projects (two roof refurbishments) for 2025 work
2. Promote responsible environmental stewardship through recycling, and other initiatives. Owner: Nancy Specht
 - a. Establish a plan by 5/1/24 for paper management, waste management
 - b. Add 1040 to food waste recycling



3. Create a plan to address Sanctuary Sound upgrades by 7/1/24. Owner: Dave Rice
4. Complete pilot project to address Windows in Ed Wing. Owner: Bob Schuman

Teams we will interact with:

- Safety and Security Team
- Monday Morning Crew
- Technology Team
- Garden Team
- Community Garden Team
- Memorials
- Maintenance

PSC needs to have oversight of any changes to the property.
PSC must approve all signed on the church campus.
All Preservation Board requests must go through PSC.

Special Note:

On Dec 27, 2023, Wayne Turnblom passed away. Wayne was a founding member of the Property Stewardship Committee, a long time Trustee including past chair, and the leader of the largest building expansion (Gathering Center, Welcome Hall, Youth Room) since 1960. His devotion to the care of the property spanned over four decades. He conceived of, created, and wrote the rules for our Capital Improvement Fund, which allows us to work on large projects which would otherwise be difficult to fund. His leadership and mentorship will be greatly missed.

Submitted by Chuck Hanrahan, Chair

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Monday Morning Crew

The Monday Morning Crew is a group of men and women who do repairs and maintenance across the Asbury campus. We consider all requests and tackle most of them using whatever skills and experience we can bring to the job. Our work saves thousands of dollars in repair costs annually. Everyone is welcome regardless of experience. We report our progress weekly to the staff and Property Committee.

Regulars in '23: Jim Connell, Jim and Bonnie Nolan, Jim Farrar, Dave Kennedy, Dave Kay, Ernie Dankert, Howie Holcomb, Dave Steider, Dick Wallace, and Bill Stata



A sampling of our accomplishments for 2023 are the following:

For the opening of the 1010 Community Outreach Center we:

- Assembled 15 five-shelf storage units for the Storehouse
- Installed new floor glides on 25 tables and 100 chairs in the Dining Center
- Installed AEDs, signage, the Storehouse quilt, bulletin boards, curtains, lights and more.
- Fabricated a radiator cover to prevent accidental damage in the Storehouse kitchen.
- Refurbished the Dining Center kitchen damper with a new actuator
- Repaired the plate warmer in the Dining Center

Elsewhere we also:

- Assembled and installed three new bike racks across the campus.
- Procured and installed a replacement hand-wash sink in the Dining and Caring Center.
- Repaired leaky sinks and pipes across the campus.
- Repaired the commercial dishwashers in both 1010 and 1040 (several times).
- Repaired crumbling plaster on walls throughout 1040 Education wing.
- Repaired many of the window blinds in the Daycare classrooms.
- Removed the wall partitions in the communications room of 1040.
- Repaired water-damaged ceilings in Gathering Center and in classrooms of 1040.
- Investigated and resolved problems with the heating system in 1050.
- Refurbished a display bookcase for the library.
- Replaced and/or repaired many light fixtures in all buildings on campus.
- Repaired the tables, chairs, and pews used in the Gathering Center.
- Sorted through 750+ loose keys identifying those still in use and those obsolete. We updated the key map for the entire campus. We changed locks to better limit access to some rooms. We labeled all the keys and are in the midst of properly locating them in locked key boxes.
- Inspected the emergency lights and replaced two failed units.
- Fabricated a rack for the safe storage of tables in Sunday School room 106.
- Replaced ballasts in several of the Welcome Hall sconces.
- Removed debris from the fire dept. connection to the sprinkler system based on our video inspection.
- Obtained and installed two warranty-replacement touchless faucets for 1040.
- Maintained the 15 wireless thermostats and actuator valves controlling heat in 1040.
- Replaced dozens of batteries in various devices across the campus.
- Recycled obsolete and broken materials including 525 pounds of steel taken to the scrap yard.
- We cleaned out and helped renovate the room now housing the Property Manager's office.

- Replaced broken electric outlets and light switches and replaced smoke and CO detectors.
- Repaired doors and door closers across the campus.
- Installed a de-icing heater with controls for the flat roof of the 1010 Red Room to prevent leaks.

Membership Report

Includes new members in 2023	45
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Baptized in 2023	8
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Deaths during 2022	26
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RE: Members Whose Addresses are Unknown

Names Read for the First Time in 2022

Names Read for the First Time in 2023

Sarah Alaimo

Anamarie Bailey

G. Cary Baldwin

David Billington

Elizabeth Bleecker

Aaron Bonham

Marcia Calos

Wesley Clawson

John Coco

Devon DeLaughter

Emily Dennison

Robert Fuino

Robert Gompf

Erica Gongloff-Piche

William Hallings

Mary Hallings

Dorothy Hanner

Richard Hanson

Georgia Hanson

Robert Henning, Jr.

Aaron Horning

Geraldine Johnson

Lydia MacLaughlin

Robert McMinn

Easton McMinn

Ronald Merle

Harold Miltsch

Nancy Miltsch

Brandon Miltsch

Ryan Miltsch



Kiley Miltsch
Jessica Owens
Matthew Pulos
Eric Regna
Bob Remington

Madeleine Reynolds
Bethany Roland
Maureen Rosenbaum
David Stewart
David Terruli

Peter Van Brunt
Mark Warth
Thomas Wilferth
Chad Williams



Worship and Arts

Music Ministry

It was a great joy to engage in a year of ministry that was uninterrupted by large-scale COVID disruptions! 2023 brought a return of stability to our music programs, with several of our ensembles seeing increases in membership.

Throughout 2023 our organists, soloists, and occasional guest musicians continued to demonstrate their dedication and talent on a weekly basis. I'm sure I speak for the entire congregation when I express my sincere gratitude to Duane Prill, Principal Organist, Assistant Organist David Strong, our soloists/section leaders Sipra Agrawal Kolar, Brenda Nitsch, Dan McInerney, and Jordan Bachmann, and our Choral Scholar Holden Turner. We continue to be fortunate beneficiaries of their dedication, professionalism, musicality, grace, and good humor.

During the summer, Sipra Kolar announced that she and her family would be relocating back to the Boston area for her husband's work. In the beginning of September, we welcomed Gwen Paker to our team as soprano soloist/section leader.

We are blessed with excellent music-making by members of our congregation who grace our worship with instrumental music. These include Annette Farrington, flute, Brian Donat, cello, Jim Farrington, trumpet and contractor for our Easter brass ensemble.

Asbury First Adult Choirs

Sanctuary Choir has risen to the challenge of some more intricate repertoire lately, performing challenging anthems in Latin and Hebrew, and singing a cappella with greater frequency. Leading this ensemble continues to be a highlight of my work at Asbury First. We were happy to welcome several new singers during 2023. I am grateful to Brian Bohrer who stands by to lead Sanctuary Choir when I need to be away.

On Memorial Day weekend, throughout June and August, and on Labor Day weekend, Summer Choir enjoyed excellent steady attendance this year. I am grateful to Brenda Nitsch who stepped in to lead Summer Choir during my summer vacation.



Personal Workload

Throughout 2023 I continued to accomplish weekly duties through a combination of remote and in-person work. Much of the work of composing Sunday worship, preparing bulletins, producing captions for live stream worship, coordination with our live stream Production Suite crew members, and other routine tasks can be carried out online. My on-campus work consists of preparing for Sanctuary Choir rehearsals, attending meetings (staff, Executive Team, worship planning), and attending to other details that require my physical presence. I continue to be involved in the preparation for funerals and memorial services, as well as other special services and events. I continue to meet weekly with the Technology Team via Zoom to evaluate and troubleshoot the Sunday live stream, and to plan ahead for special events.

The Production Coordinators team, whose purpose is to recruit and train new live stream operators and to oversee the smooth staffing of our Production Suite for live streaming, enjoyed a very successful season of drawing in new volunteers. This team, headed by David Berg and including Kenny Bailey and myself, has held a number of training sessions in 2023, and we look forward to deploying these new operators in the coming year.

It was a great pleasure for me to be involved with the musical preparations for The Sound of Music, rehearsing the Nun's Chorus and conducting them offstage during performances. We had a very enthusiastic group of singers made up of Sanctuary Choir members and others from the congregation.

I am grateful for my wonderful colleagues on the Asbury First staff for their generosity of time and overall collaborative nature!

Pianos

Our pianos throughout 1040 are in excellent care and continue to be well maintained and regularly tuned. The grand piano in Wesley Hall has benefited from the installation of a humidification system which has helped it maintain its tuning.

Submitted by Dr. Carl Johengen, Director of Music Ministry

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Organ

Duane Prill, Principal Organist



Our wonderful Austin organ continues to serve well with very little maintenance. We did renew a tuning contract with Parsons Organ Co. but only paid for ½ of the year as Duane has done most of the organ “touch-up” tuning/maintenance and has not called Parsons in as of yet.

Our contract with the Eastman School of Music to allow students to practice on the organ during the week has been renewed; we will continue to reevaluate this agreement.

Asbury Ringers ***Elizabeth Church, Director***

The Asbury Ringers is the adult handbell choir at Asbury First UMC. We currently have 13 members. We had one new member join us in the fall of 2023. Our primary commitment is to participate and contribute to the Sunday worship services.

We performed three times in the spring of 2023 during worship services: March 12, April 9 (Easter), and May 14. We also played at the memorial service of Dick Wilke on 5/20. Dick was a long-time member of Asbury and very supportive and encouraging of the choir over the years. His daughter, Barb Nelson, currently plays in the choir. In fall of 2023 we played on October 15, November 19 (Thanksgiving In-gathering), December 17, and at the 7 PM Christmas Eve service. We often play from the balcony on Christmas Eve, but the past two years we have played down front. Additionally, for the first time since the pandemic we played at an outside venue, Barnes and Noble Bookstore in Pittsford Plaza on Saturday, December 9. The Library Committee was also having their fundraiser, so we were there in part to support that cause.

As we start the Winter/Spring 2024 schedule I am looking to add a few ringers to the choir. One member has stepped down after Christmas, and having a full choir of 14 would give us more flexibility of music selections. I will be “advertising” in the bulletin, weekly e-news, and Sunday live stream slides for new members.

We continue to have a strong group of substitutes who can fill in as needed either in rehearsal or performance. This is a huge asset to the choir and our ability to perform and rehearse with a complete ensemble. Some of these subs are former ringers from Asbury First, youth and adult,



while some come from other area choirs. Barbara Howell, a member of the Ringers, has worked with me to keep the music cataloged and filed.

It is a privilege to work with this committed, enthusiastic group of musicians.

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Asbury Orchestra

Laurie Kennedy, Director

The Asbury Orchestra is a group of musicians at all technical stages that come together 5-6 Sunday mornings to rehearse and then share the results of their practice with the congregation three times a year. With members from ages 8 to 80's we share not only our musical skills but also a bit of our lives. Each member is encouraged to do what they can to add to our musical voice. This year found us making a strong comeback from the covid slowdown with over 28 players joining in for Christmas Carols. I am grateful to Jolene Harrigan for taking over some rehearsals in my absence, and for leading the Orchestra in Christmas caroling in December. In 2024 we will start rehearsals March 17 in preparation to play April 21 at the 11:00 service. All band and orchestra instrumentalists are welcome.

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Children's Music

Holly Temming, Director of Children's Music

Children's Music had a great year in 2023. In the Spring, we presented a children's musical titled Table for Five Thousand, the story of Jesus feeding 5000 with 2 small fish and 5 loaves. We were so happy to use the stage that was set up for The Sound of Music which provided much needed space in the chancel.

In the Summer our VBS theme was Make A Joyful Noise and was full of music at every station giving them exposure to handbells, marimbas, stringed instruments, organ, percussion, and musical meditation with singing bowls and chimes. Laurie Kennedy, Liz Church, Mike Mullin, and Duane Prill graciously volunteered their time and really made the week special.

Fall enrollment in children's choirs exploded, going from 6 children to 21 children in Hallelujah Kids and from 10 children to 21 children in Wesley Singers & Ringers. We barely have enough choir robes for all the children - a wonderful problem to have!



Both children's music groups sang and rang on Bible Sunday in November. Christmas Eve Pageant participation was steady with approximately 51 children participating.

My goals for 2024 are to keep growing participation in our children's choirs so more children can experience the joy of church music life.

Youth Music

Carol Lamica, Director of Youth Music

What an exciting year the youth have had at Asbury!! In the Spring, many youth participated in the intergenerational production of The Sound of Music. This musical was directed by Dr. Larry Dugan, with vocal direction for the Nuns' choir by Dr. Carl Johengen, and the remaining vocal direction for youth and adults by me. This opportunity allowed youth to make great connections with adult members of our congregation. These connections forged relationships that have led to more opportunities for the youth to participate in other areas of our church. The youth and adults rehearsed for the musical on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday evenings as needed, as well as Sunday afternoons.

The Sound of Music production used Right On Cue Services (ROCS). This is a high quality recording of the orchestration that allowed me to adjust the score for the production as I would with live musicians in front of me. The adventure of learning and using this amazing technology pulled me way outside my comfort zone! With familiarity and practice with the technology and the musical score, it ended up working incredibly well. I was thankful to have team members to rehearse and work with to get the timings perfect. It was an honor to be a part of this team, and I am encouraged that the new knowledge I have gained will allow me to continue to lead in this fashion in future productions.

The bell choir and youth choir rehearsed on Wednesdays in preparation for Youth Sunday where the youth played bells and the choir sang.

In September, auditions were held for the youth musical, Godspell. Twenty youth began rehearsing on Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons. As the production neared and we needed more rehearsal time, eventually we had a long Sunday of rehearsals, followed by nightly rehearsals for the final week. Performances took place on November 10-12 and were enthusiastically received by our audiences. The production had a pit orchestra that consisted of two keyboards, bass, electric and acoustic guitar, and percussion, with most of these roles taken on by supportive and talented adults from our congregation. The youth involved in the musical have formed a very close bond this year, "like family" as many of them tell me. What an incredible opportunity for these youth to make lifelong friendships. I am so blessed to have the opportunity to work with such a dedicated, enthusiastic group of teenagers.



The youth continued to rehearse on Wednesday evenings in preparation for singing at the 4 pm and 7 pm Christmas Eve services. There were 12 participants at the 4 pm service and 11 participants at the 7 pm service. Many of the youth choir members also served as acolytes at the 7 pm service.

My goals for 2024 are to secure regular attendance at bell choir rehearsal and increase participation in both the bells and choir. I will also be encouraging the youth to audition for Oliver. I am looking forward to being a part of another intergenerational musical at Asbury First.

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Altar Guild

The Altar Guild is instrumental in preparing the Sanctuary each week for Worship. Linens, flowers, and candles are placed on the altars. After the services, the Pastor's study, Sanctuary, and Sacristy are cleaned. Altar flowers are wrapped and delivered to those in need. In 2023, the Altar Guild:

- Successfully conducted 2 business meetings and an annual spring chancel cleaning day in March.
- The Annual Installation of new Altar Guild members was postponed until spring 2024 until a complete leadership slate is in place. Instead, a Christmas Brunch was held in December where we welcomed 4 new members and one returning guild member.
- Coordinated and assisted with seven Sanctuary weddings. The Wedding Committee provided 1-2 assistants for six of the seven weddings. One wedding did not request an assistant. At this time, one wedding is planned for 2024.
- Special Services provided support to 20 memorial services and 1 funeral and set-up for the following services – Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, 2 Older Adult Communion Services, Longest Night, 4 Christmas Eve services, and New Year's Eve. Linens for the High Altar, Meditation Chapel, and Children's Altar are routinely cleaned/pressed throughout the year.
- Special altars were created for World Communion Sunday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Palm Sunday.
- Altar candles - The oil in the Kerry candles on the three altars was maintained so that they burned properly for the 11 am service on 52 Sundays, for 7 weddings, for 20 Memorial services, and for 13 special services. The oil in the Kerry candles in the candelabra was maintained so that they burned properly for 7 weddings and 7 special services. A supply of wax candles is maintained for weddings, where requested, and for Christmas Eve, and special candles are ordered for the Advent Wreath and the Christ candle. The Candelabra were used for 12 services (Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Taize, the Longest Night, New Year's Eve, and 3 weddings)



- Flower solicitations are available all year. Overall, donations have decreased. Congregant members were encouraged to come forth after service for a bouquet to share with someone in need.
- Approximately 536 volunteer hours were recorded.
- Due to ongoing challenges in membership recruitment and a shrinking membership, the Altar Guild unanimously voted to continue the 2023 leadership slate into 2024. The Altar Guild co-presidents continue to be Martha Tuke and Ellen Williams.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Tuke and Ellen Williams
Altar Guild Co-Presidents

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Discipleship

Youth Ministries

Mike Mullin, Minister for Youth and Discipleship

Welcome. Celebrate. Serve. All.

The youth program at Asbury First is open to all 6th–12th graders. We are UMYF; this stands for United Methodist Youth Fellowship. Our mission is to welcome all youth to celebrate a growing relationship with God and each other, while joyfully serving in the example of Christ. We are built on the foundations of Christianity and we take our United Methodist Church slogan seriously:

Open Hearts.

We want all youth to feel loved and accepted in our group regardless of age, gender, race, school district, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

Open Minds.

We want our youth programming to be a safe place where all youth feel comfortable with sharing what's in their hearts without being judged.

Open Doors.

We want all youth to know they are welcome—members and non-members alike participate in our programming.

MAJOR PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

- Confirmation for youth in grade 8.
- Middle School Youth Group
- High School Youth Group
- Youth Vocal Choir
- Youth Bell Choir
- Youth Musical
- College-Age Fellowship
- Annual Youth Outings
- Middle School Mission Trip
- High School Mission Trip

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2023

Confirmation Class

Eight confirmands were received into fellowship of AFUMC in the spring of 2023—with over half being baptized as part of the service!

Asbury First is honored to have its Senior Minister, The Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady, continue to participate in leading our monthly confirmation gatherings.



Youth Group

- Youth Meeting Times – Last year, we shifted our youth group meeting times from Sunday evenings to Sundays after church. In addition to connecting the youth group meeting with morning worship, this shift has also helped families to lessen their commutes to and from church on Sundays. Youth and families alike have continued to prefer this new meeting time, and we have even started to see more youth regularly present during worship on Sunday mornings.
- *Youth Leadership* – We continue to have a committed and interested team of youth leaders who work with the adult staff and volunteers to provide leadership and direction.
- *Seniors* – We honored seventeen seniors who graduated high school in 2022.
- *Youth Sunday* – Our Youth Sunday service was offered in-person and live-streamed in the sanctuary. We had eight seniors give sermons, and numerous youth participate in other areas of the service.
- *Retreats* – Retreats have not yet returned post-pandemic. This is in-part due to conflicting and competing schedules. Some of our youth did attend the Camp Echo at Casowasco to help bring in the New Year!
- *Fundraising* – We had our annual Souper Bowl fundraiser, and Pie for Pi fundraiser in the spring. The Park Avenue Festival (which has historically been our largest fundraiser), has not returned since the pandemic, and it is unlikely to. That helped lead to our first-ever Youth Mini-Golf Outing and Fundraiser.
- *Senior High Mission Trip* – In July, 12 youth and 6 adults traveled to Tucson, AZ to work with Be The Neighbor and embark on a border immersion service trip. In addition to experiencing temperatures in the 110s, we spent the week learning about immigration, hearing people's first-hand stories of crossing the border, working in temporary housing facilities and community gardens, and crossing the border into Mexico to visit a ministry that's trying to help people cross the border legally and successfully.
- *Middle School Mission Trip* – In August, 25 youth and 8 adults volunteered with Asbury First's vacation Bible school in the mornings, and then with local Rochester agencies in the afternoons. This year, the agencies included working in the community garden at the Gandhi Institute, taking a tour of Foodlink, and helping to support and learn more about the Center for Youth. Following the week of service, the youth had the opportunity to travel to the Niagara Falls, Canada, where they spent two days touring Clifton Hills.

Youth Music

The Youth Musical this year was, Godspell. It included an incredible cast of youth, and myriad youth and adult volunteers that helped make the show a reality. As always, this program helps to welcome new youth and families into the life and ministries of Asbury First.

The Youth Choir and Bells have continued to meet on Wednesday evenings with opportunities to share their gifts and talents at worship services throughout the year.



College-Age Fellowship

The youth group put together and sent out fifteen care packages to our 2023 graduates in November.

General

Connectional:

- Mike continues to be in conversation with local ministry leaders to think through how we might foster interreligious and intra-methodist offerings for our youth. The confirmands visited a local Hindu Temple and Temple B'rith Kodesh in the spring.
- Mike has continued to be in contact with the leadership of the District Committee on Youth Ministry and the Conference Committee on Youth Ministry to help continue our connectionalism as a youth group in the work of the conference. These groups have not been very active since the pandemic, but we remain hopeful for our United Methodist connections.

Outreach:

- High School Mission Trip to the border
- Middle School Mission Trip to Rochester
- We are beginning to return to an outlook of engaging in monthly youth service work, with a focus on our Asbury First Community Outreach Center and connections.
- We hosted a youth group deCycles for an overnight in June. This group of youth and adult counselors stopped at Asbury First while biking from Indiana to Maine.
- We were able to go caroling in December to three local resident facilities. This was a wonderful opportunity to greet members of our congregation that we might not see on a regular basis.

Additional Comments:

In 2023, we have continued to focus on the foundations of our ministry—fostering positive relationships. Youth ministry—like all ministry—is relational. We want to ensure that each week we offer time for youth to connect in both structured and more open settings. We do this through service, education, games, meals, and free time. Each of these components helps us to ground our Youth Ministries in the core values of Asbury First—to live, love, serve, and repeat. We look forward to continuing to improve upon this groundwork in 2024, and to see how our programs continue to grow—not just in numbers, but in personal impact.

Respectfully submitted, Mike Mullin – Minister for Youth and Discipleship

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Library Team

Our mission is to offer a comfortable space and resources where the Asbury community can learn about God, spirituality, humanity, religion, inspiration and challenge through books and other media.

2023 Work Progress:

- The entire Church Library collection has been inventoried to update the online database and notebook collection lists. The notebooks (sorted by title or author) enable library visitors to find books even when a team member is not available to help.
- Continued the online database of the church library collection enabling online access to the collection by the congregation. This effort provides remote access capabilities in order that the library collection information can be accessed from home, office, and other locations.
- Continued to promote knowledge and use of email access to the church library for the purpose of seeking and providing information regarding items in the library collection.
- Continued to weed the collection of older books and those in poor repair, replacing them with the same or similar titles. This is a continuing process done on weekly workdays.
- We held monthly team meetings (by Zoom) to go over suggestions for new materials, plan for workdays, fundraisers, library usage, and special projects.
- We continued to reach out to pastors, staff members, and congregants for suggestions for new books to purchase.
- We continued support of the children's Sunday school and the youth group.
 - A team member is meeting with young children, monthly, in the library, for a story time during their Enrichment Period and to acquaint them with the library. We also plan to meet with the teens to assess genres of interest for the YA collection.
- The team emphasized promoting library usage by the congregation through displays, participation in adult education, special events, monthly use of our bibliocart, book fairs, publicity in the church bulletin and Thursday e-newsletters.
- A major effort continued this year to update, reposition, replace, or dispose of items in the collection. We also continued to work on organizing the collection for optimal display, use, and function.
- An anonymous specified donation allowed us to enlarge our collection of LGBTQ+ books for children, teens and adults.



2023 Events:

- A subgroup of the Library Team and a few members from the congregation, did extensive research and presented a program on banned books and the danger of such a practice. The program was held on three successive Wednesday evenings, this past fall, and was well attended.
- Barnes and Noble Book Fair Fundraiser: A highly successful day-long book fair was held December 9 at Barnes and Noble. We were entertained by the Asbury Bell Ringers and Alan Hopkins. We have not been notified yet as to how much we made.
- NOTA Farm Market Sale: The library team participated in the weekly Neighborhood of the Arts (NOTA) Farmers' Market, selling donated and discarded books as a neighborhood service and a fundraising project. We made \$280.00. NOTA Farm Market will not continue next year.

2024 Goals:

- Promoting use of the library by displaying books on the bibliocart in the Gathering Space on one Sunday each month.
- Continuation of our contract with Resource Mate, which is a service that allows people to search the library catalog online.
- Promoting library usage by continuing to refine and upgrade our collection with new and appropriate materials, as well as providing programs and information on library resources.
- Participation in and promotion of any church-wide and church group "reads" in cooperation with the Education team and Mike Mullin, Minister for Discipleship and Youth, and other church groups.
- Creation of special displays for seasonal and spiritual holidays, in the library, with accompanying publicity emphasized for special holidays and events (Advent/Lent/ MLK Day/etc.).
- Highlighting a "book of the month" in the e-newsletter each week.
- We look forward to another year of growth and will continue to search for even more ways to be a vital resource for the congregation, youth, and children. We invite all to visit the library and share with us any suggestions for new books or ways we can better serve the congregation.

Team Members: Chris Burton, Monica Gilligan, Karen Hibbard, Bonnie Kay, Mary Beth Kelley, Peggy Lyons, Carol Roote, Beth Woolever. Member Emeritus: Sharon Crouch.

Submitted by Chris Burton

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Conference Reports

FORM 1

Genesee Valley

District

Upper New York Annual Conference

Our mission is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places

Outreach and Volunteers in Mission Report

(Due two weeks prior to Charge/Church Conference)

Church Name: Asbury First UMC Date 01/09/24

Pastor: Stephen Cady

Primary Volunteer in Mission or Mission/Outreach Contact for the congregation:

Name: Rev. Patrick Dupont Phone: 585-271-1050 x136

Address: 1050 East Ave., Rochester, NY 14607

Email Address: pdupont@asburyfirst.org

OUTREACH

Name any additional outreach programs that your church would like to celebrate.

We are thrilled about the first full year in operation of our new
Community Outreach Center. We have been able to provide
meals, laundry, showers, clothing, medical care, fresh produce
and bicycle repair to the most vulnerable of our Rochester
community.

**Please continue on separate piece of paper if more room is needed.*

Revised 2022 pmg



FORM 2

Genesee Valley

District

Church Name: Asbury First UMC

Who are United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM)?

UMVIM are clergy and laity serving locally, nationally or internationally in a ministry endorsed by the host United Methodist church, partner church or agency, or non-governmental organization. UMVIM serve with the poor, build churches, assist in disaster response and community health and nutrition programs and in leadership training.

Number of VIM teams organized or sponsored by your local church? n/a

Number of people who participated in a VIM team? Adults _____ Youth _____

Number of people from your church who participated in a team organized at another UMC, denomination, etc.?

Adults _____ Youth _____

Known amount of money spent on or donated to the project \$ _____

How were the lives and faith of the volunteers impacted?

How was the life and faith of your congregation impacted?

What impact perceived or measurable did the experience(s) have on the recipients(s)?

Name of person completing this form: Stephen Cady

District Office sends copy to UNYAC Volunteers in Mission Coordinators:

Kristina Clark

Kristinaclark@unyumc.org

Blessings on all who are a Christian presence to those who are served by these ministries for "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:40



FORM 2
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



CHARGE CONFERENCE

Report of the Pastor

The report of the pastor shall include the names of all persons involved in the changes in membership and other items as outlined in the 2016 *Book of Discipline* (§§ 234, 340). This report should cover as fully as possible the work of the pastor. Care should be taken not to duplicate the reports of the Church Council, committees, organizations, and officers of the charge.

Copies of this report should be filed with the recording secretary, pastor, district superintendent and chairperson of witness or evangelism ministries.

Asbury First Church Charge
Genesee Valley District Upper New York Annual Conference
For the period beginning 01/29/23 and ending 01/28/24
DATE OF PRIOR CHARGE CONFERENCE (01/01/2022) DATE OF CURRENT CHARGE CONFERENCE (12/01/2023)

1. List those who have been received into baptized membership since the last report. *14*
(Attach as a supplement.)
2. List those who have been received into professing membership since the last report. *50*
(Attach as a supplement.)
 - a. On profession of faith or restored. *37*
 - b. From other United Methodist churches. *6*
 - c. From other non-United Methodist churches. *7*
3. List those who have been removed from the professing membership since the last report.
(Attach as a supplement.)
 - a. By action of the Charge Conference, or trial court, or by withdrawal. *12*
 - b. By transfer to other United Methodist churches. *6*
 - c. By transfer to other non-United Methodist churches. *6*
 - d. By death. *2*
4. Have the membership records and rolls been audited (§231)? ☒ Yes ☐ No If not, why not?

5. The Pastor shall give a report on the state of the church and an account of pastoral ministry as it relates to (§ 340):
providing support, guidance, and training to the lay membership in the church; ministering within the congregation and to the world; and administering the temporal affairs of the congregation. Include as a part of the report a statement outlining the pastor's program of continuing education and spiritual growth for the past year and plans for the year to come (§ 349). (Attach as a supplement.)

Signed 

Printed Name Stephen Cady

Date 01/09/24



Senior Minister Annual Report

Chief among the many missional successes of 2023 was the completion and launch of our new Community Outreach Center. After years of planning, fundraising, and dreaming together, we finally opened the doors to a fully accessible and humanizing space for the most vulnerable of our community. Watching our neighbors and volunteers create a welcoming community through the various ministries has been a highlight of my entire ministerial career. Each week the programs seem to grow and deepen as we work toward becoming that outpost for the kingdom of heaven we envisioned. I can't thank the congregation, staff, and leadership teams enough for their hard work in bringing this dream to life.

Another highlight of this year was witnessing the launch of the Asbury First Community Theater. While I am admittedly biased, watching the production of *The Sound of Music* in our sanctuary was a transporting experience. Watching the intergenerational relationships that formed between the more than one hundred people who participated in the cast and crew, however, was truly transcendent. The research is clear, one of the greatest predictors of lasting faith in young people is their ability to form meaningful relationships with faithful adults beyond their parents. That occurred in this production in spades. One needs only to watch the weekly interactions that still happen in the Gathering Center following worship to understand the lasting effect this has on community building in our church. I can't wait to see how this kind of experience continues to deepen the bonds that have already begun. Thank you to all who made it possible and supported this event.

There are other highlights. During this year, we took in the largest new members classes in recent memory and forged a new connection with a refugee church in Rochester that brought our children together for Vacation Bible School. We took the next faithful step as a congregation, leaning into the future of methodism and resolved to begin holding same-sex weddings. Our worship attendance has slowly begun to return to pre-pandemic levels while our online worship has remained strong and even deepened. (One example: in the spring, I received a call from a gentleman who worships with us weekly from Florida who asked me to come and do a funeral for his husband.) In the late spring, Emily and I led a special class called, *The Gospel According to Ted Lasso* that saw over a hundred people each week gather to grow in faith and fellowship. It was a lot of fun. This fall, we began to dream together again as a congregation about who we are and who God is calling us to be.

There have been challenges this year as well. We continue to try to navigate a congregation that seems as though it will forever have both a virtual and in-person contingent. Early in the pandemic, I mentioned that we may never again have more people physically with us than with us virtually. To date, that appears to be true. Although in-person attendance has grown, our virtual worshippers (both those who worship in the moment and later in the week through the archives or podcast) have continued to outpace the people we see in person. While it is wonderful to connect with so many people, it is difficult to not know who those people are with whom we are in regular connection. I recommend that Asbury First continues to look at strategies for engaging our virtual members in the years ahead.



Another challenge is financial. While we are blessed with a giving and generous congregation and congregational giving has remained strong, we did not bring in as much as we anticipated through grants this year. Or rather, we did not receive grants that were for general operations of our Community Outreach Center. The totals of our grants met our target, but most of the grants we received were targeted toward new initiatives and didn't offset our operational expenses. This will be a learning process moving forward and we will budget less anticipated income from grants in the year ahead, but it creates a very real budget challenge this year. As counter-intuitive as it might sound, my recommendation is to hire a Director of Development, even if it is a part-time position. I would imagine that this person could help steward the relationships with outside donors and foundations and raise money for the Community Outreach Center. We have already formed many relationships during this last year, but will need to nurture them in order for them to continue to bear fruit.

As I reflect on my time here, I am so grateful for all that we have been able to accomplish together. That said, here are a few things that I wish I had gotten done:

1. **Accessibility of 1050:** While it was a part of our original plan for Better Together, we never quite got to that last phase. My prayer is that the congregation can make this happen. Not only is it the right thing to do for our siblings with mobility challenges, but it opens access to the third floor which is lovely space that we could use for vital ministry. There is even a room that could function as a lovely chapel.
2. **Endowing the Community Outreach Center Positions:** I would love to see us endow the Director and Social Worker positions at the Community Outreach Center so that we can ensure those positions in perpetuity.
3. **Director of Connectional Ministries/Volunteer Coordinator:** I always envisioned a position whose main purpose was to connect members of the congregation into the life of the congregation.
4. **Digital Ministries:** I hope that Asbury First will continue its connection with people all over the country/world. Some churches have added a new ministerial position called the "Digital Minister". Regardless, I pray that you continue to foster that connection.

While there is always more to do, Asbury First is in a strong position as a congregation. Emily, Ellie, Charlie, Hannah, and I have been so blessed to be a part of Asbury First and I am confident that the person who follows me will come to love this congregation as much as I have. It has been a good twelve years. As I said when the announcement about my departure was shared, outside of being a husband and father, serving as the Senior Minister of Asbury First has been the greatest honor of my life. Week by week, we have done our best to love God and neighbor, live fully, serve all, and repeat.

My prayer and my confidence is that you will continue to do that work as we do our best to take the skills we have learned here to do more good in Fort Worth. Though we will be far away, you will never be far from our hearts.

In Christ's love,

Stephen



Baptized since 1/29/2023

First Name	Preferred Name	Last Name	Birthday	Age	Baptism Date
Lincoln		VanEpps	8/13/2021	2 yrs	1/7/2024
Vick	Vick	Shipmon	1/30/1967	56 yrs	4/16/2023
Colette	Colette	Kirivong	1/22/2020	3 yrs	3/26/2023
Shayera	Shayera	Asala	1/23/2020	3 yrs	6/4/2023
Ella	Ella	Kubik	11/25/2022	1 yrs	4/23/2023
Sophie	Sophia	Caprariello	1/16/2019	4 yrs	11/12/2023
Vivienne	Vivienne	March	3/6/2018	5 yrs	6/18/2023
Julian	Julian	March	6/25/2021	2 yrs	6/18/2023
Cora	Cora	McMinn	3/17/2023	9 months	8/20/2023
Angelo	Angelo	Zhushma	10/30/2023	2 months	12/17/2023
Avery	Avery	Conrow-Graham	8/23/2023	4 months	1/7/2024



Received into Membership since 1/29/2023

First Name	Preferred Name	Last Name	How Received	Joined
Dina	Dina	Alexander	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Christine	Christine	Ashton	Transfer from another UMC	3/12/2023
Jason	Jason	Ashton	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Dustin	Dustin	Ayers	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Eileen	Eileen	Blakely	Transfer from another faith	11/12/2023
Craig	Craig	Burton	Transfer from another faith	11/12/2023
Peter	Peter	Caprariello	Affirmation of Faith	11/12/2023
Katie	Katie	Caprariello	Affirmation of Faith	11/12/2023
Mark	Mark	Chang	Affirmation of Faith	11/12/2023
Stu	Stu	Cooper	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Carol	Carol	Cooper	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Morgan	Morgan	Cox	Transfer from another faith	11/12/2023
Shawn	Shawn	Cox	Transfer from another faith	11/12/2023
Caroline	Caroline	Elliott-Loughney	Transfer from another faith	11/12/2023
Sharon	Sharon	Flanagan	Affirmation of Faith	11/12/2023
Erica	Erica	Friedman-Coburn	Affirmation of Faith	4/16/2023
Ted	Ted	Fung	Affirmation of Faith	5/7/2023
Jennifer	Jennifer	Fung	Affirmation of Faith	5/7/2023
Nancy	Nancy	Gongloff	Transfer from another UMC	11/12/2023
Faith	Faith	Han	Profession of Faith	11/12/2023
Lilith	Lilith	Hart	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Ewin	Ewin	Joseph	Affirmation of Faith	5/7/2023
Mary Beth	Mary Beth	Kelley	Transfer from another UMC	11/12/2023
Linda	Linda	Larkin	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Mark	Mark	Maddalina	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Laurie	Laurie	Maddalina	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Alexi	Alexi	Mikaelson	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Emily	Emily	Milazzo	Transfer from another faith	11/12/2023
Mary Lou	Mary Lou	Milazzo	Affirmation of Faith	11/12/2023
Skyler	Skyler	Mitchell	Profession of Faith	11/12/2023
Laura	Laura	Mitchell	Profession of Faith	11/12/2023
Karyn	Kay	Morris	Affirmation of Faith	11/12/2023
Emily	Emily	Neece	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Claudia	Claudia	Nolan	Affirmation of Faith	4/16/2023
Daniel	Daniel	Pollatta	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Ellen	Ellen	Pollatta	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
David	David	Schlick	Transfer from another UMC	3/12/2023
Sandra	Sandy	Snyder	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
David	David	Snyder	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Taylor	Taylor	Spinning	Affirmation of Faith	11/12/2023
Anita	Anita	Spoor	Affirmation of Faith	5/7/2023
Katie	Katie	Sullivan	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
James	James	Taylor	Transfer from another faith	3/12/2023
Cynthia	Cindy	Wallace	Transfer from another UMC	11/12/2023
Richard	Dick	Wallace	Transfer from another UMC	11/12/2023
Chris	Chris	Williams	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023



Anna	Anna	Williams	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023
Alphonsa	AJ	Wynn	Affirmation of Faith	11/12/2023
Alan	Alan	Ziegler	Affirmation of Faith	3/12/2023



Removed from Membership Since 1/29/2023

First Name	Preferred Name	Last Name	How Removed	Date
Richard	Rich	Meyer	Withdrawn	10/24/2023
Kathleen	Kathleen	Meyer	Withdrawn	10/24/2023
Justin	Justin	Bartzsch	Withdrawn	10/24/2023
Marilyn	Marilyn	Soule	Withdrawn	7/10/2023
Terence	Terence	Williams	Withdrawn	6/7/2023
Lindsay	Lindsay	Williams	Withdrawn	6/7/2023
Daniel	Daniel	Williams	Withdrawn	6/7/2023
Sarah	Sarah	Williams	Withdrawn	6/7/2023
Landry	Landry	Retzlaff	Withdrawn	5/9/2023
David	Dave	McIntosh	Withdrawn	3/7/2023
Julie	Julie	McIntosh	Withdrawn	3/7/2023
Andrew	Drew	Saum	Withdrawn	9/5/2023
Kelley	Kelley	Johnston	Transferred to a non-UMC church	2/20/2023
Jeffrey	Jeff	Johnston	Transferred to a non-UMC church	2/20/2023
Camden	Camden	Johnston	Transferred to a non-UMC church	2/20/2023
Noah	Noah	Johnston	Transferred to a non-UMC church	2/20/2023
Aldan	Aldan	Johnston	Transferred to a non-UMC church	2/20/2023
David	Dave	Holloway	Transferred to another UMC	3/12/2023
Martha	Marti	Sweitzer	Transferred to a non-UMC church	1/31/2023
Gregory	Greg	Foust	Transferred to a non-UMC church	12/18/2023
Peggy	Peggy	Foust	Transferred to a non-UMC church	12/18/2023
Margaret	Meg	Vosburgh	Transferred to a non-UMC church	7/5/2023
Dana	Dana	Vosburgh	Transferred to a non-UMC church	7/5/2023
Linda	Linda	Saucke	Transferred to another UMC	10/24/2023
Laura	Laura	Brown	Died	12/20/2023
June	June	Brush	Died	6/9/2023
Jean	Jean	Cook	Died	1/8/2024
John	John	DeMocker	Died	9/16/2023
Grace	Grace	Doyle	Died	3/13/2023
Theodore	Ted	Epping	Died	7/22/2023
Alvona	Bonnie	Erwin	Died	2/14/2023
Robert	Bob	Fitch	Died	4/6/2023
Jefferson	Jeff	Fraser	Died	5/31/2023
Merilyn	Merilyn	Israel	Died	5/22/2023
Jane	Jane	Jeszenka	Died	8/16/2023
Karen	Karen	Kelly	Died	11/19/2023
Beth	Beth	Kleinstuber	Died	2/7/2023
Rose	Rose	Lehman	Died	2/14/2023
Grace	Grace	Matthews	Died	6/18/2023
Ruth	Ruth	McConnell	Died	8/23/2023
Anne	Anne	Mikels	Died	9/22/2023
Richard	Dick	Moncrief	Died	10/9/2023
David	Dave	Petherbridge	Died	9/23/2023
David	David	Phillips	Died	10/16/2023
Durwood	Durwood	Raplee	Died	5/27/2023
John	John	Shafer	Died	10/28/2023
E.	Wayne	Turnblom	Died	12/27/2023



Removed from Membership Since 1/29/2023

Marilyn	Marilyn	Waring	Died	5/11/2023
Gail	Gail	Warner	Died	3/30/2023
Karen	Karen	Webster	Died	5/23/2023
Richard	Dick	Wilke	Died	4/15/2023
Darin	Darin	Wilson	Died	4/10/2023

Local Church Leadership Interface UNYAC

FORM 5

Church Name: Asbury First UMC					
Pastor: Stephen Cady					
Associate Pastor: Pat Dupont, Rachel Dupont, Kathy Thiel					
Office Secretary: Deb Bullock-Smith					
Position	Name	Mailing Address	City, State, ZIP	Phone	E-Mail
Ad Council Chair	James Quinn, Governing Board Chair	44 East Blvd	Rochester, NY 14610	585-490-4619	jmq1950@gmail.com
Trustee Chair	James Quinn, Governing Board Chair	44 East Blvd	Rochester, NY 14610	585-490-4619	jmq1950@gmail.com
Finance Chair	Mark Wright	28 Landing View Lane	Fairport, NY 14450	585-369-6745	mrkwght78@gmail.com
Treasurer	John Ormsbee	1050 East Ave.	Rochester, NY 14607	585-271-1050 x107	jornsbee@asburyfirst.org
P/SPRC Chair	Beth Wilkens	9 Woodbury Place	Rochester, NY 14618	585-314-3071	beth49wilkens@gmail.com
Parsonage Chair	n/a				
Christian Ed	Mike Mullin	1050 East Ave.	Rochester, NY 14607	585-271-1050 x105	mmullin@asburyfirst.org
Lay Leader	James Quinn, Governing Board Chair	44 East Blvd	Rochester, NY 14610	585-490-4619	jmq1950@gmail.com
Lay Member to AC	Cory Tylanda	69 Boulevard Pkwy	Rochester, NY 14612	585-465-2674	corytylenda@gmail.com
Alt. Lay Member	Andrew Hunt	69 Elm Drive	Rochester, NY 14609	585-269-9124	adghunt@gmail.com
Safe Sanctuaries Rep	Mike Mullin	1050 East Ave.	Rochester, NY 14607	585-271-1050 x105	mmullin@asburyfirst.org
Mission Chair	Pat Dupont	1050 East Ave.	Rochester, NY 14607	585-271-1050 x136	pdupont@asburyfirst.org
Camp Agent	Mike Mullin	1050 East Ave.	Rochester, NY 14607	585-271-1050 x105	mmullin@asburyfirst.org
CONAN Rep.		n/a			
Social Justice Rep.	Pat Dupont	1050 East Ave.	Rochester, NY 14607	585-271-1050 x136	pdupont@asburyfirst.org
UMM President	n/a				
UMW President	n/a				
Youth Group Leader	Mike Mullin	1050 East Ave.	Rochester, NY 14607	585-271-1050 x105	mmullin@asburyfirst.org

**FORM 6****SAFE SANCTUARIES® COMPLIANCE REPORT-- Upper New York Conference**

Due 15 days prior to Charge/Church Conference and will be reviewed by DS and Safe Sanctuaries Team.

Congregation Asbury First UMC District Genesee Valley

Appointed Pastor or Pastoral Leader Stephen Cady

Pastor or Pastoral Leader has completed at least one Conference 3-hr Basic Safe Sanctuaries Training? ☒ Yes ☐ No
If No, please explain why? _____ Date training was/will be completed: _____

Check the groups with whom your congregation has ministries:

☒ Children ☒ Youth ☒ Elderly/Shut-ins ☒ Special Needs Adults ☒ Other vulnerable adults*

*(A vulnerable adult is someone 18 or older, who is less able to care or protect themselves as well as adults who work with children and youth, where accusations of abuse could mistakenly arise, or those who have been abused as a child or adult)

Items are based on Upper New York's current Safe Sanctuaries Minimum Standards which can be found at
https://www.unyumc.org/images/uploads/UNY_SafeSanctuaries_Minimum_Standards_updated_2016.pdf

Directions: Check either YES or NO. If NO, please explain why and what date the church/ministry will be in compliance.
To be in compliance, all answers should be YES for items 1-8, 9B.

1. The church's SS policy and procedures has been reviewed within the annual orientation of clergy and those who work directly with children, youth and vulnerable adults this year? ☒ Yes ☐ No If Yes, When? 9/23
2. The church's Safe Sanctuaries policy & procedures reflect UNY's Minimum Standards. ☒ Yes ☐ No
Please email church Safe Sanctuaries Policy to safesantuaries@unyumc.org or attach a copy to this form.
3. A current Safe Sanctuaries policy is on file in the District Office. ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. All clergy & laity have knowledge of and access to the policy. ☐ Yes ☒ No
5. Background checks are completed every 2 years for clergy, paid workers, and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults (i.e. youth group, Sunday school, VBS, Visitation teams, etc.) ☐ Yes ☒ No
6. All adults who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults have completed at least one Conference 3-hr basic Safe Sanctuaries training that includes all topics listed in The Minimum Standards. (i.e. youth group, Sunday school, VBS, Visitation teams, etc.) ☒ Yes ☐ No
7. Attendance records are kept for all ministry events/activities involving children and youth. ☒ Yes ☐ No
8. The church maintains files of workers that include documents completed in the recruiting and screening process and of their training and service. ☒ Yes ☐ No
9. A. Our congregation includes sex offender(s). ☒ Yes ☐ No
B. If YES, a covenant for constant shepherding is in place for sex offender(s). ☒ Yes ☐ No

Signature of Pastor or SS Team chairperson  Date 1/9/24



FORM 7

ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT FOR UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES (¶2533.6)



Church Asbury First

District Genesee Valley

	YES	NO	Description / Guidelines	Explain "NO" Answers*
GETTING INTO THE CHURCH				
1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clearly visible signs direct people to accessible entrances	For two buildings
2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 or more ADA parking spaces are on level ground close to entrance	
3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chair users don't have to move behind parked cars or cross traffic	
4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	At least 1 per 25 spaces is clearly marked with access symbol on vertical signs and on pavement (# of accessible spaces: _____)	
5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Accessible spaces are 8' wide with adjacent 5' access aisle	
6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	At least one accessible space is van accessible: 11' wide with clearly marked adjacent 5' access aisle (or 8' space with 8' access aisle)	
7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	36" wide curb cuts (curb ramps) are provided close to parking	
8	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Route (sidewalk) from accessible parking to accessible building entrance is smooth, flat, & at least 36" wide (width: _____)	
9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Entrance is level <u>or</u> has exterior ramp with non-slip surface and minimum width of 36" between handrails (width: _____)	For two buildings
10	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ramp has max. incline of 1:12 (length: _____ rise: _____ ratio: _____) with no more than 30' between level landings, <u>or</u> entrance is level	For two buildings
11	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	34-38" handrails are on both sides of ramp/ stairs and extend 12", lower railing no higher than 4" above deck, <u>or</u> entrance is level	For two buildings
12	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a 60"x 60" level platform at entry door (size: _____) and space on pull side of door (preferably 18") to allow door to open	For two buildings
13	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Automatic door opener is available, or doorbell to request assist	For two buildings
14	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Entrance door is 36" wide; threshold no more than beveled ½" high	For two buildings
GETTING AROUND THE CHURCH				
15	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Signs in entrances/ halls direct visitors and help them locate rooms	
16	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Corridors are at least 36" wide and have non-glare floor surface	
17	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No objects protrude more than 4", and lowest part of protruding object is no more than 27" above floor height to allow detection with a cane; no sign or high protrusion is lower than 80"	
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Multi-level buildings provide access to all common/ most program areas via elevator, lift and/ or ramp(s), <u>or</u> building is on one level	for two buildings
19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interior doorways have a minimum of 32" clearance and thresholds are level or are no more than ½" high and beveled	
20	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Door handles (e.g. lever style) are easy to grasp and operate with one hand/single effort, using no more than 5 lbs. force	
21	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carpet pile is level, no more than ½" thick, w/ no or firm padding; floor mats have non-slip backing and are stable	
22	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire alarm controls and extinguishers are no more than 48" (h: _____) from floor; visual and auditory fire alarms are in place	
23	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	At least one accessible marked unisex/ family restroom (<u>or</u> one stall in male and female restrooms) per floor has ~60"x 60" turning space with 33 – 36" high wall-mounted grab bar next to toilet extending 54" from back wall; toilet height 17 – 19" (h: _____)	
24	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	29" sink clearance from floor (h: _____), easy to operate controls (lever style, automatic, etc.), hot water & drain pipes are covered	

25	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Soap dispenser and paper towels are mounted no higher than 48" (h: _____) <i>or placed on counter for access</i>	
26	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bottom edge of at least one mirror is 40" or lower (h: _____)	
	YES	NO	Description / Guidelines	Explain "NO" Answers
27	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drinking fountain is no higher than 36" with easy hand controls and wheelchair clearance, <i>or paper cup dispenser is provided</i>	
28	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stairs/ interior ramps have handrails on both sides, <i>or all one level</i>	
29	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Top/bottom step edges & ramp level changes marked, <i>or one level</i>	
SANCTUARY, CLASSROOMS, AND FELLOWSHIP AREA				
30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level pew cuts/ wheelchair spaces are next to aisles and distributed throughout the room for choice in seating	
31	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wheelchair spaces are 33"x48" forward or 33"x60" side approach (size: _____), with view of pulpit and screen when others stand	
32	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chancel area and choir loft are accessible, e.g. with ramp or lift	
33	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Handrails are provided for steps to the chancel, <i>or floor is level</i>	
34	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aisles are at least 36" (w: _____) in common areas	
35	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fellowship - e.g. potlucks, coffee hour- is offered in accessible space	
36	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In fellowship area and classrooms at least one table has minimum of 29-30" clearance on underside	
37	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some chairs have armrests and have seat heights ~18" from floor	
COMMUNICATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT				
38	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Members are sensitized about need to minimize use of fragrances	
39	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Soaps, cleaning products and other chemicals are fragrance free; candles are unscented and non-petroleum-based	
40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If projection is used, large font and good contrast are provided	
41	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Large print bulletin, songbook, and/or Bible provided on request	
42	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Braille or alternative/ digital media provided upon request	
43	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Microphone used by all speakers or comments are repeated at mic.	
44	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assisted listening system (FM and/ or loop) and receivers available	
45	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ASL sign language interpreter is provided upon request	
46	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Print copies of sermon are available prior to worship, upon request	
47	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Captions are used for videos and other media	
ATTITUDES				
48	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Accessibility/ accommodations and who to contact for questions are described in website, Find-A-Church site, and signage	
49	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pastor(s), ushers & greeters, and leaders are trained in disability awareness and etiquette, e.g. using on-line resources	
50	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Signs, websites, or bulletin boards offer evidence that people with visible and hidden disabilities are welcome and included in the life of the congregation, e.g. through support group brochures, photos	
51	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disruptions are accepted and incorporated into worship	
52	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Qualified service animals (e.g. guide dogs) are welcome within the church building(s) including the sanctuary and fellowship hall	
53	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Congregation works to use inclusive, person-first language in worship, e.g. people are invited to "rise in body or in spirit"	
54	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Classes and programs are adapted as needed to facilitate active participation of children and adults with disabilities	
55	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disability Awareness Sunday ¶1265.4 observed during past 1-2 years	
56	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gifts of persons with disabilities are identified and used in service, worship, and leadership roles, and to help to improve access	



57	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Needs of people on special diets are considered when food is offered, including gluten-free & alcohol-free communion elements	
58	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transportation and valet parking or parking lot assistance is offered	
59	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	"Buddy" system offered for individuals needing 1:1 assistance	
GOALS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENT FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR				Target Date
1. We are exploring a capital campaign to make our administrative building (1050 East Ave.) accessible.				summer
2. We are looking at possibilities for making the chancel accessible.				fall
3.				
4.				
YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Request consultation from Conference Disability Concerns Committee				
Comments (* continue on additional pages if needed): We have made every effort to make our buildings accessible and have made great strides in our main church building (1040 East Ave.) and the Community Outreach Center (1010 East Ave). Both of those buildings have elevator access and fully accessible restrooms as well as automatic doors. Our admin building remains inaccessible for those in a wheel chair.				
Signature of Pastor: 				Date 1/9/24
Signature of Trustees Chairperson: 				Date 1/9/24
Signature of District Superintendent:				Date

Date Form Completed _____ Charge Conference Date _____

PLEASE PRINT NAMES AND PROVIDE PHONE NUMBER OR E-MAIL ADDRESS:

Form completed by Stephen Cady Contact information 5852711050

Contact person for church David Strong Contact information 5852711050

PLEASE NOTE:

- This form is for use on existing buildings only; refer to current ADA & state regulations for construction or major remodeling projects: <https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADAStandards/2010ADAstandards.htm>.
- The survey should be completed by a team including a member of the trustees, and people with construction, architecture and rehabilitation backgrounds. Include persons with disabilities and family members, especially someone who uses a wheelchair and someone with low vision, in the process.
- Interview individuals with disabilities and family members of children and adults with disabilities to learn how welcoming your congregation is and to help set priorities.



- This is not an all-inclusive listing of ADA guidelines or appropriate accommodations, but rather represents basic first steps that a church may take to begin to implement accessibility measures.
- Resources are available through your conference Disability Concerns Committee (§653) and through the DisAbility Ministry Committee of the UMC at <https://www.umdisabilityministries.org/access/audit.html> to help you plan and carry out improvements.



January 29, 2023 Church Conference Minutes

Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady introduced Rev. Ted Anderson, our Interim District Superintendent to lead the meeting.

Ted opened the meeting with prayer.

Stephen directed those watching via the live stream to Slido to send questions. Those attending virtually will be able to vote, but the votes won't officially count as a result of a ruling in the state of New York relating to hybrid meetings. If the meeting were only virtual, the online votes would count

Ted presented the minutes from the last several meetings as the meetings were entirely remote and the minutes and decisions need to be ratified at this first in-person meeting.

- The minutes from the January 2020 church conference were approved.
- The minutes from the December 2020 church conference minutes were approved.
- The decisions made at the December 2020 church conference were ratified.
- The minutes from the January 2021 church conference were approved.
- The decisions made at the January 2021 church conference were ratified.
- The minutes from the January 2022 church conference were approved.
- The decisions made at the January 2022 church conference were ratified.

Ted asked the congregation to vote on the Discipleship Project report. The report was approved.

Ted brought forward the Outreach and Volunteer and Mission Report to be received. It was approved.

Mike Mullin was presented as a Candidate for Ministry, and was approved by the congregation.

Stephen asked the members of the Nominations Committee to stand and acknowledged their work. Stephen asked for additions or amendments to the Governing Board ballot; there weren't any. Those attending the meeting in person were asked to complete the ballot for the Governing Board members. The Nominations Report was presented for discussion; the report was passed by a majority of those present.

Angie Burch, chair of the Finance Team, presented a recap of the budget. The Team provided two reports on the church finances to the congregation (in May and October) in an effort to fulfill their pledge for transparency. Any questions can be sent to governance@asburyfirst.org.

John Ormsbee, Financial Administrator, was introduced to share information about the 2022 budget.



2022 Operating Budget

- Our income has been steadily increasing 1 - 3% since 2016.
- For the first time ever, we received 103% of pledges.
- Plate offerings have improved as in-person attendance has increased.
- Personnel expense was below budget, and housekeeping services were above budget, net was \$40K under budget.

2023 Operating Budget

- Showed a significant increase in congregational giving following appeals; pledges increased an average of 16%
- Assuming a large increase in grant revenue
- Plate offerings are expected to return to pre-COVID levels
- Cost of living increase for staff of 2%

Dave Kennedy asked about spending more than we have. The 2022 budget was \$181K more than we had. The budget that was just presented for 2023 is also in deficit of \$66K. To balance, we're depending on an increase in restricted funds, as well as a significant increase in grants received, and he is not sure we should approve this budget. John responded that every year, there's an element of risk with a budget. We have some contingencies to handle budget gaps and we've also seen that the congregation is willing to respond by giving more when there's a gap. Stephen added that we're not at the end of January and we've already received \$50K in grants (up from \$15K last year). We also make sure that restricted gifts are used only for the purpose they're intended.

Patrick Fulford asked (via email) how much we were able to increase staff salaries. The increase was 2%.

Ted called for a vote on the budget, which was approved by a majority of those present.

If you have questions about the budget, please contact John at jormsbee@asburyfirst.org.

Ted called for a vote on the conference-required reports: Report of the Pastor, Local Church Leadership Interface, (roles of staff and volunteers in the conference), Safe Sanctuaries Compliance Report, a report from Bob Hill (a member of our conference and connected to Asbury First). There were no questions. All of the reports were approved by the majority of those present.



The church conference was closed by Rev. Ted Anderson.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Bullock-Smith
Recording Secretary



Special Church Conference Minutes - Columbarium

June 12, 2023

Motion brought by the Governing Board: To authorize the building of the columbarium at Asbury First.

Stephen introduced Bob Schuman, who talked about the details of the columbarium.

- Built on the southeast corner of the building.
- 136 niches to start with; each holds 2 urns of human remains.
- Expandable to almost 400 niches, completed in 2 phases.
- Self-funding, paid for by the purchase of niches and any capital gifts for this purpose

What is the time frame to start? If approved, they'll meet with the architects to finalize plans. Then detailed engineering and design would be completed. All of this should take about 6 months, before we have bid documents that would go out to contractors. The lead time for the niches is 36 - 48 weeks for the fabrication and delivery (the longest part of the lead time for this project).. If this is approved today, we would sign an agreement with the architects to move ahead by July 1.

What happens if Asbury should “go away” at some point in the future? We don't own this building or the property, it's owned by the Upper New York Conference. We trust that the members of this congregation would be just as thoughtful about what happens in that eventuality, as they have been in getting us to this place. While there's no guarantee, we trust that the future members of the congregation will make responsible decisions.

The motion is not very specific. How much money will it take to get started? How will it be financed? The initial build will cost about \$300,000 for the 136 niches. The final build would cost around \$500,000. This is a self financing project and there won't be any capital campaign. Bob has a list of 32 people (representing 32 niches) that are very serious about purchasing a niche. There are another 17 that are interested. We're offering the purchase of niches pre-construction for \$4500 (due by September 1), as a means to raise funds for the initial build. After that, the price is \$5000, with \$2500 down (due by the end of December). If we don't get enough money upfront, the Governing Board has agreed to allow us to borrow money to complete the first phase. In addition, we have a generous donor who has a commitment to Asbury in their will, and they have allowed us to use a portion of that, if needed, to fund this.

Can we add to the motion that it's self-funding or add a limit to the funds that can be borrowed? It feels uncomfortable that the congregation would approve this without any limits at all. The Governing Board felt comfortable with the numbers of very interested people, as well as the “back-up” option of using a portion of the generous gift from the donor. If we had



to borrow, it would likely be short-term and would be repaid from niche sales. If approved, the Governing Board will watch the progress on the sales, and would not feel compelled to go ahead if interest waned.

Where would the money be borrowed from? From our line of credit, if needed, and would be repaid through niche sales, with interest.

Can you be more specific about the “generous gift” as far as the amount? The gift is up to \$100,000.

Comments:

- It's a prudent investment that many people have expressed interest in. The risks are minimal in proceeding in the way that the proposal has been structured. We have taken on much bigger projects with more risks. This one is clearly self-funding, and any additional funds (over the building costs) will allow for the maintenance and care of the area. It's such a low-risk project with significant benefits to the church, that to make the motion overly restrictive and add any additional approvals that would slow the process and is not required.
- Many of the other large capital projects at Asbury First (the Gathering Center, the Community Outreach Center) have engaged all of us. The columbarium is for a select group, therefore it's uncomfortable to compare previous capital campaigns to this project. Maybe we can add an “if this, then that” wording to the motion.
- One of the things that made the Governing Board comfortable with supporting this project is the long lead time before we get into construction and knowing that the Board could decide on different next steps or lengthening the lead time to get more commitments.

How many niches would have to be sold to pay for the first phase? \$300,000 for the first phase, so 60 niches. We have possibilities of the first 32 sales, then we have at least 6 months to secure the next 28.

Could we add “self-funding” to the motion?

Can we get a commitment from the board that there is good publicity on where we are 3 and 6 months from now so the congregation is aware of where the project stands?

Beth felt comfortable that the Board could commit to a 6-month checkpoint.

The motion on the floor is to add “self-funded”; seconded. There was a call for discussion, but there was none. Stephen called for a vote on adding “self-funded” to the current motion, and it was approved by a majority vote.



The motion now reads: "To authorize the building of a self-funded columbarium at Asbury First."

Stephen opened the floor for any more discussion, before calling for a vote. There was no additional discussion, and Stephen called for a vote. The motion was carried by a majority vote.

Those voting online (via Slido) cannot be officially counted in this vote, as NY State requires all voting to be in-person for an in-person meeting, but the online votes matter to us. Of the online voters, 88% approved the motion and 13% abstained.

The meeting was called to a close, so the Governing Board Town Hall could begin.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Bullock-Smith
Recording Secretary