



2025

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

JANUARY 2026





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Roles

Senior Minister

Rev. Dr. Michelle Bogue-Trost

State of the Church:

The State of the Church Asbury First United Methodist Church continues to live out its mission to Love God and neighbor, Live fully, Serve all, Repeat. This past year has been marked by both challenge and growth. Our congregation has deepened its worship life, expanded its outreach, and nurtured new opportunities for connection and service. Through the Community Outreach Center, we have sustained and expanded vital ministries such as the Dining and Caring Center, the Storehouse, and the Grocery Bag Ministry. We have broadened our partnerships with local agencies, assisted refugee families, and provided tangible resources, clothing, food, showers, laundry, bicycle repairs, and hospitality-to neighbors in need.

Our worship and arts ministries continue to flourish. Choirs, handbells, and instrumental ensembles have enriched worship and welcomed new participants. The addition of a Worship and Arts Team has helped us to broaden our understandings of the visual arts in worship. Sermon series and liturgical creativity have drawn us deeper into the rhythms of the Christian year, while pastoral care and sacramental ministry have provided strength and comfort in life's transition.

Our discipleship ministries have encouraged members to grow in faith through adult classes, small groups, children's and youth ministries, and continuing initiatives like the Discipleship Project. These spaces provide not just learning, but belonging and transformation.

Our congregational care ministries continue to support parishioners through care and presence, walking with parishioners through all stages of life.

Pastoral Ministry in Three Domains

1. Support, Guidance, and Training of the Laity

This year, I have invested in strengthening lay leadership through committee trainings, staff, and one-on-one coaching. The goal has been to move from "filling roles" to cultivating spiritual leaders. I am continuing to develop workshops to address communication, conflict resolution, and spiritual practices for leaders.

This year we have also made significant strides in strengthening the culture of volunteerism at Asbury First. With the creation of a Volunteer Engagement Team, we have begun the work of reconnecting members to ministries that align with their gifts, passions, and availability. New tools, such as streamlined sign-up systems and ministry area reporting, will help us better match need with people's interests. Connection Sundays, monthly Volunteer Tables, and the development of job descriptions have raised awareness of the wide variety of opportunities available-from worship and arts, to hospitality, to outreach, to administration. This intentional focus has not only increased participation, but also reframed volunteering as an expression of discipleship and a pathway to spiritual growth.

Looking ahead to 2026, we plan to expand this work by developing a corps of "Asbury Ambassadors," refining volunteer systems for ease of use, and equipping ministry leaders to nurture and sustain lay engagement at every level of church life.



2. Ministry Within the Congregation and to the World

Preaching, teaching, worship leadership, and sacramental ministry remain at the heart of my call. My focus has been on shaping worship that connects Scripture and tradition with the lived realities of our people, calling us to be both comforted and challenged by the gospel. Weekly worship, seasonal services, and special observances have renewed our faith and reminded us of our shared mission.

While I am not the primary pastor for discipleship or congregational care, I supervise and support the staff and lay leaders who guide those ministries. I work with them to ensure alignment with our vision, provide encouragement and accountability, and integrate their work into the wider life of the church. This role allows me to help shape direction, offer theological framing, and sustain care, formation, and connection as core parts of our ministry.

Ministry to the world continues to be a defining mark of Asbury First. Through the Community Outreach Center, the Dining & Caring Center, the Storehouse, the Grocery Bag Ministry, and our garden, we embody Christ's call to feed, clothe, and welcome. Our Minister of Outreach has supported these efforts by securing resources, encouraging volunteer engagement, and lifting up their impact through preaching and teaching.

Alongside this, our new Social Concerns Committee has begun to shape a clear justice voice for our congregation, ensuring that our public witness reflects our identity as an unapologetically inclusive church.

3. Administration of the Temporal Affairs of the Church

I have worked closely with our Governing Board, staff, and committees to align resources with mission and our Dream Team vision document. This includes staff structure, facilities oversight, and collaboration with Finance, Trustees, and Personnel committees. Communication and transparency have been priorities, ensuring that decisions are mission-driven and sustainable. We have been challenged to steward our resources with both boldness and prudence. In late 2024, we realized the nature of a structural budget deficit as we clarified our budget process. In 2025, the Finance Committee launched a "Second Mile Giving" campaign, surpassing the \$200,000 goal within a month and thus securing an adequately funded General Budget. Still, cash-flow and timing challenges remain-so we have re-forecasted the 2025 budget carefully and built contingency measures into our financial planning.

Looking ahead, our focus remains on aligning our stewardship strategy with mission priorities, preserving sustainability, and maintaining transparency with the congregation. We acknowledge that challenges remain-volunteer burnout, staffing transitions, and the complexity of managing a large, multi-faceted congregation. Yet we continue to see resilience, generosity, and a willingness to adapt. The state of the church is strong, hopeful, and ready for what God has next.

Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth

In the past year, I have pursued ongoing growth through clergy peer retreats, participation in denominational connection opportunities, regular spiritual self-care, and personal study in pastoral leadership, justice, and spiritual formation. I have maintained rhythms of sabbath, prayer, and rest, which sustain my call to ministry.

In the year ahead, I plan to:

- Participate in continuing education focused on adaptive leadership and congregational vitality.
- Shadow more large churches and deepen peer learning.
- Continue spiritual, physical, and emotional self-care practices.
- Pursue intentional study in racial justice, inclusion, and spiritual practices that equip leaders for changing times.
- Take all my vacation.
- Continue participating in The Gathering.



These commitments will allow me to serve faithfully, lead wisely, and remain grounded in Christ's call. In closing, Asbury First remains a vital witness in Rochester and beyond. Our people are resilient, our mission is clear, and our opportunities are abundant. Together, we are learning to "do more good" not only for our own congregation, but for the sake of the world God so loves. I am grateful to serve as the Senior Minister in this season of renewal and possibility. May we continue to listen for the Spirit's leading and step forward in faith, hope, and love.

Minister for Congregational Care

Rev. Kathy Thiel

Congregational Care continues to be a busy and fruitful ministry here at Asbury First UMC. During 2025 there were many opportunities to serve God, always walking with Jesus Christ, and minister within this church community and the greater Rochester community.

During 2025 I visited those in hospital, hospice, nursing homes, rehab, and in their homes. I am the staff liaison to the Intercessory Prayer Group, the Prayer Shawl Knitting Group, Older Adult Team, Memorials Team, and the Visitation Team. We have two Older Adult worship and communion services each year in our sanctuary, one in the spring and one in the fall and six worship and communion services off-campus at senior living facilities during Lent and Advent. We continue to explore other ways to engage with the older adult community. Something new which will begin in February is that I will be present with the St. John's on communion Sunday February to worship together via the livestream and to serve communion in person.

I lead two Grief Groups which meet weekly. The *Lectio Divina* group which began in the first weeks of COVID shutdown almost six years ago is going strong and continues to welcome new members to the group. I meet with families after their loved one has died, and plan and lead the funeral or memorial service and burial, in our sanctuary and Columbarium, or in another location. The Columbarium was installed during the summer of 2025 and since then we have held services to inurn the ashes of many beloved parishioners and family members.

I am active in interfaith work in the community, including being one of many clergy who are on call for burials for those who have died without family members or the means to be buried. A highlight in the interfaith work was to have been able to host the annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service in our sanctuary and lead worship with Jews, Muslims, and other Christians. I lead the New Members Classes which generally take place in March, June, September and December and help our new members to find the place in this community where they can best thrive.

In March of 2025 I attended the annual meeting of the Association for Death Educators and Counselors for the first time. It was highly educational with a variety of workshops and lectures. I met and engaged with people who are committed to working with those who are dying and with those who are grieving. I brought back several helpful resources.

In November of 2025 I attended a workshop titled *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth* which presented spirituality as it engages with the body, and vice-versa. It called to mind the book, [The Body Keeps the Score](#)



about how our bodies are affected by our emotions and thoughts. It was highly helpful in learning more about how spirituality helps us in every way. We will be hosting this workshop at Asbury First soon.

I was recently invited to join a clergy support group for those who have completed Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). It is made up of clergy and chaplains, and modeled after the CPE group meeting, including receiving and offering advice and suggestions on emergent pastoral issues, and using the verbatim as a learning tool. I find this kind of peer engagement to be quite helpful and I am grateful for the opportunity.

There are so many joys in serving this congregation, and one of them is being part of the worship leadership. It is a blessing to pray, sing, and preach on Sunday mornings. It is a blessing to greet you all and learn more about your life. It is a blessing to be with you throughout the week in meetings, community supper, and those chance meetings at the grocery store. It is a blessing to be able to be with you in the hospital or nursing home, wherever you are, to hear your story and share a moment of prayer. You are the reminder of the love of God in this world and I do my utmost best to bring the fulness of God’s love to whomever I am with. My mother placed a call on my head when I was two years of age and I feel it in all that I do: “Glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” It is my intention that my enjoyment of God is glorified in this work I am called to do: being with people in their hard moments; helping people figure out how their life is unfolding; being with people as they recognize and come to know Christ in their lives; providing opportunities for growth and deepening of their connection with God; watching as Jesus and God bring comfort and peace to one in need.

This work is a blessing and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve God and Asbury First.

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Minister for Youth and Discipleship

Mike Mullin

2025 has been another year of both challenges and celebrations at Asbury First and beyond. One question I am often asked is what’s going on with my ordination process. Well, Asbury First did recommend me [again] to re-start the ordination process at our charge conference in October. Following that recommendation, I scheduled a meeting with our District Superintendent, and we discussed what it might look like to re-enter the process. One idea I presented was to have the opportunity to meet before the entire Board of Ordained Ministry to discuss my theology, as they are the group that should say yay or nay to a candidate based on theological claims. This request was denied, so I wrote my letter of intent to our local District Committee on Ordained Ministry as would be the usual process. On January 2, I received the following response:

The Genesee Valley dCOM received your request to meet with dCOM in pursuit of ordination. We recognize that you have dedicated much of your life to this work, and our decision has immense ramifications for you and your family. We also recognize the power that we hold regarding a candidate’s ordination process; our decisions can cause pain to candidates, their families, and their local churches. We also take our responsibilities as outlined in the Book of Discipline and The Upper New York Conference guidelines as a subcommittee of the Board of Ordained Ministry seriously and with prayerful consideration.

Based upon previous conversations with you, there are irreconcilable differences between your theology and the broad parameters of The United Methodist Church. As stated in your letter from the Genesee



Valley dCOM regarding discontinuance on May 29, 2020 and as stated in the letter sent on June 7, 2024, it is the discernment of the Genesee Valley dCOM that your theology is outside the broad parameters of The United Methodist Church, specifically your Christology and understanding of the resurrection. If your theological understandings have changed, the Genesee Valley dCOM would be willing to have a conversation with you regarding restarting candidacy process.

At this point, based on our understanding of your theology from your written submissions, sermons preached, and meetings with dCOM over the past 10 years, we will not meet with you regarding candidacy or meet with you in the future. We encourage you to look at other denominations that align with your theological beliefs.

And while this was certainly a disappointing email to receive to kick off my year, it was not too surprising. This email is in line with everything the DCOM has said and done up to this point. So the question is, what does this mean? Well, it means I continue to be frustrated with and by our United Methodist systems and processes. I have continually articulated what I believe, and why these beliefs sit comfortably within a Wesleyan theology and ethos. And while the DCOM cites “broad parameters,” they have failed to delineate what those parameters are, or engage my theological confession to articulate how my theology exists outside of this framework.

The above letter references Christology and resurrection as particular stumbling blocks. Some of you may recall these highlights from my annual report last year where I shared these statements from the DCOM’s January 2024 letter—and then also shared the context of my work from which they were proof-texting. What I would like to share this year is a simple overview of what I believe regarding these things—and, implicitly, what our DCOM is saying has no business in the United Methodist denomination.

Christology:

Christology is a multifaceted term that has its grounding in an understanding that Jesus is the anointed one. “Christ” is a Greek translation of “Messiah” and both terms mean “anointed one.” The question becomes what this means for Christianity. In biblical times, this was often a term used for kings. In fact, the first human in the Bible to be pronounced “Messiah” was Cyrus the Great after freeing the Israelites from their Babylonian exile (Isaiah 45.1). In modern conversations, folks might use the term Christology in reference to a “high Christology” or a “low Christology.” A high Christology might focus more on the divine attributes of Jesus (cf. the Gospel of John), while a low Christology might focus more on the humanity of Jesus (cf. the Gospel of Mark).

Based on my conversation with DCOM, it sounds like their reference to Christology is closer to the latter understanding; when we talk about Jesus, the question becomes: are we talking about a human, about God, about both, or about neither. And, theologically speaking, these are important questions to be able to answer. For those that participated in our fall class that celebrated the 1700th anniversary of the original Nicene Creed, you may recall how the early church debated who and what Jesus was for hundreds of years. In fact, it wasn’t until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE that we have an official church confession stating that Jesus is 100% human and 100% divine. But what I believe is even more important and significant is the “why” behind this claim. The reason the early church needed Jesus to be fully God and fully human was to satisfy their understanding of atonement. The early church “knew” that we needed to make sacrifices to God to reconcile us with God, and for God to shine favor upon us. After the destruction of the temple, there was no more means of temple sacrifice, and so the death of Jesus became a substitute for regular temple sacrifices. This is exemplified in the Gospel of John when Jesus’ crucifixion takes place on the day of Passover (instead of the day after, like in the other three gospels). As such, Jesus becomes the paschal lamb in the story. Following this thought, the early church wanted a perfect, unblemished sacrifice to take away the sins of the world once and for all. After hundreds of years of debate and discussion, they determined that this was only possible if Jesus was both God



and human. If Jesus was merely human, then the sacrifice couldn't be perfect enough to satisfy God. If Jesus was only God, then the sacrifice is meaningless and disconnected from our humanity. Therefore, the Council of Chalcedon decided the answer was both.

If we fast forward to our modern times, many Christians are no longer compelled by a substitutionary theory of atonement. The idea that the only way we can be reconciled with God is through a perfect sacrifice and offering does not resonate with the God we have learned about in scripture or come to know through lived experience. Substitutionary atonement has become—for some—an archaic and barbaric representation of who God was to a particular people in a particular time and context, but is not reflective of who we know God to be today.

This may all sound overly complex and confusing—and that's OK. It is complicated, and biblical scholars continue to debate these ideas even today (cf. Marcus Borg, John Piper, N.T. Wright). What this means for my belief is that I recognize there is a broad range of beliefs and traditions surrounding our understanding of Christology; and I believe wherever you are on that spectrum is AOK. You may be more "traditionalist" or more "progressive" or something else entirely. What matters is whether these beliefs help move you to do more good, as exemplified by Jesus, the Christ.

What the DCOM seems to be saying is that my belief of theological inclusion is unacceptable. And while they have not told me explicitly what I have to confess, the implication is that the "right" answer is to remain within a literalist framework and understanding of the Chalcedonian Definition and substitutionary atonement—despite there being no United Methodist documents to back up these exclusionary claims.

Resurrection:

Once again, the reference to resurrection is open-ended and vague. We could be talking about a specific event—like the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday—or we could be talking about a general idea—like our concepts of heaven and hell. And to be fair, I think the DCOM may be referencing all of these ideas. Let's start with the Resurrection story of Easter Sunday. There have been great books written to explicate and defend the veracity of a bodily resurrection (cf. *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel). And while I earnestly enjoy these 20th century writings and movements to "prove" various "miracle" stories of our Bible scientifically, I think they often miss the mark (theological pun intended...). If you asked the early church if someone could be raised from the dead, they would say no. And if you scour ancient texts and stories for individuals that have been raised from the dead, you will find that this is not as uncommon a motif as we may have been led to believe. Even so, our story has withstood the test of time in ways that the other stories have not—and that is worth investigating in its own right.

When we look at the biblical text concerning the resurrection, we have certain passages that seem to clearly indicate a bodily resurrection (cf. Luke 24.13–35 and the Disciples walking to Emmaus), and we have various letters attributed to Paul that seem to indicate a spiritual resurrection (cf. 2 Corinthians 5.11 – 21). All we can definitively draw from this is that there are important and impactful stories about Jesus rising from the dead. Whether the early church believed this to be a literal bodily resurrection, or a symbolic spiritual resurrection is up for scholarly debate. Fast forward to today, and we still have these questions and conversations. On the one hand, most of us have likely been brought up in a tradition that presumes a literal bodily resurrection. And yet, there are many who remain silently skeptical, preferring a more symbolic understanding. Again, my belief is that both approaches can be deeply faithful. Regardless of where you align yourself on this Easter Sunday spectrum, if this story moves you to stand alongside the least, the lost, the last, and the alone, then I think you have received the intended message.

The next conversation of resurrection may be related—what happens after we die? Is there a heaven? Is there a hell? The truth is, we don't know. Again, there have been many great books written on these subjects (cf. 90



Minutes in Heaven by Don Piper, *Love Wins* by Rob Bell, *Damned Nation* by Gin Lum), but (with the arguably notable exception of Don Piper in that list) these books and confessions are based on education rather than experience. And when we look to our own educational resources—particularly the Bible—we are faced with varied viewpoints. The Old Testament texts tended to refer to *sheol* (a general land of the dead) where everyone went (cf. Isaiah 14.4–21). In fact, this worldview of gods in the skies above, people on the earthly plane, and dead living in an underground realm seemed prevalent in these ancient texts (and even into the New Testament, cf. Revelation 5.3). We even see some of the debates between Jewish sects as they bring their debate of resurrection before Jesus (cf. Matthew 22.23–40). In this story, Jesus articulates that God is a God of the living and not the dead (Matthew 22.32). At the same time, there are other passages where Jesus seems to speak of an everlasting life after death (cf. John 11.17–27). All this goes to show that Christians may have varying beliefs concerning an afterlife, and still find solace and support from our Christian scriptures and traditions. Much like I have stated above, my focus is on how these beliefs help you show up in the world rather than on what your beliefs actually are. Sometimes, our after-life theologies can bring harm—too often pastors have preached people into hell; other times, our after-life theologies can bring hope. I am more interested in the latter (which is also why I much prefer *90 Minutes in Heaven* by Don Piper to *23 Minutes in Hell* by Bill Weise).

Once again, it seems that the DCOM takes exception to my belief that theological differences may coexist within The United Methodist Church. In this instance, it seems they need me to confess an exclusive belief in a literal bodily resurrection and a literal after-life experience of both Heaven and Hell. And once again, I think it is important to highlight that there is no explicit United Methodist hermeneutic to back up this exclusionary vision purported by the DCOM.

Boundary Lines:

If you are still reading and interested in this theological reflection—thank you, and I’m glad you’re here! I love discussing theology, and if you have any questions or concerns, I would be happy to connect at any time.

The last point worth highlighting is boundary lines. Above, I have expressed my intent and belief to be theologically welcoming and inclusive to all. And yet, as Christians, we know that there is a line. We believe in a God, and we devote ourselves to the study of the Bible, and the life and teachings of Jesus. So, where is our line? This is where John Wesley and United Methodism comes into play for me. Wesley expressed three simple rules: do no harm; do good; participate in the local church. OK, the last one is actually “attend upon all the ordinances of God,” but I think that can be more helpfully summed up in our modern context as “participate in the local church.”

United Methodists also often like to cite our Book of Discipline (and errantly credit John Wesley, rather than Rupertus Meldinius or possibly even Saint Augustine) with the quote “in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all else charity.” For me, it seems clear that the above debates and discussions about Christology and resurrection are non-essentials

(cf. Wesley’s sermons, “Catholic Spirit” and “The Lord Our Righteousness”). It is clear that our Christian history, tradition, and even the Bible have different perspectives on what these terms might mean. Instead, what is essential is laid out with Wesley’s three simple rules. If we use that as our rubric, then I believe we can actualize the imagery of the body of Christ as we exercise liberty in our non-essential beliefs and charity as we “form disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections” (this is the guiding vision statement presented by our Bishops in May, 2025).

This is where I stand as a Christian and as a United Methodist. I am troubled by the powers and principalities (again, theological pun intended) of The United Methodist Church in Upper New York that continue to stand in



the way of theologies that truly seek “open hearts, open minds, and open doors.” We have made great strides in the past couple of years with the passing of LGBTQ inclusion, and this is a reminder that our work of inclusion is far from over.

If this is something that troubles you as well, I encourage you to reach out to our leaders. Our United Methodist polity has striking similarities to our government. You may call, email, and write letters to our District Superintendent, our Bishop, the leaders of our District Committee on Ordained Ministry and Board of Ordained Ministry. All of these individuals’ contact information may be found on our conference website. And, like our government, our United Methodist Polity is that the collective—not just the leaders—are empowered to make change. This invitation is not made lightly, it is made after more than a decade of attempted conversations. This is me living into our United Methodist baptismal vow to “resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.” If The United Methodist Church in Upper New York is going to take The UMC slogan, the visionary statement cast by our bishops, and our baptismal vows seriously, then it needs to respond to the restrictive truth-claims implicitly put in place by our Genesee Valley District Committee on Ordained Ministry. And please know that I appreciate Asbury First’s continued support whether in spirit, in voice, or in action.

After all of that, it seems strange to transition into other highlights from the year, but here we go:

- I once again spoke at the Global Citizenship Conference held at Nazareth College in the Spring.
- I submitted an article and was published in the inaugural printing of *Flourish: A Journal of Progressive Theology*.
- I led a workshop on “Disparate Hermeneutics” at the Progressive Youth Ministry conference in Austin, Texas.
- I attended a “Dreaming Youth Ministry’s Future” conference that was limited to 75 leaders from across the country. We met at Notre Dame to network and strategize what the next iteration of Youth Ministry might look like in the church.
- I was a guest speaker and preacher at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in North Carolina for their Becoming Bright speaker series.
- I had the honor to be invited as a guest preacher at Macedon Center UMC for their reconciling ministries anniversary service.
- I was accepted into, and have been participating in, a Churches United in Christ cohort as a representative for The United Methodist Church. This group is made up of representatives from different denominations across the country and seeks to encourage congregations and communities to work ecumenically.
- I was also accepted into, and just attended a retreat, for a Winks Fellows program. This is a group of individuals from different denominations across the country who are seeking to have more holistic intergenerational engagement in worship.
- I began a Doctor of Ministry degree at CRCDS, but ended that pursuit quickly as I realized the time and funds may result in a degree, but would not result in any significant continued education or growth.
- I began my certification as a coach with the National Association of Youth Ministry, and I am on track to finish that certification this spring.
- I was also certified in Discipleship Coaching from Discipleship Ministries, in partnership with EMC3 coaching, and I am scheduled to continue with the Discipleship Pathway Coaching in the spring.



I was certified as attending the basic-training for our Conference Safe Sanctuaries training. This spring, I hope to be trained as a trainer so that we may offer these conference-official trainings to our Asbury First community in-house throughout the year.

Beyond those accomplishments, there were many highlights—and some challenges—in the world of discipleship at Asbury First. I encourage you to check out the various reports related to Discipleship to learn more about what’s going on in our children, youth, and adult ministry areas. And if you ever have any questions for me personally, or if you are interested in getting involved in discipleship at Asbury First and aren’t sure where to start, or if you just want to talk theology, please reach out at any time. Asbury First is a great community that seeks to encourage all members to find ways to engage. Together, may we continue to do no harm, to do good, and to make a difference in our community and beyond as a local church.

May there be Peace,

-Mike Mullin



Minister for Outreach & Director of the Community Outreach Center

Rev. Pat Dupont

Pastoral Reflection:

We have done powerful outreach work in 2025. The outreach ministry we were able to provide the Rochester community through the Community Outreach Center is quantified in numbers below. The impact of our ministry is, of course, amplified further both locally and globally through the work of our off-campus partnerships. Our programs continue to serve neighbors in need and continue to grow. We have forged new partnerships and deepened existing ones, seeking to create a more tightly knit network of community care across Rochester.

As 2025 comes to a close and 2026 begins, the question that keeps entering my mind is this:

What kind of church are we going to be?

The Book of Esther in our Bible tells a story of widespread government violence threatened to be inflicted upon vulnerable members of the community. Esther, who inhabits a position of influence, is petitioned by her relative Mordecai to intervene and prevent these atrocities from being committed. Mordecai suggests to Esther that she has been placed in this privileged position “for just such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). In response, Esther puts out a call for the religious community to fast and pray to give her the courage to take great risk, breaking the law and challenging the authorities.

It feels like we are living in a watershed moment for the Church. Like Esther, we enjoy a fairly privileged position. As a church community, we have largely not had to worry about potential consequences of (1) offering care to vulnerable people or (2) challenging the authorities that govern us. Our outreach ministry hasn’t had to be subversive, it has been something we can widely celebrate (for which we have even received accolades from our public officials!)

As this reality potentially changes, *what kind of church are we going to be?*

How can we continue to engage in powerful outreach ministry when doing so potentially gets more and more risky? Like Esther, how can we find the courage to continue to work for the kind of community we believe in as doing so gets more and more difficult? Can we continue to live out our values when doing so becomes less and less comfortable within our broader context? Will we be willing to sacrifice our privileged position for ‘the least of these’ among us? (Matthew 25).

I do not know what the future holds, but I pray that in these trying times we can lean more fully on the presence and hope of Christ. I pray that we can reinvest ourselves in community work that prioritizes the marginalized and vulnerable. I pray that, along with Esther, we can accept that we may have found ourselves in this place ‘for just such a time as this.’

In Hope,
Rev. Pat Dupont
Minister for Outreach & Director of the Community Outreach Center



Reports:

The Asbury First Community Outreach Center

C.O.C. 2025 By the Numbers:

- Over 13,000 hot meals
- Over 600 loads of laundry
- Over 1,500 showers
- Over 200 haircuts
- Over 200 repaired bicycles
- Almost 50 refurbished bicycles
- Over 2,200 families with clothing and/or household goods totaling almost 6,000 individuals
- Almost 1,000 bags of groceries
- Almost 400 patients with healthcare

C.O.C. Staffing

- Through 2025 our C.O.C. team grew and changed:
 - We were joined by social work interns Clayton Lyons (Syracuse University) and Jonathan Woods (Nazareth University). Clayton and Jonathan have been active with a number of community organizations in Rochester prior to beginning their Master of Social Work programs and bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our Center.
 - Joe Chaffee has come onboard as an Outreach Associate, sharing Dining & Caring Center shifts with our other Outreach Associates. Joe is also a longtime active community worker and advocate for the homeless in Rochester.
 - Michele Layher was hired as Storehouse Coordinator, the first ever Storehouse program staff position. Michele deeply understands our mission and ministry and is a huge gift to the volunteers and shoppers of the Storehouse!

Lay Reflection

Diana Carter, Outreach Committee Chair

For the first time, in 2025, the Outreach Committee was tasked with a guiding question from the Governance Board. The question pertained to how well our Asbury First's Outreach efforts are matching the needs of Rochester.

We don't have a complete answer to that yet, but we're working on it. Asbury's Outreach workers tend to be a nose-to-the-grindstone bunch. They're busy serving meals, giving physicals, processing and sharing clothing donations, growing vegetables, fixing bicycles, and filling and distributing bags of groceries. We also provide assistance to like-minded programs in Rochester and abroad. As the year progressed, though, one need emerged: because of recent federal action and the economy, our neighbors need more food assistance to meet their basic needs. So, with the approval and guidance of our pastoral staff, Outreach has decided to try to double its grocery distribution and look at other ways to meet the nutritional needs of our neighbors. This began gradually at year's end and will expand in 2026.



At the same time, though, it's necessary to lift one's focus from immediate tasks at hand and plan strategically. Toward that end, in 2025 Outreach leadership with three of our on-campus ministries to brainstorm feedback surveys for the recipients of our programs' help. Unfortunately, none of those ministries have carried out a survey yet. We're hoping this will happen soon and the results will be shared, helping us to begin answering the guiding question.

Much of the Outreach Committee's work was devoted to understanding and accounting for the half-million-dollar budget that funds Outreach at Asbury. Thanks to the hard work of Dawn Riedy, our finance officer, and the church's finance director, John Ormsbee, we now have a clear idea of where nearly every penny goes and how it's raised. This work formed the foundation of appeals to pledge directly to our Outreach Center and separately from the rest of the church budget. Some 185 people have done so. We will be losing Dawn at the end of the year as she will be devoting more time to her job as head of the church's Finance Committee. Ever the thoughtful steward, Dawn recruited Andy Dutcher, a long time member of the church and long-time contributor to Outreach, to be the Outreach finance officer.

The rest of our team – Robert Castle, Jonathan Carroll-Nellenbeck, Diana Louise Carter, Mary Church Smith, Robyn Gage, Claudia Nolan, and John Smalt – is returning in 2026. Andy Dutcher will be joining us in February. We have been blessed with experience, new perspectives, and stability.

Some other highlights of this year:

- We worked with the local chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a national organization that builds beds for children. We were surprised to hear that in the Rochester area, there's a waiting list of 400 children without beds. The Outreach team supported Third Presbyterian with a donation for their bed-building event, and supplied about a dozen volunteers for a similar event at Memorial AME Zion Church in July. Our actions also spurred a donation from a local philanthropic fund to SHP.
- Thanks to the gifted skills of David Stith, we issued an Outreach newsletter in mid-year.
- We conducted training for volunteers – both general volunteer training and de-escalation training. We hope to expand our training in 2026 to include sexual harassment.
- Outreach Leadership was involved in ongoing discussions about the homeless people who have taken to sleeping on the Asbury campus. This is not a problem that will be solved easily and many minds continue to work on it with compassion and concern for the safety of all involved.
- The work of breaking down silos between ministries has continued with meetings of leaders of the Storehouse and Dining and Caring Center. Social work interns have brought their unique talents to the discussions about how to share resources. An adhoc team was able to find storage within 1010 for a record donation of 8,500 pairs of Bombas socks that both ministries can access and share with neighbors.
- Owing to the never-ending generosity of Asbury First, we collected massive amounts of food, clothing and financial donations for our programs. Our Dining in For Outreach event raised a record-breaking \$37,000, and the year ended with hundreds of pounds of food donated to the new Asbury Giving Tree.

Some goals for 2026 include fine-tuning volunteer training, finding more donors from outside the Asbury community, making progress on the uninvited overnight guests, completing satisfaction surveys of our neighbors, initiating evaluations of our programs, and continuing to do more good in more creative and thoughtful ways.



Rev. Stephen Cady, PhD

Annual Extension Ministry Report for Stephen Cady

Grace and peace from Fort Worth, TX where I continue to serve as the President of Brite Divinity School. Though I continue to miss the good people at Asbury First and will forever be grateful for our ministry together, almost two years into this new position I am clearer than ever that this is the place that God has called me. Each day, I have the opportunity to help shape the experience of another generation of faith leaders. While it is difficult—particularly given the prevailing headwinds of the current political moment in which we find ourselves—the reward is getting to see students who I know will help transform the world by God’s love, mercy, and justice.

As one who loves preaching, I was most concerned taking this position that I might not have the opportunity to preach on a regular basis. Fortunately, that has not been the case. I find that I am preaching 2-3 times a month, both in local congregations and in special settings. I try to post the livestream for those on my LinkedIn page when they come and they are almost always shared on the Brite Facebook page. One of the most significant preaching opportunities came this summer when I was invited to preach at the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—the denomination with which Brite is affiliated (though we have more Methodist students than any other denomination). This is the equivalent General Conference for the Disciples denomination. The chance to reflect for a moment on what I had learned about my own United Methodist faith from being around so many Disciples for the past year was deeply meaningful and I consider that experience as one of the highlights of my career. In addition to preaching, I have spoken in the last year at various anti-poverty and anti-homelessness gatherings, before city council in defense of DEI, as well as the Fort Worth Rotary club.

For as much time as I spend outside of Brite in the community, most of my job in this last year has been focused on trying to align the faculty, staff, and trustees of Brite toward a shared mission, vision, and strategy for success. We have continued with the difficult, but rewarding commitment to cover 100% of the cost of tuition for master’s students. That is, every master’s student is currently able to come to Brite with their tuition fully covered. We see it as a matter of justice and access and has allowed students who might never have had the opportunity to attend Brite to do so. Further, I have spent time investing in programs that will reach a new group of faith leaders. In particular, we have made a commitment to expand our chaplaincy training program. As church attendance decreases across the country, an experience with a chaplain is increasingly the only faith connection some people will ever have. For too long, institutions have ignored the robust training of chaplains and we are trying to correct that. We were pleased to receive a \$3M gift in the spring to help us build that program even further. There are many other examples of new initiatives, including an expansion of our world-renowned program in moral injury, but they all focus on trying to meet the current need of students and the calls that God is placing on their lives.

While there have been great moments of excitement in this last year, there have also been hardships. We had a beloved staff member (and former student) die quite suddenly at work at the beginning of the year and had to find a way to mourn as a community. For as painful as that was, however, the challenge of keeping our students safe and our witness faithful in the midst of the Trump administration’s new prohibitions on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (among other changes) have proved just as difficult. The anti-trans, anti-LGBTQ, anti-immigrant, and anti-Black executive orders have not only frightened our student body who occupy those identities, but have also



forced our institution to be clear about where we stand. In the face of overwhelming pressures on educational institutions, we have been honest about who we are. Brite has named publicly and frequently that we will not roll back our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts because we are a Christian institution and to let go of those commitments would be to undermine the very faith we are teaching our students to proclaim. This has come at a cost to our institution, including losing our ability to offer federal financial aid. Nevertheless, we feel strongly that we have a responsibility to navigate this moment faithfully.

There are countless other efforts, initiatives, and programs that I could share, but I pray that this has provided at least a glimpse into my experience as the President of Brite Divinity School during the last year. I continue to feel grateful for the opportunity and honored to serve in this important extension ministry.

Grace and Peace,

Stephen Cady
s.cady@tcu.edu
585-746-1333 cell

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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

A. Dean of Marsh Chapel: Preacher

1. Regular Sunday Sermons and Services, Marsh and elsewhere: **56**
2. Annual\Special BU Services: **35**
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). Inaugural Events (9)
3. Guest Speaking Events 2025: **13** Some Highlights: BU Today MLK, TriMilitary Ball, BU Commencement (various), NYS Lake Association, Union Chapel NH, Provost's Cabinet Retreat, CGS Matriculation, Boston City Council, Rodney Peterson Celebration, AAR\SBL Soren Hessler Panel, CAS Core Lecture on Matthew, BU Today Autumn Video, BU Bostonia on Marsh Chapel 75th Anniversary, Harvard Memorial Morning Prayer.
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*), BU Hillel Board, LOVI Committee and summer working group predecessors.
5. Visits: **717** office, home, hospital, other, not including daily 45min campus walk, which allows various brief, informal conversations)
6. 2025 New Marsh Chapel Chapter Members Received (Cresman, Maguire, Alves, Jackson **4**
7. Seasonal Program Initiatives, largely Staff led: **21** (*see website*) Marsh Chapel daily full calendar and weekly program at this point.



8. 2025 Baptisms 4 Yun Chan, Kathryn Lee, Ziche Chloe Peng, Keaunu Christopher Hill)
9. 2025 Weddings:3 (Stevens, Chen, McClesky)
10. 2025 Deaths\Funerals: Wayne Howard Smith (Eaton), James Hamilton (Marsh). (The normal RAH\Staff\Marsh responses at death include: 1. *Prayer and Visit*. 2. *T: BU 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. RAH Publications: 1. Sunday Sermons, BU website (at 2500 words\sermon, the collection for 2025 would be 125,000 words, or two further 200-page books); 2. Autumn 2025 Sermon Series. *Rooted in Goodness*. 3. Lenten Sermon Series 2025: *Miguel De Unamuno* (this is year 19 of the Lenten series, the first ten in conversation with Calvinists, this second ten with Catholics); 4. Books Published: *Bay State Road* (a collection of 20 Hill Marsh Chapel sermons over these 20 years); *The Charm of the Chapel* (2nd edition), *Daniel Marsh* 5. Other: various op-eds (BU TODAY, MSNBC, other), interviews, shared podcasts, one MTS thesis (Elsy Pararem)
2. Courses BU/STH taught 2025: The Gospel of John (fall) and Parish Preaching (spring); (since 2006 two courses\year offered *gratis* in STH, part of Hill family tithe.)
3. Doctoral\Masters Defense Committees 2.
4. STH Monthly Faculty Meeting, STH Methodism Committee, STH Faculty Retreat
STH Areas A and D Monthly meetings 6 (though D irregularly attended)
5. Pastoral contacts\calls with fellow clergy\others at Christmas: 51 (*some gems here*)
6. 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 Hyding, STH dissertation, 2023 graduation) and in *Preaching* (e.g. 2024 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 assets 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: 71 including sacramental and personal hours, part of total visits).
5. Annual Open Houses\Receptions\Dinners in 96 Bay State Residence: 9
6. BU Faculty Staff Other Deaths 2025: 2
7. Sampling of authors read in 2024: various.
8. December Christmas\Holiday events 2025: 21.
9. Travel, personal\ work: Copenhagen (wonderful), Tampa, Dallas, 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. Goals 2025: *Voice* (a summative research project *Bay State Road; Sermons from Marsh Chapel* (published prior to and in honor of the Marsh Chapel 75th anniversary, 9/25/25; this is my 20st book); *Visitation* (personal visitation goal: pastoral conversation, 2 dozen a week); *both will continue as goals and foci in 2026; Also, in calendar 2025: **Marsh 75th Anniversary of Chapel Dedication (1950)(multiple), including (see above) RAH/Marsh Chapel re-publication of D Marsh, The Charm of the Chapel.*

15. Spring Annual Events: **35** Pre Commencement and Commencement Events.

16. We have happily filled all our Marsh staff positions, including last year for the role of Associate Chaplain for Student Outreach, Mr. Jonathan Lee (Davidson, Yale), (along the lines of the 5-year review plans). Knock on wood, a full, fine staff, right now. A joy!

***Management (2)**

1. Staff: **34** staff at Marsh Chapel; **25** Religious Life (*self-funded*).

2. Marsh Board of Advisors (**22**), meetings in May and September.

4. Administration: Oversight *through Chapel Director* of **10** University Chaplains and 25 Campus Ministers, 34 internal Marsh Staff (see sign boards and web site). 2 Muslim chaplains added this year, and Sunday Live Stream continued, both thanks to the generosity of the President's office.

5. Marsh Chapel oversight of Religious Life brings **\$4M/year** to BU in self-funded chaplaincies and campus ministries.

6. 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, with Provost's office). Still in place.

5. Monthly\weekly meetings with direct reports: Music Director, Monday; Chapel Director, Tuesday; Chaplains (3) Wednesday.

6. We need to make sure Religious Life Policy is regularly communicated at least once, preferably twice, each year, throughout the University (as done last September through the Provost's office and now done for the full year of 2025 twice.)

Narrative Addendum

This year marks the twentieth Christmas of our (Jan's and my) life and work at Boston University (2006--2025 inclusive). Twenty years of preaching, teaching, (guest) speaking, leading (multiple forms), and writing (now twenty books published). Not all would enjoy the three parts weekly role of pulpit, lectern and desk (i.e. Sunday preaching, Monday teaching, Weekly 'deaning'). But it is the combination, the synergy, the interaction of the three that makes the Deanship of Marsh Chapel the, or at least one of the, leading Methodist pulpits, both in history and in our time.



Administration and Property

Governing Board

Chuck Hanrahan

Working with the congregation, staff and pastors, Asbury First's Governing Board sets policy and direction, empowers its committees and teams to carry out the work of the congregation, and works to coordinate and harmonize the efforts undertaken by these groups. The Governing Board has fiscal responsibility, acting as the Trustees of Asbury First. In addition, the Board Chair serves as Asbury First's Lay Leader. Each year the Governing Board focuses on several Big Questions that are vital to Asbury First's mission and ministry. Early in the year, the Board identified the big issues for 2025 as:

1. What progress is the church making toward a sustainable financial model?

The Governing Board created the Sustainability Task Force which, together with the Finance Committee, helped facilitate a path forward to address the deficit this year. We addressed the cash shortage and assisted with the creation of the 2026 budget. We have people working on the payroll / people and facilities / maintenance aspect of our Financial Sustainability plan.

2. How are we holding our committees and teams accountable to using the Dreamscape

In March of 2025 the Governing Board held a Townhall where the Dream Team presented its work. This work took the form of a Strategic Framework, rather than a Strategic Plan. The expectation was that groups throughout the church would use this as a decision-making guide. The Governing Board has regularly asked its members to ensure that the committees and teams under each Board member are using the Dreamscape, and that the Board itself is guided by this document as it considers strategy.

3. How effectively are Asbury's mercy and justice ministries connecting with and addressing the needs of Rochester and beyond?

This year the COC saw increases in services rendered across the board. This included an increase in the number of hot meals and services provided by the Dining and Caring Center, a greater number of individuals served by the Storehouse, and an increase in the number of patients seen by the UR Well Clinic. In addition some progress has been made towards seeking feedback from guests of the various programs. The Storehouse began using a brief questionnaire given to folks as they left and the Dining and Caring Center conducted a survey to see what potential expansion opportunities they would most benefit from. Pat has also been making a concerted effort to build our relationships and connections with other providers and agencies in order to serve our community better.

Much of the Board's attention for 2025 was focused on financial issues. Our Finance Committee went through a realignment process and dug into every aspect of the budget. In addition, we formed the Sustainability Task Force to work with Finance and look at long term issues. The result was greater understanding of real costs and greater transparency in financial and budget issues. We held the Second Mile Giving campaign to close a budget gap, and presented a thoroughly researched and realistic 2026 budget.



Also notable in 2025 was the presentation and adoption of the Dreamscape as a strategic framework for growth at the March Townhall

Other work the Board was involved in included:

- Revision of the Board Policy Book (To be finalized in early 2026)
- Opening of GB meetings to congregation
- Publishing of GB minutes on the AF website
- Transition of Church Administrator following David Strong's retirement

With the church on sound financial footing, the GB plans to spend greater time on it's three big questions in 2026, including what the next century of Asbury First might look like, and how we can be prepared as society continues changing.

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Financial Report

Dawn Riedy, Chair of the Finance Committee

Role in Church Governance

The Finance Committee oversees the financial stewardship of the congregation, ensuring the church's financial resources are managed responsibly, transparently and in alignment with its mission and vision. A major work product of this committee is preparation of the General and COC Budgets for review and approval by the Governing Board. The Finance Committee's other responsibilities are those outlined in the United Methodist Book of Discipline. The Finance Committee will also provide regular updates to ensure both the Governing Board, and the congregation have an adequate understanding of the congregation's financial status and goals. The committee does not participate in day-to-day financial decision-making.

The Year In Review- Goals & Progress To Date

All of the documents referenced in this report are available on the Asbury First website under ABOUT US (top banner of our home page) ® Governance ® Committees in Action:

<https://asburyfirst.org/committees/#finance-committee>

Goal: To refocus Finance Committee efforts on responsibilities as outlined in the UMC Book of Discipline

- The Finance Committee Charter was updated and approved by the Governing Board in May 2025.
- As shared in the Finance Committee May Update, Committee membership was updated to include representatives from the Investment, SPRC, Property Stewardship, and Outreach Committees, as well as the Generosity and Legacy Giving Teams.
- The Committee reviewed and discussed the UMC publication, United Methodist Guidelines: Finance.

Goal: To ensure timely completion of annual financial audits

- In early 2025, an external auditor was engaged to perform the 2023 audit; this audit will be completed soon.
- The Finance Committee established an Audit Team to facilitate and oversee financial audits and to ensure appropriate financials internal control policies, procedures and practices are in place; this team is led by Emily Camardello, a member of the congregation with professional expertise in this area.
- Once the 2023 audit is complete, it will be submitted for approval to the Finance Committee, the Governing Board and the UNY Conference and shared with the congregation.



- As recommended by the Audit Team, after the 2023 audit is complete, we will move on to a 2025 audit; this will allow us to reestablish a timely annual audit cycle with more actionable information.
- In addition to the external audit, there are many built-in ongoing internal audit processes and process improvement efforts.

Goal: To review internal control policies and procedures

- This work is ongoing, representing the combined efforts of the Audit Team, John Ormsbee, Deb Bullock-Smith, and the Finance Committee.

Goal: To monitor the approved 2025 General and COC Budgets' income and expenses compared to budget

- This effort resulted in a major reforecast of the 2025 Budgets (see June Town Hall Meeting Materials).
- The significant budget gap identified in this reforecast was addressed with support from the Financial Sustainability Task Force and closed through budget cuts and a successful Second Mile Giving campaign.
- COC and General Budget Income & Expense Statements have been updated to be more understandable.
- Monthly General Budget Income & Expense Statements are now included in the Finance Committee Meeting Minutes and thereby shared with both the Governing Board and the congregation.
- The COC Budget is managed primarily by the Outreach Committee, then reviewed by the Finance Committee.
- Fund Balance Sheets are also reviewed monthly and summarized in Finance Committee Meeting Minutes.
- To stabilize our operating cash balance, the Finance Committee worked with the Investment and Property Stewardship Committees to present a proposal approved by the Governing Board in August (see Finance Committee August Update); this action increased the cash balance of the General Budget Fund by \$155,500.

Goal: To present sustainable, balanced 2026 General and COC Budgets for Governing Board approval

- The budget development process was shared with the congregation through Meeting Minutes and a series of three Finance Committee Budget Updates, published as Asbury First Monday Reader articles
- The 2026 Budgets are detailed in the January 2026 Town Hall Meeting Materials; these will be emailed to the congregation in advance of the January 25 Town Hall Meeting, then posted on the website.



Goal: To continue to improve financial transparency and strengthen trust with the congregation

- The Finance Committee welcomes the congregation’s questions, concerns and ideas by emailing Finance@asburyfirst.org.
- Finance Committee Minutes are promptly posted on the Asbury First website; these include detailed General Budget Income & Expense Statements.
- Additional updates have been shared with the congregation through the weekly eblasts, This Week at Asbury First and the Asbury First Monday Reader.
- Town Hall Meetings focused on a review of finances were held in June 2025 and January 2026.
- For anyone without internet access, copies of Finance Committee Minutes, Updates and Town Hall Meeting Materials are available by calling the Church Office (271-1050) and requesting a print copy.

Investment Committee Annual Report

Patrick Fulford, Chair

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 and thirteen Restricted Funds.

Financial Overview for 2025

As of September 30, 2025 \$7,435,553 was held in the General Endowment, an aggregate of \$3,824,137 was held in various restricted funds (ranging in size from \$21,473 to \$886,743). Accordingly, total General Endowment/Restricted Funds are valued at \$11,259,690. This represents a \$1,300,306 increase from 2024 year end levels. This increase occurred after distributing \$422,846 to the General Budget, COC Budget, Capital Improvement Fund & other Restricted Fund donor designations.

Key Activities in 2025

At the beginning of 2025, the committee made a change in our financial advisor make up. With this decision, thoroughly researched and evaluated throughout 2024, we replaced two of our advisors with ones that were felt to provide more sustainable portfolio growth at acceptable risk levels. At the beginning of 2025, the committee hired Clark Capital and Wespath as Asbury First financial advisors and we retained Alesco. We have operated with these three advisors for the balance of 2025.

As in the past, the committee receives investment reports from the advisors at each quarterly meeting and each advisor meets with the Committee at least twice per year. The Committee monitors advisor performance against appropriate market benchmarks. For 2025, portfolio performance is near benchmark targets and is well above our strategic goal of a minimum 7.0% return over time. This 7.0% goal supports our 4.5% portfolio distribution rate while also maintaining the endowment's purchasing power against inflation. The church’s portfolio return’s have exceeded this goal for the last several decades.



The Committee distributes 4.5% of the 20-quarter average balance of each fund (or the rough equivalent for newer funds) for the General Budget, COC Budget, 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. Although the 4.5% rate used is more conservative than the 5% distribution rate used by many endowments, after discussions with our advisors and looking at underlying market conditions, the Committee believes the 4.5% distribution is prudent . As previously stated, these distributions totaled \$423K in 2025.

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 the past, the Committee has asked our advisors to report on ESG status within our portfolio, using one available measurement tool. However, this tool is no longer available for use in this way. So, we are exploring other options. The Committee will continue to monitor progress and opportunities in this emerging field.

Other Important Activities

Earlier this year, the Finance Committee asked the Investment Committee to help them fix a long standing problem affecting the church check book. Many years ago, the check book funded a capital project worth \$155,500. This payment was booked as a loan to be paid back by a sizable bequest from a church member. Since that bequest is still (thankfully) outstanding, the check book is struggling to have sufficient current cash flow to pay normal church expenditures. The Investment Committee moved \$155,500 from the Endowment to the check book to be paid back by the aforementioned bequest - and this loan will not accrue interest. Having made this fund transfer, the check book is far better off to meet its normal obligations.

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Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC)

Beth Wilkens, Chair

Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) Role in Church Governance

The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is a standing committee of the Governance Board. Its role and functions are guided by The Book of Discipline and the Governing Board Policy Book. The SPRC assists the Governing Board in developing employee policies, liaising with the Bishop on clergy and pastor evaluations and recommendations, ensuring compliance with applicable laws, and carrying out the staff grievance process as defined by the Governance Board policies. The SPRC is responsible for recommending pastoral compensation. It oversees staff strategy and structure, but has no staff management authority and does not participate in supervision of staff or staff decision-making.



Activities During 2025

The Dream Team identified eight priorities, driven by the reaffirmed values and carried out through our various areas of ministry. Most of the priorities identified in the Dreams Report relate in part to the SPRC’s work. In particular, the SPRC’s most direct calls to action were (1) Developing a New Priority Focus on Youth, Children/Families, (2) Growing and Engaging the Congregation, and (3) Addressing Expectations and Dependence on Paid Staff. In the months following the Report the SPRC, in conjunction with the Senior Minister, undertook a fresh top-to-bottom look at our entire pastoral and lay staffing structure to rethink how it could best be aligned for progress in achieving the Dream priorities. In the background was an understanding, from work of the Finance Committee and Sustainability Task Force, that resources are limited. The SPRC developed a complete staff reconfiguration plan to better align people resources with the stated Dream priorities. The general outline of the reconfiguration plan was reviewed with the Governing Board in late spring and the final detailed plan was formally approved by the Board in September. In connection with the reconfiguration, new positions were created, some positions were eliminated, and revised job descriptions were developed for most existing positions. Included among others are a new full-time Director of Children and Family Ministries, and reconfigured positions for Director of Nurture and Discipleship, Director of Operations, Operations Manager, and Director of Music Ministry. Job descriptions were approved by the SPRC in September. Recognizing that program enhancement and personnel costs play a major role in sustainability at Asbury First, the SPRC continues to work on issues of longer-term sustainability, concentrating on most effectively using our staffing structure to enhance our ministries.

The Committee considered confidential personnel issues during the course of the year.

The SPRC is responsible for recommending pastoral compensation. The Upper NY Conference provides guidelines for pastoral compensation, including required benefits, based upon multiple factors such as education, ordination status, and tenure. The guidelines largely guide the compensation paid by Asbury First to the associate pastoral staff, and information gathered as to comparable positions across the nation guide compensation of the Senior Minister. The Committee also reviewed the compensation paid to members of the pastoral staff and made recommendations to the Governing Board for 2026.

The Committee meets annually with each member of the pastoral staff. Additionally, the Committee conducted its annual review of Senior Minister performance. It provided the review to the Senior Minister based on more than 30 responses received from staff and congregants who were asked to help by providing evaluations.

Respectfully submitted, Pastor Parish Relations Committee:

Beth Wilkens (Chair), Frances Bryniarski (Governing Board Liaison), Barbara Castle, Patrick Fulford, Alex Hunt, Helen Johnson, Ike Jordan, John Nutter

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Property Stewardship Committee (PSC)

Submitted by Wendy Featherstone, Chair

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 serves as the Building Committee when needed. The PSC has oversight of the IT infrastructure Assets as well, which presents added funding challenges due to shorter equipment life cycles. The PSC also oversaw a revitalized Safety and Security Team beginning in 2024.

The PSC gave back \$25,000 of its \$75,000 disbursement to the AOP/General Budget due to the budgetary shortfall discovered in 2025. PSC has partnered with the newly formed Facilities and Custodial Team to reduce budget overages. PSC has been asked to evaluate some of the maintenance contracts in which we have seen unexpectedly high costs.

Major expenses expected to require a capital campaign in the near future include the Education Wing Roof and Window projects.

Activities in 2025:

PSC oversaw the following projects:

- Replacement of 8 copper downspouts in 1010
- Copper downspout repair 1050
- Zero-turn mower repair
- Replacement of sprinkler heads in the Welcoming Hall and Gathering Space
- Replacement of Fobs for Daycare door locks
- Lawn area electrical service installed
- Replacement of existing thermostats in the Education Wing
- Repair of Gathering Space ADA door east
- Sidewalk replacements 1050
- Assessment (by Ocello) of IT equipment and systems resulting in a comprehensive report prioritizing need to replace based on expected life.
- Installed uninterruptible power supply (UPS) and surge protector for the Sanctuary sound system.
- Trimmed multiple trees
- Drywall repair Welcoming Hall and COC
- Education Wing Window NE Classroom lower level (approved in 2025 installation in 2026)
- Approved new signage on main doors
- Sanctuary and Education Wing Roofs: Repaired Sanctuary slate roof and completed warranty work on gutters (large flat roofs). The Education Wing Roof warranty expired in 2024. There has been concern that the roof might need to be replaced in the near future. Based on inspections done in 2024 and 2025 it appears that the roof has more years of life left than previously thought. The PSC has approved an infrared aerial



inspection, to be done in 2026, that will provide additional information for assessing the condition of the roof.

- Columbarium Project completion and consecration.
- Development of a projected list of major capital projects that need to be addressed in future years including a prioritized list of the most critical projects.

We have identified these projects as priorities in the next year:

- Exterior Lighting Staff Parking Lot & North Parking Lot
- HVAC – Inventory and Assessment
- 1050 Window Assessment including 3rd and 4th (Attic) levels
- Production Suite – Power Management PDU/UPS

Teams we will interact with:

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

PSC has oversight of any changes to the property
 PSC must approve all signage on the church campus
 All Preservation Board requests must go through PSC

Monday Morning Crew

Dave Kennedy

There has been lots of recent discussion about Asbury’s “facilities.” The Monday Morning Crew is a work group focused on facilities. On every Monday for more than 60 years, the MMC has both fixed stuff and tried to keep other stuff from breaking. In 2025 we were joined by the Pumpnickel Crew, a similarly-focused group that meets on Saturday mornings. Our facilities are aging and that keeps both groups busy. We consider all requests and tackle those for which our collective skills and experience are beneficial. Please join either group whenever you are able.

MMC Regulars in ‘25: Jim Connell, Jim and Bonnie Nolen, Jim Farrar, Dave Kennedy, Dave Kay, Ernie Dankert, Howie Holcomb, Dick Wallace, Bob Peck, and Gary Brown gave about 1,050 total service hrs.

This sampling of our accomplishments shows the breadth of interesting stuff we do:

- Fixed lighting controls and updated choice of lamps used to illuminate the Steeple at night.
- Installed, adjusted, and sometimes removed motion-detecting light switches throughout 1040.



- Replaced emergency exit and light fixtures throughout 1040.
 - Reinstalled doors to Butler's Pantry with new hinges after removal of rusted-in-place door closers.
 - Constructed and installed a new drawer for the Library's main desk.
 - Fabricated and installed inserts to prevent winter snow from infiltrating the Storehouse donation shed.
 - Repaired plaster walls in DayCare, Property Office and Classrooms of 1040.
 - Installed 8 downspouts on 1010 to replace solid copper downspouts stolen by thieves.
 - Repaired broken vacuums six times.
 - Conferred with Property Committee on 1040 heating system problems and potential solutions.
 - Repaired latches and locks on interior doors in 1040 – lots of activity
 - Reinforced the legs on the pews used in the Gathering Space. (Please, never move the pews.)
 - Replaced weatherstripping in exterior doors to decrease cold air getting in.
 - Read the gas and electric meters each month to provide accurate indications of usage.
 - Designed and installed a new electric closing mechanism for fire doors at the Storehouse.
 - Investigated source of gouges in ADCC walls. Remedied by installing protective caps on chairs.
 - Repaired ADCC walls with plaster and fresh paint.
 - Refinished the oak serving table used for coffee service on Sundays.
 - Mowed the lawns and repaired the zero-turn power mower
 - Repaired chairs (ADCC and 1040 folding) using parts cannibalized from other chairs.
 - Recycled hazardous waste and scrap metal collected across the campus.
 - Repaired the round pedestal flower stands used in the Sanctuary.
 - Fabricated a stand to hold the activity bags for children in worship.
 - Fixed toilets – seats, flappers, handles, and attachment bolts.
 - Fixed an ornery, drippy sink faucet in 1050.
 - Lubricated lock cylinders and hung first aid kits on walls across the campus.
 - Rebuilt the roof covering the emergency escape stairwell from the 1050 basement.
 - Converted fluorescent lighting in the Gathering Space to LED fixtures.
 - Replaced floor tiles outside the elevator at 1040 2nd floor.
 - Replaced ballasts on Welcome Hall sconce lights.
 - Repaired the Crucifer's cross.
 - Fixed and repainted lots of music stands,
 - Repaired brass sash "cords" in windows of 1050.
 - Unstuck the interior windows between the Narthex and the Nave.
 - Dismantled the broken pole lamp for the Rose Window & sealed its outdoor electrical box.
-



Membership Report

Holly Temming, Operations Manager

Asbury First Full Members as of 12/31/2025: 2243

Includes new members in 2025: 26

Baptized in 2025: 3

Deaths during 2025: 22

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Worship and Arts

Music Ministry

Dr. Carl Johengen, Director of Music Ministry

Asbury First's Music Ministry maintained a steady presence during 2025, continuing to enhance worship services and to provide opportunities for music making for an ever-increasing number of singers and players. As always, I join the entire congregation in thanking our musical staff for their dedication and hard work: Duane Prill, Principal Organist, Assistant Organist David Strong, our soloists/section leaders Gwen Paker, Brenda Nitsch, Dan McInerney, and Jordan Bachmann, and my co-leaders Elizabeth Church (Asbury Ringers), Holly Temming (Children's Music), Carol Lamica (Youth Music), and Laurie Kennedy (Asbury Orchestra).

While David Strong retired as Church Administrator in May 2025, we are fortunate that he retains his position as Assistant Organist, with a reduction in weekly commitments. He continues to substitute for Principal Organist Duane Prill as needed, both at Sunday services and Wednesday Sanctuary Choir rehearsals, and is on hand to assist with Memorial Services and other special services. His duties as accompanist for the Children's Music program have been taken over by Alan Giambattista, who volunteers his time in exchange for practice time on our pianos. Carl Johengen has taken over providing music for the weekly 9:00am Sunday Service.

In the spring, Gwen Paker announced that she would not continue as Soprano Soloist/Section Leader after May 2025. Fortunately I was able to recruit Juli Elliot to join the musical staff in September 2025, and she has been a wonderful addition to our team. During the summer, the position was covered by guest artist Heather Holmquest.

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, David Temperley, pianist/composer, Jim Farrington, trumpet and contractor for our Easter brass ensemble, Faith Han and Eunki Chang, violinists, and Jeanne Strong, piano.

Asbury First Adult Choirs

Leading Asbury First's Sanctuary Choir continues to be a highlight of my work at Asbury First. We were delighted to welcome eight new singers during 2025! Since September, choir attendance has routinely been above 35 singers each Sunday. I'm sure I'm not alone in noticing a steady improvement in the quality and consistency of their contributions to Sunday worship.



Between June 2 and August 4, Summer Choir enjoyed excellent steady attendance this year. I am grateful to Brenda Nitsch and Brian Bohrer who stepped in to lead Summer Choir during my vacation.

Personal Workload

Throughout 2025 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 and Arts Team, and worship planning with Pastor Michelle), hosting events for outside organizations, 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.

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 continue to be well maintained and regularly tuned as budget allows.

Organ - Duane Prill, Principal Organist

Our wonderful Austin organ celebrated its 70th year and continues to serve well with very little maintenance. A number of severely worn Great (second keyboard) ivories were replaced with vintage coverings, and Dave Kennedy replaced the filters to the organ blower room. The console's 30-year-old solid state system malfunctioned this past year, and so we "factory reset" the computer which seems to have done the trick for the time being. At some point in the future we may need to consider a new solid state system for the instrument. This is a very costly upgrade so we are hoping that can be pushed well into the future. We renewed our tuning contract with Parsons Organ Co. at a reduced rate, as Duane has done much of the organ "touch-up" tuning and maintenance.

A highlight of 2025 was the performance of guest organist Michael Messina, who in March performed the devilishly difficult "Stations of the Cross" by French composer Marcel Dupré, with visual art chosen by Lucy Winters Durkin accompanying the music, and Judy Messenger reading the poetry of Paul Claudel between each movement. It was a memorable concert, and there was a large audience of church and community members in attendance.

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 12 members. We have had several members step back last fall due to family commitments, then return in January. We have another member that has stepped way this January, but hopes to return next fall. Our primary function is to participate and contribute to the Sunday Worship services.

We performed two times in spring 2025 during worship services, March 9 and on Easter, April 20. In the fall we performed on October 19, November 23, December 21, and Christmas Eve. We were fortunate to be joined by Mike Mullin on percussion, Duane Prill on organ, and Annette Farrington on flute during this time. Many recent bell pieces pair with other instruments or vocalists to enhance the music. I try to choose pieces that will allow us to do this at least once each year.

As we head into 2026, we again have had a small shift in membership. Though we are fortunate to have a strong group of substitutes who can fill in as needed, I am looking for more regular members. To play five octave music (more complex and using the majority of the bells and chimes we own) we need fourteen members. A goal for this coming year is to recruit at least two new members. We also may be losing two members in the fall of 2026 due to job and education relocations, so having a good core is going to be especially important.

I enjoy working with the ringers and being a part of the worship experience at Asbury. They are a committed, enthusiastic group of musicians!

Children's Music - Holly Temming

Children's Music had a great year in 2025. In February, we had a Winter VBS themed *Cooking Up Faith* in which we focused on music inspiring faith and purpose. In the Spring, we presented a children's musical titled *In The Image*, by Mark Burrows, with piano, oboe, and percussion accompaniment. It told the story of a group of children who discover that being made "in the image" isn't just about physical appearance but about creativity, faithfulness, responsibility, community, and the ability to find the good in things.

In the Summer our VBS theme was *B Camp*, and the children loved the many songs that focused on how to "be": "Be Nice", "Be Still", "Be Not Afraid", "Let There Be Peace on Earth". They especially loved experiencing a sound bath in the Sanctuary where they laid down in the pews while listening to Taizé songs and instruments such as tingshas, sound ships, rainsticks, and koshi chimes.

Fall enrollment in children's choirs was 8 in Hallelujah Kids and 18 in Wesley Singers & Ringers. Both children's music groups sang a piece on Bible Sunday with drum and triangle, a Thanksgiving Day introit in November, and the Wesley Singers sang a December introit with glockenspiel, bells and chime tree. They put together a wonderful service for Advent Winter Wonder Night, singing and ringing with handbells, glockenspiels, and jingle bells. 45 children participated in our Christmas Eve Pageant telling and singing the story of the birth of baby Jesus. We added extra-small sized angel wings so that all angel costumes could include wings. While the donkey did not want to process all the way down the center



aisle during the pageant, the children loved meeting the donkey afterwards, bringing the story to life and giving the kids so much joy. We eliminated the use of real straw bales in the manger in an effort to eliminate all the sweeping required after the 4pm service.

One goal I have for 2026 is to incorporate the children more in our worship services by singing/ringing more introits. I'd also like to expand our musical instruments (a goal from 2025 which was not met) since they are, I believe, a big draw for children to our program. I would like to incorporate more Orff Glockenspiels and sound bath instruments such as Koshi chimes, sound ships, a gathering drum, and a shruti box. I will continue to give sound baths on a regular basis in an effort to show children how to use music in meditation to help calm, focus, and center them closer to God in our sometimes chaotic world. I feel so fortunate to experience the joy of sharing music with these precious children.

Youth Music - Carol Lamica

What an exciting year the youth have had at Asbury!! In the Spring, many youth participated in the intergenerational production of "My Fair Lady. Larry Dugan was the artistic director; I taught the music and ran the digital orchestration. This show afforded another opportunity for our 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 Youth choir met on Wednesdays (and a few other days to accommodate the youths' busy schedules) to prepare music for Youth Sunday.

In September, auditions were held for the youth musical, Anastasia. My job is to teach all of the music to the youth, harmonies, unison and the solo work. I spent a great deal of time working with voice placement with the youth as this show had some vocally demanding music. Fifteen youths 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 14-16 and were enthusiastically received by our audiences. We had some new youth join us from Rush-Henrietta. They are students I have taught in the past (and teach privately now). One of them is continuing in the intergenerational production of Cinderella.

The youth rehearsed on Wednesday evenings in preparation for singing at the 4:00 Christmas Eve services. We've added a new element to our rehearsal time and that's a time of "nosh and fellowship." The youth decide on the "nosh" and we all bring something to contribute. It's a nice time to gather around a table in fellowship hall, discuss our week, what's on our mind, what's new and exciting, etc. In the spring, I hope to continue this new tradition and add bells back into the rehearsal schedule.



Asbury Orchestra - Laurie Kennedy

The Asbury Orchestra is a diverse community of musicians representing every stage of musical life. From elementary students just beginning their journey, to seniors rediscovering their love of playing, to professional musicians who believe deeply in the value of community, each member offers their time and talent at every rehearsal.

The orchestra gathers twice a year—spring and fall—for four to six rehearsals before playing in worship. In addition, the group meets twice each December to share Carols in the Gathering Space on the Sunday before Christmas.

Last year, we realized that 2025 would mark the orchestra's 30th anniversary. To honor the many musicians and friends who have participated over the years, a commemorative work was commissioned from Asbury First member David Temperley. This piece was made possible through funds donated to the church by the estate of Jeff Fraser. Jeff and his wife Aileen were founding members of the orchestra and continued playing until they were no longer able to carry their instruments into Wesley Hall. The anniversary was celebrated on November 9 with the premiere of *Meditation*, followed by a luncheon at Laurie Kennedy's home.

The Asbury Orchestra is open to all band and orchestral musicians. Rehearsals are led by Laurie Kennedy, with assistance from Jolene Harrigan. If you have an instrument, we invite you to join us this spring!



ROSTERS:

SANCTUARY CHOIR

Dr. Carl Johengen,
Director
Ed Austin
Jordan Bachmann*
David Berg
Lis Bischoff-Ormsbee
Michelle Bogue-Trost
Liz Church
Rob Coatsworth
Beth Cross
Miriam Derivan
Juli Elliot*
Jim Farrington
Annette Farrington
Mary Fetterman
Cindy Haag

Lilith Hart
Janda Hemming
Carole Huther
Mary Beth Kelley
Dave Kennedy
Sarah Krug
Paula Kuempel
Christine Lee
Jim Leunk
Dan McInerney*
John Messenger
Judy Messenger
Nancy Mitchell
Maci Moses
Brenda Nitsch*
Megan Ormsbee

Ruth Phinney
Dave Rice
Lin Saunders
Chris Schlosser
Suzanne Smalt
Bill Stata
Mary Steensma
James Taylor
Charles Tellier
Maya Temperley
Heather Anne Tinling
Bruce Thompson
Dean Woolever
Mark Wright
*denotes section leader

ASBURY ORCHESTRA

Laurie Kennedy, Director
Jolene Harrigan, Asst.
Director
Donna Anderson
Jonah Beach
Lydia Beach
Dave Behnk
Nancy Behnk
Nora Caroll-Nellenback
Jim Carter
Laura Chan

Claire Chang
Jeff Dick
Brian Donat
Shannon Doyle
Georgie Dudley
Annette Farrington
Jim Farrington
Chris Gold
Carl Greenhagle
Faith Han
Lilith Hart

Dave Kennedy
John Ormsbee
Jacob Parkes
Kristin Parkes
David Raymond
Ed Ristau
Lynn Selke
Roshan Temperley
Sharon Vincent
Tammi Vinci

ASBURY RINGERS

Elizabeth Church,
Director
Jennifer Bailey
Laura Booth Chan
Cindy Connell
Carol Galskoy
Scot Graham-Raad

Deb Heuhn
Barbara Howell
Alex Hunt
Maci Moses
Barb Nelson
Vickie Stankaitis
Christina Wentz

Toni Baller (substitute)
Betsy Barr (substitute)
Angie Burch (substitute)
Liz Wager (substitute)
Caitlin Chan (substitute)



Asbury Community Theatre

Dr. Larry Dugan, Director

In 2025, ACT Asbury Community Theatre continued to demonstrate the power of community-based performing arts through a full year of productions, special events, and outreach. Across multiple theatrical offerings, ACT engaged more than 100 performers and crew, welcomed over 1,450 audience members, generated positive cash flow on all productions, supported anti-violence advocacy, and raised meaningful funds through both ticketed events and advertising partnerships. ACT's work in 2025 reflected its core values: artistic excellence without pretense, broad community participation, fiscal responsibility, and using theatre as a platform for social good.

2025 Productions and Events

Arsenic and Old Lace – Dinner Theatre (February 2025)

- Format: Dinner Theatre
- Cast: 14 performers
- Performances: 3

Highlights:

- Strong audience engagement in an immersive dinner-theatre format
- Demonstrated ACT's ability to diversify performance models
- Positive financial outcome

My Fair Lady – Intergenerational Musical (May 2025)

- Cast: 57 performers
- Crew: 23 volunteers
- Performances: 3
- Total Audience: 960 attendees

Highlights:

- One of ACT's largest productions to date
- Significant volunteer involvement across performance and technical roles
- Strong ticket sales and community turnout
- Generated a positive cash flow, reinforcing ACT's sustainable production model

Anastasia – Youth Musical (Fall 2025)

- Cast: 16 performers
- Crew: 10 volunteers
- Total Audience: 430 attendees

Highlights:

- Intimate yet impactful fall production
- Strong audience response and engagement
- Continued pattern of responsible budgeting and positive cash flow



Enough: Pledge to Stop Gun Violence – Special Event

- Cast: 12 performers
 - Audience: 60 attendees
 - Funds Raised: \$500 donated to the ENOUGH organization
- Impact:
- Used theatre as a vehicle for social awareness and advocacy
 - Demonstrated ACT’s commitment to community issues beyond entertainment
 - Strengthened ACT’s identity as an arts organization with a conscience

Community Participation & Impact Across all 2025 activities:

ACT continued to serve as a welcoming space where individuals contribute their talents in acting, music, dance, technical theatre, front-of-house operations, and production support.

- Over 100 cast and crew members participated
- More than 1,450 audience members attended ACT performances
- Volunteers ranged from experienced performers to first-time participants
- Productions fostered cross-generational collaboration and skill development

Financial Performance & Sustainability

ACT’s financial outcomes in 2025 underscore a sustainable, volunteer-driven model that balances creativity with stewardship.

- All 2025 productions achieved positive cash flow
- Approximately \$7,500 raised through advertising revenue
- \$500 raised for community anti-violence advocacy
- Demonstrated fiscal responsibility while maintaining artistic ambition

Key Achievements in 2025

- Successful execution of four distinct theatrical events
- Growth in scale with *My Fair Lady* while maintaining quality
- Consistent audience support across multiple seasons
- Effective use of theatre for community engagement and social impact
- Continued ability to generate surplus revenue while keeping productions accessible

Looking Ahead

Building on the success of 2025, ACT Asbury Community Theatre is well-positioned to:

- Continue offering diverse theatrical experiences
 - Expand community partnerships and advocacy initiatives
 - Strengthen volunteer pipelines for both performance and technical roles
 - Maintain financial sustainability while growing artistic reach
-



Youth and Discipleship

Discipleship Ministries

Mike Mullin, Minister for Youth and Discipleship

MAJOR PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

- Adult Sunday School
- Wednesday Evening Programming
- Bible Studies
- Book Studies
- Discipleship Project
- Covenant Groups

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2025

Adult Sunday School

- Our Sunday morning adult Sunday school time has continued to grow in 2025. This includes our rotating speaker series that occurs each week in Fellowship Hall and our small group studies, like "As The Spirit Moves." Each of these offerings continue to invite participation both in-person and via Zoom.

Wednesday Evening Programming

- Our Wednesday evening program has continued throughout 2025 with new speakers and series being offered each month. 2025 included topics ranging from *The Savvy Ally*, to Asbury First Outreach, to celebrating the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed (or at least a first draft of it...).
- As we look into 2026, one of the conversations we are having is about restructuring Wednesday Evenings to focus on small-group meetings and gatherings. We look forward to continuing these conversations and maybe even beginning some new initiatives and outlooks in **the fall!**

Additional Comments:

- This year, I had the foresight to invite our various discipleship groups to share about their respective ministries. I think this is a wonderful opportunity for each of us to hear directly from our various groups about what they have been doing for the past year—and what they might be doing in the coming year.
- I also think this is a great way to help readers discover new ways they might get involved in the life and ministries of Asbury First.
- Below are reflections and reports from a few of our groups.



Discipleship Project Group - Carolyn Hamil

Our Discipleship group consists of five women with a wide age range (four married 1 widowed, all have children). One person had to leave the group due to illness.

We meeting the Smart room at Asbury on Wednesday from 6pm-7pm. A typical meeting includes prayer, sharing our week's events in our lives, and a scripture reading with discussion.

Most our scripture has been in the New Testament following the ministry of Jesus and the people around him. We explore how to apply these teaching and events to our lives

During Lent this year we chose four service agencies to help. They were as follows:

Asbury Day Care Center

Liberty Manor- Women's Rehabilitation Group Home

Cameron Ministries

Recovery All Ways- Unhoused Outreach Team

The process included contacting the agency to inquire about what would be most useful, fulfill the need (whether it be supplies or service). We did this in twos. All the women felt this added to their lives in several ways and want to repeat this project.

Sharing our life events, worries and joys along with scripture studies has been of help to all of us. We have been flexible with our scheduling taking into consideration family and church duties and responsibilities. This has worked well for us. We plan to continue.

Discipleship Project Group - Sheri Dumire-Hamilton

Our small class group has identified the following items for the annual report

In 2025, we've continued to deepen our relationships and trust in each other, providing faith-based support to one another for life's ups and downs. We are not separate from Asbury First but part of it, and part of our commitment is attendance (in person, remotely, or the weekly podcast) and support for the overall body of the church family.

In our weekly meetings, we discuss various topics and devotionals. These have ranged from how we are perceiving current events in the context of our Christian journey to devotionals to topics raised in the Sunday sermons.

While our weekly meetings are via Zoom, we meet every 2-3 months in person to share a meal, conversation, and fellowship. We have grown into a trusted and trusting relationship where each can feel comfortable sharing sensitive information while seeking prayer and perspectives from one another.



We adhere to the Wesley principles for small classes with a commitment to confidentiality, trust, caring, and concern for our individual journeys as followers of Jesus. In order to share the load, we take turns selecting topics and facilitating the discussions.

In the future, we would like to :

- See new small classes formed with prayer and discernment in connecting people. This would provide new members an additional way to connect to others and build on the foundation of our faith community.
- Have opportunities for small classes to have fellowship together, preferably with different times and days due to various schedules (for example, a weekday with bring your own lunch, an evening with games and conversation, a Sunday after church).

Respectfully submitted by: Beth Rice, Beth Woolever, Chris Lee, Colleen Schantz, Dave Rice, Doug Lee, Gary Hoyle, Ruthellen Hoyle, Sheri Dumire-Hamilton, Terrie Nichols. In

Disciple Bible Study - Rev. Ruthellen Hoyle

Our Disciple Bible study meets on Fridays at 1:15. Our group is now studying Disciple 4 after having completed Disciple 1, 2, and 3. Every present member of the group has done all of those studies, and each one has chosen to continue with the next study whenever we've finished the previous one.

The value of the gifts of inspiration and knowledge each of us has received from this study have been rich, especially because we have studied as a group. Studying as a group has also grown our connection with each and our trust in one another.

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Youth Ministries

Mike Mullin, Minister for Youth and Discipleship

PURPOSE

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 2025

Confirmation Class

- Six confirmands were received into fellowship of AFUMC in May in 2025.
- Four confirmands are currently participating in our 2025-2026 confirmation season.

Youth Group

- Youth Groups – We continue to offer middle school and high school youth groups on Sunday afternoons from 12:30-2:00. This offers a convenient opportunity to connect Sunday morning worship with our youth programming. Retaining regular adult volunteers continues to be a challenge, as does trying to run quality programming for two separate youth groups without additional staffing. Our current model breaks down our monthly meetings into four weeks: week 1 is age-based small groups; week 2 is all youth together; week three is service; week 4 is interest-based small groups.
- Youth Leadership – We have continued to meet monthly with our youth leaders. These four high school youth attend monthly meetings to help plan our youth programming at both a macro and micro level. This is a great opportunity for both faith and leadership development of our youth. This year we have re-ignited conversations and connections with our Conference Council on Youth Ministry and have begun brainstorming to lead District youth events.
- Seniors – We honored seven seniors who graduated high school in 2025.
- Youth Sunday – We had the opportunity to lead both an 8:00 am outdoor service and 11:0 am sanctuary and live-streamed service in June. We had three seniors give sermons, and numerous youth participate in other areas of the service.
- Fundraising – We had our annual Souper Bowl fundraiser, and Pie for Pi fundraiser in the spring. We also did our first Envelope Fundraiser in May which was very successful. This was a significant help since the Park Ave Festival has not returned and it was our biggest fundraiser.
- Senior High Mission Trip – In July, 25 youth and 7 adults traveled to Florida to work help with Hurricane Ian Disaster Relief. We went down expecting to help with clean-up from Hurricane Helene, and were surprised to discover that much work still needed to be done from Hurricane Ian in 2022. We encourage everyone to join us for a soup lunch



after worship on February 8th to hear more about the work we did and the impact it had on our youth.

- Middle School Mission Trip – In August, 15 middle-school youth volunteered with Asbury First’s full-day Vacation Bible school program. Following the week of service, these youth were accompanied by 6 adults on an overnight trip to Hershey Park in Pennsylvania.

Youth Music

- The Youth Musical this year was Anastasia. It included an incredible cast of youth and 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 care packages to all of our 2025 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.
- Mike has re-joined the leadership team for the Conference Council on Youth Ministries, and is working to re-establish a District Council on Youth Ministries as well.
- The only real hold-up in getting these initiatives off the ground is time and bandwidth.

Outreach:

- High School Mission Trip to the Florida
- Middle School Mission Trip to Rochester
- Monthly youth service work, with a focus on our Asbury First Community Outreach Center.
- We held our annual caroling event in December to two local resident facilities. This was a wonderful opportunity to greet members of our congregation that we do not see on a regular basis—even if the Bills game and a snow storm significantly diminished our attendance and timing.

Additional Comments:

We continue 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 open settings. We do this through service, education, games, meals, and free time. Each of these components help 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 2026, and to welcome new people to our staff leadership that will enable these programs to truly thrive—not just in numbers, but in personal impact.

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Children's Ministries

Mike Mullin, Minister for Youth and Discipleship

MAJOR PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

- Sunday School
- Winter VBS
- Summer VBS
- Spring Children's Musical
- Christmas Pageant
- Bible Sunday
- Pretzel Sunday
- Friday Family Fun Nights
- Nursery

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2025

Sunday School

- In 2025, we continued to offer Sunday School for our Pre-K through 5th grade children. This opportunity occurs during the 11:00 worship service. After the Children's Sermon, the children are invited to leave the service and attend Sunday school. Children are also always welcome to remain in the worship service.
- In November, we began using the God's Stories as Told by God's Children story Bible, along with the suggested conversation prompts and activities provided by Curious Faith Media.
- Caitlin Chan is a regular volunteer who leads the pre-k through 2nd grade class; and Mike Mullin is currently leading the 3rd through 5th grade class. These leaders are supported each week by senior high youth and an additional adult volunteer in each room to help with classroom management and ensure we are abiding by our safe sanctuaries' guidelines.

Winter VBS

- We had a February Break edition of Vacation Bible School again in 2025. And while the participants all seemed to have a good time, the participant and volunteer numbers continued to diminish each year, and we have decided to take a break in 2026.

Summer VBS

- This year, we experimented with a full-day VBS model. We recognized that a half-day model of VBS is challenging for many families, and so we wanted to provide an opportunity that offered a full-day of child-care and faith formation. The mornings followed the usual structure with various teams of kids transitioning between different crafts and activities. The afternoons kept all the kids together with music, movies, and games.



- If this is a model that we choose to continue in 2026, we will need to have more volunteers, planning, and structure in place to account for a full day of engagement with our participants.

Spring Children's Musical

- This spring we had a number of children participate in the musical *In the Image*. They did a fantastic job, and we are thankful to our Children's Music Director, Holly Temming, for her leadership. You can see her annual report for more information on our various children's music ministries.

Christmas Pageant

- This year, we had 45 children participate on our Christmas Pageant. Behind the scenes, we had many parents and adults who helped with everything from rehearsals, to costuming, to staging. With the help of the children, we even made some minor edits to our script—like changing *homage* to *honor*, and *babe* to *baby*, and *goodwill* to *men* to *goodwill toward humanity*. It was great to have our 3rd through 5th graders consider the script and how they might adjust it to be more inclusive.

Bible Sunday

- This year, we gave out 12 Bibles to our 3rd graders.
- This is the second year that we have given out *The CEB Student Bible*, which includes some United Methodist information at the beginning like the General Rules, the Social Creed, and some useful terms. *The Common English Bible* is also one of the two translations often used by Methodist Publishing Houses (the other is the NRSV). *The Common English Bible* works to use common English words and phrases that make it a little more accessible than the *New Revised Standard Version*.

Pretzel Sunday

- In the spring, we continued our decades-long tradition of making pretzels and telling stories that connect pretzels to our faith. This year, we made this a family event and encouraged families to attend and participate together.

Friday Family Fun Nights

- This fall, we tried a new initiative to encourage fellowship and connectionalism with our families. The idea was to offer a time for families to gather casually outside of our usual worship or programmed times. Unfortunately, after trying it for two months with little-to-no attendance, we decided to cancel this initiative.

Nursery

- We continue to offer nursery childcare for children from birth through age 3 each Sunday morning from 9:00-12:00.
- This Fall, we hired Aimee Oldenbittel, who is still with us in 2026. Throughout the fall, we have hired and lost a handful of childcare workers for various reasons, and we depended on volunteers to get us through the Advent and Christmas seasons.
- We have now hired a new worker, Katie Hibbard, and we are looking forward to having some stability in that area again.



- We also looked into services, like Sitter Tree, as possible supports and alternatives moving forward.

Additional Comments:

- 2025 saw some significant changes and adjustments to our children’s ministry programming at Asbury First. And while change is often difficult, it also provides new opportunities for growth and vision. I am hopeful for what 2026 will hold as we seek to fill new Coordinator and Associate positions for our age-level ministries, and as we continue to live into our vision and dream documents that encourage us to center children, youth, and families of all ages in our worship and ecclesial outlook.

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Library Team and Banned Books Team

Carol Roote

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.

Team Members: Chris Burton, Karen Cole, Monica Gilligan, Karen Hibbard, Bonnie Kay, Mary Beth Kelley, Meredith Pixley, David Raymond, Carol Roote, and Beth Woolever. Members Emeritae: Sharon Crouch, Peggy Lyons.

2025 WORK SUMMARY

Team members worked in the library on Mondays from 9 am to noon and other times as needed. During these workdays, we accomplished the following:

- Processed newly purchased and donated books. This involves adding them to the church library collection database (ResourceMate), typing labels, adding cards, pockets, and spine labels, and covering as needed.
- Inventoried the entire library collection to ensure that all the books that we owned were in the database, that no books were missing, and that older books and those in poor repair were weeded and replaced with new copies or similar titles. (In the future, we will be doing this one section at a time, rather than all at once to be more efficient.)
- Updated database entries for devotionals and biographies/memoirs to include subjects to make it easier for users to find what they are seeking. The database provides remote access to information about library materials from home, office, and other locations.
- Typed new spine, card, and pocket labels for devotionals and biographies/memoirs to replace the hand-written labels, so that they last longer and are easier to read.
- Updated display books on the bibliocard and in the reading room each month.

The team encouraged library usage by the congregation through displays, participation in adult education, special events, monthly promotion of our bibliocard in the Gathering Space, publicity in the church bulletin and Thursday e-newsletters, and other fun activities.



We increased library patronage in 2024 and 2025, more than quadrupling the number of books checked out in both 2024 and 2025 compared with previous years.

We continued to support the children's Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, the youth group, and adult education.

- Two team members are reading books to children on communion Sundays during the time between the children's sermon and when children go back into the sanctuary for communion.
- We purchased and processed the books being used for the Wednesday morning study group, the adult Sunday school class, the Banned Book Club, and the Wednesday evening programs (if any).
- We obtained suggestions from pastors, staff members, and congregants for new books to purchase.

A major effort continued this year to reposition items in the collection for maximum usage. For example, we moved the biography/memoir section closer to the door where the fiction was located and moved the Christmas non-fiction back out into the collection (from the cupboard where it was stored).

The Banned Book Team is a subgroup of the Library Team. Members include: Bonnie Kay, Frances Bryniarski, Sharon Buzard (Faith UMC), Elizabeth Church, Rick Church, Karen Cole, Donna Goldberg (Temple Sinai), Nancy Gongloff (Covenant UMC), Carolyn Hamil, Heather Furlin, Karen Hibbard, Holly Johnston, Peggy Lyons, Theresa McGowan (non-member), Jeanne Morey, Mike Mullin (Pastoral Liaison), Meredith Pixley, Ruth VanDerLinden, Karen Walker (Third Presbyterian Church), Beth Woolever. We have taken a three-pronged approach, including presentations, a banned book club, and advocacy. We met periodically for planning purposes.

- Our presentation team did presentations during Social Holiness October on Wednesday evening, Oct. 8, and during Sunday school, Oct. 12 titled after the American Library Association theme for banned book week, Censorship is So 1984; Read for Your Rights!
- Banned Book Club continued to meet every other month on the third Monday at 7 p.m. in hybrid format. This was free and open to the public and advertised in the Asbury e-blast, at all Monroe County Public Libraries (by poster) at many area faith communities and at some local businesses. Facilitation is being rotated among Banned Book Team members and participants. There are currently 105 members on the Banned Book Club contact list, but not all members attend all meetings. The most number of people (36) attended on Nov. 17, 2025 (for a discussion of *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury). We have had very positive feedback. Books were chosen for 2026 from a ballot with 24 books.
- Our third area is the Freedom to Read Advocacy Team. We have made a list of the dates and times of public library board meetings, but have not yet begun attending these meetings. We want to express our appreciation for the libraries in our area and get to know the board members, so that if there is an attempt to censor a book(s) at one of those libraries, we can attend the board meeting in support of those seeking to ensure that the book(s) remains available. We would like to eventually attend school board meetings as well. In addition, because



a bookstore that is locally owned and operated usually has a smaller inventory but also more freedom to choose the books they sell, we created a list of all the independent bookstores in the area that we gave out to all those who attended our Social Holiness October presentations and to those on the Banned Book Club contact list. We are looking for other ways to support the freedom to read.

2025 EVENTS

- A Conversation with Alex Sanchez on April 7, 2025: Local author, Alex Sanchez discussed his life growing up as a Mexican-American in this country and his tween and young adult books, as part of the Banned Book Club.
- NOTA Farm Market Sale: The library team participated three times in the weekly Neighborhood of the Arts (NOTA) Farmers' Market in July and August, selling donated and discarded books as a neighborhood service, to give visibility to Asbury First and as a fundraising project. We made \$296.94.
- Banned Book Club: We met every other month on the third Monday of each month in January, March, May, September, and November.
- Barnes and Noble Book Fair Fundraiser: We hosted a day-long book fair on November 22, 2025. This is our major fundraiser.
- Christmas Sale on Dec. 6, 2025: We sold used books at this sale and made \$40.

2026 GOALS

- Continue our contract with Resource Mate, which is the service that allows us to catalog the books in our collection and for the congregation to search the library catalog online.
- Inventory the entire library collection one section at a time
- Update database entries for all books in the collection not yet completed to make it easier for users to find what they are seeking.
- Type new spine, card, and pocket labels to replace the hand-written labels for all books not yet completed.
- Update our 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.
- Create Pathfinders. These are pamphlets that allow people to look for particular types of books (e.g. devotional, LGBTQ+, humor, etc.)
- Encourage use of the library by: displaying books on the bibliocart in the Gathering Space on one Sunday each month, creating special displays for seasonal and spiritual holidays in the reading room with accompanying publicity emphasized for special holidays and events (Advent/Lent/MLK Day/etc.), having available lists of new books in our collection, continuing to refine and upgrade our collection with new and appropriate materials, providing programs and information on library resources, and devising other fun activities to educate the congregation about the high-quality resources that are present.
- Continue to support the children's Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, the youth group, and adult education, including participating in and promoting "All Church Reads".



- Continue to encourage diversity in authors and subject matter through the Banned Book Team by supporting independent bookstores where possible and by continuing with the Banned Book Club and Freedom to Read Advocacy Team. These provide a service not only to the congregation but also to the community at large. The schedule for Banned Book Club for 2026 is:
 - January 19, 2026: *Go Tell It On the Mountain* by James Baldwin
 - March 16, 2026: *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult
 - May 18, 2026: *That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America* by Amanda Jones
 - September 14, 2026: *Boy Erased: A Memoir* by Garrard Conley
 - November 16, 2026: *1984* by George Orwell
- We look forward to another year of growth and will continue to search for even more ways to be a vital resource for attendees of Asbury First of all ages. We invite all to visit the library and share with us any suggestions for new books or ways we can better serve the congregation.

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Outreach

Help Me Read Program

John Smalt, Program Coordinator

SCHOOL YEAR 2024- 2025

School #17 Enrico Fermi

School # 46 Austin Steward

School # 50 Helen Barrett Montgomery

Current Program

This was the 11th year of Asbury 1st involvement in the Help Me Read Program. This is a partnership with the Celebration of Life Program and the Arc of Jesus Ministries led by Dr. Bishop David Singleton. This program was started to help to help facilitate positive changes within the Rochester inner city communities where poverty, violence, unemployment, and academic illiteracy are rising. The HMR program is a one-on-one tutoring program held during the school day in the school library. Tutors work with their assigned students weekly for the whole school year and into multiple years when possible. All volunteers participate in a training session prior to volunteer work with students. Each session with students is about one-half hour long with most people completing two sessions per week. All students are matched up through a Help Me Read Coordinator located in each school.

Through the Help Me Read Program students who are on, below, or that face developmental hardships are able to make significant progress. Students not only have shown academic progress but have also improved social and emotional skills giving them improved confidence in their learning and lives.

Asbury continues to support the Tyshaun Cauldwell Scholarship Program. Four 6th graders were awarded \$500 towards future higher education after graduation. (scholarship, athletics, art/music, citizenship). The annual Help Me Read Lunch Celebration was held in June for students and volunteers. Each child was given a backpack and was able to choose used books to take home for summer reading.

Volunteers from Asbury 1st 2024-2025

David Snyder

Cynthia Smith

Ruthellen Hoyle

Nancy Rich

Janis Killian

Kristin Parkes

Carol Trout

Wendy Featherstone

Bob Featherstone



JoBeth Nichols

Jeanne Morey

Kristy Peck

Lorraine Lubba

Janda Hemming

John Smalt

Suzanne Smalt

Robin Smith

David Kay

Emily Milazzo

Charlotte Craig

Helen Marano

Carvers of Hope

John Smalt and Bob Castle, Program Coordinators

Carvers of Hope is an outreach ministry of Asbury 1st that provides comfort to people who are struggling with emotional, physical, or life threatening situations. Members meet once a month to carve crosses or Birds of Hope. Most of the carving is done at home and with completed carvings brought back to our meeting each month. Finished birds or crosses are then given to Asbury ministers to be given out as needed. All carving lessons and materials are free to those who are interested. Crosses and birds have traveled to others in the United States as well as a couple of foreign countries.

This past year there were several months we were not able to meet because of illnesses and health concerns. We did finish 25 crosses.
