



*Our Church exists to
introduce people to Jesus
Christ and to train those
who already know Him.*



165th ANNUAL REPORT - 2024

First Congregational Church of Allegan

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AGENDA OF THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

First Congregational Church - Allegan, Michigan
Sunday January 28th, 2023

- I. Call to Order
 - a. Mark Lovett, Church Moderator

- II. Opening Prayer
 - a. Pastor Greg Carlson

- III. Review & Acceptance of October Quarterly Meeting

- IV. Reports from Church Leadership & Committee Chairs
 - a. Moderator - Mark Lovett
 - b. Church Clerk - Elaine Cochran
 - c. Pastor - Greg Carlson
 - d. Trustees - Margaret Brown
 - e. Diaconate - Todd Wagner
 - f. Christian Education - Sue Belden
 - g. Missions Committee - Joanie Townsend
 - h. Memorials Committee - Joanie Townsend
 - i. Congregational Kitchen - Carrie Lovett
 - j. Music Committee - Elaine Cochran
 - k. Women's Fellowship - President Theresa Prolo
 - l. Women's Fellowship Treasurer - Julie DeHaan
 - m. Church Financial Secretary - Theresa Prolo
 - n. Church Financial Report - Julie DeHaan
 - o. Treasurer's Report & Budget - Julie DeHaan

- V. Old Business

- VI. New Business

- VII. Adjournment

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Mark Lovett



The Moderator has presided over three quarterly and one annual meeting. Also attended pastoral search committee meetings. Presided over two council meetings related to the verbiage of the proposed Constitution and Bylaws revisions. Delivered numerous announcements over impending Congregational votes and conducting one bylaw change vote.

This Moderator has expressed his desire to be replaced but unless a replacement is found will remain until that replacement is elected.

In God's service,

MARK LOVETT

Mark Lovett

January 19th, 2024

Once again, we would like to thank Mark for his many continuous years of faithful service to our church as our Moderator.

CHURCH CLERK'S REPORT

Elaine Cochran



These are the vital statistics from 2023 as recorded by the clerk for the January 2024 annual meeting.

Vital Statistics for the year 2023 -

Births: **None reported**

Baptisms/Dedications:

Annika Hansen	04/20/23
Ethan Belden	06/18/23
Leon Belden	06/18/23
Ivy Belden	06/18/23
Sue Belden	07/30/23
Lisa Letts	07/30/23
Carter Wagner	07/30/23
Carson Wagner	07/30/23

Deaths:

Gloria Lane	01/01/23
Carl Geupel	01/28/23
Elaina Whittemore	04/13/23
Josephine Cole	08/28/23
Marilyn Kent	10/02/23

Marriages: **None reported.**

New Members: **None reported.**

Transfer of Membership: **None reported.**

Meetings held in 2022:

Annual meeting on 1/22/23.

Quarterly meetings on 4/30/23, 7/23/23 & 10/29/23.

C.C.C.C. Spring Rally & Meeting 5/12/23

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Cochran

Elaine Cochran

PASTOR'S REPORT

Pastor Greg Carlson



Dear Congregation,

As we reflect on the journey we have taken together over the past year, we are filled with gratitude for how God has blessed our small but vibrant community of Christian faith. The worship services have continued to be a source of inspiration and spiritual growth. Through prayer, praise and the preaching God's Word, we have sought to deepen our relationship with Christ and one another. Special thanks to our dedicated worship leader, team and parishioners who have tirelessly contributed to creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Despite the challenges of the past year, your commitment to serving our community has remained unwavering. You organized several outreach events, ministered to those in need and spread the love of Christ beyond the church walls. Your generosity and servant hearts have made a significant impact. Your various Bible studies, prayer groups, educational initiatives, and discipleship activities have continued to nurture spiritual growth within the congregation. We celebrate the commitment of the people who are introducing people to Jesus Christ and training those who already know him. The calling to prayer and giving for mission's endeavors nearby and around the world has led to an awareness of the broader ministry this church has in keeping with the Great Commission.

The youth ministry has provided engaging activities, teaching moments and events. It is an encouragement to see the faith formation happening among our younger members and are grateful for the dedicated leaders who invest time and energy in shaping the next generation. We express our heartfelt gratitude for your faithful stewardship, volunteer hours and financial support in many ways that only the Lord knows. Your sacrificial giving has enabled the meeting of budgetary needs maintaining the beautiful facilities, and investing in the various ministries that make this church a beacon of hope in our community.

As we acknowledge the challenges we faced, let's remember that God is faithful. Over the years, you have weathered storms and celebrated triumphs. As the church considers an updated constitution, updates the church membership roll, engages in strategic planning, and forms a search committee for a new pastor, let us approach the future with hope, knowing that God's plans for this church are greater than any obstacle we may encounter.

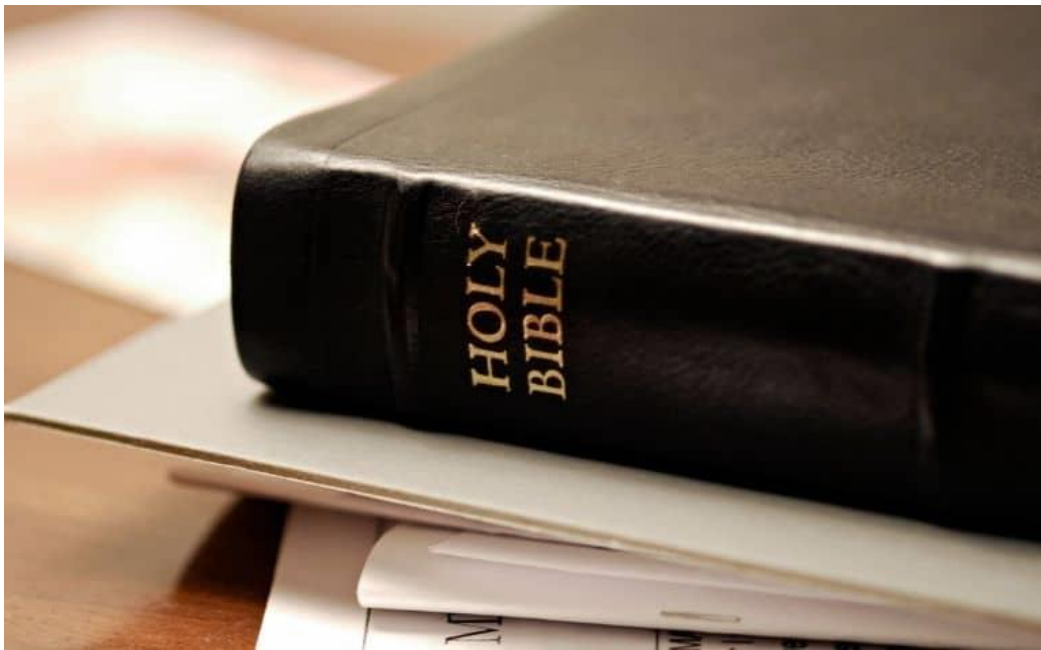
In the coming year, we aspire to deepen our spiritual connections, broaden our impact in the community and continue nurturing a culture of love, grace, and discipleship. Continue to pray and be involved with the rest of the body in moving ahead together.

As your interim pastor, I am grateful for the privilege of serving alongside such a dedicated and loving congregation. Let's continue to press on toward the goal for which God has called us. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

In Christ's love,

GREG CARLSON

Greg Carlson
Interim Pastor



“Be shepherds of God’s Flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve”. 1 Peter 5:2

TRUSTEES' REPORT

Margaret Brown - Chair



First Congregational Church - Board of Trustees

Annual Report Respectfully Submitted by – Margaret Brown, Chair January 20, 2024

The First Congregational Church Board of Trustees began 2023 with settling in with our interim Pastor and looking to support efforts towards updating documents and processes within the church. Due to the work taking place, it was determined to stop efforts to recruit an Administrative Assistant until further work has taken place. We are grateful and blessed by those who continue to show their ongoing support in the church office.

The board remains diligent in fulfilling their duties as holders of trust the property of the First Congregational Church, its finances, and our employees. Over the last year, the board has remained busy with various projects and tasks concerning the First Congregational Church. There are many items this board has been involved in. Below highlights some of the more significant items that this board has worked on during each quarter:

1. First Quarter Activities:

- a. Employee management
- b. Transitioned to QuickBooks
- c. Ongoing search for Church Administrative Assistant
- d. Preparation of vacancy of the Pastor

2. Second Quarter Activities:

- a. Pressure washing of church.
- b. Updated practice regarding hiring members to do work.
- c. Steeple leak repaired.
- d. Ramp repaired/replaced.
- e. Kitchen ceiling updated.
- f. Need for Grant Writer

3. Third Quarter Activities:

- a. Replaced hot water heater.
- b. Celebration of Service - Leah
- c. Approval of removal of chimney and side porch estimate for repair.
- d. Explored parsonage use for rental, declined the option of this.
- e. Bids for Mechanical Services

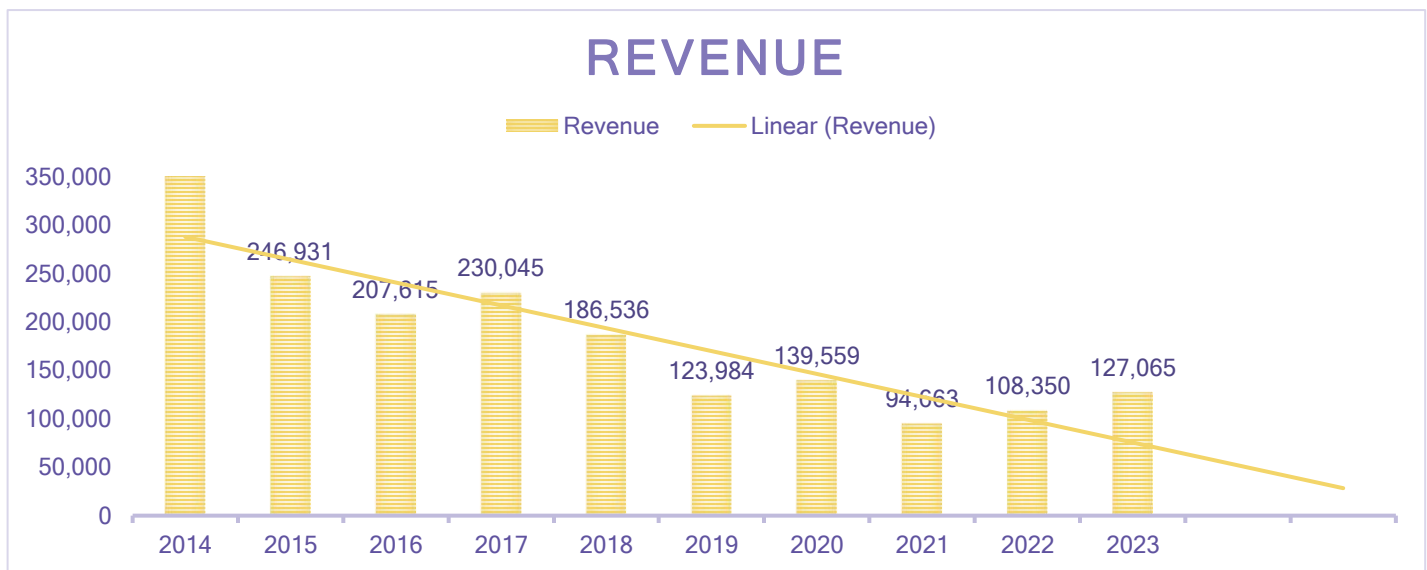
4. Fourth Quarter Activities:

- a. Review of Church Constitution/By-Laws
- b. Simply Safe - approved to move forward with this.
- c. Blain Mechanical approved for Mechanical services.
- d. Budgeting process for 2024

Your current Board of Trustees with term dates:

Board member	Term Serving/Ending
Ted DeHaan	Ending Jan 31 st, 2025
Margaret Brown – Chair	Ending Jan 31 st, 2025
Jan Lovejoy	Ending Jan 31 st, 2026
Mark Lovett (<i>willing to remain in place</i>)	Ending Jan 31 st, 2027
Todd Wagner (<i>willing to remain in place</i>)	Ending Jan 31 st, 2027

Below is a snapshot of the last ten years here at First Congregational Church regarding our financial status of revenues received by the friends and people of this church. God is good always - 2023 shows an upward turn in our financials (an increase of approximately \$18,715). Throughout 2023 we were able to overcome many challenges with the dedication and commitment of our church family, and their generous giving of not only monetary donations but the many gifts and talents within our congregation. We remain encouraged by the faithful support and work taking place here at FCC, as we move forward with work to do in this new year of 2024, we appreciate your ongoing prayers and support.



The Board of Trustees is fully committed to the work ahead of us and is prayerful that as we move forward through 2024, we will grow this church in every way possible according to God's will. It is our prayer that God guides us in this endeavor. As we close the books to 2023, thankful for the many blessings, let us look forward to the year ahead in 2024 knowing God's will be done - regardless of the challenges that may lie ahead.

Please continue to pray for our recognized needs within our church facilities as we move through 2024:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> External: chimney, side porch, and fencing. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation of Stained-Glass windows. <input type="checkbox"/> Update to side entry and fellowship area carpet flooring. <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen updates affording ongoing support of the Congregational Kitchen. <input type="checkbox"/> Parsonage updates: Plumbing, painting, carpet cleaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Church Council efforts. <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Search Committee support. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek Administrative Assistant candidates when appropriate to do so. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to seek Grants Writer.
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Prayerfully submitted,

Margaret Brown

Margaret Brown, Board of Trustees Chair 2023



DIACONATE REPORT

Todd Wagner – Chair



DEACONS

Following to Lead | Leading to Serve

Last year (2023) began with the deacons rolling up their sleeves with Pastor Carlson to begin the hard work of carefully examining the spiritual health of the church and establishing a vision for what lies ahead. In addition to many focused meetings, the deacons also planned regular corporate worship services and coordinated special events throughout the year, many of which were in partnership with Christian Education. The deacons also took the opportunity to faithfully examine themselves to establish personal goals and strengthen their spiritual resolve to become better servants in the church. We looked at our training needs as spiritual leaders so we could remain effective. Beginning in late 2022, your deacons began a study of Spiritual Disciplines. This training continued in 2023 as we journeyed through Donald Whitney's book, "***Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life***". Each month, a different discipline was examined and discussed along with related Scriptures. This study continued through September when we accomplished our goal and assessed what was learned. The spiritual disciplines studied last year were the disciplines of serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, learning, and perseverance.

Last year several discussions consisted of leading our church toward becoming more vibrant and healthier so we could begin the process of calling a new pastor. It was determined that before we could begin this endeavor, old unfinished business must be taken care of, including updating our constitution and bylaws. The deacons felt that this was an important task that needed to be accomplished before calling a new pastor. Your deacons endured several challenges and navigated difficult hurdles, spending countless hours in meetings carefully examining where the church is currently at, where we desire it to go, and how we are going to get there. The deacons worked tirelessly with Pastor Carlson reviewing his recommendations to strengthen this church, beginning with our constitution and bylaws. Researching the Word of God, the deacons sought wisdom, clarity, and understanding of biblical doctrine relating to church polity.

By developing a solid constitution and set of bylaws along with updated church policies, a new pastor could enter this church with a focus on ministering to the people and community, and not worrying about old ongoing unresolved issues. We believed that this would aid in promoting church health and unity, as well as help with personal healing from past issues. This was the priority of the Diaconate, and I am personally grateful for the individual dedication of every deacon and the perspectives they brought to the table.

The following is a brief recap of the work endured by the board of Deacons in 2023.

- **January:** The deacons helped plan and execute a Hawaiian-themed “Luau stay-cation” with the Christian Ed. Board.
- **February:** Spearheaded by Deacon Sue Belden and with the help of the Holy Spirit, a “Homecoming” celebration worship service was designed to kindly reach out to many people who have been absent from the church for the last several years. This service was intended to seek the lost and remind others of the love of Christ, that we should not give up meeting together, but to encourage one another in love, and spur each other on toward good works (*Heb 10:25*). The theme was coined, “*Jesus is the key*”. Everyone we had contact information for was sent a personal invitation that was followed up with a phone call or email. The deacons also planned for the Lenten season and discussed a Natural Church Development Study.
- **March:** The deacons planned for Holy Week and focused on congregational teaching with Pastor Carlson, targeting spiritual growth, discipleship, and dealing with adversity and healing. The deacons examined the strengths of our current ministries and continued their training in spiritual disciplines.
- **April:** Dennis Wells was approved to host a Compassion Sunday project which was held on Sunday, April 30th. The deacons developed and planned services for Holy Week, working with Pastor Carlson on scheduling and Scripture. A foot-washing ceremony was held during the Maundy Thursday service, remembering what Jesus did for His disciples in the upper room. Most in attendance came forward allowing deacons to serve them by washing their feet. The deacons also planned for F.C.C. to be the host church for the upcoming annual meeting of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (4C’s).
- **May:** The Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (4C’s) meeting was held on May 12th and was open to all members. On May 21st, our “Homecoming” service was held which was edifying to those who attended; however, despite our efforts many never returned to the church. On Mother’s Day, the women were honored during service.
- **June:** We honored our graduating high school seniors on June 4th. Alida Letts and RaeAnn Melson were presented with study Bibles and prayed over during the worship service. Deacons also honored the men for Father’s Day on Sunday, June 18th. The deacons began planning for our July outdoor service at Littlejohn Lake and conducted a review of Pastor Greg’s performance over the last six months for IMI/SOS. There were also discussions with Pastor Greg regarding our statement of faith and the biblical doctrines related to that statement.

- **July:** Our annual outdoor service and picnic was held at Littlejohn Lake, where four members of the church professed their faith and were baptized in obedience to Christ's command. The deacons also approved Helen with Grace for Hope to be a guest speaker to address the congregation concerning their mission. Pastor Greg presented a list of concerns to be evaluated relating to the church, the constitution and bylaws, our policies, and what it means to be a member of the church.
- **August:** Discussion surrounding the constitution and bylaws continued, focusing on the role and function of the pastor relating to biblical doctrine. Further discussions about membership were held and several models from other churches were evaluated, including holding a special service annually to rededicate oneself to the church and Christ. The deacons also evaluated and approved a proposal from Brian Hess to conduct a small group study on prayer, along with a sermon and puppet show.
- **September:** Deacons reviewed and approved a proposal for an October Hymn-sing developed as community-wide worship. The deacons continued working with Pastor Greg, reviewing recommendations for the bylaws and church policies, diving deep into biblical doctrine, and having difficult discussions regarding the interpretation of Scripture involving pastors, elders, and deacons, considering current post-modern thinking and our current cultural trends both in society and in the church.
- **October:** The community Hymn-sing was held on October 28th and the deacons provided a dessert reception following the service. The deacons also planned for and participated in our 2nd annual "Trunk-N-Treat" event. The deacons provided free Bibles to anyone who wanted one, and the Word of God left this church with fourteen adults. Our prayer is that these people will read the Bible and allow God to speak to their hearts. The deacons also worked with the church clerk in reviewing the membership to help update information and clean up our records. We also approved a winter "carol-sing" at the church along with entering the winter Christmas parade downtown as a community outreach effort to invite people to our church.
- **November:** The Deacons met twice to finalize work on Pastor Greg's recommendations to the constitution and bylaws for presentation to the church council for review and discussion. The deacons also planned and coordinated worship for the Advent season and reviewed a proposal from Merson Church to engage in a community-wide program geared toward H.S. graduates and young adults, keeping them engaged in God's word.
- **December:** A brief review of board positions was discussed concerning potential new Deacons if needed and will continue in January. The deacons also discussed the length of our worship service after "concerns" were raised about the length of worship. The deacons also engaged in a joint meeting with the church council to review Pastor Greg's proposal for the new constitution and bylaws. Advent services were coordinated, and the deacons participated in the Christmas parade and caroling downtown.

Finally, the deacons continue to visit with our homebound members, provide and share the sacraments, pray with and for those who ask, and pray over those they tend to. We continue to reach out to those who have been absent to encourage them back into the fold of Christ's Church. As Paul tells us in **2 Thessalonians 3:13**, "**As for you brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good**". We continue to pray that God will guide and lead us so we can continue to serve Him and this church faithfully.

As deacons of the First Congregational Church, we must "... **keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience, worthy of respect and trustworthy in everything...**". (1 Tim 3:9, 11). **Nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching from God's word** is what we strive and labor for, ensuring the spiritual needs of this church and its members are met.

Humbly serving in Christ,

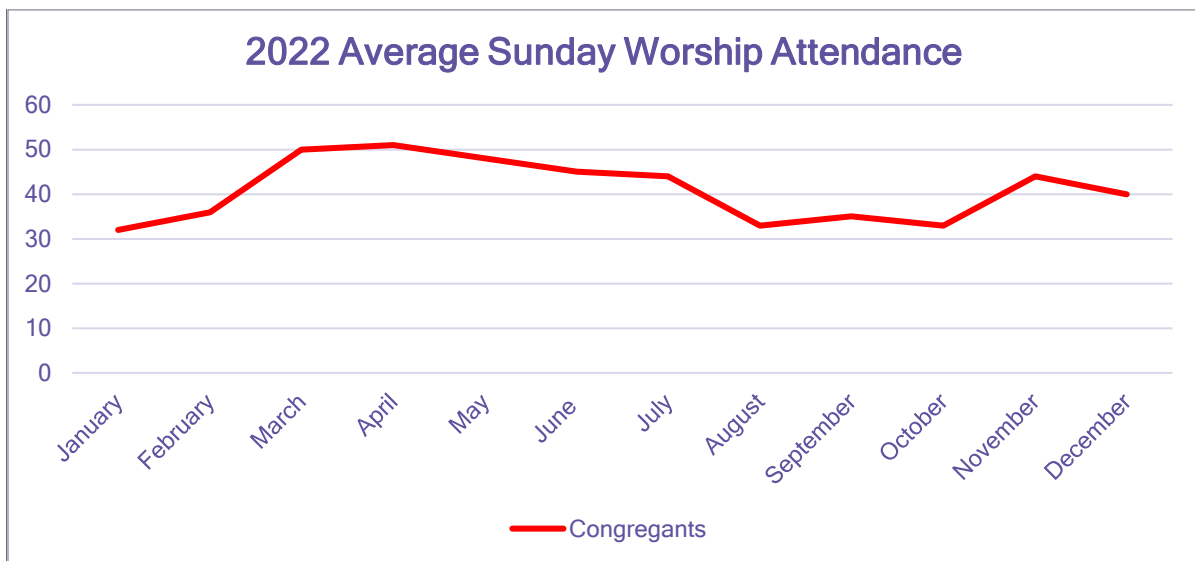
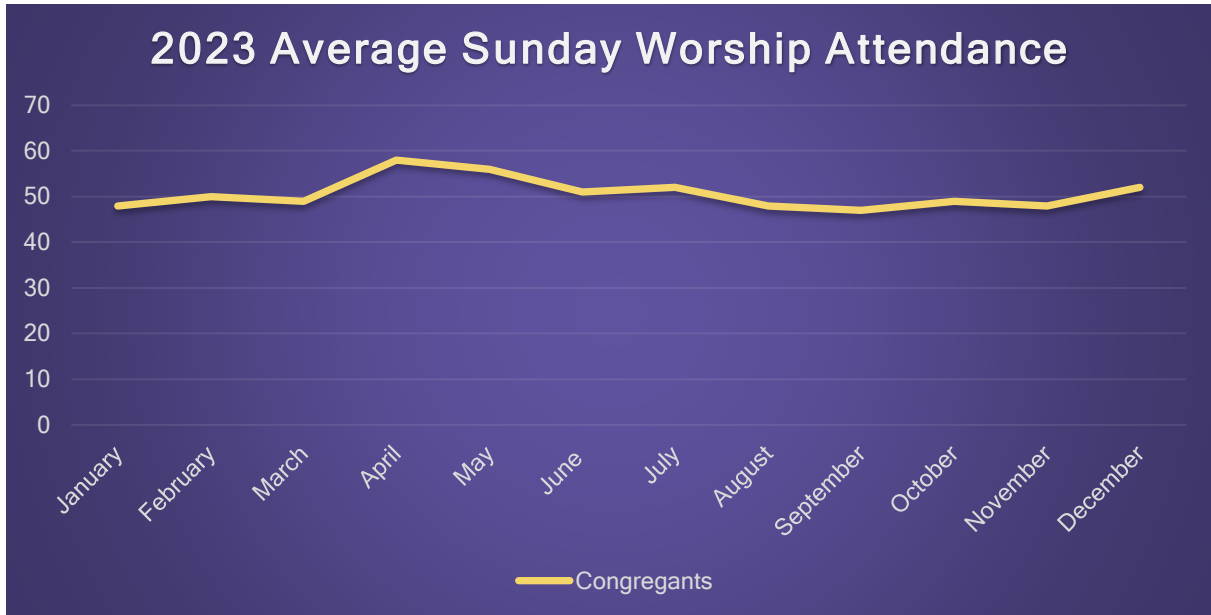
Todd Wagner

Todd Wagner, Chair
Board of Deacons

Board of Deacons

Deacon	Contact	Term
Rick Allen	269-838-9915 ricka77@yahoo.com	Ends 2023
Sue Belden	269-806-8993 sueellenbelden@gmail.com	Ends 2023
Jeff Brown	269-262-5376 jrb.enterprises@charter.net	Ends 2025
Amy Hansen	269-490-1845 rahansen5@gmail.com	Ends 2023
Jeff Polonowski	269-370-7106 jpolonow@gmail.com	Ends 2024
Joanie Townsend	269-204-8977 joanie.townsend@gmail.com	Ends 2025
Todd Wagner - chair	616-218-2604 scubacop178@gmail.com	Ends 2023

First Congregational Church
2023 Attendance Report



Attendance during 2023 at First Congregational Church increased by **23.8%** throughout the year.

“Be shepherds of God’s Flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve”. 1 Peter 5:2

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION REPORT

Sue Belden – Chair



“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!” Psalm 32:11

What a JOY this year has been!

Our STAY-cation finally came to pass on January 29, 2023! Christian Education and Diaconate planned a STAY-cation getaway to Hawaii that included all the bells and whistles leading up to a pretty cool time for everyone to enjoy. We all joined in celebrating with Hawaiian decor, leis, ukulele tunes, food, hula skirts, hula-hoop and limbo competitions, a sand area with toys, tiki toss, and more. Elsie Jones took group photos and printed them for everyone to keep as a memory of our trip. We all seemed to have a good time and may need to plan another STAY-cation trip! Thanks to all who worked to bring this together!

Our board continued throughout the year to develop a curriculum for our elementary-age students in our Word of God (WOG) classes. We had excellent teachers who gave their love and time to plant His word in the hearts and minds of our youngsters. In the past, we have ended our classes at the end of May. This year we decided to run classes throughout the summer months to encourage parents to attend church knowing their children would be able to go to class. We were fortunate to purchase a TV downstairs to add Christian videos on topics we were presenting. The kids really look forward to watching these along with a biblical lesson, craft, and, of course, snacks.

Our Tweens and Teens watched and discussed with leader, Ted DeHaan, a video series by Chip Ingram entitled, “Why I Believe.” It was well received and opened good discussions with our young adults about this important topic in their life and their Christian path.

Keeping the enthusiasm going in our church with our Tweens and Teens has been a priority. Our CE Board planned a lock-in evening here at FCC. It was a “Night at the Museum” themed evening starting with dinner and then everyone walking to Allegan’s Old Jail Museum for a guided tour. It was a great time (thank you Mark Lovett and crew) and we all learned a lot about Allegan’s History including historical information on our church and many other area churches. Everyone was given their own pad of paper and pen to jot down information that was given. They knew there was a question-and-answer game in the works for later in the evening. Getting back to the church the notebooks came in handy getting the right answers! There were card games and a crazy “in the dark” game before settling in with popcorn to watch, “A Night At the Museum” movie upstairs.

Everyone gradually found their spot to sleep in sleeping bags and/or hammocks for a rest we all needed! Morning brought pangs of hunger, so we got up, cleaned up,

dressed, and walked down to "On the Grid" for breakfast. It was such a fun and JOY FILLED time. May brought a special homecoming, reconciliation service to our church. Our Tweens and Teens participated in the service handing out keys and bulletins as people came in and sang and danced with the Ukulele Band with joy! Later in the afternoon the CE Board sponsored an all-church pool party at Allegan Public School's swimming pool. A lot of splashing and laughing and Sub-Way sandwiches were served. Again...Joy!

Vacation Bible School was, once again, held at The River Church. The River Church, Christ Community Church and FCC all participated presenting stories, skits, games, crafts, experiments, and refreshments set to the theme of "Son Spark Labs." We were so blessed with amazing volunteers, many of which were from FCC. The summer passed quickly, and we began thinking about starting our regular classes again in September after the fair. We also worked together with the Diaconate to sponsor a float in the fair parade. Wanting to have hand-outs from our church in the parade, beach balls (for kids) and Cozies (for adults) were purchased through CE. I think we all know what happened next. One of the best parts of this experience was working together as a family with the spirit of JOY!

WOG and our Tween and Teen classes began at the end of September with plenty of donuts for all in our classes. Our Word of God classes started with teaching and understanding Advent and the Jesse Tree. We journeyed through the stories each week on Jesus' family tree. We colored ornaments, read the stories of Jesus' family, and watched short videos leading up to Christmas Eve. Each student had a gift bag of Advent ornaments that they colored to take home and place on their tree or give to friends and family. Our CE Board sponsored a brunch for our Tween and Teen group and invited the tweens and teens of Christ Community and The River Church to join in. We walked down to "The Grid" after church on October 1st and FILLED the upstairs area! We all enjoyed good food, and we made a good start getting to know each other.

Our Tween and Teen group has started a new series by Chip Ingram, "Culture Shock" led by Ted DeHaan. It communicates God's truth about controversial and polarizing issues. It helps believers develop convictions based on research, reason, and biblical truth and to be able to communicate these convictions with a love and respect that reflects God's own heart. CE participated for the second year in Trunk-N-Treat along with the Diaconate. Weather, SNOW, forced us to set up indoors but with our CE decorations, we didn't miss the "trunks" and/or being outdoors! Families were grateful to come in out of the cold! We put our popcorn popper through its paces and remember those beach balls...they were all handed out! We all thank our church family for the abundance of donated goodies.

Christian Ed also approved revitalizing the classroom area upstairs. Furniture and games were moved around to make room for new bistro-type tables and stools along with relocating the mini fridge, microwave, and Keurig stations. A huge thank you to the Lovetts who jumped in and put the tables and stools together and to all who helped move the furniture and large floor games.

CE worked again with the Diaconate to participate in the Christmas Parade. Lisa Letts registered us with the City, the Wagner's supplied the wagon, and Ted DeHaan pulled us with his company's awesome truck. Everything and everybody were appropriately "lit" up singing carols and passing out treats including our Tween and Teen members, Olivia Belden, Ivy Belden, Bella Brown, and their horses! Some Girl Scouts and leaders also joined in. A couple of sweet pups also enjoyed the festivities! The first Congregational Church showed up! Everyone was invited back to church for hot chocolate and cookies. Again, JOY! JOY TO THE WORLD THE LORD HAS COME!

"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11

Our board has ended with the following members and terms for next year. We look forward to Brian Hess joining our board in 2024.

Jeff Brown 1 yr. (2025) Sue Belden 3 yrs. (2027)

Ted DeHaan 2 yrs. (2026) Amy Hansen 3 yrs. (2027)

Lisa Letts 2 yrs. (2026) Elsie Jones 3 yrs. (2027)

Holly Wagner 2 yrs. (2026) Brian Hess 3 yrs. (2027)

Erica Quinones 2 yrs. (2026)

Finally, from Dennis Fisher and myself: "Biblical parenting is not a guarantee of having godly offspring. But when we see spiritual interest in the next generation, we can cultivate conversations about God's Word. This can be one of parent's, grandparent's, great-grandparent's, family's, and friend's greatest legacies."

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Belden

Sue Belden, Chair

Board of Christian Education

MISSIONS BOARD REPORT



Missions

Joanie Townsend – Chair

January 28th, 2024

WILL AND JULIA DICKERSON IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY:

Will and Julia Dickerson are in Budapest, Hungary. After spending most of the summer in the United States visiting relatives, Wil and Julia flew back to Hungary so Wil could begin another year teaching English in the local high School. They had been in Hungary less than a month when Julia's daughter called in October to inform them that Julia's father, Dr. Charles Stout, had died. Will found substitutes for his classes and they flew to Asheboro, CN for the funeral. Julia's Mom married Charles Stout when she was 16 years old. She is blessed that Julia's daughter lives close by her in Asheboro. In recent monthly newsletters, Will reports that he is teaching his classes and he and Julia are hosting groups of students in their apartment with pizza parties and movies. Please pray for them as they share the Gospel with the students who come to the parties.

JOHN AND TRICIA FRASER IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY:

John and Tricia Frasier are also in Budapest, Hungary, where Tricia is the head librarian at ICSB (International Christian School of Budapest). This summer during a routine mammogram, it was discovered she had breast cancer. She opted for a radical mastectomy on October 18, 2023. Since then, she has undergone radiation treatments. I email her regularly and she told me that she was back at school and feeling better. John continues to teach apologetics and English in the public schools. Their son Jonathan is 16 and attends a local high school where he is in music and sports. The two older children are in the United States. Hannah teaches grade school in Buffalo, NY and Matthew is a Junior in college.

ED AND VALERIE JOHNSON IN PAUPUA, INDONESIA:

Ed and Valerie Johnson, our missionaries are close to completing the Bible in the Momuna language with the help of local people. Valerie continues as principal and teacher at Hillcrest School for missionary children. They also opened "Outreach Café" specifically aimed at reaching Muslims with the Good News. Ed and Valerie with their twins Marissa and Moriah began a six-month sabbatical in the United States in January 2024. It's the first one they've taken in many years. They plan on spending time in the U.P. Ed's home area.

We were not able to send the missionaries as much money this year as in past years. Please help us support them in spreading the Gospel. Designate "Missions" on your checks.

Thank you.

Joanie Townsend

Joanie Townsend, Chair
Dennis Wells
Jan Lovejoy



MEMORIALS REPORT

Joanie Townsend – Chair

In 2023, the following memorials were made:

In memory of –

- + Gloria Lane
- + Elaina Whitemore
- + Robert Pullen
- + Marilyn Kent

The memorial plaque was updated with these names.

Joanie Townsend, Memorials Chair

CONGREGATIONAL KITCHEN



Carole Lovett – Chair

The Congregational Kitchen continues to offer free takeout meals every Thursday evening. We started the year serving 400-500 meals weekly and ended the year serving over 800 meals weekly. We saw an increase in the number of meals being requested when the Covid relief fund ended. 32,002 takeout meals were served in 2023.

The Backpack program has also seen an increase in children in need of assistance. The bags of non-perishable food that are provided at the end of the week are to help the children through the weekend. The first delivery for 2022- 2023, started with 174 bags being delivered. The year ended with 356 bags delivered. The 2023-2024 school year started with 346 and to date has reached a high of 386. Along with the help of the Life Skill Class, we are grateful for the faithful volunteers who help pack the bags, and for those who deliver to the schools. The schools that receive are North Ward, West Ward, Pine Trails, Dawson, LE White Middle School, and the High School. This program is headed by Cathy Rapa, Sandi Horwath, Sue Richardson, and Liz Schweikert.

The warehouse continues to receive 2-3 truckloads of food, weekly. This has allowed us to keep our food costs down. It also helps us support 32 pantries in 5 counties. Since the termination of the COVID relief fund the pantries that pick-up food from us every Friday have also realized a substantial increase in families in need of assistance. Some reporting increases of 80% to over 100%.

Looking ahead, the kitchen needs upgrades and our clean room at the warehouse requires expansion.

God has blessed us with faithful volunteers in every aspect of the CK mission. Above all, we want to give Him the glory for all He has provided to date and what He will do in the future.

Respectfully submitted by,

Carrie Lovett

Carrie Lovett

Board members:

Pat Ryan

Susan Lucas

Pam Johnson

Terry Johnson

Phil Siegler

Carrie Lovett

MUSIC COMMITTEE REPORT

Elaine Cochran – Chair



The Music Committee has 2 active members at this time, Elaine Cochran and Phil Siegler. Phil plays the piano for worship services as he is able, and we thoroughly enjoy his gifts. We are blessed to have Ruth Wiersma from Delton play for us 2 times per month, and we continue to be grateful for her faithfulness in using her gifts here. Susan Thiele from Allegan United Methodist had to end her service to us this year as her health diminished. We do have recorded music or videos with printed lyrics that we utilize to facilitate congregational singing, and since Pastor Greg Carlson has joined our congregation as interim pastor, he uses his musical gifts on the piano and organ, both along with scheduled pianists and on his own if necessary.

We have once again formed a choir that enjoys presenting music during worship services, and it feels really good to have that. Phil is our accompanist once again as he is available. We also enjoyed having the ukulele band come together several times this year to give further enjoyment to our congregational singing. A lovely duet couple has come forward and offered their special music to us, delivered straight from their hearts.

Elaine continues to lead most of the singing for our services. This committee is grateful for willing hands that handle the technical aspects of playing videos during services that will continue. She is also grateful for the thoughtful suggestions of music from Pastor Greg as he plans the worship services each week.

In Christ's service,

Elaine Cochran

Elaine Cochran



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Theresa Prolo – Chair



We have been meeting the second Monday of the month at 5:30. We have continued to cover coffee hour as usual. We have hosted some funerals. The loss of those loved ones has saddened us very much. We have been enjoying having secret sisters to pray for throughout the year. We will be celebrating each other soon and finding out who our new sister will be for the upcoming new year. We would like to encourage all the ladies of the church to join us.

It was a great blessing to be able to hold our ladies' banquet in May and was very much enjoyed by all who attended. We had the pleasure of listening to Becky Wallace speak about the joys of life. We held our fall bazaar in November. Even though it looked a bit different this year it went very well. We would like to say thank you very much to everyone who helped make it a success. We did 1 family of 6 this year for Christmas. Thank you very much to everyone who bought gifts or gave monetary contributions. We are blessed with a congregation of giving hearts. We held a fun lady's game night put on by Julie DeHaan. We are working on planning other activities to aide our ladies in more fellowship time.

Once again, I cannot express enough gratitude and appreciation to all the ladies who have graciously given their time and talents to accomplish all that we have done. And also, a great big thank you to all the men who step up to help us when we need them. There are no words that can thank everyone enough.

Many thanks to God for his loving guidance in all that we do.

Respectfully submitted,

Theresa Prolo

Theresa Prolo, President

Our slate of officers are as follows:

President- Theresa Prolo

Vice –President- Erica Quinones

Treasurer- Julie DeHaan

Vice Treasurer- Terri Misner

Secretary - vacant

Devotions- Joanie Townsend

House chair- Monthly Hostess

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP TREASURER

Julie DeHaan

FCC Women's Fellowship



Treasurer's Report

As of 12/31/23

According to the Women's Fellowship Bylaws, "the purpose of the Women's Fellowship shall be to encourage the women of the congregation in a relationship of worship, service, education, and giving to support programs of the church as it serves the cause of Christ in the community and throughout the world."

Income for 2023 was \$4,056.57. Our fall bazaar made a net profit of \$2,158. Annual expenses equaled \$2,926.33. Specific accounting is as follows (complete details may be found on the accompanying Profit and Loss Statement):

Worship:

- \$204.34 Fellowship Hour Snacks & Housekeeping
- \$525.80 Programming

Service:

- \$369.03 Luncheons
- \$1,500 Kitchen

Giving:

- \$83.94 Personnel Gifts
- \$243.22 Adopt A Family program

Fund balance as of 12/31/21: \$6,409.21.

Respectfully submitted by:

Julie DeHaan
Women's Fellowship Treasurer

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Theresa Prolo



Everything has been going well. Every Sunday, gifts and offerings are collected and counted after service. During special circumstances when counting cannot be completed, collections are secured and locked and are counted the next day.

Jeff Polonowski continues to be instrumental in helping collect, sort, and verify our offerings assuring the counting process. Offerings are documented on a tabulation sheet and earmarked to the fund designated. In Jeff's absence, the trustees have stepped in to help verify counting.

Theresa Prolo
Financial Secretary

Your gifts and offerings support many moving parts of God's Church to further His mission.

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

FINANCIAL REPORT

Julie DeHaan – Treasurer



Financial Treasurer's Report

January 2024

The accompanying fund balance and abbreviated statement of income and expenses detail the direction of the finances of the church as of December 31, 2023.

May our work reflect the beauty of Christ and His gospel to our world,

Julie DeHaan
Financial Treasurer

Statement of Fund on deposit as of 12/31/2023

Total Funds: \$245,759.22

Checking	21,543.61	
Savings	113,919.48	
Benevolence Fund		1,751
Building Fund		10,814.79
Christian Education Fund		4,199.56
Memorial Fund		4,846.75
General Fund		91,366.37
Missions Fund		941.01
Investments	110,296.13	

TREASURER'S REPORT

Julie DeHaan – Treasurer



First Congregational Church of Allegan Statement of Activity Comparison

Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2023

	Jan - Dec 2023 (YTD)	2023 Budget	Proposed 2024 Budget
Total Building Maintenance Income	\$ 8,380.00		
Christian Ed Income	2,750.55		
Memorial Fund Income	475.00		
Mission Income			
Congregational Kitchen Income	9,200.99		
General Missions	8,835.00		
Total Mission Income	\$ 18,035.99		
Women's Fellowship Income	550.00		
Total Designated Income	\$ 30,191.54		
Total General Fund Income	\$ 96,873.55	\$90,000	\$95,000
Total Revenue	\$ 127,065.09		
Expenditures			
General Fund Expenses			
Total Building Expenses	\$ 10,288.35	\$2,500	\$3,000
Total Church Utilities	\$ 11,900.50	\$14,135	\$14,000
Total Contracted Labor	\$ 48,190.36	\$44,745	\$45,000
Diaconate Expenses	293.71	\$750	\$750
Total Insurance Expense	\$ 6,169.00	\$7,000	\$7,000
Total Music Expense	\$ 2,130.65	\$2,500	\$2,500
Total Office Expense	\$ 293.67	\$1,000	\$1,000
Total Other Expenses	\$ 2,140.83	\$2,000	\$2,000
Total Parsonage Expenses	\$ 1,652.54	\$2,000	\$2,000
Software Subscriptions	1,785.96	\$835	\$2,000
Total General Fund Expenses	\$ 84,845.57		
Non-Budgeted Expenses			
Christian Ed	2,997.38		
Memorial Fund Expenses	24.25		
Church Renovation Expenses	10,121.29		
Parsonage Renovation Expenses	805.00		
Women's Fellowship Expenses	550.00		
Total Non-Budgeted Expenses	\$ 14,497.92		
Total Payroll Expenses	\$ 8,131.88	\$18,310	\$8,000
Total Mission Expense			
Benevolence Expense	150.00		

CK Designations	9,200.99		
Total General Missionary Expense	<u>\$ 8,790.00</u>		
Total Mission Expense	<u>\$ 18,140.99</u>		
Total Expenditures	<u>\$ 125,616.36</u>	\$95,774	\$87,250
Net Operating Revenue	<u>\$ 1,448.73</u>		
Net Revenue	<u>\$ 1,448.73</u>	-\$5,774	\$7,750

First Congregational Church of Allegan Profit & Loss Comparison

	<u>Jan - Dec 23</u>
Income	
Bazaar Proceeds	2,458.00
Coffee Hour	49.93
Donation	546.35
Funeral Service Donations	1,000.00
Investments	
Interest-Savings, Short-term CD	2.29
Total Investments	<u>2.29</u>
Total Income	4,056.57
Expense	
Adopt a Family	243.22
Bazaar	300.00
Church Improvements	1,500.00
Fellowship Hour Expense	126.17
Funeral	369.03
Housekeeping	78.17
Mother Daughter Banquet	525.80
Personnel Gifts	<u>83.94</u>
Total Expense	<u>3,226.33</u>
Net Income	<u><u>830.24</u></u>

F.C.C. LEADERSHIP 2024

Members of Boards & Committees



Interim Pastor – Greg Carlson	269-673-5289
Administrative Asst. – open	269-673-3139
Moderator – Mark Lovett	269-941-3640
Church Clerk – Elaine Cochran	269-719-6575
Treasurer – Julie DeHaan	269-673-4071
Financial Secretary – Theresa Prolo	269-650-2037

BOARD OF DEACONS:

Todd Wagner – chair	616-218-2604
Sue Belden	269-806-8993
Jeff Brown	269-262-5376
Amy Hansen	269-490-1845
Jeff Polonowski	269-370-7106
Joanie Townsend	269-204-8977

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:

Sue Belden – Chair	269-806-8993
Jeff Brown	269-262-5376
Ted DeHaan	616-844-8106
Amy Hansen	269-490-1845
Elsie Jones	267-673-6008
Lisa Letts	269-492-5139
Erica Quiñones	616-272-9707
Holly Wagner	269-806-6411

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Margaret Brown – Chair	269-615-5172
Ted DeHaan	616-844-8106
Mark Lovett	269-941-3640
Jan Lovejoy	269-680-6574
Todd Wagner	616-218-2604

MUSIC COMMITTEE:

Elaine Cochran	269-719-6575
Phil Siegler	269-650-4455

MISSIONS & BENEVOLENCES:

Jan Lovejoy	269-680-6574
Joanie Townsend – Chair	269-204-8977
Dennis Wells	269-286-5519

WOMENS FELLOWSHIP:

Julie DeHaan	269-673-4071
Terri Misner	269-762-0043
Theresa Prolo – Pres.	269-650-2037
Erica Quiñones	616-272-9707
Joanie Townsend	269-204-8977

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE:

Margaret Brown	269-615-5172
Elaine Cochran	269-719-6575
Joanie Townsend	269-204-8977

CONGREGATIONAL KITCHEN:

Carrie Lovett – Director	269-512-2214
Pat Ryan	269-512-0857

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Upcoming Events @ F.C.C.

- Adult Sunday & Bible Study is every Sunday from 9:00 - 10:00 in the lounge
- Sunday Worship services begin at 10:30 am. Our hearts are filled with joy when you're here!
 - Communion is every third Sunday of the month.
- The 2024 Quarterly Meetings are scheduled for:
 - April 30th, 2024
 - July 23rd, 2024
 - October 29th, 2024
- The F.C.C. Annual Outdoor Service & Church Picnic is scheduled for:
 - Sunday, July 30th, 2023
 - Littlejohn Lake County Park - 3540 113th Avenue
- 3rd Annual Trunk-N-Treat
 - October 31st, 2024
 - F.C.C. Parking Lot (or indoors)

“The LORD bless you, and keep you;

*The LORD make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;*

*The LORD lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace”.*

Numbers 6:24-26