

Annual Report 2023

First Baptist Church Regina, SK Annual General Meeting April 14, 2024, 12:00

Table of Contents	Page Number
Proposed Agenda	1
First Baptist Church Covenant	2
Minutes of the 2023 November Business Meeting	3
Chair of the Board	8
Treasurer	10
Church Clerk	12
Lead Pastor	13
Music report	15
Youth	16
Mission Commission	17
Children's Programs	18
First Baptist Place Chaplain	20
Property	21
Auditor's Report	23

First Baptist Church
Annual General Meeting Agenda
April 14, 2024

1. Call to order and opening comments
 1. Reminder that only FBC members vote on Motions presented. All may participate in discussion
 2. Quorum is determined by a visual count of those participating (including video).
2. The Church Covenant and Prayer
3. Consent Agenda:
 1. Motion to approve today's agenda, the Minutes of the Fall Congregational Meeting of Nov 2019, 2023, and Ron Phillips as parliamentarian.
 2. MOTION: That we approve the Consent Agenda
4. Reports
 1. Report of Board Chair.
 1. MOTION: That we approve the Officers of the Board: Derrick Bellows Chair; Roger Bellows Vice Chair; Laureen Snook Secretary; Kevin Rich Treasurer.
 2. Clerk's report:
 1. MOTON: That we approve the active membership role, as presented by the Church Clerk in the Annual Report.
 3. Treasurer's report:
 1. MOTION: That we receive the audited financial statements as presented by the Treasurer in the Annual Report.
 4. Other Reports.
 1. MOTION: That we receive the other reports printed in the docket.
5. Staff Reports
 1. Lead Pastor Joel RM
 2. Other
6. Other Business
7. MOTION to adjourn

A covenant of Fellowship of First Baptist Church
Regina, Saskatchewan

We, members of First Baptist Church, Regina, covenant together to walk with Christ and each other in fellowship of holy love, to gather together regularly for united worship, to look to God daily for grace and guidance, to search the scriptures for understanding of the Christian way of life, to serve God and each other in love and humility.

We will recognize the worth of each individual within our community, regardless of age or circumstances, recognizing that we are all precious in God's sight.

We will uphold each other in prayer and will offer kindness, forgiveness and mercy to each other as Christ has offered to us.

We will give cheerfully of our time, talents and finances so that God's work would prosper in this place.

We will recognize Christ's presence in every aspect of our lives and will seek to honour Him in all that we say and do – at church, in our homes, and at our places of employment. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will seek to follow Christ throughout our lives.

“What does the Lord require of you, but to seek justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

First Baptist Church Regina Fall
Congregational Meeting
November 19, 2023

1. Call to Order - Roger Bellows for Chair Derrick Bellows (12:42)
2. First Baptist Covenant and Prayer - Joel Russell-MacLean
3. Consent Agenda: One motion made to approve all of the following:
 - a. Motion to approve the agenda
 - b. Motion to approve Minutes of AGM of March 19, 2023
 - c. Motion to approve WSO Accounting as the financial auditor for 2023MOVED: Bryden Yeo SECONDED: John Hillmer CARRIED
4. a. Motion to recommend Cheryl Johnston for Ordination with the CBWC
“We, the congregation of First Baptist Church, Regina, request that Cheryl Johnston fulfill all CBWC requirements to proceed towards becoming an Active Ordained Minister with the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada.”
MOVED: Heather Russell-MacLean SECONDED Brenda Ziolkowski CARRIED unanimously
- b. Cheryl presented a quick update of the steps she is following toward this goal. She has been working with a CBWC Mentor. Her credential interview seemed to go well and she’s waiting to hear confirmation of that. Next steps in the two-year process involve her writing a report for the Credential Committee before moving into the ordination process.
- c. Ron Phillips recalled our congregation making a similar request in regard to the ordination of Chris Senger. Chris reported that he’s finishing his final courses at Carey and prepping for an interview in

February '24. He will undergo an oral examination later that spring.

5. Report of Lead Pastor - Joel Russell MacLean
 - a. gave thanks for support during this 'season of challenge'
 - b. Covid break seemed to bring to the front and fast forward the effects on people with housing and addiction issues.
 - c. church decline evident since the '90's also sped up.
 - d. new budget designed to support as many intergenerational relationship activities as possible, to offer the stability and strong relationships our city seems to be searching for
 - d. this neighbourhood - retired folks, single working professionals we can minister to by offering morning prayer and prayer retreats where relationships with God and with this community can take root and grow.
 - e. outreach missions - Saturday Lunch program, working with many churches through the city to provide bag lunches on Saturdays - our partnership with the Emad family in Lebanon and the work they are doing with ABTS
 - f. Thanks extended to all, for the work continued together - visiting shut-ins, volunteering for any number of things going on in the life this church; to Kevin Rich for his work managing our website as well as serving as treasurer; Derek Bellows for his ongoing service on the Board - now as Chair; Chris, Cheryl, Kayely, Louise; and to Esther for the many ways she served when on staff; to Heather, Xavier, Rowan and Maizy for their constant support. So proud of them!
 - g. search continues for a replacement for Kayely when she goes on maternity leave. Two promising candidates in the offing.

6. Report of the Board Chair - Derrick Bellows in absentia, read by Roger Bellows
 1. Staff stability since January of this year, welcomed after a few years of upheaval

2. volunteer base shrinking as group ages - new volunteers always welcome.
3. eg - ushers willing to give long term service, kitchen team workers,
4. teachers for Oasis and Godly Play....
5. outreach is strong - Saturday Lunch Program, support for ABTS, KLC and IVCF
6. changes to membership - aging congregants/shut ins passing
7. joy of seeing our children's and youth ministries thriving

7. Organ Update: Roger Bellows

Roger reviewed the situation. We know our organ is old and in rough shape. It needs work often. The committee has been looking to replace it with a used model - easier said than done! Meanwhile, we've embarked on the work of rebuilding our existing instrument, making it easier to maintain. Recall the missed noises and odd noises last spring? The work done a year ago has served us well. The organ responded well. It will get a Christmas tune up before our Christmas Music service December 10. Thanks to Xavier and Oluwaseye for the music they bring to us.

8. Treasurer's Report - Kevin Rich

Kevin thanked the Finance committee - Kayely Rich, Tom Chen, Mark Fuller and Gloria Toews. He also acknowledged Shelly Pippin and Kari Weiss, our accountants, and Perry Schlamp at WSO, the company that audits our books yearly.

Kevin then presented a status report, detailing our Operating Bank Account, High Interest Account, Restricted Reserve funds, the loan from our Organ Fund and payments to same. \$30,000 of the CEBA loan, from the federal government during Covid will be paid by the end of this month. Kevin spoke of a deficit on our books as of October 30. He went on to mention our frequent habit of bringing

in a very generous December offering, with a reminder that we must not expect that every year, especially in the light of the advancing ages of some of our major supporters.

9. 2024 Budget - presented by Kevin Rich

It was noted that the proposed budget strives to make allowances for the effects of our currently high inflation rates. Budget lines in Personnel, Property and Admin show increases. Operating Expenses for 2024 will obviously reflect the economic climate as well. We are aiming for a balanced budget. We know it will stretch us.

A question from the floor asked about the progress of the application made quite a while ago to bring over a family from Syria. MP Michael Kram informed

10. us that the application process has been stamped “non-routine”, meaning it can be put off indefinitely. Monies and household goods have been set aside and will wait till they arrive.

MOTION: to accept the Budget for 2024 as presented.

11. MOVED: Kevin Rich SECONDED Barbara Ellemers CARRIED none opposed COMMENT from John Hilmer reflecting gratitude for the “fantastic church treasurer”.

12. 2024 Board Nominations

Nominees: Laureen Snook, Carol Hepting and Bryan Orthner

MOTION: to appoint these nominees to First Baptist Church Regina Board MOVED: Bryden Yeo SECONDED: Annabel Robinson CARRIED

Returning: Roger Bellows, Heather Russell-MacLean, Adija Pusi, Derrick Bellows (Chair), and Kevin Rich, (Treasurer).

Stepping down after six years: Brenda Ziolkowski

13. MOTION to adjourn Anne Bellows (approx.1:30)

Board Chair Report

In 2023, we continued to recover from the disruptions of COVID. For First Baptist, it meant trying to get back to some traditional activities and modes while keeping some of the positive things we were forced into. It was good to see that we maintained in-person attendance for Sunday worship services while also attracting many to continue to join us through our video ministry. And while we continued to fret over our financial situation throughout the year, God blessed us with donations from many generous folks to balance the budget.

At the Fall Congregational Meeting, we welcomed three new members onto the Board: Carol Hepting, Bryan Orthner, and Laureen Snook. I look forward to working with them and returning Board members Roger Bellows, Adija Pusi, Kevin Rich, and Heather Russell-Maclean. We are blessed to have excellent folk serving in this leadership role. We said goodbye to Brenda Ziolkowski, who completed her term on the Board after six years.

We enjoyed pastoral staff stability in 2023. Pastor Joel provided strong, steady and clear leadership to our church family through the many aspects of his ministry. We are blessed to have him and his family with us. Our other staff has made a great impact as well. Thanks to Kayely for providing administrative leadership, chaplaincy to First Baptist Place and pastoral care. In December, Kayely Rich started a maternity leave for 2024. Thanks to Cheryl for leading and coordinating nursery, family and children's church activities. Thanks to Chris for engaging and leading youth in their spiritual development and community growth. And special thanks to Esther Gurnsey, who stepped away from communications support with the bulletin and newsletter.

Our congregation members continue to be faithful supporters, and we have had a number of new folks choose to join our fellowship. We should all work hard to make newcomers feel welcome and part of our church family. For a smaller congregation, we do very well at providing a wide range of ministries to our church, the community and the broader world. I particularly want to point out a few things volunteers did in 2023 to build the community and spread God's love:

- We have many fellowship opportunities in the church. Small groups reading the Bible and doing book studies, men's and ladies' breakfasts, daily prayer time at the church, the church picnic at Willow Island, backyard BBQs and

patio parties, seniors activities, work days and a church retreat at Katepwa Lake offer occasions for fellowship that we should all engage in.

- Our adult education remains popular and strong with in depth studies. Dr. Annabel Robinson, Kayely Rich, Ron Philips and Dr. Kelvin Friebeled led classes in Bible study and cultural/current issues. If you haven't attended you are missing out on tremendous teaching and discussion.
- Our music ministry remains strong even though we have lost key musical expertise over the past few years. Special thanks to Mark Anderson for his decades of service on the organ. Louise Kruger led the choir last year and did wonders with a small group, providing regular anthems throughout the year and great seasonal concerts at Easter and Christmas. Also, we have enjoyed inspiring organ music from Oluwaseye and Xavier, as well as piano from Calla-Dawn throughout 2023. And members of the congregation have blessed us with their musical talents as well.
- We continued hosting the Saturday lunch program with other churches, meeting real needs of our downtown community for food and fellowship. Louise, Brenda and Gordon have been instrumental in coordinating churches from across Regina in this effort.
- First Baptist is a strong supporting of Katepwa Lake Camp with members on their Board and many volunteers contributing to this excellent ministry to children, youth and families.
- Farther afield, we continue to maintain a strong relationship and support with the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut. Their work to spread the gospel in the Palestine and the Middle East grows increasingly difficult.

I am blessed to be part of this family of God and to enjoy the love and fellowship of you all.

Respectfully submitted,

Derrick Bellows, Board Chair

Treasurer's Report

First Baptist Church is active in a great many ministries, and follows the CRA standards for charities in reporting and tracking our finances. In addition to financing the normal day-to-day activities necessary for our church life (operating expenses), we have a number of restricted reserves that are dedicated to specific purposes.

The FBC community was very conscientious in maintaining a healthy giving effort in 2023. Thanks again to extraordinary December giving, our overall revenue exceeded our yearly expenses, which provided us with a small surplus to begin 2024.

We continue to make monthly payments against both principal and interest for the internal loan from our own Organ Fund. This loan was supplemented with the CEBA interest-free loan, a program provided by the government for COVID relief. The CEBA loan was paid back in 2023, and the Organ Fund loan is expected to be paid off in 2045 at our current rate.

Detailed financial information follows in the audited statements, but highlights are presented below.

Operations

Church staff and leadership manage the operating expenses of the various operations and ministries. Personnel accounted for 57% of the operating expenses in 2023. Property, Administration and Missions also had significant budgets. The church staff and leadership continue to carefully monitor all expenses.

Restricted Reserves

Separate Restricted Reserve fund accounts were established in 2017 for special long-term financial items. Expenses and revenue related to these funds are managed separately from the operating budget.

The Building Fund is for larger capital expenses related to building repair. During 2023, we did not have any larger projects that were funded. This fund had just over \$7,300 at year-end.

The Organ Fund is for expenses related to the maintenance and use of the pipe organ. This fund has had significant donations through estate bequests over the years. In 2020, the Organ Fund provided the church with a loan of \$215,000,

which we used to pay off a loan from CBWC. This allowed the church to reduce the interest paid on debt from 5.65% to 2%. As a result, the church has no external debt. The fund account had a total of \$80,385 at year-end, with a current loan balance owed to the fund of about \$164,100.

The Benevolent Fund is for special financial aid to individuals and families. It is administered by the pastoral staff with accountability to the Board. This is part of our approved budget and donations are requested when the fund is low. During 2023, this fund provided over \$2,200 in support. This fund had \$276 at year-end.

The Legacy Fund was created a number of years ago to hold funds to support special outreach projects from our church that were not part of the annual budget. The main source of money to this fund is intended to be from estates and special gifts. The fund had \$17,169 at year-end.

We have also initiated a Refugee Fund to assist in the financial support of refugees in their first full year in Canada. We have a current balance of \$1,217 in the fund. However, no assistance to refugee families has yet been provided.

General

About 12% of our revenue came from property use, not donations. The largest is the facility agreement with Regina Youth for Christ, who pay market value rent of the Youth Center. We do return about 38% of that rent as part of our missions support to their ministry. We also received payments from the Christ's Commission Fellowship for the use of the sanctuary for services, and rent for the use of the lower hall and meeting rooms from various organizations.

Through 2023, Shelly Pippin CPA Prof. Corp. continued to provide bookkeeping services. We are very appreciative of the work and assistance that Shelly and Kari are providing. The Finance Committee continued with the same membership of Marv Fuller, Gloria Toews and Tom Chen, who assisted me in ensuring that our financials were properly managed through the year. I thank them for their commitment over the past year. I also thank the Board and staff for their diligence in managing the financial resources entrusted to them.

This was my sixth year as Treasurer, and I thank you, the family of First Baptist, who continue to provide the finances for the work of our church.

Respectfully submitted, Kevin Rich

Church Clerk Report

This Lenten season, our community has been hearing stories of baptisms from some of our church members. Baptism is a very personal experience of introduction into the family of God. Membership is more of a community experience – an introduction into a specific congregation. First Baptist Regina has welcomed people from a great variety of Christian traditions into our community for decades, and we desire to count each one as a full member of our church. People come into membership by baptism as believers but also by transferring membership from another church or by profession of faith. I was baptized as an infant, followed the traditions of the United Church (welcomed into full membership as a teen by confirming my faith), and I was welcomed into full membership here without re-baptism.

It is certainly not necessary to be a member to attend here and enjoy the fellowship and ministry – but if you love being here – please ask one of the pastors about taking membership!

Total membership - 114

Members: # active = 110

Active adherents (including children) = 118

Members lost through death: 1 - Marjorie Bloomfield

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Ward, church clerk

Lead Pastor's Report

2023 seems to have been a year of quiet, steady renewal. We enjoyed a year of stability in many ways as a congregation and as staff. This stability allowed us to facilitate a few new opportunities for fellowship and spiritual growth.

New Initiatives Encouraging Friendship and Prayer

We held two trial “workday retreats.” Instead of going away on retreat, there were a few days of regimented prayer, fasting, and reflection together but arranged to allow people to continue their other activities. Each retreat culminated in a celebratory meal. The goal was to encourage the regular habit of prayer in our daily lives.

The staff worked together last summer to restore a monthly event for people of retirement age called “North of 60.” The goal has been to provide good food, a chance to visit, relevant topics, and special guests sharing about their good work in Regina.

Cheryl has organized several evening events for all ages, involving food, games, singing, and learning about our faith. The goal has been to create opportunities for our children to interact with our adults over learning and games. These events also provided opportunities to welcome families from outside the church.

A Great Staff

Louise has continued excellent work with the choir and created a great and unique Christmas concert featuring carols from around the world.

Chris and Cheryl’s work is increasingly diverse and growing. Beyond their knowledge and skill, they both love each child and teen and relate well with them.

Chris has been a real help by sharing his ability on guitar and singing. For years, people have been asking for a bit more balance in our music and without Chris, we could not be doing it.

Mark and Cheryl hosted many folks on their farm, including inviting the entire congregation for a BBQ.

Kayely worked at many things behind the scenes, shared in the work of preaching and teaching, including a thoughtful series on “the Theology of Food.”

Kayely and Cheryl also really enjoyed and built on a woman's book study that has been well attended.

John, as Pastor Emeritus, may not have regular duties, but his support, friendship, ongoing pastoral care, and willingness to help is so appreciated.

Thank you to Mark Anderson, who retired last spring after over 30 years as our organist. Not only was he loved for so much memorable music but we also enjoyed his humour, many excellent Sunday morning classes, and friendship.

Thank you to Esther Gurnsey, whose time on staff finished in June. Esther had stepped in to help early in the pandemic with all the extra communications we undertook. She continued on taking on new responsibilities and tasks and did a great job.

A Great Congregation

Every single ministry we undertake requires many people to take part and pitch in: Time for Friends, Audio/Visual/Zoom, Sanctuary Choir, children's programs, Saturday lunch program, FBC board, property care, and meal teams. Many of us join in several of these ministries. Thank you to every person who shares their time, ability, and energy.

And after all of this, so many people find time for prayer, visits, small acts of service, and making meals for one another. It is a joy to serve alongside all of you in downtown Regina.

Yours, Rev Joel Russell-MacLean

Music Report

Our music ministry has had a successful year. The choir presented an anthem in Sunday morning services twice a month from September through May. The choir members are wonderfully faithful participants in these musical offerings. Thank you, choir members. Our anthems have covered a range of musical genres: classical, gospel, jazz, contemporary, and spirituals — all praising our Lord. We have done musical worship in conjunction with Cheryl and the children, telling the Biblical story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, as well as David and Goliath. I can speak on behalf of the entire choir that these collaborations bring so much joy to the musicians. An integral part of every choir is the accompanist. Calla-Dawn Brooks has filled this role admirably. She has been a wonderful addition to our choir. Xavier Russell-MacLean steps in when she is not available. Thank you to both

Our long tradition of presenting annual Easter and Christmas concerts continued this year. This outreach ministry succeeds with the help of volunteer seasonal singers, professional soloists, and instrumentalists. A group of 'semi-retired' FBC handbell ringers stepped forward, which enabled to have this very special addition to both concerts. I am looking forward to future handbell contributions.

So many others contribute to these major events in various areas: sound, zoom, camera, ushering, stage preparation, decorations and lighting, post-concert receptions, program preparation and printing, and creation and distribution of posters. This is truly a First Baptist community effort. Thank you one and all.

Our church music has been rounded out with contemporary songs and choruses accompanied by guitar, piano and organ. Many thanks to Chris Senger and Joel Russell-MacLean for leading us in this aspect of worship. I feel we are so fortunate to be able to worship God with a mixture of traditional and contemporary music. Oluseye Popoola and Xavier Russell-MacLean on piano and organ, and Calla-Dawn Brooks on piano have provided traditional and contemporary contributions. We are blessed to have such talented musicians.

I have found this past year to be filled with challenges, rewards, and so much joy. Music lifts our souls to the Lord and he hears our offerings.

Respectfully submitted, Louise Krueger

Youth Group Report

This year, our Youth Group has been meeting every Friday night, rather than the bi-weekly change last year of alternating between Fridays and Wednesdays. This has stabilized the group a bit, and we have seen growth in the last few months, especially in the middle-years age group. We continue to alternate between one week being more of a Bible study focus and the other week being more of an “event” evening. I always enjoy the shoulder seasons of our ministry, where we can be outside together, have a BBQ, or sit around a fire. Those events seem to lead naturally to good conversation and bonding.

Over the past year in ministry, students have been challenged to think about their faith and relationship with God as we have studied the Creeds of the church, especially the Apostolic Creed. I am grateful to our families who support our youth and help build our community by hosting events, helping with Bible studies, driving, or sending words of encouragement and prayer. This year, I have sensed more and more how this ministry is woven into the fabric of our church, and relies on many to ensure that we are being challenged to be better disciples of Christ.

A challenge for us will be how we answer the question of how we keep our older youth engaged in leadership opportunities and service opportunities as they graduate from youth group. Xavier has been an incredible blessing and has committed himself to helping lead almost every week. We are grateful for all he brings to this role, as I know that I could not do this without him.

There are many areas for improvement: communication, organization, and intentionality in spiritual formation, just to name a few. But despite these areas in need of growth, we can also celebrate that there is a safe space for our youth to belong, explore their faith, and encourage one another. Please continue to pray for us, and especially for us to have the time and take the time to discern God’s leading in how we might best continue to love our youth, encourage them to use and express their talents, to be and to better become a reflection of Christ in this world that deeply needs them to be a shining light.

Yours In Christ,

Pastor Chris Senger

Missions Commission Report

Commission Members: Bryan Orthner (chair), Barb Ziolkowski, Carmen Pauls Orthner, Heather Russell-MacLean. Pastoral liaison: Joel Russell-MacLean.

Our mandate:

Provide vision, direction and management for our “missions” ministry, including: financial, relational and practical involvement in local AND global missions.

In 2023, the Missions Commission budget financially supported YFC (\$15,684), Katepwa Lake Camp (\$6,500), Maryann Gibson with IVCF (\$4,000), and the local inter-church Saturday feeding program (\$3907).

The Missions Commission hosted a Lebanon dinner at the church on June 12th as the kick-off for our annual Lebanon fundraiser. This event was well-attended and well-received by those who came. In the end, the people of the church raised \$15,032 for CBM’s Lebanon partnership. The Missions Commission budgeted giving of \$10,500 added to this total, bringing our total church contribution to \$25,532.

Through the summer, the Mission Commission encouraged our church family to support Cheryl Johnston on her trip to Lebanon with Canadian Baptist Ministries Sent team as part of the anniversary celebrations for Thimar (formerly Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development). Cheryl participated in this trip from September 23rd to October 4th.

In October, we were eagerly anticipating a visit from Emad and Almess Botros. However, the breakout of hostilities between Hamas and Israel led to the Botros family’s early return to Lebanon. On October 22nd, we had a second missions lunch, in which we heard Cheryl talk about her trip to Lebanon, as well as hearing from Emad and Almess over Zoom.

Looking forward to 2024, we hope to partner with Katepwa Lake Camp on a spring fundraiser, as well as having a fall Lebanon fundraiser.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Orthner, Missions Commission chair

Children and Families Ministries report

This year, we have enjoyed seeing our children and families dedicated to a relationship with Jesus. They are working to ensure that Jesus is central to their lives. We have seen steady attendance of our Sunday morning children's programs, Sunday services and intergenerational events. We are grateful for a growing number of volunteers and those dedicated to caring for and teaching the young ones in our congregation.

Once a month, we aim to have the children part of the upstairs services. They participate by sitting at the front, doing sermon-related activities, and leading the service a few times a year, through prayers, Bible reading, and acting. The children and choir collaborated twice: once by singing a Lenten song together and once when the choir sang and the children acted out the story of David and Goliath. Those were fun for the children and adults alike. (Thank you to Louise Krueger for her creativity and organizational skills in making those happen).

Our nursery serves those who are under the age of 3. We have had 1-4 children in this nursery along with two volunteers each Sunday of the year. A big thanks to Rosemary Ward who has offered to lead the nursery starting in March 2024. She will take care of scheduling and caring for the room and toys.

Godly Play is for children ages 3-6. We have had 1-8 children in attendance (on average 4). The leaders and shepherds in this group guide the children through a simplified liturgy, similar to the pattern of the service upstairs. The story is told with objects that help the children wonder as they learn about the lives and events of the Bible. We have had 8 volunteers who help to teach this class weekly.

Oasis is for children in grades 2 to 6. We learn a new passage or story from the Bible each month. The Bible passage is read, and then each week, we do a different activity to help them understand the story more deeply. Activities include drama, art, music, games, cooking and science. These activities help children remember the stories and build community. I have been teaching this class most Sundays with the help of a few volunteers. Cassie Wolfe has been a vital helper since the fall, helping to prepare lessons and create samples for the weekly activities. I am looking for approximately 4 people to come alongside and help teach this class once a month so that she can participate more often in the services upstairs. There are a couple of people who have expressed their

willingness to serve as teachers. Please speak to her if this would be an area in which you would enjoy serving.

During July and August, we combine Godly Play and Oasis together. The numbers are often lower, and this allows us to need fewer volunteers during the months when many are away. Although we often have fewer children, our highest child attendance in 2023 happened in August, when we had 29 children attend. This summer, the children learned The Lord's Prayer through sign language, class discussions and activities. In a September service, the children said The Lord's Prayer in ESL alongside the congregation.

In order to build relationships between people of all ages in our church, we held three "Intergenerational Celebrations." We had 60-80 people turn out to share a meal together, worship in song, and do Bible-themed activities. On February 23, we celebrated Shrove Tuesday together with a traditional pancake meal and Lent-themed activities. On May 26, we had a Pentecost-themed celebration, eating from charcuterie boards and creating decorations which were used in the Pentecost Sunday service (firesticks for the children to wave and origami doves to decorate the front of the sanctuary). We also learned a song, "No More Waiting!" (you are welcome for that earworm), that we sang with the choir on the following Sunday. November 3, we had an All-Saints Day celebration with an international potluck. Our activities included decorating socks to learn about St. Nicholas, designing a mask for Barbara of Lebanon, and a saintly scavenger hunt to learn about people of faith who lived lives of service to Jesus. Thank you to Adzo Baku, who created the scavenger hunt for this event. In June, we had our annual picnic and enjoyed a BBQ and traditional picnic games like potato sack and 3-legged races. It was a blessing for those who attended to learn more about our Christian faith and build relationships between old and young and everyone in between.

During Advent and Lent, families were provided with packages to help them learn more about God and develop a routine of daily Bible reading and prayer. During Lent, they were invited to use the Prayer of Examen. They created a prayer book with the theme verse of Romans 8:38-39 where they could share with God about their day, celebrate what went well, ask for help with what was hard, and confess their sins. During Advent, we had an advent countdown calendar with Bible readings for each day. These readings helped us learn the biblical themes and stories of the Christmas season.

Thank you for your continued prayers for our children and families. Generation Alpha (those born 2010-2024) is navigating a world that is very different from what any of us have experienced before. A secular world is the norm. Technology offers both great opportunity and temptation. There are so many possibilities for children; deciding which to choose and how much can be done is a tension. Be encouraged. We have some wonderful families who are engaged in a relationship with Jesus and eager to learn more about how to be Christ-followers.

Yours, Pastor Cheryl Johnston

First Baptist Place Chaplaincy

Joel and Kayely took turns leading the services at First Baptist Place on Wednesdays in 2023. This also provided opportunities for a few visits in person, in the hospital and over the phone with residents. Chris Senger arranged to have the youth join a number of times as well. A number of folks helped lead the music. Thank you to CK Lai (harmonica), Kevin Rich (accordion), and pianists Marilyn Phillips, Xavier Russell-MacLean, Adoniram Holtslander, Esther Gurnsey, Roger Bellows, and Barb Ziolkowski.

With Pastor Kayely on maternity leave, beginning in January, Rev Ron Phillips agreed to step into the role of chaplain for the year and is providing good care for the folks there. Thank you Ron.

First Baptist Place tenants come from a variety of Christian backgrounds but enjoy the time of song, scripture, and prayer and they support each other well throughout the week. They are a lovely group to serve.

Pastor Joel and Pastor Kayely

Property Report

After upgrading our heating and plumbing systems in 2022 and 2023, we are now seeing a reduction in repair costs and utility bills. The ongoing upgrade to LED lights is extending the life of our lighting, and the reduction in the electrical bill has enabled us to meet the increased cost of electricity. A lighter snowfall this winter also resulted in reduced expenses for snow removal. As well, last July we saw the return of the Open Door program and the opening of our church to help newcomers and their children plant roots in our community. We hope to host them again this summer.

One of the major projects for 2024 will be repointing the brickwork and repairing the gutters and downpipes on the east, west, and south sides of the church. The mortar is suffering water damage due to the gutters not draining properly. Left unchecked, this could result in significant deterioration of the building's exterior.

We are always looking for help with minor repairs and various projects. Please contact Joel or Rob if you can help with the following:

Maintenance Projects for 2024

- Maintaining the garden
- Cleaning windows
- Cleaning pews and the sanctuary floor
- Cleaning sanctuary lights and fans
- Repairing the basement floor (including the library)
- Deep cleaning kitchen/nursery/Godly play/library areas
- Developing a History Wall

New Projects Being Considered for 2024

- Repointing/repairing exterior walls
- Resurfacing the dome
- Sanding and varnishing the outside doors
- Organ update
- Costing/designing outside banners
- Replacing outside signage and notice board

- Replacing window blinds in offices
- Updating the lighting in the office area.

Summary

I would like to thank the Board and Joel for their support over the past year. The workload is made lighter with the help of Marv, Len, Kayely, and Joel. We need help with property issues and can always do with a helping hand.

Respectfully submitted, Rob Stafford-Lai