

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

Fourth Presbyterian Church
340 Dorchester Street
South Boston, MA 02127

Co-Pastors' Reports

From Burns Stanfield –

Once again, it's not hard for me to sit upon the perch of the Annual Report publishing deadline and marvel at the wondrous things that have happened over the last twelve months. That incredible group of prayer warriors are still meeting every night at 6pm. The GBIO team led a powerful local action with neighbors in nearby public housing and also helped us do our part to win over \$2 billion to repair and restore desperately needed public housing across the state. Seven amazing teenagers joined our church (and sparkled in theater performances). Six more adults joined our community. We grieved together in saying goodbye to Shirley and Sugar, and we sang oh-so-jubilantly when two couples of our community tied the knot: Lauren with Andy and yours truly with Laura. We studied Scripture, wrote devotionals, delivered food, told our stories, fed *thousands*, taught kids how to perform, supported recovery, ministered to the traumatized, and prayed with the patter of a joyous tap dancer. It was a good year.

All that said, the biggest thing for me to report is that this been an enormous year of transition for me as a person and as your pastor. Following up on a plan initiated over a year ago, I am now (in addition to being 65, married and residing in Arlington) your half-time designated co-pastor. It is a technical term, but it really means I am now semi-retired and sharing this ministry with our old friend, Rev. Tim Hughes Williams. It is incredible that we are at this point. For the denomination, we are a kind of test case for one innovative way to navigate a Big Transition. Fourth Church, you are once again leading the way. And I'm excited to do this with you, all in the spirit of reflecting the Light we've seen in Jesus to a beautiful and aching world. God be with us for the next chapter.

From Tim Hughes Williams –

I've been describing my 2024 return to Fourth Presbyterian Church as "Back To The Future." What a pleasure to return to the corner of Dorchester and Vinton Streets, the location of so much of my formation as a pastor. There are ways in which it feels like I've slipped right back into a familiar world, as I worked for the church from 2008 to 2012. But of course, so much is new. I'm a different person ten years later, having started a family and served two other churches. And Fourth is also different, with new members, new opportunities, and new challenges. I'm enjoying the old and the new as we forge our way into this new season. I'm grateful for the short time we've shared together in 2024 and I really looking forward to digging into our shared ministry in the year to come. Thanks so much for the warm welcome.

Nurturing the Spirit

Worshipping, praying, studying, gathering. These kinds of activities continue to be absolutely central to our body. Many have their own reports down below or up above. It is an intriguing challenge to “summarize” them for any given year, since many are planned, many spring up on their own, and others are woven into some other piece of ministry.

Some of our traditional ways of gathering went through changes during the pandemic, of course, and now our regular Sunday worship is hybrid: a great crew in the sanctuary, loyal friends on Zoom, and a large number of unseen folks watching us on YouTube.

Evening prayers are entering year Six – every night! 6pm-6:30.

Our Wednesday classes are often hybrid. And through it all, we keep worshipping, praying, studying, gathering....

One piece of our study and gathering is our Sunday morning adult class, and a team of folks got us through 2024, and now it is a anchoring piece for our new co-pastor, Tim Hughes Williams.

Complementing all of that was a steady stream of **Wednesday night gatherings**. To summarize those:

We began with a study of prayer practices.

When we shifted into Lent, Burns worked with an experience team to do another “12 Steps and Christianity” group (hybrid format with big support from Ken, Lauren, Carrie, Danae, Dave and Mark.) That group attracts visitors from the community.

Moving into the summer, we worked with deacons, Rachel Mallett and Kendall Robinson to support a robust Summer Wednesday Series with cookouts, worship and music-making (all outdoors). We saw the need to help everybody re-connect and reclaim our mission, so the worship focused on relational story-sharing built around The Fruits of the Spirit -- giving us a nice excuse to sing that song every week!

In the fall, Burns led an exploration of an audible book by former intern, Martien Halvorson-Taylor, who now teaches at the University of Virginia -- Writing the Bible: Origins of the Old Testament.

For Advent, we returned to Taize-style services of contemplation. We slipped in four weeks of gathering and chanting – plus all of those big performances we do in December--and it was lovely, particularly with the flowers

lovingly arranged and nurtured by Karen and her team. Those evenings were gifts.

As you can imagine, these study/prayer groups also connected in many ways with Sunday worship, which continues to be the real hub of our congregation’s life together.

During the year... We reaffirmed baptism in our remembrance of Jesus’s baptism. We also lifted up Epiphany. We ordained leaders, reflected on a theme of “Sustaining the Spirit, Reviving the Soul” during Lenten worship, and observed a rich Holy Week. We were able to gather once again for Maundy Thursday and walk with other SB Christians on Good Friday. Easter Sunrise Service was robust with Roxbury Presbyterian Church on Castle Island.

The deacons led a creative Appreciation Day, and we had a summer healing service. We had a lovely SMP Sunday and then welcomed our families to Castle Island worship.

We had a Jubilee Service and reaffirmed baptism in September, and we remembered departed loved ones in October. We had a big of Thanksgiving potluck and stepped into a rich Advent season, finishing with a Christmas Live Pageant, our first Zoom bomb incident (squashed immediately by Owyn and Andy) and shared stories of Light born in our midst on the very last Sunday of 2024, a day we also baptized Ezekiel..

Prayer groups, vespers, Sunday worship, study sessions... these gatherings of the Spirit are at the heart of our life together. Thanks to all who participate and lead!

Adult Sunday School

Sunday morning class offerings have been a team effort. In the early part of the year, Interns Derek Sexton and Sam Reeve worked together with David Craig to keep the class strong, looking at Early Christianity, as well as a series on the Apostle Paul, articles from the newspaper, and interludes with theology and music. In late spring, Sam led the group in a discussion of bell hooks’ *All About Love*. The summer had more conversations led by Kendall Robinson.

Tim Hughes Williams joined us in the fall and he offers this report...

It was a pleasure to lead the Adult Education class through the fall and Advent seasons. The class met in the kitchen of 5 Vinton at 9:30am on Sunday mornings. In September and October we

worked our way through Maryann McKibben Dana's excellent book "Hope: A User's Manual," which we also used as the foundation for our Fall Retreat. For the season of Advent, we watched eight short films with different Christian thinkers reflecting on the meaning of the Advent season. Heading into 2025, our class has decided to tackle the entire Gospel of John, with specific focus on the stories of Jesus' adult ministry before the events of the Passion. We are using "Encounters with Jesus: Jesus Through John's Eyes" by Frances Taylor Gench as our guide. Feel free to join us for an interesting discussion of "everything in between" Jesus birth and death.

Building Committee

Kenny Shallow reports two new furnace units for the sanctuary! And John gives us this list...

In January 2024, one of the two overhead fans in the sanctuary stopped working. This issue has not been resolved. In February 2024, there appeared to be a small leak in the roof above the hall. John Meier investigated the crawl space above the hall and found the leak to be caused by an ice dam, causing leakage through nail holes. When the roof was last redone, holes in the old roof structure were not properly sealed before tar paper was put down, so the ice dam leaks may happen on occasion. The solar panels help prevent other problems, but attention should be paid to repair the substructure of the roof next time it is redone.

In February 2024, a temporary bucket toilet was placed at the bottom of the ramp leading to the basement, because a person experiencing homelessness was using the space for shelter and the accumulation of human waste was clogging the drainage basin at the bottom of the ramp, leading to the basement flooding and mold issues that occurred in 2023. The bucket toilet was removed after the person was able to find a more permanent shelter.

In February 2024, the walk-in freezer needed its cooling unit replaced due to a coolant leak. United Service performed the repair. Derek and John cleaned the interior of the walkin freezer and Recycleworks from Braintree helped us dispose of the defrosted food waste.

In April 2024, the gutter drain on the south corner of the hall was extended to prevent water from draining into the basement. The gutters on 5 Vinton and the church building are all in need of cleaning and repair.

In May 2024, the large box elder tree growing in the back of 11 Jenkins street was trimmed to prevent further roof damage to the church building and prevent another box elder beetle infestation in 5 Vinton that lead to extermination costs in 2023. The tree needs to be trimmed annually until the owners of 11 Jenkins street can be convinced to remove the tree.

In May 2024, the toilet closest to the hall was replaced, because the bracket holding the tank on corroded and broke. The bracket design was a known issue from the manufacturer. New brackets were acquired from the manufacturer and the old toilet and new brackets are in the basement of 5 Vinton. The new toilet does not have this issue, but the toilet closer to the street shows signs of corrosion and could fail imminently.

In July 2024, the window closes in the kitchen were repaired and the window sills cleaned at the request of the health inspector. A new threshold for the walk in fridge was also made to prevent rodent entry and cold air loss. Karen arranged for a large pile of garbage to be hauled away from the unfinished basement.

In the summer and fall of 2024, we got not one, but two new refrigerators for the kitchen to help Annie serve hot meals. The first was purchased used from FF Smith and Sons in Quincy to replace a broken unit. The second refrigerator was acquired a few months later for free from a developer who purchased the home at 2 Vinton Street.

In September 2024, two doorway thresholds were repaired and a patch in the basement classroom floor was leveled to remove tripping hazards and help carts for the food pantry and recycling to roll through the basement more easily.

In October 2024, the heating duct outside of the walk in freezer was repaired to return air flow to the vents at the front of the sanctuary. The duct had been ripped open by the door of the freezer,

so the duct was strapped higher up, to prevent future damage.

In October 2024, Andy installed a WiFi mesh system, dramatically increasing the speed of the wireless internet in the building, benefiting every program at the church. The network is called "Fourth Mesh" and has the same password as the old network.

As of November 2024, we have a new pest control service, Rob Henry, son of longtime church member, Shorty. We switched services away from Boris Pest Control in order to help us deal with some sporadic mouse sightings in the kitchen. Rob has sealed up every rodent access point he could find upstairs and has placed new baited traps around the church and 5 Vinton. So far, he is doing a great job, and the mouse sightings have stopped.

In December 2024, National Grid came out to respond to a strong natural gas odor in the church. It was determined that a furnace was malfunctioning and needed to be replaced. Ken handled the furnace replacement. National Grid also identified the gas meter for the building as undersized and I believe Janine started the process of getting the meter upgraded by National Grid to meet the needs of the building.

John Meier

Fourth Fest/ 2024 Fund-raising

On April 28th, 2024 we held our Fourth Fest fundraiser at the wonderful Southline building. This annual event raises funds for our summer programs which serve the community in so many ways.

The party featured performances from our kids programs, live music, a silent auction, an enthusiastic live auction led by the incredible Tommy Timlin, BBQ, a fun photo booth, a crafty kids activity corner and more! Thanks to all of those involved we were able to raise over \$62,000!

This year we return to Southline on Sunday, May 4 from 2:30-5:30pm. We love Southline because it's conveniently located, has ample parking, plenty of room for all kinds of activities, a wonderful event team, and is really stunning.

There will be good food, great music and performances, and exciting auction prizes. Our kids corner and photo booth were such a hit that they are coming back as well.

Fourth Fest is a fun way to gather with friends, enjoy food, drinks, entertainment, and win some great prizes. All while raising money to support important community programs. We hope to see you there!

Ingrid Gerdes

Recovery Groups

It's easy to take for granted all the 12-step groups that meet in our church. It's worth pausing to remember that lives are saved in those meetings: Sunday Young Peoples, Thursday NA, Friday AA, and Saturday NA. Plus our own 12 steps and the Christian Faith.

Those groups had to stop meeting in person in 2020, but in 2021 they came back to reconvene, and we even added a couple. We did this because our communities had seen the cost of dis-connection. Bless this work of healing.

Evening Prayers

We have been meeting 6 nights a week for almost 5 years now, and a core group is still going strong! We livestream to YouTube on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with a chance for more private prayers on the other days. It's a great opportunity to stay connected, especially for those of us in the 4th Church diaspora, who only get to stay connected to 4th through Zoom. We regularly have people from Southie; Plymouth; Charlton; Bozeman, MI; and even London! We catch up, we laugh, we worship, we pray, and of course, we sing. And we always come away with some good spiritual nourishment that strengthens our faith. We'd love to have you join us anytime! The Zoom link and bulletin are on the 4th Church website, under Online Worship. See you there!

Holly Aloise

A P.S. from participant Shannan Hudgins:

"Evening prayer is vibrant. It's impact is clear by the loving, caring souls whose ability to notice God's work in their lives keeps the Light of Christ burning bright. Year six looks to be as engaging and encouraging as every year before, each night in the wake of another evening of prayer."

Food Pantry

2024 was a transitional year for the food pantry. Chuck Ferrell expressed his desire to retire after 2 years as Director and 8 years of service. John Meier volunteered to assume the duties of food pantry director. The leadership transition occurred seamlessly in the 4th quarter 2024.

The pantry continues to be essential to Bostonians and Greater Boston. 568 unique households received food during the year. 173,000 pounds of food were distributed. This is a 38 % increase in the number of households and a 26% increase in the total amount of food from the prior year. The need to serve our neighbors continues to grow.

Children and seniors represent 28% of our clients each. Non senior adults represent the other 44% of the clients. 310 turkeys were distributed at Thanksgiving. The South Boston Nonprofits are an essential part of this process.

The pantry did continue to operate during the summer sharing space with the childrens meal programs. Thus we did not shut down for 6-8 weeks during the summer (which has happened in some previous years).

The pantry relies on a core of approximately 15 volunteers. They should continue to excel under John Meier's leadership and we wish him well in his new position.

Chuck Ferrell

Extended Meals Program

The Extended Meals Program has now extended all the way from March 2020 through the present! What started as an expansion of the Summer Meals Program during the early weeks of the pandemic has now become a regular part of the way we care for our neighbors at Fourth. Thanks to many generous donations from Fourth members and friends, we've been able to continue funding the program so far, and we are continuing to work on ways to bring program costs to a more sustainable level without compromising the quality of the food we serve or the compensation we give our amazing cooks.

Right now we're still serving meals three nights a week, and we've come to know many of our

guests by name. It's been an incredible way to meet our neighbors and help everyone get the food they need! We're so grateful for all the volunteers who have made this program possible throughout the year, especially Brandynn, Derek, and members of Annie's family! Sam, Derek and now Rachel have been critical to getting the food ordered. Annie and Carmelo are, of course, anchors to getting the meals prepared.

In 2024, we served over 16,000 meals, not counting the Summer Meals Program. It continues to be a remarkable response to a dire need. Although we're still unsure how long the program will be able to continue, we hope our efforts to make the program more financially sustainable will pay off by allowing us to keep feeding our hungry neighbors for as long as possible. A big thank you to the whole Fourth family for cheering the program on, and for your generous contributions in time, money, and encouragement!

Fourth Church Trauma Ministry

Some generous Friends of Fourth Church made possible a new ministry in post-traumatic healing in 2018. We worked with our sister church in Roxbury to launch the Peace by Piece program summarized below. The Trauma Ministry also inspired a series of conversations on the pandemic, and we've also partnered with McLean hospital to offer mental health resources to families in South Boston and Dorchester.

Peace by Piece Program

2024 has seen the Fourth Church Trauma Ministry continuing to provide weekly gatherings in a supportive space with a focus on mental health and a team that is trained to know and recognize what trauma is and how it can affect people. Lauren Basler and Shelby Hall are well into Year Two of leading "Expressing Our Stories"- our gathering on the first Monday of the month that emphasizes the arts. During Expressing Our Stories, participants have the chance to quietly reflect on a poem and prompt using different art modalities including journaling, collaging, watercolor and clay. Afterwards, we gather to share or witness each other's creations.

In addition, we continue to gather on the third Monday of the month for Peace by Piece, where

we share our experiences of loss, grief, or trauma, as well as our healing process.

Additionally, we have begun an afternoon gathering at 5 O'Connor Way with the older adults who live there. We take Peace by Piece "on the road" to reach these seniors that may not be able to get to our church and give them the vital opportunity to share what is on their hearts and minds. In October, we gathered for our annual retreat in Gloucester where we continued to learn from each other and share in a tai chi class and walking meditation.

In summation, Fourth Church continues to provide what many churches do not- a focus on mental health and an educated and supportive way of abiding with our neighbors who are experiencing trauma. Please consider joining us for dinner and a gathering in 2025.

Lauren Basler

Coming Soon- "Our Town"

In 2024, Lauren got an idea in her head to direct an intergenerational church production of the classic American play "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder. Because Fourth Church is a space that welcomes and supports the arts, Burns said YES and in December 2024 we had our first read-thru of the script. 28 people from our church community will be participating in this production, which is set to take place on March 1st and 2nd. Here are some of Grovers Corners inhabitants: Doc Gibbs (Andy Ward), Howie Newsome the milkman (Derek Alfano), Emily Webb (Brenny O'Brien, Arianna Shepherd, and Fiona McCusker), Constable Warren (Laura Massie), Professor Willard (Dave Courage), Joe Crowell, Jr. (Felicity Cooper), and Acts I, II, and III Stage Managers (Layne Jacobs, Diane Devore, and Burns Stanfield) among many others! Come and see our church transformed into Grovers Corners, NH!

Annual Fall Retreat

We gathered a crew of over 50 participants at Wilmot this year.. Our theme was *Open Wide Your Hearts* and we showed up in body and spirit to sing, swim, eat, pray, create, and celebrate the opportunity to be together in the beautiful Camp Wilmot location. Once again, time for... Karaoke, prayer groups, square

dance... and lots of good food. Tim joined us and guided reflections on hope.you

The Deacons

In 2024, the deacons of Fourth Presbyterian Church did our best to minister to our church community during a year of change. The deacons that served this year as we used our model of mini-parish "teams" of at least two deacons, which helped us support one another in the ministry were: Shemiram Fabian and Carrie Austin, Jacob Blanton and Derek Alfano, Laura Massie and Danae Jacobs, Sheila Buckman, Alison Slade and Owyn Jacobs, Katie Stansifer and Janine Warrington, Ingrid Gerdes and Al Circeo.

In January, we had a retreat at Shemiram's house. We welcomed the newly elected deacons, bonded through Bible charades, talked about what our role is and what the upcoming year would look like.

In February and March, Deacons reached out to their mini parish. In April, we had our annual "Appreciation Day" celebration, reaching out to our mini-parishes to express appreciation one-on-one. In the sanctuary we had nets that caught fish filled with appreciation. We also hosted a yummy potluck.

In July and August, Summer Wednesdays were back. Summer Wednesdays we cook out and have our Wednesday night service. We also hosted a Castle Island service with burgers and hotdogs from Sullivans and the deacons filling in the rest.

In October, for our annual service of Remembering the Saints, we reached out to our mini-parishes for names to lift up in remembrance. we had a slideshow of the Saints of our congregation.

In November, we also hosted our annual Thanksgiving dinner potluck. What a great feast of turkey and all the fix-ins.

In December, we made special holiday visits with poinsettias to a few folks in our mini-parishes, It is a tradition where we get to spend time with the older and wiser ones in our congregation.

Much love and gratitude to Barbara Erikson, Kaden Jacobs, Danae Jacobs, Jacob Blanton who have left or will be leaving the diaconate in January 2025. We look forward to serving our church community with newly elected deacons. Many blessings to all!

Danae Jacobs

Boston Pride Parade

2024 was our second year being present at Boston Pride For the People. We co-hosted a booth along with Newton Presbyterian Church. Janine was there to represent Fourth, Rev. Tom Reid was there to represent Newton, and Gracie Paterson was present as a representative of both congregations. Others, like Jack Colantuoni, also joined the booth throughout the day as volunteers. All expenses (booth fees and hand-out materials) were provided through donations.

The booth had a lot of interactions, mostly from people interested in our free "God Loves Everybody" stickers. We also had an anonymous prayer request box set up, in which people could write down prayer requests which Janine then prayed over privately later. We had information about Sunday services, food pantry, and other offerings available. Notably, a group of friends visited Peace by Piece a few times after learning about it at the Pride Festival.

As many Christian churches in our country continue to be hateful and unaffirming to queer and transgender individuals, it becomes more and more important for us to emphasize that God loves them and that we at Fourth love them.

Janine Warrington

Social Media

Fourth has multiple different social media accounts, and Janine has posted across them regularly over the past year. These accounts contribute to our mission in a few ways:

We bear witness to the good news of Jesus by:

- sharing live streams or clips of sermons and choir songs.

We create opportunity for growth together in the spirit by:

- creating means of connecting with the Fourth diaspora.
- sharing reminders and invitations to upcoming events and opportunities at Fourth.

We serve our neighbors in love by:

- sharing service opportunities.
- connecting with other organizations in and around Boston that serve the community.

2024 has been a year of growth for our social media presence.

- YouTube - @fourthboston
 - YouTube is arguably the most important of our social media platforms, as it allows folks who are homebound or live far away to join us for Sunday services, prayer nights, and other events that are live streamed.
 - During 2024, our views and watch time increased significantly. 46% of our view time comes from non-subscribers, suggesting that our YouTube account allows us to reach new audiences. We also gained 30 new subscribers this year.
- Instagram - @fourthboston
 - Our general Instagram account allows us to promote our Sunday services and our community offerings. It also provides an important platform for fundraising, especially for Fourth Fest.
 - During 2024, this account gained 64 followers.
- Instagram - @fourthchurchtheater
 - In addition to our general Instagram account, we also have an account dedicated to our kids' and teen theater programs run by Brenny O'Brien.
 - During 2024, this account gained 25 followers.
- Facebook - @ Fourth Presbyterian Church of South Boston
 - Our Facebook followers decreased by 28 this year, but our overall reach increased by 9.6%.
 - Thanks to assistance from Christine Keller, Rev. Tim now has full access to the

Facebook account as an account manager. This should help with our consistency of posting.

- TikTok - @fourthboston
 - After starting this account in 2023, our TikTok account has 56 followers. The future of this account will depend on Congress's decision on the TikTok ban, but this is far from our most important platform for outreach.

Janine Warrington

Bowling

Our Church Bowling Commissioner has guided us through another season of church bowling. This year we added a new element to our Saturday bowling to spice things up: trophies! Church bowlers had the opportunity to compete for the title of Bowling Champion for the highest score. For those less concerned with score and more focused on flare, there was the Spirit Award. This has been a great time for fun and fellowship, for nachos, for french fries, for pizza, and in our final outing of 2024 the Turkey was achieved! Truly a blessed year.

Audry Ward & Barry Monteiro

Children and Youth Programs

Children and Youth ministries have been a key dimension of our ministry for thirty years. They are how the community knows us, and they've been a big part of our growth over these decades.

There is steady discernment about which pre-Covid programs to resume, replace or reconstruct, and that discernment will continue. Some pre-Covid ministries are still quiet (Youth organizing, Friday Night Live, Teen Crib). Some are starting to come back (Sunday activities before worship, dance, Feb VBS, Summer Meals Program). Some are *storming* back (the Civil Rights pilgrimage and huge groups for theater classes). Some are new (Wednesday Art, and an expanded Kids Church)!

Keep it all in prayer and volunteer where you can. These ministries will look different in these next couple of years, but they continue to be a vital part of our witness.

Report on Kids Church from Janine

Kids' Church provides age-appropriate church programming for kids under 10 years old in the hall during the service. The standard format for Kids' Church goes 1.) sing a song, 2.) read or act out a story from the Bible or church history, 3.) do a related game or craft project, 4.) fellowship (AKA free play). Raymond Poon and Curtisha Beckford are our regular Kids' Church staff, with Janine, Fiona, and others occasionally stepping in when they are out of town.

This year, thanks to a suggestion from Raymond, we focused on one story or theme for four or five weeks in a row to allow kids to become more familiar with the story. Our units for 2024 included St. Patrick, David and Goliath, the feeding of the 5,000, and hope.

Throughout the year, we also found ways for kids to be involved in "big church" and in the Boston community. They made a prayer quilt for Alyce and Patrick Lee, (bright green) grape juice to use for communion, signs to use for GBIO lobbying at the state house, and hand-out bags for the homeless.

Report from (teacher) Curtisha

I enjoyed working with the children this past year. The moment that stood out for me was when they were learning about David and Goliath. They really got into the story and the song David, David. They loved singing the song along with doing the dance movements. Still to this day every once in a while they sing the chorus David, David.

Report from Macve Meier (Age 7):

- I really like lighting the candles because it's fun!
- I also like playing hockey with Caroline in kids church.
- I like when there are big parties at church like the Christmas gingerbread party.
- I also really liked going to the weddings at church this summer.

Kids Create

Kids Create started in earnest in September of 2024, providing a time to explore stories and art projects with Janine before service. It takes place

simultaneously with adult Sunday school and our teen gathering, allowing parents to attend Sunday school while their children stay with Janine in the hall. We made a watercolor mural celebrating South Boston, filmed a music video about the prophet Jonah (keep an eye out for the premiere of this music video in 2025!), made found object collages in the style of artist Hanoeh Piven, and created props and costumes that we used in the Christmas pageant at the Christmas Eve service.

Youth Confirmation Class, Confirmed!

As reported a year ago, this class was lively and committed! They worked on several units, helped with projects around the church, built strong relationships with each other, and participated in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage.

In May, after a serious process of study and writing faith statements, they joined the church as fully confirmed members. Aren't you proud of them? Seven new members. (Check out the "Passages" section at the end of the report.

They are now growing into their responsibilities as members, with some even serving as youth officers. The crew meets with Burns Sundays at 9:30. Join us!

Burns Stanfield

Soul Possibilities

Our Soul Possibilities arts programming continues apace! We welcomed brand new faces into our theater and art programs and put on amazing plays and recitals. We also continued Wednesday art classes with Janine into our rotation of regular offerings. The stage is set for programs to continue growing in 2024, as dozens of families have already registered for our next session of classes.

Some statistics from Janine:

Registration numbers for teen theater:

- Winter/Spring 2024: 18 registered, 15 remained for the performance
- Fall 2024: 12

Registration numbers for kids' theater:

- Winter 2024: 81
- Spring 2024: 33
- Fall 2024: 55

Registration numbers for dance classes:

- Winter 2024: 19

- Spring 2024: 17
- Fall 2024: 5
- Fall 2024 adult dance: 7

Registration numbers for Wednesday Crafternoon class:

- Winter 2024: 9
- Spring 2024: 4
- Fall 2024: 10

Scholarships granted through the year:

- Winter 2024: \$1,330
- Spring 2024: \$1,140
- Fall 2024: \$1,655

A Report from Alison Slade on Mainstage Theater, Teen Theater & Voice lessons

2024 brought 3 wonderful voice recitals and many performing opportunities for 4th Presbyterian voice students both in MainStage and Teen Theatre productions. I have loved watching students grow artistically during the past 6 years and am gearing up for my 7th year of teaching at 4th!

Notable highlights of the past year were our teen production of Into the Woods, the many, many faces of the Oompa Loompas in Willy Wonka and our first ever production of Matilda!

I absolutely love collaborating with Burns, Diane, Sarah and Janine!

A Report from Kathy Encarnacao on Dance

Ms Kathy's favorite class, Zumbini, entered it's sixth season at the church. Based on the popular Zumba classes, Zumbini is developed for children, ages 0-4, with a caregiver. We had so much fun dancing, singing, playing instruments, and most importantly, socializing and getting to know others in the community. Many of the little ones from Zumbini continue with the school age dance programs such as ballet and hip hop. Others branch out into theatre and music classes. But why should kids have all the fun? In the fall, Kathy and Ingrid offered a *3 week dance workshop for adults. Styles included Salsa, Bachata, Merengue and some hip hop. A fun way for us all to kick back and let off some steam. Hopefully we can have a repeat session this spring!

Report from Diane Devore- Teen Theater

The Fourth Church Teen Theater Troupe continued to build on the successes of 2023. We started 2024 by diving into Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods Jr.* with a performance weekend in May. The production included 15 cast members and Alison Slade, Sarah Cooper, Diane DeVore and Janine Warrington on the production team. We enjoyed a cameo from our costume designer Rena Gyftopoulos as the "Old Man." We kicked off the new season this fall with a Christmas themed cabaret and a reworking of a familiar Christmas story and characters. We had a dozen cast members—including some new tween performers—and we had Burns, Jon Hazillia and community friend Ash O'Brien making up the band. Seats for all the performances were full, and our audience brought full hearts and joyful support to our program. As we head into 2025 we're looking forward to auditions for *Mean Girls*. We're grateful for the support of this program and the opportunity to see the growth in the program and performers!

Summer Meals Program

2024 was an important summer for rebuilding the Summer Meals Program. Total registrations went up from 88 in 2023 to 104 in 2024. Daily attendance was high for the first few weeks, but due to a case of Covid in our staff, attendance dropped off a bit for the last few weeks of the summer. Still, our average daily attendance increased from 39 in 2023 to 41 in 2024, counting attendance for our morning program and Teen Crib. We offered breakfast and lunch five days a week for kids ages four to twelve and supper three times a week for teenagers.

Our staff in 2024 was fantastic, with some veterans and some brand new staff and volunteers. The return of Rev. Tim Hughes Williams provided consistent pastoral presence while Burns was out of town. Teenagers Fiona McCusker and Zoe Chaparro led Imagination Station while Janine led a new science class. Andrianna Leon, a brand new staff member, led our usual art class while summer intern Rachel Mallett led our outdoor games class at Moakley Park. We also welcomed newcomers Zakka, Kendall, and Sarai along with SMP veterans Raymond, Wilson, Shamia, and Rose as shepherds who provided deep love for the kids who attended our morning program. Shelby Hall also joined the staff as an administrative assistant

this summer, and managed to save a significant amount of money on the food we served. We spent \$1500 less on food than we did in 2023 despite serving more meals in total. Unfortunately, many of our staff from this year will be unavailable in 2025, so we will be looking for more amazing new staff members!

We had amazing field trips and visitors this year. Dumpling-making classes at Mei Mei Dumplings on Old Colony continued to be a favorite of the attendees. We also welcomed Curious Creatures into the hall with their reptiles, amphibians, and tiny mammals. The hall became a stage for professional ballerinas, a professional juggler, and Jon Hazilla and Dylan Szuch. And, thanks to a suggestion from Lauren Basler, we welcomed two alpacas from Harvard Alpaca Ranch into the lawn behind 5 Vinton! Kids had the opportunity to learn about alpacas and to pet their soft fleece.

The Teen Crib offering continued with three suppers a week, tying it into the Extended Meal program which happens three times a week all year long. Shamia Chaparro and Janine provided adult supervision. Attendance was consistently low, often with zero attendees. Teen Crib will be a great area for growth in 2025!

Several families inquired about the possibility of kids younger than four years attending our program. This provides another potential area for growth in 2025.

Report from Fiona McCusker (Imagination Station leader):

When you begin your training for summer meals one of the first things that we are told is "You will have a great impact on these kids", but no one really warned me about the impact the kids would end up having on me. My first year working at summer meals was 2 years ago but remarkably I can still remember my campers' names. I can still feel the joy that they bring to each space with them. Every day I strive to bring the joy, curiosity and boldness that they always seemed to have no matter the situation. Never would I have guessed that a few weeks in the summer would shape me and change me, but to my surprise it did.

Report from Andrianna Leon (Art teacher):

In reflecting on my time at the Summer Meals program this past summer, I can fully say it was a blessing that will forever be held close to

my heart. For two months I had the pleasure of serving as the art teacher for the Summer Meals program, during which we completed over forty unique projects for age groups ranging from toddler to rising middle school. Beyond the sheer amount of projects we did, ranging from slime to gimp, what I appreciated about being "art teacher" was the opportunity to cultivate a space for our kids to exist simply as kids. By way of increased social media, being a kid in today's society is truly hard. By way of outward pressures to grow up or "fit in," I feel as though childhood today almost feels rushed, as such I'm so grateful to be given the opportunity to craft an environment where nothing else was expected of them but to be kids. I'm grateful over the course I can say most of the kids felt comfortable asking me any questions, and to me, the need for these open spaces was emphasized in all of the age groups' love and participation in art class. By far the hardest part about my role as art teacher was designing projects for each respective age group. With the majority of kids belonging to the extreme eldest or youngest age groups, at times I struggled coming up with activities that would appropriately accommodate each age group's interests; however, ultimately I saw that their mere presence of being in art class and showing up as themselves was enough! To me this was manifested in the sincere friendships they made with one another. Whether by advocating for more glitter glue on behalf of their new best friend, or making friendship bracelets, it was incredibly heartwarming to see how art class was used as a space for them to cherish these new connections, and to me, the inherent joys of being a kid. All in all, I can say my time at Summer Meals was invaluable, and I will forever be grateful for the manner in which the camp, and its incredible staff grounded me & by far was the highlight of my summer.

Some statistics from Janine:

Total number of kids registered (SMP): 104
 Average daily attendance (SMP and Teen Crib): 41
 Total meals served (B/I/S): 2,365
 Total spent on food: \$7,176
 July - \$4624
 August - \$2552
 Total reimbursed by state: \$9,761.78
 July - \$5895.33
 August - \$3866.45

GBIO

Fourth Presbyterian is a member of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), a coalition of more than fifty institutions around the Greater Boston area committed to serving the public good and advancing causes of social justice. In 2024, GBIO concluded a multi-year campaign on housing justice that had four targeted goals:

- 1) increased funding for state public housing
- 2) passage of a real estate transfer fee to increase funding for affordable housing projects
- 3) implementation of the MBTA Communities Zoning Act to increase affordable housing stock in transit-accessible neighborhoods
- 4) a mandate for state-issued IDs for returning citizens, which is necessary for housing access

In-District Meeting with Rep. Brandy Fluker-Oakley

The Fourth Pres GBIO Core Team, along with other GBIO leaders who reside in South Boston, organized an In-District Meeting (IDM) on January 25th at First Baptist Church in Dorchester with Representative Brandy Fluker-Oakley (with Senator Collins invited, but not attendance). We hosted more than 70 people at the event, hearing stories of housing injustice and the importance of state funded public housing including testimony from our own Cheryl Sessler! A key to the event's success was our strengthened relationships with our neighbors at West Broadway, a state-funded public housing site in South Boston. Across its member institutions, GBIO organized dozens of IDMs in early 2024, which were a critical tool in promoting the passage of our agenda in the state legislature.

A Victory for Public Housing Funding

To cap off our housing justice campaign, GBIO organized a large action of more than 1000 people at the Islamic Society for Boston Cultural Center on March 3rd, 2024, demonstrating to the legislature our commitment to our policy goals. By the end of the legislative session, GBIO achieved a massive victory with the passage and signing of a housing bond bill that authorized an unprecedented 2.2 billion dollars for state funded public housing. These funds will allow public housing leaders to address years of deferred maintenance and facilitate sustainable upkeep.

Going forward, we will enter a period of evaluation on the housing justice campaign, relationship building across institutions, and imagining where we want to direct our energy next! For the Fourth Pres GBIO Core Team in particular, we hope to continue our relationship with tenants at West Broadway and work with them to hold our leaders accountable in making the newly authorized public housing funds turn into real improvements.

Laura Blanton

Field Education Students

Support of seminarians doing their field education continues to be an important piece of our ministry. In the first part of 2024, Sam Reeve and Derek Sexton finished their units with us. (See report below). During the summer, Rachel Mallett and Kendall Robinson both worked in the Summer Meals Program and did internships with us. Zakka Emmanuel also did a different kind of internship with us through Harvard's Religion in Public Live program. In the fall, Ro Robinson came back for a second unit. We are exceptionally blessed by these students!

Derek Sexton: Field Education Report

Greetings Fourth!

It's hard to put into words what my time with you last year has meant to me. From weeknights planning for our GBIO in-district meeting with Layne, Laura, and Sam, to Friday afternoons for the Extended Meals Program with Annie, Carmelo, and Derek Alfano, to early Sunday mornings for Sunday School with David Brooks, the Apostle Paul, the first urban Christians, and those brave souls who braved the cold for coffee and donuts, we accomplished SO much together! And I know that I learned A LOT from all those experiences and more.

In thinking back on last year, I am drawn to the writings of Dorothy Day, the legendary 20th century Catholic social activist who founded the *Catholic Worker* movement. Some of you may know her; others may not. Though I never "knew" her and she passed away in 1980, she's been a frequent conversation partner of mine throughout my time in divinity school. Her

whole life was devoted to the works of mercy and justice in "inner city" areas, much like the South Boston neighborhood of Fourth. While there are many lessons that can be learned from studying her prophetic witness, I think that the simplest but most profound is that for us to love God we must love our neighbor. In order for us to love our neighbor, we must know each other. And we know each other through companionship and community. What is Fourth if not a genuine, wholehearted (and of course, still imperfect) example of companionship and community?

So, that's what every one of you taught me last year: what it means to *be a community*. I'll never forget that as long as I live! I hope that you learned something from me too along the way. Until we meet again, peace and many blessings to all of you, Fourth!

Warmly,
Derek Sexton

Sam Reeve: Field Education Report

Interu Sam (and Derek) continued to support the Meals Program to ensure timely food planning, ordering, and distribution by Annie and Carmelo. Along with other weekly volunteers like Brandynn, the interns and Annie greeted community members with warmth and yummy food three times a week, distributing hundreds of meals a week.

Sam led a two-month long Sunday School book club on bell hooks' *All About Love* and reported lively critiques and debates each week on love and themes like spirituality, parenting, family, friendship, romance, and community. These conversations were one of his highlights! Sam Reeve

Rachel Mallett: Summer Field Education Report

I found myself working at Fourth this past summer thanks to my connection to Rev. Burns at HDS. I come from a Presbyterian background, but somehow hadn't yet worked in a PCUSA congregation professionally. It just so happened that I also lived in Southie at the time. The role and the church fell into place in my life almost immediately. I have always been a very community-oriented person and it became clear to me that Fourth functions in this way as well and very organically. Fourth is relationally-focused, both outwardly and inwardly. My

responsibilities involved working with Annie on our weekly Meals Program and with Junine and a full team of staff facilitating the Summer Meals Program camp. Within the church, Kendall and I, along with the Deacons and now co-pastors, led Wednesday night cookouts and camp-style worship services. Community is both near and far for Fourth and it made me both optimistic for the health of churches in the US, as well as confidently aware of how much I love connecting with people. I appreciate the range of relationality here that involves light-hearted and good-natured time together, as well as genuine and deep connections. Three months out and I have begun the ordination process with my home Presbytery in Florida and I have continued to work with Annie and spend time at Fourth because it has been the perfect balance to my time at HDS. So my lasting impression for the internship is one of gratitude and reignited optimism.

Zakka Emmanuel: Internship Report

1.0 INTRODUCTION: I am thrilled to share my experiences and reflections from my internship at Fourth Presbyterian Church, Dorchester, South Boston, in 2024. The internship opportunity allowed me to explore the intersection of faith, community, and social justice, deepening my understanding of the role of religious institutions in promoting positive change.

2.0 BACKGROUND: A vibrant and diverse community of faith, Fourth Presbyterian Church is committed to serving the spiritual and social needs of its congregation and the broader Dorchester community. The church's strong emphasis on social justice, community engagement, and youth engagement resonated deeply with my own values and passions.

3.0 MY INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE ; One of my key involvements during the internship was with the Kids Summer Meals 2024 program, where I worked closely with kids from diverse backgrounds. The experience was truly amazing, and I was struck by the sense of community and camaraderie that developed among the children. I had a moment of moral imagination where I imagined that given the very polarised relationship between Christians and Muslims, creating Summer Meals Program like this one

could help break the cycle of hate and foster mutual trust and commitment to the common good. I am working on this idea carefully.

I also participated in the food pantry programme of the Church, serving meals to the homeless and vulnerable members of the Dorchester area, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It was a humbling experience for me and it inspired my subsequent decision to volunteer at the Harvard Square Homeless Shelter in the Fall Semester of 2024 where I was on the Friday Night Shift every Friday from 11.00 p.m. to 11.00 a.m. Saturday.

4.0 KEY TAKEAWAYS: Through my involvement with the Summer Meals 2024 program, I learned several valuable lessons:

1. The power of shared humanity: I witnessed firsthand the possibility of raising a generation of young people based on the principle of our common humanity rather than religious differences.

2. The importance of community engagement: I saw the impact of community-based initiatives in promoting social cohesion and supporting the well-being of young people.

3. The value of intergenerational relationships: I observed the benefits of bringing together people of different ages and backgrounds, fostering a sense of mutual respect and understanding.

5.0 CONCLUSION: My internship at Fourth Presbyterian Church was a rich and rewarding experience that deepened my understanding of the intersection of faith, community, and social justice. The Summer Meals 2024 program was a highlight of my internship, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with such an inspiring group of young people. As I move forward in my own journey, I will carry the lessons and insights gained from this experience with me, striving to apply them in my future work and endeavors.

SPECIAL THANKS

I wish to extend my special thanks to the entire Fourth Presbyterian Church for opening your doors and arms to me. I am eternally grateful.

My deepest sentiments of gratitude go to Rev Burns Stanfield who is my mentor and teacher, for the opportunity he gave me to serve during my internship and the faith he has continued to show in me. Thank you for taking a chance with me. I appreciate deeply Pastor Tim for his

friendship. My heart is aglow with gratitude to Janine, Derek, Mama - the Cook, Franco, and all the staff at Fourth for their wonderful friendship and love.

More Music

It is hard to overstate how important music is to this community. Our ways of musical expression had to change during the pandemic, and we've had to do lots of re-building and re-organizing since that Great Disruption. But it keeps happening.

Some treats in 2024 --- Jon brought his tap dancing percussion student to church and he tapped along with the hymns. He also brought the amazing Stan Strickland on another couple of Sundays. We met Hui! (and his beautiful wife, Silu, and son, Silas). Hui is a great sax player. Matt York joined us mid-year with this Johnny Cash songs and soulful twang.

Meanwhile, we managed to do another Passion Play, we had moments of featuring our theater kids, and we had an extraordinary Christmas concert. Some called it "the best ever;" though that may be another happy testament to how much we and our fans love each other.... Regardless, it really was wonderful.

There was also a great talent show, thanks to a robust representation by the kids theater and teen theater programs. There was also a lovely sampling of our amazingly talented musicians.

The choir did extra singing for two weddings and lifted the rafters. The singing here.... So good.

Passages

Child Baptisms: Lydia Stansifer, Wesley & Gabriel Rinehimer, Amelia Cogswell Clark, Ezekiel Mbah

Adult Baptism: Brandynn Holgate

New Members: Brandynn Holgate, Al Circeo, Kelsey Circeo, Perry Hughes Williams, Melissa King, Lena Kilburn

New Members through Confirmation: Jack Colantuoni, Owyn Jacobs, Lijah Blue Jacobs, Fiona McCusker, Natalie Laterza, Grayson Slade, Ari Hamilton

Deceased: Shirley Duggan, Sugar Long

Fourth Presbyterian Church
Budget vs. Actuals: 2024 Budget - FY24 P&L Classes
January - December 2024

	Actual	Church Operating Budget
Revenue		
01) Invoices	265,205.60	279,916.00
03) Fundraising	3,106.90	3,000.00
04) Designated Gifts	1,674.67	2,500.00
05) Grant Funding	750.00	
07) Reimbursement	5,995.95	4,000.00
Individual Contributions	52,481.14	25,000.00
		Non-pledge, XMAS, Loose Offering, 527600 rec'd for 2023 in 2024
		Food Pantry donations, St. Patrick's day
Total Revenue	\$ 329,224.29	\$ 314,416.00
Gross Profit	\$ 329,224.29	\$ 314,416.00
Expenditures		
01) Salary	260,231.34	254,108.00
02) Building, Office & Supplies	49,454.19	47,488.00
03) Church Mission Expenses	17,527.23	8,200.00
04) Designated Mission Support	17,100.00	16,879.00
05) Program Expenses	95.46	1,000.00
Bank Charges & Fees	383.76	
Office Supplies & Software	79.03	
PayPal Fees	-33.82	
Service Fees	46.06	
Uncategorized Expense	25.80	
Utilities	40.09	
Total Expenditures	\$ 345,310.14	\$ 327,675.00
Net Operating Revenue	-\$ 16,085.85	\$ 13,259.00
Other Revenue		
Building Space Rentals	694.95	2,000.00
Capital "Vision" Donations	1,833.29	
FourthFest Donations	62,659.00	
Interest Earned	1,904.37	1,000.00
Rental Unit	26,345.00	25,500.00
Total Other Revenue	\$ 93,436.61	\$ 28,500.00
Other Expenditures		
Building Improvements or Reserve	17,138.72	15,827.00
Fundraisers and Special Events	359.99	
Utilities 5 Vinton	1,695.97	5,250.00
Total Other Expenditures	\$ 19,194.68	\$ 24,077.00
Net Other Revenue	\$ 74,241.93	\$ 4,423.00
Net Revenue	\$ 58,155.08	-\$ 8,836.00

Gifts for Christian Ed, Food, Outreach, retreat expenses