

71st Annual Report of the Ministries of the Church for 2025



ANNUAL MEETING, January 25, 2026

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Hendersonville, North Carolina





Pastors' Report

2025 was an amazing year in the life of our congregation. As you will see in the pages of this Annual Report, the Holy is working her mystery and magic in every corner of ministry at FCCH.

This congregation is filled with people who help us be the hands and feet of Love. Many serve faithfully on committees like Physical Resources, Finance, and Service and Giving. Others make coffee, fold bulletins, sing in the choir, and care for those who are sick or homebound. Still others show up in the community for rallies, protests, school board meetings, and more. We care for one another, and we are passionate about justice and mercy in God's world.

Our Sunday School, led by Ginger Zemp and Emily Gill, remains steady and sure. We are grateful for their loving presence with our children. We also welcomed Daniel Vindas as our live-streaming coordinator, and his artistry with the camera is appreciated by many. We are deeply grateful for Dora Littleton's custodial care, one of the unsung ministries that keeps our church home sparkling and welcoming. And our church administrator, Jennifer Austin-Janssen, is truly a gift, a steady presence, a whiz at all things administrivia, and one of the warmest welcomes anyone could receive by phone, email, or in person.

And finally, I love being able to say this every year: Lynx continues to be a valued presence in our midst. Whether at work or worship, he is always ready to offer a purr or a hungry meow for a snack. His stellar skills at napping remind us all to live in the moment and not neglect self-care.

We (Mark and Karla) are deeply grateful to serve as your pastoral leadership at FCCH. This is truly an extraordinary place. Every day, new blessings emerge, new challenges confound, and tender kindnesses arise. We remain committed to building a church where all are welcome, and all can find a place to belong.

Faithfully submitted,

Karla Miller, Pastor

Mark Acker, Pastoral Associate & Minister of Music





AGENDA ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

January 25, 2026

Acknowledgements and Call to Order	Bob McLendon, Moderator
Opening Prayer	Karla Miller, Pastor
Quorum	Lin Stogner, Clerk
Welcome & Meeting Protocols	Bob McLendon
In Memoriam – Saints of 2025	Karla Miller
New Members & Baptisms	Karla Miller
Approval of Minutes	Bob McLendon
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Annual Congregational Meeting – January 26,2025 - see p. 10· Special Congregational Meeting – March 30,2025 - p. 13· Special Congregational Meeting – November 16, 2025 - p. 15	
Treasurer’s Report for Year Ending December 31, 2025	Phil Taylor, Treasurer
Final Budget for 2026 - p. 17	Phil Taylor
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Motion (second)· Discussion· Vote	
Project Updates	Pete Heuberger, Facilitator
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Sunday Schools · Bathrooms · Signage· Environmental Parking Area	
	Bill Shaffer, Assistant Moderator

- Moderator: **Bill Shaffer**
- Assistant Moderator: **Linda Laderach**
- Clerk: **Helen Vennard**
- Treasurer: **Phil Taylor**
- Assistant Treasurer(s): **Ron Miller, Joan Nobling, Linda Yopps**
- Representative of the Ministry of Finance: **Scott Querin**
- Representative of the Ministry of Physical Resources: **Pete Heuberger**
- Liaison to Ministry of Worship: **Diane Rose**
- Liaison to Ministry of Congregational Life: **Krista Kaufman**
- Liaison to Community Outreach and Justice: **Cathy Evans**

Closing Prayer

Karla Miller





In Memoriam

John Sams

Tom Kimmell

Lester Vier

John Towle

Joanne Rather

Ingrid Perry

Roger Woolsey

Joan McKinney



New Members

John & Suzanne Newton

Dottie Koopman

Rich Stewart

Sharon McLendon

Erin Whyatt & Maddie McLendon

Dale & Debi Brotherton

Cindy Larrison & Jim Bonham

Sky & David Conard

Susan Cowardin

Helen Vennard

Jay Calloway

David Squibb

Jeff Collis & Carisa Ledoux

Gracen Duffield

Isabel Cutler

Steve & Kim Villanti (Aryella)

EJ & Jeanne Wilson

Julie Muehe

Marcia Walker & Theodore Sharps

Frances Yoder

Carol & Jennifer Austin-Janssen

Renee Gipson



Baptisms

Madeleine Grace McLendon, Feb 16, 2025

Hannah Marie Cercena, March 25, 2025

Church Council Moderator and Church Clerk Joint Report for 2025

- Because of everyone's generosity, it was a very good year, financially.
 - Investments did well.
 - The anticipated 5% withdrawal from the Heritage Fund was not needed.
 - We received approximately ____% of what was pledged in 2024.
- Thanks to the hard work of our Assistant Moderator we received have the following grants to assist with the parking lot retention pond and stream care.
 - \$2,000 from Henderson County Community Foundation
 - \$20,000 from Henderson County Community Foundation
 - \$50,000 from The North Carolina Department of Agriculture
- It was determined that Jennifer Austin-Janssen, Church Administrator, would add an additional four (4) hours per week to her current duties to take over Accounts Payable for the church.
- Hunter Marks was hired to provide additional plans for the environmental piece of the parking lot.
- Unanticipated problems occurred when paving the parking lot, resulting in additional costs which were approved by the congregation. However, paving was completed and paid in full.
- The Bylaws Committee updated our Church's Bylaws, which were unanimously approved.
- The theme of this year's Stewardship Campaign was "We Love This Place." The campaign was reduced to three (3) weeks.
- We celebrated its 75th Anniversary of incorporation and Karla Miller's 25th Ordination Anniversary.
- This year's Transgender Day of Remembrance Service at the Unitarian Church was well attended.
- Our Circle of Friends (small groups) continue to thrive and support our mission.
- After worship Coffee Hours have been filled to the brim and lively discussions have been an integral part of each one.
- John Pavlovitz filled the Fellowship Hall and Wroship when he spoke at our Ashley Lecture series.
- Our garden produced in the neighborhood of 1, 671 pounds of produce for IAM



TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2025

There were two significant events for our church's finances in 2025.

In April, we spent \$337,519 to repave most of our parking lot. To cover this expense, we withdrew \$247,000 from the Heritage Fund and added the Ecusta Trail settlement funds from the CD. By the end of 2025, the Heritage Fund had gained \$136,727 with contributions from members and friends of \$50,498 plus investment returns from market growth of \$86,229 – helping to cover part of the parking lot spending.

The other significant event was that our total operating income exceeded our total operating expenses without use of a 5% withdrawal from the Heritage Fund. I'm told this has not happened in recent years –

so a big shout-out to our members and friends for their contributions in 2025. By not taking the 5% Heritage Fund withdrawal, we were able to help the Fund regain more of what we spent on the parking lot.

Looking ahead, our 2025 operating surplus of \$32,615 will help to provide funding for planned renovations of our bathrooms near the kitchen plus expansion of our Sunday School room(s). Alternatively, it might be used to cover the shortfall in our 2026 pledges, which are \$26,655 short of goal as I write this.

I would like to offer my thanks to the Assistant Treasurers who assisted with Treasurer's tasks – Ron Miller and Linda Yopps. And to the church administrator, Jennifer Austin-Janssen, who assisted with check preparation. Additional thanks to all those who helped count the offering after worship each week - a seemingly mundane but very important task.

Our financial results in brief:

Total operating income in 2025 was \$407,511, \$18,641 above budget, without taking any money from the Heritage Fund. Regular giving income was up substantially to \$375,613 as compared with budget (\$328,895) thanks to the generosity of our members and friends.

Total operating expenses for 2025 were \$374,898, \$13,972 below budget. The net result was an operating surplus of \$32,613.

Our Heritage Endowment Fund ended 2025 at \$746,015.

Our Temporary Investment Fund ended 2025 at \$171,670.

Our Ashley Lecture Endowment Fund ended 2025 at \$145,623.

Our Roger Smith Concert Investment Fund ended 2025 at \$26,489.

Respectfully submitted on 1/7/2026, Phil Taylor, Treasurer.

(If you have questions or would like more details, please email me at treasurer@fcchendersonville.org).

Ministry to the Larger Community

The **Service and Giving Ministry** is one of FCC's largest groups. This ministry meets monthly, vets and discusses the many organizations that our church supports financially, leads drive-by collections of food and supplies, and leads in numerous projects within the church and community. All are welcome to participate in this ministry by being a team member or by participating in our community service projects.

10% of FCC funds are donated to area non profits. This year \$40,100 went to 42 community agencies. This group also sponsors a year-end Matching Funds drive. In 2025, twelve agencies received donations from individuals that were matched with FCC funds allocated for this purpose.

Our church membership is most generous and active in the various collections and community service projects sponsored by Service & Giving. This year our church raised \$1,421 for headsets and two SUV carloads of supplies for Upward Elementary, \$860 plus school supplies for the afterschool homework program at the Boys & Girls Club, two SUV carloads of requested items for the migrants, and 276 stuffed toys delivered to community agencies dealing with children.

Additionally, we supplied \$528 to Safelight for blankets and gifts for senior citizens through Meals on Wheels. Most recently our church collected food and funds for IAM to provide to those who lost SNAP benefits: 1671 pounds of food and \$2,345 (that was three truck loads of food items). We participated in sponsorship of the Pride Festival and enjoyed conversation and fun at the FCC booth.

Ministry to Members and Friends

Our Ministry to Members and Friends include many opportunities to grow together in fellowship and learning. Our prayer shawl ministry continues, we have a weekly Sit & Stitch Group, Monday Community Coffees, Thanksgiving Potluck, Fat Wednesday Pancake Supper, Congregational lunches, Fellowship Dinners, Game Nights, Sunday Coffee Hour, Book Study Groups, and our Thursday Crones Meeting for women. Our Children's Sunday School program meets every Sunday during worship. The Circle of Friends Small Group Ministry first session finished in May 2025. Our second round of groups began meeting in September 2025 with 11 total groups and 103 people participating. We enjoyed Ashley Lectures in May with John Pavlovitz as our speaker.



Ministry of Physical Resources

MPR hired a paint contractor to repaint all exterior wood trim, paint exterior doors, window frames, scrape old paint off panes, repair front porch columns, and repaint the cupola. Mark Mitchell (interior designer) and Ken Harkins (retired architect) were asked to provide MPR with plans for both a renovated nursery/Sunday school space and renovated Fellowship Hall bathrooms and a new ADA bathroom. We have asked a local contractor to determine the proposed costs for such a project; they have made site visits and we are creating a subcommittee to select the fine design details. We will be coming to the congregation this year for a decision about whether to proceed with the renovation. Stephanie Lowder designed and created a new set of exterior building and parking lot signage designs using our "new" logo. We have received bids on the job and we will proceed to order all signs except for our marquee sign (located off the front porch), which we are still designing.

MPR hired a contractor to clean the Fellowship Hall and Sunday school classroom carpet before Thanksgiving. At the request of our congregation, we will soon be installing handrail along the left-hand wall of Holy Hall, between the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. MPR works with community artists to exhibit their work along Holy Hall. The labyrinth, memorial garden and atrium are all tended and maintained by MPR members.

Milton's Garden now has signage to reflect the name, and Milton and his team (Carolyn, Dr. John and community volunteers) planted and harvested approx 1,600 lbs of fresh food for local food pantries including IAM. The harvest included potatoes, cabbage, okra, beans, tomatoes, and squash. Attention was given to the greenhouse, installing new windows and replacing the wood that was rotting. The greenhouse was repainted, as were some of the other buildings. The wooden fence between the garden and labyrinth will be painted in the near future. Currently, the three gates to the garden are being repaired and updated with new wood and hardware. The crew worked on replenishing the nutrients in the garden soil by incorporating organic material, which included chipped wood (from Jon Nobling's trees that were taken down during Helene), and planting Austrian winter peas, which are currently growing quite nicely. They will be tilled under in the near future.

The tractor needed some work on the engine in the early Spring but was fully functional throughout the summer. The tines on the tiller were replaced due to wear and will be much more efficient in tilling the soil. Two new people joined the garden crew.... Jim Bonham, a member, and Carroll, who Milton recruited from the ECUSTA trail. Carroll is now a regular and brings his own weed-wacker to keep the weeds at bay and the garden looking very tidy.



FCUCC Hendersonville
Special Congregational Meeting Minutes
26 January 2025

Call to Order.

Moderator Bob McLendon called the meeting to order at 11.35 am in the church sanctuary.

Karla led us in the opening prayer.

Establish the quorum.

Just prior to the meeting start, Bill Shaffer and Dawn Kucera counted the attendance, ensuring that a quorum (35% of 200 active membership) was present. The count was 86, so a quorum was present.

Opening Comments.

Bob announced that Dawn Kucera is acting as Clerk Pro Tem in Lin Stogner's absence.

Necrology.

Karla read the names of our members who died this year – the Saints in our lives. The list can be found in the Annual Report.

New Members in 2024.

Karla read the names of the new members who have joined us this year. The list can be found in the Annual Report.

Approval of Minutes of past meetings.

There were three congregational meetings in 2024:

- The Annual Meeting in January 2024.
- A special meeting in Spring of 2024 to approve the paving project.
- A special meeting in October to approve the interim budget.

Council had already approved them, which served as the motion, and a second was not needed. The minutes of these meetings were approved by a unanimous vote.

Treasurer's Report.

Phil Taylor presented a brief summary of the church's financial status. Those who wanted one had a copy of the report. Phil pointed to the summary on Page 1 as being key.

We had a good year in 2024.

- Our income was above budget and more than in 2023.
- We ended the year with a surplus of about \$38,000. This will be moved to the Property Maintenance Fund.
- Our invested funds also did quite well in 2024.
- We received a settlement of about \$119,000 from the Ecusta Trail project.

- \$99,000 to compensate for land that was taken. This money was placed into a 5-month CD, maturing in April 2025.

- \$20,000 in contingency fee refund. This money was placed in the Heritage Fund Temporary account.

Bob announced a Forum for later in February to introduce the new Council and seek congregational inputs.

Presentation of final 2025 budget.

Bob asked for a show of hands to approve the Final Budget for 2025. It was passed unanimously.

Parking lot paving project.

There are two parts to the project.

- **Paving Portion.** Mindy Myers gave an update. When the asphalt factory opens, hopefully in March, we will be Trace Paving's first project. It should take about a week to tear up the existing pavement, lay the foundation, and pour the new pavement. The striping will be done following that.

- **Environmental Portion.** Bill Shaffer gave the update. This will wait till spring, as the environmental part needs to have some of the pavement taken out. There are a number of moving parts, as plans are being revised.

- Ben Coonrod is working with landscape engineers.

- Bill Shaffer is working on new estimates and getting the correct permits.

- Bill applied for, and got, two grants for this part of the project, totaling \$96,500. This is roughly half of the total cost of the environmental portion.

- Council will come to the congregation in the spring for further funding appropriation.

- Cutouts in the median strip is allowing drainage to the back of the parking lot, causing some flooding there during rains. But this is good – the slant that way will push the water to the eventual retention pond, that will clean the water before going into Wash Creek (and following into Mud Creek and the French Broad River).

- Signage on the Ecusta Trail will document FCC's contribution.

- In response to Amy Dahan's question, the number of parking slots will remain about the same – perhaps a loss of a couple slots.

Bylaws revision update.

Bill announced that a team has been formed to do a Review of the Bylaws, as required in the Bylaws. Each ministry is represented on the team. Work will begin in February.

2025 Council Officers.

Bob presented the slate of officers for the year 2025. They are:

Moderator: Bob McLendon

Assistant Moderator: Bill Shaffer

Clerk: Lin Stogner

Treasurer: Phil Taylor

Assistant Treasurers: Ron Miller, Joan Nobling, Linda Yopps

There were no nominations from the floor.

The slate was approved unanimously.

Pastoral and Personal Relations Ministry (PPRM) Report.

Normally there would be nominations to PPRM to replace members rotating off. However, the chair has requested this be delayed until after the Bylaws review. All current members are willing to continue in their service.

Announcement of 2025 ministry facilitators.

1. Ministry of Finance, Scott Querin.
2. Ministry of Physical Resources, Pete Heuberger.
3. Ministry to Members and Friends, Diane Rose.
4. Ministry of Worship, Diane Rose.
5. Ministry to the Larger Community, DeDe Walton.

Acknowledgments.

During the course of the meeting, Bob acknowledged, to congregational applause, the following service to First Congregational:

- Bill Shaffer, Assistant Moderator, for filling in as Moderator for several months.
- Mark Fagerlin, from Ministry of Finance, served 2 years.
- Mindy Myers, from Ministry of Physical Resources, served 6 years.
- Linda Laderach, from Ministry of Worship, served 3 years.
- Stephanie Lowder and Bruce Mills, Serving and Giving.
- Bill, Mindy, and the entire Pave the Parking Lot Team.

Closing Benediction.

Karla sprinkled us with baptismal water while Mark gave the closing benediction.

Bob adjourned the meeting at 12.07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Kucera

Clerk Pro Tem

FCUCC Hendersonville
Special Congregational Meeting Minutes
30 March 2025

Call to Order.

Moderator Bob McLendon called the meeting to order at 11:37 AM in the church sanctuary.

Opening Prayer

Karla led us in the opening prayer.

Establishment of the quorum.

A quorum was confirmed by Clerk, Lin Stogner. There were 107 members present. A 2/3 approval vote (83 members) is required.

Opening Comments.

Bob defined the single purpose of the meeting: to approve additional funds as recommended by the Ministry of Finance (and approved by the Finance Ministry in a meeting held Monday with the president of the paving company). Monday's meeting included Church Council members and Ministry of Physical Resources members.

Additional cost to complete – Bob McLendon spoke to the additional funding requirement. To complete the paving of the parking lot requires \$96,419 in additional funds above the \$250,000 already approved by the congregation in September of 2024. The motion to be presented by Scott Querin, Facilitator of the Ministry of Finance, will be to increase the funding for this project by an additional \$130,000 (in addition to the \$250,000 already approved). An additional \$130,000 will cover the current increase of \$96,419 and provide a contingency of \$33,581 in case new issues arise (although none are expected). Bob requested that Trace stop all parking lot activity until congregational approval could be obtained. As a result, no work on the parking lot occurred this week. Bob indicated that the increase in paving costs will come from our Heritage Fund which now has \$955,201. \$118,964 of the increase to the Heritage Fund came from the Ecusta Trail property settlement. Bob will have an article on the Heritage Fund in the upcoming Chronicle. There is a small portion of the parking lot that will not be paved until final plans for an environmental retention pond are complete and approved.

Parking Lot Update - Bill Shaffer updated the congregation. The week Trace & Company began the parking lot project, their "asphalt eater" (milling machine) sank on the first parking lot section; however, it was able to continue. On the second section the machine sank a lot further (so much so that it required a wrecking company to pull it out). Once the asphalt was removed, we found the ground underneath was so soft it caused the milling machine to sink. Even trucks working on the parking lot sunk 10 to 12 inches. Gray clay is the cause. When it gets wet it becomes soft, then dries, gets cold, and expands and contracts pushing the soil up and down cracking the asphalt.

It has been 30+/- years since the parking lot was paved. Technology has changed in 30 years! So has the area around the church. Construction and landscaping have occurred. Existing drainage issues were fixed. And the parking lot cracked, allowing more water to exacerbate the problem. Also, the formula for asphalt has changed (making it more environmentally friendly and more flexible). This flexibility allows the parking lot to *absorb* the weight of vehicles rather than cracking. These problems existed in the past and were addressed by increasing the thickness of the asphalt in the spots from three to as much as seven inches.

To fix the areas of soft clay, they must be dug out, landscape fabric placed, a layer of stones added, a geo-grid placed and then gravel placed on top to fill to the level required to ready the lot for asphalt. The additional cost is to fix these areas and requires your approval. The paving company does not anticipate problems in the back lot. However, there is a possibility which explains why the contingency is being included. We did not know about this beforehand because it was hidden underneath the existing asphalt. The only way to know ahead of time would have been to pay a company to complete a series of borings around the parking lot (more money). Even so, the selected borings may have missed problem areas, and any areas found would have to be fixed regardless.

Motion from Finance Ministry – Scott Querin presented the following motion. *Approval of up to \$130,000 in additional expenditures to complete parking lot remediation and paving. This amount represents estimated additional costs of \$96,419 to complete current work plus a contingency of approximately \$33,500 (roughly 26% of remaining costs) in the event additional stone or other material is required to complete the paving.*

Pete Heuberger provided a second to this motion.

Questions & Discussion:

Ken Harkins asked if a daily fee was being charged for the “stop work” order.

Response: Bob indicated that we were not paying any additional fee for the work stoppage.

Jim Jolly asked if we are sure, without the boring, that we are on solid ground going forward without the machine not having travelled in the remaining areas.

Response: Bill responded that the machine *has* travelled in all areas, except that which will be reserved for the environmental project. No issues have been noted.

Linda Laderach asked if there had been any thought regarding asking members of the congregation to contribute, so funds did not have to be taken from the Heritage Fund.

Response: Bob responded that a request had not been made, however, anyone wishing to donate should see him after the meeting.

Phil Dratz asked where the retention pond would be.

Response: Bob replied that the retention pond would be a separate project with separate funding to be addressed at a later meeting. Grants have been obtained to cover some of the costs of the environmental project.

David Kelly called for no more questions or discussion.

Response: Bob called for a show of hands of everyone in favor of calling the question. Hands were raised in favor of calling the question. Hands were raised in favor of ending discussion.

Vote: No one opposed the original motion. The motion to approve the funds was unanimous, by a show of hands.

Bob McLendon adjourned the meeting at 11:53AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lin Stogner, Clerk – First Congregational United Church of Christ, Hendersonville, NC

FCUCC Hendersonville

Congregational Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2025

Special Congregational Meeting to Review Discuss and Vote on the Proposed Updates to our Bylaws.

- Bob McLendon, Moderator, called the meeting to order at 11:48AM.
- Lin Stoger confirmed that a quorum was present (84 members were present).
- Bob opened with a prayer.
- Bob gave a brief overview about the update of the Church Bylaws before turning the meeting over to Bill Shaffer, Assistant Moderator.
- Bill acknowledged and thanked all members of the Bylaws' Committee (of which he was also a member) for their tedious work and dedication for nearly one year.

- o Stephanie Lowder

- o Dawn Kucera

- o Pete Heuberger

- o Pam Rogers

- o Diane Rose

- o Rich Yount

- o Assistants – Mark Acker, Karla Miller, and Bob McLendon

- Bill gave an overview of why we have the Bylaws and reviewed the specific updates made to the Bylaws and why they were made.

- o First, a typographical error has been corrected. Congressional should be Congregational and will be edited accordingly.

- o Bill specifically addressed membership, ministry details, and changes to the Church Council.

- o Bill called for questions; none were raised, so the meeting returned to Bob.

- Bob McLendon mentioned that the Bylaws updates were unanimously approved by the Church Council and

called for discussion. The following comments and questions were raised.

- o Mary Woolsey asked why Council members should not be enrolled members. Bill Shaffer,

Stephanie, and Dawn responded: Many people must sever their ties with previous churches in order to become a member of this church. Our Bylaws now allow those who wish to remain associated with previous churches to become Council members if they wish to worship and physically and

spiritually support this church. Although some people have been attending and supporting the church for many years, they have been too shy to come to the front to make a commitment as an “enrolled” member. Additionally, every Council member must receive approval from the Congregation.

o Another congregant asked, what will be the process and approval for the Ministries Operational Manuals? Bill responded, The Ministries will approve and so will the Church Council.

o David Kelly asked, how will the Council be sure they are getting the information needed from the Ministries if the person reporting to Council is not the Ministry’s Facilitator? Bill responded, every Council member must receive approval from the Congregation at the Annual Meeting. Bob added the Council will still be updated on each Ministry’s activities from the person chosen by the Ministry and approved by the Congregation.

o EJ Wilson asked, once the manuals are finalized will and where they be available for review? Bill responded, there is an “archive” that the office keeps; we will also see about keeping them online on the Website. Stephanie responded, the updated Bylaws require that the manuals be available for review.

o Sammye Whitney again thanked the Committee Members for updating the Bylaws (applause). Continuing her comments, she felt the updates move us closer to inclusion rather than exclusion.

o Church Council approval of the Bylaws acted as a motion to approve. David Kelly and another congregant put forth motions to approve the updated Bylaws. The vote was unanimously in favor of approval.

- Bob McLendon adjourned the meeting at 12:11PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lin Stogner, Clerk