

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAN DIEGO
FY 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW
FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee has continued to support First Church's mission in FY 2025, navigating changing giving patterns and inflationary pressure on expenses. As we approach year-end, we are blessed as a congregation and submit these highlights on the financial health of our church:

- As of October 31, total revenues are at 95% of budget. Though current year pledges are short, we remain optimistic that holiday giving will help to close the gap. There is a modest budget surplus that can be applied should any shortfall remain at year-end.
- The Children's Growing Center (CGC) continues to provide a valuable ministry in the broader community. You may recall that enrollment was impacted when the State of California extended pre-K public education to 4-year-olds through the transitional kindergarten program. The CGC adjusted and revenues have improved year over year; however, expenses continue to increase – particularly wages and benefits – and the CGC has announced a tuition fee increase in response that will be effective at the start of the New Year.
- New Life Counseling Center has exceeded revenue projections and is on track to end the year with a budget surplus.
- The East Property Fund is at 77% of the YTD budgeted revenue, primarily because of delinquent rent by a tenant. Steps have been taken to remove the tenant and pursue collection. There is interest in the space and once the current tenant is gone, we are hopeful that it will be successfully leased in 2026.
- Last month we transferred the Ocean Beach property to the District Union, and it no longer resides on the books of First Church.
- After careful consideration of regional data on annual salary increases as well as inflationary impacts, a 4% cost of living adjustment was proposed and approved for all pastors and staff. This investment in talent supports continuation of the many programs and services to our community.
- The annual financial review was conducted by Leonard Sonnenberg, CPA. He issued a clean opinion for FY 2024. As in the past, he encouraged the church to consolidate funds and accounts wherever possible and to create a report in the format he uses to prepare his documents.

It has been a pleasure to serve in partnership as co-chairs of the Finance Committee. We would like to thank our fellow committee members for their active participation and support:

Rick Cook
Bruce Johnson
Erik Kim-Holmgren

Jerry Schiebel
Kathryn Small

Tom Trujillo
Tara Wilde

Respectfully submitted,
Nan Myers and Phyllis Sarkaria

FUMCSD Board of Trustees

2025 Year in Review Report

Solar Panel Installation

Our solar panels went operational in October 2024. After five months of operation, Dr. Keith Fuller, member of our congregation, did an analysis of the output of the solar panels compared to what had been promised by the provider, Sunistics Group. The results were disappointing. The system was producing about ½ of the kWh output promised. Phil Jeter, member of the Board of Trustees, has worked with Keith to identify potential causes for the deficit. A number of installation issues were uncovered including panels that were not installed, panels not tilted correctly, broken panels, and panels not wired correctly. Keith and Phil have spent a considerable amount of their time working with Sunistics to resolve these and other problems.

A problem that was quickly observed several months after installation was the amount of dirt that had accumulated on the panels. The dirty panels are likely the result of the Home Depot construction taking place next door. Sunistics required clean panels to do their testing and analysis so the board approved a company to clean the panels at a cost of \$5,800. They used a drone to do the cleaning. A third party solar inspector was hired to do an audit of the installation. He found a number of potential code violations that are being addressed by Sunistics, but nothing that would significantly improve production. One savings that was identified was to change the Sunday morning schedule for turning the sanctuary heat pumps on. The savings could be as much as \$1,800 per month. Much work remains to be done with Sunistics Group. They have made commitments to resolve the issues or to provide compensation to the church.

Projects Funded in 2025

- Landscaping Maintenance
 1. A high priority for 2025 was to improve our landscaping maintenance. The board agreed to stay with Landcare Logic and to conduct a walkaround with them each month identifying irrigation issues.
 2. Brush was cleared on the hillside behind the church at a cost of \$12,300.
 3. Trees in P5 parking were treated to promote better growth and two additional trees were planted. Total cost was \$4,482.
 4. Additional drip lines and plants, along with improved drainage were installed in the area between the CGC and P3 parking at cost of \$5,000.
 5. Irrigation backflow that was impacting water pressure in the upper part of the campus was replaced at a cost of \$5,645.

6. Landcare Logic completed the remainder of irrigation repairs for restoring the watering system at a cost of \$3,569.
 7. 87 trees on the church campus have been trimmed at a cost of \$8,141.
- Painting Projects
 1. King of the Painters completed painting the sanctuary exterior at a cost of \$184,521.
 2. The painting of the Linder complex was completed at a cost of \$30,900.
 - HVAC

Brian Cox Mechanical installed four high efficiency heat pumps in the Music Center/Trotter Chapel for a cost of \$112,241.
 - New Lighting

A new lighting system was needed in the sanctuary chancel. The old system was inefficient and difficult to maintain. A DMX lighting system was installed at a cost of \$91,711.
 - Security and Safety
 1. Four additional security cameras were installed by Alarms Unlimited to cover P4, P6, P7, P10, and P11 parking to eliminate numerous blind spots. The cost was \$7,501.
 2. Hand rails were installed on each of the chancel steps at a cost of \$2,241.
 3. The driveway between Linder Complex and UMC was repaired, resealed, and restriped at a cost of \$7,655.
 - Other Projects
 1. An annual maintenance contract has been started for maintenance of the Bell Tower. The 12 bells will be checked each visit for proper operation. The 1-year contract is for \$2,750.
 2. The hot water heater in the CGC staff room has been replaced for \$5,010.
 3. The floor drain has been repaired and tiles replaced in the Linder Hall Men's restroom.
 4. The water tanks for the heating and cooling system in the UMC have been replaced for \$3,041. A repair was done to the system for \$2,718.
 5. The church truck has been repainted for \$4,818.
 6. UMC elevator certification has been completed for \$4,175.
 7. The board has approved the drains in the lower sanctuary to be cleared and cleaned at a cost of \$2,667.
 8. The carpet in the lower sanctuary foyer has been replaced with ceramic wood at a cost of \$7,690.

Other Items

1. The board approved the necessary documents for the transfer of the Ocean Beach properties from FUMCSD to the South District Union of the California Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church. Transfer of ownership is now official.
2. The church has been unsuccessful in finding a private school to lease the 2nd floor of the UMC. The board authorized church staff to enter into a real estate contract with Kidder Mathews to find a suitable non-profit organization to sign a lease.
3. The board approved a new benefit for church staff with five years of service entitling them to a Memorial Garden niche with engraving and urn. The niche is restricted to the bottom three rows of the Memorial Garden walls. Current value is \$870.
4. In December, the board will be asked to approve a request from the Finance Committee to transfer \$500,000 from its funds to the annual church operating budget for fiscal year 2026.

Pastor Parish Relations Committee

Year in Review Report

December 2025

The PPRC of 2025 met at least once each quarter, listening to our pastors and sharing our versions of faith within this congregation.

Twice this year, we had the opportunity to meet in person and enjoyed that special personal interaction. Our last meeting was by Zoom with the District Superintendent, Rev. Luis Garcia.

Next year, we look forward to welcoming new members as well as those who will continuing their service with us.

On behalf of PPRC, I want to thank Joy Bush and Kalen Michel for their service as they rotate off our committee.

Respectfully, submitted,

Dana Hook

Chair

**FOUNDATION BOARD REPORT TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL FOR 2025 YEAR END
SATURDAY DECEMBER 15, 2025**

THE 2025 FOUNDATION BOARD SCHEDULE AND MEMBERSHIP

We met 4 times during the year: February 4th, May 6th, Sept. 7th, and November 4th

Janice Lau stepped down as chair for personal reasons, but continued as a Foundation member. Nick Hubsmith was elected chair. Chrissy Masuda continued as Secretary.

New members added for 2025 were Amy Moberly, Kent Shrock, and Claudia Kay. Rotating off the Foundation Board in 2025 were Cheryl Slavik, and John Stevenson. We thank them for their service to the Church and the Foundation.

Continuing Foundation members were Mel West, Scott Caprio, and Norma Brownwell.

Staff members serving on the Foundation were Jason Tucker and Linda Hawk.

THE 2026 FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND SCHEDULE

For 2026, all members will continue through the year except for Amy Moberly who wants to focus other church commitments. We want to thank Amy for not only her work on the Foundation but for her continuing service on other church committees and ministries. We will enter 2026 with one opening.

I think all of us are aware that Jason Tucker will not return as our paid staff manager and advisor to the UMC Foundation. We will miss his guidance, experience and daily presence in the office, but he will continue to be available on an as needed basis should we need assistance with questions that may come up. We wish Jason blessings as he embarks on a new endeavor with an outside organization. We will be looking to fill Jason's position as the year moves along.

Election of a Foundation chair and secretary will take place in the first quarter meeting of 2026. Those meetings are yet to be scheduled. We will also schedule the annual report review and other Foundation activities as needed.

2025 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

We started the year with assets totaling \$11.1 million. We ended the year with assets totaling \$11.9 million (these are rounded numbers).

We continued with our investment advisors from previous years, Blankenship and Foster, and Kane-Anderson- Rudnick. We have \$7.4 million invested with Blankenship and Foster and \$4.5 million

invested with Kane Anderson Rudnick for a total of \$11.9 million The YTD investment return with Blankenship and Foster is 13.4% and the YTD investment with Kane Anderson Rudnick is 6.89%. After the 12/31/25 earnings are posted and statements rendered, the Foundation will disperse 5% of the invested assets to the church per our bylaws. Last March we dispursed\$549,000 to the church and expect to have a similar or slightly higher disbursement in March of 2026 based on the YE 2025 balances.

2025 gifts to the foundation came from the estate of John Herrman (after final estate settlement) and the estate of Mary Lee Dickerson. We are grateful for all gifts of any size and we especially honor John and Mary Lee.

2025 FONDATION EVENTS

On May 4, we hosted the 32nd Covenant Circle luncheon at the Southwestern Yacht Club.

On November 1st in conjunction with the Cultural Events Committee and Church Choir we hosted a well attended evening dinner in Linder Hall. After dinner the Memorial Garden was open for a tour and allowed time for family and friends to honor loved ones. That was followed by the Evensong All Saints day concert in the sanctuary. It was very special!

2026 ISSUES AND QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

Follow up on estate planning help/referrals for church members: We started looking at this question in 2025; need to loop back around to determine resolution. The issue here is that the Church cannot be seen as recommending specific advisors, investments distributions etc.

We are going to examine, with the help of our investment advisors, whether or not we should or can increase our annual distribution from 5% to perhaps 6%. This could require a change in our bylaws. We need to consider the market, possible changes in investment assets and be cautious with Church assets. WE ARE JUST GOING EXPLORE THE QUESTION for now.

The Foundation has three policy statements: 1. Gift Acceptance Policy 2. Distribution Policy, and 3. Investment Policy. The Investment Policy has not been updated since 2017 or 2018. In conjunction with the question above, it our goal to review and "perhaps" update this policy.

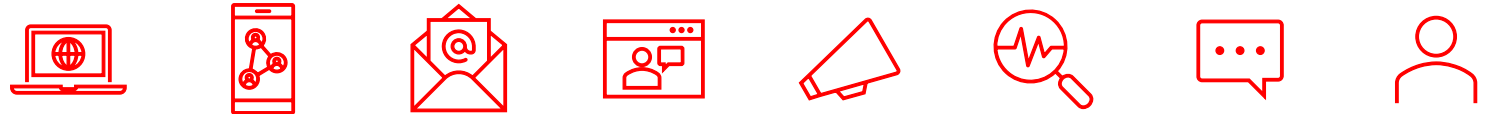
We also want to review our current stance of having two investment advisors. Their investment approaches differ to some degree. We may be able save some money in fees, but we need to determine the risks vs. rewards if we were to consolidate.

Respectfully submitted by:
Nick Hubsmith

First Church SD

Awareness & Engagement

November 2025



Awareness & Engagement Dashboard

WEBSITE	NOV	YTD (JAN-NOV)	12 MO (DEC24-NOV25)
New Visitors	3.2K	31.6K (↓)	35.4K (↓)
Web Visits (number of sessions)	5.4K	58.3K (↓)	65.4K no significant change
Engagement Rate (% sessions in which users interacted with website)	53.89%	56.41% (↓)	57.46% (↓)
SOCIAL (Facebook & Instagram)	NOV	YTD (JAN-NOV)	12 MO (DEC24-NOV25)
New Followers	75	1.4 (↑)	1.5K (↑)
Post Interactions	1.1K	12.9K (↑)	15.7K (↑)
YOUTUBE	NOV	YTD (JAN-NOV)	12 MO (DEC24-NOV25)
New Subscribers	54	497 (↓)	814 (↑)
Video Views	48.1K	296.2K (↑)	382K (↑)
% of Completion (average of how much a video is watched once started)	22.4%	21.9% (↑)	22% (↑)
TOTAL FOLLOWERS Facebook: 3.6K Instagram: 660 YouTube: 3.7K			

PODCAST	NOV	YTD (JAN-NOV)	ALL TIME (JAN24-NOV25)
Views (YouTube, Apple, Spotify)	546	6.9K (↑)	12.6K
% of Completion (YouTube only; average of how much is watched once started)	25.5%	21.5% (↓)	23.3%
WORSHIP	NOV	YTD (JAN-NOV)	12 MO (DEC24-NOV25)
In-Person Attendance	1,340	13.4K (↓)	17.1K (↑)
Livestream Viewers (1 st week viewers x 1.5)	2,282	20K (↓)	24.5K (↓)
MONETIZATION (YouTube, Church Merch, Patreon)	NOV	YTD (JAN-NOV)	12 MO (DEC24-NOV25)
Amount Earned	\$174.51	\$1,597.48 (↑)	\$1,714 (↑)

Church Merch started July 2024 & Patreon started Nov. 2024

Website engagement has decreased but YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram engagement and followers have increased. More people are finding the podcast on YouTube and we're seeing more in-person worshippers. We're continuing focus of improving podcast engagement.

Additional Stats & Recent Activities

Worship Visitors & New Members:

35 new members this year; 5 in November | More than 200 new visitors in worship this past year

Digital Visibility & Engagement:

- Averaging 385 monthly viewers of **Perspectives** podcast
- **Being found by ChatGPT:** 132 website visits & 99 new web visitors in 2025
- **Growing social following**, we've gained 2,007 followers on Facebook, Instagram & YouTube in 2025
- **UMC Communications** is featuring our Reverends in a project ... we'll share when it's live!

Church Merch & Church Logo:

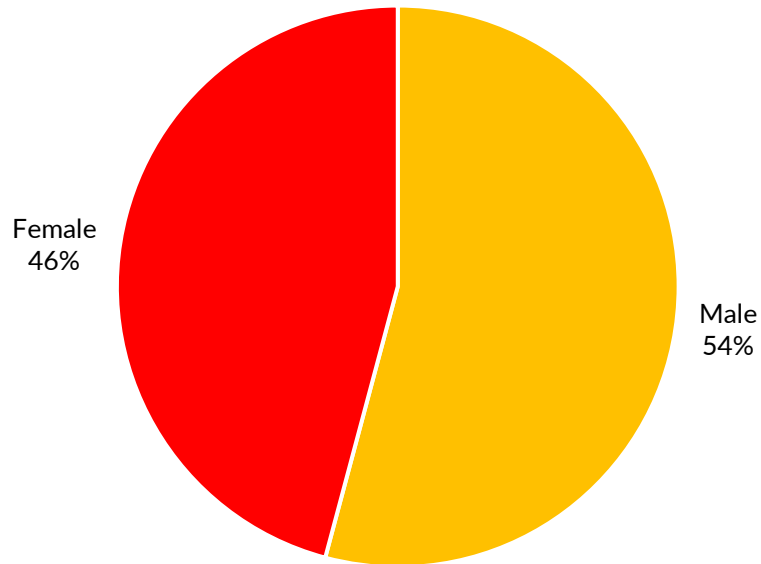
- Logo refresh and merch designs **highlight our inclusive environment**
- Church Merch options now include some polo shirt options and products with just our logo

Audience

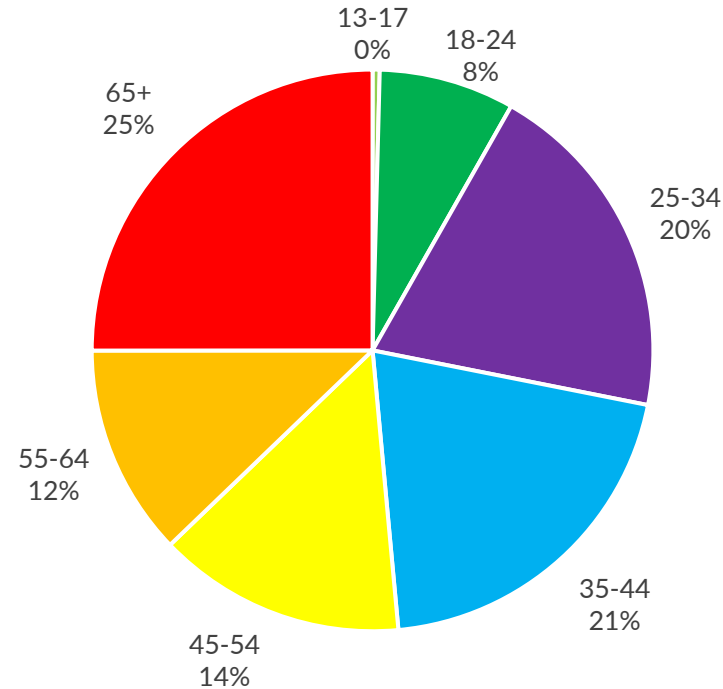


We continue to reach a mix of ages across the digital channels. Location is primarily Southern California, but some paid social is targeting all of California.

Reported Gender



Reported Age



Cities	Views
San Diego	2,755
Los Angeles	798
San Jose	185
Chula Vista	115
El Cajon	83
Santee	68
Anaheim	63
Phoenix	62
Escondido	60
La Mesa	45

Represents: Facebook/Instagram subscribers, YouTube video views, website visitors. Excludes cities outside of western U.S.

Age & Gender from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube; **Location** from Facebook, Instagram, Google Analytics (website)

CHARGE CONFERENCE FORM #7: Annual Report of the Pastor or LPA

REPORT YEAR	2025-2026
I. ABOUT THE LOCAL CHURCH	
A. DISTRICT	South at southdistrict@calpacumc.org
B. LOCAL CHURCH/CHARGE	First UMC of San Diego
C. PASTOR OR LPA AT LOCAL CHURCH	Trudy Robinson
D. PASTOR OR LPA EMAIL	revtrudy@fumcsd.org
E. PASTOR OR LPA TITLE	Lead Pastor
F. CHURCH OFFICE EMAIL	lhawk@fumcsd.org
II. REPORT OF THE PASTOR	
1. HAVE THE MEMBERSHIP ROLLS BEEN AUDITED FOR THE CURRENT YEAR?	Yes
1a. If NO, why not?	
2. IN WHAT WAYS DOES YOUR CONGREGATION "SEND PERSONS INTO THE WORLD TO LIVE LOVINGLY AND JUSTLY AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST BY HEALING THE SICK, FEEDING THE HUNGRY, CARING FOR THE STRANGER, FREEING THE OPPRESSED, BEING AND BECOMING A COMPASSIONATE, CARING PRESENCE, AND WORKING TO DEVELOP SOCIAL STRUCTURES THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE GOSPEL"?	<p>We are continuing to make adjustments in our philosophy of ministry to better respond to the changing digital world in which we live. First UMC of San Diego, as a regional church, is focusing on making a larger impact as a large church while encouraging our parishioners to make a local impact in their own neighborhoods.</p> <p>The broader impact that the whole church embraces are: 1. The Dream School of the Arts, 2. Support and Advocacy for Immigrant Families and 3. Racial Justice through education and financial support.</p> <p>We have been serving the children in underserved local elementary schools with after school programs of tutoring, arts and music, healthy living, and a culture of empowerment and belonging through the Dream School of the Arts. Parishioners are encouraged to volunteer their time to engage in building a network of supportive relationships with the "dreamers".</p> <p>The threats against the immigrant community has affected the families of the Dream School of the Arts and we've been providing help as we can. Some of us have been involved in protests against the current administration's treatment of immigrants, and providing compassion, support and funds as needed for families in our community.</p> <p>The Sankofa Pilgrimages and the prerequisite learnings and summary celebrations are have completed its third year. We have learned the broad history of racism from chattel slavery to modern day red-lining and school to prison pipeline during the first Sankofa Pilgrimage that took us to the Southeastern states of our country. We saw how racism showed up in the North the second pilgrimage, and in the Midwest in the most recent pilgrimage. These trips have been transformative for the pilgrims, both those who have gone to only one, and those who have attended every year. Two more years follow. In 2026 we will look at the racism in California and in 2027, we will go to Ghana to see where most of those who became slaves came from.</p>
3. IN WHAT WAYS DOES YOUR CONGREGATION "CONTINUE THE MISSION OF SEEKING, WELCOMING AND GATHERING PERSONS INTO THE COMMUNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST?"	<p>Our commitment to building a digital presence has been an effort in evangelism. We have known for a long time that the website is often the first thing people see in their search for a church home. We have sought to be clear in what we believe, who we are, and how we practice our faith in everything we post on our social media accounts, YouTube channel, and the pages on our website. We have found that when people come to visit on a Sunday morning, they already know us and are eager to see us in person. Some are even eager to join us.</p> <p>The clarity of our message makes us distinctive from the more generic Christian postings or more damaging postings of Christian nationalists. People who are seeking an authentic faith that doesn't squirm away from the things we need to apologize for or the hateful theologies that can come from interpretations of the same Bible we use, allows a depth to our hope that isn't always found in platitudes and generic hopeful messages.</p>

	<p>When people see these posts online, and decide to visit us, they get to experience whether or not we are true to our word. I am grateful that we are becoming just what we say we are. The congregation is seeing new and younger people find us and are welcoming them with open arms. Our hospitality team of laity and staff communicates on Sunday mornings in real time, sharing information of our visitors and ensures that people are welcomed, introduced and shown we care.</p> <p>I firmly believe the the Re-Wilding conference gave us an understanding of changes in our world as a result of digital technology. That discovery has allowed for a new openness and a greater sense of hope. That hope, honesty, clarity and openness is contagious.</p>
<p>4. NARRATIVE REPORT OF THE PASTOR OR LPA.</p>	<p>This year has been a rewarding year in many aspects. After the Re-Wilding visioning process of 2023, and the implementation of many of the ideas that came from the vision in 2024, 2025 was the year we began to reap the harvest of the seeds we've planted. We are seeing the Spirit at work affirming the inclusion we embrace as we seek to welcome, cherish and support all we come in contact with, including those in the gap between our physical footprint and the digital world.</p> <p>Our Sunday mornings are curated to be an invitation to dive deep into focused theological themes, in our in-person services and activities, as well as in our on-demand content. These themes have challenged us all to approach faith, life, and others in new ways. We hear from many that this has brought a new depth to their discussions as they wrestle with matters of faith. We launched new groups and spaces to blend fellowship and spiritual growth, including a Patreon channel, lay-led book groups, and virtual small groups for our remote worshippers. These groups allow for participants to be supported as they wrestle.</p> <p>We know our families continue to be busier than ever, so we've challenged our church to find new ways to foster the spiritual development of kids and help our families carve out sacred time to worship and fellowship together. VBS was reimaged into single-day adventure, followed by a family fun fest that brought smiles to all involved - from the youngest to the oldest of family members. And we've shifted our Sunday School format and focus to bring in more avenues of spirituality and worship, helping our kids and teens expand their view of how they can explore and live out their faith.</p> <p>Other events and activities have formed stronger relationships with others and allows us to make an impact on the world around us. Our racial justice ministry continued, awarding grants to San Diego based organizations so they can continue to do their life-giving work throughout the region. We embarked on our third Sankofa Pilgrimage, tracking the Midwest Migration to better understand the history of racism and its harm that continues today. Our families once again worked alongside our Jewish brothers and sisters during our second Interfaith Dominican Republic Service-Learning Trip. Our Dream School of the Arts continues to grow in numbers and impact on students' lives. And we had the joy of celebrating Pride throughout San Diego in a variety of community gatherings in July - honoring the Imago Dei in the beautiful mosaic of relationships and gender expressions that God has blessed us with.</p> <p>We continue to explore affordable housing on the unused properties of the church. We look forward to being able to impact our neighbors who have insufficient housing in positive ways and to building relationships with these new neighbors for the benefit of both neighbor and congregant.</p> <p>The Re-Wilding process has redefined and shifted how we understand the church's role in today's world, and this abundant harvest comes from this. We've had the pleasure of sharing about our Rewilding process at conferences and webinars, throughout the United Methodist connection.</p> <p>The stories of the people who have found new hope and new faith in the church because of our re-Wilding are the most important result. But the numbers are impressive, too. We welcomed 30 new members into our church family this past year, including 9 confirmands. As of October 5th, we've also connected with 211 new visitors in worship, with about 50 of them returning regularly. Our small group attendance averages 216 each month. We have more than 1,800 new followers across YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, and more than 5,800 hits to our podcast.</p> <p>With this new vision, new energy, new parishioners and new partners, we expect 2026 to continue to produce a harvest, to provide new areas in which to plant seeds, and to give us more reasons to praise God and give thanks to God's love, grace, and church.</p>

Report for Church Council, December 2025

Rev. Dr. Hannah Ka, Pastor of Discipleship

After five years of ministry among you, I entered a season of harvest this year. The **re-wilding** of the church, whose dreaming began in 2023 and implementation in 2024, has now begun to bear abundant fruit. Greeting several new visitors each Sunday has become part of our weekly rhythm, and many are finding their way into the small groups we planted in earlier years.

Our weekly podcast and continued livestreaming have brought nearly 300 new visitors so far this year. The **hospitality team** we launched, using WhatsApp to stay connected, has been hard at work welcoming new visitors, tracking returning guests, and helping them connect with existing groups. Our newly established **Coffee & Clergy** gathering on the Linder Patio between services has also become a meaningful point of connection, offering new and returning visitors a warm, low-pressure space to meet pastors and ask questions. Many of these conversations have naturally led people to join the new members class. More than 30 **new members** joined our church this past year, and the pastoral team has delighted in formally welcoming them. In 2026, I plan to invite additional lay members and leaders to join the hospitality team so that we may greet new visitors with even greater intention.

When I first began planting **small groups** during my second and third year, I did not yet realize how central these groups would become in welcoming newcomers. Many of our neighborhood groups opened their monthly or bi-monthly gatherings to new participants. Our Water's Edge group developed a new circle within the group, called *Dig Deep*, to offer sacred space for those wishing to explore their spiritual journey more intentionally. Three new individuals have stepped up to help organize the neighborhood groups next year. Two groups also participated in Showers of Blessings, serving hot breakfast to unhoused neighbors around Balboa Park, an expansion of their fellowship into shared service.

Thanks to our ongoing **re-wilding** efforts and the steady flow of new visitors, both Young Adults and The River (our LGBTQ++ community) have tripled their monthly attendance. This year, we also launched an online group, *Fabulous Online Ladies*, to connect women across our community for a monthly Zoom gathering on the last Sunday of each month. The Parents Forum continues to meet to support parents of children and youth, though attendance fluctuates due to the full schedules of young families. We also added a weekly discussion group for listeners of the Perspectives podcast, which now gathers 8–10 people after Tapestry worship each Sunday.

Following the recommendations of the **Engagement & Discipleship Task Force**, we are slowly taking our **mission and outreach efforts** to the next level. We have begun spotlighting various mission groups as well as individuals who live out the spiritual inspiration they receive on Sundays in their own neighborhoods, engaging both our in-person and online communities.

I continue to stay in touch with our **migrant friends** who have settled in San Diego and throughout California. Whenever we exchange texts, phone calls, or visits, they express heartfelt gratitude for the radical hospitality extended by our congregation. This November, I joined a prayer vigil for immigrants taken into custody and held in the basement of the federal courthouse. Bearing witness to their suffering and resilience only deepened the urgency of our care. Many continue to live in fear of ICE and the ongoing changes in their processes over the past several months. Please continue to keep in your prayers the migrant guests who found refuge on our campus as they continue their journeys.

Our **church-wide gatherings** remain an important part of our communal life, offering learning opportunities such as the Sankofa pilgrimage, seasonal book studies, and podcast-based discussions. These gatherings create space for us to learn, eat, laugh, love, and heal together.

Baptism continues to be a central mission of our church. In 2024, we baptized seven babies and children, as well as two adults. We also celebrated a wonderful **Confirmation Class** of 2025, welcoming

nine new members by profession of faith. Nine mentors walked alongside them this year, and I enjoyed hosting a post-confirmation beach gathering with our confirmands this summer. I pray that our congregation will continue to nurture them in the years ahead.

Preaching and teaching from the pulpit, in Zoom gatherings, and in 1-on-1 meetings with leaders continue to be important learning platforms for me. Listening to our people, reading new books, and integrating those insights into sermons and book studies is a source of deep joy. This year, I took the risk of sharing more vulnerable parts of my own journey from the pulpit, inviting our congregation to reflect on their everyday experiences and to discover God's abiding grace in the ordinary moments of life.

This year also brought **personal milestones**. With my teenage daughter heading off to college, I began a new chapter, strengthening my body by swimming five days a week, deepening my social connections by saying yes to more invitations, and refreshing my language studies through Duolingo in Spanish, Japanese, and French. As I enter my sixth year of ministry with you here at First Church, I also plan to apply for the Lilly Grant to prepare for a sabbatical year in 2026. I ask for your prayers in this process.

In closing, I offer my deepest gratitude to the congregation for your unwavering faithfulness and dedicated service. Your commitment continues to inspire and sustain the work we share. In 2026, my focus will be on **identifying and nurturing new leaders** while **welcoming and equipping new members** for the many ministries we carry out together. As we look beyond 2025, may we continue to grow in grace, courage, and community.

Church Council Report: December 2025
Rev. Brittany Juliette Hanlin, Pastor of Connection and Care

Caring Ministries

I continue to work with the Caring Ministries of the church to meet the needs of congregants facing difficult health diagnoses and challenging personal situations. I continue to build relationships through pastoral calls, visits, and Sunday check-ins.

The **Caring Hearts** Team meets bi-weekly to discuss pastoral care needs in the congregation. The team continues to show great compassion as they strengthen connections and form new bonds. We continue to receive cards of thanks for our phone calls, cards, visits, and Christmas and Easter bag deliveries. Christmas bags and boxes were filled on December 1. Bags will be delivered to our homebound congregants between December 2-December 25. Boxes will be sent out to our online community on December 3.

In this season, we have also held space for grief as families mourn and remember loved ones from our congregation. Offering pastoral care and helping families plan **services of remembrance** is a tender and sacred part of my calling. It is an honor to walk with families during these moments, and often I am blessed to form new relationships through the sharing of stories, memories, and faith.

This fall we recruited for **Stephen Ministry** and we have five new people joining us. This is very exciting as we took a year off from recruitment to rebuild our leadership team and overall ministry. Training for the new cohort begins January 10, 2026 and ends on March 14, 2026, with a commissioning in worship to follow. Trainings are scheduled for 10 Saturdays for five hours each week, in order to complete the 50-hours of required training. Stephen Leaders meet monthly to plan training sessions and supervision learning for current Stephen Ministers.

The **Prayers and Squares** is looking for ways to grow and connect with younger generations. During many of my pastoral visits, people request prayer quilts or are comforted by my offer to have one sponsored for them.

The **Grief Support Group** continues to meet under the leadership of Sheilah Cameron, Director of NLCC. Due to low registration numbers, we have decided that it is best for Sheilah to lead the fall group. Due to the intimate nature of grief, it is usually beneficial to have smaller groups, so the low registration numbers is not a deterrent in this ministerial offering. The Blue Christmas service will be held on December 21 as a space to acknowledge the depth of grief many are carrying during the holiday season.

Children and Youth

Chapel Time for CGC resumed for the 2025-2026 school year on August 24 with 30 preschoolers, across three classrooms. I continue to work with Denise Vick, the Director of the

Children's Growing Center to strengthen our relationship and we are seeing some fruit with a CGC family recently joining us for worship. Chapel Time is one the highlights of my week because the innocence and curiosity of the kids is a heartwarming reminder that God's abounding and abundant joy is closer to us than we often realize.

Sunday School has also resumed for the 2025-2026 program year, but we've made some changes. This year we are focusing our time and resources on strengthening our music and arts ministry for children. Our program incorporates traditional Sunday School lessons, music, art, mental health, STEAM, and musical performances in an effort to reach a larger demographic of families and to offer children a spectrum of learning opportunities. We have 18 Sunday School volunteers this year. Dana Zimbric, Director of Primary Voices was instrumental in creating this year's schedule. The children and youth are now in Session 3: Christmas Pageant preparation. I am excited to see this year's pageant on Christmas Eve.

Teaching

We continue to record the **Pastor's Podcast: Perspectives**, which has been a fun pastoral ministry to develop with the ministers and communications team.

The **Sankofa Pilgrimage** having now explored the South, the East Coast and the Midwest, I am now preparing for next year's journey, exploring our neck of the woods: the West Coast, specifically California. We will unpack the history of our great state through various day trips around San Diego (May 2, May 16, May 23, June 13) and a 4-day pilgrimage to Central and Northern California (July 3-7).

Plans are underway for Sankofa 2027 which will take us to Ghana, West Africa in January. As always there is a required pre-study before each pilgrimage to prepare our hearts, minds, and spirits for what we will encounter and uncover together.

Worship

Worship and preaching responsibilities as assigned for 9:00 and Tapestry services.

Continuing Education

Official classes for my **Doctor of Ministry** program at Emory's, Candler School of Theology end on December 10, but next semester is focused on finishing my thesis and theological project. My rough draft is due January 30, 2026, and my final draft is due March 14. I will defend my paper and project at a symposium called, "The Festival of Learning" in Atlanta on April 26-29. My project explores the ways White Jesus iconography reinforces and upholds White Supremacy in the Church. Prayerfully, I will successfully defend my paper and project and graduate on May 9, 2026. This is an intense time for me as I try to get everything done and done well. I cannot believe 3 years has passed already, but I have learned a great deal throughout my time in this

program. I look forward to celebrating its completion, but in the meantime, I covet your prayers, encouragement, and support.