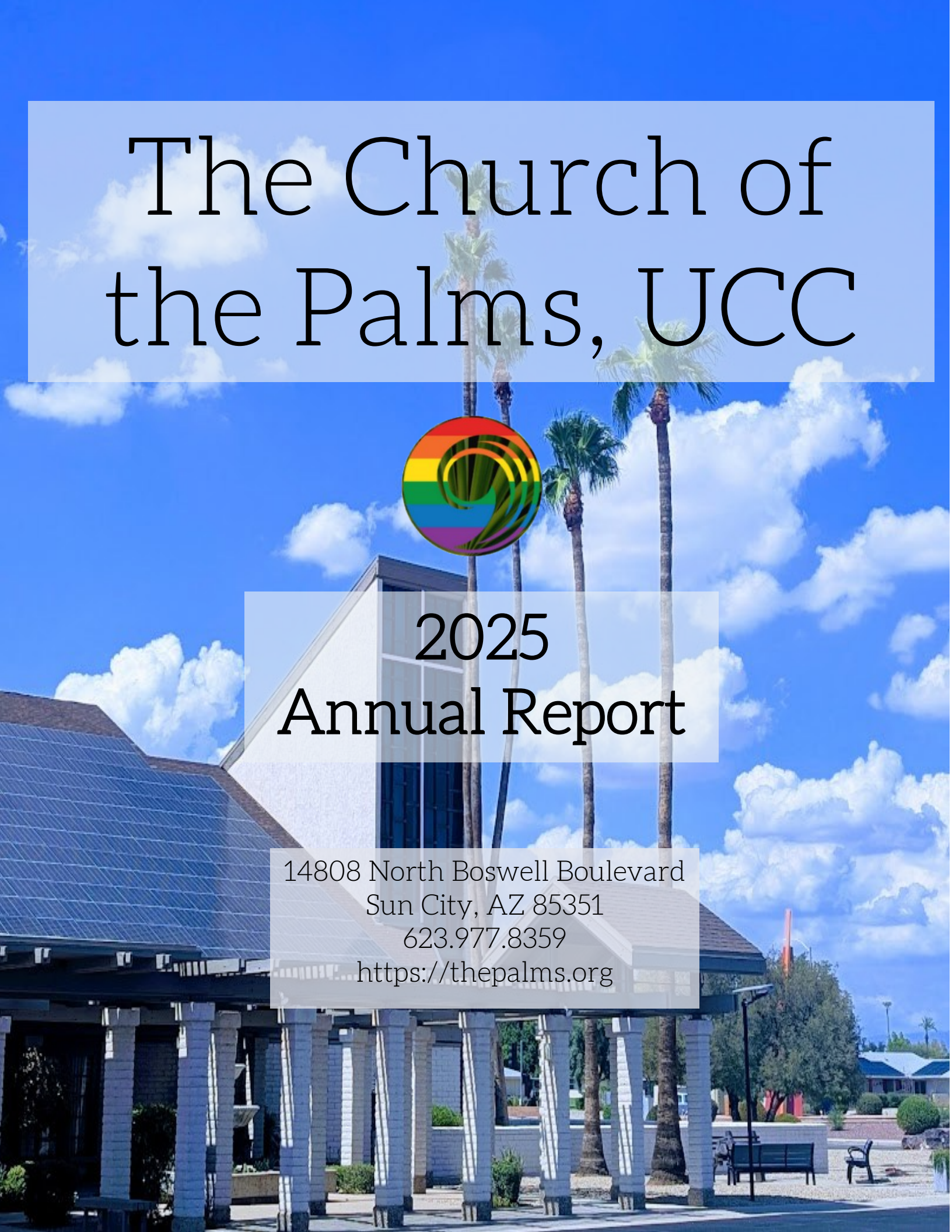
The Church of the Palms, UCC



2025 Annual Report

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Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting

THE CHURCH OF THE PALMS
ANNUAL MEETING
JANUARY 25, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Phil Ladd.
OPENING PRAYER led by Pastor Jim Alexander.

QUORUM: Anthony Parks counted members. Fifty-eight members are in attendance. Phil Ladd asked Andrea Stefanov if we have a quorum. She answered "yes." The quorum of The Church of the Palms is 24.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Phil Ladd asked for approval of the minutes of the annual meeting of January 27, 2024. He said no motion is necessary and asked for a vote. The ayes have it; there weren't any nay votes.

STATE OF THE CHURCH: Pastor Paul began by saying that 2024 taught us what it means to Be the Church. God did some great things with us. He said a prayer then started presenting some challenges as we move into 2025 and brief ideas on moving forward. Soren Kierkegaard said, "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." Pastor Paul starts every annual meeting with this quote. We need to look backwards to gain a perspective for us to live onward.

In 2017 he talked about **adjusting our sails.** We raised the Pride flag and led the Southwest Conference (SWC) in new members. In 2018 he spoke about transitioning away from a **consumer church** to a **missional church**. A **Consumer Church** is where members have an attitude of "what's in it for me," entertain me with great music and preaching; it's all about me and my needs. A **Missional Church** is one where people come and say, "how can I help? and what can I do to promote our mission." We had faith in bringing Pastor Jim on fulltime. We developed a Mission Statement to guide us. We led the SWC in new members.
In 2019 Pastor Paul talked about the **potential of possibility**. In that year, we received over $500,000 in estate giving, which enabled various construction projects in 2019 and 2020. We celebrated our 50th Anniversary. We began the I-HELP program.

In 2020 the year was **having integrity and vision**. We withstood the storm of COVID adding video to our worship. Our Social Justice Ministry within this community expanded. Also, a new organ was installed.

In 2021 he shared the Victor Hugo quote, "To love another person is to see the face of God." We saw the face of God in children, neighbors, and creation. The capital campaign received $180,000 for solar panels and other green projects. We began the Feet-N-More Shower Trailer ministry. Security was improved with cameras and fobs. A new electronic sign was purchased, and we got a new roof. We lived into our proclamation that we were a Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaging (W.I.S.E). congregation for mental wellness. The Constitution and By-Laws were totally revamped.

In 2022 we were living into and tweaking our Constitution and By-Laws. Pastor Paul went on Sabbatical. Track lighting was installed in the Sanctuary. Our social justice ministry was expanded, and we created our pet memorial area.

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With 2023 we came alive in ways he could not image. We purchased a new bus. The office was updated, along with the air conditioning and computer. Track lighting was added for the choir. We purchased Homeless Jesus and created a serene place for people to visit, pray, and meditate. We again led the SWC with new members.

In 2024 we were **intentional and used the fruits of the spirit**. We purchased a new truck in a group effort. Numerous groups within our Church gave monetarily to purchase the truck. The Constitution was tweaked again which is a good thing because the Church should always be adjusting to catch the Spirit of God flowing through our community. We gave over $40,000 to charities not including the cash equivalency donations of our soup, I-HELP meal and supplies, Thanksgiving, giving to our donation center, etc. The donations of those items should be equivalent to $10,000.

We revised an outdated personnel manual which was a huge step towards connecting the way we operate within our guidelines. Highlights for many, including Pastor Paul, were our special services, Creation Justice, Pride Sunday, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and the Longest Night/Blue Christmas. Colleagues of Pastor Paul ask him how, in Sun City, do all the fabulous things happen. He replies that it takes a village to answer the call of God. We need to let go of the past and live forward into 2025.

In 2025 the State of the Church is **Imagine! Doing Justice, Loving Kindness, And Walking Humbly with God.** Pastor Jim's and Pastor Paul's job will be to help each of us live out our calling then weave all the varied answers and textures into a tapestry of love.
Pastor Paul shared some of what he learned from the Galapagos Islands he visited in 2024. It reminded him of what he imagines the Garden of Eden was like. Creation, in all its glory, was on display and humanity doing its best to be good stewards of the Creation taking care of it by not using it, abusing it, or making money from it, but to be good stewards of it.

In the Galapagos, the animals didn't fear humans because the humans visiting must live under the strict requirements of not hurting them.

IMAGINE walking up to a Blue-footed Booby and all it does while sitting on the nest with its baby is tilt its head at the strange creature in front of it (a human).
IMAGINE marine and land iguanas three, four and sometimes five feet in length, laying in the sun as humans walk by instead of scurrying off like the lizards of Arizona do. The group Pastor Paul was with had to step over them in many cases just to walk along the path.
IMAGINE sea lions and fish in the ocean who are not afraid yet are so curious about human's existence that they blow playful bubbles in your face.
IMAGINE a garden in our community.
IMAGINE people not afraid of other people.
IMAGINE politicians not trying to divide groups into us and them but trying to find ways for us to work and live and play together.
IMAGINE a government that doesn't punish the poor.
IMAGINE a couple of the same gender holding hands walking down the church aisle like he and Wendy do and that couple being able to do that in the world without fear of persecution or harm.

Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting

IMAGINE a criminal justice system that is fair.
IMAGINE a world where there are no homeless people.
IMAGINE a healthcare system that doesn't put profit before health.

Last week Pastor Jim challenged us to put the **"Do" in Do-ciples**. We need to break out our imagination to start changing the wrong that is around us. This year Pastor Paul wants us to use our imagination by looking at what the requirements are from God in 2025. Micah 6:8 NRSVUE reads:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?

In 2025 we need to be about **DOING** Justice**, LOVING** Kindness, and **WALKING** Humbly with God using our imagination. Our mission calls us onward to take advantage of God's Spirit as we journey through deep, dark shadows of the unknown in 2025. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. The staircase of faith in this desert, in this nation, in this world is uncertain in 2025.

God calls us to share unconditional love in a selfish world of greed and hatred. God is calling us to share justice by not just talking about it but doing it. God is imploring us to share radical hospitality and knock down walls that separate and divide. In 2025 we need to decide what we are going to do with our time, talent, and treasure.

Estate giving has its genesis helping with much of the improvements to our building and the wonderful street ministry like the shower trailer. We need to keep that in people's hearts and minds in 2025. Do, Love, and Walk the talk.

Here are things we need to look at in 2025:

- How do we pay for the ongoing costs of owning our truck? Do we do it with blessing gifts and/or estate gifts?
- How do we prioritize our shower trailer to ensure this ministry continues? We need more volunteers for this ministry. If you have questions, please talk to Max Klinkenborg. There are several volunteer opportunities that do not require strenuous activity.
- What is the Chapel going to look like now that Shea Darian has moved her Grief Ministry to another location? A team meeting will be held this week to discuss this. Pastor Jim and Pastor Paul are going to let that group DO the work. It will be a chapel for the people.
- A memorial gift has been received from someone who wants to see some changes now while they are alive! That gift will upgrade our electronics in King Hall. The King Hall set up will be easy enough for anyone to use. It will be easy enough for our Lifelong Learning activities to use. This gift will also provide a second camera in the Sanctuary for worship to enable us to show the choir while they're singing. These upgrades will happen soon. If you want to experience your gift now, please talk to Pastor Paul.

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Pastor Paul believes everything can be figured out. Together, blessed by the Spirit blowing afresh, we can get things done.

In 2025 we will find ways to respond to our government when it tries to hurt, not help, people.

We take our Mission Statement seriously; therefore, we must respond when groups are threatened whether it be LGBTQ+, refugees, or any other group. When groups are threatened, we must respond as a church. Our Church is a safe place. We will not be silent on justice matters in the United States and around the world. We are here to listen, to support you, and for you to know that your voice will be heard. In 2025, this Church will be a citadel against the storms of bigotry and hatred spewed by an individual or group. We must Do, Love, and Walk the talk.

The Church of the Palms will be a safe haven, a respite, a lighthouse shining God's light to the world. We will be exploring what areas of our ministry could change if we Do Justice, Love Kindness, and Walk Humbly with God in 2025.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Roberta Fitch moved to be with her son and grandson yesterday. She will continue to help us from her new location. She will be able to get onto our computer to help with reports. Jeanne Brandenberger is helping with Ruthie Whitlock as an assistant. Pastor Paul went over the Treasurer's Report from January 1 through December 31, 2024, which is included in the 2024 Annual Report, with members of the congregation in attendance.

He first explained the Income Section going through the report line by line. The pledges, loose plate offerings, and blessing gifts show where we are financially, and we are in a good position. We did not need to transfer anything from our Reserve Fund, so it was kept in the bank. We were able to hire Jennifer Hoppe using the Accompanist Fund. The Building Reserve Fund comes from the rental of our cell towers. We use this when we have a big project, such as getting a new roof. We did not have to use anything from that in 2024. The Endowment Fund Earnings are approximately $6,000 less than we expected because the UCC did not send us everything. We are working on getting the $6,000 owed to us. The total income for 2024 is $368,470.

Pastor Paul asked if there were any questions for the section of total income. Ken Barberry asked if the cell towers pay us rent. Pastor Paul responded that we must pay taxes on the income from that. After paying taxes we get approximately $30,000 from rental of the cell towers.

The next section is the **Expense Summary**. Staff salaries and housing were down a bit due to Wendy Whitlock retiring and the need for health insurance. Pastor Paul lowered his salary a bit to pay for his and Wendy's health insurance. The staff auto allowance is for both Pastors. Staff Health and Life Insurance went up a bit because Pastor Paul has to pay for Wendy's health insurance. We did not use all the staff education expense. Pensions are included in staff annuities. Payroll services are used to write checks for staff. Staff Other Expense is for Worker's Compensation. The sub-total of Staff Expenses is $261,484.

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Other expenses include Lifelong Learning. They were given a gift a few years ago so they can use that money for their purchases. Church Giving to the Southwest Conference is $5,000. They ask for $100 for each member of a UCC Church in this conference. TCOTP has 238 members and that would be $2,380, but TCOTP gives $5,000. Worship and Fine Arts' expenses are for candles and communion supplies. There are several people who donate things. Fellowship has some money in the bank. Also, several people donate cookies and things for Fellowship. The cost for Evangelism and Growth is for maintaining our social media (Facebook and web page). Office and General Expenses are for our copier, paper, and anything else needed in the office and general expenses. The Board of Trustees do not defer maintenance. TCOTP has several members who can do handy things to maintain our Church. Our utilities were about $30,000 before the solar panels and chiller were installed. They went down in 2024 to about $13,000. The sub-total of other expenses was $105,787.

The total of all expenses is $367,271. Pastor Paul asked if there were any questions. Anthony Park asked if the Church giving to UCC includes the One Great Hour of Sharing. It does not include that, but we do give through our special offerings.

We have $76,062 in our checking account. We will not ask for money through an email. Our United Church Foundation Endowment has $503,771. We have $18,825 for a Seminary Student. This Foundation fund was used when Pastor Jim was getting CPE units. When our sister Church, Desert Garden in Sun City West, has a member go back to Seminary we helped sponsor that student. An estate gift was used when we wanted Pastor Jim to join us full-time. We realized we needed to start thinking about long-term funding for that. We take a 5% draw from Endowments and Pastoral Care every July because that is one of our lowest giving months. Special Funds are savings accounts that various groups have such as Lifelong Learning and Fellowship. We are closing our Scrip's Account because it has not been a revenue generating account for us. We have a total of $951,598 in the bank.

We received one estate gift in 2024 from the Dee Krull Estate which was $38,000.
In 2021 TCOTP lost $200,000 when the stock market crashed. We have now gotten that back and are starting to earn money on our investments.

There were no further questions regarding the Treasurer's Report.

<u>PROPOSED BUDGET 2025</u>:

Pastor Paul reported for Roberta Fitch. The proposed budget is included in the 2024 Annual Report. What we have done in the past is look at the previous year to determine our budget for the current year. The amounts for the 2026 and 2027 budgets are for information only.

We looked at our pledges and loose plate offerings from last year and used the same figures for this year. Our Building Reserve for Utilities budget is $6,500 which is used for anything that might be above the $30,000 we receive from lease of our cell towers. The Reserve Fund is funded from estate gifts that are undesignated. An estate gift that is designated must be used for that designation. TCOTP has a policy of 40-40-20 for undesignated gifts. Mission and Outreach receives 20% for their causes, 40% goes to long term financial health, and 40% goes to our Reserve Fund for any emergencies that might occur. It is our savings account, and

we anticipate taking $16,700 which is about a 15-20 year average for us taking $15,000-$17,000 from this account. Last year we took $26,000 from the Accompanist Fund/Office Fund. This year we anticipate taking $18,000. The total budgeted amount for 2025 is $388,200 which is what we are anticipating.

There were no comments or questions about the 2025 budgeted income.

Operations Council Expenses

Regarding personnel expenses, Pastor Jim and Pastor Paul receive the same income. Personnel Expenses of $500 is if we need to use it for a job search. The Sub-Total is $271,512.
Office and General Expenses are self-explanatory and subtotals $31,800. For your information only IT hardware expense increases for 2026 because we will need to upgrade some computers. We will not be voting on that today.

Our liability insurance went up 50% this year because of hurricanes and flooding in Florida and North Carolina. It will probably go up again because of California.
The Board of Trustees is self-explanatory. Their budget is used to take care of the maintenance of our building. The sub-total of their expenses is $64,185.

Ministry Council Expenses

Lifelong Learning expenses are budgeted totaling $1,700.
Care and Support Ministry Team: $0
Worship Team $3,692
Evangelism and Growth $8,500
Fellowship $1,500
Social Justice and Leadership Team $0
Total Ministerial Expenses $15,392
Volunteer Engagement Committee $250

TOTAL OF ALL EXPENSES $388,139

Gains/Losses $61

Our Social Justice Leadership Team does not have a budget. We have people who faithfully give to our social justice causes. If our members are able to give above and beyond, please give to our shower trailer or to our rising costs or to our LGBTQ+ costs. You can designate your extra giving to any of TCOTP's needs and that money will be used for your designation.

John Durbin asked the question: Are there any finances set aside to accommodate what we want to do in the Chapel? Pastor Paul said that there is no money earmarked for the Chapel; however, there are people who have said they will donate to help cover the cost.

VOTE ON THE BUDGET: Phil Ladd said that because the budget has come from a committee through the Executive Board, it does not need a second. Phil asked that all in favor say aye. The congregants said "aye." There were no nay votes to the budget; therefore, the budget was passed.

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VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE (VEC) REPORT: John Durbin presented the VEC report. The VEC Election Roster for 2025 is included in the handout. He spoke on the legal financial responsibilities for positions. For positions in which legal, financial, and personnel decisions are made those positions must be members of TCOTP. They need to be vetted and voted on by our congregation, which is why we have people elected for Board and Committees. On the other hand, we have the mission of TCOTP which Pastor Paul talked about that include our ministries (all the things we do for TCOTP, our community, and the world). Those members do not need to be elected, they are appointed by the Executive Board. The VEC used to be called Nominating Committee. The VEC is the evolution from the nominating committee is active all year long, celebrating our volunteers, helping our volunteers grow, knowledge about them, boundaries, etc.

We are also involved with other organizations such as the HART Pantry. Jan Eckstein has served on the board of the HART Pantry and is leaving that board. If anyone is interested in serving on that board, please see John Durbin or any Executive Board member. The HART Pantry board does meet monthly on a Tuesday and there is minimal involvement, but it is important to have that connection.

ELECTION OF BOARDS: Phil Ladd said the list of Board members needing to be voted on is in the packet members received. This comes from the VEC with an endorsement from the Executive Board, so we do not need a second for this. He asked if anyone has questions and/or changes. Phil asked for a vote for the elected positions on the Executive Board, the Blessings Board, the VEC, the Personnel Board, and the Trustees Board. Phil asked for all in favor to please say aye. There were no nays; therefore, the elected positions were approved.
Phil now asked for comments and/or questions for the remaining 10 minutes of the meeting.
Bobbie Chapman said we're happy. No one has questions or comments.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS: Phil Ladd is now completing his 3rd year on the board and 2nd year as Chair and expressed his gratitude for everyone on the Executive Board including our dedicated Pastors. He said It has also been heartwarming to witness the dedication of the whole congregation. He thanked everyone for being individuals who truly walk the walk rather than just talking the talk. He leaves this meeting with renewed appreciation for how special TCOTP has been, not only for him but also for his wife. Phil passed on the gavel and Robert's Rules of Order to Victoria McWilliams saying "May the gavel not be too heavy and the words not too complex. Remember the gavel is mightier than the sword as long as you know where to swing it."
Victoria made a statement that she is in very good hands since Phil will continue to sit on the Board as an advisory member. She said the TCOTP congregation members are wonderful and giving. She hopes that will continue and thanked everyone.

THANK YOU'S: Pastor Paul and Pastor Jim thanked Phil with two parting gifts as Chair of the Executive Board. The first gift Phil opened was an "Old Fart Sash" which is being passed around to Pastors and Church Members as appropriate. The second gift was a medallion with the UCC symbol and our logo. It says, "United Church of Christ That They All May Be One." It is tradition to give this to outgoing moderators and chairs of the Executive Board.

Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD: Pastor Paul asked for all newly elected Executive Board members to come to the front so he could introduce them.

Victoria McWilliams Chair
Ray Larson, Operations Council Chair
Jessica Hermann, Ministry Council Chair
Mark Makowski, Secretary
Donna Meadows, Member-at-Large
Phil Ladd, Retired Chair to stay one year (new position)

BENEDICTION

Pastor Paul led the benediction. Pastor Jim led us in song "I Am The Light of the World."

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Stefanov, Secretary

Executive Board

Executive Board Report

Executive Board 2025 Annual Report
2025 was tremendously busy and successful. According to our Constitution & Bylaws, Executive Board has "ultimate responsibility for accomplishing the church mission and assisting all Boards, Teams, Committees, and Work Groups in achieving their respective missions and objectives." As such, Executive Board had the honor of seeing many accomplishments throughout 2025. You will read about these achievements throughout the Annual Report.

One of the major accomplishments was putting together a team of such talented and promising staff. We were saddened to learn that Pastor Jim Alexander was leaving us in September. However, through a successful search we were able to hire a new Associate Pastor, Pastor Mark Makowski. He has been supporting the ministry of our church since he hit the ground running! He and our Senior Pastor, Pastor Paul Whitlock, make an outstanding team. We also are fortunate to have hired a new Treasurer, Carrie Rowe. Bertie Fitch, who was our Treasurer for years, moved closer to family but has blessed us with her ongoing training and guidance for Carrie. Another excellent team! With Pastor Jim's departure, we had the very good fortune to expand Jennifer Hoppe's role here at The Church of the Palms. She has always been an excellent keyboard artist. Now in addition she is Director of Music and Worship, and we are benefiting greatly from her talents. Additionally, we had extremely good luck hiring a new Office Manager. Wendy Whitlock temporarily took over the role this summer and we were blessed when she accepted the permanent position. All these people put together are making life at The Church of the Palms go very smoothly!

Other actions of the Executive Board include approving motions from the Ministry Council and Operations Council during the year. Plus, we formulated a plan involving knowledgeable church members to assess our security needs and make recommendations to the Board. Further, the Board has updated the bylaws as appropriate – changes were needed when we decided to hire a Treasurer as opposed to the position being voluntary, and our voting procedures now officially deal with absentee voting instead of relying on precedent established here and across other churches. In addition, we called congregational meetings as needed.

The Executive Board has had excellent members this past year. Pastors Paul and Mark provided leadership to the Board. Jessica Hermann did an outstanding job as Ministry Council Chair and, additionally, offered Dare to Lead seminars. Ray Larson in his role as Operations Council Chair led the effort to move the council forward in a more complete direction than in the past. And of course, Donna Meadows as our Member At Large was always available to the congregation for questions, discussions, and any concerns that needed to be brought to the Board. I extend my personal thank you to all Board members.

The Executive Board looks forward to working with our congregation and the Pastors during 2026. We are a very strong church and congregation, and I also thank all of you for everything you do to make The Church of the Palms as special as it is.

Respectfully submitted,
Victoria McWilliams Executive Board Chair

Senior Pastor's Report

Pastor Paul's Reflection: Looking Back, Leaping Forward

As we close the book on this year, I pause to reflect on the journey of The Church of the Palms: our actions, our shared commitment, where we placed our energy, and where meaningful ministry took root. This year has been truly impressive—a testament to our collective spirit and the abundant blessings we share.

In a year marked by significant societal anxiety, flux, and division, we did not shrink. Instead, we stood strong as a sanctuary of solidarity and safety for those living on the margins. The sheer scale of global and local challenges can feel overwhelming, underscoring the vital importance of our shared purpose when we gather. The question is never *if* we will face difficulties, but *how* we choose to internalize and respond to the world's harshness. We always have a choice. Amidst the storms of the past year, The Palms chose the path of unconditional love, active justice, and radical, extravagant welcome.

Change was not only external but also vibrant within our community. We bid farewell to our dedicated Treasurer, Bertie Fitch, as she moved out of state, and enthusiastically welcomed Carrie Rowe into the role. Pastor Jim followed his heart to Canada and married George—a moment of joy we celebrate! Jennifer Hoppe's role expanded, reflecting her talent as she became the Director of Music and Worship. We joyfully affirmed Mark Makowski as our new Associate Pastor, and Wendy Whitlock stepped in as our capable Office Manager. That is a significant amount of transition! Yet, through it all, our commitment to dynamic ministry never faltered.

As you explore the pages of this report detailing our organization and activities, please look beyond the logistics. Focus on the human element, guided by the foundational call to "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God." Even amidst difficult times, we centered ourselves on justice, compassion, and living out our faith. As you read, reflect on the people who created space for ministry, who intersected your path, and who enriched your personal story. Ponder the transformative encounters—with the Divine and with one another—that have reshaped your perspective this year.

Those of us who are deeply invested in the Church and its compelling mission are certainly feeling the creative tension of living through an era of rapid change. For institutions, change is rarely simple or swift! Yet, it continues to move us, ready or not. So, let us embrace this reality: why resist the momentum of the Spirit? We acknowledge that some practices or cherished traditions may need to evolve, and there may be understandable grief or pain on the other side of that shift.

But with change comes the promise of new joy and renewed purpose. These new occasions offer us opportunities to adjust our sails, harnessing the wind of God's Spirit blowing in fresh directions. God is still speaking! The Gospel—the good news of God's redeeming and transformative love—has borne remarkable blessings in our community this year.

As you delve into the details in the following pages, look for the evidence of unconditional love in action. Examine the justice being done and the lives being changed for the better! And, above all, celebrate the extravagant welcome extended to every single person. Imagine yourself at the center of this movement of love, justice, and welcome. I am filled with excitement for what we will accomplish together in the coming year and beyond! Bee the church!

Shalom,

Rev. Paul A. Whitlock

Associate Pastors' Report

Pastor Jim's Report

Pastor Jim Alexander reports

- Dare To Lead training sessions led by Jessica Hermann were conducted for The Church of the Palms leadership
- The Chapel at the Palms was renovated and blessed into commission.
- Sacred Spaces Team and Ministry were formed. Devotionals were written for the The Chapel at the Palms, Labyrinth, and Homeless Jesus. A calendar of events was created, too. Max Klingenborg installed the station for The Homeless Jesus.
- Pastor Jim continued his preaching schedule while providing a monthly service at Royal Oaks.
- Pastor Jim led the choir and provided his own accompaniment on the organ and piano. He also provided vocal pieces.
- Pastoral leadership was provided for VEC, Care & Support Team, and W.I.S.E.
- There were Christmas and Easter musicals and a concert in September.
- A new sound system with Overhead Projector were installed in King Hall.
- A new congregation camera was installed in the sanctuary.

Agape,
Rev. Jim Alexander

Pastor Mark's Report

Pastor Mark Makowski reports

- **Sacred Space ministries** had a meeting in November. A brief review of the calendar events revealed a few people attending scheduled events. Although many future events have not been scheduled, it has been suggested that we continue to offer opportunities to use our sacred spaces of The Chapel at the Palms, Homeless Jesus, and The Church at the Palms labyrinths. Pastor Mark will lead Ash Wednesday and Good Friday services at the Homeless Jesus sacred space in 2026.
- **Pastoral Care and The Care & Support Team** has been an integral part of our ministerial outreach. Members from our congregation form the Care & Support Team and offer their support to our members who cannot attend our services due to a variety of reasons. Pastor Mark has been active with visits to members at their homes, assisted living residences, hospitals, and rehabilitation facilities.
- **Pastoral Presence** at Social Justice Leadership Team, LGBTQ+ Ministry, Ministry Council, Executive Board, VEC, Worship Team, and Life-Long Learning serve as a reminder that pastoral leadership is supportive and present as these established Teams, Councils and Board serve our congregation.
- **LGBTQ+ Ministry**. We are committed to do Pride Festival, June Pride Sunday service, and Transgender Day of Remembrance for 2026. Conversation Cafes will continue also.
- Pastor Mark has continued with services monthly at Royal Oaks. Carolyn Modeen has provided invaluable music assistance. The monthly stipend goes to church.

Associate Pastors' Report

Pastor Mark's Report continued

- **Preaching.** I prepare these to be dynamic and thoughtful. I'm grounded in theologies that express modern developments of spirituality and deepen my understanding of our Loving Creator. I'm an avid reader.
- **Weekly Tuesday** at 2. I've been calling these our sacred readings time. It has developed into a faith-sharing experience. We read the Psalms as a starting point of discussion and spiritual insights.
- **Interfaith Initiatives have begun**. I attended an interfaith service on Friday, November 21, hosted by Temple Bet Shalom in Sun City. I will be working with Rabbi Dana Kaplan on forming a Sun City Ministerial Association.
- **Shower Ministry**. Once a month, I volunteer on Friday as a team member of the Shower Ministry. Personally, it's humbling to be serving God's people in this ministry.
- **Dare To Lead** seminars. Two sessions were led by Jessica Hermann. Developing healthy boundaries while growing as leaders.
- **W.I.S.E. team** (Welcoming. Inclusive. Supportive. Engagement.) will need training in 2026.
- **New Members** are a lifeblood for our community. Social Justice is often the reason why we attract new members.
- **The Church of the Palms website** is no longer the responsibility of the Associate Pastor. The Associate Pastor, by being present at our various congregational meetings, is aware of necessary updates that are important concerning our various ministry teams. Change requests can be sent to me. I can help facilitate that Wendy Whitlock, our Office Manager can make the necessary changes happen.
- **It's a 3/4 gig**. Managing time in the office, phone calls, and e-mails. Writing reports. And imagine how to grow in ministry.
- **Imagine Initiatives.** Sacred Space Ministries. Advocacy for peace and social justice. Agents for change in mind, heart, and soul. How do we pray? How do we worship? How do we grow spiritually?

Peace,
Rev. Mark Makowski

Ministry Chair's Report

Ministry Chair's Report

This past year, we dared to imagine a better world—and then rolled up our sleeves to help create it. Across every ministry, we brought that vision to life through passion, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to one another and our community. The work reflected in this annual report is something to celebrate: moments of connection, acts of service, and bold ideas turned into meaningful action. As Ministry Council Chair, I am incredibly proud of what we accomplished together and deeply grateful for the energy and heart that fueled it all. And the best part? We're just getting started. With the momentum we've built, next year promises even more growth, creativity, and impact as we continue shaping the world we believe is possible.

It has been an honor to serve as the Ministry Council Chair this year, and I encourage you to join us next year, with an extravagant welcome!

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Hermann
Ministry Council Chair

Council Reports

Worship Team

Sacred Spaces at The Church of the Palms

- In January, the discussion began about claiming our sacred spaces located on the church grounds and in the church. A policy statement was drawn up. The Executive Board approved the Sacred Spaces Policy. The document is entitled Political Statement for The Church of the Palms.
- The sacred spaces were identified as The Sanctuary, The Chapel at the Palms, Homeless Jesus, Labyrinths, Garden with fountain area, Memorial walls devoted to our past members and beloved pets. The Chapel at the Palms was named, renovated, and blessed. Judy Jondahl created and assembled the new banners, and Ray Larson crafted the new sign. The Bible Stand was donated by Bobbie Chapman.
- Blessings of our furry friends took place in the Memorial Garden on Saturday, October 18.

Director of Music & Worship

- With the departure of Pastor Jim Alexander, Jennifer Hoppe accepted and is our leader of music for Sunday services and special additional services, including memorials.
- Her annual report: Jennifer started on September 14, 2025
- The choir has grown and has 22 members. We have outgrown the choir loft and are now singing from the front, which has been met with positive feedback.
- Made changes to the music program; choir sings 2 times a month except for Advent, which is every week. Alternating weeks have been small groups
- Made changes to the music that we are doing. I am trying to update the music, give more variety, and use music that is pertinent to the message of the service, religious or not.
- I am working on getting some of our tech systems updated. Our equipment is extremely old, and updates would make things quicker and more efficient.
- Had Narthex speakers replaced because there was interference happening in the old ones.
- Elaine is now playing all the hymns on the organ. We have eliminated sounding the hymns with the piano since the two instruments were never together. The congregation found that it was very disorienting and difficult to follow.
- I am trying to incorporate more music into the special services and are utilizing people in the choir, etc., in them (e.g. the women's ensemble singing at Blue Christmas service.)

Bus Ministry

- Our church bus is primarily used to transport our members who cannot drive themselves. This invaluable ministry provides a safe option with our hospitality. New volunteers are always welcome.

Deacons Ministry

- Bobbie Chapman heads up our Deacons. The Deacons are responsible for setting up and serving Communion each 1 st Sunday of the month. Christmas Eve and Easter are our other Communion services throughout the year. Communion is provided at the end of each Sunday service, too.
- The two Vessels located in the front of the Sanctuary pews are provided with wax candles for our members to light. These candles burn as an offering of prayer in remembrance of loved ones and special intentions. The center candles are oil-based and new this year.
- The altar has a center candle entitled The Christ Candle. It’s wax. After it has served its purpose, a new one will be installed. It will be oil-based.
- The 12 Sanctuary wall candles are oil based. A new team has been formed that will refill these candles throughout the year. The Keepers of the Flame members are McKinnley Annas and Ashley Sciury. The Old Flames members coordinate this task, and its members are Bobbie Chapman and Bonnie Green.
- Advent candles are made with wax. New wooden stands with staggering heights were added this year. Thank you, Ray Larson.
- Hand-held candles are provided at our Christmas Eve service.

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Mark Makowski

Social Justice Leadership Team

Social Justice Leadership Team

- Encouraged and supported social justice initiatives of interest to members of the congregation and assisted with the coordination of events, volunteer recruitment, and fundraising for ten social justice ministries.
- Met monthly to review progress of ministries and explore new opportunities for service.
- Updated and improved social justice landing page on church web site.
- Provided social justice prayers for Sunday bulletins.
- Obtained a $3,000 grant to support social justice ministries.
- Combined total social justice ministries volunteer hours logged during 2025 exceeded 7,000 hours.

LGBTQ Equity Ministry

- Participated in the Rainbow Festival at Heritage Gardens fostering connections and exploring collaborative outreach opportunities.
- Provided our annual Open and Affirming Sunday service.
- Conducted a "Conversation Café" and provided a "Roadmap for a Resilient Compassionate Community" to the church leadership.
- Provided the Transgender Day of Remembrance, with speakers from the trans community, and honored the lives lost to violence in 2024
- Conducted the day of Remembrance Labyrinth Walk and the World AIDS Day Labyrinth Walk.
- Continued work with Gays for Good and First Church and Well Church.

I-HELP

- In March the I-HELP was terminated because of the Trump administration's cutting funds to support the program. During the five- and one-half years of operation, over 300 nights of hosting were provided. This included 13,000 hours of volunteer service and the hosting of more than 450 different guests. Over 100 volunteers supported the program. It is estimated that because of this program approximately 150 individuals were able to move off the streets and into housing.
- Provided transportation, shelter and meals (dinners, breakfasts, and lunches), a space to sleep with mattresses and clean bedding, monitors, and laundering.
- Provided showers, haircuts, safety checks for cars, furniture essentials for graduates, heat respite in the summer, and social connections including the celebrations of successes.
- Efforts continue to explore alternative ways to provide assistance to the unsheltered. Possibilities include working with Home Base/Native Connections, New Leaf, the Surprise Resource Center.

Feet N More

- Provided over 1,000 showers plus haircuts, water, soup, lunches, toiletries.
- Over 5,000 showers have been provided since the initiation of the program in 2021.
- Fifteen volunteers faithfully welcome our guests, treating them with dignity and respect. A team of volunteers laundered our towels and washcloths after shower trailer outing.
- Clothing, including underwear, socks, and tee shirts are provided for those in need.
- Partnered with The Grove Church in Chandler, Grace Lutheran in Phoenix, St John's Lutheran Church, Santa Teresita Church in El Mirage, Bicentennial Park in Surprise, Hit the Streets for Jesus Church, Rio Vista Park in Peoria, and several sites with Project Connect.

Criminal Justice Reform/Prison Ministry

- Provided Pen Pal Training/Meetings, including meeting with graduates from the Bridges Reentry Program
- Continued collections of backpacks with toiletries, selected clothing and gift cards for Arouet.
- Participated in Locks of Love, collection of hair products for event at Perryville.
- Camp Genesis, donations for camp backpacks (water bottles and sunscreen), 50 people praying daily for one of the children with incarcerated family members who attended Camp Genesis.
- Coordinated donations of toys and clothing for kids of parents incarcerated and teens in juvenile incarceration requested for the Christmas party.
- Initiated planning the Perryville Prison Art Show for March of 2026.

Creation Justice Ministry

- Provided monthly articles for the Palm Leaf on topics of sustainability.
- Provided funding for the purchase of trays for the new glass dishwasher safe communion cups.
- Continued recycling of used batteries.
- Continued to purchase and use environmentally friendly paper products in the church kitchen.
- Conducted the 7th Annual Earth Day Service.

Palestinian Human Rights Ministry

- Participated in zoom meetings with Daud Nassar to track status of farm registration and updates on the increasing number of settlements in the West Bank.
- Conducted classes on the Conflict in Israel-Palestine with a focus on understanding the siege in Gaza, the status of Palestinian Arabs in Israel Proper, and the issues faced in the West Bank.
- Continued our relationship with Friends of the Tent of Nations and encouraged contacts with elected officials.
- Donations were made to both Tent of Nations, and the UCC's Urgent Appeal for the people of Gaza, Israel and the West Bank.

Neighbors in Need Ministry

- Increased number of contacts with Dysart Community Center to provide support for food distribution, clothing, and school supplies to families experiencing financial distress.
- Provided volunteers for youth and adults education programs.
- Provided financial support to purchase water stations for refillable water bottles.
- Participated in a "Trunk or Treat" program at Halloween at the Dysart Community Center.
- Increased the number of contacts and activities with "Deep Within" program (halfway house for men).
- Provided the annual diaper drive for the New Life Center (home for victims of domestic abuse).

Immigration/Refugees Ministry

- Continued partnerships with "Helping With All My Heart", and "Their Story Is Our Story".
- Added Backpacks to our request list for donations.
- Purchased a water station to support migrants through the "Humane Borders" program.
- Partnered with the Shower Trailer to give showers at Grove Church in Chandler.
- Donated a water tank to Humane Boarders.

Legislative Advocacy Ministry

- Provided Request to Speak (RTS) training with Civic Engagement Beyond Voting for congregation to give online feedback to AZ legislators on proposed legislation.
- Participated in Arizona State Capitol visits to support social justice activities.
- Initiated a letter writing campaign to Support funding of programs to support the homeless.
- Coordinated efforts with churches in the Sun City area to continue supporting the unsheltered.

Othering and Belonging Ministry

- Celebrated Juneteenth with Sunday service message delivered by Rev Lynette Turner.
- Conducted program on "Unconscious Bias" led by Rev Lynette Turner.

Respectfully submitted,
John Durbin

Evangelism and Growth Team

Chair: Phil Ladd, Secretary: Marcia James Team members: Pat Durbin, Bonnie Wyman, Arloa Hymans, Deanna and Larry Delong, Donna Meadows, and Judy Pinter.

The Evangelism and Growth Team continually seeks methods of attracting visitors to our church by sharing an unconditional love and an enthusiastic welcome as they enter the doors on Sunday morning. Volunteer greeters enthusiastically make sure each new person feels welcomed. Visitors are encouraged to visit the Information desk where they have an opportunity to learn more about the church's mission to Do Justice, Love Kindness, and Walk Humbly with God. Each new visitor to our church receives a hand painted gift bag that has information of the social justice teams as well as the most current Palm Leaf.

An open invitation is extended by word of mouth, newspaper articles, banners, the church website, and by Facebook. Many visitors state, "they initially found our church by watching the church service on YouTube". Our evangelism continues with "Bring a Friend to Church Sunday dinner" where team members cook and serve a wonderful meal along with the Fellowship Team. Also, during the cookies and coffee fellowship hour following each worship service, you will find team members socializing with prospective new members.

During 2025 our church was blessed with 32 new members. Prospective members gathered in one of the four Information Sessions offered this year where they engaged in conversation with the Pastors, the Evangelism & Growth Team, and the Executive Board. A brief tour of the church is given, followed by a delightful meal set family style around the table.

It is our Team's hope that every person visiting the Church of The Palms feels welcomed and at home.

Respectfully Submitted,
Donna Meadows

Lifelong Learning Ministry Team

The Life Long Learning Committee currently includes the following members: Judd Rinsema (Recorder), David Klingensmith, Cindy Reese, Dr. Phil Ladd, Pastor Mark Makowski, Shari Kanehl, Valerie LeBlanc, Nelson Hymans. I thank all them for contributing their ideas and labor that have provided presentations on a variety of topics important to our spiritual life.

LIFELONG LEARNING WORKSHOPS/CLASSES 2025

CLASS	DATES	# of CLASSES	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
Inspirit – Bible Study and Discussion	Thursdays Sept-May Aug-Dec	ongo-ing	Board Room (ZOOM) (Hybrid)	Led by Pastor Mark, we are currently reading selected Psalms in various biblical translations and discussing how we, individually, understand the passage and how the passage affects our faith.
Spring				
Unconscious Bias	Feb. 24	1	King Hall	Facilitator: Lynette Turner
Sacred Self-Care: Daily Practices for Nurturing Our Whole Selves, by Chanequa Walker-Barnes	March 19, 26, April 2	3	Resource Center	Facilitator: David Klingensmith
LTBGQ+ from a psychological view	Apr 30, May 7 & 14	3	Boardroom	Facilitator: Phil Ladd
Film: 1946: The Mistranslation That Shifted Culture	April 26	1	King Hall	Facilitator: Mark Makowski
Organized the Behle Resource books and DVDs so that materials can be checked out				Facilitator: Valerie Leblanc

Lifelong Learning Ministry Team continued

CLASS	DATES	# of CLASSES	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
Fall				
Unconscious Bias	Oct. 13	1	Boardroom	Facilitator: Lynette Turner
Update on Project 2025/ Project Esther	Oct. 29	1	King Hall	Facilitator: Kay Klinkenborg
Booklet of Advent Daily Devotional by Congregation	November			Facilitator: Judd Rinsema
Advent book study "Low" by John Pavlovitz	Dec. 3, 10, & 17	3	Resource Room	Facilitator: David Klingensmith (2 sessions) & Martin Meadows (1 session)

Respectfully submitted,
Martin Meadows

Fellowship Team

Fellowship Team held various events to bring people together such as weekly Fellowship Hour following services, Lunch with a Bunch, Root beer float Sundays, Bingo. The Team also hosted several farewell & welcoming gatherings during the year. Pins and Needles meet weekly as a sewing group. Memorial Refreshments Team has aided families following memorial services throughout the year. Men's group meets for breakfast and fellowship. Beehive Gathering are held during Fellowship Hour on a regular basis. Individual Hives plan outings and get togethers. The Fellowship Team performed 1556 total hours of volunteer service during 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry Starr, Chair

Care & Support Ministry Team

The Care & Support Ministry Team has several objectives:

- Providing support and care to members and friends of the church who are homebound or dealing with illnesses.
- Providing transportation to the church through the Bus Ministry
- Offering programs to support people who are dealing with issues such as grief and loss, chronic illness, depression, etc.
- Making sure that church members and friends know of various community resources that are available in dealing with life issues.
- Working with our Faith Community Nurse to provide services such as blood pressure screenings, immunizations and other health education events.

Members of the Care & Support Ministry Team provide contact with visits, phone calls, and cards to some 23 church members who live in various care settings or at home. Some are still able to come to church occasionally. Our separate Communications Committee sends birthday cards to church members, cards on the anniversary of a death, and to people who have been listed on the Prayer List that is included in the Sunday bulletin.

Faith Community Nurse, Jayne Peak, has continued to offer blood pressure screenings after church monthly during fellowship time. She organized a Senior Health Expo but unfortunately had to cancel it due to not having enough reservations.
The Care & Support Ministry Team is presenting a monthly session on Self-Care as part of our Sacred Spaces events in the Chapel.

The Team organized a Recognition for all the persons who assist with the Bus Ministry.

Members of the Team write articles for the "Care Corner" that appears in each Palm Leaf.

Thanks to all who serve on the Care & Support Ministry Team!

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Dave Klingensmith, Co-chair
Judy Jondahl, Co-chair

Needles and Pins Craft Group

The members of the Needles and Pins Craft Group have been working diligently this year, knitting, crocheting and sewing beautiful items for our craft table and for charities.

Thanks to your continued support, we raised $1,700 from sales, which allowed us to contribute to several worthy causes with money and gifts:

- $300 for Campbell's soup for Souper Bowl
- Donated 102 aprons made by Ellen Merchant to the Dysart Community Center
- Donated 12 aprons also made by Ellen Merchant to Olive Branch Senior Center
- $200 for water bottles to Dysart Community Center
- $250 A Place for Hannah for Christmas gifts to families of prisoners at Perryville
- Donated 12 baby quilts to Dysart Community Center
- Donated 50 soap bags to Deep Within alcohol recovery home
- $238 to purchase 697 diapers for New Life shelter for abused women.

We had two major projects this year to distribute our homemade items.

First was to the Phoenix Indian Center where we delivered the following items:

- 100 soap bags with soap
- 81 crocheted and knitted hats
- 47 knitted scarves
- 18 cowls
- 8 afghans
- 5 headbands.

Next we distributed items to the Dysart Community Center to be included in their Christmas gifts to the children and their families:

- 150 soap bags with soap
- 120 crocheted and knitted hats
- 20 crocheted stuffed animals
- 20 knitted scarves
- 9 lap quilts.

Respectfully submitted,
Bobbie Chapman, Chair

Volunteer Engagement Committee

The mission of the Volunteer Engagement Committee (VEC) is to "engage and equip church members and friends of the church to participate in service activities for the purpose of "Sharing God's unconditional love, justice and extravagant welcome." According to the church constitution the VEC is the only elected committee. It is responsible for recruiting and preparing individuals for service on boards, teams and ad hoc groups as needed. It is chaired by the chairperson of the Executive Board and has representation at both the Ministry Council and Operations Council.

Highlights of the Committee's work in 2025 include:

- Hosted 2 Ministry Fairs to increase awareness of opportunities to serve on Boards, Teams and Work Groups.
- Recruited members for Boards, Teams and Work Groups as vacancies occurred and for the slate of 2026 board members to be elected at the Annual Meeting.
- Distributed a Spiritual Gifts survey to members to identify areas of opportunity for leadership and volunteering.
- Continued Recognition Sundays to acknowledge and celebrate the work of our Boards and Teams.
- Worked with the Operations Council to more clearly define its role in the overall operation of the church.
- Worked with the Social Justice Leadership Team to select the annual Social Justice Champion at The Church of the Palms.

Respectfully submitted,

John Durbin

Council Reports

Operations Council

It has been about three years since Judie and I joined the milieu called The Church of The Palms. The initial hook for us was the clear witness of outreach beyond the walls of the building. We found that people weren't worshipping the "sacred space" where the joy and strength of community take place, most visibly on Sundays, but on other times as well. No, it was all about service! Reaching beyond comfort levels and self- preservation.

It wasn't long before I became very involved in the I-Help program by serving the breakfasts prepared by several from TCOTP whom I had never met. And it was then I began to discover the mystery of this group of believers who were involved in so many ways. The mystery of so many things of this ministry that were coming from the grass roots of the congregation: THAT'S WHEN I GOT COLLARED! Chair of the Operations Council.

One doesn't need to be a long-time member here to be sought out for service! Maybe even service beyond one's comfort level. And that's how I became Chair of the Operations Council. Coming from a long and thorough Presbyterian background it has been an interesting journey of learning the differences between "decently and in order" and a "dynamic" system of governance where so much power and ingenuity comes from the grass roots.

The Operations Council's job is to oversee the ministries of Personnel, Trustees, and Blessing Board and communicate important issues back and forth TO The Executive Board and FROM the Executive Board. This task can be dizzying at times with sudden changes that may affect procedures and process, but some repetition is an attempt to make sure everyone is aware of the OTHERS involved in a ministry of love, peace, justice and radical welcome.

The aim of the Executive Board is a smooth system of communication between all facets of effective ministry. Remember, it's "dynamic" so it is always seeking improvement.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Larson, Operations Council Chair

Council Reports

Operations Council

Blessings Board

The Blessings Board provides leadership and guidance in the acquisition, management and distribution of donations and contributions of time, talent and treasure to the Church. 2025 was the first full year of operations, following its creation mid 2024. We are grateful to the Pastors, board members and our congregation for their support of our efforts to be good stewards of the resources we have been blessed with and look forward to continued growth in the coming years.

Highlights of the Blessings Board activities for 2025 include:

- Adopted a comprehensive Mission Statement; Functions and Procedures Document
- Renewed focus on and enhanced the Planned Giving Program under the leadership of Max Klinkenborg
- Completed a review of our investment portfolio and service with UCC Funds; selected Asset Preservation Wealth & Tax Financial Advisors to ensure better communication, accountability and flexibility with our investments moving forward
- Distributed over $20,000 in funding to various worthy local and global organizations that support causes that are in alignment with the church's mission.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Boisclair
Blessings Board Chair

Board of Trustees

The Trustees are responsible with stewardship to care for the church buildings and property.

Building Projects Accomplished in 2025

- Outside trim painted and repaired by Albrecht & Sons. With the painting, they also repaired rotting wood around the building.
- The window on lectern-side of the sanctuary was sealed to prevent water leakage when it rains.
- A study was done of the oven's temperatures, and a helpful chart was made so those using the oven can be assured of the temperature.
- New doorstops were installed around the sanctuary.
- Truck and bus maintenance occurred, and the recall notice on the truck was resolved.
- Recoated our flat roofs.
- Replaced locks in the bathroom by King Hall bathrooms.
- The toilet by King Hall entrance repaired.
- The outdoor hose bibb by the kitchen began leaking and was fixed.
- Security improvements have been explored and discussed.
- The Chiller was repaired, and a maintenance plan was purchased.
- Our DH Pace (security) cameras were updated, and camera licenses were purchased. All cameras are working and recording.
- Landscaping around the church has been maintained.
- Large Tree on the north side of the sanctuary was removed.
- Dishwasher was repaired.
- Urinal in men's restroom off the narthex was repaired.
- Thank you to everyone who helped with this ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

David Princehouse

Board of Personnel

1. According to Bylaws of The Church of the Palms, the Personnel Board is responsible for managing and overseeing the Personnel Policies of the Church, ensuring that they are in compliance with all laws and ethical guidelines. Various responsibilities are included in the church's bylaws. Current Members include Larry Delong, Mandy Desmidt, Phil Ladd, Victoria McWilliams, and Pastor Paul Whitlock.
2. Various responsibilities that were attended to this year include conducting evaluations of staff, overseeing the hiring and termination of non-pastoral staff, monitoring compensation for staff, establishing a Pastoral Search Committee, appointing a Pastoral Relations Sub-Committee, maintaining the Personnel Policy Manual:

- **January**: A Pastoral Relations Sub-Committee was appointed consisting of Pastor Jim Alexander, Suzanne Boisclair, Jessica Hermann, Phil Ladd, Victoria McWilliams, and Pastor Paul Whitlock.
- **February**: Bertie Fitch moved at the end of the year. The Personnel Board began working on her replacement. In the Interim, Ruthie Whitlock assisted with the financial reports.
- **April: 1)** Margaret Carpenter resigned from the Personnel Board due to health reasons. Larry DeLong agreed to be appointed to the Personnel Board in her place. **2)** It had been decided to make the Treasures position a paid staff position. Carrie Rowe accepted the position of Church Treasurer.
- **May: 1)** Nicole Lindsay discontinued employment with The Church of the Palms. Wendy Whitlock was asked by the Personnel Board to fill this position on an Interim basis. At the request of the Personnel Board, Wendy later accepted the permanent position of Church Manager. **2)** Pastor Jim Alexander announces his resignation to the Executive Board effective September 2025.
- **June: 1)** Phil Ladd, Pastor Paul, and the Personnel Board established a Pastoral Search Committee consisting of Suzanne Boisclair, Larry Delong, Georgia Feiste, Jessica Hermann, Lynette Turner, Victoria McWilliams, Terry Starr, and Pastor Paul Whitlock. **2)** Pastor Paul contacted the SWUCC and the Disciples of Christ concerning potential candidates for ¾ time Associate Pastor. We were informed by both organizations that no candidates were available. Both Pastor Paul and Phil Ladd checked with SWUCC regarding protocol if there are no candidates and learned that it was permitted to look outside the UCC. **3)** After much discussion, the Pastoral Search Committee agreed to ask Mark Makowski if he would be interested in accepting the call of ¾ time Associate Pastor. **4)** The Pastoral Search Committee, with the blessing of both the Personnel Board and the Executive Board, asked Jennifer Hoppe to expand her job description to accept the position of Director of Music and Worship. Jennifer accepted this new position.

Board of Personnel continued

- **July: 1)** Mark Makowski met with the Search Committee and was unanimously supported to be recommended to both the Personnel Board and The Executive Board to be our new ¾ time Associate Pastor. **2)** Many conversations took place between Mark and Phil, Mark and Paul, and Mark and the Personnel Board. References were checked; a background check was performed before Mark was approved unanimously by the Pastoral Search Committee, the Personnel Board, and The Executive Board. Mark accepted the position.
- **August: 1)** The Search Committee, the Personnel Board, and the Executive Board met before the Worship Service of August 10 to once again unanimously affirm their decision to present Mark to the congregation August 10 to be our new ¾ Associate Pastor. **2)** Mark was presented to the Congregation for the position of ¾ Associate Pastor. Mark was supported with 94% of all votes. 3) A Call Agreement between The Church of the Palms and Mark Makowski was signed by both the church and Mark. His ministry with us was determined to begin September 1, 2025.
- **September: 1)** Mark pursued Ordination with the Progressive Christian Alliance. Mark went through their process and met all their requirements. His Ordination was approved.
- **October:** A Rite of Ordination Service was held during our worship service on October 19 with the Laying on of Hands for Mark's ordination.
- **November:** Mandy DeSmidt was appointed by the Executive Board to be on the Personnel Board.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phil Ladd, Personnel Board Chair.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer's Report

The Church of the Palms						
Cash Flow January 1 through December 31, 2025				**ANNUAL**	**UNSPENT 2025**	
GENERAL FUND INCOME SUMMARY THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2025				**BUDGET**	**BUDGET**	**100.00%**
Offerings	$	323,872	$	285,000	(38,872)	113.64%
Loose Plate	$	8,659	$	10,000	1,341	86.59%
Blessing Gifts	$	22,605	$	20,000	(2,605)	113.02%
Interest	$	5,259	$	-	-	0.00%
Rental Income	$	497	$	1,000	503	49.70%
Reserve Fund Transfer	$	-	$	16,700	16,700	0.00%
Accompanist Fund	$	-	$	18,000	18,000	0.00%
Building Reserve Fund	$	-	$	6,500	6,500	0.00%
Endowment Fund Earnings	$	31,794	$	31,000	(794)	102.56%
Total Income	**$**	**392,686**	**$**	**388,200**	**(4,486)**	101.16%
EXPENSE SUMMARY				**ANNUAL**	**UNSPENT 2025**	
BUDGET ITEMS				**BUDGET**	**BUDGET**	
Staff Salaries & Housing	$	230,173	$	216,169	$ (14,004)	106.48%
Staff Auto Allowance	$	11,700	$	10,800	$ (900)	108.33%
Staff Health & Life Ins.	$	13,302	$	14,998	$ 1,696	88.69%
Staff Education	$	1,690	$	3,600	$ 1,910	46.93%
Staff Annuities	$	17,653	$	17,400	$ (253)	101.45%
Payroll Service	$	1,837	$	2,645	$ 808	69.44%
Staff Other Expense	$	6,712	$	5,900	$ (812)	113.77%
Sub-Total Staff Expense	**$**	**283,067**	**$**	**271,512**	**$ (11,555)**	104.26%
Lifelong Learning	$	-	$	1,700	$ 1,700	0.00%
Blessings Board (UCC)	$	5,000	$	5,000	$ -	100.00%
Worship Team	$	3,480	$	3,692	$ 212	94.25%
Fellowship Team	$	470	$	1,500	$ -	0.00%
VEC	$	-	$	250	$ 250	0.00%
Care and Support Ministry Team	$	-	$	-	$ -	0.00%
Evangelism and Growth Team	$	8,323	$	8,500	$ 177	97.91%
Social Justice Leadership Team	$	-	$	-	$ -	
Office and General Expenses	$	32,569	$	31,800	$ (769)	102.42%
Board of Trustees	$	52,960	$	64,185	$ 11,225	82.51%
Sub-Total Other Expense	**$**	**102,801**	**$**	**116,627**	**$ 13,826**	88.15%
Total Expense	**$**	**385,868**	**$**	**388,139**	**$ 2,271**	99.42%
General Fd Gain or (Shortfall)	**$**	**6,818**	**$**	**61**	**$ 6,757**	
Transfer from Reserves	**$**	**-**			**$ -**	
General Fd Gain or (Shortfall)	**$**	**6,818**	**$**	**61**	**$ 6,757**	
Transfer to Reserve Fund		**6,800**				
Balance		**18**				
Account 106.500 U S Bank General Checking Account			**$**	**44,009**		
Account 109.000 U S Bank Special Fund			**$**	**266,262**		
***Account 108.001 Charles Schwab Endowment Fund**			**$**	**629,474**		
***Account 108.002 Charles Schwab Continuing Education**			**$**	**20,665**		
Account 101.500 Petty Cash			**$**	**100**		
Total All General Fund and Special Purpose as of December 31, 2025			**$**	**960,510**		
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Total Bequests 2025	**Dee Krull**		**$**	**5,996**		
Note: Information on the UCC Fund Accounts are posted quarterly						
Unrealized Gains/(Losses) 1st Qtr 2025 on UCC Foundation Accounts			**$**	**(3,110)**		
Unrealized Gains/(Losses) 2nd Qtr 2025 on UCC Foundation Accounts				**57,969**		
Unrealized Gains/(Losses) 3rd Qtr 2025 on Charles Schwab Accounts			-			
Unrealized Gains/(Losses) YTD Qtr 2025 on Charles Schwab Accounts				**21,094**		
Annual 2025 Net Unrealized Gains on UCC Foundation Accounts			**$**	**75,953**		

Special Funds

Special Funds as of 12/31/25

Account	Balance 01/01/25	Income	Disbursements	Balance 12/31/2025
Building Reserve	$47,987	$19,688	$41,047	$26,628
Life Long Learning	$3,820	$0	$533	$3,287
Memorial and Gift	$2,268	$2,625	$3,423	$1,470
Mission and Outreach	$60,955	$6,854	$22,066	$45,743
Music	$1,186	$3,360	$3,912	$634
Fellowship Team Funds	$1,200	$300	$623	$877
Sr. Pastor's Discretionary	$320	$2,709	$2,605	$424
Sunday Flowers	$715	$1,265	$1,451	$529
Reserve Account	$74,022	$6,800	$672	$80,150
Memorial Garden	($99)	$750	$1,272	($621)
Care Team	$710	$100	$383	$427
Needles and Pins Craft Group	$1,758	$2,717	$1,533	$2,942
Music Personnel Reserve Funds	$50,958	$0	$0	$50,958
Christmas Offering	$670	$0	$670	$0
Neighbors in Need	$0	$1,175	$1,175	$0
One Great Hour of Sharing	$0	$4,623	$4,623	$0
Thanksgiving Dinner	$0	$2,848	$2,848	$0
Evangelism	$1,822	$0	$262	$1,560
LGBTQ+ Ministry	$2,548	$1,398	$1,192	$2,754
Music and Arts	$1,654	$100	$829	$925
Bus	$3,600	$3,097	$2,869	$3,828
Truck Fund	($625)	$3,000	$1,707	$668
I HELP	$5,935	$4,700	$2,129	$8,506
Cell Phone Towers	$0.00	$30,800	$30,800	$0
Kitchen Fund	$803	$0	$349	$454
Shower Trailer	$11,119	$17,855	$20,770	$8,204
Social Justice	$2,658	$5,466	$4,961	$3,163
Ecumenical Fund	$2,585	$0	$0	$2,585
Pet Memorial	$194	$95	$0	$289
Stewards Fund	($1,099)	$1,313	$0	$214
Shower Trailer Replacement	$1,046	$10,000	$0	$11,046
Creation Justice	$3,087	$100	$0	$3,187
Ministry Council	$5,205	$0	$0	$5,205
Disaster Funds	$0	$3,652	$3,652	$0
Pastor Jim Love Fund	$0	$6,847	$6,847	$0
Audio Visual Fund	($24,056)	$32,125	$7,843	$226
RaiseRight	$1,249	$0	$1,249	$0
Total	**$264,195**	**$176,362**	**$174,296**	**$266,261**

Summary of All Giving to Others for 2024

Beyond Our Local Area

Our Wider Church Ministries – UCC	$2,393.00
Per Capita Assessment	$2,370.00
New Church Start-up	$237.00
Neighbors in Need	$1175.00
One Great Hour of Sharing	$4623.00
Medical Relief Debt	$2,200.00
CA Wildfire Relief	$3,652.00
Veterans of the Cross	$1,170.00
Global Ministries	$1,000.00
Gaza Middle East Support	$1,000.00
Friends of Tent of Nations	$2,000.00
Strengthen the Church	$500.00
Disaster in Globe	$500.00
Humane Borders	$1,000.00

Closer to Home

New Life Crisis Center	$1,100.00
Benevilla Family Resource Center	$1,100.00
Dysart Community Center	$3,175.00
Deep Within Rehab	$1,100.00
Sun City Meals on Wheels	$550.00
Sun City Posse	$1,100.00
HART Pantry	$2,000.00
Love Offering Family of Pastor Tua	$1,000.00
Solutions Church	$1,210.00
Sun City Community Assistance Fund	$500.00
AZ Interfaith Power and Light	$500.00
A Place for Hannah	$270.00
Arouet Foundation	$100.00
Camp Genesis	$206.00

Proposed Budget

Proposed Budget 2026-2028

2026 Preliminary Budget				
Income		2026	2027	2028
Pledges and Regular Offerings		$294,000	$300,000	$306,000
Loose		$10,000	$10,000	$10,000
Building Use		$750	$750	$750
5% Endowment		$32,000	$33,500	$35,000
Building Reserve		$3,600	$3,600	$3,600
Reserve Fund Trans		$18,000	$18,000	$18,000
Accompanist Fund		$17,000	$16,000	$15,000
Blessing Gifts		$22,000	$23,000	$24,000
	Totals	$397,350	$404,850	$412,350
Expenses				
Operations Expenses				
Group	Line Item	2026	2027	2028
1. Personnel	Clergy	$157,761	$162,500	$165,000
	Music Director	$53,720	$55,000	$57,500
	Office Manager	$38,160	$39,000	$40,000
	Treasurer	$15,296	$16,000	$17,000
	Payroll	$1,000	$1,200	$1,500
	Wkers Comp/Taxes	$5,400	$5,500	$5,600
	Expenses	$500	$500	$500
	Totals	$271,837	$279,700	$287,100
2. Office	Line Item	2026	2027	2028
	Printing	$9,000	$9,500	$10,000
	Telecommunication	$7,200	$7,500	$7,750
	Postage	$1,000	$1,000	$1,000
	Office Supplies	$4,800	$5,000	$5,200
	IT Support	$7,750	$8,000	$8,200
	IT Hardware	$1,000	$1,500	$1,500
	Totals	$30,750	$32,500	$33,650
3. Trustees	Line Item	2026	2027	2028
	Sup. & Main	$14,000	$14,000	$15,000
	Landscape	$11,000	$11,000	$11,000
	Bldg. Ins	$19,000	$22,000	$25,000
	Utilities	$17,000	$12,000	$13,000
	A/C Maintenance	$6,500	$6,500	$6,500
	Janitorial	$7,250	$7,750	$8,000
	Totals	$74,750	$73,250	$78,500
4. Blessing Bd.	Line Item	2026	2027	2028
	UCC	$5,000	$5,000	$5,000
	Totals	$5,000	$5,000	$5,000
Operations Totals		**$382,337**	**$390,450**	**$404,250**

Proposed Budget 2026-2028 Continued

Ministerial Expenses					
1. LLL	Line Item	2026	2027	2028	
	Materials	$100	$100	$100	
	SWCUCC Delegate	$500	$500	$500	
	Totals	$600	$600	$600	
2. Care / Support	Line Item	2026	2027	2028	
		$0	$0	$0	
	Total	$0	$0	$0	
3. Worship	Line Item	2026	2027	2028	
	Guest Artist	$250	$275	$300	
	Sub. Accompanist	$600	$700	$800	
	Music Library	$250	$250	$250	
	Equip Maintenance	$500	$500	$600	
	Licenses	$2,000	$2,000	$2,000	
	Supplies	$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	
	Total	$4,600	$4,725	$4,950	
4.Evan / Growth	Line Item	2026	2027	2028	
	Activites	$0	$0	$0	
	Social Media	$8,913	$9,000	$9,200	
	Total	$8,913	$9,000	$9,200	
5. Fellowship	Line Item	2026	2027	2028	
	Kitchen Supplies	$250	$250	$250	
	Activities	$500	$500	$500	
	Total	$750	$750	$750	
6. Social Justice Leadership		2026	2027	2028	
	Total	$0	$0	$0	
		2026	2027	2028	
Ministerial Totals		**$14,863**	**$15,075**	**$15,500**	
VEC		$0	$0	$0	
ALL EXPENSES		**$397,200**	**$405,525**	**$419,750**	
Year's Income		$397,350	$404,850	$412,350	
Year's Expenses		$397,200	$405,525	$419,750	
Difference		150	-675	-7400	

Constitutional Amendment

The Church of the Palms Constitution Article IV—Church Officers lists the Treasurer as an Executive Board member. Our Treasurer is no longer a volunteer but a paid staff member. Therefore, the Treasurer is no longer an Executive Board member. We ask for you vote to remove "Treasurer" from our Church Officers and Executive Board members.

VEC Election Roster For 2026

Elected Positions: Vote Required

Executive Board

(Elected for one-year term)
Victoria McWilliams
Jessica Hermann
Phil Ladd
Donna Meadows
Pastor Mark Makowski
Pastor Paul Whitlock

Executive Board Secretary

Suzanne Boisclair

Blessings Board

Jan Eckstein
Victoria McWilliams
Terry Starr
Cindy Kunkel
Jeanne Brandenberger
Jessica Hermann
Norman Krinsky
Pastor Paul Whitlock

Volunteer Engagement Committee (VEC)

Pam Caron
Larry Cornelius
John Durbin
Phil Ladd
Victoria McWilliams
Nancy Nonini
Georgia Feiste
Pastor Mark Makowski

Personnel Board

Larry DeLong
Phil Ladd
Victoria McWilliams
Mandy DeSmidt
Pastor Paul Whitlock

Trustees Board

Larry Cornelius
Frank Bauknecht
David Princehouse
Chuck Rowe
Phil Maher
Brian Pontius
Bob Potter

Positions Appointed by the Executive Board

Worship Team

Bobbie Chapman
Bonnie Green
Deanna DeLong
Mary Hoy
Anthony Park
Jennifer Hoppe

Fellowship Team

Pat Durbin
John Durbin
Arloa Hymans
Ruthe Humes
Sandy Krueger
Barb Little
Vicotria McWilliams
Donna Meadows
Mary Ann Mowry
Nancy Mueller
Terry Starr
Kathy Rukiss
Linda Rinsema
Mary Ann Maes
Susan Leino

Lifelong Learning Team

Eunice Hammerstrom
Nelson Hymans
David Klingensmith
Shari Kanehl
Phil Ladd
Valerie LeBlanc
Martin Meadows
Judd Rinsema
Cindy Reese

Evangelism & Growth Team

Pat Durbin
Arloa Hymans
Marcia James
Phil Ladd
Donna Meadows
Bonnie Wyman
Larry Delong
Deanna Delong

Care and Support Ministry Team

Pastor Mark Makowski
Jayne Peak
Judy Jondahl
John Durbin
Pat Durbin
Doris Gott
David Klingensmith
Kay Klinkenborg
Lurene Ladd
Phil Ladd
Carolyn Modeen
Paul Hiles
Babz Zimorino
Sharon Smith
Barbara Schuellein
Stephen Schuellein
Stan Pflueger
Judy Jondahl
Bonnie Green
Holli Grimaudo

Social Justice Leadership Team

Larry Cornelius
John Durbin
Max Klinkenborg
Pastor Mark Makowski
Beth Moore
Martin Meadows
Nancy Mueller
Nancy Nonini
Terry Starr
Suzanne Boisclair
Tom Theisen
Kathy Abramowitz
Shari Kanehl
Jana Fogel

Pastoral Relations Committee

Suzanne Boisclair
Jessica Hermann
Phil Ladd
Pastor Paul Whitlock
Pastor Mark Makowski
Victoria McWilliams

Work Groups: Components of Ministry Council Teams

Parts of Worship Team

Deacons

Bobbie Chapman
Bonnie Green
Terry Starr
Sandy Krueger
Mary Hoy
Mandy DeSmidt
Mindy Nemecek
Lurene Ladd
Ellen Merchant
Lynette Nickelson

Ushers

Anthony Park—Captain
Numerous Volunteers
Appreciated
(Sign-up sheets always
in Narthex)

W.I.S.E. Steering Committee

Pastor Mark Makowski
Kay Klinkenborg
Phil Ladd
Nancy Nonini
Bert O'Neill
Andrea Stefanov
Judy Jondahl
Pastor Paul Whitlock

Technical/Digital

Mary Hoy
Ruthie Whitlock
Chuck Rowe
Wendy Whitlock

Bus Ministry

Pat Durbin
John Durbin
Mary Hoy
Jon Mahaffey
Larry Cornelius
Terry Starr
Suzanne Boisclair
Ray Larson
Judd Rinsema
Cindy Reese
McKinnley Annas