

THROUGH THE WINDOWS: LOOKING INWARD, LOOKING OUTWARD



Few people who visit our welcoming church building miss the beautiful windows along the sanctuary nave and transept walls. They're a big part of worship for many of us — portals connecting us to our deepest selves, to the community of which we are a part, and to the beautiful planet we share. The sacred link between looking into ourselves in faith and commitment and looking toward each other and our world in fellowship and sharing — this is our focus for 2024. We invite you to think about how these connections resonate in your faith, and your actions, which are always already vibrant in the many activities supported in this building and by this congregation.

We're so grateful to present to you the plans of some of our various groups and ministries for the 2024 year. **If we reach our stewardship goal of \$725,000, we can keep the momentum of the past year going and continue so much of the programming we all treasure.** However, if we can stretch to raise additional funds, there is much more within our reach — just outside the windows. We've asked your fellow congregants in leadership positions to describe some "what if" visions that we could undertake if we're able to raise more funds. "What if" we stretched? "What if" we put even more emphasis on giving first to God and each other? WHAT IF???

We of the Stewardship Ministry are, as always, honored to work alongside each of you.

*Jenny Himmelman and
Keith Logan, Elders*

*Sally Davis, Kim Hill, and
Peter Williams, Elected Leaders*

(stewardship@fhcpresb.org)

**THROUGH WINDOWS OPEN TO JERUSALEM, ON
OUR KNEES PRAYING, GIVING THANKS TO GOD.**

(based on Daniel 6:10)



**Online 2024 Annual
Gift Commitment**

As an alternative to mailing the enclosed envelope, you may scan the QR code to the left and complete the electronic form online.



Pastor John Lentz

PASTOR'S LETTER

We have the option, right now, to stretch toward what we envision — both for ourselves and for each other. Like Daniel, on his knees three times a day, giving thanks to God, we have the choice to bring ourselves into closer relationship to ourselves, to each other, AND to God. I invite you to consider prayerfully what might be possible if each of us renews and strengthens our commitment to this congregation's work together.

The inspiration for this year's Stewardship theme — captured by our beautiful sanctuary windows — gives us a great opportunity to reflect on our building, where it all happens. Our building is the incubator for our mission and ministry. The building is where faith is formed and from where we go forth to serve in Christ's name. We need to take care of the space and support all the activities that take place both within the walls and outside the walls. We need to renovate and update our foyers and entrances, update Fellowship Hall, continue to improve sound and projection systems, install a new church sign. Perhaps even install air conditioning.

“Reflect on the aspirations your fellow congregants describe...and consider how you can financially commit.”

As for what happens in this space — well, so much: weekly worship, Tuesday Pantry, daily AA meetings, evening meetings and fellowship, youth groups, community gatherings, annual Culture Camp, concerts, weddings and funerals, to name just a few of the activities that happen within the walls of Forest Hill Church. Family, Youth & Children's programming created huge momentum this past year. We now need another nursery worker and perhaps an intern to work with our teens. The excellent Music Program needs some new equipment and funding to continue to invite the excellent visiting musicians whose gifts we enjoy so often.

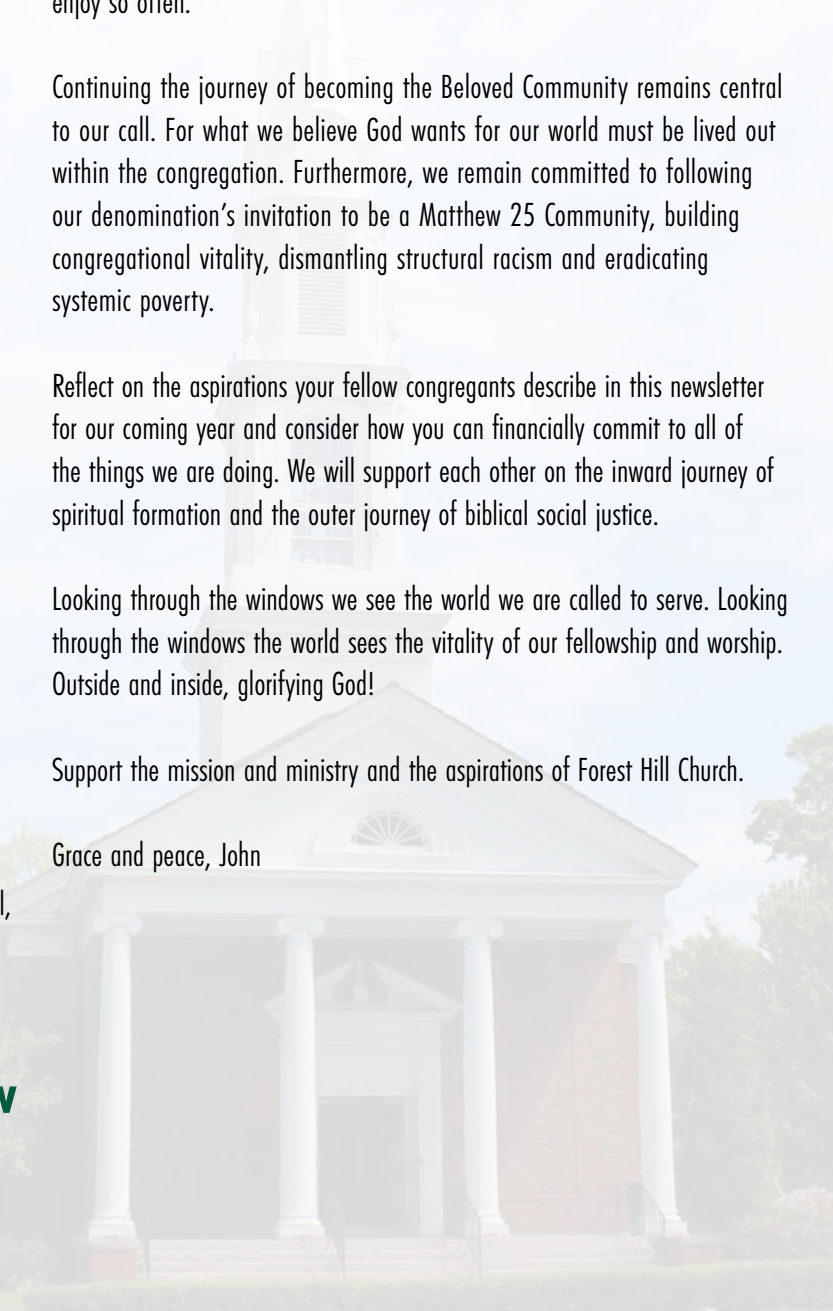
Continuing the journey of becoming the Beloved Community remains central to our call. For what we believe God wants for our world must be lived out within the congregation. Furthermore, we remain committed to following our denomination's invitation to be a Matthew 25 Community, building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty.

Reflect on the aspirations your fellow congregants describe in this newsletter for our coming year and consider how you can financially commit to all of the things we are doing. We will support each other on the inward journey of spiritual formation and the outer journey of biblical social justice.

Looking through the windows we see the world we are called to serve. Looking through the windows the world sees the vitality of our fellowship and worship. Outside and inside, glorifying God!

Support the mission and ministry and the aspirations of Forest Hill Church.

Grace and peace, John





FAMILY, YOUTH & CHILDREN

After a period of wonderful growth, the Family, Youth and Children's Ministry is thrilled to report that the number of families participating has grown 200% over the last two and a half years, and the number of children and youth involved has tripled over the same period.

2024's aspirations include

- Maintain existing programming in the face of significant inflation on supply costs
- Expand family outreach and connection, including faith-at-home packets, weekly worship activity bags and take-home bags, celebration of birthdays, back-to-school, baptisms, and graduations
- Continue the fun events that include the Cedar Point youth trip, Family Fun Nights, and guest speakers
- Create welcoming, inclusive spaces by painting and updating furnishings in a Family Library space, Youth Room, Infant/Preschool Rooms, and a "pray-ground" space in the sanctuary

WHAT IF?

- Support a learning and service trip to the U.S./Mexican border
- Develop more intergenerational programming, such as this year's Gingerbread House Decorating Event and Matthew 25-based learning and service activities

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee intends to continue professional development programs, refinement of personnel policies, and complete implementation of its revised performance evaluation process. Goals for 2024 include

- Secure and maintain adequate staffing levels
- Implement recommendations of the CRE Audit Report





CHURCH GROWTH MINISTRY

In its efforts to introduce visitors and newcomers to Forest Hill and open pathways for their engagement, Church Growth plans to

- Define and implement a comprehensive promotion plan
- Unite various communication strategies into cohesive and measurable efforts
- Publicize Forest Hill's desire to be a welcoming, inclusive faith community through the web site, social media, and a variety of mail and digital communications



WHAT IF?

- Create professional, short video clips about the church to be used on several social media platforms

MUSIC PROGRAM

The Music Program aims to

- Grow and expand Chancel Choir, Voices in Bronze, and Little Crescendos
- Revive the Percussion Ensemble
- Present two Chancel Choir concerts — one exploring environmental change and God's Creations and another featuring a cantata based on the Lord's Prayer



WHAT IF?

- Replace the sanctuary piano
- Provide educational opportunities for music directors



ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In addition to ongoing leadership training, broad experiences for spiritual growth, and coordination of intergenerational programming on being a Matthew 25 church, Adult Spiritual Growth plans to

- Offer a seminar on leadership skills for teachers, small group leaders, and others both within and outside the church
- Build on the success of the weekly Advent and Lenten emails



DEACONS MINISTRY

The Deacons Ministry will continue its crucial support work to

- Provide coffee hour after worship services
- Organize meal trains, transportation to medical appointments, and other acts of caring
- Host the Fall Festival and other fellowship events to foster the ties that bind us together



JUSTICE & MISSION MINISTRY

We have a strong tradition of social justice activism at Forest Hill. Just some of the justice-focused programming is highlighted below, along with plans in 2024 for the Justice and Mission Ministry to

- Continue to integrate with the goals of being a Matthew 25 congregation
- Reorganize grantmaking and gifts; use the Creating Racial Equity audit experience insights
- Deepen work with and support of associate members and grantees

JUSTICE FOCUSED PROGRAMS

The **Racial Equity Buddies and Equity Book Club** continue to combat individual and structural racism. They intend in 2024 to

- Provide materials and support to buddy pairs who meet consistently and hold "sacred conversations" on racism and equity issues
- Partner with other churches and groups on equity initiatives
- Continue to facilitate discussions on five books per year and support this education leading to informed action in the community

WHAT IF?

- Increase funding for FHC community grants for projects aiming to eradicate systemic poverty
- Develop inter-generational, cross-cultural workshops on dismantling structural racism

RACIAL EQUITY BUDDIES
multi-cultural group
(racialequitybuddies@fhcpреб.org)

The Book Club
Schedule All Saturday Mornings Via ZOOM beginning at 10:30 ET & concluding by NOON

Be The Bridge, Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation
by Latasha Morrison
October 15, 29, and November 12

December 3 - Racial Equity Buddies Meet

Homegoing
by Yaa Gyasi
January 7 and 28, 2023

A Black Women's History of The United States
by Daina Ramey and Kali Nicole Gross
March 4 and 25

African People in World History
by John Henrik Clarke
April 29 and May 13

One Person No Vote
by Prof. Carol Anderson (author of *White Rage* we previously read)
June 10 and 24

From Awareness to Vigilance



WHAT IF?

- Install art and mounted scriptures in Fellowship Hall about becoming the Beloved Community

JUSTICE FOCUSED PROGRAMS, CONT'D

The **Immigration Task Force** will be integrating the connections and insights from its Border Trip by

- Designing and hosting a range of educational activities, movies, and speaker events for Forest Hill and other churches
- Authoring awareness articles for community publications
- Advocating with legislators and with the Presbytery of the Western Reserve/Presbyterian Church (USA)



Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC) continues to build on its work with the Battle for Democracy group's work on voter disengagement and the Youth Bindover team's work to monitor court hearings for children charged with offenses that could send them to adult court. In addition, the core team plans for 2024 to

- Implement "Engage GCC" efforts by emphasizing one-on-one relational meetings
- Expand work through the GCC Delegate Assembly to distribute news and current information
- Recruit leaders for Issue Teams
- Support efforts to build a new consortium of community organizations



WHAT IF?

- Host events and trainings at FHC
- Support the GCC for software, training, and web site development



WE ARE A MATTHEW 25 Church

Actively Engaged in the World



The **Creating Racial Equity Committee** will complete its scope of work this year and transition to efforts to incorporate racial equity planning and actions into the work of Session and individual ministries. Efforts underway and to be continued include

- Strengthen racial equity in the church's procurement process
- Incorporate the findings and recommended actions of the Creating Racial Equity Audit into each ministry's ongoing planning and review

The **Abundance Food Pantry** is serving a greatly increased number of families each week (up to 350). Some aspirations for the coming year include

- Install air conditioner in kitchen
- Build storage at the back of the stage for shelf-stable products
- Replace standing fans and flat carts



TRUSTEES

The Trustees Ministry continues its commitment to ensuring that the church building and grounds are welcoming and accessible to all persons, regardless of mobility, identity, or age. Goals for the coming year include

- Increase engagement with businesses and contractors owned by people of racial and ethnic minority and others from historically disadvantaged groups by fully implementing the new Minority Purchasing Policy
- Shepherd the renovation of the Christian Education Wing foyer
- Renew emphasis on outside grounds maintenance, including tree trimming, lawn edging, and garden updates and maintenance

WHAT IF?

- Install air conditioning in the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall
- Replace flooring in the foyer and hallways by offices



Kemp Jaycox

WHY I SUPPORT

The Stewardship Ministry invites you to listen to others talking about their connection to Forest Hill.

Hear Kemp Jaycox explain in his video **“Why I Support,”** all the ways that people can help others, and giving to the church is one for him.



WHY I SUPPORT



**Online 2024 Annual
Gift Commitment**