ST. CHARLES AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

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From the Pastor's Desk

Rev. Dr. Chris Currie

Dear St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church Community,

2023 was a year of extraordinary challenges and extraordinary fulfillment. A month after the war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas, we were worshipping together with Jewish brothers and sisters to the music of Leonard Bernstein's Chichester Psalms. We began the year fully staffed and ready to fully engage in all forms of ministry in the course of the year, and I am proud to say we exceeded expectations as we continued to welcome new members into our life together, as we touched more and more lives through the ministry of this church from children to youth to adults of all ages, and as we engaged the congregation and community in worship that kept rising to greater heights. We welcomed a new member of our pastoral staff for the next two years, Ashley Brown, our pastoral resident, in partnership with Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. We added more classes on Sunday mornings and welcomed over sixty youth to youth group on Sunday nights and our Young Adults and Families ministry continued to add new events and new participants and families and build this church's future. We also were challenged by rising inflationary costs and as wind insurance rates caused significant headwinds to our budget for 2023, probably also to your own household budgets. This past fall in particular, we as a church did some amazing things in our life together, celebrating Joe Bean and the work he does on our church staff, welcoming President of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary José Irizarry, commencing a stewardship campaign that led to our largest number of pledges and amount pledged in the last five years, celebrating heritage members on Scottish Heritage Sunday, worshipping with the Chichester Psalms, hosting our Lupberger lecturer Jennifer Lord, and welcoming packed sanctuaries for Advent services, Christmas pageants, Christmas Carol services, and Christmas Eve services. Extraordinary challenges and extraordinary fulfillment. Mountaintops and Valleys, Taking Risks and Investing in our Future, Sharing our Sorrows and Celebrating our Joys. This is what it means to be the Christian community in all its fullness. In 2023 and in what God has in store for our future.

Gratefully yours,

Chris Currie

Annual Meeting of the Congregation
St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church
New Orleans, Louisiana
Sunday, February 18, 2024

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING PRAYER	Chris Currie, Moderator
DECLARATION OF QUORUM AND PURPOSE OF MEETING	Mary Malone, Clerk of Session
DISTRIBUTION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT	Buddy Cambas, Usher Captain
REPORT OF 2022 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN	Stewart Peck, 2023 Chair, Stewardship
PRESENTATION OF 2023 CHURCH BUDGET	Charlie Carson, 2023 Chair, Finance
PRESENTATION OF CONGREGATIONAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE	Richard Seelman, 2023 Chair Leadership Development

Session, 2024 Richard Seelman
Session, 2025 Libbie Reiss
Session, 2026 Maureen Herring

Additional Nominating Committee members represent the following areas: Youth, PW, staff, YAF and senior adults. They are:

Tyler Wheeler
Emily Tatum
Amanda Berger
Ebie Strauss
Vivian Kane

PRESENTATION OF 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN	Parke Ellis, Chair, Strategic Planning Committee
APPROVAL OF CHANGES IN PASTORS' TERMS OF CALL	Kristi Trail, 2024 Chair, Personnel
ADJOURNMENT AND CLOSING PRAYER	Sarah Chancellor-Watson, Vice Moderator

COMMUNITY MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Chair: Avery Beuerman | Vice-Chair: Karen Donaldson

This year was very exciting and full of events for the Community Ministry committee and our partners. What a gift to support over 18 agencies, both in the community and at SCAPC and watch them do amazing work with those they serve.

Year Highlights:

1. Spring Day of Service: In early April, over 50 SCAPC members gathered for breakfast before heading out to 5 partner agencies for a morning of service-everything from gardening, to baking, cleaning out closets and creating rock gardens for kids. It was a very successful and fun day.

2. Raintree Field Day: SCAPC sponsored a fun filled morning at Raintree in June, where we tie-dyed, played Bingo, enjoyed lunch and built relationships with the girls and staff of Raintree.

3. Fall Day of Service: With over 60 participants in early October, our annual fall day of service was a huge success. Volunteers did a variety of activities: baking, preparing lunch for the Unity Build, painting, building with Habitat, gardening, putting together backpacks for the border, and much more.

4. Community Ministry Sunday: This annual celebration of our community partners continues to give our agencies the opportunity to share their work with the congregation, as well as allowing us to honor their important work. This year, we had about 6 agencies represented between the two services.

5. White Gift: We continue this important ministry, which provides SCAPC members with meaningful ways to support the community at Christmas, this year was no different. Also, important to note that as needs evolve, the White Gift leaders pivot to make sure all needs are met and no one is left behind in receiving a gift at Christmas.

6. Mission Market: Various community and global agencies gathered in Fellowship Hall to sell items and gifts that benefit their work in the community and world. This year we had 5 different partners who participated, which is a great way to celebrate the Christmas season while giving back.

Other things of note:

1. A focus this year was to educate the congregation on the various partners that the church supports. We did this with a partner focus each month, and put information about the agency as well as ways to get involved in the Quatrefoil and Bulletin.

2. As a committee, we want to grow and strengthen relationships with our partners in the community, so we can better understand their needs and in turn—be better partners! To build on this, throughout the year, we had different agencies come and report about their work at our meetings. It seemed to be well received on both ends.

Our community partners do incredible work and what a gift to see SCAPC dollars and members' time encourage them to live out their mission. We look at this past year and are grateful for the successes and growth and look toward the future with energy and excitement.

Respectfully Submitted
Avery Beuerman, Community Ministry Chair

CONGREGATIONAL CARE COMMITTEE

Co-Chair: Melissa McDonald | Co-Chair: Nancy Ellis

Our committee is blessed with opportunities to reach out to our SCAPC members.
Activity Update:

Flower Ministry bouquets delivered:
Quarter 1: 123
Quarter 2: 79
Quarter 3: 126
Quarter 4: 107
Total: 435

Birthday Cards to members 70+
Quarter 1: 70
Quarter 2: 69
Quarter 3: 75
Quarter 4: 75
Total: 289

Written Notes:
Quarter 1: 106
Quarter 2: 62
Quarter 3: 79
Quarter 4: 90
Total: 337

Annual Outreach:
Easter lilies delivered: 25
High School Juniors final exam "happy" bag: 28
Breakfast for graduating seniors: 13
Poinsettias delivered: 35
Total: 101

Other Projects:
We had Spring and Fall pantry drives.
Our most fun new project was a joint service project with our SCAPC Youth. On November 12, we shared lunch, and then made bouquets for our flower ministry.

While these numbers show our activity, they aren't a complete reflection of the gifts of grace within our community. Each bouquet, card, or poinsettia touches the committee member and the family and friends of the recipient too.

Respectfully Submitted
Melissa McDonald and Nancy Ellis, Congregational Care Co-Chairs

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE COMMITTEE

Chair: Katie Gilly | Vice-Chair: Ann VanHorn

I am humbled by the generosity of this congregation. So many give of their time and talents to make the Congregational Life a joyous committee to chair. I have to give my sincere gratitude to Ann Van Horn; thank you for all you do!

Wednesday Night Out -This year has been full of wonderful meals and programming. Thank you to Bonnie and Jim Hobden for the countless hours in the kitchen preparing delicious dinners. You and the kitchen support could go head to head with any restaurant in NOLA!

After Worship Fellowship - To be mindful of the budget we asked for Sunday snacks to be donated. We continue to offer a reimbursement but have provided guidelines for what that entails. It was received well by the volunteers who generously provided a sweet treat for post worship fellowship.

Special Events and Activities - SCAPC is not only a place to worship and gather, but to celebrate. This congregation shows up when there is something fun to experience. Snowball Sunday was a fun way to cool off on a Sunday morning. Thank you, Michele for coordinating. The Fall BBQ was a tasty way to reconnect after a summer away. The Congregational Life committee provided the BBQ and asked for chips and desserts to be donated by the members of the church. Scottish Heritage Sunday was a hit with dancing, tea and shortbread. Some exceptional WNOs to mention are Broadway Night, Talent Night, King Cake tasting, Cake Walk, Trivia and White Gift-Wrapping Night. Lastly, let's not forget celebrating the years of dedication of Joe Bean. What a man!!! Thank you for all you do!

Heartfelt thanks again to Ann Van Horn, Denise Morse, the countless volunteers, the dedicated church staff, and a special thanks to the sextons, Donald, Joe and Percy. I am grateful for your support this year.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Gilly, 2023 Chair, Congregational Life Committee

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chair: Charlie Carson | Vice-Chair: John Koch

Attached are the following reports as of December 31,2023:

- Operating Income Statement, including the approved 2024 budget
- Operating Account Balance Sheet
- Visionary Fund Activity and Net Assets

Operating Results 2023

Church budgeted operations resulted in a deficit of approximately $300,000 against our 2023 budget. Total operating revenue was approximately $140,000 short of budget. Total operating expenses were approximately $160,000 over budget. Most expense categories were on or below budget except for insurance expense which was significantly over budget.

The pledge budget of $1,590,000 was based on a projected 10% increase from 2022 pledges. Actual pledges were 8.8 % less than expected. Actual pledges were $1,450,000 for 2023. The insurance expense budget was based on the prior year with a minimal increase. Due to unexpected wind and hail insurance expense increase, however, the insurance expense increased by $160,000. In 2022 the Church received $319,000 from PPP money, as a result of the pandemic, which offset budgeted operating expenses and reduced the requirement to use Visionary Fund investments. That was not the case in 2023.

Financial Procedures

The Finance and Visionary Fund Policies and Procedures were updated by the Finance Committee and approved by the Session in 2023.

Visionary Fund

In 2023, the Visionary Fund net assets increased from $10,448,005 to $11,640,962. Significant market positive performance in 2023 reduced the effect of drawing $627,203 of Visionary fund investments for operating expenses.

Looking Ahead at 2024

We have budgeted $1,500,000 in pledges for 2024. Other revenue (prior year pledges, donations without pledges and loose plate collections) is budgeted at $230,000. Benevolences and operating expenses total $2,579,008. This requires Visionary Fund withdrawals of $857,842 for operating expenses. That amount of withdrawal is approximately 8.3% of the Visionary Fund and significantly higher than the 5% we would recommend. Pledges have remained relatively stagnant for the past 5 years and have not increased to meet increased operating expenses. Fixed costs (personnel, office, property and insurance) are $2.1 million. This has forced a reduction in funds for a number of departments. Community Ministry is down 9.2 %, Adult Spiritual Formation is down 11.9%, Children's Spiritual Formation is down 18.3% and Global Ministries is down 5.8 %. We need a significant increase in member pledges to meet the Church's mission and avoid financial problems.

Respectively submitted,
Charlie Carson, 2023 Finance Chair

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financials redacted

GLOBAL MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

Chair: Cindy Bush | Vice-Chair: Dave Grissett

Global Ministries in 2023 worked diligently to further the goal of connecting our congregation with opportunities to assist those less fortunate, whether citizens of other nations or those seeking a better life in the United States. Our two-pronged objectives focused both on partnerships and procedures.

With regard to partnership strengthening and development:

◊ Took our first mission trip to Cuba since 2019, when COVID restricted overseas travel. We rekindled relationships with friends at our two partner churches, El Fuerte and Juan G. Hall. We also delivered much needed over-the-counter medicines, personal hygiene items, and parts for the water filtration systems in our Living Waters installations.

◊ Met via Zoom with our newly appointed Mission Co-Workers for the Caribbean, Vilmarie Cintron-Olivieri and Jose Manuel Capella-Pratts. They discussed PCUSA current best practices for the development of mission partnerships, which stress a mutual relationship rather than merely writing a check.

◊ Met several times with Caly Fernandez of the Presbyterian Borderlands Ministry. She runs a number of ministries out of Puente de Christo in Hidalgo, Texas, one of seven locations along the Texas/Mexico border. A "Border Immersion Experience" is planned for 2024.

◊ Expanded our successful Backpacks for the Border program, a package of much needed items that Caly distributes at a refugee camp in Matamoros, Mexico. With receipt of a $2,500 grant from the Synod of the Sun's Empowering Committee, we were able to increase the number of packs from 40 to 96.

◊ Hosted several of our overseas partners while in New Orleans. Bob Gamble, with This Child Here in Ukraine, visited us twice. Pastor Alison Infante of Juan G. Hall Church in Cuba also visited while in the US as a PCUSA Peacemaker.

◊ Educated the congregation on our various projects. Activities included a VIEW article on the Cuba visit, a Sunday school hour presentation on Cuba, a WNO overview of a member's trip to the Ukraine, and numerous Quatrefoil updates.

With regard to operating procedures:

◊ Refined the committee's goal to better express our committee's focus.

◊ Completed development of long needed project application and annual reporting forms. The purpose of these is to collect in writing key information on each project and to define in detail our criteria for funding projects.

- Required each existing project to submit an annual reporting form outlining their activities for the preceding year and explain how these met with our clearly stated objectives.
- Evaluated each project based on these . There had been no written reporting requirement or evaluation since a number of our projects were adopted in 2016. Support for several projects was dropped since they did not meet newly adopted goals.
- Took measures to ensure the fiscal accountability of our projects, especially one that had received a disproportionate amount of funding.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Bush, 2023 Chair, Global Ministries Committee

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Chair: Kate Prechter | Vice-Chair: Richard Seelman

In early January the Elders of the class of 2025 were Ordained.

The Session Retreat was planned and executed the last weekend in January.

Thereafter, the Leadership Development Committee commenced to identify church members to serve on the Elder nominating committee for the class of 2026. Leadership Development also opened up nominations for elders for the class of 2026 to the Congregation at large in February. The nominating committee proposed a slate of elders for the class of 2026 in May which was approved by the Congregation at the May congregational Meeting. These elders were ordained January 7, 2024.

In September the elders of the Class of 2026 completed Elder training classes led by Pastor Chris Currie and Assistant Pastor Sarah Chancellor-Watson.

Leadership Development also enlisted elders to serve as Commissioners to the Presbytery of South Louisiana meetings throughout the year.

Leadership Development Awarded Certificates of appreciation to the retiring Elder Class of 2023 at the December Session meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kate Prechter,
2023 Chair, Leadership Development

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Chair: Lou Hoffman | Vice-Chair: Christy McCann

Every Sunday the Membership Committee meets in the Phifer Library to welcome visitors interested in learning more about the church and to assist those who wish to join the church. Some of our new members are former members of SCAPC, some come from other denominations, some are native New Orleanians, some have just moved to the city. It is always a joyful moment when a person — or a couple — appears at the Library door and says "yes, this is the day!"

The enrollment form is filled out, introductions are made, and we join with one of the pastors in a brief ceremony, finalized with a hearty "Amen." Finally, we take a photograph of the new member or members for the Quatrefoil.

As of December 1, 2023, 48 new members have joined the church, 32 adults and 16 confirmands.

We continue to welcome new members into the life of the church by hosting a New Member Lunch, one in June and another in October. We chose the Land Building for both of these events where new members and the committee celebrate together and where easy access to the Land Building encourages families with children to attend. Many thanks go to Christy McCann, who chaired the June Lunch. (The church's Sno-Ball Sunday fell on the same day, making our Lunch especially celebratory!)

And many thanks to Gwen Wertz, chair of the Fall Lunch. Anticipating a larger than usual attendance, we opened the double parlors of the Land Building allowing tables on one side, food stations on the other. We were honored that pastor Chris Currie's parents joined the festivities, held on a beautiful Fall day.

Each week, Camille Zander keeps us informed about visitors who sign the Fellowship pads during weekly church services. We appreciate committee members who write notes of welcome to first-time visitors or make calls to frequent visitors: thanks to Sheila Schwartzmann, Christy McCann, and Elizabeth Favret. Contact by the committee is then recorded in a visitor's record of attendance.

The Navigator Program offers support to new members as they become assimilated into the life of the church. I am grateful to Navigator chair Margo Phelps who — looking for the best "matches" — pairs church members with new members. "Navigator Guide," printed by the committee, offers ways for navigators to connect with new members.

For those interested in learning about the Presbyterian Church (USA), its organization and beliefs, and in particular about St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church, the committee provides a pastor-led information session called SCAPC 101. Three 101 classes were held during the year: in March, August, and December.

Under the guidance of Associate Pastor Sarah Chancellor-Watson, the Membership Committee held two meetings to discuss the work of the committee, to hear suggestions, and to plan Membership events.

I wish to express my thanks to the Membership Committee for help whenever needed and for our work together.

Longtime committee member Margaret Ann Lindsey continues to offer encouragement and steadfast support.

Respectfully submitted,
Louise C.Hoffman, 2023 Chair, Membership Committee

NURSERY SCHOOL

Director: Keflyn Fransen

1. Highlights of the year:

* Back to normal numbers- we dropped in numbers during Covid but are now back up to our pre-Covid numbers.
* Welcoming new staff- always great to add to our amazing staff. SCAPCNS has amazing staff with very little turnover. The teachers are here because they love the children and want to make their first school experience a special one! The teachers create a team that works well together to make NS a loving, nurturing and learning environment. SCAPCNS has a wonderful reputation in the NOLA community because of the many talents, communication and work ethic of our teachers.
* Great family relationships and sense of community- wonderful to be able to host activities and special events
* Parent involvement and many family celebrations on campus: Halloween trick or treat, Thanksgiving Feasts, Christmas Chapel and Holiday Celebrations, Krewe of SCAPCNS with the State St. Stompers, Easter Egg Hunts, etc. Room Parents that work well with the teachers to keep everything centered around fun and a love for learning.

2. SCAPCNS is a loving and nurturing first school experience. Our curriculum consists of play based activities that help develop the children's academic, social and emotional skills. We have six classrooms. All classes are done chronologically.

* three 2 year old classes (Butterfly, Bear and Busy Bee)
* One 3 year old class (Firefly)
* Pre K3 and Pre K4 (Duck and the Gator Class)
* 68 children
* 16 teachers

3. Chapel has been a great addition to our Nursery School program. The Fireflys, Duck and Gators attend Chapel on Monday mornings at 11:25. The children participate in prayer, songs and a bible story. They love to share stories and learn about God.

4. Looking forward to next year- Keeping a close relationship with the Church has been very special and it provides a sense of community.

5. The Nursery School is very thankful for their spacious classrooms, a wonderful playground and resources that help the NS be part of a larger community.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Chair: Dawn Talbot | Vice-Chair: Kristie Trail

2023 was the second full year at SCAPC for Rev. Dr. Chris Currie as Senior Pastor and for Lynn Hoffman as the Director of Administration. This stability in the office provided the time/ability to focus some attention on policies and procedures.

At the beginning of the year, we set the following goals:

1) Create an (employee) handbook for Ordained Staff
2) Review our office procedures and policies to make sure we are following best practices and are compliant with labor laws
3) Continue to improve our annual staff interviews
4) Recruit new personnel committee members

We are happy to report that as a committee we:

◊ Worked with the Director of Administration to move employees' retirement savings to the Board of Pensions.

◊ Worked with the Director of Administration to move employees' medical benefits to the Board of Pensions

◊ Hired a new director for the Aden Program

◊ Worked with the Director of Administration to review and update the Policies and Procedures of the Staff and of the Pastors. New (or newly revised) handbooks for the Ordained Staff and Lay Staff received full Session approval. As part of this process, we reviewed best practices at other churches and workplaces.

◊ Conducted annual interviews with every member of the church staff (full-time, part-time; lay and ordained). SCAPC is, by nearly all accounts, a very happy place to work, as well as worship. These annual interviews help us better understand the work and workflow within SCAPC, and how that can best be accomplished.

◊ Created a system for recognizing staff on their "big" work anniversaries (5, 10, 15, etc).

◊ Received one new committee member with an insurance background.

Respectfully submitted,
Dawn Talbot, 2023 Chair, Personnel

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Moderator: Sarah Edgecombe | Vice Moderator: Nancy Davis

The SCAPC Presbyterian Women were blessed in 2023 to have a very fulfilling year of implementing our numerous programs without interference of natural disasters, medical threats, or other disruptions. The PW Coordinating Team guided us admirably throughout the year. The year began under the leadership of Moderator Harriet Riley. In keeping with our PW calendar, Pastor Sarah Chancellor-Watson led the members of the 2023-24 team through a Litany of Installation in May. Sarah Edgecombe assumed the Moderator position, assisted by Vice Moderator Nancy Davis.

The PW Bible Circles resumed their study of *Celebrating Sabbath: Accepting God's Gift of Rest and Delight*, by Carol M. Bechtel. In September, the group began study of *Sacred Encounters – The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts*, by Olive Mahabir. Thanks to Kate Prechter, Kate Elkins, Beth Poe, Gwen Wertz, Donna Davis and Frances McCall for making our studies possible. In addition, several of our small groups had successful years. These include Spiritually Hungry Women, led by Beth Poe, and the PW Book Club, led by Elizbeth Artigues.

We implemented our various traditional projects. The annual PW retreat, with a theme of Beautifully Made, was held in January. Chaired by Christina Carlisle, Stephanie Currie, and Kelly

Gottsche, the Rev. Taylor Lewis Guthrie Hartman was our presenter. The Easter Egg Hunt for SCAPC children was hosted by Louellen Berger and Allison Tiller and co-chaired by Amanda Berger and Annie Wilson. Simple Elegance, a night of socializing and dining, was chaired by Camille Zander, Caty Johnson, and Pierce Young and held at the home of Monique McClesky. The theme was "Naturally Nawlins". The Christmas worship Service, with a theme of Sacred Encounters, was coordinated by Jo Quinton and Beth Wren and led by Chris Currie and Ashley Brown. It was followed by a reception at the home of Stephanie November. Peace and Justice initiatives were expanded under the leadership of Julie Nice and Charlotte Urban. These included the Centennial Tree Project, the Blessing of the Animals, and a prison visit to the Elayn Hunt Correctional Center.

Throughout the year we maintained support of our Mission Partners. These include: Living Waters for the World, whose teams empower their partners to provide clean, sustainable water for their communities; Eden House, a ministry for women who have survived prostitution, addiction, and human trafficking; Program of Hope, a local outreach supporting the homeless and people living on the margins; Raintree Children and Family Services, a social service agency helping abandoned or neglected children; Okra Abbey, a community garden and sacred space for the residents of Pigeon Town; and Carrollton Camp, which provides nurturing and enrichment activities for children in need. Each program received monetary contributions as well as donated items to meet their needs. After a hiatus of three years due to COVID we resumed our mission trips to Cuba.

Through generous contributions from our members, we were able to lend support to our numerous PW partners: PW Birthday Offering, the Thank Offering, the Synod of the Sun, the Presbytery of South Louisiana, Fellowship of the Least Coin, Cents-Ability, PW Gives Day, and PCUSA Mission Co-Workers. We donated to the Rowena McMillan Scholarship Fund at Union Presbyterian Seminary in memory of the PW members who died in the past year. Additional moneys were given to the SCAPC sextons who assist in our logistics, the Medical Benevolence Fund, Second Harvest Food Bank, Montreat Conference Center and the Leland Presbyterian Church in support of tornado assistance.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Bush, Presbyterian Women Historian

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Chair: Harper Johnson | Vice-Chair: Matthew Wilson

As we embark on the new year, the 2023 property committee is pleased to report several significant property enhancements, upgrades, and initiatives to help our facilities offer the best possible environment for worship and gathering now and into the future. The following list outlines the key highlights from the past year:

◊ Exterior Cleaning/Waterproofing/Stained Glass Preservation – Volker Construction: We have partnered with Volker Construction to implement

state-of-the-art cleaning/waterproofing solutions and stained-glass reglazing ensuring the longevity and structural integrity of our buildings.

- Back Roof over staff offices - Guidry Sheet Metal: The expertise of Guidry Sheet Metal was employed to retool and enhance the durability of our back roof, providing a reliable shield against the elements.
- Columbarium Cleaning: Our commitment to maintaining a serene and respectful environment included thorough cleaning and upkeep of our columbarium.
- Property Tax Credit Application for Construction Work: We are actively engaged in opportunities to minimize the financial impact of construction through historic property tax credits, ensuring responsible fiscal management.
- Property and Wind Insurance Coverage Renewal: With lengthy review, consternation, and as part of our ongoing risk management strategy, we were able to procure wind insurance coverage to give some safeguard against unforeseen events such as hurricanes.
- Garden Committee: We are in the beginning stages of the creation of a dedicated Garden Committee which underscores our commitment to beautifying and maintaining our outdoor spaces for the enjoyment of all. More to come.
- New Chairs for Children's Sunday School: The comfort and safety of our youngest members are a priority. The new chairs enhance the learning environment in our Children's Sunday School and were a special gift from the Wilson family.
- Construction Contract Template: To streamline and standardize our construction processes, a comprehensive construction contract template has been developed and will be used for all projects to enhance and streamline contractual engagements with outside parties.
- Equipment Lifecycle Matrix: Ensuring the efficiency of our operations for years into the future, we have developed an equipment lifecycle matrix to track and manage the lifespan of key assets and help property and finance allocate for upcoming major maintenance expenditures.
- Civil Engineer Site Improvement Proposal: Collaborating with experienced civil engineers, we are reviewing a site improvement proposal to enhance the functionality and aesthetics of our property grounds.

These highlights represent the congregation's dedication to the continuous improvement and well-being of our property, creating a space that is both resilient and welcoming for our community.

Special thanks to all members of the 2023 property committee for their time, thoughts, and dedicated service.

Respectfully submitted,
Harper Johnson, 2023 Chair, Property

SPIRITUAL FORMATION COMMITTEE

Children

2023 began with Sunday school classes for children divided into four groups: PreK– K, 1st,2nd – 3rd, and 4th -5th grade. Fall semester we rearranged the classes to better cover developmental and social groupings, as well as included the 3-year-olds who had previously been part of the nursery. Classes are now split into PreK3-4, K-1st, 2nd-3rd, 4th-5th. Twenty-one Sunday School teachers volunteered throughout the year to teach the classes in rotations. We hosted a Teacher Appreciation Luncheon at NOLA Brewery for our dedicated volunteers in the spring.

In May, family Sunday School classes were offered in fellowship hall instead of individual classrooms due to historically smaller class sizes during the month of May. We enjoyed the joint class on the theme of Jesus' miracles where we explored the story through storytelling, science experiments, and discussion. We then continued this theme with our June classes where the children joined their families in the sanctuary for the 1st part of worship then had class in the fellowship hall for the second half.

Worship Workshop was held for 3 Sundays in the beginning of the year for 1st Grade Students and their parents. The workshop showed the parts of the service, how to actively listen and ways to participate in the service. They receive a children's bible as a next step in their faith journey. After the class, they will make the transition to staying in the service after the children's message and we hope this class has helped both parents and kids with that transition.

The Challenger Class (4th and 5th grade) was able to hold their annual retreat in Tickfaw State Park. Eight students and 2 chaperones enjoyed a weekend learning the power of prayer and got to spend the afternoon at a corn maze.

In the summer, our Vacation Bible School hosted 47 children and 16 youth volunteers. Our youth were given greater responsibilities and led several of the workshops themselves. While this VBS was smaller than previous years, this year we had a lot more SCAPC children attend VBS along with their friends from school. Many parents shared their children had the best time this year and can't wait to come back next year. This year's VBS theme was "Hero Hotline: Called Together to Serve God." Thanks to the many volunteers who came together and answered the call to serve God to make all of our children's ministries possible; you are indeed our heroes!

Youth

SCAPC's youth and college ministry blossomed in 2023. In the spring semester, 6th-12th graders met regularly for Sunday School, Youth Group, and service projects. Sunday School took place in person between services and virtually on Instagram @Scapc_youth and focused on the lectionary. Youth Group in the spring continued concentrating on a curriculum written by Director of Youth and Young Adults Chris Hazlaris,

entitled "Knowing Our Worth," and welcomed around 30 youth/night. Service Saturdays were offered monthly to tie in to the youth group and enact the different ways the youth were encouraged to see "worth" in others. Youth also engaged in their faith through "Youth Sunday" services in February, which offered SCAPC's young people the opportunity to prepare and lead both 8:30 and 10:30 worship. The middle and high schoolers wrote prayers, chose the Bible readings and hymns, served as ushers and even delivered the sermons. Finally, in the spring, a class of seventeen 8th grade confirmands attended classes and a retreat to prepare them for their confirmation later in the year.

SCAPC middle and high schoolers' faith formation continued in the summer with trips to Memphis (Mission Trip), Mo Ranch (Junior High Conference), and Montreat (Senior High Conference). These trips gave our youth the chance to engage in fellowship and worship with peers from other parts of the country as members of a larger community of faith and to feel loved and accepted just as they are.

The fall saw a massive increase in youth numbers. Sunday School remained lectionary focused, but now welcomed around 15 youth. Youth Group saw up to 60 6th-12th graders attend weekly, as the community explored a new annual theme: "Who is your neighbor?" Each month, through scripture study, discussion groups, breakout games, and large-group activities, the youth discussed all the different groups in our world who deserve our neighborly love, open-mindedness, compassion, and attention as God's people (from those experiencing poverty, to the environment, to our own family members). Service projects continued to be offered monthly to practice loving those particular neighbors.

A few new additions to SCAPC Youth's happenings were the creation of a Parents Group and the offering of a Girls Retreat. During the first youth group of each month, SCAPC Youth parents were offered a space for fellowship, refreshments, and discussion around the topics their children were simultaneously learning in their youth classes. The hope was to not only build deeper relationship amongst our parents, but to keep faith conversations happening in the home. 2023 closed with a retreat designed for our female youth, sponsored by Presbyterian Women and modeled after the Barbie movie. Around 20 girls came together to bond, build each other up, open up about some of the pressures about being a girl in this day and age, and rest in the Biblical knowledge that they were fearfully and wonderfully made.

Finally, it should be noted that SCAPC's college community also continued to thrive in 2023. Bolstering a relationship with NOLA Wesley, a local Tulane/Loyola campus ministry led by PCUSA Pastor Zoë Garry, our church made strides to connect with local university students across the greater New Orleans area. SCAPC took around a dozen 19-22 year-olds to Montreat's College Conference in January and continued to nourish relationships with its college-aged members through intentional check-ins, dinners, care package deliveries, and organized Zoom calls throughout the year.

Young Adults and Families (YAF)

2023 has been a full and enriching year for the Young Adults and Family (YAF) at St. Charles Ave. Presbyterian Church. We have had a full programming schedule as well as opportunities to grow in faith weekly through PINTS and Sunday School classes. We welcomed new members with coffee visits and provided meals for families welcoming newborns or experiencing difficult times. I was also thrilled to organize our first-ever YAF Retreat at Fontainebleau State Park; a tradition that we hope to continue for years to come. Our YAF members are engaged in the various activities that are offered, and our community continues to grow.

YAF sponsored a variety of social events throughout the year, providing opportunities for fellowship and community development. We kicked off the year with our annual 12th Night Party and King Cake Tasting as well as a trivia night at Oak Street Brewery. In the spring we coordinated a tree planting project with SOUL in March and had our annual Crawfish Boil at the Land Building in April. We started the summer with a concert in Lafayette Square in May and kayaking on Bayou St. John in June, gathered for beignets in July after worship, and ended the summer with a cocktail competition in August. We started the fall with our first POLO (Parents of Little Ones) Party, providing a much-appreciated opportunity for families with children under three to get together and meet new friends. The rest of the fall featured many classic YAF events, including a Saints watch party in September, pumpkin carving party in October, Friendsgiving Feast in November, and our annual Holiday Brunch and White Elephant Gift Exchange in December. Some of these gatherings saw crowds of up to 60 young adults and children! We've had great attendance from both current and prospective SCAPC members, who are grateful for these opportunities for friendship and fellowship.

In October, we hosted over 40 young adults and children for our first YAF Retreat at Fontainebleau State Park. This event was originally planned by former YAF coordinator Bria Rault, but the event had to be cancel due to COVID-19 shut downs in March 2020. There was a lot of interest from the YAF community in reviving the plans for this event, and I was so happy to make the plans a reality. On a gorgeous fall weekend, our group had the opportunity to step away from the demands of daily life to connect with God, nature, and each other as we explored the theme of our retreat: Rooted in Christ. We camped in tents, enjoyed s'mores, explored the beautiful grounds of the park, and had a wonderful time together. I hope that this retreat will continue to be a part of our regular YAF programming!

In addition to these large social events, YAF offered opportunities for weekly spiritual formation on Wednesday evenings at PINTS as well as during the Sunday School hour. PINTS continues to offer a variety of topics related to faith from articles, books, and podcasts and this fall we did a multi-week study of David Zahl's book Seculosity. YAF also supported Adult Spiritual Formation by offering two Sunday School classes: God, Improv, and the Art of Living by MaryAnn McKibbon Dana in the spring and When Kids Ask Hard Questions in the fall. Both PINTS and the Sunday School classes saw regular attendance, with the former drawing around 10 and the latter around 8 engaged participants weekly.

Outside of our programmed events, there have also been several "unofficial" YAF events suggested by members of the group. Group members have suggested impromptu gatherings, such as picnics at the Fly on Friday nights, getting together for meals at local restaurants, meeting up on the parade route during Carnival season, and most recently singing Christmas Carols in

Jackson Square. These events are often suggested in our YAF GroupMe account, where members share exciting personal news and offer encouragement to each other for the various happenings in our lives. I love to see the engagement of our YAF members at our scheduled events and in these informal events as well. I believe it speaks to the strength of this program and our church community, and it's a wonderful thing to be a part of!

Respectfully submitted,Tyler Wheeler, Young Adults Coordinator

Adult Christian Education

For the Spring Semester of 2023, we were able to offer two adult classes each week. Our young adults conducted a class, *God, Improve and the Art of Living* based on a book by MaryAnn McKibben Dana that blended personal stories, pop culture and scripture into a smart, funny down-to-earth guide to the art of living.

Richard Ashmore led a series of classes on African American Spirituality which gave an exploration of African American spirituality from its roots in many diverse Western African societies to its many manifestations in America today. Key questions the class addressed were: Is there a "Black Church" in America? How did enslaved Africans adopt and adapt Christianity? How have Historically Black Protestant Denominations served both group cohesiveness and societal change? Each class began and ended with music.

John Dunlap and Chris Currie collaborated on a class entitled John Knox and How the Scots Invented the Modern World. Due to the contributions of John Knox and the reform movement that gave birth to the protestant church in Scotland, an environment was created that nurtured a literate society, education for all, faith that asks questions and seeks understanding, free thought and inquiry, a larger commitment to the ethical vision of society, and a say in the affairs of government.

A single adult class was offered during the month of June on the subject of Book of James, taught by John Dunlap. Our summer programing took another summer break for the months of July and August as we did last year which worked well.

After a summer break, we began the fall with single class led by Chris Currie on More Than Curse Words: The Gospel in the English language. This class gave a brief overview of the origins of English, its lack of sophistication and refinement as a language, the struggle to get scripture into English, and the irony of the most beautiful translation of scripture.

A new Bible study class organized by Janet Bean and Michael O'Keefe filled the balance of the semester up to Advent. The focus of this year's Bible study is the transition from the formation of the Hebrew people to the beginnings of the early church. This fall started with a series of classes on Exodus which covers the transition of the Hebrews from a group of tribes into a community and nation, from bondage to freedom. In 2024, this Bible study class will continue with series of classes on Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, which tells the story of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He is the Messiah long awaited by the Hebrews. The Bible study class will wrap up the spring semester of 2024 with a series of classes on Galatians which is considered the "Magna Carta" for Christianity in which this new belief is unbound from the requirements of the Hebrew law and thus can broaden its evangelism and is no longer considered

another Hebrew sect.

Our Selley Series class was led by the Rev. Dr. José Irizarry, President and Professor of Practical Theology at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. In addition to preaching at 8:30 and 10:30, Dr. Irizarry spoke about 'Opportunities and Challenges in Theological Education Today.' Our Lupberger Series class was led by Dr. Jennifer Lord, the Dorothy B. Vickery Professor of Homiletics and Liturgical Studies at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Her topic was Baptismal Spirituality which is an extension of her work on liturgical theology.

Beth Poe led a class for Advent entitled "Living Advent" with reflections on how All of Life is Advent aimed at transforming Advent into a spiritual program for life. During Advent season, Luminary Memorials and Honorariums were created and set up outside the front of the church in memory or honor of friends and family. Over 300 luminaries were placed.

The Adult Spiritual Formation Committee would like to thank all those who brought to fruition the adult classes this fall semester. Thanks to Ruthie Frierson for suggesting that the committee approach Janet Bean and Beth Poe to lead a class.

We thank Janet Bean and Michael O'Keefe for their enterprising spirit and tireless efforts in putting together the bible study on Exodus. They did a great job recruiting many other talented teachers that joined them in leading this class. Along with Janet and Michael, the following also led a class: Pat Widhalm, Rev. Neale Miller, John Galbraith, Rev. Phil Stagg, Donna Ryan, Richard Ashmore, Larry Hamric, and Robert Edgecombe. These are some of the leading lights in this congregation and it was a joy to have them present this bible study. We also thank this group for their continued commitment to leading the bible study series in the spring semester of 2024 on the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistle to the Galatians. We would like to also thank Beth Poe for putting together and leading the Advent class this year. She has an uncanny ability to clear out the weeds and get to the heart of the matter. We are also grateful for Katie Brendler and Miriam Hollar who have been steadfast in their assistance with all things technical for these classes. Finally, we would be nowhere without Michele Murphy leading the way and keeping us on track.

The committee chair, John Dunlap, offers his gratitude to his fellow committee members, Ruthie Frierson and Laurie Young, for their support and encouragement. They will welcome Geoff Snodgrass to the team next year as John rolls off the Session.

Respectfully submitted, John Dunlap, Chair Adult Spiritual Formation

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Chair: Stewart Peck | Vice-Chair: Megan Guy

The Stewardship Committee for the 2024 campaign challenged the St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church to consider a pledge as something more than an annual stewardship campaign, but as an investment in this church, in our faith, and in our future. The Stewardship Committee consisted of Chair Stewart Peck, Vice Chair Megan Guy, and committee member Bob Vorhoff. In addition, the Stewardship Campaign was supported by a campaign team of past stewardship chairs (Anderson Baker, Chesley Hines, Price Lanier, John Morton IV, Scott Zander, Nathan Adams, Hallie Boh, John Dunlap, Parke Ellis, Harry Hardin, Ruthie Frierson, Julie Nice, Kathy Randall, Richard Seelman, Holly Snodgrass, Dawn Talbot, Tom Winingder, and Scott Zander) The 2024 Stewardship Campaign was also heavily supported by our church staff, in particular Katie Brendler, Hallie Boh, and Emily Fleshman who helped design our materials, craft our message, and offer legwork each step of the way.

The campaign commenced on September 24th with a Congregational Picnic and concluded on October 8th with Dedication Sunday. The Stewardship Committee led by Stewart Peck also were tireless in following up in the weeks following the Stewardship Campaign. As a result, the 2024 Stewardship Campaign had the highest number of pledging households in the last five years (321) and the highest total pledged in the last five years, $1,487,606. As we face the challenges and opportunities of the future, we are grateful for the consistent support of this congregation and your investment in this community and our future. Submitted by the 2024 Stewardship Committee

WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE

Chair: Carol Maher | Vice-Chair: Judith Halverson

Gathering together to worship God is an essential part of being one of God's people. The Worship & Music Committee has as its primary responsibility to ensure that the worship services are meaningful.

The worship services continue to be provided in person at 8:30am and 10:30am and live streamed during the 10:30am service. We had the good fortune of hiring JP Allen who takes care of the audiovisual requirements of making the live stream happen, and then the recording available on YouTube each week. Approximately 130 people view the recordings each week.

The worship experience would not be what it is without our important volunteers. Libbie Reiss continues to provide consistent service in organizing the flower contributions each Sunday. Mayson Buffington provides an important service as worship coordinator at the 8:30 am services, with special assistance from full time ushers Wes Simon, Thom Schulingcamp, and Miriam Hollar. Wes deserves special recognition for ushering throughout the summer for the Summer Sundays. Geoff Snodgrass ensures that our ushers at the 10:30 a.m. services are present to assist each Sunday. Mayson Buffington plays an essential role in preparing the communion elements for both the 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services. Communion is served weekly at the 8:30 a.m. service and at the 10:30 a.m. service on the first Sunday of each month and on special Sundays.

The church performed 18 baptisms in 2023. The children are represented by a Baptism Buddy. A core group of women stitch special baptism cloths: Wendi Adams, Nancy Borland, Betty Founds, Judith Halverson, and Sally Wimberly. Rosemary Pic has recently joined the group.

From the Book of Order, Presbyterian Church (USA): "The covenant people have always used the gift of song to offer prayer…To lead the congregation in the singing of prayer as a primary role of the choir and other musicians. They also may pray on behalf of the congregation. Music as prayer is to be a worthy offering to God on behalf of the people". Music is at the heart of the worship experience at SCAPC. Under the incomparable leadership of Steven Blackman, in addition to weekly services several special services were provided in 2023. These included the Palm Sunday service with Chancel Choir and the LPO, Gospel Sunday, Heritage Sunday with its bagpipe processional, and the Christmas Service with Chancel Choir and LPO. This year, we were blessed with a gift from the estate of Mary Langlois, long time Chancel Choir member, to provide funds to add a special service featuring the Chichester Psalms provided by the SCAPC Chancel Choir and LPO on Sunday, November 5. SCAPC also hosted the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service in November.

The Worship & Music committee is a dedicated group who work hard throughout the year to ensure that the worship experience is meaningful to all participants.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Carol Maher,
Judith Halverson, 2023 Vice-Chair, Worship and Music

ST. CHARLES AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Mission

We at St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church are called by God's grace to exist in the world as a community of faith grounded in Jesus Christ. In our corporate and personal life, we are called to bear witness to the transformative power of the Holy Spirit wherever we see it at work—in our personal lives, in our church, and in the life of the world. As a community formed by God's grace, claimed by Jesus Christ, and sent by the Holy Spirit, we seek to support one another in love, live with joy, foster belonging, build community, practice hope, and offer healing in Christ's name, to each other and to the world around us, near and far.

Our Strategic Plan

In 2023, a Strategic Planning Committee was formed to compose a set of goals and strategies to guide our church over the next several years. In developing a plan, members of the congregation were challenged to reflect on where the church has been, where it is now, and where it should and can be over the next five years. The committee has been impressed by, and grateful for, the ways the congregation has celebrated the church's strengths, identified challenges and opportunities with candor, and shared wonderful ideas for a bright future. From your input, a new mission statement was created (see above), and from that statement the following plan was derived.

You can find the whole strategic plan by using the QR code below (opening the camera app on your smart phone then clicking on the link that appears). If you would like a printed copy of the strategic plan, please contact Katie or Hallie in the church office.

A special thanks to our Elder Class of 2023 for three years of hard work!

Avery Beuerman
Hallie Boh
Cindy Bush
Charlie Carson
Zach Christiansen
John Dunlap
Beth Edwards
Katie Gilly
Lou Hoffman
Harper Johnson
Carol Maher
Melissa McDonald
Stewart Peck
Kate Prechter
Dawn Talbot

Youth Elders:
Lock Gottsche
Molly Talbot
Ava Zander

Welcome to our Elder Class of 2026!

Jonell Quinton
Helen Barnett
Stacey Danner
Jim Carter
Russell Steele
Maureen Herring
Kay Randels
Gillian Egan
John Morton IV
Geoff Snodgrass
Stephanie Carter
Griff Thomas
Stephanie November
Mayson Buffington
Nathan Adams

Youth Elders:
Sophia DeFraites
Delanie Sundmaker
Nick White

St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church
1545 State Street | New Orleans, Louisiana | 70118
office (504) 897-0101
@scapcnola @scapc_nola
www.scapc.org