

The Quarterly Magazine of Florence Christian Church

Abundant

Volume 4: Issue 1 Spring 2022

Rebuilding Through
Leadership



REBUILD THROUGH LEADERSHIP

By Rev. Dr. Susan Ward Diamond, Lead Pastor

There's a quote that always causes me to think (and sometimes, to cringe):

The only thing that does not change, is change itself.

Attributed to Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535-475 BCE), this challenging quote reminds us that the world and all that is in it continues to evolve. Change is a constant, and there is no going back. The question is, what does change require of us?

Sometimes we yearn for the past...the way things were before some kind of earth-shattering event happens. All of us have no doubt had a dose of nostalgia over the past couple of years. And yet, we also remember that the "good old days" had their own troubles.

In this issue of Abundant, we are focusing on our 2022 theme REBUILD as we look at rebuilding through leadership. And as you read what's inside, look with me at how change is happening in the midst of rebuilding: staff changes, our evolving mission and ministry, and the stewardship opportunities that call us to consider how we will be a part of what God is doing in us and through us.

How will you respond to change? It's here to stay!

Blessings, Pastor Susan

Abundant

The quarterly magazine of
Florence Christian Church

Contributors

Rebecca DeCecco
Rev. Dr. Susan Ward Diamond
Rev. Dr. Diana Hodges-Batzka
Drew Murphy
Melissa Stephens

Design & Editing

Rev. Dr. Diana Hodges-Batzka
Melissa Stephens

In this Issue

	Page
Rebuild through Leadership.....	2
Leadership Drives Us Forward.....	3
On The Road To	6
Leaders Embrace Change.....	8
2022-2023 Ministry and Mission Spending Plan.....	10
Leading Through New Friendships...	15



Cover Photo by Karolina
Grabowska: [https://
www.pexels.com/photo/blue-
and-orange-lego-blocks-
4887167/](https://www.pexels.com/photo/blue-and-orange-lego-blocks-4887167/)

LEADERSHIP DRIVES US FORWARD

By Rev. Dr. Diana Hodges-Batzka

Florence Christian Church, along with the world, has been going through a lot of change as we have responded, adapted and innovated in response to a global pandemic, social unrest and divisions, and the changing economic and geo-political landscape. As we move forward into the mission God has for our church, we are considering how to utilize one of the greatest gifts, resources and investments that the church has – its paid staff.

In his book *Good to Great*, author Jim Collins describes the concept of “First, Who, Then What” that great organizations take to staffing as “If we get the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats . . . then we’ll figure out how to take it someplace great.”

As we are moving through a year of rebuilding, we are doing just that - getting the right people in the right seats. We have been blessed with many talented people joining our team in recent years and now we are getting them in positions to utilize their gifts, calls, skills and passions to serve the church in more spiritually aligned ways.

THE RIGHT SEATS

PASTOR SUSAN - LEAD PASTOR



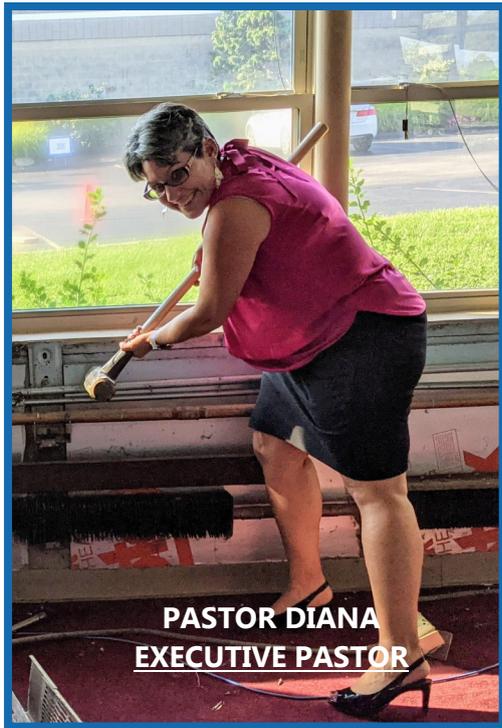
Pastor Susan with Alma Bonham

Pastor Susan, Doctor of Ministry, has served as Senior Minister for seven years and has led the church in amazing ways! Yet, many of her gifts – especially those for community networking and relationship building – have been underutilized due to the administrative tasks of this traditional role.

As Lead Pastor she will unleash her gifts for vision-casting, preaching and worship designing. Her primary focus will be pastoral care, leadership development and adult faith formation, as well as expanding our ministry engagement through relationship building within the church, in the community and with ecclesial partners.

“Rev. Dr. Diamond is well-suited to lead this phase of church life and she has extensive experience in helping craft vision and mission. How lucky you are to have her among your pastoral staff, and I know that her leadership will be key in this phase.”

~Rev. Dr. Suzanne Castle, Sabbatical Coach



Pastor Diana managing the office wing renovations

Pastor Diana, Doctor of Ministry, has served as Associate Minister for seven years and has continued to grow in her gifts and skills. In this time, her roles and responsibilities have changed from a primary focus on faith formation to include leadership for Discover Zone, the Renovations project, human resources, communications, technology infrastructure and special events. The role of Executive Pastor better focuses Pastor Diana's gifts of organization. She will provide spiritual leadership to strategic planning, administration, finances, facilities and human resource operations of the church, creating effective, efficient, and mission-aligned systems. She will continue to serve in worship and pastoral care.

"Rev. Dr. Hodges-Batzka brings an amazing skill set to process and detail management. Call upon her gifts in this time to help discover more streamlined ways to be church in this moment and beyond."

~Dr. Castle



Kayla working with Crystal Floyd, Assistant Director of Adventure Zone

Since 2019, Kayla, Associates in Business Management, has served as the Administrative Assistant to the Discover Zone. She brings a strong work ethic and many years of administrative and management experience. Kayla has transitioned into a new role as General Office Manager. In this position, she is responsible for both the Church Office and Discover Zone offices, as well as Human Resources, payroll, and financial support functions. Kayla is continuing her education and will soon have a Bachelor's in Accounting.

"I'm very excited to grow within the church; I truly believe my passion for service has been fulfilled at Florence Christian Church. I'm excited about the creation of this new position as it is another step in fulfilling our mission to provide holistic family care within Florence Christian Church and Discover Zone. I aim to be part of the effort to join Florence Christian Church and Discover Zone into one dynamic organization."

Kayla grew up in Campbellsville KY. She is happily married to her wife Crystal, and they share a son named Jackson who is 6. Kayla also runs video production for the 11 AM service. In her little free time, she enjoys all things music.



*Melissa with Donna Murphy and Maleah Rhodes,
Outreach volunteers*

Melissa, Master of Divinity, has served for 6 years as Administrative Assistant, Communications Coordinator and Office Manager. While the pastors were on sabbatical she served on the sabbatical team taking preaching rotations. For many years she has been on a journey, discerning a call to ministry. In January, she was approved for Ordination with the United Church of Christ (UCC) pending a call. She will be developing a part-time Outreach Minister position to build sustainability into our thriving Outreach Ministries through community partnerships and funding streams. Melissa hopes to serve in this role as well as a part-time pastoral role with another church to explore her pastoral leadership gifts. We journey with Melissa and her husband John as her call unfolds.

SAM COMBS - WORSHIP MEDIA DIRECTOR



Sam, Associates in Applied Science and AV Production, and his husband Veston came to Florence Christian in Nov. 2019 and quickly embraced our mission, becoming Ministry Partners in Feb. 2020. When the worship service

had to quickly transition online due to the pandemic, Sam offered his video and audio production expertise. He volunteered his time to develop online worship, upgrade equipment, and

develop our digital ministry. In January 2022, he formally joined the church staff as our part-time Worship Media Director. Sam also volunteers as the Team Lead for our Fresh Start Shower Ministry. When not at the church, Sam volunteers with the American Red Cross and grandparents in partnership with Veston.

**JAMES STEPHENSON
MUSIC MINISTRY DIRECTOR**



James Stephenson, Master of Arts in Music Education, joined us in 2019 as a guitarist in the praise band. We are blessed by his many musical gifts, experience, and education. In March of 2021, he became Interim Sabbatical Music Director. In January 2022,

he accepted the role of part-time Music Ministry Director in which he leads the praise band and our music ministries. He is the Lead Instructor with the TALL institute providing musical instruction to adults with developmental disabilities and teaches private lessons. He is married to Courtney, who is a gifted vocalist. They are parents to Jack (age 10) and Sam (age 8).

Praying for the Right People

There are still empty seats in communications and children/youth faith formation ministries. These are vital positions that cannot remain empty as we seek to rebuild the mission and vision to which God is calling this church. In the coming weeks, we will be seeking a part-time Communications Coordinator to guide our communications ministry. We are also exploring how to fill the seat for our children and youth faith formation ministries, whether a paid or volunteer position or multiple positions. If you know of people who might be the right fit or if you are interested in helping, please contact Pastor Diana, dhodgesbatzka@florencechristian.org.

On The Road To...

By Drew Murphy, Board Chair and Trustee

As a young boy some of my favorite movies were from the "Road To..." series featuring Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. The stars of the film were always in some far away exotic place and they ended up in life changing situations that would never have happened had they just stayed home. Then, in my teenage years, I discovered the beatnik novel "On The Road," by Jack Kerouac, another example of storytelling adventures that could only be encountered by traveling, experiencing things that would forever change visions of a future. These stories always evoked feelings of excitement and wonder in me.



The Bible contains Road stories, detailing pivotal moments in the faith journey of the protagonists, searching for a vision and changing lives. We may be familiar with the "Road To Damascus" and the "Road To Emmaus." Are you familiar with a story not in the Bible that changes lives closer to home, in significant ways, forever altering our future direction? I refer to the Road Story of Florence Christian Church.

Within our lifetimes, the various visions, shared by the congregation and shepherded by church leadership, have greatly impacted lives in our community. The road trip we are on now began with recognizing the need for affordable housing in the senior community. So we built what is now Arcadia Park next to our Main Street campus. This was a great leap of faith at the time as there was no facility like it in the area. Then the road turned.

Nearly twenty years ago, the Senior Center was sold to new ownership. Some of the proceeds were tithed; the remainder was used to purchase property in Union as an investment in the future. The original intentions were to build another church on the land but the road twisted again and while we retained the land, ministry focus returned primarily to the Main Street campus in Florence.

More recently, the past few years have brought significant changes in the life of Florence Christian Church. We have greatly increased our food ministries. We have officially become an inclusive and affirming church. We have renovated our office wing to house a Fresh Start Shower Ministry that serves those most at risk in our community. These things would not have happened by standing still. Despite the natural temptation to remain static during the uncertainty of a pandemic, Florence Christian evolved and found new and creative ways to serve as the hands and feet of God.

On March 1st, at the exact same time, on the exact same day as the opening of the Fresh Start Ministry, the Trustees signed the closing statements for the sale of the Union property. That moment opens the door

to the opportunity to provide one of the greatest gifts this generation can offer to the next generation — to ensure that the ministries of Florence Christian Church continue — in perpetuity.

I can't help but think that the Bob Hope and Jack Kerouac characters would take the proceeds from the sale and throw a big party. That is certainly a temptation but not one that the Trustees recommend.

We propose the land sale proceeds be gifted to a permanent fund in the name of Florence Christian Church at the Christian Church Foundation. This will create an income stream for Florence Christian Church's ministries, for future generations, in perpetuity; not just for our lifetimes, but forever.

We believe this best follows the vision established by the leadership of the church from generations ago. Through example, it provides a path forward for the children of Florence Christian to continue writing the story of a church in service to a community, committed to being a light in the darkness, a well for the thirsty, and open to all.

While this is a proposed plan by the Trustees, it requires the approval of the Congregation. After consideration and endorsement by the Elders and Board, an informational meeting was held on May 1 to allow for transparency and questions for the entire congregation. On May 22 at Noon, at a called Congregational meeting, the congregation will vote on the proposal.

The decisions made by past leadership and partners of Florence Christian allow for this opportunity to secure our future by making this decision in the present.

We know that the path into the future is in a direction known only to God. And as we make our way, we also can expect some fearful times that will be overcome by faith. But, with an endowment in place, it is much more certain that the Road Story of this church will continue to grow and be shared for generations to come.

What a tremendous gift we have been given. What a tremendous gift that we can give. Amen!



Crystal Floyd, Assistant Director of Adventure Zone School Age Program; Debbie Smith, Director of Operations, and Amanda Martin, Assistant Director of the Infant and Toddler Program

By Rebecca DeCecco, Executive Director

The childcare industry is experiencing regulation changes, lack of funding to support mandated initiatives, and generalized pandemic fear. Over 300 centers in Kentucky closed permanently due to heavy financial losses during the mandated three-month closure and many more were unable to remain open within six months of returning to daily operations. Working families are caught in the upheaval caused by these changes; finding high-quality childcare is a struggle.

At Discover Zone, we are helping families navigate the struggle, despite capacity limitations. We thought creatively to use every available space here at Florence Christian Church to decrease classroom numbers without an extreme decrease in capacity. Normal capacity for our campus is 190 children. During the restricted capacities, we were still able to care for 150 children in groups of ten

throughout the facility. Since returning to normal capacity, we have been able to serve our community at full capacity.

So, how did we survive when others did not? The answer is strong leadership from our Discover Zone leadership team!

Debbie Smith, Director of Operations, Crystal Floyd and Sarah Manley, Assistant Directors, created policies and parent education documents to ensure parents were comfortable returning to childcare. This past year **Amanda Martin and Ali May** joined our leadership team as Assistant Directors and continue to improve childcare quality at Discover Zone. When asked what early childhood education leadership means, Smith, a 39 year Discover Zone staff member, said "Leadership is setting examples for others to follow." Smith sets this example daily as she

guides parents, staff, and children through struggles as well as achievements.

The Discover Zone staff strives to improve their teaching practice by continuing education. In the past year, 12 staff members have pursued their Child Development Associates (CDA) degree using the Kentucky All-Stars CDA scholarship program. The degree takes approximately a year to complete, and requires dedication, time management skills, and extra time outside of working hours. In addition to these 12 staff members there are others with Associates degrees, Bachelors degrees, and Masters degrees. These educational certifications increases overall childcare quality in our center.

When **Amanda Martin**, a 22-year staff member and current Assistant Director over our Infant and Toddler department, was asked what leading during a time of restructure means to her, she responded with "Just getting everyone to trust that it will get better. Listening and learning from each other will help us build a better place for the children and also for us as coworkers. Sometimes, a little change is good!" Martin is correct, we must change our way of thinking and being in order to keep up with the needs of staff, children, and parents.

What changes have we made recently?

Staff wage increase: Through the assistance of the American Rescue Plan Funds, we have raised staff wages above industry standard. This improves staff retention and decreases the high turnover rate typically associated with childcare. Less staff turnover leads to more consistency and security for children in an increasingly unstable world.

Staff professional development: We have established policies and procedures for staff professional development and implemented a rigorous curriculum and support curriculum. The

Discover Zone staff is equipped to work with children's mental health struggles, children with disabilities, and continuous assessment of children's educational progress. A team of teacher coordinators for family engagement, mental health and disability assessment, and curriculum experts enables us to increase our mission-based work. **Alisha Hunt, Family Engagement Coordinator** and **Jennifer Adams, Assessment and Disabilities Coordinator**, identify children in need of early intervention for developmental delays and mental health struggles. **Jenny Lonneman**, an expert on our curriculum, guides staff through the new study-based approach to learning as well as Conscious Discipline strategies to build a strong school family.

"Listening and learning from each other will help us build a better place for children and also for us as coworkers."

~Amanda Martin

Rebecca DeCecco, Executive Director, leads with a strength-based approach. She discovers hidden talents and leverages those strengths to benefit the program and the staff member. Working in an environment where the staff are passionate about their work results in higher quality care and education.

"I have seen many staff members grow and improve in their teaching practice as well as make the position their own. Giving people ownership of their work leads to highly competent and well-qualified educators."

~ Rebecca DeCecco

Smith said the changes were scary at first but concluded with "I'm proud. Because you, Rebecca, allow me to grow and share ideas."

Florence Christian Church can be proud of the work that has been done at Discover Zone. With the help of God, we are all continuing to expand and lead the region in exceptional childcare.

2022-2023 MINISTRY AND MISSION SPENDING PLAN

Stewardship is...all I do with all I have...once I say, "Lord Jesus, I believe."

Stewardship campaigns are often regarded with a sense of dread and anxiety in congregations for two primary reasons:

1. There's a misunderstanding of stewardship as simply "raising money for the church." Stewardship isn't about another bill to pay. It's about our lives as believers in the risen Christ, both individually and as a community of faith.
2. Most of us don't really get inspired looking at numbers on a spreadsheet, especially when they are categorized by dull words like "Administration" and "Property." Stewardship isn't just about numbers. It is about the stories and the lives changed that those numbers represent.

So instead of bringing dread or anxiety to this stewardship campaign, let's celebrate all that God is doing through Florence Christian Church. It is a time to rebuild our ministries and mission, trusting in God's abundance.

The following is the Ministry and Mission Spending Plan for 2022-2023. It tells the story of our mission now and for the future. It highlights the ministries of Florence Christian Church to encourage you to see how your giving changes lives! The actual dollars are not finalized, so please understand what is represented here is based on previous years and preliminary planning for the future.



Volunteers preparing for a Free & Fresh Food Distribution

Rebuilding through Abundant Mission and Outreach Support

Feeding the Multitudes Food Ministries responds to Jesus' commission to feed his sheep. The twice monthly Free & Fresh Food distributions has seen a 10% increase in families each month. The Care & Share Outdoor Pantry is filled and emptied twice daily. In partnership with Action Ministries, our once monthly Arcadia Park Food Aid provides supplemental groceries to 25 low-income seniors

On March 1, 2022, we launched the New **Fresh Start Shower Ministry**. Our first month we provided 91 showers to our unhoused neighbors, employing 551 volunteer hours! The mission of this ministry is to promote dignity through a safe and welcoming place with showers and restrooms.

The **Discover Zone Preschool and Childcare Program** is full and thriving, despite the pandemic's challenges. Each week we provide over



Discover Zone children reading a book with a Boone County Librarian in the new DZ library.

100 families a nurturing, safe, Christian environment for their children to discover their world as their parents and care takers go to work. We seek to support the whole family with food donations in partnership with Kroger and early childhood literacy in partnership with the Boone County Public Library.

We have 35 Discover Zone employees. Support from the American Rescue Plan grants enabled us to give a significant wage increase, reaching our goal of 100% of staff being paid \$3 or more above the industry standard of \$10 an hour.

In addition to these on-going outreach ministries we also serve our community through our annual events. The annual **School Supply Drive** raised \$5,700 and delivered supplies to 26 schools. In December, we host our **Angel Tree** which makes sure children and seniors in our community experience the joy of gifts on Christmas morning and Fur Tree which supports our **Christians for Critters Ministry**.

Florence Christian Church is a part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada. We partner with our district, region and general ministries of the denomination to reach beyond our local community and support global mission, social justice efforts, ministries to the poor and marginalized, seeking reconciliation and wholeness through our witness.

Our pastors and support staff contribute a significant portion of time and resources to these outreach ministries, along with our excellent DZ Executive Director and amazing, dedicated staff. Our outreach ministries have grown so much and have even more potential! To support this growth, we need to develop more community partnerships and engagement. To accomplish this goal, we are investing in a new part-time Outreach Minister position to which we are calling the soon to be ordained Melissa Stephens.

In 2022-23, our ministry plan for Outreach and Mission commits 41% of our resources to these ministries.

Rebuilding through Abundant Faith Formation and Worship Support

Florence Christian Church believes faith formed every day is a life-long process. Faith Formation is growing children, youth and adults in knowledge and love of God by incorporating faith into daily living. Through classes, small groups meeting at church and in homes, through intergenerational gatherings and more, we create opportunities to bring faith in God into real life. With the video Daily Devotions by a pastor, we share God's word each weekday with people around the world.



Pastor Susan in a Daily Devotion on our website, Facebook page and YouTube channel



Rebuilding through Abundant Pastoral Care and Membership Development Support



Pastor Susan with Rachael Fey.

In January 2022, we began rebuilding our worship in three ways – a 8:30 AM service rebuilding our traditions, an 11 AM service rebuilding our celebrations, and an online streaming service at 11 AM rebuilding our digital ministry. These worship services offer meaningful times to grow in our love of God and each other every Sunday, whether on campus or online. Relevant preaching, lively and inspirational singing, and gathering around the Table of our Lord where EVERYONE is welcome is offered each time we gather for worship.

To adapt to the changes of worshipping online and distinct music and worship flows, we are investing in our worship ministries with the creation of a part-time Worship Media Director position, currently filled by Sam Combs as well as in our music ministry and production team.

Through our Worship & Wonder programs, children hear sacred stories and worship God in developmentally appropriate ways. With grants from Florence Christian Church for half the cost of Church Camp, our children and youth experience God in Christian Community and through nature. We rebuild our children and youth ministries by providing connection and community as well as equipping parents for at home faith formation. We are investing in our Children and Faith Formation Ministries with the creation of a part-time Children and Youth Faith Formation position.

The ministry plan for Faith Formation and Worship in the next year will utilize 34% of our financial and human resources.

As a congregation, we engage in a variety of acts of care for members, friends, and our community. Births, dedications, baptisms, weddings, illnesses, family struggles and conflict, and funerals are all times when we, the church, respond to people’s pastoral needs.

Our pastors and elders visit the sick and homebound, bringing communion, encouragement and prayer. Members of the Pie Day Ministry visit our homebound each month, providing much needed community and connection. Our prayer team prays each week for those who have specific prayer concerns.

Our pastors provide counseling and guidance when appropriate. Our pastors and staff spend time with members, friends and the community, celebrating life through weddings and funerals and new births. Our ministers are present with individuals and families, preparing for and during surgery or illness, experiencing life transitions when other stressful circumstances occur. Milestones of life are recognized and celebrated as well through our presence and support.

Our ministry offers the congregation opportunities for fellowship activities that help connect members as friends as they live out their

faith as one body of Christ. We hope to rebuild the following ministries in the next year:

- Hospitality Hour between worship services
- Special events like church-wide dances, parking lot picnics with food trucks, Trunk or Treat, and Turkey Supper
- Small groups that meet at church and in homes
- We have already enjoyed rebuilding Easter traditions with the Easter Brunch and Egg Hunt.

Our ministry enables us to enjoy fun, food and fellowship in Christian love! To the ministries of Pastoral Care and Membership Development Support, 9% of our resources will be allocated.

Rebuilding Abundant Evangelism, Information Technology and Communications

There are many ways we are “spreading the word” about God’s amazing grace, love and acceptance at Florence Christian Church. We are reaching folks through our print publications, digital and social media, a redesigned website, bulletin stories and this quarterly magazine.

In January 2021 we adopted our welcoming statement and have become an Open and Affirming Church and a member of the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance. Our Inclusive Church Team continues to lead the whole church in living more fully into our value of Welcome Radically.

We are also spreading the word literally - person-to-person - by word of mouth with friends, co-workers and family members, sharing how God is doing great things at Florence Christian Church.

Florence Christian Church is also exploring new ways to share the gospel, specifically through digital ministry, by investing in a part-time communications coordinator position and new a church management and communication system.



Note the rainbow chalice in the logo

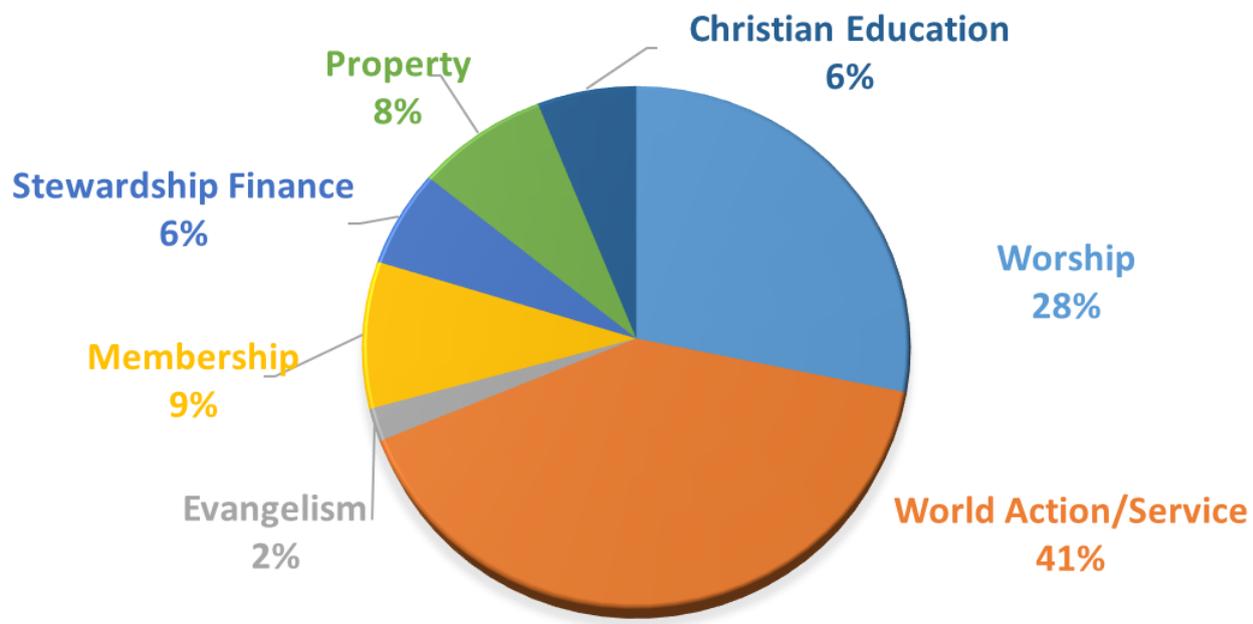
Welcome Statement

In response to God’s unconditional love for all people made known to us in Jesus Christ, we are called to be a welcoming and affirming community. We proclaim this statement of welcome to all, especially those who have known the pain of exclusion or discrimination in the church and society. With this proclamation, we commit ourselves to breaking down dividing walls and building a community where all are loved.

Florence Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) embraces diversity of all kinds throughout our neighborhood and the world. We affirm that all people are created in the image of God, and as God’s beloved children, all are recipients of God’s unconditional love and grace. We welcome the full inclusion of all people in the whole life, leadership and ministries of Florence Christian Church as we journey towards being a community of abundant love, grace and acceptance.

We are continuing to increase the effectiveness of our communication and share our identity in creative and consistent ways. Two percent of our financial and human resources are allocated to evangelism. IT and Communications support is embedded in other ministry areas.

MINISTRY & MISSION SPENDING PLAN



Total Ministry & Mission Spending Plan: \$1.5 million

Rebuilding Abundant Facilities and Administration Support

One of the means by which we recognize and develop our gift of faith is the church. And while Florence Christian Church is not a building, but a people, we have been given an amazing church facility out of which we worship, learn, grow, and do amazing mission.

In early 2022, we completed Phase 1A of our renovations of the campus with the updating of the Administrative Wing. Yet that is just a small portion of our 36,000 square foot facility which is used almost every weekday from 6:30 AM – 9 PM. From snow removal and landscaping to minor or major repairs, upkeep of our campus is a labor of love by all of us.

Florence Christian Church campus is not a typical church campus. We are a medium-sized employer, with 48 part-time and full-time staff. The church's staff is one of its greatest assets. Everyday women and men show up to serve God through their work, dedicating their talents to the mission of the church. To the ministries of Facilities and

Administrative Support 8% of our resources are allocated.

Summary

Between Discover Zone, our weekday childcare ministry, and the many ongoing church ministries, Florence Christian Church has a \$1.5 MILLION spending plan. A large part of that plan is excellent leadership and staff support, but another significant portion of our giving ensures the sustainability of our amazing "HOUSE;" God's house of worship, learning, fellowship and mission.

As you consider this spending plan, aren't you amazed at what you see – all the ways that Florence Christian is following Jesus' instruction to go and do the same? All of this, and so much more happens because of the faithful gifts of each one of you.

Thank you! Thank you for being a ministry partner in the mission of Florence Christian Church. YOU are making a difference in God's Kingdom!



FRESH START
SHOWER MINISTRY

FRESH BODY | FRESH CLOTHES | FRESH HEART



LEADING THROUGH NEW FRIENDSHIPS

"I feel so beautiful after my shower."

Shirley, Shower Guest

Shirley and Mark, guests of the Fresh Start Shower Ministry, stop in most mornings to take a shower, drop off an outfit or two to be laundered and spend time with the friends they have made in their recent experience of homelessness.

They owned a trailer and two vehicles before Mark lost his job. Now, they both work temporary jobs when they can find them, but are struggling to find permanent employment. Mark is a skilled laborer and overqualified for entry-level factory work. They are working with a local agency to find affordable housing, living in their vehicle until an apartment becomes available. The lack of affordable housing in this community increases the length of the waiting time for qualified candidates. He says, "It could happen to anyone, anytime, any day."

But don't think that this experience has crushed their spirits. They are grateful for the good life they are living. They have children and grandchildren they delight in. They feel God is with them 24/7. Shirley has volunteered to help with the laundry and clean the showers between guests. "Happy is the only way to be," says Shirley.

Mark says, *"If this hadn't happened to us, we wouldn't have known there were good people like this,"* referring to other guests of the Shower Ministry.



300 Main Street, Florence KY 41042

(859)647-5000

fccinfo@florencechristian.org

Florencechristian.org