

2024 Annual Report: Treasurer's Report, Investment and Financial Stewards.

It is as the Scriptures say: "The godly man gives generously to the poor. His good deeds will be an honor to him forever." For God, who gives seed to the farmer to plant, and later on, good crops to harvest and eat, will give you more and more seed to plant and will make it grow so that you can give away more and more fruit from your harvest. Yes God will give you so much that you that you can give away much, and when we take your gifts to those who need them they will break out into thanksgiving and praise to God for your help. -2 Corinthians 9:9-11 (The Way)

God provides every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. There is no need to "sow sparingly" and, therefore "reap sparingly."

2024 was a year of pause. As we discussed plans for the year, everything seemed to revolve around what would happen with the Keystone project. Should we wait to see what the vote would be? The difference between a positive and negative vote here determined what the future would hold.

God does not pause in his work. He is continually planting and harvesting and planting again. We are thankful for the 2024 harvest. The churches that support the Penn West Conference stepped up in a big way. I am happy to report a 3 percent increase in our churches giving to OCWM, reversing the trend of the past years. Your generosity supports the ministry and mission of the Penn West Conference.

The Financial Stewards review financial statements, OCWM statements, and updates from the Endowment committee. We meet prior to the Board of Directors meeting to assess the quarterly expenses and provide a Treasurer's report to the Board Members.

This year our financial record review for the 2022 fiscal year was performed by members familiar with accounting practices. The review team reported their findings to the Stewards and then the Board of Directors for approval of the report. The records for 2023 are currently being prepped for a review later this year. Plans are in process for a full audit of the financials for both Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025. This will be necessary before finalizing the release of funds to the Keystone Conference.

There is no budget to present this year. The Keystone Finance committee is preparing the 2026 budget and we will have the opportunity vote on it at the Fall Keystone Meeting. The financials from 2024 are included in the report. Other income streams were down, resulting in a year of year decrease in total income. Total expenses were 3% less than last year, with expenses exceeded income by about 7%.

For those churches contributing to OCWM, look for the OCWM certificate presentations occurring in person thanking congregations for supporting the conference and OCWM. The committee wants to acknowledge the volunteers that travel to complete these visits.

As an advisory committee, The Investment Team, appointed by the Board, reviews the quarterly reports from our Investment Partners and recommends draw percentages from those funds. The committee works to improve our investment strategy and provide funding for the conference and its programs. 2024 was the first year for distributing earnings of \$5,660.62 for the Berg Scholarship Fund.

With the responsibility to oversee and monitor the investment portfolios, we met with representatives from United Church Funds and Somerset Trust, reviewing investment strategies, re-assessing draws, and verifying our commitment to our strategic Investment policy.

As last year was a year of pause, this year is a year of dreaming what we can do to further the ministry and mission of the United Church of Christ in our collective regions, as Together we are Stronger. Each legacy conference has people appointed to the initial respective Keystone Conference committees, as we work to establish the framework for the new Conference. Tom Croner and I are representatives on the Budget and Finance Team and Nancy Harclerode and I are on the Investment Team. Additionally, we have representation on the Keystone Generosity Team.

The scripture I opened with is one of my favorites. When I was asked to join the Stewardship Associates many years ago, we spent time at the Heartland Stewardship meetings. There I selected this as my stewardship verse. I had no idea at the time that joining the team would lead to me being a 'financial person' here in the conference. I never thought of this as my talent. Thank you for trusting me in the roles on the Financial Stewards team, the Investment team, and as your Treasurer of the Penn West Conference.

With many thanks to the team members for their participation and support over the years....

Financial Stewards: Tom Croner, Nancy Harclerode, Rev. Diane Wiley, Rev. Linda Miller-Pretz, Rev. Dave Mears, Rev. Liddy Barlow, Rev. David Ackerman

Investment Committee: Tom Croner, Nancy Harclerode, Rev. Diane Wiley, Henry Cook, Mark Poole, Rev. James Neatrour, Rev. Dave Mears, Rev. Liddy Barlow, Rev. David Ackerman

Deb Long, Treasurer