

Annual Report

May 2024–April 2025



COLUMBINE UNITED CHURCH

From Rev. Dr. Steve Poos-Benson

Senior Pastor



I can't believe this is my forty first Annual Report. These past years have flown by. While we've definitely had our ups and downs and rough patches, I still love my work and feel called to ministry here at Columbine United Church.

As I think back upon this past year, the following are some of my highlights.

I have enjoyed our sermon series – The Back Story. Beginning in September through April we have walked from Genesis clear through the Prophets and the Wisdom literature. Making connections between the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible has been fun, inspiring, and a wonderful challenge for me as a preacher.

Second to preaching is teaching. When I'm in the midst of a classroom of people learning, talking, sharing, and making connections between their faith and life, I feel as though I'm in my element. Time goes zooming by and I barely have time to cover my goals for a particular event. My highlights include teaching on Sunday mornings in Adult Education classes. I particularly enjoyed, "Finding God when the World Falls Apart." Our Tuesday evening Bible Study has become a great success. Our classes have covered "An Introduction to the New Testament", "The Barmen Confession", The Birth Stories of Jesus, and An Introduction to Matthew's Gospel. Stay tuned for more classes. Everyone is invited to participate. A huge thanks to Rene' Koesler, Suzan Leach, and Janet Kester for their creative work as the Adult Education Committee.

One of the great joys as Head of Staff is working with our excellent and committed staff team. I believe in creating a small, nimble, competent, and highly committed group of people. My model is to empower the staff to not only implement their job descriptions but to work as a team for the greater good of the church. We don't punch clocks, we empower ministry in all of its many forms. I love working with my colleagues, Jill VanderWal, Samantha Bronson, Jeannie Kiel, Tag Worley, Sarah Rex, Judson Lee, and Melanie Smythe. Another huge thanks to all of the volunteers who come and sit at our front desk welcoming you during the week.

This past year you've been led by a great Council. Led by Brian Snyder as Council President, the Council has presented strong consistent leadership that has guided the church.

Another highlight from this past year is our finances. Last year (April 2024) we ended up over \$85,000 in the black. This year there will also be a substantial overage. This is due to your strong financial support of the ministry of the church. Week in and week out you have empowered the church's ministry. Without your giving, nothing happens as a church. Much thanks to Melanie Smythe, our financial administrator, Susan Lummanick as Treasurer, Ron White, the Chair of the Finance Committee, Greg Schriefer as Generosity Chair, and the rest of the Finance committee who work to create and manage the budget. This group of dedicated people deal with everything from the mortgage, investments, to insurance. They make sure the bills are paid, the staff is compensated, and the ministries are supported. A huge thanks for their work.

Here we stand on the brink of a new year. I wonder what the year has in store for us. If this past year has been an indication, I know the sky's the limit.

Steve Poos-Benson

Senior Pastor



MOVING *Forward*

Transitions come to us either as part of our strategic plans, or haphazardly when life crashes around us without warning. Personally, I prefer the strategic approach where there is time to contemplate and envision a future together. To this strategic end, the Council has voted to create a transition team to help you as a congregation look ahead as CUC moves from my tenure to the next phase of congregational leadership.

I believe this is the time for the congregation to begin the process of reflection, learning, and planning for what's next. In collaboration with the council and the transition team, I will set a date to retire.

Since I have been here for 41 years there is a lot of work to do. We can all celebrate what we have accomplished, as well as contemplate what the church needs and hopes for in its' next season of pastoral leadership. This work includes learning, listening, reflection and visioning. We imagine this work will take place over the next 6-9 months. The Council's goal is for everyone to be heard and for ideas to be distilled into a plan for the future.

A small group, Transition Team, has been selected by the Council for appointment. Jerry Clayton, Devin Croft, Aimee Crispin and Cristin Buys. They will be introduced at the Annual meeting. We'll be able to further discuss the direction of this committee at the meeting.

Here's to the future!

Steve Poos-Benson

Senior Pastor



From Rev. Jill VanderWal

Associate Pastor



I feel blessed to be a part of CUC. This community is strong, generous, and filled with love—and that's because of you. Thank you for showing up, investing your time and hearts, and helping CUC continue to thrive. As I begin my seventh year serving here I'm filled with gratitude and excitement for what's ahead.

There's a vibrant energy moving through our church. We're gaining momentum in such a positive direction—living into our mission of care, inclusion, and welcome. Every week, new people walk through our doors looking for a place just like this. For those of you who are new in the past year, we are so glad to have you as a part of this community. So let's keep doing what we do best: sharing love, being real, and welcoming all.

Here's a glimpse into what I focused on at CUC in the past year:

Administration & Planning

- I collaborate with several teams and committees to support the mission and ministry of our church: Mission Committee, Ministry & Mission, Church Council, Care Team, Generosity, and Nominating Committee
- Planning programs, small groups, and learning opportunities throughout the year.
- This year we worked with Gent Grush to plan an anti-racism symposium in March (2025) with 70 participants.
- Serve on the Denver Presbytery leadership team (in 2024), Presbytery retreat planning team, hosted at CUC in March of 2025 and the Leadership Development Committee (2025-).
- Worked with SPRC on a new Staff Handbook with up-to-date HR policies.

Worship Leadership

Sunday mornings are full and joyful! My role includes:

- Welcoming visitors and help foster community through food and fellowship between services. I coordinate our monthly breakfast volunteers.
- Preach once or twice a month, worship series design, and planning of special services.

Building Community around fun and learning

- Creating and leading smaller communities focused on deeper connection and faith formation.
 - One example is the CUC moms group that meets every other week.
 - Moms Retreat in April.
 - Advent we had a community gingerbread decorating night attended by 18 families.
- **Senior Luncheons:** Held monthly with a consistent group of 30–40 attendees. (Special thanks to Dawn, Sally, and Connie for making these possible!)

Other Areas of Focus

- **Pastoral Care:** Offering support through funerals, hospital visits, home calls, and collaborating with our Congregational Care Committee.
- **Stewardship & Generosity:** Helping cultivate a culture of generosity while building clear, intentional systems for giving and communication.
- **Continuing Education:** I am working on my Doctor of Ministry Program through McCormick Theological Seminary. I will finish my course in the fall of 2026 and graduate Spring of 2027.

May- June 2024 I was on Sabbatical. My first one! I am so grateful to Steve and the staff team for their support and extra work during my time away. Thank you for your support as a congregation to take time to rest, un-plug and just enjoy gardening, mountain adventures and painting.

Thank you for the many ways you embody God's love. I'm honored to walk alongside you and look forward to all the ways we'll grow and serve together in this year.

With gratitude,

Jill VanderWal
Associate Pastor



Council President's Annual Summary

Dear Columbine United Church Community,

I hope this message finds you well and looking forward to a joyful and restful summer. It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your Council President this past year. As I reflect on our work together, I am filled with gratitude for the spirit of collaboration, faith, and commitment that defines our church family.

The Columbine United Church Council—composed of the President, President Elect, Past President, Clerk, Head of SPRC, Treasurer, Head of Missions and Ministry, and Members at Large—met monthly to guide the church's operations, support its leadership, and nurture our vibrant, Christ-centered community.

Notable Accomplishments This Year:

- Supported and celebrated the ordination of Rev. Samantha Bronson, a meaningful milestone in our church's ministry.
- Navigated significant hail damage with agility and care, ensuring minimal disruption to church life.
- Adapted policies in accordance with updated Colorado family leave laws, supporting both compliance and compassion.
- Refined and implemented new security measures to better protect our community and facilities.
- Revised and aligned the employee handbook to reflect evolving standards and our church's values.
- Hosted a dynamic and well-received Spring Racial Summit, furthering our commitment to justice and inclusion.
- Played a key role in developing a record-breaking 2025–2026 budget that reflects both vision and responsibility.

Goals for the Coming Year:

- Support and nurture the growth we are seeing in our congregation, especially among families, by fostering meaningful engagement and faith development opportunities.
- Continue to anchor our work in the core values, beliefs, mission, and vision of Columbine United Church—ensuring every decision, policy, and initiative reflects our deep commitment to inclusivity, theological openness, and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for entrusting me with this role and for the many ways you each contribute to the life and ministry of this beloved community. I can't wait to see what God has in store for us in the year ahead.

With gratitude and hope,

Brian Snyder
Council President

MUSIC



May 2024 to May 2025 has been a very busy full and lively year of Music!

Our big services over the summer, Cowboy Sunday and Pride Sunday.

Cowboy Sunday had a full choir, 4 professional section leaders and lots of CUC volunteer choir members, our band added a steel pedal guitar player to fill out that country sound. We began the service with a Dolly Parton tune sung by Megan Van De Hey, and ended with Happy Trails!

Pride Sunday had 6 contemporary singers (3 professionals). We had a four piece band who were all professionals. We opened the service with a song written by the Drag Queen Flamy Grant. A gorgeous proclamation of God's love for all and coming back to your faith after being shunned. We closed with "Proud" by Heather Small.

In August we hired a Traditional Music Director for our 8:30AM Sunday service, Judson Lee. Judson hit the ground running choosing challenging sacred choral pieces. Our choir of about 15 may be small but they sound fantastic. Judson took on providing the congregation with a Christmas choral cantata. He had members of the congregation provide the narrations and he brought in some UNC vocal music majors to really round out our choir for a lovely full glorious sound. Our Christmas eve services were 2 Contemporary and one traditional later service.

In January, Judson started a bell choir. We have about 8 ringers and a two octave set of bells that we are currently using. It is so nice to hear their beautiful sound after so many years of hiding away in a closet.

In February we celebrated black history month. We only sang songs written by black artists. We sang songs of justice and hope. We used the power of music to address some pretty difficult racial topics. One Sunday Randy Chalmers sang a song by Mykal Killgore, a gay black man who writes gorgeous melodies around the topics of homosexuality, faith and race. We posted the song on our instagram and received a very nice compliment from Mykal himself!

The Sunday before palm Sunday Judson provided a bell and vocal choir mini cantata for the 8:30 service. It was a lovely morning telling the beginning of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Bell choir was 8 and the choir was 15.

In addition to the mini cantata, the choir also contributed music to our annual Tenebrae service. The choir sang two songs, and one of our tenors, Colin Hearn, provided narration through scripture and poetry. Pastors Steve and Jill also provided a meaningful liturgy, message and communion at the start of the service to help center the congregation's hearts on the meaning of the night, as well as extinguishing candles in between songs and narrations. Overall it was a very meaningful and somber night in reflection and observation of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

MORE ABOUT MUSIC

The music for Easter services this year was set to a theme. "I Will Never Be the Same" The service opened with a prelude of this name. Steve preached a sermon on this, and then the service closed with the entire congregation singing the song together. I believe it was a powerful moment of how music and singing together joins a congregation in unity and purpose. Easter services had a 4 member band and 4 singers. For the early more traditional service the choir sang a traditional Easter Anthem. It was a beautiful piece of music that packed a punch! The choir joined in singing for the Flowering of the cross. It was a very contemporary song, but they did fantastic! Additionally, Judson and Dave Hicks provided some simple yet fun acoustic music for our annual sunrise service prior to the start of our regular Easter services.

Anna High, one of our professional singers, along with Steven Burge(director), and Martha Yordy(Music Director) are putting on "Godspell" produced by our very own Samantha Bronson. This is a church/community wide opportunity to bring a bunch of different people together and have an evening of Musical Theatre right here at the church! (Will give details in next year's annual report!)

As a whole, our music program is flourishing. We always make an effort to use inclusive language in our traditional hymns. Our contemporary songs speak of love, acceptance, joy, finding God in each other, and celebrating God because of a beautiful day. We sing songs about justice and equality for all people. We sing songs about hope when life is difficult. We always try to encourage group singing through fun and creative songs rather than coercion. As a former evangelical, who felt manipulated through worship, I am always trying to see worship through my new eyes with an expansive view of God and Faith.

Sarah Rex
Director of Music Ministry



ADULT EDUCATION 2024-2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our committee felt we hit a homerun this year in terms of offering new, stimulating topics related to current issues/affairs. In fact, we often had 20+ people attending many of our talks. Here's a summary of topics we offered over the year. Some Sundays we offered the BETWEEN class which was a good class as well as our other topics.

Mental health and how to cope with and overcome anxiety - League of Women Voters
Children's book reading - The next 48 hours: How to find peace on election day
How do we come together after election day decision - Discussion on immigrants and migrants
Value of gratitude - Where is God when your personal life is falling apart
Where is God when the world falls apart? - Setting boundaries in personal relationships
Setting boundaries in daily life (e.g., food, exercise, alcohol) - Open discussion on racism
How to be, feel and stay relevant? - Racism follow up - How do you give Joy?
Near death experiences - What is right and what is wrong? How do you know?
What's the difference between a Christian and "a Christian"?

We have already discussed topics for next fall - Infectious generosity.

Rena Koesler



Congregational Care



Members of the CUC Congregational Care Committee communicates joys and concerns to our congregation on a weekly basis through the Eblast. There are seven members on this committee.

- When members of our congregation want to inform others about a loved one's illness, injury, or death, they inform the chair of the committee who contacts the person who is writing the monthly reports to post them in the bulletin re: online Eblast.
- The committee also mails cards made by members of our church to people who are ill, injured, or have lost a loved one.
- Joys are also submitted for the monthly report. Joys include members whose health is improving, recognizing members who are serving as chairs or leaders of committees and events at CUC, and joyful happenings at our church through the Eblast.
- Members of the Committee delivered 12 poinsettias at Christmas time to members who have experienced a loss or a health challenge as a way of communicating our continued concern for them.

Marci Pokrywka



Next Gen Ministry

Samantha Bronson was on Maternity Leave from the end of March to June of 2025, she did a great job planning for coverage in the areas of youth and children's ministries. Jeannie Kiel worked with Kate Davis in children's ministry and Gent Grush with youth. Here are a few the the ministry highlights for the year.



Children's Ministry

- Added a new Sunday School Classroom fall 2024, growing from 2 to 3.
- Continued the use of Young Children in Worship curriculum and added another curriculum level in the new class.
- We average 6-10 preschoolers & Kindergarteners, 10-15 1st-3rd graders, and 5 4th&5th graders. Average 25 kids.
- Classes facilitated encouraging growth of conversations about the stories in addition to the growth in numbers.
- Successful, well-attended events include: Easter Brunch, VBS, Art Camp, Summer swim party, Pumpkin Palooza, Friendsgiving, Christmas Production, and Winter and Valentine's Parents Night Out
- VBS grew from 31 participants the previous year to 51 participants in 2024
- Increased youth helper involvement as well as adding several new volunteers to storytelling and door-keeping
- Mentoring program continued with incorporating new students with committed mentors.



Youth Ministry

- Our youth group meets Sunday evenings, having an average of 10-12 youth participate.
- We added two new regular volunteers to the youth team.
- We hosted or participated in each of last year's events in addition to a new event LGBTQIA Littleton Park
- The youth participated in the fall, spring and summer retreats at La Foret with one of our youth on the planning committee for the spring retreat.
- 6 confirmands engaged in confirmation classes and a community service project.

by Jeannie Kiel and Kate Davis

The Missions and Ministries Board

The Missions and Ministries Board is comprised of 6 committee chairs. We meet every other month to discuss each committee's upcoming plans for the next several months.

ADULT EDUCATION: Plans thought provoking seminars and speakers each Sunday for Adult Ed. class between the services.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE: Meets weekly to reach out to members through prayers and cards. They also provide the weekly Joys and Concerns in the E-Blast.

MISSIONS: There are 12 mission organizations, local and international, that this committee supports and serves through distribution of budgeted funds and other fundraising events.

NEXT GEN: Plans activities and outings for all ages of youth in our church, some of which are Pumpkin Palooza, Christmas Pageant, a Talent Show and a special Saturday Easter brunch & family service with flowering of the Cross.

PARTY TEAM: Organizes the Pig Roast on Rally Day, helps with the Chili Cook-off & Pumpkin Palooza, the Shrimp Boil dinner in March, helps with Cowboy Sunday in May.

WORSHIP: This committee is in charge of the candle tables each week and sets up for Communion each month. They are especially busy helping to make our Christmas and Easter services special.

Future goals are to encourage more members to serve on these committees and to make church members more aware of what the M and M Board committees accomplish.

Kay Dunn



Council Updates



THE PARTY TEAM

The Party Team had a full schedule this year putting together four major all church events. We were very happy to see our participation numbers increasing as we worked to promote our fellowship and connections within our congregation.

- In May we celebrated Cowboy Sunday.
- September was our Homecoming Sunday complete with a pig roast and a car show.
- In October we joined forces with the Next Gen Committee for our annual Pumpkin Palooza and Chili Cook Off.
- And back by popular demand, in February we hosted the Shrimp Boil. 125 attended.

Our overall participation was up by 15%. Our plans for next year are still TBA so stay tuned for some of your old favorites and perhaps some new surprises. Party Team members are: Danny Debolt, Lindsey Debolt, Laura Graber, Bunny Rankin, John Rankin, Betsy Rehling, Tom Rehling, Lynn Swanson and Russ Young. Regular volunteer worker bees: Chuck Halderman, Yetta Halderman, and Reese Uthlaut.

Thank you Party Team and Tom Rehling.



Property Updates



Property Committee

During this fiscal year the Property Committee completed a number of MAJOR PROJECTS.

HAIL DAMAGE IN 2023: Our insurance claim was settled in July and the commercial roofer who helped with the claim began work in August. All of the shingled roof was replaced along with all gutters and downspouts. In addition, we stained the fencing surrounding the A/C units and painted the handrails along the main entrance sidewalk.

This was approximately a \$200,000 claim and we ended up covering our insurance deductible as well.

HVAC MAINTENANCE: We were not satisfied with the original contractor maintenance service and Tag found another experienced contractor to perform the work at a significant reduction in cost. The annual cost is now just under \$14,000.

LAWN TRACTOR: Our old lawn tractor required too much maintenance. Tag was able to purchase a new mower for under \$3000.

SPRINKLER SYSTEM: In early June thieves cut off the above ground copper pipe for our sprinkler system and took that along with the anti-syphon controller. These were replaced and covered with a lockable cage at a cost of some \$3000.

DECK REPLACEMENT: Our deck is now over 25 years old and should be replaced. We were unable to cover this cost in our major building renovation of 2019-2023. We have selected a builder to help us with a new design and are in the process of estimating the size and costs. Our objective is to stay under \$200,000. Permitting from Arapahoe county may take time. We would like to complete this project early in the fall of this year. Updates on design, cost, and fundraising will be forthcoming.

Jack Dunn, Chair

Worship Updates

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee is responsible for supporting church services and related activities to ensure they run with ease and are meaningful for all in attendance!

- Prepared communion monthly
- Organized and led the yearly Hanging Of The Greens all church event
- Implemented a new event in January to take down all the Christmas decorations
- Prepared candles for the Christmas Eve services and flowers for Easter services
- Participated in various upkeep tasks as a team to keep church services flowing smoothly



Nominations

Position	Individual (pending voter approval in green)	Class
COUNCIL 2025-2026		
Past President	Brian Synder	2026
President	Megan Pickett	2027
President-Elect	Rod Eggert	2028
Treasurer	Susan Lummanick	2027
Board of Staff Parish Relations	Lori Halverson	2028
Board of Ministry/Missions Chair	Jenn Milstead	2028
Member-at-Large	Janet Kester	2026
Member-at-Large	James Sult	2027
Secretary/Clerk	TBD	
Other Committees/positions		
Chair Staff Parish Relations	Lori Halverson	2028
member SPRC	Stephanie Townsend	2028
member SPRC	Ken Beckey	2028
member SPRC	Diane Witonsky	2028
Financial Secretary	David Lewis	2026
Adult Education - Chair	Suzan Leach	2028
Congregational Care - Chair	Linda Veres	2028
Transition Team	Jerry Clayton , Aimee Crispin Devin Croft and Cristin Buys	

Thank you to outgoing committee chairs: Lindsey Stevenson, Past Council President. Anne Fioretto Clerk of Council. Michelle Noyes, Chair of SPRC. Kay Dunn, Chair of Ministry and Mission. Marci Pokrywka Chair of Congregational Care Committee, Rená Koesler Chair of Adult Education and Ralph Townsend, Finance Secretary

Clerk's Report



March 31, 2024

Church Membership	527
Church Families	324
Gains in 2024/2025	
New Members	16
Confirmation	6 (class of 24-25)

Losses in 2024/2025

Transfers out (certified)	3
Deaths	6
Removed from rolls at their request	0
Moved to inactive and removed from rolls	0
Total losses in 2024/2025	9



March 31, 2025

Church Membership	540
Church Families	331

Confirmations	6
Memorial Services	6
Baptisms	0
Marriages	0

CUC STAFF DIRECTORY



Rev. Dr. Steve Poos-Benson, Senior Pastor
Steve@columbineunitedchurch.org

Rev. Jill VanderWal, Associate Pastor
Jill@columbineunitedchurch.org

Rev Samantha Bronson, Children's & Youth Pastor
Samantha@columbineunitedchurch.org

Sarah Rex, Contemporary Worship
Sarah@columbineunitedchurch.org

Judson Lee, Traditional Worship
judson@columbineunitedchurch.org

Tag Worley, Director of Facilities and Technology
Tag@columbineunitedchurch.org

Jeannie Kiel, Families, Youth and Children
Jeannie@columbineunitedchurch.org

Melanie Smythe, Finance Manager
Melanie@columbineunitedchurch.org



Finance Report



COLUMBINE UNITED CHURCH

Financial Committee Report

Greetings Columbine United Congregation,

I want to thank all members of the Finance Committee throughout the Fiscal Year 2024-2025; including pastors Steve Poos-Benson and Jill Vanderwal, Jerry Koepke (At Large), and Greg Schriefer (Generosity Campaign). Special thanks to Melanie Smythe (Accounting Manager) and Susan Lummanick (Treasurer) who dedicate themselves to the detailed day-to-day, month-to-month management of our church Finances. Without their diligent effort of our church finances, the church programs, financial controls, and budget development would not be possible. Thanks also to Ruthann Moomy (Past Finance Chair & At Large Member) for continuing through with the Finance Committee after a fantastic job during the most challenging times for Columbine United Church through the Covid pandemic and major church remodeling. She continues to provide transitional help and was instrumental in procuring new church insurance and salary assistance programs over the past couple of years that helped Columbine thrive. Special thanks to Ralph Townsend (Financial Secretary) who participates in Finance Committee reviews but more importantly, handles week-to-week financial contributions from members and Sunday plate collections with the required confidentiality and timely reporting. Finance Committee welcomes David Lewis as he trains for transition into Ralph Townsends replacement, and we handoff President Elect Megan Pendley Pickett to her council President role after a strong financial year at Columbine United Church.

Your Columbine United Church Finance Committee exists to oversee the month-to-month financial progress of the church throughout the year and to provide detailed financial discussions and recommendations to Council for special decisions to support ongoing monetary needs, and finally a thorough review of budget planning for the next new year.

Finally, your Finance Committee THANKS YOU, the congregation, for finding Columbine United Church as a home for your personal and family spiritual development and for your generous financial support to maintain our church ministry, programs, missions, and benevolences.

Blessings and Thanks,

Ron White
Financial Committee Chair

Columbine United Church
Missions We Support
Fiscal Year Ending 4/30/25

Common Hope	\$720	LOVE Inc	2,400
Denver Inner City Parish	2,400	MS Society	400
El Porvenir (Nicaragua Water)	1,200	Network Coffee House	1,800
Family Promise	1,179	Nourish Meals on Wheels	3,600
HAAT Force	1,000	Presbytery of Denver	5,632
Heifer International	1,495	Second Wind Fund	2,400
Integrated Family Community Service	3,600	The Action Center	2,000
Jeffco Serving Kids	600	United Church of Christ	5,632
Loaves and Fishes/Habitat for Humanity	3,000	United Methodist Church	5,632
		Total	\$44,690