

**Jackson's First
Presbyterian Church**
Serving God, Serving Others

Self-Study

June 2023

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Prologue to the JFPC Self-Study Report

In April 2021, our pastor, Rev. Dr. Jim Hegedus retired. As a part of the Jackson's First Presbyterian Church (JFPC) interim period and transition to new pastoral leadership, a "self-study" was undertaken. The JFPC Nominations Committee identified candidates to serve on the Self-Study committee. These individuals were accepted by the session and approved by the congregation. They began working in December 2021.

The committee reviewed the church's history, finances, and annual reports and researched local community demographics. They sought congregational input in a variety of ways including several congregation-wide conversation sessions. They interviewed local community leaders and then began dreaming about future possibilities. In May of 2022, JFPC was approached by Westminster Presbyterian Church, a small, family-size PCUSA congregation in the area, to explore the possibility of merging the two congregations. Since the idea of a merger had also been discussed in the JFPC congregation conversations, the Session decided to pause the Self-Study and explore merging. The two congregations worshipped together twice and had a joint church-wide day of visioning and several leadership meetings. Ultimately, the conversations revealed fundamental differences in pastoral leadership needs and approaches to the future. In December Westminster decided to explore other options. The JFPC Session then decided to celebrate the Season of Christmas and have the Self-Study Committee resume their work in January.

This document is the culmination of the committee's work and provides a glimpse into the life of Jackson's First Presbyterian Church. In the report, we describe who we are as a congregation, and identify our vision for ministry and the skills needed for our next pastor.¹ It is divided into three parts: Called to Be God's People (Who we are), Seeking the Welfare of the City (What we are called to do), and Room at the Table (Who God might be calling to lead us).

The committee thanks Liz Swartzel for her participation in the self-study and her extensive work on the history of the church over many years. We also thank the Reverend Bill Fuerstenau for supporting the self-study team in discussions about difficult conversations and their impact on church communities.

Self-Study Committee:

Jean Herrick	Kurt Rudolph	John Vanderpool
Karen Meyers	Kevin Rule	Zoe Wilcox
Jim Roberts	Natalie Schroeder	John Williams

¹ While this sentence belongs in this type of report, this work has not been completed by the Session. If submitted without a vision, the Committee on Ministry might not approve the report, but if they do this work will be left to the PNC as the vision statement is a component of the Ministry Description.

Called To Be God's People: The Beginnings

In 1883, fifty-eight people came together to form a new Presbyterian church in Jackson Michigan. At that time, Jackson was a rapidly growing, manufacturing and railroad maintenance center. The Lansing Presbytery approved the request and on December 18, 1883, the Jackson First Presbyterian Church was fully organized. The first few services were held in the local Jewish Synagogue, before moving to the Ancient Order of United Workmen Hall. The congregation quickly outgrew this location and moved to the Knights of Pythias Hall. The congregation was not wealthy, but with their growing numbers, plans were made for a church building. Funds were sought, land was purchased, and construction started. The cornerstone for the first church was laid in 1886 and the brick and stone structure was dedicated six months later. Where possible, materials and labor were provided by Jackson firms. The entire church community came together in a variety of ways to furnish and equip the church.

By 1900 the membership had grown to 380. A new pipe organ was purchased and the choir was organized in 1905. Fire damaged the church in the fall of 1909; while repairs were made, the congregation worshiped with the First Baptist Church and the Sunday School met at the Y.M.C.A.

As the city grew so did the congregation. By 1923, membership had grown to 650 people and had outgrown the existing church building. A building expansion and addition were planned with services held in the St. Paul Episcopal Parish House during construction. New members and growth followed. "However, the economic conditions of the 1930s and the Depression threw a grim cloud overall. People lost jobs, opportunities dwindled, and the entire country suffered. A major debt plus necessary operating costs were almost impossible to meet."² World War II (WWII) brought additional challenges; finally, in 1944 the debt was cleared.

After WWII, the church grew dramatically. Church membership reached 1,945 in 1956. Naturally, church programs expanded to meet the demands of this growing congregation. As they grew, curtains were used to create more classrooms, older kids had Sunday School off-site at the YWCA and the kindergarten class met in the front gathering space. Unfortunately, the building had no room for expansion. Seeing the need, church leaders, once again, trusted in God and leaned into the future, purchasing property and building a new building to house 2000 members.

Committed to the city of Jackson, this new property was just a few blocks west of downtown. The congregation began worshipping in the Fellowship Hall in 1958, with the upstairs and Sanctuary completed in 1961. As in the past, it was the congregation working together not for a minute but for years that made this building dream a reality.

² Celebrate 125 Years, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson Michigan. A history booklet in honor of the 125 Anniversary of the church, compiled by Liz Swartzel, member and historian.

743 West Michigan Avenue has been “home” to the congregation ever since. Here we educated countless Jackson area children in our Preschool and nurtured their growing faith through Sunday school, Kid’s church, Vacation Bible School, and the Orff music program. Youth activities, movie nights, lock-ins, adult education, music ministries, plays, musicals, choirs, handbells, women’s circles, potlucks, chili cook-offs, Harvest Dinners and so much more happen here. Mission trips to Mexico, Mississippi, and Louisiana have been planned here as have many local missions.

To continue our mission of community support and development in the local community, we purchased the United Way property next door in 2004. Affectionately referred to as “The Hive,” we lease this space to non-profits at below-market rates with the income generated helping to stabilize the Church’s operating budget. It should be noted that there are no liens on either building. The Hive has one long-term tenant, Samaritas, with additional space available to rent or develop ourselves for other mission opportunities. During the week, we lease the nursery area in our main building, to an Early Head Start program through the Community Action Agency. We are currently exploring leasing space to a non-profit preschool or daycare, in the fall of 2023.

In recent years, major companies have moved out of the Jackson area, auto production has decentralized, and the state population has declined. As the city declined in numbers so have we. Today, our official member number is just under 150 people. We find ourselves to be a small church with dreams and a building more typical of a large church.

When we look at our history, we see a faithful church community that answers God’s call to care for one another and be a neighbor to others. Seeing the needs of others and responding to those needs is who we are. Our history also reveals a resilient community, that faithfully responds to real-life challenges and nurtures resiliency in others. JFPC has survived and thrived through building fires, astronomical growth and decline, two pandemics, two World Wars, and both economic boom and busts. The challenges of today may be different but we know that no matter what, God is with us, calling us to live faithfully in such a time as this.

These details from our history are included in this report because they reflect our congregational traits and some of what has shaped us as a people of faith. A much more detailed history of the church is available on our website.

Our Current Home: 743 West Michigan

Built as an act of necessity and faith, this 2-story church building was completed in 1957. On the upper level is the 600-person Sanctuary, the Westminster room (social room & Chapel) library, the choir room, classrooms, and staff offices.

The lower level includes a full commercial kitchen, a small dining room, a large fellowship hall with a stage, a memorial courtyard, an activity room, a nursery & toddler room, a preschool room, and additional classrooms.

Recent Capital Improvements & Major Maintenance:

1995

Elevator installed

2003

1962 Pels Organ (sanctuary organ) rebuilt

2008

Insulation, wiring & lighting in Westminster room

New carpet & floors in the Sanctuary

Boiler & parking lot repairs

2020

Air scrubbers added to the HVAC system in the sanctuary

Wi-Fi throughout building & other tech upgrades to stream services

2020-2022

Roof replaced over 3 years

2023

Planned fenced play area restoration

The Hive:

In 2003, word came to the church that our neighbors to the east, the Red Cross and United Way, had decided to sell their property and relocate. Available space seemed to be curtailing church functions at the time so purchasing the property was enticing. Realizing that it would increase available parking and provide room for expansion and growth, on January 9, 2005, the JFPC congregation voted to purchase the building for \$400,000. Because of the generosity and far-sighted vision of prior members, the church used Endowment Funds for the entire purchase. With good stewardship over the next few years, the endowment fund was fully repaid. The church began to envision not just a parking lot solution but saw the building as *a hive* of activity and mission. In 2014, much-needed renovations were completed, which allows the church to support community-based mission opportunities, make the space self-sufficient, and generate income. Lutheran Social Services, now Samaritas, is our primary long-term tenant. It has been a mutually beneficial relationship that fits into the mission of the Church and returned the funds invested into the building over time.

A Place of Hope:

Our current tenant/partner, Samaritas “serves others as an expression of the love of Christ with programs to help Michigan’s disadvantaged families and individuals thrive. Samaritas is the state’s largest foster care and adoption organization with a full suite of family preservation programs and options like Substance Use Disorder (SUD) services to keep families together. [Samaritas is one of the largest providers of refugee services, resettling families in from all over the world.](#)” The Hive houses their Jackson Area foster care program. Through our rental relationship, additional ministry opportunities have occurred. We have participated in the “Pillow Case” program that provided essentials for the first days of a CPS foster child placement; housed the Summer School for refugee students in our Activity Room; and worked on the Refugee Home for Unaccompanied Minors here in Jackson. Because of the elimination of Title 42, Samaritas is planning for new refugees in Michigan, and we are planning for new ministry possibilities. The lower level of the building continues to have space available for rent

A Place of Possibilities:

Because the lower level of the Hive is available for use or rent by a non-profit, we dream about what could be. One of our long-held dreams is an affordable coffee house, which could then house a listening ministry, public bathrooms, showers, and/or clothes washing machines for those in need.

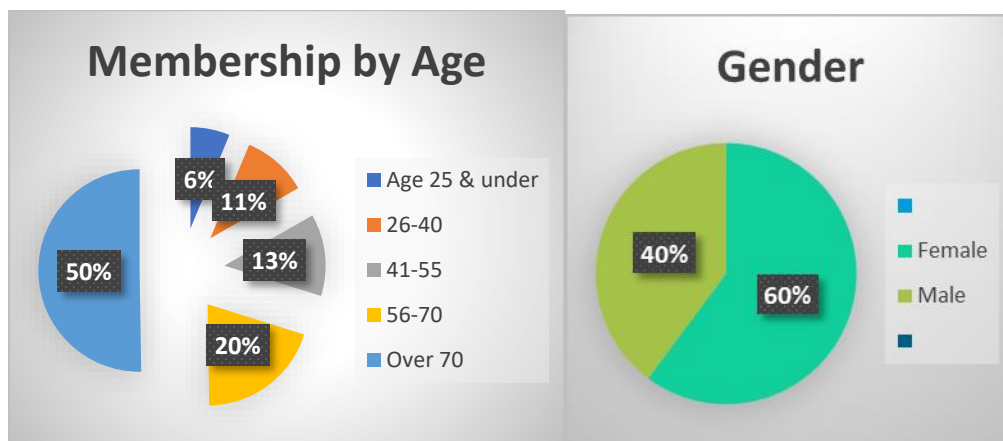
Who We Are Today:

The following description of the church was written by a woman who joined the church 10 years ago; she is married with 3 school-age kids. “The membership here reflects the committed, close-knit sensibility of the citizens in the area. Multigenerational attendance has led to some devoted and engaged caretakers who quietly ensure that their house of worship and all of the members are cared for. Younger and older members join together to ‘seek the welfare’ of each other and serve the community in thoughtful ways.”

We are a community that:

- values intergenerational interaction
- responds to the needs of others
- is committed to the local community
- cares about the Earth
- supports the life journey of those in and outside of our faith family
- values collaboration with those outside our faith community
- believes faith should be lived out in love
- supports the arts
- nurtures children
- engages in shared leadership
- uses our values as a basis for decision-making
- encourages questions even if they lead to difficult conversations
- tries to respond from a framework of love

Who We Are By The Numbers:



Some Of The Things We Do Well:

Dedicated Church Volunteers

Including: Worship tech team, friends of property, office volunteers, kitchen crew, library volunteers, soup makers, song singers, bell ringers, music makers, gardeners, snow shovelers, our list goes on and on and includes almost everyone in the church.

Caring Ministries:

Deacons	Parish Nurses
Praying congregation	Lay hospital visits
Support kids	
Respond to needs of the church community (rides, meals, financial assistance)	

Supporting the Arts

- Church members participate in the Jackson Chorale, a local community choir, and JFPC's current Music Director conducts it
- Orff program – developing love of music in kids in Jackson for years
- Host Divine Artist Concerts
- Center Stage Jackson- Community Theater for adults, youth and teens
- Art Camps for Vacation Bible School
- The church showcases art from local artists, including: Drawings, photos, paintings, quilting, needle point, and gifts from mission trips

Nurturing the Gifts of Music

- Choir shows up, on Sundays (of course), sings Happy Birthday to a shut in, sings carols for a member in hospice
- History of cultivating musical talents in children
- Many of our kids grew up to sing in college choirs and continue to sing in church and community choirs
- Some current professional musicians that grew up here:

Dr. Robert Spring,
University of Arizona

Jeff Zook,
Detroit Symphony

Stephanie Hegedus Kertesz
Flint Symphony

Hailey Cunningham, 2022 MSU Music Education Grad

A Glimpse At Who We Are & How We Make Decisions Through Looking At Our Covid Response:

Informed by science, guided by input from the Presbytery of Lake Michigan and the wise and concerned adult children of this congregation who now have professional roles in medicine and research, Session appointed a small committee to recommend key actions. The church building was closed to all outside groups except the activities in support of those whose lives depend on their meetings: recovery groups continued and Red Cross Blood drives maintained their monthly schedule. At the same time investments were made to improve our streaming capacity, allowing all safe access to worship. Services continue to be streamed on Facebook Live and uploaded to YouTube later.

All other activities were paused for 14 months; the worship format changed slightly with the choir replaced by a weekly song leader and visiting instrumentalists. During this time, we invested in air scrubbers, which were installed to increase the safe use of the building. Meanwhile, the deacons and others used their telephones to check in and chat with an entire congregation that had been “shut in.” The weekly newsletter and Sunday bulletin were published as usual.

In June of 2021, worship resumed in the building with blue painter’s tape used to block off pews, and communion was served in untraditional ways. People rejoiced when the tape came off almost a year later!

Where We Live - At The Crossroads Of Faith And Life

North To: Lansing - The State Capital 37 Miles
East Lansing - Michigan State University (East Lansing) 37 Miles

US-127

West To: Lake Michigan 93 miles
Chicago 207 miles

I-94

I-94

East To: University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) 37 miles
Detroit 81 miles

West Avenue

Michigan Avenue



90% of our members live within 5 miles of the church and are primarily in the Southwest quadrant of the city and the surrounding townships.

Whether it's Maize & Blue or Green & White, allegiance to both Universities runs strong! We have alums of both schools in our midst with stadiums so close, fall football schedules can impact Fall Saturday scheduling of events.

From its beginnings and throughout its history the life of this church has always been intertwined with the growth and development of the city of Jackson. The church history expresses it this way: “The entire program of First Church is geared to aid the community from the preschool program to senior citizen groups and community service organizations that use our building facilities.”³ Not surprising then, in our current self-reflection, we were as concerned about the city as our own church. It’s as if Prophet Jeremiah spoke those words to our founders and they were passed down through the generations:

Seek the welfare of the city...

pray to the Lord on its behalf.....

For in its welfare you will find your welfare.

-Jeremiah 29:7

³ Celebrate 125 Years, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson Michigan. A history booklet in honor of the 125 Anniversary of the church, compiled by Liz Swartzel, member and historian.

The City We Are Called to Serve: Jackson

Jackson, the only city and the county seat of Jackson County, Michigan, sits at the crossroads of I-94 and US127.

This is “home.”

Jackson - The Past

Named in honor of President Andrew Jackson, the city was settled in 1829. The state’s first prison opened here in 1839 and the Michigan prison system remains a major employer in Jackson County. Jackson has a history of involvement with the anti-slavery movement of the 1840s. Politicians gathered here in 1854 to argue against expanding slavery and Jackson is one of several communities that claim to be the birthplace of the Republican Party. The area has a significant Civil War history with troops from the community involved in battles. Michigan’s Civil War Governor, Austin Blair called Jackson his home. There are also links to the trial of those involved in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

In 1868, Jackson was home to the first corset manufacturer outside of New York City. It was a major railroad maintenance hub until the 1920s. It is the birthplace (1886) and headquarters of Consumers Energy, one of the larger investor-owned, combination natural gas and electric utility companies in the United States. Since 1910, it has been home to numerous auto parts suppliers. The first-ever Coney Island restaurant opened here in 1914 – a tradition residents cheerfully maintain! Henry Ford Jackson Hospital, a major hospital in South Central Michigan, makes its home here.

The population of Jackson grew steadily through the first half of the twentieth century to a peak of 51,088 in 1950. Since then, it has experienced a slow but steady population decline, with 31,309 residents as of the 2020 census. Interestingly, the county population has continued to grow to 160,366 over the same period.

The Present

Demographics look much different between the City of Jackson and the County of Jackson (aka Jackson Metro). This is truly a tale of two communities. The city has a lower per-family income, is more diverse, and leans politically more Democratic. The city has active Black and LGBTQ communities. The County is more affluent and less diverse and is for the most part controlled by Republican elected officials. Even within the city, there is a significant degree of economic segregation. The city center is beginning to change with a number of new downtown businesses, apartments, and condos, as well as numerous weekend festivals throughout the year.

Christian churches provide the bedrock for the county; both mainline denominations and small independent churches are well represented. JFPC is one of four PCUSA congregations in the county. The existence of several ministerial associations reflects the

differences rather than the similarities we share. Many churches are engaged in providing services to the community; JFPC members join in the work of several including a food pantry, a personal products ministry, and an overseas mission to provide reusable monthly supplies for women.

Spring Arbor, a private Free Methodist University, is located here. Their conservative faith is shared through the community in active mission projects, and in the service of several retired missionaries and pastors who make their home near the university.

To understand the current needs of the city, the Self-Study team members interviewed organizational leaders at local schools, foundations, and non-profits. There was broad agreement that the number one priority is affordable housing. Parents are raising families in unsafe neighborhoods because there are no other affordable housing options. Our Community Action Agency Early Head Start Program asked the church to convert a play area to simply green grass so the little ones would have the experience of a safe, green, backyard space to play in.

Poverty is a persistent problem that has only grown as Covid-related assistance ended. Special food programs have disappeared, and food insecurity has increased. When winter arrived, teachers and friends once again noted the absence of warm coats, hats, and gloves when students came to school. JFPC responded to the needs by focusing our support on one elementary school. We now stock the clothes closet at Northeast Elementary School, provide winter coats, shoes, and boots to their kids and support the kids and staff by being library volunteers.

Gun violence has increased as well. The community leaders and partners have responded with a *Stop The Violence Summit*. At that summit, we found out how interrelated the problems of poverty, housing, drugs, literacy, violence, and crime are. By showing up, becoming aware of the root causes of the problems, by being a part of the discussions, we hope to find our place in improving people's lives and our community.

Jackson's Future

Jackson is a small city with some common contemporary problems, but it has hope. There has been redevelopment in the downtown district, and it is becoming a center of activity for young and old. *Bright Walls*, the downtown building mural project, has certainly made a positive impact, as have other efforts downtown. In our visioning throughout the self-study period, we envisioned a Jackson Community where families had safe, affordable housing, where people could easily get to work and school, and live full abundant lives where systems of racism, violence, and poverty are weakened or destroyed.

While JFPC moved to support the school children’s needs immediately, we recognize that to reduce poverty and tackle the affordable home crisis we can’t do it alone. The larger, systemic problems of society, like racism, poverty, violence, and affordable housing will require vision, partners, and leadership. We have the dream of not only being a part of these conversations but of actually convening them. And we have the space to host such conversations. We have many of the community connections we would need. While we dream of doing this work, we realize that we need to learn how to do this work of social activism as individuals and as the church.

Jackson by the Numbers –

Jackson Census Data		
Population		
Year	City	County
2020	31,309	160,366
2010	33,534	160,248
2000	36,316	158,422
1990	38,303	149,756
1980	39,739	151,495
1970	45,484	143,274
1960	50,720	131,994
1950	51,088	108,168
1940	49,656	93,108
1930	55,187	92,304
1920	48,374	72,539
1910	31,433	53,426
1900	25,180	48,222

The population of the City of Jackson and the membership of the church are certainly related. Historically, as Jackson grew so did Jackson’s First Pres*. As the city experienced decline so has the church. In the city, population decline is due to companies relocating, and the general migration of people out of the Midwest. National trends of an aging population, active retirees, and fewer young people have also impacted the area and the church. There is also a general societal shift away from the dogma of organized or mainstream religion along with a move toward spirituality by younger generations. Regardless of the reasons, the pandemic years have exponentially increased the rate of decline in church attendance.

For more detailed community demographics, please see the MissionInsite report in the Appendix.

So it is here in Jackson that God has brought us or planted us. It is here that we have built houses, planted gardens, raised children, and grown old. It is here that we have multiplied, and touched countless lives, worked, and dreamed for the welfare of this city. Trusting the words of Jeremiah “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” It is here that we worship, teach, and live out our calling as God’s people; to go out into the “highways and byways” as servants of the Master modeling and sharing God’s love, inviting others to “come and see” and then “go and do.”

Finances:

“Working to put the Church’s mission in all we are and all we do.”

– JFPC Finance Vision

We do this by:

1. **Guided Socially Responsible Investing** of approximately \$2 million invested at New Covenant Funds, through the Presbyterian Foundation. Our investment advisors take a three-pronged approach to managing our assets.
 - a. Negative Screening – Divestment from Military weapons, tobacco, human rights offenders, for-profit prisons, alcohol, and casinos.
 - b. Positive Environmental Social Governance (ESG) Integrations – Investing in best-in-class companies that are doing the best job on ESG stewardship within their industries. Investments include affordable rental housing, green projects, neighborhood revitalization, healthy communities, and general community development.
 - c. Shareholder Engagement and Proxy Voting Enable us through our investments to push the mission of the greater Church within corporations.

2. **Our Tenants:** Both our main building and the Hive next door are a part of our mission and finance strategy. We accomplish this by offering building space at below-market rental rates for non-profits that align with our theology and mission. *Samaritas* (formerly *Lutheran Social Services*), which supports families in stress, children and foster parents, and immigrants is a long-term tenant in the Hive. The *Community Action Agency* houses an Early Headstart Program in the nursery area of our main building. In addition, we continue to consider ways to use our space for other mission purposes and look for opportunities to rent to other non-profits.

3. **Our Service Providers:** At the suggestion of several members, in 2022, we began using “A Clean Slate Cleaning Service” which was created by SOAR, a Jackson – based non-profit organization, which provides jobs, rehabilitation, and a home for women who have been trafficked, addicted, abused or incarcerated.

4. **Education Scholarships:** Because of the generous gifts of members throughout our history, JFPC has three separate scholarship funds:
 - a. General Scholarship Fund – for those affiliated with JFPC who are pursuing post-high-school education. In 2022, 14 individuals received a total of \$30,000 from this fund.

- b. Griffith Scholarship Fund – is to be used for educating ministers, Christian educators, and church musicians at a theological school of the PCUSA. There was one recipient in 2022. We believe this allows for use against student loans or career development. Please note that with a station in Jackson, McCormick Theological Seminary is only a train ride away.
- c. Alma College Scholarship – This scholarship is held at Alma College and was established in December of 1983, with a gift of \$10,000. An additional gift has been made since that date, \$500 in October of 1987. As of 2021 the current 3-year market value was \$48,019, allowing for a 5% spendable amount of \$2,401. The awarding criteria is: “...to provide scholarship aid to students from First Presbyterian Church of Jackson or Jackson County.”

Finances – By the Numbers

The [PCUSA Church Trends data site](#) has the following financial information on our church:

At A Glance: Financial⁴

Finances	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Annual Income	391,676	264,436	336,854	326,395	329,051
Annual Expenses	499,253	372,783	406,679	396,937	393,906
Facilities	196,956	105,229	123,432	92,077	64,854
Mission	13,208	11,278	12,276	8,029	33,657
Personnel	215,298	193,981	215,971	216,710	226,280

In reviewing the above information, we realized that the statistical data given to the denomination does not reflect the whole financial picture of the church. The Church is blessed with buildings and facilities that have a replacement (insured) value of over \$10 million and a book value \$5 million. We have an endowment and reserves of approximately \$800,000. Our building next door, The Hive, provides space for nonprofits **and** income to the church. The PCUSA statistical report includes traditional sources of church revenue but **does not include** the income JFPC receives from the long-term lease of space at The Hive or the income received from the endowment

⁴ <https://church-trends.pcusa.org/church/3295/financials/5/>

investments. This income helps offset budget deficits. The table above reveals a significant increase in facility expenses; these increases included a planned roof project spread over three years, unplanned but necessary technology upgrades, and the addition of air scrubbers to the HVAC system as a result of COVID-related needs. The following table represents a “normalized” financial review that separates the Hive as a “profit center” and removes all Major Maintenance Expenses (roof, LED lighting, etc.).

Normalized Financials					
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>
<u>Income</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Stewardship	\$282,952.76	\$264,709.36	\$264,232.34	\$245,569.53	\$241,115.04
Direct Mission	\$27,730.04	\$15,094.74	\$11,177.40	\$11,278.20	\$13,206.00
Other	\$26,867.27	\$44,641.81	\$70,970.51	\$15,606.64	\$146,403.32
Total Church Income	\$337,550.07	\$324,445.91	\$346,380.25	\$272,454.37	\$400,724.36
<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Facilities	\$66,603.40	\$64,596.50	\$57,324.05	\$66,281.65	\$77,533.96
Mission	\$27,730.04	\$15,094.74	\$11,177.40	\$11,278.20	\$13,206.00
Personnel	\$226,280.71	\$216,710.20	\$215,971.74	\$193,981.64	\$215,283.14
Other	\$55,770.37	\$60,436.69	\$37,702.12	\$43,224.26	\$57,273.98
Total Church Expenses	\$342,161.88	\$342,161.88	\$326,221.33	\$309,331.20	\$442,036.09
Hive Income	\$85,175.55	\$78,684.51	\$74,231.86	\$72,429.82	\$74,370.03
Hive Expense	\$32,543.83	\$23,716.45	\$82,672.41	\$22,704.66	\$25,148.35
Net Hive Profit	\$52,631.72	\$54,968.06	\$53,059.45	\$49,725.16	\$49,221.68

Because our congregation is declining in numbers and aging, we are concerned about long-term sustainability and are adjusting our budget. We have reduced personnel expenses (via outsourcing and volunteers), but only at a pace to match the increase in utility expenses. As repairs are needed, we also seek to improve the building’s energy efficiency.

JFPC has practiced “faith-based giving” for over 20 years. With a declining membership further stressed by “culture issues,” Covid, and the retirement of the pastor, we recognized the need for a different approach. We have begun a stewardship education campaign and will likely return to requesting a pledge from our members and friends in the fall of 2023.

Our Mission expenditures do not reflect our true giving. The Church provides numerous opportunities throughout the year for donations of food, personal care needs, and clothing which do not show in the financials. It should be noted that this year our OGHs offering (\$1,848) came close to the pre-Covid level. The Hive represents a “win-win” scenario where below-market rent is provided to a non-profit agency that provides child and family services.

Worship at JFPC

Worship is at the heart of our life together. Currently, most prefer a traditional Presbyterian service with traditional hymns, organ music, chancel and bell choirs, and special music. Our current music director, Wendy Treacher, is a lifelong member of the church and is a retired, beloved music teacher in the Northwest School District. Wendy also currently directs the local community choir, The Jackson Chorale. Being able to sing with Wendy is a draw for many of our younger and older choir members. The church has benefited from her music connections, as she arranges special guest musicians almost every week. While traditional worship is our current comfort zone, we have enjoyed Taizé services, worship indoors, outdoors, at the park, and have even had a praise band. Holy Communion is served monthly and sometimes on other occasions. The service always includes a children's message delivered by a congregational or staff member. Our post-pandemic average in-person worship attendance hovers around 60-65 people, however, attendance is influenced by winter weather, our "Snowbird" migration, summer trips "Up-North," and the demands of family life. Our confirmed online attendance varies anywhere from 5-15 computer attendees.

Spiritual Formation at Jackson's First

Since the pandemic, how we grow in our faith at JFPC has, and is, continuing to change and grow as we adapt our approach to Christian formation. We transitioned from the more traditional Christian Education Model practiced before the pandemic, to first a more family-centered program during the pandemic and now a more intergenerational model of Christian formation. Since the pandemic, our families still value faith formation but time allocation for worship and church activities has declined. Families don't come as often or volunteer as much.

What has been working?

- Shorter, targeted events where we meet a few times with a focus and then take a break
- Special one-time events in or out of the church (Caroling, a Christmas-based Escape Room, etc)
- Creative experiences blending faith and the arts (Art Camp focused VBS, making a video for Transfiguration Sunday and Easter in a local cemetery)
- Presenting an inter-generational musical based on the feeding of the 5000
- A small preschool class at the same time the choir is practicing

We have also found that kids/families aren't eager to be separated during worship any longer, so JFPC now has dedicated space for both little ones and big ones within our sanctuary space. At first glance, the KiDS Worship Center™ appears like an ordinary

“Pray-Ground,” however, under the care of our Director of Spiritual Formation, Dr. Lori Tate, there is an opportunity for deep spiritual growth in both our children and the adults around them. Kids are immersed in the rhythms of the worship service and actively participate in the prayers of the people, the Lord’s prayer, the offering, and communion. Worship, repetition, and community are critical to young kids’ spiritual formation. Maria Montessori said, “The mind remembers what the hands have done.” Our young children are near their parents, older kids have some autonomy, and the adults benefit from an intergenerational community. This seems to be a win for all in our community.

Adult Education and continued formation needs have also shifted since the pandemic. Today, our adults grow in their faith through in-person, online, hybrid education classes, or seasonal devotions. In recent years, the focus has primarily been either on diversity, equity, and inclusion or Biblical studies. Class topics include Waking Up White; Doctrine of Discovery; PBS – The Black Church; The Book of Forgiving by Desmond & Mpho Tutu; Ephesians; Psalms of Ascent; Invitations from God; Vital Congregations; Minor Prophets and Lament with Dr. Nancy Weatherwax; several studies by Dr. Amy Jill Levine. Prior to COVID, there were quarterly spiritual practice retreats which we hope to resume at some point. In addition, the Men’s Breakfast and Study meets faithfully on the first and third Saturdays of each month.

A variety of intergenerational experiences have also been surprisingly successful since the pandemic. Our “Room at the Table” experience tied together a summer VBS experience with the creation of painted chairs. Each week a new chair (designed by adults and kids) was added to the sanctuary, symbolizing that all are welcome at the Table of God. During Advent and Lent, various prayer practice activities (prayer cubes; seed balls, labyrinth art, etc.) are offered to the young and old during coffee hour. In good weather, peace walks at the Soul Dig labyrinth have been encouraged as well.

Seeking the Welfare of the City ~ Mission

Responding to the Needs of Others

Northeast Elementary School Clothes Closet Collection

Seasonal appropriate children's clothes are donated regularly and as additional needs arise

First Sunday Foods

Canned goods collected on the first Sunday of each month supporting [Immanuel Lutheran food pantry](#)

Diaper Ministry

Collect and manage the local diaper ministry in conjunction with [Love INC](#)

Personal Care Products Collection

On-going collection to support the [Jackson Personal Care Ministry](#)

Interfaith Shelter Monthly Meal

The first Tuesday of each month, a meal is prepared for the residents of the [Interfaith Shelter](#)

Little Lending Library

Books appear and are donated as needed, to keep the lending library in front of the church well stocked

Northeast Elementary School Library Volunteers

Sixteen church members staff the library **three days a week** in support of the students and staff, and to promote reading literacy

Lights On Our Building - Since the invasion of Ukraine we have had blue and yellow lights on our building, in prayerful support of people around the world living in conflict, violence, and war. The lights temporarily changed to green and white in support of Michigan State University after the mass shooting there on February 13, 2023

Harvest Dinner- The church and community comes together for food and fellowship for a cause – with all proceeds going to mission

Seeking The Welfare Of The City ~ Using Our Space To Meet The Needs Of Others

Outside Groups that Regularly Meet at JFPC:

AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTHLY BLOOD DRIVES

American Red Cross Emergency Disaster Shelter if necessary

C.A.A. EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM – Weekly

CARDIO DRUMMING CLASSES – 2x Weekly

LA LECHE LEAGUE –Monthly

RECOVERY GROUPS

Al-Anon –2 mornings a week

A.A. – 7 Nights a week

N.A. – 3 Evenings a week & on special occasions

RENEW CANCER SUPPORT GROUP – 2x a Month

SCOUT TROOP 312 –(longest active troop in Michigan) Weekly

Eagle Scout Review Board

Wood Badge Training

Leader Training

SERA – (State Employee Retirement Association) Monthly

Outside groups that meet occasionally at JFPC

Cadette Girl Scout Troop 60186

Center Stage Jackson –Both Adult and Youth Community theater

City of Jackson, 5th Ward Neighborhood Community Meetings

Emmaus Walks

Girl Scout Events

Jackson Landlord Association Meetings

JPS (Jackson Public High School) Make-Up Testing

Local election polling site Music Recitals

PEO Meetings

Refugee Home Training Programs for Leaders Tuesday Musicale Programs & Luncheons

Samaritas Summer School for students living at the Refugee Home

Tuesday Musicale Scholarship Auditions

Seeking the Welfare of the City ~

Above And Beyond What We Do As A Church

In March 2003, The Session of JFPC “Recognizing the need to strengthen ourselves in order to do God’s work...” adopted key principles. These key principles were printed on the back of every session agenda. Throughout the self-study, it became apparent that some of the principles have been achieved and some fell by the wayside. However, there is one that absolutely cannot be ignored:

2. We will prepare our members for service in our church and in the community

a. We will prepare our people to serve as leaders in our congregation and in the community

Today, we find that JFPC folks live their faith and values out as leaders in the church **and** in the community. Life in the Jackson area is certainly impacted by our commitment to serving with and for others. When asked one Sunday “If you serve outside your church commitments, how do you serve God by serving others in the Jackson community?” This is what we heard back:

Help a family member totally handicapped with MS
Being kind to my neighbors
Dept. on Aging - Medicare Program Volunteer
Grand River Environmental Action Team
President of Homeowners Association
President of Hillsdale County Veterans Hall of Valor
Spring Arbor University Professional Standards Committee
Faculty Advisor for two student chapters of professional organizations for educators (ASCD & ISTE)
Jackson Symphony Guild volunteer
Scholarships for education
Jackson College Foundation Board
Co-President and Secretary American Association of University Women
Jackson Host Lions
Driver for Blind Club Members
Lansing Capital Chordsmen (Men’s barbershop chorus)
Send cards to people for uplifting moments
Bake goodies, and prepare food for people when there is a need
Make jewelry for fundraising projects (Relay for Life, Ukraine refugee relief)
Support the Jackson Emmaus Walk Community
Two golf committees & a bridge committee
Board of Condo Association
Read stories at local elementary school
Volunteer at Center Stage Jackson Community Theater
Volunteer at Café Connection
Volunteer at Northeast Elementary School Library
Statistician GEGC Golf League

Meals to a shut-in Mother
Summit Township – Zoning Board of Appeals & Recreation Planning Committee
Neighborhood Association
Jackson Audubon
Hospital/Rehab visits
Blood donor
Relay for Life
Special Olympics
Civitan Club of Jackson
Dahlem Center Volunteer
Oakley, Therapy Dog at Arnold Elementary School

Seeking The Welfare Of The City ~ Some Of Our Mission Partners

AL-ANON
Alcoholics Anonymous
American Red Cross
Community Action Agency
Immanuel Lutheran Food Pantry
Jackson Interfaith Shelter
Jackson Ministerial Association
Jackson Personal Care Ministry
Jackson Public Schools, North East Elementary Clothing Closet
Love, INC
Narcotics Anonymous
Presbyterian Mission Agency – Special Offerings
Refugee Home
Relay for Life
Samaritas
Summit to Reduce Violence

Reflection & Planning

Throughout this time of study, self-reflection, and visioning we have rediscovered or reaffirmed much about ourselves. Here are some of our self-study learnings:

1. We are smaller than we act – We were a corporate size church that is now a much smaller church. However, there are times when we operate as a much larger church. We dream **BIG**. We also need to learn how to operate with fewer members and continue to cultivate more outside partners. We recognize that because of our size, long-term sustainability is a concern that requires consideration and planning.
2. Jackson First has a long history of responding to the needs of the city of Jackson. It's so ingrained in us and a part of who we are that we don't do it to promote ourselves or the church and we don't even think about it as mission - it's just what we do. When our Interim Pastor started in 2021, she was told "We don't do mission well" and that was a common belief. During our self-study, we have come to see ourselves a little differently; and realized, that as our financial reflections stated earlier in this document, "Mission is who we are and in **all** we do."
3. During this time of self-reflection and self-study, we have (re)discovered how crucial it is for faith communities to have difficult conversations. Our session leadership has had to intentionally listen, reflect on things said, and try to respond with care, curiosity, and as people of faith. Through this process, we have discovered that we actually value asking questions, recognizing the journey of discovery that people are on. We also realize it's ok if we don't all agree, but it's important to treat one another with respect, learn how to work together, and then model this for the world.
4. We are a community that does things because they are "the right thing to do" **not** for the recognition. That is one of the reasons why we struggle with telling our story and viewing what we do as mission.
5. The "Little Library" story reflects some of our characteristics as a church: check it out and do what is right, smiling as you go! One day last winter a truck with a City of Jackson seal on the door pulled up in the driveway. Three men jumped out, dug two holes, poured concrete in them, and stuck two poles in the holes! It was the amusement of the day, but perplexing to our interim and other staff. Phone calls followed; later that day, the truck returned and installed a "little lending library" in a grassy area of the front lawn. Who ordered this? Who approved it? Why us? Phone calls eventually confirmed that the city had placed the box in the easement, thus implementing a request to increase the number of "little libraries" around town. Word got around the church and by Sunday morning enough books had arrived to fill the box. Children's books, adult fiction, and nonfiction continue to circulate. The little library chose us, but we see the message "Seek the welfare of the city" in our front yard each day!
6. We wrote and adopted a welcoming statement. It's who we are, who we want to be and yet we also realize that we aren't 100% there yet. The same is true with Earth Care, Hunger Action, and Social Justice. For example: On the Sunday of our

Earth Day worship, we were “greeted” by a sign on the front lawn warning us that fertilizer had recently been applied. Clearly, we still have work to do.

7. Coming out of the pandemic, our mission focus is strong; our church community relationships (aka fellowship) need some intentional development right now. People are not returning to their pre-covid ultra-busy schedules. What to offer and when remains to be determined.
8. Visitors are slowly, consistently showing up on Sunday mornings. We need to figure out how to assimilate them and us into this less-is-better post-pandemic world.

During this self-study period, we have explored our history, considered who we are today (a faithful remnant of who we were), listened intently to local Jackson community leaders, **and** reflected on the call of God to this community. And then we allowed ourselves to dream about the future, our Jackson future. We dreamed in small groups, as the session, in larger church groups, and even with others. It turns out our dreams and vision are very much based on how God is calling us to respond to the needs articulated by Jackson community agencies and leaders.

Our Dreams

- Exploring reading opportunities for kids – this dream was so strong that during the '22-'23 school year, we developed and implemented a School Library volunteer program, that we can share with other interested churches or organizations
- Coordination of the many Agency services (Improving the coordination of services offered to reduce duplication of and competing services)
- “Navigating the System” @ helping individuals find help and support in the system of supportive services.
- Expanding our affordable building use opportunities especially for benefit the of kids
- Public bathroom and shower space - designed to be gender neutral & family use. Curious about washing machines & dryers - would they be helpful or how could we assist with the challenge of clean clothes
- Housing/Homelessness – Convene/ host conversation to address larger systemic issues, and be a part of the longer-term Jackson community vision
- Gas Cards
- Listening Ministry

And finally.... The message has been reinforced to us that God’s call is not just about making room here in our building; we have an abundance of that. God’s call to us has been **and continues to be** about sharing the gifts of God with all of God’s people, in the church building **AND** in the world.

Our Call

Determining JFPC's calling is the result of discernment on the history, ongoing legacy, the needs of the City, and the actions and visions of our people. This Call is captured and clarified in specific statements, actions and plans. The Welcoming Statement was adopted this fall. It reflects the church's understanding of the love of God and how God calls us to love like God does. The statement is new for us so there is some concern about living into it 100% of the time. The vision statement was updated during this interim period.

OUR WELCOME STATEMENT: (Adopted in December of 2022)

Welcome!!!

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in our church.

If you are young or old, you are welcome here.

If you have brown skin, black skin, white skin, peoples of all races are welcome here.

If you are married or single, you are welcome here.

If you are gay or straight, or both or neither, you are welcome here.

If you are a man or a woman, transgender or non-binary you are welcome here.

If you are sick or well, you are welcome here.

If you are disabled, or differently abled, you are welcome here.

If you are rich or poor, powerful or weak, you are welcome here.

If you believe in God, or if you don't, you are welcome here.

YOU are welcome here,

And WE will strive to love you, as God does, just the way you are.

OUR VISION STATEMENT:

Discovering our true selves through loving and serving God, our brothers and sisters.

Using all our resources - facilities, finances, gifts and talents, and partnerships -

We intentionally serve one another and our community.

We create intergenerational opportunities

reflecting our values,

encouraging worship and spiritual growth, and

cultivating genuine relationships.

We seek the welfare of the city...and pray to the Lord on its behalf - Jeremiah 29:7

Church Leadership Structure ~

To Care For Our Church And Our Community

The following describes the two main leadership groups of the church as well as the staff:

Ruling Elders, together with the ministers of Word and Sacrament, ruling elders exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of the congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships (Book of Order G-2.0301). The elders carry out the work of the Session as listed above and generally chair one of the committees. Elders are elected by the congregation for up to two consecutive, three-year terms.

Deacons are a ministry of “compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost...” (Book of Order G-2.0201). At JFPC, Deacons assist the Pastor with congregational care that includes regular visitation of those in need of extra care and our shut-ins, delivery of sanctuary flowers, cards, and special occasion greetings. They ensure the compassionate response of the church to the church community.

Note: Having once served as an officer of the church JFPC non-currently serving elders and deacons continue to play a significant role in the life and leadership of our community. They offer their time, talent, and support to the current church leadership, as a resource or an extra set of hands.

Staff Positions

Pastor

Part-Time Music Director

Part-Time Director of Spiritual Formation

Part-Time Office Administrative Assistant

Committees

Congregational Life

Care of Members Identifies and implements strategies to identify and welcome visitors, helps connect them into the life of the church, moving from church visitor to church family. Organize new member classes when needed, provides oversight of fellowship activities, and coordinates as needed the deacons and lay-person hospital visitation.

Worship, Music & Sacraments Assures a God-focused worship experience whenever, wherever the church community worships.

Spiritual Formation (formerly the Discipleship Development Committee) formulates ways for the **whole** church community to grow in their Christian faith.

Outreach

Hive Committee provides direction and oversight to the Hive operation and building rental as mission responsibilities.

Church Operations

Mission Committee develops, maintains, monitors, and potentially expands the church's mission ministry. This includes exploring new ideas, evaluating the effectiveness of ongoing missions, determining participation in PCUSA special offerings, and developing and expanding Mission Partner relationships.

Finance Committee assures that JFPC is meeting the Great Ends of the Church, through wise stewardship of money, time, and resources. Is responsible for the oversight of all financial (investments, disbursements, income, and stewardship), legal, and insurance matters of the church. They monitor monthly financial activities and prepare the budget for the Session.

Kitchen Committee: provides the opportunity for the church community to break bread together and maintains and improves the kitchen to meet State requirements, including the licensing of the commercial kitchen.

Personnel & Nominations Committee assures that all human resource activities are handled in a professional, humane and legal manner.

Marketing Committee promotes the Church and its witness through multiple and interactive media on a timely basis. This includes a branding strategy and various modes of communication including website, social media, print media.

Property Committee (Friends of Property) assures that the building is well

maintained. Works with the office admin and a team of volunteers to ensure that the church is ready for use by both the church and community groups.

Who Is God Calling Here??

The pastor that we envision God calling here would have a heart for both the church and the greater Jackson community. They would help our church family live into the reality of our smaller size, leaving behind the less useful norms of the corporate-size church of our past. Understanding the relationship between the health of the community and the health of the church our new pastor would come alongside us as we continue to learn how to go out into the community and build partnerships that enable us to address the problems that challenge our city (violence, poverty, homelessness, and racism).

In various meetings with the congregation, the following pastoral characteristics were identified and discussed: compassion, decision-making, collaboration, interpersonal engagement, spiritual maturity, personnel resilience,

Some of the pastor's responsibilities would include: Preaching, teaching, and administering the sacraments. In regard to preaching, our congregation appreciates a message that they can take with them and is as relevant on Tuesday as it was on Sunday morning. While a traditional congregation we are increasingly flexible and even comfortable with more interactive sermons. The pastor would work with the deacons to ensure good pastoral, care for the congregation, support, and work with the Director of Spiritual Formation to foster the continued spiritual growth of the community and coordinate worship planning with the music director and worship committee.

Why Would You Want To Come To Jackson?

Jackson area is an interesting combination of city and rural life. The church is located just outside the downtown. In recent years, downtown redevelopment has been stimulated by a number of efforts: [The Jackson Symphony](#) redeveloped the old J.C.Penneys building into a music school, rehearsal, and performance center; the Grand River Brewery was built in the old bus garage and other new restaurants have opened. A grant allowed Jackson to host a [Bright Walls](#) initiative where artists from the U. S. and around the world have left great murals on old walls. Consumers Energy built an eleven-story corporate headquarters using the beautiful old US Post Office as the main entrance. The Y Center has announced an expansion and redevelopment plan. New downtown apartment buildings have added living spaces for young adults and older ones, too. Jackson really is a beautiful city with **lots** to do. Good coffee, great food, the Farmer's Markets, and all sorts of events are available downtown.

Quiet neighborhoods, friendly family-oriented community, no rush hour traffic jams, great health care, and lower housing costs are just some of the factors that draw people here. There are programs for seniors, special needs children, and at-risk teens.

Our proximity to Ann Arbor, Detroit, Lansing, and Chicago provides excellent opportunities for personal or professional growth, education, and entertainment including Big Ten College and professional sports. The Great Lakes and many Michigan vacation adventures are a short drive away.

The Arts:

In addition to the Jackson Chorale and the Jackson Symphony, there are events at the Potter Center, and community theater through [Center Stage](#). All are welcome to listen to or perform with the Jackson Community Band. There is the Ella Sharp Art Museum and an “Art-A-Loan” program for local businesses to borrow student art. All ages of artists are nurtured through organizations like Art 634, ESSA Arts, and Jackson School of the Arts.

Parks & Recreation

[Jackson County is filled with parks](#), many of them on the small to medium-sized lakes that dot the landscape. Others are in the city, county residential, or farming areas. Both the city and the county maintain staff and millage support for their maintenance and programming. Places to hike are numerous; The Cascades Park is a nice place to take an evening stroll or afternoon walk (even better when it ends with ice cream). The Cascades also host several special programs, fireworks, and special events from spring through fall. The [Dahlem Center](#) provides year-round outdoor experiences and environmental education. There are pickleball courts, bike trails, kayaking, all sorts of water sports, fishing, golf, and for the racing enthusiast Michigan International Speedway.

Schools

Jackson County has several school districts from rural districts like Concord and Grass Lake, which are headquartered in a small town or village, to a large urban district like Jackson Public Schools, the largest in the county. In addition to traditional public schools, the county has an International Baccalaureate School, charter schools that must meet state standards, and several private, and parochial schools. Schools operate under a state law allowing “school of choice” options for parents, i.e. schools must enroll students from outside their physical district as long as they have a seat for the students.

Jackson also has a county career center, a college offering technical training for two-year and four-year degrees with transfer ability to large state schools and private colleges. The county is the home to Spring Arbor University and Jackson College. Spring Arbor University is a Christian liberal arts university celebrating its 150th Anniversary in 2023 and offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs. Jackson College is a regional community college serving Jackson, Hillsdale, and Lenawee counties. 40 minutes to the East is the University of Michigan, ranked by US News and World Reports #3 in Top Public Schools, #6 in Best Undergraduate Engineering Programs, and #25 in National Universities. Michigan State University, is 40 minutes North of Jackson. In addition, there are numerous smaller school options nearby Calvin College, Alma, Adrian, Albion, and Kalamazoo College.

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

This is a Matthew 25 Presbytery, that envisions “dynamic leaders and healthy congregations who are vital to their communities, working together to share the way of Christ’s love, grace and justice.” Their mission is to form and partner “with faith communities to challenge, encourage, equip and hold one another accountable as Christ’s disciples.”

A Final Note

Thank you for taking the time to look at this report. For more information about Jackson First Presbyterian Church please explore our website (<https://www.jacksonfirstpres.com/>), explore the hyperlinks in this document and referenced in the appendix, or contact us at Jackson First Presbyterian Church (insert the PNC email when established). If you are interested in additional demographic information please email us for the MissionInsite Report.

Appendix:

The history on pages 3 & 4 is from *Celebrate 125 Years, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson Michigan*. A history booklet in honor of the 125 Anniversary of the church, compiled by Liz Swartzel, member, and historian.

Hyperlinks in this document:

<https://www.samaritas.org/About-Samaritas>

<https://church-trends.pcusa.org>

<https://www.immanueljackson.org/food-pantry>

<https://loveofjackson.org/>

<https://jacksonpersonalcare.org/>

<https://www.interfaithshelter.com/>

<https://www.jacksonsymphony.org/>

<https://www.brightwallsjackson.com/>

<https://www.centerstagejackson.org>

<https://www.co.jackson.mi.us/567/Parks-Recreation>

<https://www.dahlemcenter.org/>

<https://www.lakemichiganpresbytery.org>