

FIRST FOUNDATION:

Putting our money where our values are

Fall is in the air, which often means a return to regular church attendance after a busy summer of traveling and soaking up every bit of time outdoors while the weather was warm. It also means our children and youth (and some young and not-as-young adults!) are heading back to school.

At First Church, and perhaps the broader United Methodist denomination as a whole, education is deeply intertwined with the church's mission and traditions. Many people who grew up as Methodists had their first exposure to the Bible, church music, community service, and other foundational parts of Christian life through Sunday School. Engaging the young in Christian life through education during their formative years shows them how to live in Christian community, which can be foundational to their values for the rest of their lives.

Additionally, the opportunities First Church offers for Christian education at all ages is a testament to how much the Church values ongoing education. From regular classes and small group studies to pop-up classes on current topics and the annual Lyons Lecture, it is clear that continual learning is an intrinsic aspect of this church. Many of the church's trailblazing missions and outreach begin in a study group, like the 2022 Ho-Chunk land acknowledgement, which grew out of the Native American Acknowledgement group.

First Foundation is here to support it all. The Church was a



trailblazer in founding First Foundation to begin with (perhaps the idea grew out of a study group?); not many churches have a longstanding financial foundation like this, much less one that has grown enough to be able to provide more than \$270,000 of funding a year.

When you think of the Foundation, your first thought may relate to the scholarships provided by the Van Dyke/Alton Scholarship Fund to people heading off to college or seminary. That is a big, visible way that the Foundation supports the church community thanks to everyone who has donated to that fund. But the Foundation's financial support of the church's educational opportunities expands much further than that.

In 2022, of the \$273,604 the Foundation gave in support of First Church ministries, the second-highest expenditure was towards Education and Scholarships (second

only after general operations). That is separate from the support given to Youth and Young Adults, which was the fourth-highest expenditure. If you want to see what an organization values, see where it puts its money: First Church values education. The endowed funds support what the church supports, thanks to those who have generously donated.

A gift to First Foundation is a forever gift to First Church that will help the Church live out its mission. If you have found value in the ongoing educational opportunities provided at First Church, or if you just want to help the Church continue to live out its mission to provide such rich educational opportunities, you can donate any amount, big or small, to the Christian Education general fund by visiting first-foundation.org.

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