

# Heaven as it is in In Albert Lea

2024 STEWARDSHIP LETTER



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
**of Albert Lea**

308 Water Street, Albert Lea, MN 56007  
(507) 373-2035



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## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

**1929**

**PASTOR CHARLES**

In January 1929, a fire broke out in our church's sanctuary and the building burned down in the bleak midwinter. In quick response, the church rallied and raised funds to erect the sanctuary we now worship within. Over nine months, they gathered \$90,000 (roughly \$1.65 million in today's economy). They were determined to rebuild the church they adored and see that the work God had begun in and through First Presbyterian would continue well beyond their lifetimes.

They excitedly broke ground for the new sanctuary in September 1929. Only a few weeks later, on October 24, Albert Lea and every surrounding community was reeling from the greatest economic depression our country had ever suffered. Times were tougher than they had ever been. Families were making difficult decisions about how to prioritize costs of living while employment was far from guaranteed month by month. The end of 1929 was a pivotal time for our church. Our church could have stopped building, recouping what costs they could in order to secure their own finances- but they didn't. They kept building. They were confident in God's ability to provide for them and their families and they kept building.

Now, each Sunday, we sit in the sanctuary that was raised by that generation's courageous generosity and outlandish trust in the Lord's faithfulness.

Today, we face unknowns of our own. As churches around the country see declining attendance and influence in their communities, how will we respond? Will the worshipers of First Presbyterian Church one hundred years from now thank God for the perseverance of our faith and our commitment to the Great Commission despite the unknowns around us, as we give thanks for the body of believers one hundred years before us? May we be faithful to Him, as so many have been before us, until the Kingdom of God in Albert Lea fully reflects His reign in heaven.

*"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8*

## A NOTE OF THANKS

**DAVID PAULSON, ELDER**

Making Disciples to glorify God!

I believe we are making this Mission Statement come alive with your continued support for the ministry here at First Presbyterian. Through the blessing of your tithes and offerings, Session would like to thank you for being faithful to God and the Church.

May God's blessing be so abundant as He said to Malachi in Malachi 3:10 (NIV): "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

To God be the glory

GREAT THINGS HE HAS DONE...

Our PWSC event "Missing Piece" helped almost 100 women explore their identity in Christ.

We welcomed two amazing women to the church staff - Andrea Reimann (Dir. of Children's Ministries) and Emily Mulder (Ministry Assistant)

We trained and ordained our first ever Commissioned Lay Pastors (1) - Steve and Susan Piper.

We're offering more in the evenings to meet the spiritual needs of those who work during the daytime.

Faith Cafe continues to raise up disciples who make disciples, with an average attendance of 30-35 each Sunday morning.

Our library has begun renewing its space and resources - over 200 books have been added to the many classics already there!

This was the first year sending young families to summer family camp to grow in their faith together.

We've been able to responsibly assist our neighbors with roughly \$2000 of aid towards shelter, utilities, and gas.

Our student ministries has multiplied since last year and continues to offer students a safe and fun place to explore faith in Christ.

In our second year hosting Celebrate Recovery, we continue to reach adults healing from hurts, habits, and hang-ups.

Pastor and the deacons have made over 200 visits to covenant partners so far this year, bringing Church to the people of God.

A team of 14 students and leaders served the Lord in the mountains of Jamaica.

Our nursery continues to grow! We regularly have over a dozen children in our care on Sundays.

We've made drastic improvements to our online worship, allowing dozens from our church family to worship "alongside us" again.

Our KidZone classrooms and curriculum have been renewed and are ready for the next generation of God's work in the city!

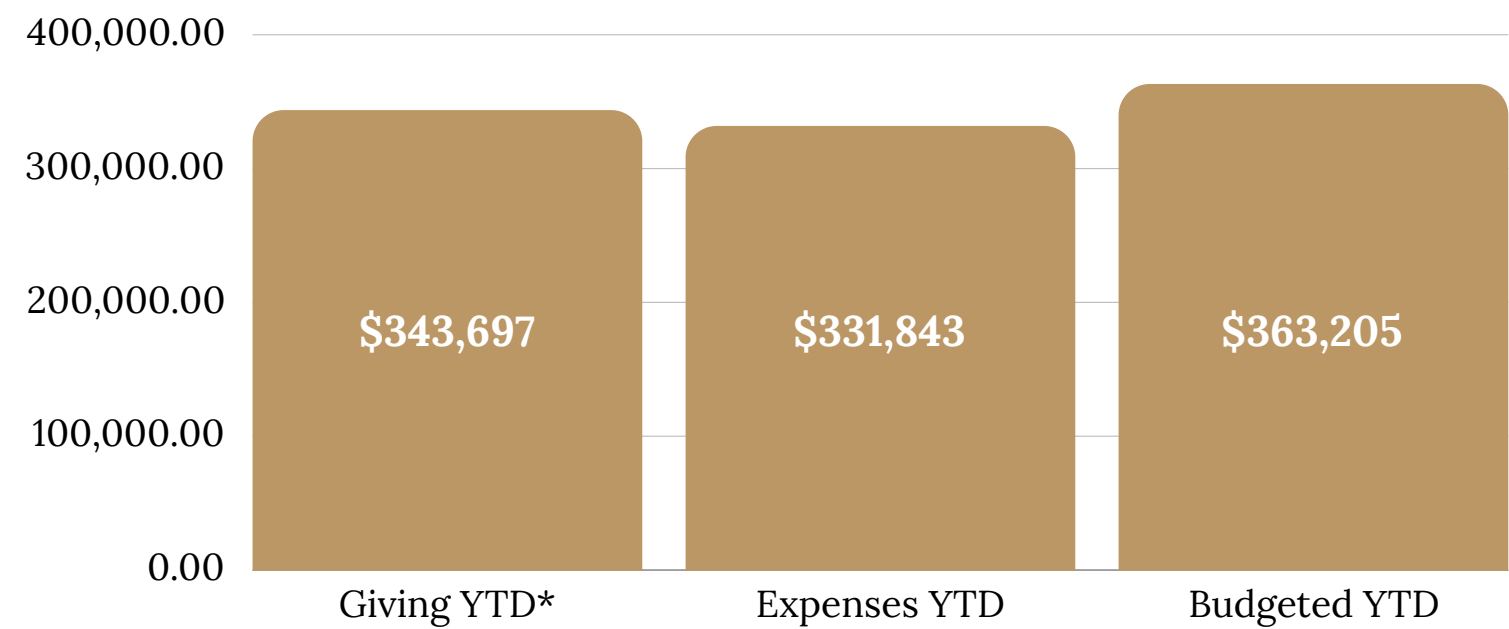
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Men from our church recommitted their lives to following Jesus at our first ECO Men's Retreat in September.

We have celebrated 7 baptisms in 2024 so far, including our first adult baptism in 15 years.

THIS YEAR'S FINANCES

AS OF OCTOBER 1, 2024



\* Giving YTD refers only to gifts towards the general offering and does not include designated or memorial giving.

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY - NOVEMBER 17

CELEBRATING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TOGETHER

**Our call as a church is to respond to the high calling God has given us: to make disciples to glorify Him.** First, we're asking that you pray. Pray that we can all deeply experience God's grace for us and that we would, in gratitude, respond to this grace we've received.

Pray that God would provide you with a clear sense of direction as to how you will support First Presbyterian Church's ministries in 2024. Every gift, no matter the size, is an act of worship- a response to grace.

**On November 17**, after our morning worship, we will make our financial commitments for 2025 using the enclosed pledge cards. Your commitment to steward your finances and spiritual gifts helps our church ensure we can fully participate in all the good work God has prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10).

**Celebrate with us.** God has, and will continue to be, faithful to us. *Praise God from Whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!*

# GIVING TO GOD AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:8

General Fund Giving	Memorial Giving	Benevolence Funds
<p>The general fund helps to cover all the expected costs of the year that we’ve budgeted for- from staff salaries to overseas mission partners to keeping the lights on.</p> <p>There are various methods of giving to the general fund, including: an <a href="#">offering time</a> on Sunday mornings (passing the plates), using one of our <a href="#">wooden offertory boxes</a> near the sanctuary or church offices, <a href="#">mailing a check</a> to the church, or <a href="#">giving online</a> using the Tithely app on your phone or online at <a href="#">www.firstpres.us</a></p> <p>To help honor any financial gifts given to the church, you will receive an annual giving statement for you and your household for tax purposes.</p>	<p>Prayerfully consider legacy giving as you prepare or update your estate-related documents.</p> <p>This is an impactful way to provide for the church and its mission for generations to come, just as so many have done for our generation.</p> <p>This is the “endowment” aspect of our Memorial &amp; Endowment resources. These funds are invested to grow with time and continue the giving spirit going forward.</p> <p>Just a few recent examples of how our endowment funds have made impacts: supporting single mothers in need, working towards improving our elevator, and renewing our library resources.</p>	<p>Beyond your regular giving to the church, you may choose to give to one of our two funds focused on assisting those in financial need.</p> <p>Our <a href="#">Neighbor Benevolence Fund</a> assists neighbors who visit the church seeking help with transportation costs, utility bills, or rent. Our church staff coordinates with other local churches and non-profits to make sure all funds are handled responsibly.</p> <p>Our <a href="#">Covenant Partner Benevolence Fund</a> assists the members of our own church family who are undergoing a financial hardship. These funds have helped covenant partners (members) of the church with groceries, housing costs, medical bills, car repairs, and more.</p>

**A Special Opportunity for Those 70 1/2 Years Old and Older:** You can give any amount annually (up to a maximum of \$100,000) per year from your IRA directly to a qualified charity such as First Presbyterian Church without having to pay income taxes on the money. This popular gift option is commonly called a qualified charitable distribution or QCD for short. Many use a QCD to satisfy their annual pledges. Ask your IRA custodian to make a check payable to the Church. You can use the amount of your gift to satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution (RMD). You pay no income tax on the gift. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions.

# ...and for everything HE IS DOING AND WILL DO.

<p>We’ve just hired two women to serve as Nursery Co-Directors, Katie Eisen and Angel Hawkinson.</p> <p>Our Church Health Assessment results are in from 2024 and our elders have begun discerning how to flourish in the years ahead.</p> <p>Our church continues to be generous in response to God’s grace. Our giving has exceeded our expenses thus far in 2024.</p> <p>In 2025, we will extend our outreach of Celebrate Recovery, to the residents of Fountain Centers (Mayo).</p> <p>Our Decorating Team will be working to refurbish the library, making it a comfortable space for groups and individuals to use.</p>	<p>Steve Piper has begun the process of becoming a Commissioned Lay Pastor (2), which will include 2 years of seminary coursework.</p> <p>Our 2025 budget includes our first-ever investment in church planting and will help begin new communities of worship in the future.</p> <p>We will continue to expand our celebration on Pentecost this year, just as we did with several new worship elements this past spring.</p> <p>Our KidZone program is exploring new ways to connect with the unchurched families attending.</p> <p>As our student ministries expand, Steve has begun to raise up student leaders to take leadership roles on Wednesdays.</p>	<p>Our choir continues to adapt and will lead us in Lessons and Carols for the first time in over 30 years this Advent.</p> <p>Our nursery is set to be refreshed in 2025, renewing our commitment to the youngest among us.</p> <p>We have several large property improvements in the pipeline – including exterior drainage and brickwork.</p> <p>We’ll offer a Wednesday night service during Lent for those looking to draw nearer to Christ.</p> <p>Shifting from printed church news to an emailed newsletter has led to increased engagement and awareness in our church body.</p>
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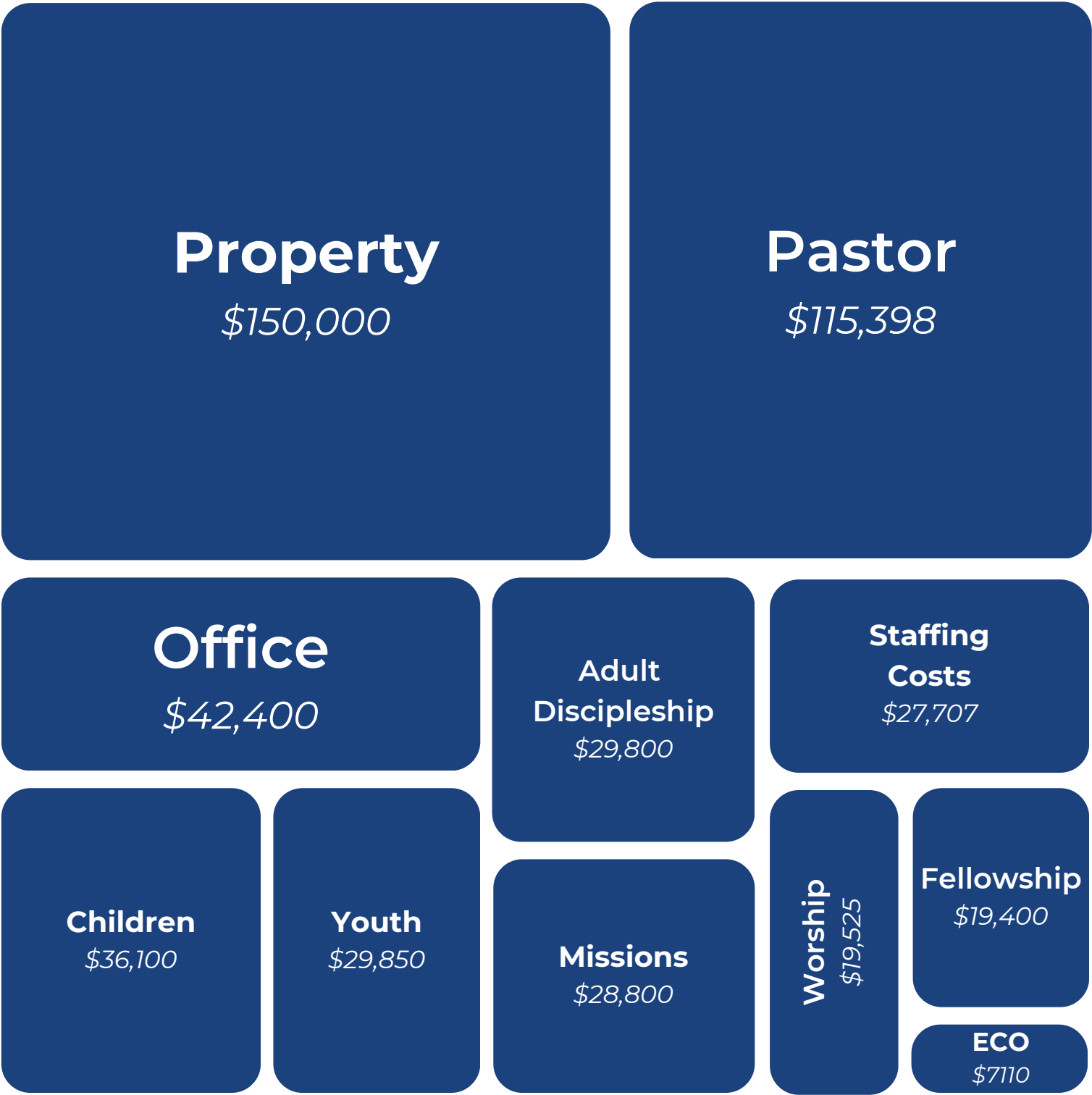
AN INVITATION TO SERVE

On the back of your stewardship response cards, we’re asking every covenant partner to please serve **in the church office** during the week, **in the nursery** on Sundays, **with KidZone children** or **middle/high school students** on Wednesdays. Thank you for partnering with us and for offering your time back to God.



# OUR 2025 CHURCH BUDGET

Our 2025 budget reflects a 4.9% increase (\$23,803) from our 2024 budget. These increases primarily cover cost-of-living increases for staff and the rising cost of building insurance. This budget is prayerfully set by our elders with the input of our committees and staff. You'll have a chance to ask any questions about our budget on November 10th after worship at our congregational meeting.

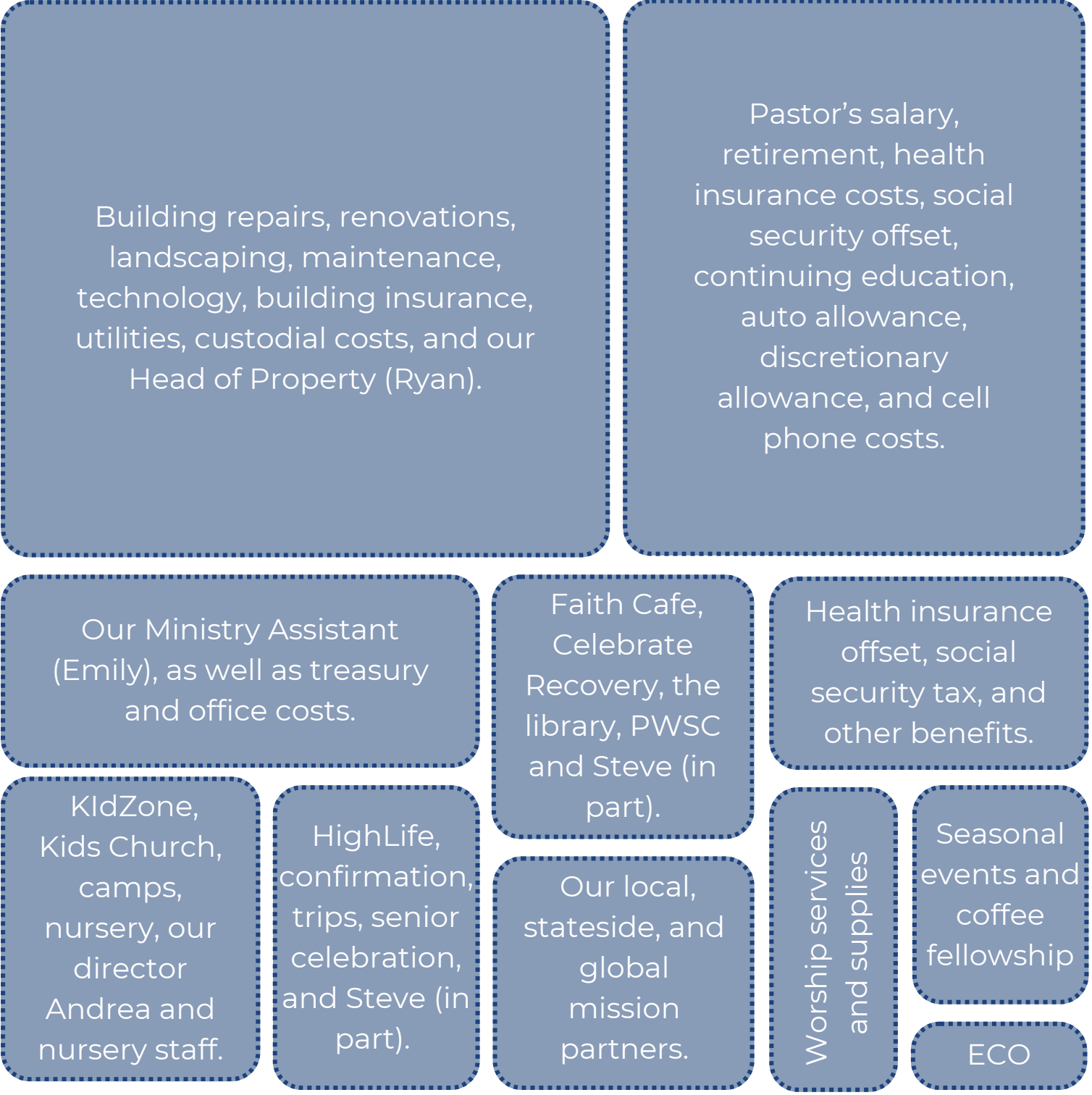


Please note, staff salaries have been divided into the areas of ministry where they focus their time. The only exception to this is the Pastor's compensation.



# A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR BUDGET

The graphic below helps to explain what is covered by each of these budget areas. The lists below are meant to serve as a comprehensive overview. Paper copies of our annual budget, in complete detail, will be available in the sanctuary beginning in November.



Regarding our costs labeled "ECO", these include the dues we pay to our denomination ECO, amounting to 1% of our annual budget, that cover ecclesiastic support and resources. The costs here also include sending Pastor and others to the annual denominational gathering.