



## December 2023 at a glance:

SUNDAYS	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education
SUNDAYS	11:00 a.m.	Worship — In-Person, YouTube, Facebook
TUESDAYS	3:00 p.m.	Staff Meeting (Zoom)
THURSDAYS	9 a.m.-12	Pastor Sarah and Cassidy In-Office Hours
Friday, December 1	6:30 p.m.	Youth Group in Mayflower Room
Saturday, December 2	10:00 a.m.	Hanging of the Greens
Sunday, December 3	12:15-12:45 p.m.	Family Room Playdate
Tuesday, December 5	All Day	Pastor Sarah's Day of Prayer
Wednesday, December 6	7:00 p.m.	Trustees Meeting
Thursday, December 7	5:00 p.m.	Spiritual Support Group (Zoom)
Friday, December 8	6:30 p.m.	NAMI Support Group in Parlor
Friday, December 8	6:30 p.m.	Youth Group in Mayflower Room
Friday, December 8	7:00 p.m.	Blue Christmas Service (In-Person)
Saturday, December 9	9:30 a.m.	Caring Crafters
Sunday, December 10	12:45 p.m.	Pitch-In Lunch and Congregational Meeting
Tuesday, December 12	3:30 p.m.	Worship and Faith Meeting
Thursday December 14	11:45 p.m.	Women's Lunch Bunch
Thursday December 14 and 28 <sup>th</sup>	1:00 p.m.	Men's Lunch
Sunday, December 17	11:00 a.m.	New Member Sunday!
Wednesday, December 20	7:00 p.m.	Church Council
Sunday, December 24	11 a.m. and 7 p.m.	Christmas Eve Service

Out of concern for community health, we request that you remain up to date with your vaccinations.  
Mask as needed. Please stay home if you feel unwell.

**Pastoral Care:** Pastor Sarah may be reached at (386) 478-9012 or [pastorsarah@fcindy.org](mailto:pastorsarah@fcindy.org).

**Office Hours:** Cassidy (church admin) and Pastor Sarah are in office Thursdays from 9am-12.

## A Message from Pastor Sarah

As we approach Advent and Christmas, I want to sincerely thank you each of you for your tangible and faithful service to First Congregational. Your willingness to be present and actively engage in our shared journey reflects the core of what it means to live out Christ's call. It's in your everyday actions, conversations and caring where we share God's love. Thank you for shining the light of love.

Each one of us, doing our part, makes a difference! On December 10th we will bless our pledge cards as part of supporting the mission and ministry of First Congregational. Your dedication to being present with us, whether through worship, supporting church activities, or participating in wider community partnerships, demonstrates a deep understanding of our collective calling. We are here to share God's light and love. Thank you!

Please consider making a special, additional end of year financial gift to the church to support our finances. Any amount of giving is greatly appreciated. Your steadfast presence and faithfulness in our communal life are invaluable, providing strength and continuity to our shared path. Thank you for being a vital part of this journey, consistently showing up and embodying the spirit of community and faith in action. Thank you for all of your love and support.

**Blessings,**  
Pastor Sarah



# Senior Councilor's Report

## Steve Coomer, Lead Councilor (October-January)

Here we are in the month of December, a time of peace, joy, and love. As I said last month, we have a great deal to be thankful for and now we need to be thankful for the joy, peace, and love that the Lord has given us. It seems to be how we handle that peace, joy, and love and recognize that it is a gift. Sometimes we can become so wrapped up in business or our work that we are only trying to win in the race. We also need to learn how to work with others in the most peaceful and loving way possible. I know sometimes I have a problem in only trying to prove my point that I forget to listen to others. I wonder how many of us share some of that same trait? We must learn how to listen to others, learn from them and move on. Sometimes proving our point of view is the most important thing to us, but listening to others and understanding their point of view can be a way that we can learn. We have a very accepting and open church and I wonder how many of us are able or willing to practice that acceptance and openness in our daily lives.

We have a very important Congregational Meeting complete with a pitch-in lunch after church on the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month. As a member of the team that has been working on a new Constitution and Bylaws to help move us forward and give us more flexibility within the governance of our church, I can say this has been an eight to nine month project and we have had several meetings listening to people's concerns and have incorporated many of them into the new document. Make sure, if possible, to be there and vote. We continue to strive to make our church a church we can all have pride in.

We need your continued support of FCC spiritually and monetarily. What can you do to help our church move forward? Is it being on a board that works with caring for others, activities which support the church's missions, maybe it's helping with the services themselves and activities, or possibly working in the financial area? We can use many more people getting involved in the church and its activities. As I said last month for me, the more involved I become the more fulfilled I become. Is it time for you to get involved? Do you need to be more fulfilled in your life? If so, maybe you should get more involved.

We are engaged in a Stewardship Campaign for this next year. We really need your help to make this successful and hope you will give to your church as generously as you can.

We, again, invite all of you who have been watching and participating in worship with us online to join us in person, if possible. The month of December is a great time to come to church and see the sanctuary in all of its splendor and beauty with the beautiful greens and music that goes with the birth of our Lord. Our doors are open to everyone. As we say, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at FCC." We need to make sure we are living that invitation when folks show up to worship with us for the first time and every time. If you see someone new or who hasn't been here for a while welcome them and for those who are new not only welcome them, but invite them to come back.

We all need to come together in order to move our church forward. We may not do everything to your liking, but we are trying to be as open and affirming

to everyone as possible. We welcome your suggestions and just maybe they will be incorporated, but we need to hear from you.  
May the peace, joy, and love of the season be with all of us not only in December but throughout the whole year.

–Steve Coomer, Lead Councilor, October-January

## Constitution and Bylaws Update

### Special Congregational Meeting to Vote on the Constitution & Bylaws Proposal

– As announced on November 10, there will be a special congregational meeting on Sunday, December 10. It will start with a pitch-in lunch following worship, and our meeting will begin at 12:45. The purpose of the meeting is to vote on a new Constitution and Bylaws for our church. Our current Constitution requires notice of proposed changes at least one month prior to the vote, and the changes require approval by a three-fourths vote of those present and voting. Per the Constitution, this will be the only business item discussed at this meeting.

During the past several years, our congregation has voted to suspend certain parts of the Constitution and Bylaws at our Annual Meetings. The "CBL Team" was created this year to update this document. It consisted of Wendy Baldwin, Steve Coomer, Steve Leatherman, and Pastor Sarah; Judy Fletcher also served on the team until July. This group met regularly since March to put together a proposed revision of the current Constitution and Bylaws. There were several opportunities in October and November to discuss this proposal with members. A lot of input was given, most of which has been incorporated into this final proposal.



We hope you can attend the congregational meeting. A summary of the changes, along with the final proposal, is available in the Narthex, or can be accessed in the weekly e-pistles. If you have any comments or questions about the proposal, please contact the CBL Team.

### **Because of you, our church changes lives -**

This is the theme for our Annual Campaign for 2024. While there are many ways to support the congregation, our annual campaign provides a chance to think about the choices we make with our money, time, and talent in support of First Congregational. Prayerfully consider all the ways that our church blesses your life and the lives of others, and **respond by turning in your pledge and Time & Talent cards by December 10.** You can:

- Put them in the offering plate during worship
- OR, mail them to the church.

Thank you to all who contribute in so many ways to our ministries!



# Are You Considering Membership at First Congregational UCC?

## NEW MEMBER SUNDAY IS DECEMBER 17, 2023



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BECOME A MEMBER,  
EMAIL PASTOR SARAH  
AT [PASTORSARAH@FCINDY.ORG](mailto:PASTORSARAH@FCINDY.ORG)



**New Member Sunday!** New member Sunday is December 17<sup>th</sup>.  
If you're considering becoming a member of First Congregational, reach out to  
Pastor Sarah to join us!

## A Message From Your Financial Secretary

If you are planning to make a year-end financial contribution to the church or a pre-payment for 2024, please be sure to get it in a week before the end of this month. Whether on-line, mailed in, or donated in church, there are time lags, such as bank closings for holidays, in getting donations posted and deposited that can affect getting such donations posted in 2023. This is also a good time to consider making a gift of any amount to the Capital Improvements Fund. **Thank you! Sue Chapman**

## Pastoral Congregation Relations Committee

PCRC for Pastor Sarah: Lianna Campos, Nancy Dickinson, Chuck Kiphart, Chair-  
Randy Walker ([aa28977rwalker@gmail.com](mailto:aa28977rwalker@gmail.com))

These are hybrid meetings (in-person in church library and on church zoom)

**Sunday, February 11; 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM**



## How to Join Zoom Meetings with FC Indy:

To join Zoom meetings, click this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9264494206?pwd=dmFWE5UXRBtk5pcHZlYlB0aEFVUT09>

Meeting ID: 926 449 4206 Password: 7171



**To Join by Phone call only:** 1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago), you will be prompted for the meeting ID 926 449 4206, followed by the # sign, and the Password 7171, followed by the # sign. You can call in and participant as a 'conference call'.

## WORSHIP & FAITH

**Hello from the Worship and Faith board!**

Join as we celebrate Advent! This year's theme is Hark! Heralding our Faith On **December 2**, we will be hanging the Greens beginning at 9am. The first Sunday, December 3, we herald hope.

**December 10** is peace.

**December 17** is joy and Music Sunday.

**December 24**, Christmas Eve, is love and the celebration of the birth of Christ. There will be a service at 11am and another one in the evening at 7pm. Please join us as you are able.

**Sean Baker, Abbie Bryant, Gini Coomer, Aurelia Holt-March, Cristy James, Alice Rutherford**

## Adult Ed

Advent is a time of expectation. We get ready and prepare. And then we wait. Still, it is a season of surprise, too. During December, Adult ed will reflect together on selected Advent devotions. This can be a time of wonder and sharing. Come and see! **Join us on Sunday mornings, 10:00 AM at church for a time of fellowship, learning, and discussion.**

## **Ways to Connect for Worship:**

**In-Person** at 7171 North Pennsylvania Street Indianapolis, IN 46240



**FACEBOOK**

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/FirstCongregationalUCCIndy/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/FirstCongregationalUCCIndy/posts/?ref=page_internal)



**YOUTUBE** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWV9wqAvPiUKSkEbjaV6Zpw>

- YouTube Live broadcasts at 10:45am with 15 minutes of gathering music. The service begins at 11am.

## OUTREACH & SERVICE

**Mental Health Team**

**Outreach and Service Board**

The Outreach and Service Board plan several opportunities for service and giving in December. We will have our traditional mitten tree. Beginning November 26th, contribute mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, and socks (childs and adult) which will be delivered to Exodus Refugee. We have refugee families coming to our community who have never experienced our Indiana Winters. Our giving tree will also be up in the parlor. Gift cards from big box stores for the amount of \$25.00 will be accepted beginning November 26th. The gift cards will be sent to Family Promise and Indiana Youth Group to provide additional Christmas funds for those families and individuals who may have very limited funds. We have to begin

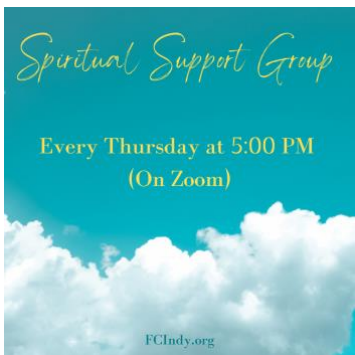
before Advent due to our limitations of when these groups need to distribute these gifts. Boxes will be available in the narthex until the tree goes up. Gift cards can be put in the offering plate until the tree appears and will be added to the tree at that time.

The last of our UCC 5 for 5 offerings will be December 17th. This offering in the UCC Christmas Fund. These funds supports our retired clergy and their widows. Many of our clergy have served small parishes and have limited or no pensions other than their social security. This fund offers of cash for Christmas or cash gifts to cover emergencies like major damage to home in storms, or medical emergencies.

**Thank you for all of generous donations of money, goods, and time to our wider community.**

**WISE Mental Health Team Questions?** Contact Larry Eckel at [lspeckel@comcast.net](mailto:lspeckel@comcast.net).

The WISE Mental Health Team is seeking input from the congregation's youth and their families ( middle school age through high school) about starting a youth group in which there would be opportunities to connect with other youth, have fun together, do service projects and learn more about faith. Please contact Larry Eckel, 317-445-9351 [lspeckel@comcast.net](mailto:lspeckel@comcast.net) or Sandy Wood 317-225-6206 [csjlwood@att.net](mailto:csjlwood@att.net) if interested. Thanks!



**Need a Lift in Your Spirit? Join us the first Thursday of each month, this month: December 7<sup>th</sup>, for Spiritual Support Group for Mental Health at 5:00-6:00PM [on Zoom](#)**

This gathering is open to everyone and is an informal time to check-in about how you are doing, get emotional support from church family, and offer prayer for one another as we navigate nurturing positive mental health in these difficult days. We are an open group with confidentiality guidelines. Sessions are on Zoom.

**JUST PEACE COVENANT GIVING:** The Outreach and Service Board is encouraging members to financially support community organizations that align with our churches' just peace covenant.

**PEACE LEARNING CENTER (PLC):** The PLC was created in 1997 by a team of people that included Tim Nation, the PLC's current Executive Director, to reduce violence and increase kindness in our community. It is housed at Eagle Creek Park and has reached more than 250,000 people locally and internationally. It all started with a few people concerned about neighborhood and family violence in Indianapolis. The PLC works directly with schools, community nonprofits, businesses, juvenile correctional facilities, and faith groups to facilitate peace education. The PLC's programs are designed to teach safe and simple ways to manage anger, solve problems, and develop appreciation for differing perspectives. They believe everyone can be a peacemaker. The PLC's mission is to facilitate community learning that acts as a catalyst for peace, equity, and justice and its vision is a healed world where strong and caring communities strive together to fully live in peace.

FCC member Worth Hartman, a founding board member of the PLC, was on had to celebrate the PLC's 25th anniversary. Founder and director Tim Nation spoke at that occasion and explained the Peace Learning Center's advocacy for restorative disciplinary actions in schools is built on "love and respect" rather than "fear and intimidation." "What we've been trying to do is work directly with young people to teach them how to have healthy relationships. And how to deal with conflicts and differences,"

Learn more about the Peace Learning Center at: [peacelearningcenter.org](https://peacelearningcenter.org)

**FAITH IN INDIANA:** Since 2021 our Just Peace commitment has focused on supporting Faith in Indiana. Faith in Indiana (FI) is a vehicle for congregations, clergy, and people of faith to act collectively for racial and economic justice in Indiana. FI believes every Indiana resident deserves to live in a safe, healthy, and supportive community and that no one should be left out. We are a part of FI's Indy Metro Congregational Coalition and have a dedicated organizer, Bailey Schwartz. As a church we have supported FI in the following ways:

- We sponsored a Research Action Meeting with a state senator. 34 people participated in the meeting as we introduced FI's principles and agenda and presented our concerns on the issues of gun violence, COVID relief and ID for immigrants.
- Members participated in a meeting with Indianapolis officials urging Indianapolis to create a municipal ID for undocumented residents.
- FCC representatives attended FI's "Building the Base/Faith Voices Campaign"
- We hosted four house meetings where participants were invited to share personal stories of someone who is hurting in your life, how does this relate to your own faith and values and how current government policies affect people's suffering. 24 distinct individuals attended the various meetings.
- Made phone calls urging citizen's to vote
- Members attended "A Rally for Care" asking legislators to fully fund SB #1 creating a system of mental health crisis response with a phone number to call, a mobile response team to respond and a crisis stabilization facility to provide ongoing care. Pastor Sarah was a featured speaker. Through FI's efforts SB #1 was passed with a historic \$150 million commitment to crisis mental health services.
- Attended "Listening Campaign" to discern 2024's organizing campaigns on the issues most important to the Indy Metro Congregational Coalition

Learn more about Faith in Indiana at [faithinindiana.org](https://faithinindiana.org)

As you consider your financial stewardship this holiday season consider supporting these excellent peace and justice organizations, the Peace Learning Center and Faith in Indiana. The other Just Peace Covenant organizations we support are Exodus Refugee Immigration and Family Promise.



# **CARE & CONNECTIONS BOARD**

**Wendy Baldwin, Chair**

## **Happy Birthday in December!**

Sally Coombs

Richard Kent

Steve Coomer

Susan Kent

If you're having a birthday this month, and you are not on this list, please contact Wendy Baldwin, so we can add you to our master list for the future!

## **Greeting Cards in the Narthex**

If you are worshipping in-person on Sundays, please be sure to stop by the "card station" to sign that week's cards. These cards are for birthdays or to let someone know that we are thinking of them, and are part of our ministry to extend love within our church family.

## **Transportation Help**

Several in our church family need rides to church on Sunday. A few of our members have been providing transportation, but we could use more, especially to cover when people are out of town. Please contact Wendy Baldwin, [wbaldwinindy@gmail.com](mailto:wbaldwinindy@gmail.com), if you would be willing to assist.

# **TRUSTEES**

## **Fundraising and Other Updates from your Building Manager**

Thank you to those who have contributed to our Capital Improvements campaign! In the past months, about \$35,000 was raised to supplement existing funding. This allowed us to make some much-needed repairs to our building and grounds. These gifts came in all sizes, but it all adds up; we could not have done the work we did without these donations. Your continued support is greatly appreciated, since there is more work to do! Gifts to "Capital Improvements" help us to provide a safe and comfortable setting for our worship and ministries. Thank you!

Here is a summary of projects that have been completed in the last few months:

- The new boiler system is now up and running. This cost \$138,000.
- Work on the steeple has been completed, for now. There was a lot of wood rot, and new copper flashing was installed. This cost over \$15,000. Additional wood rot was identified, and we have decided to hold off on this work until June 2024; it will also cost about \$15,000.
- The parking lot and driveway were crack sealed, sealed, and "striped" in October, at a cost of \$9800. This work protects the \$35,000 investment we made in 2015 when it was fully repaved.

Another concern is the water that periodically comes in through the Boiler Room during heavy downpours. Due to the slope of the floor, the water then runs into the hallway, and needs to be mopped up. We discovered that there is a foundation problem, and have contracted with Indiana Foundation Solutions to do the repair work in January, by adding piers, installing a basement 'gutter', new drain, and new sump pump in the boiler room. This will cost \$15,000, but should secure our building foundation for many years to come.

The next project that we would like to do – pending funding – is to replace and improve the accessibility of the “patio door”, used as our main entrance. We also have a quote to improve the Wifi accessibility throughout the building, which will cost about \$8000.

Thank you again for contributions of any size - Together we can secure and improve the building which houses our many wonderful ministries!

**–Wendy Baldwin, Building Manager**  
**Questions or comments for Trustees**, contact current Chair, Steve Coomer, 317-255-9328, [s.coomer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:s.coomer@sbcglobal.net)

## Financial Update

### When We Give, We Reach Out With Helping Hands

Here are the financial results through October 31, 2023.

#### 1. Current Year Actual vs Budget Summary 1/1/2023 through 10/31/2023 Using 2023 Budget

Category	1/1/2023 Actual	- Budget	10/31/2023 Difference
INCOME	238,717	207,549	31,167
M. Unrestricted Contributions	238,717	207,549	31,167
M.01 Pledged Offerings	118,926	103,975	14,951
M.02 UnPledged Offerings	35,649	47,433	-11,784
M.03 Rollover Prior Year Surplus_De...	-13,409	-13,409	0
M.04 Foundation - Endowment Fund...	28,000	24,000	4,000
M.05 Foundation - Minister Fund Draw	64,000	40,000	24,000
M.06 Foundation - Trad. Music Fund ...	1,000	1,000	0
M.08 Other Transfers from Restr Accts	4,550	4,550	-0
EXPENSES	237,160	229,269	-7,891
A. Pastoral Leadership	108,739	109,697	958
B. Worship & Faith	27,772	26,782	-990
C. Care & Connections	177	250	73
E. Outreach & Service	11,221	13,086	1,865
F. Trustees	50	80	30
G. Administration & Operations	30,499	29,367	-1,132
H. House & Grounds	52,601	43,955	-8,646
I. Miscellaneous	6,101	6,053	-48
Net Difference:	1,557	-21,720	23,277

#### Highlights:

- **Income** of \$238,700 was \$31,200 above budget, due primarily to timing of Foundation draws. Excluding those, income was still better than budget, but only by \$3,200.
- **Expenses** of \$237,200 were \$7,900 over budget due to House & Grounds (\$8,600 - bldg. maintenance and nat. gas), Admin (\$1,100 - IT and copying), and Worship and Faith (\$1,000 - vocalists, organ and piano maintenance, supply pastors).
- **Cash at October 31** was \$52,700.
- **Looking ahead: Cash will be tight for the end of 2023.** We continue to run a large operating deficit, with \$238,700 of expenses versus \$154,600 of “new money” through October. We are very fortunate to be able to close this gap with funds from the FCC Foundation, but we cannot continue to draw from the Foundation at the current pace indefinitely. And we still have some large cash outlays before year-end, including the final boiler

payment (\$27,500), paving (\$9,800), and mission giving (+\$3,000) that will strain our year-end cash balances. All year-end gifts will be greatly appreciated!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

**Jim Lootens, Treasurer**, [lootens.jb@gmail.com](mailto:lootens.jb@gmail.com)

**Note:** Cash donations of \$1.00 or less are counted as donations to the current Covenant Outreach. Cash of \$5.00 or more should be put in pew envelopes with a designation of Pledge/Contribution, Covenant Outreach, or the specific charity. Unless designated, cash over \$5.00 will go to the church budget.

### **A Note on our Current Covenant Outreach Giving**

Our current Covenant Outreach focus is related to our Just Peace Covenant, and the recipients are Exodus Refugee, Peace Learning Center, Family Promise, and Faith in Indiana.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Women's Lunch Bunch:** All women of the church are invited to get together once a month for lunch, friendship, and fellowship. However, due to the holidays we will have a combined Nov. -Dec. gathering on **Thursday, Dec. 14 at 11:45 a.m.** For any questions or more information please contact Sue Chapman at 317-259-1806 or [carolsuech59@gmail.com](mailto:carolsuech59@gmail.com)."

**Calendars & Notepads for Exodus:** Once again we will be collecting wall calendars for Exodus Refugee to give out to new arrivals. Please put your calendars in the labelled box in the narthex. Those with scenery or animals are preferred. We are also collecting notepads. Please **do not** donate any with your name and address. **Thank you, Sue Chapman**

**From the Indiana-Kentucky Conference:** As a Just Peace Conference, the IKC is committed to finding ways to respond to the crisis in the Middle East. To this end, we have developed **a conference-wide event to be held at the Indiana-Kentucky Conference office from 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM on December 12th.** **This Indiana-Kentucky Conference Palestine Israel Network Strategy and Response Session** on December 12th will feature Dr. Michael Spath from **Indiana Center For Middle East Peace** and conversation among our local church leaders, both lay and clergy. Dr. Michael Spath is the Founder and Executive Director of *Indiana Center for Middle East Peace* (ICMEP) based in Fort Wayne, IN. He holds a PhD in Historical Theology, with an emphasis in Islam and Muslim-Christian Relations, and a Doctor of Ministry degree in New Testament.

**Calling all caring crafters!** Please join us for creativity and companionship with your favorite knitting, crocheting, or other crafting project. **Please join us on December 9th at 9:30 a.m. in the parlor.** From time-to-time, we will work on projects together. Are you interested in learning to knit or crochet? We would be happy to teach you! If you have questions or suggestions, please let Susan Eckel know -- 317-445-6558 or [susan.eckel317@gmail.com](mailto:susan.eckel317@gmail.com).

**The Book Circle** will meet next in **January** (skipping December) by zoom. We are reading the book "The Kitchen Front" by Jennifer Ryan. This 2021 historical fiction novel, based on the World War II BBC radio program of the same name, incorporates period-authentic recipes and food trivia, including the use of war rationing, while telling fictional stories of four women who enter the contest. We will discuss the first 2 parts at our January meeting. All are

welcome! We will meet on the church zoom meeting on Wednesday, January 17 from 1:30 - 3. If you have any questions, please let me know - Karen Walker 317-319-8950, [karen.e.d.walker@gmail.com](mailto:karen.e.d.walker@gmail.com).

**Acts of Kindness Fund** - Members can make requests for use of this fund to assist themselves or others in our church family who might not ask for help. These gifts can help support financial needs, as well as help with ride-share transportation, shovel or plow snow, pay an unexpected expense, etc. Honoring the dignity of the recipient, all requests for use of this fund will be confidential, and privacy will be respected.