

FRIEDENSCHURCH

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



CHURCH — ON — MISSION



Dear Friedens Family,

Have you ever wondered how to tell if a church is successful? In business, success is measured by profit. In sports, success is measured by stats and wins. In education, success is measured by grades and test scores. Numerical measurements like these are easy to identify, which is why churches tend to measure success by counting people and dollars. But in a church, numbers don't necessarily indicate whether we are successful in fulfilling the mission Jesus has called us to. If we want to understand whether Friedens is truly faithful and effective, we must examine the impact of the church's ministry.

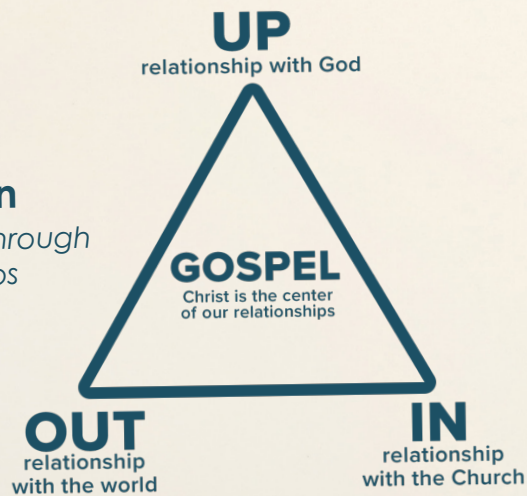
"Impact" is why I am encouraged by Friedens' ministry in 2023. God is making a major disciple-making impact in people's lives – right in our midst! As you read this annual report, I encourage you to pay particular attention to the impact of God's work in and through Friedens. Numbers still matter, but they are a means to an end, and the goal is helping people grow as followers of Jesus.

It's a joy to be on this journey together. Being the "Friedens Family" means we all have a vital role in what is happening in and through Friedens. I pray that as you read this report, you will feel a sense of ownership and joy in God's work in our midst!

For His glory,
Brandon Lemons
Senior Pastor

Friedens' Mission

Making disciples of Jesus through
UP-IN-OUT relationships



I grew up in a house that believed in God, but I didn't truly know God or take my faith seriously. Before I had found my place in a relationship with God, I struggled with anger and to feel loved. In 2018 a friend brought me to youth group at Friedens, and I started to learn more about God. However, I still wasn't taking my faith seriously. The biggest turning point was in 2022, when I went to summer camp at The Woods, and everything changed. For the first time in my life I felt so loved and accepted. It was a sense of peace I had never before had, and on July 1, 2022, I gave my life to Christ. I may not have support in my faith from some of my closest family, but the church community around me has helped me grow so much in my faith. I now want to share about Jesus with others. I've been doing this though recording and sharing high schoolers' testimonies on [Friedens'] Midweek Instagram page and inviting new people to come with me to youth group and worship services. As Christians we are called upon to guide others to him: 'Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God (Romans 15:7). -**Jessica Robertson**



I have been attending Friedens Church consistently for the last 18-24 months. I now have a family and relationships built on the solid foundation of Jesus. The congregation and leadership welcomed and embraced me and my son Colby. We have been surrounded by love and support while I navigated difficult transitions, including the loss of a marriage and many family relationships. Playing with the Worship Team, leading students at Midweek, and studying with a discipleship group have provided a platform to grow spiritually and to publicly acknowledge Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Most importantly, I have received bi-weekly counsel from Pastor Greg that has empowered the most transformative time of my life. This one-on-one spiritual counsel has been invaluable to maintaining, growing, and sharing my walk with the Lord, staying balanced amid challenges, and being a Christ-focused father. -**Chris Moravec**



2023 Sermon Series



Delighting in God's Word studied three psalms that celebrate the value of joyfully getting Scripture into our lives.



Based on Jesus' call in Luke 9:23, **Not a Fan** challenged us to grow as fully-devoted followers of Jesus. This series was supplemented by Not a Fan

small groups that featured a dramatic story of transformation from fan to follower. Over 70 adults and 30 students participated!

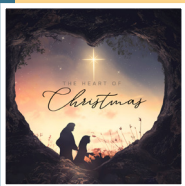


Graves Into Gardens highlighted that God can turn our sadness, shame, and defeat into victory, joy, and glory.



All around us, there is doubt and confusion about church. **Church: An Origin Story** invested seven months into walking through Acts to help

us understand God's glorious intent for the church.



The Heart of Christmas offered a theology of the incarnation through the lens of Matthew 11:28-30.



Chris Moravec



Alex Sielaff



Luke Toeller



Tess Waege



Brody Watry

For the first time in Friedens' history, we had **believer's baptisms** in the sanctuary during services.

In 2023, we continued our focus on intentionally **studying the Bible** for ourselves.



"Digging into Scripture" has been a wonderful class for me this past year. I enjoyed reading Bible passages section by section – taking time to identify, reflect, and discuss with others what we had read. I am thankful that I have been able to learn techniques for analyzing and enjoying Scripture with such a thoughtful group of congregants. Because I took the class with my husband, we have had regular conversations that enriched our spiritual relationship with each other. I can't wait to continue developing this useful and lifelong skill of reading through Scripture! -Kim Olsen

In April, a man from out-of-state visited Friedens; he has extensive experience as a church leader but was deeply hurt by church, which damaged his faith and drove him from church. After his visit, he wrote: "Dear Brandon et al, Many thanks for your warm welcome today. This visit served to restore an important part of my gradually reconnecting faith. I am eternally grateful and hope to be able to worship with you again at some point." He wrote again in December to express his gratitude for Friedens' ministry, saying, "I am with you online just about every Sunday." We never know when or how God is going to impact someone's life through Friedens' ministry!



Worship Services provided a valuable way to gather with others in worshipping God, learning, and being inspired to follow Jesus. Each week, the **Worship Team** led us in singing praises to God, and the **children's message** engaged young people (and adults) with the sermon's topic. Memorable moments from 2023 include: **Student Sunday**, when middle and high schoolers led almost every part of the service, including ushering &



food; a fantastic **Christmas drama** called "The Innkeeper's Dilemma;" testimonies; and missionaries giving updates on their ministries. In addition, the **Good Friday Experience** moved participants through 7 stations that followed Jesus from the Garden to the Grave.



MISSION: IN

Our relationships within the church



Children's & Student Ministries
Sunday School classes began at age 3. The **4K-8th grade** classes continued the multi-year cycle of walking through the Bible using Gospel Story curriculum. In this age range, 40 children attended at least two-thirds of the Sunday school classes! Their commitment is building a great foundation for their faith! The **High School** class studied Acts & Romans and memorized passages from Romans that help them internalize and articulate the gospel.

Motion Midweek Ministry grew by 18% to an average weekly attendance of 33 students. In January, 31 students attended the **Districts Youth Conference**.



Being a part of a church where children are welcomed and loved is of utmost importance for our family. We have that here at Friedens. Our leaders, teachers, and helpers are all fantastic, and they make learning about Jesus so much fun! Our kids absolutely love being a part of Sunday School and iGnite. They are learning how to pray, learning about the Bible, and growing in their own faith in Jesus. Many times, they'll even surprise us with the things they can recall from a Sunday school lesson. -Gentry & Kyle Tetschlag



Connection Activities

140 people attended Friedens Night at Skateland! Friedens' **Men's Softball Team** won first place in the regular season but faded in the playoffs. We hosted a **church picnic** & cornhole tournament. We had our first **Pickleball, Pool, and Pizza Party!** We hosted four **Movie & Game Nights**, including one outdoors with a bonfire. We continued enjoying **food in Fellowship Hall** after every worship service. People connected at life-stage-based **potlucks**, the **Easter Breakfast, Thanksgiving Praise & Pie**, and the **caroling potluck**.

Adult Ministries
Sunday Adult Classes equipped participants with biblical teaching, such as the book of Revelation, and practical skills, such as studying Scripture and handling conflict.

Adult Small Groups continue to play a key role in building disciple-making relationships at Friedens. Eight groups met during 2023 to study the Bible, pray, and share life together.

Men's Ministry hosted fundraisers, breakfasts, and a No Regrets conference site at Friedens.

We launched a **young adults ministry** for 18-25 year-olds.

We held a **Financial Peace University** course to help people grow in healthy financial practices.

"In the fall of 2023 I felt pulled to join a small group for connection. The Thursday morning mom's group has offered me support that I didn't realize I had been lacking. At this time in my life, I spend a lot of time supporting others, and it has been refreshing to take time to refill my bucket." -Julie Wilson



MISSION: OUT



Our relationships with our community

A Story of Serving

One of Friedens' priorities is equipping the church family to be missionaries in our spheres of influence. Through our **Local Needs** ministry, Friedens helps individuals in practical ways, including helping people in crisis pay for gas, food, and utility bills. But there are countless under-the-radar ways that individuals from Friedens are making an impact in the community. One example is when Liz Luther put out an urgent request for help moving out of her duplex. **More than a dozen people from Friedens showed up within an hour!**



Here is an encouraging note from **Tyler Holthaus** of what he experienced while helping: While helping Liz Luther move out of her duplex and talking with the landlord/owner of the property, the owner mentioned many times over an hour-long span how impressed and taken aback she was by how compassionate and helpful the Friedens congregation is. She was amazed by the selflessness and quickness of people giving up their time or changing what they were doing in order to come help a member of their church. This woman has been a life-long resident of Port Washington and said she had never seen such a thing. I mentioned that **when we say "the Friedens Family," we mean it** and it's just not a tag line; she said, "I guess not!" She wanted to go back to her church and see if they could set up something similar to how we at Friedens go about things like this. She kept making remarks throughout my time there about how impressed she is with our church.

Children's & Student Ministries

Of the 48 children who attended **iGnite** in the 2022-23 ministry year, 26 were not part of Friedens! Even more impressive is that 63% of iGnite's newcomers became regular attenders!

Students continue to love inviting friends to **Midweek!** 18 new students attended in 2023, 10 of whom came back regularly. Midweek also serves as a fruitful pathway for connecting students and their families with the broader church.



Our family began attending Friedens in August of 2023 and jumped right in! Dan and I became official members this fall and it's been wonderful. Our family already knew several Friedens families, so when we were looking for a church to join, it was easy to decide to try out Friedens. Since we've been attending, mine and Dan's personal relationships to Jesus have grown exponentially; more importantly, so have our children's. Having a safe and comfortable environment for our kids to make friends and learn about and form their own relationships with Jesus is extremely important to us, and we've found that in Friedens. Joining Friedens has been a very welcoming experience for our family, and we're excited for what's to come!"
-Julie Simniok



In September, we held our second **Neighborhood Party**. We rented a bounce house, set up games and the Kidja Warrior Course, painted faces, made balloon animals, hosted a cornhole tournament, and served free food – all in the church's parking lot! About 160 people attended – half of whom were from outside the church!



What Else Happened?

Fifty-two people from Friedens went **Christmas caroling**, bringing the joy of Christmas to residents and staff at five care facilities around Port Washington! Friedens ran two **GriefShare** groups; of the 9 participants, 7 were from outside the church! **The 40 Days of Prayer** mobilized the Friedens Family to pray for the salvation of hundreds of people in our spheres of influence.

MISSION: OUT

Our partnerships in the world



Children's Ministries raised money to buy 3 goats, 200 chicks, and one beehive kit for families in poverty through **The Heifer Project**.

Friedens' Women's Ministry created 48 "blessing bags" for **Portlight Homeless Shelter** and helped **Hidden Treasure Resale Shop** prepare for Christmas.

Friedens' staff and several Board members participated in a Dementia Friendly Business Training led by the **Aging & Disability Resource Center**; this was the first step of equipping Friedens to better minister to those impacted by dementia in the church and community.

Friedens hosted six **blood drives** in 2023, collecting 82 units of blood. These donations touch the lives of over 246 patients in local Wisconsin hospitals!

Friedens continued to be a collection site for the **Port Washington Food Pantry**. In addition to food and toiletries, we collected 54 cold-weather items in December.



Blessing Bags



In 2023, we continued our partnership with **Global Fingerprints** (the EFCA's child sponsorship ministry). We are partnering with three sites in Nagpur, India, which serve around 400 children and their families. The sites provide tutoring, meals, medical care, and Bible teaching. There have been numerous baptisms, a church planted, and multiple churches growing because of the impact of the Global Fingerprints sites.



One-Time Missions Gifts in 2023

- \$2500 for earthquake relief in Turkey
- \$2500 for crisis response toward greatest need
- \$2500 for Nagpur site: church planting & pastor training
- \$2000 for Middle East ministry center
- \$1000 for Singhs' mission trip to Trinidad
- \$500 for Emily Lewis office needs

Missions Partnerships

In 2023, Friedens supported 11 missionaries. These partnerships continued emphasizing key target areas including **unreached people groups**, **crisis response**, **orphan care/prevention**, **outreach in Milwaukee**, and **ministry to Muslims**. Our investment in these missionaries means the impact of Friedens' ministry is global!

- **Jason & Christa E., evangelism, foster ministry, and medical ministry in East Asia**
- **Dan & Deb Kensel, church planting in Thailand**
- **Mark & Denise Lewis, leading Crisis Response ministry**
- **Emily Lewis, Communications Director of GlobalFingerprints**
- **God's Kidz in the Neighborhood, a ministry in inner-city Milwaukee**
- **Isaac & Hanna C. and Brian & Dana P., church planting in Turkey***
- **Muammer & Nurgul K., pastoring in Turkey***
- **Adam & Libby T., leading a team of missionaries in Middle East/North Africa***
- **Jerry & Kathy Singh, evangelism in Wyoming & beyond**
- **Jon & Lauren Emanuelson, training pastors in South Africa**

*Turkey and areas of the Middle East are also considered unreached people groups.

Sharing Life Together

Birth: Julianna Rose to Joe & Amanda Blaha (5/24)

Adoption: Hazel Joy Christian, by Trevor & Meghan Christian (11/11)

Wedding: David & Geri (Fromm) Nothem (6/10)

Dedications: Hannah & Ryan Wilde dedicated Jax Vieira & Waylon Wilde, Brennan & Alex Sielaff dedicated Otto, Matt & Sydney Hampson dedicated Walker, Trevor & Meghan Christian dedicated Hazel

New Members: Chris Moravec, David Nothem, Brennan & Alex Sielaff, Dan & Julie Simniok, Hava Zodrow

Deaths: Dave Sather (3/23), Bill Moritz (6/12), Maxine Schwinn (10/10), Diane Schneider (11/8)



What else happened in 2023?

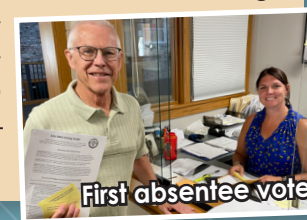
Friedens' facilities are an important resource in our ministry. In 2023, extensive repair work was done on the brick of the church's east side. The north parking lot was resurfaced. CG Schmidt replaced the west exterior stairs for free since the concrete was failing prematurely. The DNR finally completed its case for the remediation of contaminated soil that was discovered during the 2019 building project. And a children's check-in center was installed on the church's lower level.



In May, **Lou Myers** began working four hours per week as Friedens' Custodial Assistant. Lou has Down Syndrome and is assisted by her Job Coach, Rhaea Morgan. **Dane Barber** retired from his role as Maintenance Technician.



In February, Friedens' members approved a **bylaws revision** to allow absentee voting, which allows members who are homebound or traveling to participate in congregational votes.



Church Leadership

Leadership Board

Kurt Benkley (1st term ends January 2025)
Josh Carl (2nd term ends January 2025)
Board Chair
Paul Grady (1st term ends January 2024)
Jesse Kopp (1st term ends January 2025)
Rose Morgan (1st term ends January 2024)
Meghan Watry-Christian (2nd term ends January 2024), *Vice-Chair*

Church Treasurer: Kyle Tetschlag

Friedens Staff

Brandon Lemons, *Senior Pastor*
Greg Masslich, *Pastor of Adult Discipleship*
Matt Hampson, *Pastor of Students & Young Adults*
Charissa Toeller, *Worship & Communications Director*
Shelly Lemons, *Children's Ministry Director*
Heidi Schuldt, *Administrative Assistant*
Eileen Ellefson, *Custodian*
Lou Myers, *Custodial Assistant*

In 2023, Friedens officially concluded most of its **Forever Families** ministry. Launched in 2010, Forever Families raised and distributed \$150,000 to help fund the adoption of more than 35 children, along with supporting foster families and global orphan care. Forever Families inspired people to foster and adopt children, along with providing much-needed encouragement for adoptive and foster parents. Adoption support groups continue, as does the legacy of Forever Families' impact on families throughout southeastern Wisconsin.



2023 Church Finances

2022-2023 Fiscal Year

August 2022-July 2023

Income	\$485,284*
General Giving	\$448,473
Miscellaneous Income	\$36,811
Expenses	\$499,620
Staff Salaries & Benefits	\$243,451
49%**	
Debt Service	\$80,400
16%	
Missions/Outreach	\$58,582
12%	
Facilities	\$38,935
8%	
Administrative/General	\$24,504
5%	
Utilities	\$23,767
5%	
Capital Reserves	\$12,000
2%	
Worship & Hospitality Ministries	\$9,131
2%	
Age-Based Ministries	\$7,726
1.5%	
Leadership Development	\$1,124
0.2%	

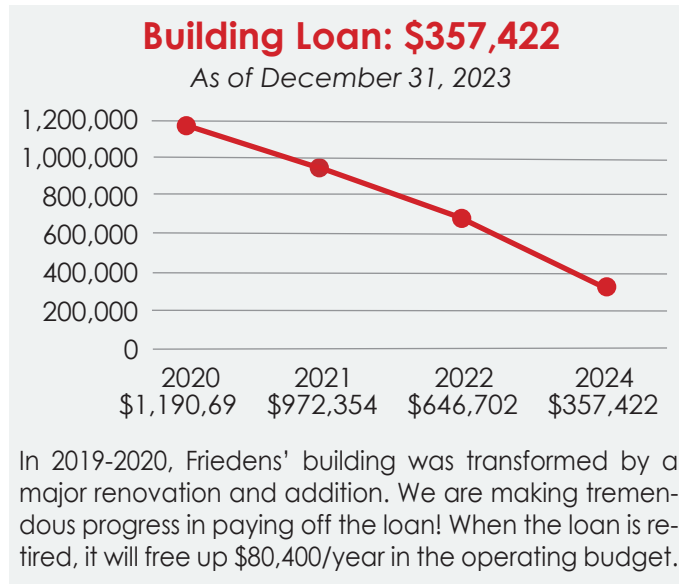
*This is general income for operating expenses. This does not include money given toward the building loan and memorial gifts.

**Percentages based on total expenses for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year. Due to rounding, percentages do not add up to 100%.

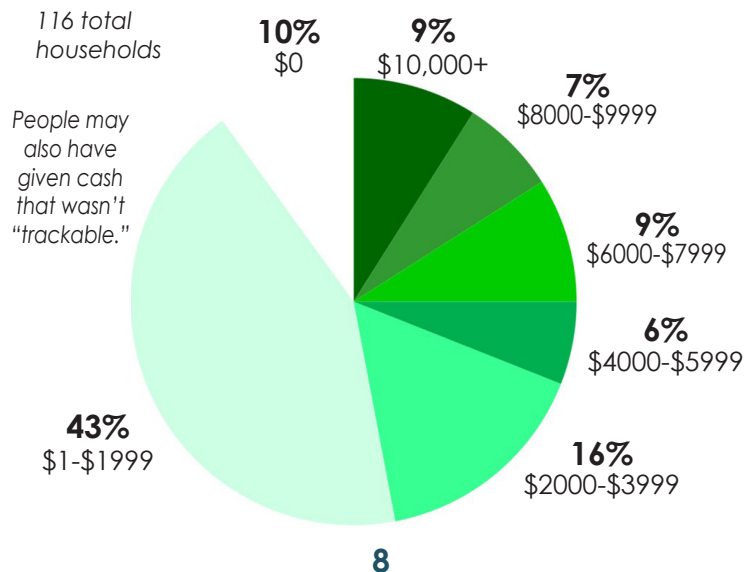
Cash & Investments: \$340,394

As of December 31, 2023

Of the total Cash & Investments, \$69,526 is designated for specific purposes such as Missions and Capital Reserves.



2023 Giving Ranges of Friedens' Attendees



Key Financial Trends

CONGREGATIONAL GIVING

Contributions by the church family increased 6.9% from the prior fiscal year. The 2022-2023 fiscal year marked the highest-ever level of congregational giving at Friedens!

EXPENSES

Spending tracked very close to the budgeted amount (0.8% over budget). However, this represented an 8% increase in expenses from the previous fiscal year. The increase was due to inflation in most line items and maintenance of Friedens' building (including doubling the amount we set aside in capital reserves).

MISSIONS GIVING

Isn't it wonderful that Friedens' third highest "expense" was investing in ministry beyond the church walls?!

GIVING RANGES

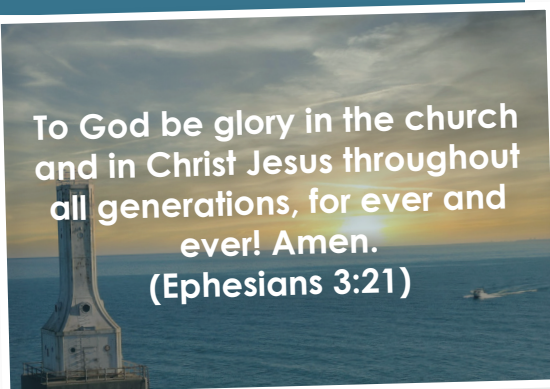
The percentage of contributors in each range remained similar from 2022. The total number of households dropped by 5%, but there was a 4% increase in contributors in the \$4000+ range.

We thank God for you! Thank you to everyone who invested time, energy, and prayer into Friedens' ministry. From mowing the yard to tracking the budget, from serving food to caring for babies, from playing music to corresponding with missionaries, and much more, Friedens couldn't do what we do without you!

Thank you to everyone who invested relationally in others' spiritual growth! Whether through official ministries like classes and small groups, or discipling relationships, or informal yet intentional interactions, you are making an eternal difference in people's lives!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the weekly offering at Friedens, for this is how the church's ministries and operating expenses are funded. Also, thank you to everyone who so generously contributed to paying down Friedens' building loan.

We couldn't do what we do without you!



A Prayer for 2024

A note from Pastor Brandon: In 1 Corinthians 3:6, the apostle Paul reminds us that we can plant and water spiritual seeds, but only God makes them grow. Therefore, as we look ahead at 2024, it is important to not merely plan and dream and work, but to seek God's guidance and power. Therefore, I will follow Paul's example of writing a prayer. Please join me in praying these themes for Friedens in 2024.

Our Father, You are the King of all, and You have appointed Jesus as Chief Shepherd over Your people. He cares far more than we ever could for His church and His mission. Therefore, we surrender Friedens into Your hands.

We pray that in 2024, You will draw the Friedens Family deeper in following Jesus. We confess that we are easily distracted from You by busyness and apathy, by confusion and anxiety, by pride, and at times by temptations that are blatantly sinful. Please forgive our waywardness and transform us to enjoy and glorify You more. We also ask that You fill us with delight in knowing and applying Your Word.

Lord Jesus, You call us to function as one body, united around the Gospel. Please empower us by Your Spirit to relate to one another with humility, gentleness, patience, and love. Keep us faithful in meeting together and building one another up – from the youngest children to the oldest generation in the Friedens Family. May Friedens be a place of healing and grace, and we pray people will be astonished by the depth of our love, generosity, and commitment to one another.

As we look at the surrounding world, please give us eyes to see the needs of those around us. Fill us with the compassion of Jesus and readiness to be His hands and feet. Through us, help people see the beauty and truth of the Gospel, and please draw people to faith in Jesus. May we be faithful representatives of Your Kingdom in our community and beyond.

Father, we pray all these things in Jesus' Name and for Your glory, knowing You can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. Amen.