

FIREBIRD SPIRIT

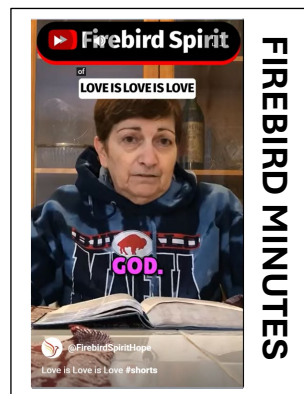
Redefining the lowercase church through an evolving Way of the Spirit

#firebirdspirit

(on any server)

Snapshot Report on the State of “Us”

February 20, 2025



Dear Firebird Spirit Community,

What a time it has been and continues to be!

Hope rising + Transformations taking shape + New possibilities unfolding

And all of them/these are occurring in ways we couldn't have imagined a year ago.

Firebird Spirit exists to spark change, create sacred spaces of belonging, and live out a faith that is **bold, inclusive, and authentic**. And that is just what we are doing as we position ourselves for a busy year ahead.

In the last year: We gathered. We questioned. We built. We dreamed.

We showed up for justice. We created community. We lived our faith in action.

The programs and video channels you see represented on the cover of this report are some of the initiatives / ministries we have been doing this year.

In a world that often feels heavy, **Firebird Spirit is a welcoming place where the embers of hope keep burning**—where people find new life, a fresh vision, and the courage to live with purpose. And much to our surprise, our movement is happening around the *world*, reminiscent of that old church camp song, “It only takes a spark to get the fire going.”

As we report to you today, we celebrate what has been as we lean forward into what's next. What follows is a brief account of some of the highlights from 2024 as well as what we are working on for 2025. Please keep in mind that our world is changing so very quickly and thus we are committed to keeping Firebird Spirit (FBS) responsive to the everyday needs and direction of the Spirit.

As I sat down over several months and tried to write up a typical “Annual Report,” I found it nearly impossible; the Spirit is changing so rapidly and in so many directions that I am now calling this our

Early 2025 Snapshot Report

Laid out in three Sections with each representing where we are as of this date:

Part 1: Who Are We? / What Are We Doing?

Part 2: How Are We Doing This? / Some Fun Metrics

Part 3: Looking Toward the Future

Epilogue: Two Things to Watch For

As many of you know, I retired from parish ministry on September 20, 2024; beginning October 1st, my energies became fully focused on Firebird. For now, Kevin continues to be the glue holding together both Irondequoit Presbyterian Church as they prepare to dissolve and sell their property, and South Presbyterian Church as it readies itself to call a new pastor. His work with Firebird is as amazing as ever, and I don't know how he does it with those other two draws on his time and energy. Although I

am the one compiling this report, it is not without his input and the contributions of many of you across the country. Without all of you, Kevin and I would not still be standing.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

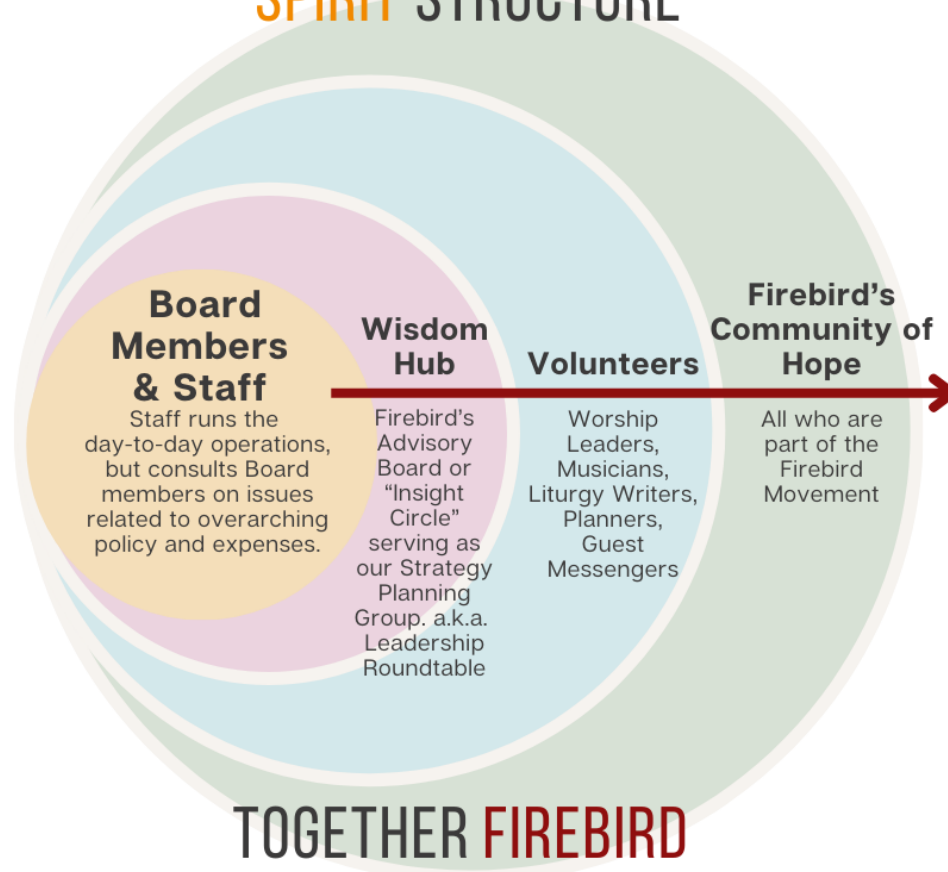
Thank you for believing that faith can be real, that community can be sacred, and that love—when lived out—can change everything.

With gratitude and thanks on behalf of the entire Firebird Team,

Deb Swift

Executive Director

FIREBIRD ORGANIZATIONAL SPIRIT STRUCTURE



TOGETHER FIREBIRD
WE ARE THE TEAM

PART 1: Who Are We? / What Are We Doing?

SUMMARY:



BACKGROUND:

As we began to gear up for the October 1st “new launch,” one of our first questions was,
“Who Are We?”

Were we going to continue with our consulting and coaching practice, assisting congregations in their missional discernment? What about all the people who had come to know us only as an online entity since the pandemic? In the changing landscape of our nation, what about people living in a “Progressive Desert” who might be longing for an inclusive view of Scripture and a different experience of Jesus than that being presented in their local communities?

With a New Jersey church seeking to engage us in the fall of 2024, we decided to say ‘yes’ to continuing to resource brick-and-mortar institutions on a small scale. A church in western NY was also beginning to work with Kevin as they revamped their financial procedures. Additionally, the Presbytery of Genesee Valley occasionally sought advice and counsel from Firebird re: best practices. As a result, here is a snapshot of who we have been becoming since October 1st – and our rationale behind it.

And, of course, as we were gearing up, we spent a lot of time creating our website so it accurately reflects who we were becoming.

Rationale

Collectively ... we at Firebird Spirit are guided by the radical and transformative love of Jesus Christ, whose ministry broke barriers, uplifted the marginalized, and proclaimed a Gospel of liberation for all people. Rooted in the early church's vision of a diverse and inclusive community—where Jew and Gentile, enslaved and free, and men and women stood as equals before God—and where we affirm that **diversity, equity, and inclusion are not modern political trends but sacred theological imperatives**. We are all in agreement that we are:

redefining the lowercase church
through an evolving Way of the Spirit

Jesus defied societal divisions, dining with outcasts, embracing the rejected, and amplifying the voices of the oppressed. The early church embodied this radical inclusivity, inclusiveness? ,forming a movement that welcomed all, regardless of race, gender, status, or background. In this same way, Firebird Spirit is committed to fostering a faith that is expansive, justice-oriented, and unshaken by fear.

We challenge theological distortions that seek to exclude, oppress, or control, recognizing that regressive interpretations of Christianity have too often been used to justify discrimination, bigotry, abuse of power, patriarchy, white supremacy, and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric.



On this cold snowy day in the Mid-Ohio Valley, it is great to be able to worship in the warmth of Firebird Spirit.

Online comment from YouTube watcher

Jesus said, “*Whenever two or three of you come together in my name, I am there with you,*” (Matthew 18:10 – Contemporary English Version), and we, too, believe that “being together” includes how we connect on- line. Together, we are the church – the “lowercase church,” i.e., not necessarily the institutionalized Church with a capital “C”. We also recognize that the Church throughout history has adapted to scientific advancements, as well as the changing nature of society; we are committed to doing the same – growing in our understanding of the changing demographics, interests, and technology of our day.

Through **education, advocacy, worship, and spiritual formation**, Firebird Spirit counters harmful narratives that debase and belittle the Divine Spark within each person by equipping people with progressive understandings and applications of Christ’s teachings.

We embrace a theology of love, justice, and inclusion. We elevate historically silenced voices, reclaim the liberating message of Jesus, and build communities that reflect God’s radical hospitality. Our programs aim to empower both individuals and congregations to resist the forces of exclusion, separation, and blame by embracing a faith that is courageous, prophetic, and deeply compassionate.

In a world where Christianity is often co-opted to serve powerful rather than the power-less, Firebird Spirit burns with the holy fire of transformation—leading the way toward a church and society where **all** are truly welcomed, affirmed, and celebrated in the love of Christ. And we demonstrate how this can happen/be actualized not only through in-person/same-physical-location connection, but also through on-line connections such as YouTube, Zoom and other platforms.

This is how we are redefining what it means to be a church *community* with each other, and as people of the Way, we are doing this by following the Spirit as she makes herself known to us in the Risen Christ.

You, too, are invited on the journey to join our Community of Hope.

Come, rise with us. The Spirit is moving.

Individually ... we at Firebird Spirit are a group of volunteers seeking to be faithful followers of Jesus’ teachings in our own lives. That commitment, in turn, deepens our own faith journeys and connection to the Spirit. It is this sense of authenticity and individual involvement which seems to be speaking to others who hear our message.



I'm a moderate, I have voted on both sides throughout my life. I didn't like either side this time, But I liked one side much less than the other. I have friends on both sides of the aisle, and I've watched them fight each other with a lot of malice over the last decade or two. On either side, they are good people. They are my friends. They have love in their hearts, just none for each other, which is so hard to see. Thank you for creating this. It's beautiful.

Online comment from YouTube watcher

Currently, everyone at Firebird Spirit is a volunteer.

Thirty people from across the country come together and volunteer their time as readers or musicians for our weekly online worship services. An additional 15 participate in our on-line or in-person education, spiritual formation, and support groups; in the fall, two members of our team traveled out-of-state for a weekend-in-residence with the Rahway, NJ Presbyterian Church to assist them with discerning their future as a bricks-and-mortar church.

Our volunteers are a cross-section of humanity: multi-racial, multi-ethnic, Christian and non-, multiple denominational representation, youth and elders, and residing in Arizona,

California, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Washington.

It is this Firebird Team – along with our Guest Messengers who, in the last four months included a Baha’i woman, a member of the PC(USA) national staff, parish clergy, hospital chaplain, and lay people – that embodies the Spirit of New Life and Inclusive Kindness that we are called to share.



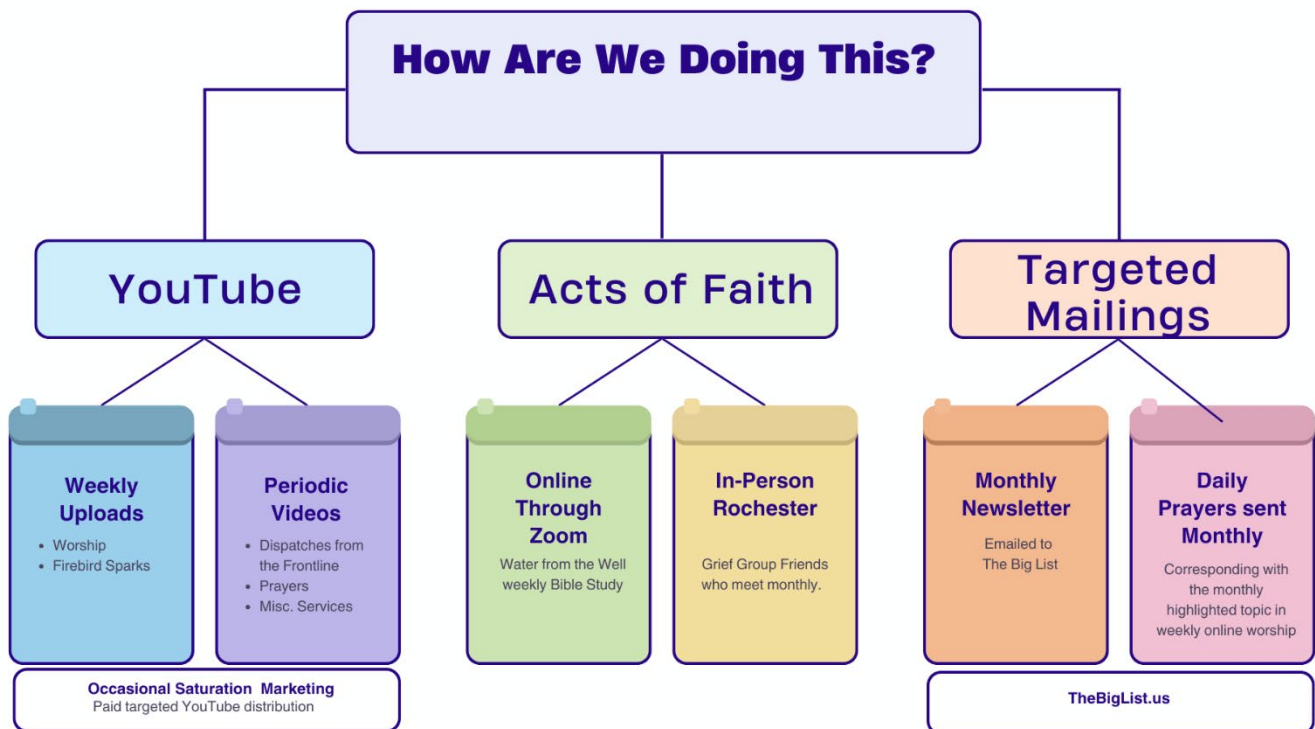
every time I see ur posts, I’m reminded why I follow you!

i love how authentic this feels, so inspiring!

Online comments from two different YouTube watchers

Part 2: How Are We Doing This? / Some Fun Metrics

SUMMARY:



BACKGROUND:

The Firebird Spirit Movement

Firebird Spirit is not just a **community**—it’s a **movement**. A movement redefining faith, reimagining community, and rethinking what it means to be “church.” It’s a way of being. And a place of belonging. We are a **progressive Christian space where faith is alive, evolving, and deeply connected to justice and inclusion.**

As we note in our Guiding Principles (<https://www.firebirdspirit.org/guiding-principles/>), we affirm that:

- All people are beloved of a Universal Presence (called by many different names) whose essence is within each of us and which longs to be in relationship with humanity and all of Creation.
- As we grow in that relationship, we become more aware of the Oneness connecting /that connects every living thing. We refer to this as the Beloved Community.
- The Creator’s Presence is another name for Love and, as nothing is greater than the Creator, nothing is greater than Love ... not fear, not hatred, nor any human-made condition ... and Love always Wins in the end.
- The Beloved Community is connected by the movement of the Spirit calling us to act with compassion as we work for just and equitable standards for all.
- The Way of Jesus began as a collection of people from different cultures and communities. Throughout history, his teachings have found new expressions for embracing the marginalized, giving voice to the voiceless, and welcoming the stranger. Our Firebird Community is a version of the 1st century church but in the 21st century. We are an expression of the evolving Way of the Spirit.
- We are committed to *seeing* each other, *respecting* each other, *listening to each other*, and *being present* to each other. People of good faith can disagree without being disagreeable, and the process of building consensus is preferable to the divisiveness of “taking sides.”
- All people have gifts -- a calling or purpose waiting to be made manifest in the world for the betterment of the Beloved Community.
- The Spirit is always present, inviting (but not forcing) us to be our best selves through constantly seeking, learning, adjusting, and growing.
- Jesus and others came to show us the Ways we can be in relationship with Spirit and grow along our spiritual journey within the Beloved Community.
- “Worship” is defined by the worshiper; what has meaning for one may not have meaning for another. We embrace the tenet of the Christian Reformed Tradition that “God alone is Ruler of the Conscience.”
- We are called to be in community with each other along our spiritual journeys, but our communities may change as we grow and are transformed. We are not limited to only one community at a time. Therefore, the Firebird Community may be someone’s primary spiritual connection, or it might be supplemental to what that person is already engaged in with another community.

As such:

🔥 **We welcome everyone.** Whether you come from a church background, no background, or a complicated relationship with faith, you have a place and are welcome here. **People from across the U.S. and around the world—different denominations, beliefs, identities—have found a welcoming community in Firebird Spirit.**

🔥 **We believe in hope, new life, and new possibilities.** Just like the firebird, we rise from what was into what is possible. **Faith is meant to move us forward.**

🔥 **We are online, always accessible, always growing.** Through worship, learning, conversation, and community, Firebird Spirit is there—**anytime, anywhere.** And our Team stands ready to facilitate local organizing of individual “firebirds” in specific geographic areas if requested.

The bulk of our programming is online to reach the greatest number of people. This outreach is done through the following ministries that have been developed, deepened, or expanded during this reporting period.

And people are noticing.



Pastor Deb thank you for bringing us all these prayers of peace. The Buddhist prayer spoke to my heart as we move into 2025. This is inspiring in the face of a threatening change in our country's leadership also on 1/20/25.

Online comments from a YouTube watcher

Our Acts of Faith (some call them Acts of Hope) on our YouTube Channel [@firebirdspiritHOPE](https://www.youtube.com/@firebirdspiritHOPE)



Dispatch from the Front Line

These are timely responses to current events in real time based on our progressive theological perspective to/and underscore the need for hope during these challenging times.



Firebird Minutes

Less than 2minute clips that either are excerpted from longer works (like worship videos) or are specially recorded to address topics and viewpoints. These account for about half of our views on YouTube; we recently acquired NexusClips, an app that uses artificial intelligence, to choose and clip those portions of our larger works that are likely to become viral based on the parameters we create for our clip choice criteria.



Online Prayers and Firebird Moments

Whether a specific Prayer Service (eg., Thanksgiving, Ash Wednesday, etc.) or prayers that are responsive to specific situations (i.e., the crash on the Potomac), these short prayers are responsive to both situations and the needs of our viewers. They seem to pick up some play on Facebook.



Firebird Sparks

For the last month, we have been experimenting with a Tuesday “drop” of a 5- or 6-minute “mid-week Spiritual Check-in” that is loosely based on the upcoming Sunday worship service. The entire transcript is in the video description, which increases the numbers of words that can be searched when looking for a specific topic.



Firebird Weekly Worship

Through the help of volunteer readers and volunteer musicians from around the country, we present 40-55 minute services that “drop” online every Friday. By Sunday morning, frequently there will be more than 150 views. Our Guest Messenger cadre is growing, and their comments reflect the pleasure at seeing and hearing different voices from across the country. (Wish we could get someone outside the States to contribute as well. Do you know of anyone?)

Our Acts of Faith that are either on **Zoom** or **In-Person**.



Consulting & Coaching

Our primary focus in this reporting period was with the First Presbyterian Church of Rahway, NJ. Barb Sixbey and Deb Swift were welcomed for a weekend of presentations on and worship. Church leaders are currently implementing several of the processes and lessons learned that we shared with them. We are planning a follow-up visit for Part II of this two-part training during the spring. *To explore how we might work with your organization, please contact the Firebird office.*

Daily Prayers



Firebird Daily Prayers

A comprehensive list of daily prayers for each month is sent to those on our mailing list and offered upon request to anyone. Each two-line prayer revolves around the topic for that month (e.g., African-American History Month in February). These prayers are provided at no cost and may prove to be a good introduction to Firebird Spirit for those looking for God's message. *To get your copy, register at www.TheBigList.us*



Firebird DVD Ministry

When FBS inherited three Acts of Faith that were highly tech-based from South Presbyterian Church in Rochester, NY, the DVD Ministry was one of them. Each week, our online worship is burned onto a DVD and mailed to four locations to people who do not have internet access. At least one of the four, we are told, is shared during a group worship of ten people at a care facility. Another has generated one of our largest ongoing financial gifts for FBS. *If you know of someone who would appreciate a DVD mailed weekly, please let us know.*



Grief Group Friends

This is the first Act of Faith developed by Firebird Spirit. Growing out of a multi-congregational online group started by Pastor Deb last summer, this AoF has now become its own in-person support group that meets monthly in the Rochester, NY area. Member led, the group stands ready to welcome new people who moved through or are moving through the different stages of the grief cycle. *For more information, please contact the Firebird Office.*

Hello Firebird!

NEWSLETTER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

With the help of our automated mailing system, our monthly newsletter now goes to 511 inboxes to share what we are doing and in turn ask people to share Firebird with family, friends, and neighbors. *To join our mailing list, visit www.TheBigList.us*



WATER FROM THE WELL

As a legacy gift from South Presbyterian Church, Water From the Well, our weekly in-depth Bible Study, continues in its fourth year. With participants signing in from across the country, this group of about a dozen has come to see each other as “church” - and have found themselves visiting each other when traveling in that part of the country. They continue their deep dive and discussion into the Gospel of John led by Pastor Deb. *Please contact Deb if you would like to join this online “church” of seekers and sharers.*

One of the first things that Kevin accomplished was getting us positioned online so that whenever anyone types **#firebirdspirit** into *any* search engine (Google™, Firefox™, Chrome™, Edge™, Duck-Duck-Go™, etc.) ... OUR ministries will be the first items to pop up.

Around the same time that Kevin was working on that, we were also busy combining our website (www.FirebirdSpirit.org) with our partner site on CommunityScape (https://communityscape.life/my_profile/communityscape/welcome). (If you have not checked out CommunityScape, we invite you do to. It is an easy, drag-and-drop site where you control the content, share with others, create an inexpensive website, and more. When Firebird works with small churches, we encourage the use of CS for their online presence.) Firebird has now integrated our CS site with our home site. It holds all of our resources that are easily accessible and easily swapped-out or updated to keep our internet presence current. You can access our Firebird Resources site through the Firebird website above, or by clicking [HERE](#).

What We Accomplished This Year / Some Fun Metrics

Incorporated in 2018 to work with local congregations as they become more missional and less bound to their bricks and mortar, we never envisioned being where we are today, seven years later.

Firebird honed its technical skills with broadcasting classes, support groups, and weekly worship throughout the COVID pandemic, so it is a natural continuation of those offerings to find us expanding them today.

On October 1, 2024, Firebird Spirit took flight as an online **Progressive Christian Presence** to begin weaving together a **Community of Hope** where everyone is welcome.

Through February 18, 2025:

- 🔥 We have garnered just under **29,000 views** of our **173 original videos** in our first **four-and-a-half months**.
- 🔥 We have welcomed just over **2,000 YouTube subscribers**.
- 🔥 Our Christmas Eve service had **just under 3,000 views worldwide**.

But perhaps most surprising to all of us has been the broad reach of our ministries: of those 29K views, only **52% have been in the U.S.**, and the rest are spread over **41 countries across six continents**. For those of you interested in data (and with excellent eyesight 😊), here is a snapshot those locations as of February 18, 2025:

Locations of our YouTube viewers:

Geography	Views	↓
<input type="checkbox"/> Total	28,909	
<input type="checkbox"/> United States	14,952	51.7%
<input type="checkbox"/> India	4,523	15.7%
<input type="checkbox"/> United Kingdom	927	3.2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Canada	768	2.7%
<input type="checkbox"/> Indonesia	625	2.2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Ukraine	600	2.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistan	370	1.3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Australia	221	0.8%
<input type="checkbox"/> Türkiye	191	0.7%
<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnam	138	0.5%
<input type="checkbox"/> Saudi Arabia	113	0.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Jordan	112	0.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladesh	111	0.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> South Africa	106	0.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Iraq	103	0.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Egypt	101	0.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Philippines	98	0.3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Uzbekistan	84	0.3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Belarus	81	0.3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Syria	81	0.3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Russia	78	0.3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Kazakhstan	69	0.2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Algeria	67	0.2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Malaysia	63	0.2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Japan	45	0.2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Brazil	37	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanon	34	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Morocco	33	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Azerbaijan	32	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Moldova	25	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Venezuela	24	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Germany	22	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Poland	22	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Nigeria	17	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> New Zealand	14	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Qatar	14	0.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mexico	12	0.0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Netherlands	12	0.0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Argentina	11	0.0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Colombia	11	0.0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Czechia	10	0.0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Ireland	10	0.0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Oman	10	0.0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Yemen	10	0.0%

These numbers reflect a definite hunger and thirst for our progressive message and are excited to see where the Spirit is leading us next.

Part 3: Looking at the Future

From the chair of the Executive Director, some things are beginning to take shape that are both challenging and exciting. In no particular order, these are the ideas and visions that inspire me to jump into whatever God next has for us.

Financial and Staffing Sustainability

It is important for us to be operating as a cadre of volunteers right now. As the world becomes more and more inundated with graft and corruption, I think people find it refreshing that we all volunteer our time and nobody is getting rich off Firebird Spirit. However ... the amount of work it takes to do all of this is not sustainable without some remuneration for the staff.

We need to work toward a regular income for Kevin and a moderate “retirement bonus” for me (I think we are talking about a 5:1 ration of Kevin to Deb.)

Our plan is to get us to the point where we are monetized on YouTube which means 10,000+ subscribers. (We are 1/5 of the way there after four months.)

We check in with each other almost daily and have pop-up staff meetings in a parking lot or restaurant as needed.

We both love what we are doing and have a great deal of “energy & excitement” for this work.

So far, I think we are both realistic about what it means to be launching a new business/ministry venture in this political climate, and we are extremely grateful to our volunteers and the “Wisdom Hub” of our Leadership Roundtable:

Ed Daniel, Esq. (*Legal responses*) – Rochester, NY
MJ Ebenhack (*Liturgy planning, Writing*) – Marietta, OH
Rev. Amy Fowler (*Theological grounding, Church processes*) – Franklin, MA
Sonya Kennedy (*Hands-on presentations*) – Greensboro, NC
Carly Logan (*Video production*) – Rochester, NY
Rev. Dr. Rachel McGuire (*Theological grounding, CommunityScape partner*) – Rochester, NY
Linda McLean (*Editing*) – Ithaca, NY
Jennifer Haase Morris (*Strategic planning*) – Coupeville, WA
Andy Pratt (*Visioning, Liturgy planning, Music*) – Brighton, NY
Dr. Margery Saunders (*Public policy, Non-profit administration*) – Brighton, NY
Barb Sixbey (*Hands-on presentations, Theological planning*) – Penfield, NY
Karen Thomas (*Strategic planning, Finances, Systemic review*) – Marana, AZ

All of us are well aware that it takes three to five years to know if something will be sustainable in the long term, and perhaps longer given the current political conditions. But we are all

working to position Firebird Spirit to be sustainable, carefully considering new projects before launching them.

Current Finances

As of this writing, we have \$10,178 in our account. This reflects one-time gifts as well as on-going pledges made by individuals and funds forthcoming from our in-person work with churches.

Our people are very generous.

Officially, we operate on the Economy of Grace Model (<https://www.firebirdspirit.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/White-Paper-2-Origins-and-Founding.pdf>) and I am pleased to note that so far that seems to be working with people in our online class contributing what they are able. Additionally, when we recently made it known that we need to replace an office computer, the amount needed appeared within a matter of days. The Spirit provides through people of good will.

Continuing Education

Normally, you might think that title relates to our class participants, but in this case, it refers to Kevin and me ... Kevin is continuing to read, watch, study and learn about algorithms, how platforms differ from each other, how we need to present ourselves for maximum viewership, etc. And he is patiently encouraging me to incorporate what he learns.

At the same time, all of our volunteers are encouraged to adopt best practices in terms of video production and editing with many learning how to share documents for the first time, to share files, and become more comfortable with technology in our lives – including in the use of Artificial Intelligence.

Musical Expansion

Through friends of mine in the music world and our exploration of online sites where we can get copyright-free music at no cost, we are able to build on the incredible library that **Andy Pratt** has put together for us over the years.

A special Thank You to Andy who, at a moment's notice, will record either a previously unrecorded hymn or some other music to enhance our worship experience.

Online Worship Leaders

These are the rock stars of our online presence. Thank you, one and all, for your ongoing contributions or time and talents. Welcome to those who joined us this year. Special thanks to those who coach the “newbies” and to Kevin for his patient coaching around best practices for visual presentation and production. Our Worship Team includes:

Barb Sixbey, Barbara Durfee, Carly Logan, Carol Santos, Charles Griffith, Cori Rainbeaux, Holly Powell, Jacques Kouevi, Karen Thomas, Martha Moler, MJ Ebenhack, Norma Carter, Paul Morris, Sonya Kennedy, and Susan Riblett

Guest Messengers since October 1st have included our Baha’i sister, **Darlene Saeva**, Ruling Elder **Barb Sixbey**, Rev. **Ray Bagnuolo**, Rev. Dr. **Ray Jones**. These folks will all be returning and will be joined by four or five others who are already committed to sharing their messages of optimism and faith in the next few months.



What a nice job Barb did with the message. This really resonated with me.

What a hope-filled and joyful message our brother Ray has gifted the growing Firebird Community to begin 2025. Let us have the courage to do what God would ask of us.

Online comments from two YouTube watchers






Epilogue: Two Upcoming Things to Watch For

Online Team Meeting

There are some topics that need YOUR input ... a real meeting of the Firebird Team (which, as you see back at the beginning of this report is all of you who are **Board/Staff Members**, part of the **Wisdom Hub**, and/or **Volunteers**.)

In these few months, we have discovered some things that need a wider input than just our Board & Staff and we are hoping that you will be able to attend. **We will be sending out an invitation to members of those groups to narrow down possible dates** in the near future. Hopefully, there will be a time in the spring which can accommodate most of us regardless of our time zone.

Some of the items on the docket for that meeting include (so far ... who knows what will be added by then!):

-  Updating our Mission Statement
-  Update on Financial Giving
-  Discussing the Purpose on online worship and the role of music, sacraments, etc. in it
-  Report from Kevin on what’s next and how we can each help
-  Suggestions that you all have for moving Firebird forward in 2025.

Planning Ahead: Lenten Theme

Our theme for Lent this year will be “*Thresholds.*” (Thanks to MJ Ebenhack for her work in this area.) We will have a special **Ash Wednesday service online** to begin the season and each week will focus on a different aspect of our theme:

Lent 1 THEME: Crossing the Threshold – Embracing Change

Karen Thomas, *Messenger*

Lent 2 THEME: Letting Go – the Grace of Release

Steve Bryson, *Messenger*

Lent 3 THEME: Liminal Space – Waiting in the In-between

Susan Riblett, *Messenger*

Lent 4 THEME: Death and Dying – Trusting the Darkness

Bill Hockey and Deb Swift, *Messengers*

Lent 5 THEME: Recognizing Resurrection – Encountering New Life

Barb Sixbey, *Messenger*

Palm Sunday THEME: Living Into New Beginnings – Becoming Co-Creators

Deb Swift, *Messenger*

Easter THEME: Integration: Journeying Beyond the Threshold

Ray Bagnuolo, *Messenger*

We hope that you will join us and invite others to worship with us, as well.

+ + + + +

Here ends this “snapshot” report of Firebird Spirit and where we are now.

What we need from you is your continued support ... any prayer and/or financial support that you can offer ... telling people in your contact list about us because you never know when someone might be searching for just this kind of positive message.

As always, all of us welcome your comments, questions and suggestions.

It’s pretty clear to us that the Spirit is alive and well and doing something amazing here. We get up every single day excited to see what will be unveiled to us next and we are oh, so honored, to be on this journey with you.

To God be the Glory ...

dfs