

2013 ANNUAL REPORTS

(covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2013)



 **FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, UCC
WILLIAMSTOWN, MA**

Editor's Note

Individual reports are organized alphabetically under each Ministry Team, following the report of the Team Chair(s), if s/he/they write one.

The reports of the Moderator, the Treasurer, the Nominating Committee, and the Clerk's Report (which is actually compiled and submitted by the Office Administrator), precede the Team-related materials.

Gail M. Burns

On the Cover: A year of transition - the clergy who have served us during 2013. Clockwise from the top: Rev. Carrie Bail, Rev. William Hydon, Rev. Rick Spalding, Rev. Rick Chrisman, Rev. Mark Longhurst. Rev. Hydon provided us with his photo, the rest of the photos are from our trusty photographic chronicler Harry Montgomery. Thank you Harry!

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**Agenda for the
249th Annual Meeting of the
First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ, Williamstown, Massachusetts
Sunday, 2 February 2014, 10:45 am**

We continue our morning worship:

CALL TO CHURCH MEETING - Marilyn Faulkner, Clerk
READING OF THE NAMES OF DECEASED MEMBERS - Marilyn Faulkner

OWNING OF THE COVENANT - Moira Jones, Moderator

We desire and by the Aids of Divine Grace do promise to walk in all the Statutes and Ordinances of the Lord, to assemble for God's worship, to keep Holy the Sabbath Day, to maintain Family Religion and Secret Prayer, and to honor our High and Holy Vocations by Lives of Piety toward God and Benevolence toward all People, and so do now join ourselves into this Church and covenant to walk with it in Christian Love and Faithfulness according to the Rules given us in God's Holy Word.

This we do in humble Dependence on God, praying that God will enable us to be Faithful and Steadfast in this covenant. Amen.

DECLARATION OF A QUORUM - Beth Goodman, Parliamentarian

BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH - Moira Jones

1. To review the minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting.
2. To read the names of deceased members & friends
3. To present awards & honor 50-year members.
4. To receive the year-end 2013 Financial Report.
5. To act on the allocation of discretionary funds.
6. To hear the reports of the ministry teams & other committees
7. To receive the report of the Nominating Committee & vote on new officers & members of ministry teams.
8. To install new officers & members of ministry teams.
9. To extend our Covenant with Habitat for Humanity.
10. To consider sending greetings to previous pastors.
11. To act on any other business that may properly come before the meeting.

BENEDICTION

CLOSING HYMN #393 *Blest Be The Tie That Binds* - Dennis

Minutes of the 248th Annual Meeting of the Congregation, February 3, 2013

The 248th annual meeting of the First Congregational Church of Williamstown convened at 10:50 a.m. following morning worship.

In the absence of a parliamentarian, Moderator Samuel Humes declared a quorum, with more than 50 members present.

The names of deceased members and friends were read, and then the Moderator lead in reading the Owing of the Covenant. Recognition of the fifty-year membership of Jane (deceased) and Don Mesick was made.

After the Clerk noted that all had had time to read the minutes of last year's meeting, there was a motion and second to approve the minutes as they appeared in the Annual Report, which was passed.

The Green Award had been made (by Elizabeth Smith) to Carrie Bail at the party in her honor two weeks earlier. The Marion Shaw Award will be made (by Susan Smith) in several weeks to Lynn Chick, who is currently away. Carolyn Behr presented the Jim Skinner Award to Robin Lehleitner. Robin then asked permission to read a moving tribute to Sam Humes, retiring Moderator, in recognition of all he has done in the past sometimes difficult three years. There was grateful applause all around.

Kevin Jones presented the Financial Report, saying that essentially we had a balanced budget for last year (although some items were delayed), but that the current year looks much less rosy, primarily because we have lost so many pledging units (down 25% since 2000). We could be facing a deficit this year of as much as \$47,000. With a screened presentation, he also showed that we could anticipate spending as little as \$200 or as much as \$2000 each week for our pastor, depending on what we decide to do before we find a new settled pastor to succeed our recently-resigned Carrie Bail. An early step toward making any decision about that will be round-table discussions following this meeting. There was heartfelt applause and thanks for Kevin, who has agreed to continue acting as Treasurer until someone else is found to take over that position.

Susan Yates spoke about the proposed Makepeace allocations, about which there is ample information in the Annual Report. She moved that we table a decision on distribution of Makepeace Funds to a later date. Seconded, that motion was passed unanimously.

Brian Handspicker offered Steward of the Meetinghouse Awards to all who have kept our Meetinghouse as a valuable and much-used building, including, among others, especially Jody Green, Annie Parkman, Kay Sherman, Gail Burns, and Keith Davis (and, although of course he didn't mention it, himself). There was grateful acknowledgement of all they have done.

For the Transition Team, John Craig said there will be another meeting tomorrow (the fourth such meeting, two with representatives of the UCC and two without). The Team is a limited committee for a limited job, he noted, and, although they will plan to review materials received from the UCC, we must all keep in mind our specific economic situation. The lunchtime discussions today may provide information to help in any decisions.

No action was taken with respect to reports of the clusters and other committees, since the Annual Report presents the reports in detail.

Marilyn Faulkner presented the slate of nominees for continuing, renewed, and new positions, as listed in the Annual Report. She added that Anne Skinner has agreed to head the budget task force, if needed. Marilyn moved, and Susan Clarke seconded, a motion to vote in the entire slate, and the motion was passed unanimously.

On behalf of all, Sam thanked all those who have served and then took the opportunity to present incoming Moderator Moira Jones with a "church key," a gavel, and a pictured target.

No action was necessary with respect to our Habitat for Humanity covenant.

We agreed to send greetings and copies of the Annual Report to former pastors.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Jean Donati, Clerk

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Congregation, Sunday, May 26, 2013

Moderator Moira Jones, called the special meeting to order about 11:45 am.

It was noted that there was definitely a quorum of 40 members present.

Moira summarized the focus of the meeting: to authorize the Church Council to move ahead on hiring the designated pastor candidate, Mark Longhurst, whom we had heard preach today.

A formal motion was made by Jina Ford as a member of the Transition Team as follows: "I move that the congregation request the members or representatives of the Church Council to negotiate a contract with Mark Longhurst to be our Designated Pastor for a period of two years, starting in mid-September 2013."

Susan Clarke seconded the motion.

Discussion followed. Question arose as to the term 'designated pastor.' It is that Mark, or any candidate, named in this way can not only serve a congregation as an interim but can also be considered for that same settled pastor position. This allows the candidate and the congregation some latitude in seeing how things work out. Right now the Council's plan is to conduct a full search for a settled pastor in the fall of 2014. Mark could be a candidate.

Question was asked about other candidates under consideration and Moira responded that they had spoken with Rick Chrisman about the position but he, while possibly interested, does not have the time available. There was another candidate, but that person was just graduating from seminary and seemed too young for the position.

Someone commented that it seems a bit rushed to take this approval vote so soon, but Moira explained Mark was the best candidate they had found and he also has received another call and needs to make up his mind by mid-June.

Given the constraints of our having no service next week, May 26 was the only viable date fitting into the schedule.

The question was called and the motion passed unanimously with two abstentions.

The meeting adjourned at noon.

Marilyn Faulkner, Clerk

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Congregation, Sunday, June 16, 2013

Moderator Moira Jones, called the special meeting to order at 5:50 pm. There was a quorum (25 members) present of approximately 45 members.

The Moderator reported that the Rev. Mark Longhurst has agreed to come to the FCC as our Designated Pastor for a period of two years. He can begin in mid-September working full-time 40 to 50 hours per week. Mark has agreed to the job as outlined in the call agreement. The total package offers compensation of \$74,657.79 divided into several parts. A copy of the call agreement is attached as well as an outline of goals for the future. Approval of the call agreement was moved by Bruce Grinnell with a second by Jan Keep. This action was approved unanimously.

The second piece of business regarded the forgiveness of a \$13,652.62 unpaid portion of a loan to Carrie Bail and Darius Jonathan. Bruce Grinnell moved the motion with a second by Peter Witham giving the Moderator, Moira Jones, authority to execute the proper papers on behalf of the FCC. This amount will be regarded as taxable income for Carrie Bail. The motion was approved unanimously.

The third piece of business regarded voting to authorize Church Council to approve the Makepeace grant recommendations that had been tabled at the annual meeting if and when they can be funded. The Outreach Team will be asked to prioritize them.

Sam Humes so moved and then Susan Clarke seconded the motion. The motion was then amended to specify that the vote pertains just to this fiscal year only and will not change the ongoing process of Makepeace

grants. The vote was unanimous.

The special meeting was then adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Marilyn Faulkner, Clerk

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Congregation, Sunday, December 15, 2013

A special meeting was held on Sunday, December 15, 2013, to hear the report and vote on the recommendations of the Budget Task Force for the proposed 2014 budget of the church.

The meeting commenced after service about 11:05 am. There was a quorum of about 40 members present.

Kevin Jones, as Treasurer, walked us through the budget proposal as copies were passed out. The format is different from other years and is referred to as a core budget. This includes the necessary expenses of the church operation such as salaries, insurance, utilities, coffee hour, and Sunday School for 2014. It does not include outreach giving or disbursements of Makepeace funds at this time. Until we know how much is raised from pledges and income from our various investments, we cannot know how much discretionary income we will have. Hopefully based on the 2013 spending, the amount should be about \$60,000.

By the time of our annual meeting, the Budget Task Force should have a much clearer picture of what our actual income will be and another vote would be taken at that time to question, change, or approve the final budget.

Kevin went briefly through the budget items. The Community-Outreach Team budget does include the UCC's Our Church's Wider Mission support amount. Further discretionary amounts are not known at this time. The Team should be planning some projects and have their budget set by annual meeting.

The Deacons Team is responsible for the worship-related expenses. The professional expenses of the pastor are known and included.

The Education and Fellowship Team budget includes the Christian Education Director salary. This area is thriving right now and the hours planned for this budget are 15 per week up from 12 hours. There is an item for Sunday School teachers in hopes there will be some college helpers. There are some program funds budgeted for fellowship food events that Mark envisions. Yet to be decided is whether or not there will be a youth trip planned by the team. Our 250th anniversary is coming up and may require some additional expenses.

The Stewardship budget concerns the staff and building upkeep. The hours people work has been looked at and realistically the office assistant will be increased to 20 hours per week. Gail's hours as Building and Office Manager will remain the same. The Financial Secretary also should go to 20 hours per week.

In the past no regular budget money was used for capital expenditures as it was Makepeace funds that supported those expenses. So the task force estimates \$12,000. for repairs. There is care of the outside of the building by a lawn-care company and the cleaning service for inside. We have saved money this year by not having a sexton. Both the steeple loan and ABC loan have been paid off.

If all goes according to plan, there will be about \$60,000. left for additional expenses, capital projects, outreach support, and special projects.

At this point Sam Humes moved the budget be approved with a second from Susan Clarke. The floor was then open for questions. Anne Skinner did ask how much the pledge total is so far. Annie Parkman answered about \$160,000. She asked for further clarification concerning the Makepeace funds and why the allocations were not being made now as in the past. Susan Yates-Mulder and Brian Handspicker provided the answers.

A vote was called for and passed unanimously with no opposition or abstentions.

Susan Yates-Mulder then asked for a motion concerning the Makepeace Fund and Outreach discretionary funds in that leftover funds in those accounts at the end of the year be transferred to the general fund. The motion was moved by Rutledge Currie and seconded by Susan Clarke. It was passed positively with one or two no votes and no abstentions.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Marilyn Faulkner, Clerk

Moderator's Report

2013, a year of many changes, as we forge our new future together. What a momentous year we have had! We have had five different ministers in our pulpit over the course of this past year (Rev. Carrie Bail, until Jan. 20th, Rev. Rick Chrisman, Rev. Bill Hydon, Rev. Rick Spalding, and Rev. Mark Longhurst.) We started 2013, celebrating the ministry of our former pastor, Rev. Carrie Bail, and we now start another new year near the beginning of the two-year ministry of our Designated Pastor, Rev. Mark Longhurst. If nothing else, 2013 has constantly reminded us that change is with us all the time. Having established that change is inevitable, we need now to continue to focus on what kind of change we want, and how to harness it to our advantage.

During the past year we have renewed our concern for the environment by participating in both the Mission 4/1 Earth initiative of the UCC, and Solarize Williamstown, part of the Solarize Massachusetts initiative of the commonwealth of Massachusetts. We knitted scarves for the UCC's Rainbow Scarf Project, and hung a rainbow banner outside the building to reinforce our commitment to welcoming LGBT folk. Our homegrown Second Hour series of public discussions on important subjects continues to challenge and expand our thinking on a wide variety of topics. We finished renovations turning the former "Mango Room" into the local ABC House's Tag Sale sorting and storage facility. We welcome ABC joining our other Mission Partners in our building.

While all this was going on, the attendance at our weekly Sunday morning worship service has been steadily increasing. The Sunday School has found the need to reclaim more and more space in the education wing. The increasing number, and wider range of ages being taught each week, is challenging the Stewardship Ministry Team to reorganize our education wing for all that we do under our roof. These are exciting changes as we come closer to our upcoming 250th anniversary in 2015.

This coming year we will continue our discernment of what kind of church community we want to be. The Vitality Coaching is coming up, to help guide us into being a more open and welcoming congregation. Our Outreach Ministry Team, having folded the duties of the Outreach Allocation Committee into their list of duties (and disbursed 1/2 of the delayed Makepeace funds from last Annual Meeting in June of 2013), continues this year to help us discern what we are called to do for outreach at First Church, Williamstown. Stay tuned for your part in helping this discernment process.

The budget process is also undergoing an evolution that started many years ago. As we have had to revise our bylaws to reflect how we are actually governing ourselves, we need to rethink how we do our budget to encourage us to be the church we want to be. The fact is our pledge income has gradually decreased, and our expenses on salaries, energy costs, and insurance have been increasing; this has naturally left fewer discretionary funds for programs at the church. Instead of focusing on those things we cannot do any longer, the new budget process is evolving to encourage our ministry teams to think about what we can do with the resources we have.

Our treasurer has put together a core budget which was passed at the budget meeting in December 2013. This enabled the Church to plan for those core costs at the beginning of the calendar year, as our bylaws require. Now, at Annual Meeting, knowing how the pledge drive has finished, and what the various investment accounts have available to us for this coming year, we can decide what kinds of discretionary

spending we would like to put into place.

One possible benefit of this change will be to encourage the Ministry Teams to work together on a communal vision of what First Church, Williamstown would like to accomplish in the coming year. I believe it would be advantageous for our congregation to think holistically when deciding on this discretionary spending. This might mean deciding on some kind of theme for our activities for the year, either something like “hunger” or “homelessness,” or a spiritual theme that could be used to guide the ministry teams. This type of approach will give our church a clearer sense of what it is we are doing, and what we want to do. In addition, our outreach efforts would be able to respond more flexibly to events that happen over the next 12 months. This ability to be responsive in cases of extreme weather, or other natural events that have local or international impact will help us maintain higher visibility within our wider community. Helping others in this way will have benefits in many ways for the whole congregation.

- Moira Jones, Moderator

Treasurer’s Report

Last year I concluded my “Treasurer’s Report” by noting that I was stepping down as Treasurer and thanked our hardworking Financial Secretary, Annie Parkman, whose efforts make it feasible for a very part time volunteer to serve as Treasurer. Well, as events transpired, I was not replaced as Treasurer last year. Thus I again thank Annie Parkman for another year of hard work on behalf of the church, and of steadfast support of the Treasurer. This was a challenging year for the church in many ways including financially. The thoughtful contributions of the Stewardship Team, headed by Brian Handspicker, have been instrumental in helping the Church navigate the challenges. There were unanticipated changes in staff and Stewardship worked hard to insure that necessary tasks were completed while looking for opportunities to lower costs in what was already a tightly constructed budget.

Many others contributed as well to envisioning a sustainable financial future for FCC consistent with the present membership and pledge levels. The Outreach Ministry Team looked realistically at the uncertainty in Church finances for the year and acted accordingly, giving us some important financial breathing room. The Transition Team, the group charged with replacing our departed pastor, thought carefully about finances in advertising for - and establishing a relationship with - our new designated Pastor. I would particularly like to thank Susan Yates-Mulder, for her sensible contributions on both Transition and Outreach. The Deacons too, played an important role in navigating the challenges of the year by finding talented supply pastors who kept the church service going without interruption while we had no regular Pastor. Financially this permitted us to pay some \$65,000 to our departed Pastor, Rev. Bail, to give her space to discern her next step in life, while still permitting the Church to be in a good financial position at the end of the year as we welcomed in our new Designated Pastor, Rev. Longhurst. This was a bit of a delicate transition, and - thanks to many helping hands - we made it rather more successfully than one might have imagined we would back in early 2013.

A special note of thanks is due to the church staff who, despite all the changes of the past year, worked constructively with the Moderator to keep everything running smoothly, no doubt performing “behind the scenes miracles” that most of us never knew about.

While it is interesting to reflect back on 2013, our primary focus now should be on the future. In establishing the 2014 budget we are taking a different tack from recent past practice, one which I hope will be more transparent and flexible and will help build a larger sense of shared purpose. Past practice was to pre-allocate a substantial portion of the income (specifically that derived from the Makepeace Trust, some \$85K) to specific Teams for certain kinds of expenses, and then, based on estimated pledge and other income, try to fit in the rest of the operations of the church. This may have worked well in earlier years, but in my experience, in a world of declining pledge dollars, this resulted in the budgeting process being a painful

exercise in cutting, sometimes in ways that did not (to my mind) make good strategic sense. Although the church still has resources and options, the process did not make this clear and did not encourage long-range, cooperative thinking about what was best for the church.

So for this year, at least, we have reversed the budget process. The Budget Task Force, representing the four Ministry Teams, put together a “core” budget of all the usual expenses of running the church for the year – Pastor’s compensation and Staff compensation (about 2/3 of the total), building expenses, office expenses, UCC dues, our contribution to Our Church’s Wider Mission, and so forth. The Congregation approved this 2014 core budget in December 2013. Depending on how the pledge drive ends up (and it is going very well this year!), and on final figures on investment income, we anticipate having approximately \$60,000 in unallocated funds when we get to Annual Meeting. This is a substantial amount of money and represents what is available for the Congregation to spend on discretionary projects – building improvements, grants to other charities, a youth trip, special programs, and so forth. At Annual Meeting the Congregation will be asked to allocate some portion of this money to specific projects and defer decision on the rest until the Church-wide discussions on the future of the Church have taken place.

A project that I had hoped to take on in 2013, but remains for a future Treasurer, is to improve the way in which Church finances are reported to the Stewardship Team and the Congregation. Our “Meals-on-Wheels” program, a fine example of an outreach activity that “does good” and brings together church members in fellowship, does not show up on the operating budget because it has its own special funds. Likewise basic Church activities like buying flowers are not part of the regular budget. These are not large amounts of money, but with better reporting we should be able to provide everyone a clearer picture of all of the Church’s resources and activity.

We are rapidly approaching our 250th anniversary. I hope that we will take advantage of this very special opportunity. To that end, I trust everyone will keep in mind that FCC can run a deficit (within reason) for a year if there are sound reasons to do so. We have to be very careful about building in long-term recurring expenses to the annual budget, but every 250 years or so we can loosen up a bit and live big. We should do that.

- Kevin Jones, Treasurer

Clerk’s Report

STATISTICS OF THE YEAR:

	Last Report	Current
Church Members	217	175
Pledging Families	109	90

Members and Friends lost by death:

John Dykstra Eusden*, Daniel Eldridge Galusha*, Cecil Lee Harvey*, Rina (sister of Darius Jonathan), Beverly Balcome Parkman (mother of Jeffrey Parkman), Carino VanOrden (nephew of Wendy VanOrden), Carl Arnold Westerdahl*, Lauren Stevens’ sister, Scott Wong’s father

Transferred Membership: Richard and Donella Markham, Peter Harold Witham,

Received into Membership:

Weddings

Katherine Sheffer Larabee and Samuel Tuttle (The Rev. Rick Spalding officiating)

Edwin Iglehart Lawrence and Diego Uribe de Urbina (The Rev. Carrie Bail officiating)

Covenant with Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity

(First voted by the congregation on October 4, 1992, Revised January 23, 2011)

First Congregational Church, Williamstown, MA, covenants with Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity (NBHfH) to commit financial and human resources in the following ways:

Praying for the ministry of Habitat for Humanity;

Providing financial support for NBHfH;

Organizing volunteers and individuals to help build homes and carry out additional tasks in support of NBHfH.

Designating an individual to actively serve as Liaison with NBHfH each year.

The Liaison will:

- Encourage others to serve as volunteers for NBHfH.
- Actively seek to inform members of the congregation about NBHfH's projects and needs. Seek to develop ways in which the church can support those projects and needs.
- Attend appropriate meetings of NBHfH as representative of the church.
- Inform NBHfH of possibilities and deadlines for applications for possible church funding.
- Advocate for NBHfH with church leaders.
- Keep informed about the activities of World Wide Habitat for Humanity.
- Report to the Community Cluster of the Church.

This covenant is in effect for one year and will be considered in good faith for renewal at the end of that time.

Congregation's representative (Date)

NBHfH's representative (Date)

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee included Phil Smith, Margy O'Connor, Katherine Myers, Charles Fox (for Deacons), Sam Humes (for Education and Fellowship), Beth Davis (for Outreach), and Jody Green (for Stewardship). Mark Longhurst and Moira Jones were invited to join our meetings and did so when they were free.

We began meeting early in the fall in order to replace Dick Markham and Peter Witham, who resigned from the Education and Fellowship Team because they had moved. Margaret McComish and Angela Hillman agreed to take their places and began their work with the Team in the fall. Bruce Grinnell resigned from Stewardship in the fall and Betsy Burris '16, At Large Delegate, and Susan Yates '15, Chair of Outreach, resigned from the remainder of their terms as of the annual meeting.

Happily we had 100% attendance for all of our four meetings and a lively e-mail exchange between meetings. The Nominating Committee is in the process of developing a protocol for an inclusive method of developing candidate nominations and a standard procedure for contacting members and friends whom the Nominating Committee selects.

We are pleased to present the following slate of nominations:
(Nominees are in caps. Holdovers are listed prior to the nominees)

Moderator: Moira Jones '16

Clerk: MARILYN FAULKNER '16

Treasurer: JOHN CRAIG '17

At Large Church Council: Elayne Murphy '15, SUSAN CLARKE '16, LAUREN STEVENS '17

Deacons Ministry Team: Anne Atkinson '15, Cesar Silva '15, Nan Fritz '16, Jina Ford '16, Carol Paul '16, SAM SMITH '15, ELIZABETH SMITH '15, RON ALUND '17, LYNN CHICK '17

Education and Fellowship Ministry Team: Karen Benko '15, Sam Humes '15, Margaret Oxtoby '16, Rebeccah Kamp '16, Margaret McComish '16, Angela Hillman '16, KAY SHERMAN '17, CHARLES FOX '15

Outreach Ministry Team: Judy Wright '15, Beth Goodman '16, Annette Triquère '16, Cynthia Payne '16, SHERWOOD GUERNSEY '17, BETH DAVIS '17, PHIL SMITH '17, BENNI McCOMISH '16, BOB BEHR '15

Stewardship Ministry Team: Jody Green '15, Ben Hynes '15, Nancy Piatczyc '16, Deborah Currie '16, David Dewey '16, ANNE SKINNER '17, KEVIN JONES '17

Nominating: Margy O'Connor '15, Katherine Myers '16, SUSAN YATES-MULDER '17

Delegates: Sam and Elizabeth Smith '16

Respectfully Submitted,
Philip Smith, for the Nominating Committee

Reports from the Deacons' Ministry Team

Overseeing the spiritual life of the congregation, the Deacons' Ministry Team is responsible for choir, flowers, Koinonia, expanding membership, music, pastoral relations, pulpit supply and worship.

CO-CHAIRS: Charles Fox & Cesar Silva

Committee on Pastoral Ministries (COPM) Report

Given that Reverend Mark Longhurst came to us as our Designated Pastor in mid-September of 2013, it was obviously not possible to do an evaluation of Mark's work within the guidelines of the COPM policy. However, the persons who would have constituted this year's committee (the Ministry Team Chairs and the Moderator) agreed that it would be useful to have some initial evaluative report prepared during the month of February, 2014, once the new Ministry Team Chairs are in place. As per the policy, the new COPM will be convened by the in-coming Chair of the Deacon Ministry Team. This initial evaluation would pave the way for a more full-orbed process to be completed in the Fall of 2014, as the Church takes stock of its current two-year contract with our Pastor.

Respectfully submitted, Charles Fox, Co-Chair of the Deacons' Ministry Team

Deacons' Report

The Deacons began their work in 2013 with significant involvement in the process of selecting an interim ministry arrangement, in the wake of the resignation of Carrie Bail. This process worked out very well for our church, as we secured the services, first, of the Rev. Dr. Richard Chrisman, Chaplain at Skidmore College, and then, in alternation with the availability of Chrisman, the services of the Rev. Dr. William Hydon, a psychotherapist in private practice. These two persons, in their alternating periods of leadership among us, carried the church through the summer of 2013, until our new Pastor began his work with us in mid-September. And of course, beginning in the late Spring, the Deacon body was much involved in the process of exploring options for a more permanent ministerial arrangement for the church. This process led us to recommend the hiring of the Rev Mark Longhurst, who has now joined us as our Designated Pastor with a two-year contract of service in place.

At the outset of the year the Deacons, as also the other Ministry Teams, prepared a comprehensive Manual of their responsibilities and the logistics for fulfilling these assignments. This Manual was recently updated to record a few changes in Deacon practice which have emerged during the year. One very recent such change was the decision by the Deacon Team, in consultation with our Minister, to conduct our communion services on a regular basis by the medium of intinction. As part of this practice the Pastor and the assisting Deacon for the day will serve in the pew any individuals who are infirm. We will continue to practice communion on the first Sunday of the month throughout the main part of the Church year, with the likelihood of not celebrating communion during July and August.

Throughout this year the Deacons have recurrently reflected upon their designated role as being responsible for the spiritual life of the church. We have seen this as extending especially to exploring ways of enriching our regular Sunday worship experience. We encouraged a number of innovative practices for conducting worship during the interim work of both Rick Chrisman and Bill Hydon, as for example several varieties of more intimate engagement between the minister and congregation during the worship service. And our new Pastor continues to lead us in thinking about alternative worship experiences, something we have urged him to continue to propose and explore.

After two years of moving our winter worship into Fellowship Hall, the renewed vigor of the congregation elicited by the impact of Mark Longhurst's presence among us led a significant majority of the congregation to express a preference for a return to the main sanctuary as our consistent place of worship. However, the Deacons have left open the option that we may indeed move into Fellowship Hall for a few occasions during the winter (and Lenten season) to facilitate the possibilities of exploring some alternative styles of worship experience.

In June of this year the Deacons held a half-day retreat at the home of Anne Atkinson Short. Once again the focus of our attention was upon the meaning of our primary role as being responsible for the

spiritual life of the church. To facilitate the reflections of the group we read and studied together a richly nuanced sermon from the theologian, Paul Tillich, on the theme of "Spiritual Presence." We reflected on the reality of spiritual development and enrichment as not simply an emotional experience, but also one of thought and service. Thus also during this year the Deacons sought to make the congregation regularly aware of the need to support the Pastor's Discretionary Fund in order to minister to the special needs of persons in our midst whose life circumstances placed them in situations of special need.

With the coming of Mark Longhurst the Deacons have continued to engage with him (and with our Christian education leader, Beth Davis) in exploring ways in which we can include our new bounty of children in the rhythm of the worship service.

This recent service of incorporating new members expressed the promise we are all feeling from the impact of the spiritual leadership and invigoration of new ideas brought to us by our new Pastor. Our roster of Deacons for the year of 2014 brings our number to nine members for the first time in many a year, together with a good range of age, gender, and experience. We anticipate a vigorous year of new activity on the part of the Deacon Ministry Team, as for example a plan to re-think our whole concept of church membership and the conditions thereof, including the practice of baptism.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles Fox, Chair

Flower Committee Report

Arrangers: Audrey Clarkson, Arletta Currie, co-chair; Deborah Currie, co-chair; Sarah Currie, Marilyn Faulkner, Dolores Lovegreen, Katherine Myers, Nancy Piatczyc, Carol Stein-Payne, Suki Wilkins
Special arrangements: Phil Smith Membership: Suki Wilkins

Thirty eight lilies and spring plants were placed in the sanctuary for Easter Service. After the service, plants were presented to the Church Staff, and members of Koinonia distributed the plants to shut-ins and to those who had lost loved ones in the past year.

Forty red poinsettias and eight red cyclamens were arranged in the sanctuary for the Dec. 22nd service and were distributed to Church Staff and to special members of the congregation after the Dec. 29th service. The church was decorated for Advent by members of the Flower Committee. Our beautiful 12" wreaths for the front doors were once again contributed by Mary Flynt.

As the Flower Committee has no formal budget for the purchase of plants, a number of the plants are donated in honor or in memory of loved ones by members of the congregation.

Suki Wilkins and Phil Smith serve as our esteemed mentors. New Flower Committee members are most welcome.

- Arletta Currie & Deborah Currie

Koinonia Report

The members of Koinonia meet monthly to try to help fulfill some of the pastoral needs of the Church. In January we celebrated Carrie's ministry with us at a special potluck lunch in the parlor. Carrie was an integral part of the group that started this ministry about ten years ago.

In April, Annie Barbour, a Medical Social Worker from Hospice, talked to us about the extraordinary services they provide to Hospice patients in the Berkshires.

We felt as if we had extra responsibility when there was no pastor here from January until September, so we were especially thankful to welcome Mark Longhurst. At our November meeting Mark led us in prayer and introduced us to a Reading by Richard Rohr, encouraging us to be in touch with the spiritual side of our role as members of Koinonia.

It is a joy to work with the following dedicated women: Arletta Currie, Anne de Gersdorff, Jean Donati, Marilyn Faulkner, Jody Green, Abbie Hatton, Delores Lovegreen, Susan Schneski, Kay Sherman, Sally Sussman, Jinx Tong, Annette Triquère, Suki Wilkins and Judy Wright

- Susan Smith, convener

Minister of Music's Report

Calendar year 2013 once again proved to be one of change in the worship life of First Congregational Church. We began in January with Pastor Carrie Bail finishing her last few Sundays in our pulpit. Through the next months, we were fortunate to have Richard Chrisman and William Hydon supplying our pulpit. My work was made easier by having these two fine, experienced clergymen leading worship. We were also blessed to find Rick Spalding in the pulpit for Easter and at a few other times. By late spring and into summer and early fall, Rick Chrisman became our main worship leader. Of course, these details belong in someone else's report than mine, and it is our Board of Deacons who made sure of all this excellent worship leadership.

Mid-September saw the arrival of our designated pastor, Mark Longhurst. It has been a treat to begin developing a working relationship with him. We are truly enjoying working together. Staff meetings are a joy.

For the liturgical seasons of Epiphany and Lent, we continued worshipping in Fellowship Hall, as we have now for several winters. It's always interesting to worship in a different space, always providing opportunities as well as challenges. It's lovely to all be on the same level. I hear from many of you that you enjoy actually seeing the choir up close! It's interesting for me to remember, each time, how to use the piano to lead the singing, instead of the organ.

Our choirs are among the most dedicated, loyal groups in the church. The remarkable members of our adult choir bring wonderful talents and skills in music reading, lovely individual voices, and years of experience to the table. We always welcome new members to the choir. You may have already have heard how much fun we have at rehearsals! Don't be shy. Speak to me, or watch for an opportunity to sing when I assemble a one-shot, "no fault" men's or women's choir. This is most likely to happen during the summer.

We have been lucky to have enthusiastic young singers forming our Junior Choir as well. A healthy group of girls who all started together in the second grade are now sixth-graders, and will be moving on at the end of this season. It has been terrific to have them with us, to watch them develop as fine singers. We expect our boys to continue singing and growing as young musicians. We will be looking for new children to join us as we begin the next season in September. The parents of the Junior Choir singers deserve special praise. They see to it that the young choristers are there each Thursday and on the Sundays on which they sing, as well as providing a snack and helping the rehearsals run smoothly.

We shared worship with our friends at the South Williamstown Congregational Church on the first Sunday in June. Several of our choir members joined with the singers there and director, Susan Matsui.

In early July, I was able to attend the Regional Convention of the American Guild of Organists. It is

so important to connect with other church music professionals. Good to check one's pulse, compare notes with peers, and to be inspired by the "best in the business." As usual, I came back with several new repertoire ideas for our choirs.

I was able to spend most of the rest of July in Colombia, visiting my in-laws with Diego. In my absence, we were lucky to have Jane Jenkins and Ellen Beebe on the organ bench. Various choir members and other musicians in our congregation provided special music while the choir was on summer hiatus. Among these, Jeff Watson, Susan Yates and Peter Witham each soloed for the first time. We were sad that Peter Witham's Sunday, July 28th, was his last before he moved to Maine. Other soloists included oboist Carl Jenkins and singers Moira Jones, Wendy Van Orden, and Annette Triquère. I was especially honored to have Penny Bucky and Robin Lehleitner present songs I had written for them based on words by poets from Colonial era New England.

In December, we had a joyous collaboration of adults and children in the Pageant. For Christmas Eve, the adult and children's choirs performed together in the loft along with several special guests, totaling some 20 voices.

Yours in Christ,
Edwin I. Lawrence, Minister of Music

Senior Choir Members

Sopranos

Penny Bucky
Moira Jones
Margy O'Connor
Annette Triquère
Wendy VanOrden

Altos

Nancy Piatczyc
Carol Stocking
Susan Yates

Tenors

Phil Smith
Peter Witham

Basses

Mart Mulder

Junior Choir Members

Second year (maroon ribbon)

Patrick Briggs
Third year (lilac ribbon)
Teague Murphy

Fifth year (silver ribbon)

Miriam Bakija
Sarah Briggs
Amelia Murphy

Pastor's Report – The Reverend Mark Longhurst

Greetings Church!

It's been a true joy to be with you in these past five months. Thank you for so warmly welcoming myself, Faith and Ian! We have covered a lot of ground in this short time, and I'd like to highlight some of our successes.

We launched our mutual ministry in mid-September with a sermon series on "Relationships and Storytelling." I talked about the importance of beginning ministry together by telling our stories and meeting each other face to face. Over the course of the fall, and into the winter, I've now met with 60 members of our congregation and community to hear what you care about. These conversations have helped clarify the issues, joys and concerns that are most present to members of our congregation.

Here are a few things I've learned about the First Congregational Church collective "body": You are a diverse and talented group of people! The passion, knowledge, and life experiences you carry are significant and inspiring. Thank you so much for sharing your stories with me. I hope to hear more. I've also heard that in the wake of a difficult pastoral transition, some people are still hurting. Through it all, a central desire I

perceive is for the church to live out a unified vision of hospitality and justice for our community and world.

In these five months together we have identified old and planted new seeds of transformation. Here are a few of those seeds:

- In second hour workshops, we began the work of establishing a “relational covenant” together, and we told our church narrative-going all the way back to 1765!
- We have embarked upon a year-long project of “vitality” coaching to learn about ways to reach out even more effectively to our community.
- We have experienced an expanded Christian Education program with young families.
- The church’s music continues to energize our spirits.
- We held the Habitat Christmas Tree Showcase and Alternative Gift Fair.
- We opened our doors for the Tag Sale and the ABC Clothing Sale.
- We made the front page of the Transcript for our Pie-Palooza.
- We hosted a well-attended training with the Berkshire Organizing Sponsorship Committee.
- We’ve hosted many energizing Second Hour programs, from conversations about physics and faith to Moses in Exodus.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously wrote, “The church is the church only when it exists for others.” In 2014 I’d like to build on this momentum for our church to exist for others. Let us continue to enhance our communication and unify our vision. Let us be even more effectively engaged in the healing of our aching planet and broken world.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Mark

Preacher’s Report – The Reverend Richard Noel Chrisman

Eight months of Sundays in 2013 - the Interim Preacher’s report.

Eight months of Sundays! It was a short time that was just long enough to get FCC to the next stage and to Mark Longhurst, sort of like those rickety rope bridges adequate enough to get somebody from one precipice, over a deep gorge, to the other one way over there! Whew, you made it! And now you’re exploring a new future together, feeling the lift under your wings that comes with having a full time minister. Wonderful.

Eight months of Sundays! It was a long time that was just short enough that you couldn’t get too tired of my shenanigans. A “visiting fireman” can put out fires—and start others! Whew, hopefully no damage done. Wonderful.

Through eight months of Sundays I grew to appreciate the special community you have at FCC and to see your potential relative to the current local and planetary circumstances. Through these uniquely challenging times, I am wishing for your ministries to evolve further and ultimately to flourish.

That is not just the heartfelt personal sentiment that I mean it to be—it is also a deep hope for the future of the “mainline Protestant church” in Berkshire County and in the U.S. We have an important witness to make in a country living on spiritual sound-bites. I suppose it is a good sign to discover the variety of philosophical quotes that decorate people’s e-mail signatures and Facebook pages. But people need a better diet than this concatenation of random nostrums, don’t we? We have a gospel to offer, a gospel to preach, a gospel to teach, a gospel to demonstrate through our individual lives, a gospel to apply in public life, a gospel to reveal further through our artistic efflorescences. This gospel enables a coherent life, it requires a disciplined life, it assures a fulfilling life. This gospel entails a life that is a total participation endeavor—its many-faceted vision touches all aspects of human existence, public and private, natural and societal, without which the people will (and do) perish [Prov. 29:18]. This is known as the Christian life—integrated, beautiful,

powerful—an instrument of endurance, survival, and triumph.

FCC, you must grasp—you must embrace—this gospel for the sake of Christ, which is to say, for the sake and love of the world. There is much at stake.

Blessings for 2014,
Richard Noel Chrisman

Pastoral Transition Team Report

Members of the Pastoral Transition Committee (PTC) met on a regular basis beginning after the last Annual Meeting to gather input and to move forward on advising the Deacons on pastoral arrangements for the first months of 2013. The lunch discussions following the Annual Meeting were valuable in understanding what our members feel are the immediate needs of the church and what help we should have to meet those needs. A “distillation” of the comments is below.

Not surprisingly, the comments indicate diversity of thought and opinion and we tried to include various points of view. To address the ongoing spiritual nurture and stability of our congregation requires more pastoral attention than pulpit supply. At the same time, we felt budgetary constraints were facing us during 2013. We hoped to find a person strong in facilitation and communication, experienced with multi-generational congregations, and comfortable in our type of community who will help us renew and extend our church membership.

After much discussion, we came to favor a “Designated Pastor” arrangement, which includes normal pastoral responsibilities but with reduced administrative work; possibly a flexible contractual commitment; and the potential to consider that individual as a settled pastor. Our active congregation and our intellectual Williamstown community offer many attractive features for pastoral candidates. A first draft of an advertisement was sent to the UCC, and we are got feedback on how to improve it, and were optimistic in finding a suitable candidate by May.

In the meantime, the Deacons arranged for pulpit supply (see Deacon’s Report above). Our Koinonia group intensified its efforts to help those in need; and our moderator worked with the staff and ministry teams on administrative matters.

In place of Second Hour on Sunday March 10th, a potluck lunch was served after worship service, approximately 11:15 am. While we enjoyed fellowship over this meal, the Pastoral Transition Committee heard the congregation’s views on the topic of communications and the actions taken to date by our committee.

Distillation of February 3, 2013 Discussions: Pastoral Transition Committee

1. Immediate needs of our congregational community

- a. Basic role: Leading the worship service, (continuity of satisfying Sunday worship), preaching, and coordinating planning with the Minister of Music, providing care and compassion for those in need, and supporting and coordinating the work of the staff.
- b. Healing; restoring trust. There are sores and people are grieving. Start the healing and the teaching. Rebuild trust, coordinate church activities, and create healthy interpersonal relationships. Achieve increased listening to each other. Long process involving any sort of therapeutic effort at sorting out and mediating conflict amongst us might cause an even greater reduction in church attendance and participation.
- c. Communication. Follow up on self-assessment goals we didn’t do, especially improved communication. Find ways to talk together so everyone feels heard and listened to, respecting all points of view. Allow discussion of old and new grievances, so that everyone feels that their point of view is heard. Conduct frequent on-going communication about the process and options that are being considered. Have more open meetings.

d. Other

- Gathering congregation's sense of what particular strengths/characteristics we want in a settled pastor
- Re-examining and adjusting the self assessment we have already completed, in a process that involves the entire congregation.
- A bold new direction. Stress coming anniversary, special events
- Alternative types of services and programs that are relevant for young families
- Different approaches to Christian education that minimize competition with local sports commitments
- Decide what work we could give up in order to reduce burnout (ex. Angel Tree)

2. Help we should have to meet those needs in the months ahead

a. Type of person and role.

- A pastor and not a preacher, one who is knowledgeable, objective, spiritual, inspiring, and a good listener
- Someone who can offer both pastoral care and a good sermon
- Someone who could be flexible to our needs
- A strong leader interested in the church, the congregation and the needs of the outside community
- Allow discussion of old and new grievances, so that everyone feels that their point of view is heard; not a judge and not one to take sides in what has happened in the past and pass a verdict
- Someone who would actively attempt mediation and conflict resolution would be a bad idea.
- To help us communicate better with one another, to focus on who we are, to confirm our beliefs, and clarify our mission; to help us move forward and to not have problems go underground only to resurface later; to help us do the congregational work of improving our process of relating to each other so we can better move forward together; to help us achieve affirmation of who we are and our visions for the future
- Someone to facilitate discussions on the type of pastor we are seeking
- Help us keep our current community, retaining the extremes of membership
- Help attract young families.

b. Structure

- Help in the pulpit, pastoral and facilitator roles, preferably in one person, not split between several people
- On our terms, that is, if not required to go through another lengthy self-examination and proceed to a settled pastor in a more timely way
- Full time interim: too expensive; possible fixed agenda that doesn't suit our needs; don't feel we need as long term commitment as interim requires.
- Professional interim desirable, if affordable
- Investment in outside help could mean more rapid and sustainable church growth.
- Perhaps a combination of part-time interim and a consultant (financial benefits?).
- Part-time interim needs to be here enough to listen to and know the congregation, at least 2-3 days/week.
- Desirable time for interim of 6 months

3. Local community needs our church could be addressing

1. Need to get our own house in order first, before increased community outreach. Use funds to focus on building our own church now (find a good person who can help us heal and grow) and worry about outreach later.
2. More ways to interact with and help one another, and to attract others, in the context of affirming who we are.

3. OK to cut Makepeace outreach money for a year but a year should be the maximum.
 4. Be like a public library in which resources are available to all but there is a group of caretakers who keep the place going.
 5. Alternate services at nontraditional times as part of including younger families who have other priorities for Sunday morning.
 6. Continue with mission partners in our building as part of meeting community needs.
 7. Consider a coupon exchange: people with coupons they do not need/want contribute them for those who do.
 8. Meals on Wheels, chaperones for a Rainbow Dance, Habitat work days. More of what we already do on these lines. However, people are busy. What about things that retired people can do such as mentoring and tutoring
 9. Activity for community children such as children's chorus, drama club, parent/child activities that could also serve as guidance in parenting; art, poetry, or music events for adults and/or children
- General

- The small group discussion over lunch seemed to be greatly appreciated and there was a significant interest in having more.
- It was also healthy for people to be able to express their feelings in a safe setting, with negative feelings being aired about events that were 14 to even 25 years past, and that were based on incorrect information or misunderstandings about facts. People need to get these feelings out.
- Committee documentation sent to all, so there are no surprises

After submitting our church profile, we received several ministerial profiles from Jill Graham, our Berkshire UCC representative. Not having seen any inspiration in these choices, we received a letter of interest from Rev. Rick Chrisman. A meeting was scheduled to talk with Rev. Chrisman more about his interest.

At that meeting on April 29th Rev. Chrisman made it clear that, although he was very interested in the challenges our church faces, he had come to realize that the amount of time that we deserved, did not match the time he had available to serve us, after his commitments at Skidmore College.

The PTC looked back again at the profiles that had previously been sent to us by Jill Graham. The most recent of those profiles had not been considered at the time it came to us, because we had already received the letter of interest from Rev. Chrisman that led to the meeting mentioned above. Upon looking at this profile with new eyes, the Pastoral Transition Committee found this candidate, Rev. Mark Longhurst, not only has the skills to meet many of our needs, but also some that we hadn't previously considered! The Pastoral Transition Committee invited Rev. Longhurst for an interview, where we were even more impressed with him in person than we had been on paper. At that meeting the PTC learned, among other things, that he was a finalist in a pastoral search at another church, near Boston, and expected a call from that church very soon. The PTC then enthusiastically recommended to the Deacons that he also meet with them, and soon. The Deacons made time to meet him on a Saturday morning, and were likewise impressed with their meeting with Rev. Longhurst, and recommended him strongly to the Church Council, at the Meeting on May 15th.

Because the Church Council wanted to offer Rev. Longhurst a job as our "Designated Pastor", the Deacons asked him to come and preach to our congregation on May 26th, so that the congregation could experience this young man in person, before he has to make up his mind about his future. On May 26th, Rev. Longhurst conducted the worship service in our Sanctuary, and shared coffee hour with us. After that, at about 11:45, we called together a Special Meeting of the Congregation. The motion asking the congregation to authorize the Church Council to negotiate with this candidate to be our Designated Pastor for the next two years passed with no objections. After Rev. Longhurst came back from lunch with Sam and Elizabeth Smith (thank you very much to the Smiths for taking Mark and Faith to lunch), he met with a small committee gathered by the Moderator, consisting of the Moderator, Moira Jones, the Treasurer Kevin Jones,

the chair of Personnel, Deborah Currie, and John Craig, as a legal advisor, and Susan Clarke, as another advisor, we met with Mark to answer questions he had about a contract that was developed over the next few weeks.

At 5 pm on June 16th, Rev. Longhurst conducted a Taizé worship service at our church, followed by a Special Meeting where it was unanimously decided to ask him to act as our “Designated Pastor”, beginning on September 16th. Also at this meeting one half of the amount of the recommended Makepeace grants were awarded.

The Pastoral Transition Team: Anne Atkinson Short, Magnus Bernhardsson, Susan Clarke, John Craig, Jina Ford, Moira Jones, Anne Skinner, Lauren Stevens, and Susan Yates

Reports from the Education and Fellowship Ministry Team

Serving members and friends, carrying out related Church events that give definition to our time together, the Education and Fellowship Ministry Team is responsible for Christian education, coffee hour, hospitality, membership and parish life, Meetinghouse events, and the library.

CO-CHAIRS: Carrie Waara & Margaret Oxtoby

Education and Fellowship Ministry Team Co-Chairs' Report

Co-Chairs: Carrie Waara and Margaret Oxtoby

Members: Karen Benko, Sam Humes, Rebecca Kamp, and Peter Witham and Dick Markham. These last two served until mid-year, when both moved out of the area. Margaret McComish and Angie Hillman graciously took their places on the team this fall.

A committee under deacon Cesar Silva's leadership planned Carrie Bail's farewell luncheon, and the Education and Fellowship ministry team provided decorations and luncheon for the event, which was capped with Diego Uribe's amazing cake. With music, prayer, tributes and gifts and an opportunity for members to contribute pages to a notebook for Carrie, many community as well as church members, participated in expressing our gratitude to Carrie and all her family, and shared the impact she had during her ministry here in Williamstown and beyond.

As a newly-constituted ministry team in February this year, we reflected on Rev. Rick Chrisman's sermons about being "stakeholders" in our church and on what we both need from the church and can give in time and talent. That seemed like a useful way for us to begin to overcome some of the problems in participation rates that had been experienced over the last few years, and to begin to heal from the losses and divisions of the previous years and ultimately to strengthen our faith and our church community. We decided to try to undertake more food fellowship events and to develop small group programs centered on some of the deep questions and issues of interest to the congregation.

We focused our efforts on supporting the Sunday School, Nursery, and Second Hour programs; the Green Committee's Mission 4/1 Earth; and on the food fellowship of coffee hour, Children's Sunday picnic (held indoors this year), celebrations of major anniversaries, and of our new minister and his family's arrival, Pie Palooza, and potlucks. We are thunderstruck by the generous outpouring of contributions of food and time at many events, especially Anne Atkinson Short and Delores Lovegreen's delicious baked goods. Allowing ourselves to take the summer off from meetings, with simple lemonade socials after worship services, we came back in the fall energized to undertake several new initiatives and further enhancements to previous commitments, especially as we watched the Sunday School and the congregation grow dramatically. The implementation of the online volunteer recruiting tool SignUp Genius is beginning to result in expanding our volunteer base.

As we partner with Reverend Mark in launching a new Lenten Small Groups series, we take joy in the deepening of relationships, of fellowship, within the church, and our new opportunities to grow in faith.

- Carrie Waara & Margaret Oxtoby

Christian Education - Sunday School and Youth Group Reports

This was an exciting year to lead Sunday school! We opened the year by studying the matriarchs and patriarch of Genesis. Starting with Transfiguration Sunday and throughout Lent we compared Bible stories about Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. During the Easter season, the church school led our congregation in the UCC wide "Mission 4/1 Earth" program with a focus on how to be good stewards of our environment. Students recorded congregational time spent maintaining and tending our planet, wrote letters to government representatives, and number of trees planted. We finished the school year on Pentecost with a children's Sunday Worship Service and All Church Picnic. On Children's Sunday, 19 students participated in leading the worship service, that blended the story of Earth's creation with Pentecost's gift of Spirit. Our average nursery and Sunday school attendance for January-May 2013 was 7.

After summer break, our first Fall unit was about faith communities. Students made name tags for everyone in church, performed a special Stone Soup skit during second hour on October 16th, and gave a

second performance for residents of Sweetwood on November 3rd. Students completed a lectionary unit which introduced basic Bible organization and featured reenacting scripture readings with Rev. Longhurst during time for children. We ended 2013 with a multigenerational Christmas Pageant that explored how each of the Gospel writers uniquely started their story about Jesus. The four worship teams that led the service included 23 youth, 5 college students, and 8 adults. Over the fall, average nursery and Sunday school attendance increased to 17 students.

The Middle School youth group for 4th - 8th graders has developed a cohesive core of students in 4th through 6th grade. This group has focused on hands-on, creative service activities, including taking a lead in pageant and children's Sunday service planning. Projects this year included making Rainbow Scarves for the annual Synod meeting to show support of LGBTQ teens, work on a welcome quilt, and building new picnic tables for church grounds. Students enjoy making lunch together and are also creating a mystery drama they plan to video tape. Regular attendees include: Karen McComish, Amelia and Teague Murphy, Miriam Bakija, Sarah and Patrick Briggs, Malcolm and Effie Skinner. Karen McComish also volunteers in the church nursery and takes an active role in leading Sunday School activities and discussions. For her contributions to Nursery, Sunday School and Youth Group, she is this year's winner of the Skinner award.

The High School service youth group began the year with a sleepover and cooking service project for Meals on Wheels. They held a Spaghetti Dinner in early April, and when combined with a fall fundraiser, were able to send \$700 to Project Hospitality on Staten Island, NY. Project Hospitality provides food and shelter for the hungry and homeless, and played an essential role in providing relief to Hurricane Sandy victims. Beth and Katie Davis went to Staten Island during the April School vacation to volunteer at a food bank and soup kitchen run by Project Hospitality. Fall projects included a trip to the Berkshire Food Project to reorganize their food pantry, and hosting the Habitat for Humanity Holiday Tree Showcase.

- Beth Davis, Sunday School Teacher & Youth Group Advisor

Nursery and Sunday School Students

Miriam and Jude Bakija
Everett, Charles and William Bayliss
Merrie and Charlotte Benjamin
Adriel and Klara Benko
Sarah and Patrick Briggs
Fiona and Connie Gordon
Mia and Isabella Harding
Jacob Hillman
Theo and Felix King
Ian Longhurst
Julia and John Stevens McComish
Amelia and Teague Murphy
Malcolm, Euphemia, and Rutledge Skinner
William and Meridith Wayne
Ruth Wheat

Middle School Student Volunteer Leader

Karen McComish

Assistant Sunday School Teachers and Nursery Staff

Mei Mei Chan
Katie Davis

Rosie Walters
Sarah Wong

Middle School Youth Group

Miriam Bakija
Sarah and Patrick Briggs
Amelia and Teague Murphy
Karen McComish
Malcolm and Euphemia Skinner

High School Youth Group

Aaron Burns
Katie Davis
Ben Hines
Sky Jones
Benni McComish
Dan Packer
Kate Parks
Luc Parks
Jasper Rosenheim
Noah Savage
Rose Shuker Hains
Darren, Devin, and Derrick Sullivan
Sarah Wong

Hospitality Committee Report

The Hospitality Committee was organized in 1991, when the Women's Fellowship ceased to be. There was a need for a group to organize receptions after Memorial Services for church members whose families asked the Hospitality Committee to do so.

This year receptions were held after the Memorial Services for Jane Mesick and Carl Westerdahl. Many people assisted by bringing food, working in the kitchen, and arranging flowers. Our sincere thanks to all who helped make these occasions easier for the family and friends.

- Kay Sherman

Library Committee Report

Committee members: Arletta Currie, Rutledge Currie, Abbie Hatton; Mary Ellen Pattee, consultant
Several titles were added to our collection this year, pertaining to pastoral selection and interim ministry. We continue with self sign-out for circulation.

Goals for 2014 will include expanding the committee and instituting the new cataloguing system as well as exploring ways to increase circulation.

- Arletta Currie

Second Hour Report

During the year 2013 the Second Hour Task Force developed a rich array of programs on topics ranging from Biblical studies, to theological issues, to matters of social concern, to straight-out fun events like the Pie Palooza. Indeed, there were twenty two Second Hour programs during the Winter, Spring, and Fall of 2013, with no programs being held during the Summer.

We started the new year with a three part series exploring the “Eastern” religious traditions of China, Japan, and India. Featured speakers were Sam Crane of the Williams History Dept, who discussed with us the close interweaving of religion and culture in both China and India, and Jason Josephson of the Religion Dept, who documented “The Invention of Japanese Religion” under the influence of Western interpreters. In February we explored our environmental concerns over the exploitation of Canadian tar sands oil by an analysis of the Keystone XL pipeline proposal, led by local environmental lawyer, Phil McKnight, and Williams College environmental economist, Sara Jacobson.

In a sequence of two programs we reflected on the rich experience of three of our senior church members, all nonagenarians, namely, Wayne and Suki Wilkins and John Chandler. (Unfortunately health issues prevented the Flynts from joining this celebration of lives well lived.)

At the end of February and extending into March we had the return of the very popular Williams College Biblical scholar, Edan Dekel, for a series of two programs on the Genesis texts dealing with the three covenantal encounters between God and Abraham, culminating in the remarkable story of God’s demand for the sacrifice of Isaac himself, the son of Abraham and the bearer of the covenant promise..

This was followed by a second Biblical study, this time a three-part series studying a sequence of three provocative, indeed puzzling, parables of Jesus. This program was led by our own Richard Ford, who is a published scholar on the topic of Jesus’ parables.

In April we once again hosted the (now well-established) Coffin Prize competition on “passionate public speaking,” with a program conducted on a Sunday evening rather than in the normal Second Hour time slot.

We also further revisited our environmental concerns in a program coordinated with the UCC “Mission 4/1 Earth” program. We explored the environmental impact of planting trees and going solar, in discussion with Andy Parkman and Jake Laughner.

Our Spring program series concluded with two sessions featuring the return of prior Second Hour speakers. We had a discussion with former Williams President and eminent medieval historian, Francis Oakley, on “The Current Crisis of Authority within Catholicism,” exploring the ongoing fallout from the last great Catholic ecumenical Council (Vatican II) as expressed in the election of a new Pope from South America. And then Magnus Bernhardsson, Middle Eastern historian at the College and a member of our church, explored with us the complicated outcomes of “Religion and the Arab Spring.” (Magnus was the very first speaker in the Forum on Contemporary Issues in Religion, which was the conceptual precursor of our current Second Hour @ the Meetinghouse program series.)

Our Fall series began with a program led by our Interim Minister, Rick Chrisman, who joined with Stewart Burns, a local specialist in civil rights history, to recall the momentous events of 50 years ago surrounding the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and the subsequent passing of the Voting Rights Act. This program was followed by welcoming our new Pastor, Mark Longhurst, who led us in two workshops related to reflection on the renewal of our church life.

In October we had a further discussion of outreach issues within our Church commitments (a matter we hope to revisit in the near future of Second Hour programs). At the end of October we once again explored the interaction of “Contemporary Physics and Faith,” led by two physicists from the College, William Wootters and Stuart Crampton, both of whom are committed Christians. (The latter returned to us after having been the second presenter in the Forum on Contemporary Issues in Religion series, the precursor of the Second Hour.)

In November Judy Grinnell, who spearheads a group concerned with “Revitalizing the Hoosic River,” presented a captivating series of images about how the mundane flood chutes containing the Hoosic River in North Adams might be environmentally transformed into both a great communal amenity and a revived riparian habitat. Then Williams Chaplain Rick Spalding led a very moving discussion with four Williams students about their experiences of “Coming Out Spiritually.” The Sunday before Thanksgiving brought to us once again the Pie Palooza, for the benefit of the Berkshire Food Project. The event this year was led by Susan Clarke.

In the last program of the year, during December, Glenn Shuck of the Williams Religion Dept discussed with us the perplexing preoccupation among many fundamentalist Christian and right wing political groups with apocalyptic predictions. His program was entitled, “Is the End of Time at Hand?” (We anticipate the ‘imminent return’ of Dr Shuck himself to explore with us some of the equally perplexing curiosities of the contemporary “culture wars”, an issue on which he will teach a course this Spring.)

It should be added that the Second Hour Task Force (which includes Sam Humes, Carolyn Behr, and Lynn Chick) is always open to considering new ways in which our ‘adult Christian education’ Second Hour program can explore the role of religion and our Christian faith in matters of Bible study, of theology, of spirituality, of social action, and of religious and Christian history. So do not hesitate to approach members of the Task Force with your ideas. We want this program to be a comprehensive venue for the exploration of the meaning and implications of our Christian faith and commitment.

- Charles Fox, on behalf of the Task Force

Reports from the Outreach Ministry Team

Serving others near and far, as we would wish to be served, particularly those without the opportunities or means, the Outreach Ministry Team is responsible for the angel tree, the delegates, just peace, Meals-on-Wheels, Makepeace grants, open & affirming, shawl ministry, communications, and our partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, Louison House and Hearts to Haiti

CHAIR: Susan Yates-Mulder

Report of the Outreach Ministry Team Chair

It has been a year of transition for the Outreach Ministry Team. In the past one of primary tasks of the team was to oversee monetary grants via Makepeace Grants and direct Outreach Allocations. The financial challenges of 2013 caused us to review the timing of Makepeace Grants in the Church year and to delay planned grants for January 2013. Also the need to revitalize our congregation and to welcome our community into our midst has created a need to review how outreach fits into our goals to become a more vibrant community.

In the past Makepeace Grant proposals were reviewed October to December and grants were approved at the Annual Meeting in January. These grants were funded from Makepeace monies that arrived early in the next fiscal year (ie: grants voted in the 2012 annual report were funded from 2013 budget dollars).

Because of the uncertainty of the Church's finances, it was voted at the annual meeting in January 2013 to postpone disbursing the Makepeace Grants presented in the 2012 report. We were thankful that eventually we could fund 50% of the planned grants and those funds were disbursed in August 2013. An additional \$1500 was provided in December to fund the Revitalization program that the Church has begun and \$500 was provided to fund Pastor Mark's outreach efforts in the community. The Outreach Ministry team is reorganizing the outreach grant process so that grants will be allocated later in the same fiscal year that the funds are received. The remaining Makepeace funds were returned to the general fund to cover budget shortfalls.

The Outreach Ministry Team plans to engage the congregation in small group discussions during 2014 to consider how we desire to envision Outreach going into the future. We will need to find a balance between needs for flexible funding for urgent unforeseen problems and longer term planning. An important part of Church revitalization will involve outreach into our community, and funding for hands-on outreach will need to be balanced with monetary grant outreach. We welcome your input into these conversations!

- Susan Yates-Mulder, Chair

Alternative Gift Fair Report

On Saturday December 7th, 2013 the Alternative Gift Fair was held in conjunction with the Holiday Walk and Habitat Tree Showcase. The number of vendors was smaller this year, but the participation was lively and joyful. Local crafts were displayed, the ABC House Clothing sale had a booth, and non-profit organizations provided gift options from around the world.

- Susan Yates-Mulder

Angel Tree Report

Annette Triquère and Marilyn Faulkner took on this project this year. The Salvation Army provided 20 tags and the Louison House 10 tags of names of children and adults needing gifts at Christmas. The Angel Tree was set up for Sunday, November 24, by the side entrance. The tags were all taken within three weeks time! Gifts were returned by December 13, for delivery to the Salvation Army and Louison House. Thanks to some cash donations bus passes were purchased along with some Wal-mart gift cards for the Louison House folks. We extend a great big THANK YOU to all who participated to help provide a little bit of Christmas joy for so many in our area!

- Marilyn Faulkner

Communications Task Force Report

A year of monthly newsletters continues to be available on our website, FirstChurchWilliamstown.org, and an e-mail is sent to most of the congregation on the last day of each month reminding people to take a look at what is happening at First Church, Williamstown. Please let the office know if you are not receiving this e-mail, but would like to. We do print out several copies for those who do not have e-mail, or prefer to have a paper copy to read, and we leave printed copies out on the table in the vestibule for visitors who may be interested. Our new Office Assistant, Terry Plumb-Clark, has been instrumental in helping to make the newsletter available in this way.

The website also contains many announcements of current events at First Church, Williamstown. We have made some progress on reducing the doubling of events on the calendar, and continue to look for ways to reduce this even more. Please do excuse the occasional doubling of an event, as we work to get a new system up and running.

Two new brochures were developed for the office to hand to visitors. A black and white church brochure is now available to be printed in the office on the church. A new color wedding brochure was produced, mostly using text from the website, so that the office has something to give to prospective couples who are interested in being married in our church. It will be printed as needed, and so can be updated regularly.

This year, for the first time, the Christmas advertising was done on iBerkshires.com, rather than in the print media. As the local print media continues greater consolidation, we may find that we need to change our dealings with them further. Having run an ad for the month of December, into the beginning of January, we were charged less than we had paid previously for two weeks of advertising in local papers. This ad linked to our website, so the ad did not have to include all the text, and could be designed to be more pleasing as a result. We have been told that this ad received 91,000 “impressions,” which sounds very impressive. We will look into how to use this service to our advantage in the future.

The Communications Task Force has few if any meetings (it does most of its business via e-mail). If you would like to be a part of the continuing conversation about how the church can do public relations in the modern age, please contact someone from the list below to let them know your interest.

The Communications Task Force: Moira Jones (chair), Lisa Hiley, Trevor Murphy, Terry Plumb-Clark, Leigh Short, and Jean Vankin

- Moira Jones

Delegates' Report

The primary tasks of the church's delegates includes representing our congregation at meetings of the Berkshire Association of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, attending the ordination and installation ceremonies of various county UCC churches and participating in the two day Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (MACUCC). With the exception of the Annual Meeting of the Conference, the above tasks for 2013 did not require detailed note-taking but were nonetheless important for maintaining lines of communication within the Berkshire Association.

The 214th Annual Meeting of the MACUCC was held in Sturbridge, MA on June 14 & 15, 2013.

The theme for this past year's meeting was taken from Habakkuk 2:2-3

Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. NRSV

There were two major events at the conference that will have long-term ramifications:

1. Affirmation of the fossil fuel Divestment Resolution
2. Address by the Keynote Speaker, The Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers

1. Affirmation of the Divestment Resolution

Delegates to the 214th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference overwhelmingly affirmed a Resolution urging divestment from fossil fuel companies - a resolution the Conference Board of Directors had earlier voted to send to the UCC General Synod, the denomination's biennial meeting.

"This resolution arises from two basic realities," said Vicki Kemper, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Amherst. "The first is that Jesus' basic core teaching ... is that we must love our neighbors as ourselves, and we have realized that future generations of the earth are our neighbors. The second is that climate change is already happening, and if fossil fuel companies continue to carry out their missions to make money for their shareholders by extracting all fossil fuels from the earth, life as we know it on our planet will cease."

Kemper acknowledged that if all religious groups and colleges and universities divested, only 2 percent of fossil fuel stock would be impacted.

But, she said: "The only power we have in this challenge is the moral, spiritual power to revoke the social licenses of these companies to continue to profit from wrecking the earth. The question is - will we exercise that power?"

Since the Conference Board of Directors first voted in December in favor of bringing the resolution to Synod, 10 additional Conference Boards and numerous local churches have voted to co-sponsor or endorse the resolution.

The full text of the resolution, and its endorsers, is at: macucc.org/divest.

2. Address by the Keynote Speaker, The Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers

In his address - after briefly summarizing the reasons (the bad news) why mainline churches are dying on the vine - Meyers said:

"Now for the good news: the church of Jesus Christ in the Western world is in terrible shape. That's right - the good news is the bad news - and that's good news. Why? Because...apparently about every five hundred years the church holds a sort of giant rummage sale. It must decide what goes and what stays, what is dispensable and what is irreplaceable. Five centuries after the Protestant Reformation, we find ourselves passing through precisely such a time. Think of it as a kind of spring cleaning."

And another quote:

"The great irony of the church in the Western World is that nobody considers Christians or Christianity to be dangerous; nobody regards us as anything other than dependably decent; certainly nobody refers to us as "persons of interest." The charge against Jesus was that he "stirred up the people," and the fate of apostles was persecution and even death. Our movement was born as contra mundum (against the world). How then did we become at home in the world?"

If these quotes spark your interest, please read Meyers's book [The Underground Church - Reclaiming the Subversive Way of Jesus](#).

"When was the last time you thought of going to church as dangerous? Once we challenged the status quo; now we mostly defend it. The Underground Church tells the story of how we forgot where we came from and why we must recover our subversive roots. Read this book if you dare. Become part of the movement if you are daring." - Archbishop Desmond Tutu

- Sam & Elizabeth Smith, Church Delegates

Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity Liaison Report

This year, NBHfH came close to completing two projects, which is notable since in the past projects typically lasted for at least two years. This shows real progress on their goal to reduce construction-based disruption of neighborhoods. The first two month project was a wheelchair access ramp for a home in Adams. The second project, begun in June, is the rehab of a house on 825 West Shaft Road, North Adams, for the Rice family. This project has involved Williams, MCLA, and area high school students as well as dedicated adult volunteers and the Rice family. So far the rehab has included removing water damaged interior, exterior, and structural supports, replacing the roof, windows and siding, waterproofing the basement, and insulating the house from roof to basement. Finish work will continue in 2014.

NBHfH completed a project in December of 2012 in Williamstown, on Route 2 opposite the Spruces. Planning a new project did not begin until early in 2013, when it was too late to apply for a Makepeace grant. This year Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity (NBHfH) did not received financial support from our church, because their timeline did not match our application process; our church may want to consider a more agile process for financially supporting this cooperative and affordable housing ministry.

Our church did host NBHfH's Annual Holiday Tree Showcase, during the Williamstown Holiday Walk, on Saturday, December 7 by donating use of Fellowship Hall, assisting with organizing, set up and clean up, and holding trees for raffle winners to pick up. Close cooperation and coordination between FCC and NBHfH on the fundraiser was a high point this year. The event raised \$2400 for Habitat, and continued the tradition of our Fellowship Hall being a favorite destination for many on the Holiday Walk. Thanks to the many Sunday School students, youth, individuals and families who volunteered the weekend of the holiday walk and decorated trees during second hour on Sunday, December 1.

This includes but is not limited to:

Bayliss Family
Briggs Family
Jytte Brooks
Aaron Burns
Brandon Burns
Mei Mei Chan
Currie & Skinner & Harding Families
Davis & Handpicker family
Keith Davis
Abbie Hatton
Rebecca Kamp and Miriam Bakija
Murphy Family
Carrie Waara and Sarah Wong
Sullivan Family
Jean Vankin

Just Peace Coordinator's Report

This year has been marked by change. We have a new pastor. We are revisiting our mission team manuals. We are exploring what it means to be a vital church. From a just peace perspective, we are taking a hard look at what we want to accomplish in our outreach efforts. The outreach mission team is working on

this task. We have a chance to join with other churches to expand our influence by working cooperatively to accomplish potentially transformative changes in our community. These changes come under the heading of social justice, and will be determined by the participants.

Let's take a look at what church vitality means. After four of us attended a conference on How to Reach New People, held at our Framingham UCC offices, our Church Council signed on with a coach who is experienced in the work of church vitality. This form of outreach is designed to take us actively into the community to listen to what people are looking for in a church, in their lives. We do not start by talking about our church, we listen. Only after it comes naturally do we invite folks to visit our church, to experience the possibility of being in a community of seekers who are trying to bring about social justice. Mark will play an active role, but he cannot do it by himself. We must all take a part in becoming an invitational church.

We had a Just Peace Sunday on May 26, this year, and I gave a sermon on the topic of Justice and Faith. In that sermon, I shared some of the things that I have been learning in my faith journey. I observed that we do not often talk to each other about our faith. We had a wonderful series of classes on Faith and Politics a number of years ago, during which we shared our faith journeys. It was a powerful experience, a time of bonding and learning, components of a vital church. We have already begun to seek out opportunities for this kind of sharing, in Second Hour, the Lenten series, and the Iona worship service.

The Berkshire Organizing Sponsoring Committee is part of a new project to bring churches and other religious groups together to organize for power and justice. This project is under a group called the InterValley Project, and they are funded to provide a staff person to work with us, Wendy Krom. We held a North Berkshire Leadership Institute at our church with Wendy and Ken Galdston on January 11, 2014, to begin training leaders for this initiative. Eleven members of our church have attended one or more of the Leadership Institutes. We are in very early stages with this project, and need to decide if or when we will become a Sponsoring Agency. In Berkshire county, there are already a number of organizations who have agreed to be sponsoring agencies, including the Berkshire Association of the UCC and St. John's Episcopal Church here in Williamstown. As with the Church Vitality work, this project emphasizes talking with each other and developing relationships.

We are in for an interesting time at our church with these new initiatives. There is a good level of excitement and curiosity about the emphasis on listening and engaging with each other. I look forward to working with all of you as we move forward.

- Jina Ford, Just Peace Coordinator

Makepeace Grant Funds

There is no report of Makepeace Grants for the Church year 2013 because the allocation of monies for Makepeace Grants has been moved to the year in which the funds are received. We have yet to receive Makepeace funds for this year, but they are due soon. The revised budget for 2014 shows funds for Outreach projects in 2014, including Makepeace Grants, which will be allocated during this church year.

- Susan Yates-Mulder

Meals-on-Wheels Report

Approximately 25 church folk continue to carry on this program, assumed by FCC in 2004, of preparing and delivering about 650 meals yearly as part of the local ecumenical "Take and Eat" program. This effort provides meals the fourth Sunday of each month year round to those in our community in need of nutritional and social support. We share this effort with St. John's Church and St. Patrick's Church covering other Sundays.

Marilyn Faulkner and Kay Sherman have spearheaded this effort for the last 15 months in cooperation

with Jean Vankin who secures delivery people each month, Marian Wilkin who rounds up the kitchen helpers, and Annette Triquère who contacts the cookie bakers! Blessings to all who continue to give generously of their time and talents. AND - new recruits are always welcome!

- Marilyn Faulkner & Kay Sherman, Co-Organizers

Outreach Allocations Report

The funding for Outreach Allocations (usually grants are given in December) was cancelled for 2013 and used to cover budget shortfalls.

Shawl Ministry Report

Knitters met four times in 2013. They are Judy Blackmer, Arletta Currie, Marilyn Faulkner, Barbara Hadden, Abbie Hatton, Marge Janes, and Wendy VanOrden. This quiet ministry has brought comfort and joy to over 160 members and friends of the church in the 10 years we have been knitting together. Shawls have also been given to Louison House. At least twice a year shawls are dedicated and blessed during a worship service. Once a year a special offering is taken to buy yarn. In addition to work of shawl knitters, this year many members of the church participated in knitting, crocheting or quilting rainbow colored scarfs for the LGBT Coalition at the General Synod. 47 scarves were sent from our church. Now we shawl knitters know there are many more people in our congregation who have a talent for knitting and crocheting. We invite you to join us in continuing this work of prayerful care and concern for others.

I include this prayer, often read as we open our meetings,
written by the Rev. Susan S. Izard, co-author of book, Knitting into the Mystery:

*Gracious God, God of Life, God of Love, God of Compassion,
We give you thanks for your abiding presence and our shared joy
that you are our God and we are your people. We give you thanks for
the gathering of our knitting circle. We give you thanks for the
shawls we create. We give you thanks for each other and all of those for
whom we knit.*

*Bless, O God, our time together. Bless our hearts that they might be
filled with your Spirit. Bless our hands that they might be touched by
your creative power. Bless our knitting that the shawls may be filled
with your love.*

*Gather us, Holy One, in your embracing arms. Fill us with your tender
mercy. Nurture us with your compassionate presence. Breathe in us
the gift of your grace so that our hearts may be your Heart, our hands
may be your Hands, and our work may be your Work, now and forever
more. Amen.*

- Abbie Hatton

Reports from the Stewardship Ministry Team

The Stewardship Ministry Team comprises the elements of our church community that enable us to reach outward and inward: a building for worship and church programs, support of our leadership, and funds to fulfill our ongoing commitments. Together with the Treasurer, its responsibilities include: funding and financial oversight, personnel and legal matters; our building; and certain aspects of community engagement, such as enabling building use and Williams College liaison.

CHAIR: Brian Handspicker

Organization

The 2013 Stewardship Ministry Team was represented by: Brian Handspicker '14 (Chair), Michael Sussman '14, Anne Skinner '14, Bruce Grinnell '15, Jody Green '15, Ben Hynes '15, Nancy Piatczyc '16, Deborah Currie '16, and David Dewey '16. Each member brought a unique background in participation in the life of the church, sharing views and experiences, contributing to decision-making, and broadening his or her understanding of the administrative operations of the church. Ministry Team members worked closely with the Treasurer (an ex officio member of Stewardship), making policy and spending decisions, and working with other members of the Congregation in sub-groups focused on specific projects. Jody Green has been our scribe for most of our written reports.

Donations, Financial Reviews, and Budgeting

Whitman Welch Society. The Society is named after the first minister of our Church.

With our 250th anniversary approaching, it is fitting to honor Rev. Welch by strengthening the future mission of the FCC through estate planning. Those who have already placed the Church in their will or trust are: Robert V. and Carolyn P. Behr, Magnus Bernhardsson, Susan S. Clarke, John C. and Barbara A. Craig, Jean S. Donati, Mary A. Flynt and Henry N. Flynt, Jr., Margaret McComish, Pauline G. Piper, and Carl A. Westerdahl.

Perhaps there are others who have already made such plans, and there will be others who will do so in the future. Kindly inform our Financial Secretary, Annie Parkman, so that your name can be added to the Society's rolls.

The estates and living gifts of the following are already working for the Church in special ways or as part of the endowment fund: Caroline Hopkins Denison, Betsy Debevoise, Richard C. Donati, Doughty – Botsford, Ralston Doughty, Doris M. Harbor, James H. Hunter, Isabelle L. Makepeace, Willis Milham, Sheila A. O'Neil, Elizabeth and Raymond Sawyer, John N. Umlauf, Robert G. L. Waite, and Anonymous.

Annual Pledge Committee. Brian Handspicker led the 2014 Pledge Committee which included Susan Clarke, David Dewey, Kevin Jones, Moira Jones, Rev. Mark Longhurst, Annie Parkman, and Nancy Piatczyc. The committee's goals included helping the congregation to understand how important pledges are to the Church and its missions through newsletter announcements, pledge letters, a new Christmas postcard, and follow-up thank you cards and reminder calls. We also have been finding time to make some semi-random follow-up thank you calls during which we have given members a chance to share their joys and concerns of the church. We were pleased to hear nearly universal pleasure with Mark's work as our Designated Pastor. At press time we had received 88 pledges for \$192,310.20, surpassing our goal of \$190,000. Happily we have 9 new pledgers. Welcome!

Pledges were given in honor or memory of the following: Mrs. Janice M. Alund, Hazel Bullock, David MacGregor Burns, Sam Edson, Dr. David English and Barbara Joan English, Henry and Mary Flynt, Hubert and Lottie Goodale, Una and Art Schwedner, and Fleta C. Wellcome.

Tag Sale. The tag sale is a major recycling event in the community. It is a community effort introducing us to many Williams students and others in the community. It provides a low-cost shopping opportunity for members of the community who are facing hard times. Plus, the funds raised this way allow us to continue our outreach efforts to help others in the community. Stewardship members thank all those who helped with

this significant effort. As usual, everyone stepped forward to help with the collection of student donations and then helped with the cleaning and organization for the Sept 8th tag sale. We sought volunteers from the Williams College community to help with the organization and cleaning with the “carrot offer” of early shopping.

This was another successful year for the church’s tag sale, with total receipts of \$16,589.99 (after all expenses were paid), surpassing our goal of \$12,000. Many, many thanks and appreciation for everyone’s hard work. Tag Sale Committee: Annie Parkman, Cynthia Payne and Jody Green

Financial Review and Budgeting. Stewardship members have worked with the Treasurer, Kevin Jones and Financial Secretary, Annie Parkman, receiving their monthly reports, including regular monitoring of income and expenditures, both for Stewardship and for the church as a whole. Annie Parkman has expertly provided historical records and documentation in many endeavors.

Personnel and Legal Matters

Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee consists of five individuals – the Moderator, the Clerk, a Stewardship representative and chair, an Education and Fellowship representative, a Deacons representative, and an Outreach representative. Together they are responsible for:

- Review individual job descriptions to assure they are up-to-date and inclusive;
- Contribute to the performance evaluations given by the Pastor to staff members;
- Recommend salaries for the upcoming year;
- Review and recommend adjustments to the general Personnel Policies for all employees;
- Help resolve any personnel-related issues as they arise.

After reviewing our staff salaries and consulting with the Budget Task Force we recommended a 2% salary increase for staff in 2014. Since the Designated Pastor was newly called this past Autumn, we recommended a 0.5% salary and housing allowance increase to synchronize his raise schedule with the rest of staff.

The Meetinghouse

Fire Sprinkler System and Basement Renovations. This year we completed renovating a basement room (“the mango room”) so that it can be used by the local “A Better Chance House” charity as a storage and sorting headquarters for their annual clothing sale, long held at FCC. Bringing the ABC clothing sale operations and the associated flow of volunteers into the building has helped to strengthen the ties between our two organizations to their mutual benefit. Bringing the basement space up to the requirements of the fire code, including installation of a sprinkler system, proved more expensive than anticipated. All available building improvement funds for 2013 were required to complete the basement renovations along with an additional \$13,000 loaned to us by a parishioner. This loan was paid off in the waning days of December 2013 as we closed the books on the year. Although it cost more than expected due to building code requirements, we now have a significant new mission partner in-house and the beginnings of a church-wide fire sprinkler system in the basement.

Winter Closing of the Sanctuary. Through the winter 2012-2013 we repeated our ongoing experiment of winter worshipping in Fellowship Hall instead of the Sanctuary. While many congregation members enjoyed the opportunity for a less formal style of worship in Fellowship Hall, a poll taken in the Autumn of 2013 showed that, by a 2-1 majority, the congregation preferred worshipping in the Sanctuary throughout the winter.

Since we found that we did not save a significant amount of fuel nor money by worshiping in Fellowship Hall, the Deacons and Church Council have decided to return winter worship services to the Sanctuary, with a few special services held in Fellowship Hall when it makes creative or logistical sense.

Future Projects. Planning and implementation for major capital projects is ongoing and we continue to identify needed projects to be carried out as future funds permit. We are looking ahead to our 250th anniversary in 2015 with hopes for exciting new ideas for refurbishing and re-energizing our church.

Community Engagement

Building Use by Community Groups. As part of the church's mission to serve the community, our building is made available for use by various community groups. This past year we have continued our approach to building users as "Mission Partners." Through careful tuning of rates and encouraging donations for otherwise free member-sponsored events, we have maintained our building use revenue at \$33,000 in 2013. With so many Mission Partners to whom we rent, our church is alive with staff, family, friends and clients. We have come to understand that our historic meetinghouse is not just a building to be maintained, but an asset to be used for our missions and a place for the people that make up the broader community of our Church. We now look not just to raise money with our building, but also to perform community service through our building, and in so doing to increase membership in our Church community.

We support and are supported by the offices of The Counseling Center in the Berkshires, the Hoosic River Watershed Association (HooRWA), COOL, Higher Ground, and Greylock ABC. In addition we house the efforts of Meals-on-Wheels, Berkshire Food Project, Music Together, Starlight Stage Youth Theatre, Miverva Arts Center, Gentle Yoga, Dynamic Flow Yoga, Ciao Italia, Red Cross, Spruces Tenants' Association, Habitat for Humanity, Buxton School, Williams College Davis Center events, Wild Oats, Caretaker Farm, Northern Berkshire Contra-dancing, JavaJive, and now multiple "anonymous" programs. Each of these Mission Partners support and extend our own church's outreach missions - serving compassion, health, eco-justice, economic justice, and educational justice to our local and wider communities.

Observations. Members of Stewardship have worked hard to carry out responsibilities on specific projects and to make decisions in the context of the church's overall finances and priorities. We are fortunate to attract so many volunteers for so many projects, and to have support from the staff members associated with Stewardship - Terry Plumb-Clark, Office Administrator/Assistant to the Pastor; Gail Burns, Building and Office Manager; Annie Parkman, Financial Secretary; and Kay Sherman, Office Assistant and Assistant Treasurer. In addition we are ably supported by Steve McMahon, Maintenance & Repair, our Setup/Cleanup Crew including Aaron Burns, Brandon Burns, Tristan Burns, Ben Hynes, Cameron Martin, Andrew McNamara, John Kolesar, and Nathan Samson, our cleaning service, InnerSpace, and our landscaping service, MountainHome Landscape.

- Brian D. Handspicker, Chair, 2013 Stewardship Ministry Team