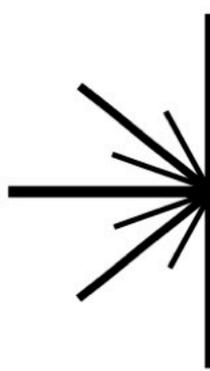


2014

ANNUAL REPORT

(covering the period between January 1 to December 31 2014)



 **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.

On the Cover: The cover photograph, taken by Harry Montgomery during December 2014, is appropriate for the cover of this Annual Report, since this report is all about the year that Rev. Mark Longhurst was our Designated Pastor. At the time this picture was taken, the church had voted on the budget necessary to pay Rev. Longhurst as our settled pastor. The vote to "call" Rev. Longhurst happened just after the New Year, in 2015. This picture is from the season of Advent, the season of waiting, which seemed a very appropriate comment on the status of our Church in 2014.

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**Agenda for the
250th Annual Meeting of the
First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ, Williamstown, Massachusetts
Sunday, 1 February 2015, 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 - Parliamentarian

BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH - Moira Jones

1. To review the minutes of the 2014 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 2014 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

249th Annual Meeting of the Congregation, Sunday, February 2, 2014

The 249th annual meeting of the First Congregational Church of Williamstown convened at 11:20 a.m. in the sanctuary following the morning worship service.

Beth Goodman, serving as parliamentarian, declared a quorum of 40 members plus to be present.

Names of the deceased members and friends were read. Moderator, Moira Jones, lead the reading of the Owing of the Covenant.

The minutes of the 248th Annual Meeting of February 2, 2013, meeting were moved, seconded, and approved.

Fifty year members, Jean Donati, Phil Smith, and Lauren Stevens, were recognized with a plaque and flower from Rev. Mark.

The Jim Skinner Award was given to Karen McComish for her steadfast assistance to Beth Davis in the church school. The Marion Shaw Award was presented to Marilyn Faulkner by Carolyn Behr. The Green Award was not given this year.

Brian Handspicker as head of the Stewardship Team, had two awards to present to 'Stewards of the Meetinghouse' being Hank Flynt for his quiet support of the church mission and building. And secondly to the Currie Family for their efforts in decorating the church for the Advent season.

Brian asked for a motion to establish this new award for a 'Steward of the Meeting House' and although seconded, the congregation moved to put the motion on hold for Church Council to decide.

Kevin Jones, Treasurer, had a visual presentation recapping the 2013 spending and the budget for 2014. At this time last year our budget looked to have a large deficit of about \$47,000. but due to good planning, cost cutting in various areas, and adjustment of small funds not part of the budget, we actually have come out well with \$30,000 now left as discretionary income to be spent. Most of this amount is Makepeace funds that were put on hold for giving out in 2013. In July 2013 we were able to give out half the grant amounts because of our favorable cash flow.

The Budget Task Force recommended that \$500 be put into the Pastor's fund for miscellaneous expenses associated with community relations, \$3000. to the Education Team budget for additional pay for the Christian Ed coordinator and some for the Stewardship Team to begin work on their long list of renovations including the kitchen, a possible laundry and shower room for ABC and for future disaster center use, and conversion or upgrade of the heating system. They are trying to be very transparent in cooperation and spending.

Susan Yates as outgoing head of the Outreach Team proposed a motion to allotting \$10,000 to \$15,000 for traditional Makepeace grants and using the balance for the work of the ministry teams and getting the congregation involved such projects.

In the end, Beth Goodman made an amendment to Susan's motion to take \$10,000 right now for Makepeace grants from 2013 unallocated funds to focus on outreach, and that use of the unallocated \$30,254 funds in the 2014 budget be decided by Church Council with input from the teams. This amended motion passed by unanimous vote.

Kevin reported the pledges are looking very strong for 2014 and the number of pledging units is going up. Kevin moved that the small funds listed as temporarily restricted funds be looked into by Church Council with the hope of rolling them into one contingency or “Rainy Day fund.” This motion was seconded and approved.

Reports were reviewed. The Education and Fellowship Team had an addendum to their report as follows:

“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.”

Also, Beth Davis has been given the title of Christian Education Director instead of just Sunday School Teacher. Our Church school is suddenly burgeoning!

Phil Smith presented the slate of nominees for new positions as listed in the Annual Report. A motion was made to approve the nominees, seconded, and passed.

The new officers and members of the ministry teams were blest in prayer.

Our Covenant with Habitat for Humanity was extended for another year by unanimous vote.

We agreed to send greetings to previous pastors (along with a copy of the Annual Report.)

Under other business to come before the meeting, Sam Smith invited people to join a vigil here at the church on the Keystone Pipeline issue on Monday evening, February 3, 2014, at 5:30 p.m.

Rev. Mark passed our copies of what he proposed as a Relational Covenant for the congregation. He had introduced this idea when he first came in September.

Several meetings and conversations at second hour ensued. Notices and opportunity for input were offered in the Sunday bulletins. This one-page relational covenant has come out of those sessions, notes, and conversations. The covenant has been approved by the Council and was subsequently adopted by the meeting. It reflects a manner of behavior and listening and dissenting with love and respect of each other.

The meeting adjourned with a benediction and hymn at 1:10 p.m.

Marilyn Faulkner,
Clerk

Special All-Church Meeting Sunday, December 14, 2014

A special meeting was held on Sunday, December 14, 2014, to hear the report and vote on the recommendations of the Budget Task Force for the proposed 2015 budget of the church.

The meeting commenced after service at 11:10 a.m. There was a quorum of about 40 members present.

John Craig, Treasurer, reported that the Budget Task Force group had met at least six times over the past months to thoroughly consider budget requests and issues involved. He noted the request on page 2 indicated by an asterisk for \$20,000 for the Director of Christian Ed was not firm as the request was received too late for the group to meet about it.

So far this year, 2014, \$184,000 has been received in pledge funds and we anticipate receipts of \$194,000 by the end of the year. Pledges to date for 2015 total \$220,000 and are still coming in.

A question arose regarding the amount of Pastor's compensation listed on Page 4 of \$89,487.17. It was pointed out the total is a combination of \$86,487.17 on Page 1 under pastoral support and professional expenses on Page 2 of \$3000.

Question arose as to the 250th Anniversary Consultant and that nothing is budgeted for 2015. The answer according to Brian Hanspicker is that funds for events and promotion of the 250th anniversary will be coming from a capital campaign during 2015 and not from our operating budget. In 2014, some limited funding (\$1358.30) for the celebration was spent for Gail Burns' time reorganizing the archives for Moira's historical presentations. Gail's services may again be used as we get into our fundraising in 2015.

The fund raising line amount of \$12,000 is the estimated income from our annual fall tag sale. In 2014 the total income was just over \$16,000,

There being no more questions Susan Yates-Mulder moved that the budget be adopted. Seconding was Carrie Waara. The vote passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Jody Green as chairman of the Stewardship Team expressed great thanks to David Dewey for his work on the pledge drive. The team is very pleased with the outcome of the pledging and is feeling a great deal of optimism for this next year and that we will be able to offer some wonderful programs!

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Marilyn Faulkner, Clerk

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Congregation, Sunday, January 4, 2015

Moderator, Moira Jones, called the special meeting to order after service at 11:15 a.m.

The Moderator reiterated the purpose of the meeting was to act on the recommendation of the Church Council and the Deacons of the First Congregational Church – United Church of Christ to call Mark Longhurst as our settled pastor. This recommendation was quickly moved and seconded.

Discussion was opened and Cesar Silva, Head Deacon, asked for a moment to comment on the process involved in this recommendation. Last year the COPM (Committee on Pastoral Ministry) which annually reviews the work of the pastor was asked as well to seek input from the congregation about the possibility of having Mark Longhurst stay on as our settled pastor. Representatives from the three ministry teams including Jody Green from Stewardship, Margaret McComish from Education and Fellowship, and Judy Wright from Outreach as well as Cesar Silva for the Board of Deacons comprised the committee. The committee was impressed with the enthusiasm and support received for Mark. The Committee then recommended to the deacons and subsequently to the Church Council that Mark be called as our settled pastor. This recommendation has the full support of Church Council.

A Discernment Committee was appointed that met three times with Mark to discuss our past history as a congregation, where we are now, and where we want to be in the future. There was also a meeting regarding the details of the calling in December and the compensation package was included in the approved special budget meeting in December. Further, part of the agreement includes a four-week family leave for Mark in February when the new baby comes.

Several questions were raised including why not a longer paternity leave, but Moira said the month is what had been agreed upon between the deacons and Mark. Another question concerned Mark's vision for the future. He replied his goals right now are for strengthening relations in the congregation with God, the community and each other.

A question concerned Mark's on-going educational pursuits. He was a said he has not seriously considered this but he would love to work toward and DMA or Doctor of Ministry if God wills and the opportunity arises. He is currently participating in a program through the Center for Action and Contemplation exposing him to theological programs in a mystical tradition. For this he takes a week away in September each year.

Rick Spalding spoke of the holiness of this moment – a moment that speaks for us as profound and mysterious. He reminded us Mark is being 'called' and not hired. This brings a pastorate into being and should inspire our living in a deeper way. God's spirit is underneath making this ministry possible!

With no further questions or comments, the meeting voted unanimously in its call to Mark Longhurst to be our Settled Pastor!

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m. with celebration to follow in Fellowship Hall! Amen!

Marilyn Faulkner, Clerk

Moderator's Report

2014 Annual Report, where has the time gone?! We have had a very busy year that has led us down a new path. We have gone from a Church that wasn't sure where we were going to a church that has become more comfortable with the path we are on. We started last year feeling we were at the beginning of our transition. Rev. Mark Longhurst had been with us only 4 months at that point. This year began with our congregational vote to have Rev. Longhurst stay as our settled pastor. Rev. Mark (as he signs his newsletter articles), has gotten to know us much better in this past year, as we have gone through the change of each season together.

January saw what has become our annual Martin Luther King Day of Service, with Williams faculty and students, MCLA students, Greylock ABC students, and First Church members and staff helping us to clean up and get things ready for new projects. The ABC clothing recycling efforts were expanded, the sound equipment which belongs to JavaJive was moved. A new Church Archive was created upstairs ~ to make more room for the ABC recycling efforts in the basement. A new meeting room was created in the basement, to be more private for "anonymous" meetings, after-school tutoring, music classes, theater rehearsals, and other meetings. New Sunday School rooms were reconstituted to house our expanding Sunday School program. A comprehensive clean out of office supplies, maintenance supplies, and financial records was much needed.

Just hearing this list of work done on MLK Day, says a lot about what has been happening in our Church this year. The Sunday School is expanding ~ something that some believed would never happen again! We have been organizing our archives ~ much needed in this time of anniversaries!

In Lent, we redesigned the tradition of Round Robin Dinners to include discussion topics. There were seven topics to choose from, which ranged from "Mindful Parenting", to "The Politics of Peace", and from "Teaching Through Emotions" to "Reading My Bright Abyss". Two more small group discussions were offered at the beginning of November, "Real Good Church", and "Ethical Sensitivity: Recognizing and Prioritizing our Values".

At the beginning of November all our Ministry Teams were invited to come together to discuss larger issues of the Church. We hope to repeat this retreat on an annual basis, so that our leadership can look forward to this time to envision the kind of Church we want to be.

All through the year, our new Office Administrator, Terry Plumb-Clark, grew into her job. We are all warmed by her friendly greeting each time we enter the office. Steve McMahon, has taken over the duties leading the set up and clean up crews, and we are wondering how we ever accomplished these tasks without his capable hands. The building is busy with Music Together, Gentle Yoga, and other classes and meetings each week. With Terry scheduling, and Steve to make sure everything is set up, things are humming smoothly.

We announced to the Williamstown Community about the 100th anniversary of our building by marching in the town's 4th of July parade. Although it was a very damp, rainy day, many of our fellow townsfolk cheered us on! That celebration continued with the exhibition "100 years in White: The 1914 Renovation of the First Congregational Church" at the Williamstown Historical Museum, which opened in November (there is still time to see it, if you haven't made it over there yet!) with my talk on that same topic (if you missed the talk, you can see it online at Willinet.org). First Church also got a very good reception at the Community Chest's Penny Social this year, during the town's Holiday Walk. In the fall, the Deacons decided to start offering coffee before the service, to warm people as they come in the door. This has turned out to be a wonderful thing for newcomers, and regulars alike!

Many of these efforts have been inspired by the efforts of last year's Vitality Team, which is inspiring a new group: the Welcome Team. Stay tuned for more on the Welcome Team, as the Deacons work on how it takes shape.

One recurring wonderful "problem" we have had this year has been running out of bulletins on Sunday mornings! With more college students finding their way to us, and more townsfolk filling the pews on Sundays, the church looks much more vibrant today than it did just a year ago. We look forward to welcoming more new people among us, as we continue down this new path.

Moira Jones, Moderator

Clerk's Report

Statistics of the Year:

	Last Report	Current
Church Members	208	210
Pledging Families	92	95

Members lost by death:

Mary Flynt, Nan Fritz, Jane Mesick and Kirk McNagny

Transferred Membership:

Sharon Grace and Barbara Walvoord

Received into Membership:

Amanda Bayliss, Trevor Bayliss, Aaron Gordon, Chrissie Gordon, Rev. Mark Longhurst, Terry Plumb-Clark, Faith McClellan. Confirmation class: Aaron Burns, Katherine Davis, Bernhardur ("Benni") Magnusson McComish, Rebecca Silva.

Weddings:

Brenda Dorr and Laura Fitzgerald

Baptisms:

Trevor Bayliss, William Bayliss, Wesley Peabody

Office Administration Report

An important change to office administration was made this past year. The building use duties of Office Administration were transferred to our new Building Manager, Steve McMahon. This division of duties enables Steve to manage the set-up crew for building use, basic repairs and maintenance to the building and the overseeing of any special building-related activities. The scheduling of building use events, as well as pastoral support and general office work, remains within Office Administration.

This year we were beset with ongoing photocopier malfunction issues that required special attention from our copier-rental vendor. We remain concerned about the use of this particular copier in the future time left on our lease contract. Many thanks to Jody Green and Stewardship who were active in pursuing an improvement to the situation.

Our elderly telephone system received a health check-up and repair tweaking by our phone-support vendor. We are hoping it will continue to work successfully for us until a more modern system can be afforded and installed, as service calls to repair this system are costly.

In 2014 we experienced a slight downturn in the number of people in need who came to the office seeking food, gas and/or lodging assistance from the Northern Berkshire Ministry voucher program, with whom we are a partner.

Rev. Mark continues to receive daily pastoral administrative support and we are developing new operational and communication processes to keep things running smoothly and communications to you, open and often.

We also appreciate the addition of the Keurig coffee machine in the office as it provides a warm beverage on a cold day, and offers fellowship to those who come into the office. Acknowledgement and thanks to Moderator Moira Jones for her support of office and staff, and special thanks to the Friday Bulletin Folders, Jean Donati and Susie Smith, who come in rain, snow or shine each Friday morning, and brighten an hour with their presence.

Terry Plumb-Clark, Administrative Assistant and Pastoral Support

Building Management

I was pleased to begin my role as Building Manager for First Church this fall. I had the opportunity to work on specific small projects for the first part of the year but in September I assumed responsibility for supervising the cleaning and landscape contractors and working with the Set-up Crew. InnerSpace Cleaning and Mountain Landscape know their jobs well and the Set-up Crew with Ben Hynes, Jasper Rosenheim and Jaedin King, pitch in whenever called upon to help set up for Tag Sale, Second Hour programs and the many special events in Fellowship Hall that keep the Church vibrant. Learning how the events all are set up and coordinated is an ongoing process. A couple of important projects that were undertaken were painting Pastor Mark's office and, with invaluable help from Keith Davis, constructing a deck over the former boiler pit in the basement. This will create more of a workshop area. Coupled with this construction was the cleanout of the

basement area, successfully accomplished with the help of volunteers and staff on the Martin Luther King in-service day. A very large dumpster was filled in just over two hours. Finally, being a part of a very dedicated Church staff makes all work just a bit easier.

Steve McMahon, Building Manager

Nominating Committee Report – 2016-2018 Slate

The Nominating Committee included Margy O'Connor, Katherine Myers, Susan Yates-Mulder, Ann Short (for Deacons), Sam Humes (for Education and Fellowship), Phil Smith (for Outreach), and Deborah Currie (for Stewardship). Rev. Mark Longhurst and Moira Jones were invited to join our meetings, and attended every one.

When we began meeting in the early fall we realized that there were some unanticipated openings in the “expiring in 2015 slate” beyond the usual 3-year term limit. John Craig requested a replacement as Treasurer, and Nan Fritz’s death left a hole on the Deacons. Ron Alund also asked to be excused from the rest of his term on Deacons, while Beth Goodman, Annette Triquère and Cynthia Payne had resigned from Outreach.

We finalized the protocol for developing candidate nominations, and have placed this protocol in a binder of policies and protocols in the church office. We had several discussions on the appropriate size of the various ministry teams (six to nine in the bylaws). We also considered the multiple tasks of the Education and Fellowship team, and the proposal to have two subcommittees in future, one for the Second Hour programs, and one to support the church school and Director of Christian Education. These subcommittees do not require congregational nomination or vote for their makeup, but would properly report back to Education and Fellowship for coordination.

We were fortunate to secure Aaron Gordon’s interest in the position of Treasurer, and he has begun working with John Craig for an orderly transition. Four members of the congregation offered to extend their terms, or to sign up for a second term on their Ministry Teams to promote continuity. A few agreed to fill out terms, or serve one year.

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: AARON GORDON ’18

At Large Church Council: Susan Clarke ’16, Lauren Stevens ’17, JODY GREEN ’18

Deacons Ministry Team: Jina Ford '16, Carol Paul '16, Lynn Chick '17, CESAR SILVA '18 (extend for second term), LAUREN STEVENS '16 (1 year), SUSIE SMITH '18, DICK STEEGE '18 (7 members)

Education and Fellowship Ministry Team: Margaret Oxtoby '16, Rebeccah Kamp '16, Angela Hillman '16, Margaret McComish '16, Kay Sherman '17, SAM HUMES '16 (extend 1 year), LUCY PAGE '17, LEON AALBERTS '18 (8 members).

Outreach Ministry Team: Benni McComish '16, Beth Davis '17, Sherwood Guernsey '17, Phil Smith '17, JUDY WRIGHT '18 (Second Term), SARAH DEWEY '16, ANN CLARK '18 (7 members)

Stewardship Ministry Team: Deborah Currie '16, David Dewey '16, Nancy Piatczyk '16, Kevin Jones '17, Anne Skinner '17, BEN HYNES '16 (extend one year), BRIAN HANDSPICKER '17 (7 members).

Nominating Committee: Katherine Myers '16, Susan Yates-Mulder '17, ELAYNE MURPHY '18

Delegates: Sam and Elizabeth Smith '16

Respectfully Submitted, Margy O'Connor, for the Nominating Committee.

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)

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 the Pastoral Ministry (COPM)

The COPM is established annually by the deacons to “make an annual review of the ministry of the pastor and the congregation.” This year’s group consisted of Jody Green, for Stewardship; Moira Jones, Moderator; Margaret McComish, for Education & Fellowship; Cesar Silva, for Deacons, and Judy Wright, for Outreach. Cesar Silva was elected chair. The committee started in April and submitted its report to the Deacons in October, which was then presented by the chair of the deacons to Church Council.

To prepare its report, the COPM requested feedback from all members and friends of the Congregation. After meeting with Rev. Mark, a letter was sent to the Congregation at the end of May. Members of the COPM also met with Ministry Teams and had feedback from a broad spectrum of the congregation, including long-time members and friends, new members and friends, parents, youth and staff. On the request of Church Council, the COPM also requested feedback on the possibility of appointing Rev. Mark as the settled pastor of FCC. The feedback was very positive and the COPM unanimously recommended to the Deacons that Rev. Mark be appointed our settled pastor.

Church Council, on the recommendation from the COPM and the Deacons, voted to recommend to the Church that Rev. Mark Longhurst be called as our settled pastor, and to form a Discernment Team (headed by Deacon chair Cesar Silva, and including representation from all the Ministry Teams) to work out the details of the call agreement. The Discernment Team concluded its meetings and was very happy that Rev. Mark agreed on the terms proposed to him. The compensation package was proposed and approved at the December meeting of the congregation. On January 4th, on the recommendation of Church Council, the congregation unanimously voted to call Rev. Mark as settled pastor. Rev. Mark conveyed his deep joy, delight, and honor to continue ministry at First Church Williamstown in the position of settled pastor.

Respectfully submitted,
Cesar Silva

Deacons’ Report

Communion by Intinction: The deacons supported communion by intinction on some Sundays and it was well received. The deacons supported communion by intinction on some Sundays and it was well received. Regular communion with the cups will also continue every three months, on the first Sundays in April, July and October

Labyrinth: With the support of the congregation we had a labyrinth during Holy Week. The labyrinth was installed in Fellowship Hall.

Lenten Small Groups: Reverend Mark set up a small group program for Lent. There were seven small study groups that met at members' homes for dinner and study. The hosts provided the first dinner, and the last three dinners were pot luck. Rev. Mark identified seven groups and leaders for each group: Charles Fox, Elizabeth Smith, Carrie Waara, Rick Spalding, Faith McClellan, Margaret Oxtoby and Betsy Burris.

Bagels and Coffee: The deacons started a program of providing bagels and coffee at 9:30 am before the service. For the future the deacons to continue with coffee and are not sure what will be offered as a snack.

Deacons' Retreat: The deacons had a retreat on July 19th, from 9am to 3 pm at Cesar Silva's home. Rev. Mark prepared a topic for the retreat and handed out an article on hospitality for the deacons to read ahead.

The Pastor Parish Committee has been divided into two committees. The Pastoral Support Committee will have three members: Jan Keep, Rick Spalding, and Elizabeth Smith. The Listening Team will help address issues of conflict that people have not been able to resolve among themselves.

Ed Lawrence attended a deacons' meeting to discuss music in the service. Rev. Mark and Ed meet monthly to plan for the service. The choir works on four weeks of music at each rehearsal.

Deacon Choir Picnic: The deacons hosted a picnic on June 12 to express our thanks to the choir for their valuable contribution to our spiritual life.

Pastor's Parental Leave: The deacons supported and approved a leave of four weeks during the birth of Rev. Mark's second child. With the help of Rev. Mark they have arranged for pastoral coverage during the weeks he will be on leave.

The Deacons also spent time planning and helping with the Christmas Eve service and other activities of the Pastor such as new members meetings and baptisms.

Flower Committee Report

Arrangers: Audrey Clarkson, Arletta Currie, Deborah Currie, Sarah Currie, Marilyn Faulkner, Chrissie Gordon, Dolores Lovegreen, Katherine Myers, Nancy Piaczyc, Carol Stein-Payne, Suki Wilkins

Mentor and special events: Phil Smith

Membership: Suki Wilkins

Easter and Christmas decorating: Deborah Currie

Chairwoman: Arletta Currie

We express our fond memories of Mary Flynt, our loyal flower committee supporter and friend, who passed away this year.

Twenty lilies and assorted spring plants were placed in the sanctuary for Easter Service. Following

the service, members of Koinonia distributed the plants to members and friends of the congregation, and who had lost loved ones in the past year. Some plants were given to church staff as a special thank you.

The church was decorated for Advent on Sat. Nov. 29. Steve McMahon assisted by bringing the decoration boxes from the attic. The 12" live wreaths on the front doors were donated in memory of our beloved Mary Flynt.

Thirty red poinsettia plants were arranged in the sanctuary on Dec. 20 for the Christmas season. These plants and two cyclamen were distributed to church staff and special members of the congregation after the Dec. 28 service. The Flower Committee has no formal budget for the purchase of plants. Plants are donated in honor or in memory of loved ones by members of the congregation.

We thank Phil Smith for making his flower gardens available to our arrangers and to both Phil and Suki Wilkins for serving as our mentors.

Arletta Currie, Chair

Koinonia Report

"Koinonia" is a Greek word for community, fellowship, caring and joint participation. This name is given to a group in our Church that tries to meet some of the pastoral needs of the congregation. A list of members and friends is divided among Koinonia members who stay in touch with their assigned families and hope to be called upon when needed.

In January we participated in Koinonia Sunday where all the members were introduced and the role of Koinonia was explained.

Koinonia meets every month with Mark, whose guidance is much appreciated. In April we were fortunate to have Craig Clemow, the former director of the Counseling Center in the Berkshires, lead a discussion on "Caregiving" and "Caretaking". In October Craig returned to talk with us about the meaning of confidentiality and its importance in our group.

Our hope is to create a helpful and meaningful liaison with the Pastor, the Deacons and the Congregation.

The members of Koinonia are:

Arletta Currie, Anne de Gersdorff, Jean Donati, Marilyn Faulkner, Jody Green, Abbie Hatton, Delores Lovegreen, Susan Schneski, Kay Sherman, Susan Smith, Sally Sussman, Jinx Tong, Annette Triquère, Suki Wilkins and Judy Wright

Susan Smith, Convener

Minister of Music's Report

It is interesting, year to year, to learn how our faith journey surprises us! Each time, new and unexpected events color our walk together. As I write, in January, we have just called Mark Longhurst as our new settled Pastor, and he has accepted the call. It has been a joy to develop a working relationship with this fine gentleman, and to get to know his young and growing family. Our church staff continues to grow together, as we find wonderful ways to work together and support each other. We see new faces in the congregation, and are blessed with other young families.

This year also marks our 250th as a congregation, and there will be lots of celebration, and lots to celebrate. We have a long and rich tradition, worthy of remembering. The year ahead will surely be an active one!

Last spring, with the closing of the North Adams Regional Hospital, we were invited to participate with several of our Williamstown churches, as well as the Williams College Gospel Choir, to present a benefit concert for those who suddenly found themselves without jobs. The event was organized and hosted by the Community Bible Church. It was hugely successful, and raised

<i>sopranos</i>	<i>altos</i>	<i>tenors</i>	<i>basses</i>
Penny Bucky	Jina Ford	Phil Smith	Leon Aalberts
Ann Clark	Ming Lash	Miles Wheat	Mark Mulder
Moira Jones	Nancy Piaczyc		
Margy O'Connor	Carol Stocking		
Annette Triquère	Susan Yates		
Wendy Van Orden			

money beyond expectations. But, in addition, it brought together many of us, friends and

<i>First year (green ribbon)</i>	<i>Second year (maroon ribbon)</i>	<i>Fourth year (gold ribbon)</i>
Eleanor McPartland	Lola Bohle	Teague Murphy
Effie Skinner		

neighbors, to share our joy in music and in faith. What a treat to experience the music of each group, unique and sincere. Wouldn't it be great to do a similar concert again!

The end of the “program year” in late May meant that I saw three of our wonderful junior Choir members move on. Miriam Bakija, Sarah Briggs, and Amelia Murphy, who had sung together for several years, graduated from the sixth grade, and therefore, from the junior Choir. I’m sure we will find good ways for them to use those voices again!

We joined with our friends in the South Williamstown Congregational Church again for the early June Sunday of Williams’ commencement. It is always fun to pool our musical resources, even though only a handful of our members attend the service. We also reciprocated for one summer Sunday, when the South Williamstown folks visited us.

In June, I was able to attend the national Convention of the American Guild of Organists in Boston. Among other experiences, I attended some productive workshops on music for choirs like ours. As a result, I have added several new items to our choir library. You will be hearing the result as the appropriate liturgical moments arise. It’s always healthy for our choir members to be learning new things: fun, challenging, rewarding.

I was lucky to continue to use our fine soloists throughout the summer, and, in addition, to use a Men’s Choir and a Women’s Choir for one Sunday each. It’s an opportunity for anyone who would like to come out to sing, with a single rehearsal. We have a great time, and I encourage anyone to join us next time around.

With the fall startup of choir, I was delighted to welcome new singers Ann Clark and Leon Aalberts. Ming Lash arrived a little later in the season. Great additions to our choir. We also welcomed returning singers Jina Ford and Miles Wheat. Happily, we had new young singers as well for the Junior Choir.

Our Christmas Pageant in December crossed the generations, and had musical contributions from many. On Christmas Eve, we had a good group of 15 in the choir loft.

The success of our Music Ministry is dependent on the volunteer efforts of so many. Our Choir members are among the most dedicated people in the church, committed to a 90 minute rehearsal every Thursday, and regular service on Sunday mornings, including the warmup time we spend together. Junior choir parents bring our young singers every week, and pick them up (of course), but also provide snack each week and help supervise the rehearsals. They make sure our young voices are primed and ready on the Sundays that they sing. Let’s give them three cheers!

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

Senior Choir Members
Junior Choir Members

Pastor's Report – The Reverend Mark Longhurst

What a year we've had! You've heard me use the following analogy this past year in relation to the plight and possibility of mainline Christian churches in America: *we can either be hospice chaplains of the old church, or midwives of the new church that God is birthing in our midst.* That phrase could well be my personal mission statement as we embark upon "settled" ministry together. As a former hospice chaplain, I believe ministry to dying people and institutions is a sacred calling. Yet alongside this belief, I hold a resolute hope in God's ability and desire to create newness both in our lives and in our church.

The Celtic writer J. Philip Newell writes the following in his book *The Rebirthing of God*: "The rebirthing of God...is pointing to a radical reemergence of the Divine from deep within us. We do not have to create it. We cannot create it. But we can let it spring forth and be reborn in our lives. We can be part of midwifing new holy births in the world." As a church, we have dedicated ourselves to the practice of spiritual midwifery in 2014. Such newness is always a work of God-at same time, as Newell suggests, we are absolutely integral to the process.

Here are a few examples of God's new birthing that we've witnessed over the past year together, some of which will be listed in other reports:

- A significant increase in worship attendance, from an average of around 50 people to 70 (or more!) on a given Sunday.
- Did you know that over 230 people came to our 2014 Christmas Eve service? The place was humming!
- A near doubling of attendance in Sunday School.
- A 4 person confirmation class.
- Taize Advent worship with Minister of Music Ed Lawrence and student musicians Mei Mei Chan and Sarah Stevenson
- Intellectually stimulating 2nd Hour programs
- The Outreach-hosted Berkshire Immigrant Center's New Citizen's Dinner.
- A Blessing of the Animals service on the church's front lawn, including a horse, many dogs, and a ferret.
- A worship service led by college students, featuring organ music from Will Kirby and Daniel Potter and preaching from Chelsea Thomeer.
- A wide-range of thoughtful small group offerings over Lent, with over 70 people participating.
- A summer book study on *Resisting Structural Evil* with 10 people. (As I told the group, I've never been to a church where that many people would show up for a dense theology read-well done!)
- Sermon series on "Big Questions" which engaged topics as diverse as: What is a Christian concept of time, and what are non-canonical gospels?
- 6-part sermon series on "Prayer," which covered spiritual practices of silence, chanting the psalms, and praying with our bodies.
- 5 new members!

- 4-part sermon series on church vitality, 3-part series on Exodus (in conjunction with Professor Edan Dekel's 2nd Hour series).
- William Sloan Coffin Speech Prize
- Three baptisms: Wesley Peabody, William Bayliss and Trevor Bayliss.
- My first same-sex wedding (Brenna Dorr and Laura Fitzgerald)
- More financial pledges than the projected 2015 budget anticipated (!!)
- Invigorating conversations during Tunnel City "coffee shop hours."
- Much, much more!

Finally, an anecdote: it can feel daunting to embrace change, but midwifing God's newness can be as simple as moving a coatrack. Literally. A sufficiently critical mass agreed that the coat racks in the church entryway were a cluttered eyesore, and that the space could be used in a more effective, welcoming way. So, at the close of a recent evening meeting several of us (ranging from 34-80 years old) simply moved the coat racks into Fellowship Hall. Afterwards, we stood there, mouths gaping, muttering "Wow!" in response to the open space it created. Our minds stirred as we brainstormed colors and potential welcome banners and re-envisioned the space. It's a minor example, but I see it as symbolic of the shift that is needed: sometimes stepping into possibility is as simple as moving furniture around and seeing old space with new eyes.

The urgency of "now" requires us to build on our traditions and history while risking creativity, innovation, and unfettered joy (even though, as Wendell Berry says, we have considered all the facts). May our next year together be as exciting as 2014.

With great hope,
Rev. Mark

Reports from the Education & 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.

CHAIR: Margaret Oxtoby

Education and Fellowship Ministry Team Report

Members: Margaret Oxtoby (chair), Margaret McComish, Sam Humes, Rebeccah Kamp, Angela Hillman, Charles Fox, Kay Sherman, Karen Benko (first half of year).

This year our ministry team continued to coordinate various aspects of education and fellowship. This includes the education programs for children and youth; adult second hours and small groups; refreshments after church and special fellowship events.

The children and youth bring great blessing and joy to all areas of church life, from their participation in church services and special presentations as well as their ongoing Sunday school study, service activities, and presence at coffee hour. Youth groups continue to grow – in numbers and in variety of activities - under the creative and dedicated leadership of Beth Davis, with the support of Pastor Mark Longhurst. More details are provided below in the ministry team report. Young families also gathered in fellowship at the Longhurst-McClelland home as well as at a late summer picnic at the Silvas. The ministry team recommended an increase in hours for the Director of Education based on the year round scope of activities, greater numbers of students participating and Beth's role in identifying, training and coordinating the paid and volunteer teachers. We also worked with Beth toward the end of this year to plan for quarterly gatherings with parents and other interested parishioners to provide feedback and guidance for longer term thematic planning.

Adult education second hours continued this year, detailed below, as well as the ongoing fellowship time after church, so ably headed by our team's former chair, Carrie Waara with the help of many parishioners. This informal gathering time over lemonade in the summer, tea coffee and cocoa in the winter, provides us time to gather and catch up as well as to meet newcomers and visitors.

A highlight this year was the Lenten small groups. Marrying the idea of round robins held in parishioners' homes, with the idea of an ongoing small group, we worked with Pastor Mark to identify leaders and hosts for seven small groups, with approximately ten persons signing up for each group. An initial second hour presented the topics, while a wrap-up second hour summarized each group's experience with the larger community.

We plan to continue this same structure with a new set of groups, in 2015. The 2014 small groups included:

- Mindful Parenting, with Faith McClelland
- Tillich's sermons, with Charles Fox (host: Sam and Lynne DeLay)
- The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth, by Thomas Berry, with Elizabeth Smith (host: Susan Clarke)
- Teaching through Emotions, with Betsy Burris (host: Moira Jones)
- The Politics of Peace (studying "The Raft is not the Shore," by Thich Naht Hanh and Daniel Berrigan) with Carrie Waara (host: Jean Donati)

- A Taste of Poetry (poetry reading and writing) with Margaret Oxtoby (host Margaret McComish)
- My Bright Abyss by Christian Wiman, With Rick Spalding (host Beth Davis)

We entered 2015 in a joyful spirit with a fellowship time January 4, celebrating after a discernment process and congregational vote, the appointment of Pastor Mark Longhurst as our settled pastor and also the anticipated arrival of Mark and Faith’s second son this February.

Margaret Oxtoby, Chair

Christian Education – Sunday School and Youth Group Reports

January/February: The Story of Exodus, with a 90-minute reenactment in classrooms concurrent with Annual Meeting in Feb 2014

March/April: Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, with a 20-minute pageant at the beginning of the Palm Sunday worship Service

May: Children in Nicaragua with Williams College mission team presenting on Youth Sunday

June/July/August: Story-Time summer Sunday school

September/October: Prayer, Crop Walk

November/December: Stories from the Old Testament, with Jesse Tree Christmas Pageant, Caroling at Williamstown Commons and Sweetwood

2014 Youth Group Highlights:

Visit to Louison House Family Shelter

Created new rainbow picnic benches for church grounds.

Routinely meet after church to make lunch, work on projects, and play dodgeball

Fall movie series for teens and adults on “structural evil” issues.

Crop Walk

Pie Baking for Berkshire Food Project

New Citizens Dinner

Habitat for Humanity Holiday Tree Showcase

Nursery and

Sunday School

Students by family:

Miriam and Jude Bakija

Everett, Charles and William Bayliss

Skyana Field (Boesse)

William and Meredith Bond

Sarah and Patrick Briggs

Riley Guiden (Burdick)

Mia and Isabella Harding (Currie)

Fiona and Connie Gordon

Jacob Hillman

Linnea and Anderson Keiser-Clark

Nobel, Berlyn, and Vanner Khairule

Ian Longhurst

Eli McEvoy

Ross McDevitt

Eleanor McPartland

Amelia and Teague Murphy

Lola Bohle (O’Connor)

Malcom, Effie, and Rutledge Skinner

Ruth Wheat

Middle School Youth Group by family:

Miriam and Jude Bakija

Sarah and Patrick Briggs

Nobel, Berlyn, and Vanner Khairule

Karen McComish

Amelia and Teague Murphy

Effie and Rutledge Skinner

High School and College Students:

Aaron Burns (Set Up Crew, Confirmation Class)

Mei Mei Chan (Sunday School Teacher, Lenten Book Group)

Zach Charbonneau (Set Up Crew, Movie Group)

Katherine Davis (Nursery Child Care, Confirmation Class, Movie Group, Middle School Youth Group Leader, Pageant)

Wesley Davis (Pageant)

Ben Hynes (Audio/Visual for Second Hour, Set Up Crew, Movie Group, Pageant)

Sophie Jones (Pageant)

Jaden King (Set Up Crew, Movie Group)

Kate Latham (Sunday school volunteer, Movie Group, BIO, Pageant)

Benni McComish (Confirmation Class, Outreach Mission Team)

Andrew MacNamara (Sunday School Teacher, Youth Group Leader)

Rebecca Silva (Confirmation Class)

Jasper Rosenheim (Set Up Crew)

Sarah Stevenson (Sunday School Teacher, Lenten Book Group)

Rosie Walters (Nursery Child Care)

Sarah Wong (Nursery Child Care)

Williams College Student Spring Break Out Trip to Nicaragua Team (Sunday School Teachers and Second Hour Presentation)

Adult Classroom, Youth Group, and Pageant Volunteers (* indicates Sunday School Teacher)

Leon Aalberts, Amanda and Trevor Bayliss, Carrie Bond*, Brittany Burdick, Dick and Jina Ford, Chrissie* and Aaron* Gordon, Angie Hillman*, Moira Jones, Rebecca Kamp, Elayne* and Trevor* Murphy, and Margaret Oxtoby, Andrew Skinner, Elizabeth and Sam Smith, Lauren Stevens, Wayne Wilkins

Beth Davis, Director of Christian Education

Fellowship Report

Thank you to those listed below, who assist us on Sundays with our coffee fellowship time:

Jean Vankin, Margaret Oxtoby, Elizabeth Smith, Elayne Murphy, Amanda Bayliss, Anne Short, Susan Yates, Wendy Van Orden, Sue Briggs, Delores Lovegreen, Carrie Waara, Lynn Chick, Kay Sherman, Moira Jones, and Margaret McComish.

We continue to use cold water coffee extract each Sunday at Coffee Hour. Many people have remarked on what an improvement in taste has resulted from this process. Thank you to Moira Jones for initiating this coffee choice.

-Carrie Waara

Second Hour Report

In 2014 the Second Hour Task Force once again hosted a wide variety of programs that informed and educated us while also offering opportunities for fun and fellowship. This hour, which is usually from 11:20 - 12:00 noon, has happily extended the time we share together on a Sunday morning and offers church members an opportunity to welcome neighbors and friends to our meetinghouse.

The Task Force has worked hard to arrange an informative Second Hour program for every Sunday of the month, exclusive of the summer months, while preserving the first Sunday of each month for extended coffee fellowship. This schedule has not always been possible to achieve, but the Second Hour Program continues to present a rich array of reflections on the meaning of our faith, the history of our tradition, and the application of our faith values to contemporary ethical challenges.

2014 Activities sponsored or hosted by the Second Hour Task Force

January 12, 19, and February 9. Prof. Edan Dekel speaking on Moses in Exile and Moses in Deuteronomy

February 23. Kickoff and introduction to Lenten Small Groups

March 2. Presentation of goals and plans from our Outreach Ministry Team

March 4. Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

April 6. What is ahead for Mount Greylock Regional High School, Carrie Greene MGRHS School Committee member

April 13. William Sloane Coffin Speech Competition

April 27. Reports from the Lenten Small Groups

May 4. Report on the Meetinghouse usage and voicing our dreams for building and space upgrades

May 18. Journey to Nicaragua, report from Williams College students

Sept .21. History of First Church building and the First Church Clock with Moira Jones and Trevor Murphy

Oct. 5. Berkshire Interfaith Organizing Project

Oct. 12 Immigration in the Berkshires, Hilary Green & Brooke Mead from the Berkshire Immigrant Center

Oct. 19 Catholic Reactions to the Reformation, Prof. Zirka Filipczak

Oct. 26 *Good People Go to Hell, Saved People Go to Heaven*, Film Screening and discussion with director Holly Hardman

Nov. 2, 9, 16 Small groups (Real Good Church authored by Molly Basket was the topic of one group; *Ethical Sensitivity: Recognizing and Prioritizing our Values* led by Lynn DeLay and Sam Humes was the second topic)

Nov. 23 The Great Pie Palooza

Lynn Chick and Charles Fox

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: Phil Smith

Outreach Ministry Report

The Outreach Ministry Team met monthly throughout the year. At our first meeting we agreed to focus our efforts this year in three areas of local import: hunger, housing, and immigration. We also passed a resolution that our goal as a Church should be to work towards a sum of no less than 10% of the annual budget going toward Outreach.

At the February Church Council meeting we requested and were granted \$20,000 for Outreach grants for the year to supplement the \$2,000 that Outreach had in its initial budget to cover regular contingencies. We focused our efforts this year on support for Louison House, The Berkshire Food Project, Berkshire Immigration Center and the Friendship Center. Proposals were solicited from each of these groups and representatives met with the Committee. In addition we sponsored a Second Hour Breakout Discussion where representatives from these groups presented and then spoke with members of the congregation in breakout sessions.

By May we voted to send \$10,000 to Louison House, \$6,000 to the Berkshire Food Project and \$4,000 to the Berkshire Immigration Center. We agreed to begin work with the Friendship Center on possible solutions to their transportation needs. That work is ongoing and meetings are scheduled in January with representatives from Outreach, The Fellowship Center and the Learning Center at Williams in an attempt to craft a long range solution. In December, Outreach sent \$800 to the Fellowship Center to cover the cost of one month of emergency transportation costs. Outreach Committee Member Bob Behr has been volunteering weekly with the Fellowship Center and has agreed to continue to work on transportation issues after his second term on Outreach concludes in February.

Our Ministry Team agreed to sponsor Iman Lipumba '14 for a year of Optional Practical Training in her year-long work studying immigration in New England. Our expectation is that she will present a Second Hour later in the spring about her work and also display some of the photographs she has taken.

In the fall Outreach sponsored an immigration second hour with Hilary Greene and a newly minted US citizen from Williams. On November 2, in partnership with BIC, we sponsored a discussion on immigration issues and hosted the county's annual dinner for new US citizens from Berkshire County. And in early January we sponsored another second hour on immigration led by Sherwood Guernsey, Scott Wong and Eleanore Velez on Immigration Reform: What Is It? And Why Are People So Scared? The dinner attracted close to 100 people; Beth Davis and the youth group assisted with it as did Cesar Silva with his photography. The Immigration Reform Second Hour, ably led by Sherwood Guernsey drew more than 70.

During the course of the year, Annette Triquère, Cynthia Payne, and Beth Goodman, who changed job locations, resigned from the Outreach Team and Sarah Dewey agreed in December to take Beth Goodman's place. Judy Wright did yeoman service during the year in attending Church Council and serving as Outreach representative to the Budget Task Force and to the Personnel

Committee. Marilyn Faulkner has contributed reports on Meals on Wheels and on the Angel Tree, (see below) which she, Chrissie Gordon and Kay Sherman coordinated this year. We were pleased to have Moderator Moira Jones and Pastor Mark Longhurst attend most of our meetings and join in the discussions.

Respectfully submitted,
Philip Smith, Chair, for the Outreach Ministry Team Bob Behr, Beth Davis, Sarah Dewey,
Sherwood Guernsey, Benni McComish, Phil Smith, Judy Wright

Angel Tree Report:

Marilyn Faulkner and Chrissy Gordon took on the project this year. The Salvation Army provided 25 tags and the Louison House 11 tags. The Angel Tree was set up for Sunday, November 23, by the side entrance. Gratefully all the tags were all taken in the ensuing three week period! Gifts were returned by December 15, for timely delivery to the Salvation Army and Louison House. Thanks to some cash donations and a \$230 gift from the Outreach Team funds, bus passes were purchased along with some Walmart gift cards for the Louison folks. We appreciate your continued support of this long-standing church project and thank you for brightening the lives of our neighbors right here at home in northern Berkshire!

Marilyn Faulkner & Chrissie Gordon

Just Peace Coordinator

This year has built on the new initiatives that began in 2013. We have moved toward calling Mark Longhurst as our settled pastor. Our Vitality Team continues to offer guidance on growing our church into a thriving church. We have six members who are active in Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO), and we are moving forward in becoming sponsoring members, as BIO moves toward its Founding Convention, scheduled in January, 2015.

The Vitality Team has worked with the Deacons to make our church more welcoming. The Deacons have established a Bagels and Coffee time before church so that folks can have fellowship before our service. We have participated in Community Events, such as the Penny Social held by the Community Chest and our regular Christmas Tree festival for Habitat for Humanity. Currently we are planning to make our church foyer more welcoming. We plan to give First Church mugs to new visitors. We have had "Secret Visitors" who have given us their impressions of our welcome.

May 11 was Just Peace Sunday this year. I gave a sermon on the Stewardship of the Earth. I quoted our Massachusetts UCC Conference Minister, Jim Antal, who said that Climate Change due to our use of fossil fuels is the most pressing and important moral issue of our day. We continue to see the consequences of climate change in the increase of major storms that leave entire countries, such as the Phillipines, devastated. We have connected with students at Williams College in their efforts to have Williams divest of holding in fossil fuel corporations. This effort is causing a great deal of discussion which needs to happen, as we recognize our own continuing reliance on fossil fuels to heat our church.

Over this year, BIO continues to seek new member churches who will become sponsoring members. The effort has been extended into South Berkshire. The purpose of BIO is to work with churches to identify issues that are part of our system of community, that seem almost invisible, because that is how things are. These issues are a part of structural injustice. We moved into issues identification, seeking issues where we have some chance of making a difference. The two issues that came to the surface were Food Insufficiency and Transportation. We have gone to each of our state representatives and our state senator to ask what they see to be done, as well as researching the issues in the wider community. We have learned a great deal about both issues, and are beginning to position ourselves for issue cuts with a goal of changing the system, improving access to food and transportation for the most needy in our community. Not surprising, there is much that has been done and much more that needs to be done. For example, in the transportation research, we learned that access to information about bus schedules is primarily over the internet. We realized that low income folks are less likely to have computers at their fingertips. We also learned that economic development is tied to transportation. Low income people in a more rural environment cannot get to shift jobs unless public transportation runs after 5:30 pm, when the BRTA (Berkshire Regional Transit Authority) shuts down. We also learned that out of our state taxes that we all pay, close to half goes to public transportation. All of it goes to the Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority. Berkshire County does not get any of it. As an aside, I asked Ken Galdston, our consultant and trainer in developing BIO, how can we apply this model to Climate Change? He paused, and said, "I've been thinking a lot about that and I wish I knew."

These are interesting times for us and our church. There is an energy, an excitement as we approach new initiatives and new ways of being church.

Jina Ford, Just Peace Coordinator

Meals-on-Wheels Report:

A small core of folks - both church people and caring community volunteers - are carrying on this outreach program, assumed by FCC in 2004, preparing and delivering about 600 meals for the year 2014 as part of the local ecumenical "Take and Eat" program. We currently provide about 50 meals on the fourth Sunday of each month delivered to qualified seniors in Williamstown who are in need of nutritional and social support. Ours is the fourth Sunday of the month. St. Patrick's and St. John's churches also participate in this program on other Sundays.

Marilyn Faulkner and Kay Sherman continue to spearhead this effort by planning and supervising the meal preparation; Jean Vankin is in charge of the delivery crew; Marian Wilkin rounds up our helpers each month; Annette Triquere knows all the best bakers; and then there are the faithful preparation people. Blessings to all who continue to give generously of their time and interest. AND NEW RECRUITS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED! Preparation day is 9-11 am on the Saturday morning prior to our delivery Sunday, which occurs right after services. COME JOIN US!

Marilyn Faulkner and Kay Sherman, Co-Organizers

Shawl Ministry

2014 saw the loss of knitter Judy Blackmer. We send her best wishes for finding a knitting group in the Wake Robin community where she and John have resettled in Vermont. Judy was a prolific knitter and we miss her shawls. Arletta Currie, Marilyn Faulkner, Abbie Hatton and Marge Janes continue the knitting ministry.

Fourteen shawls were given away this year, making a grand total in eleven years of 161 shawls. Two baby blankets were given at the time of baptism. It is a joy to make the shawls and, shall I say, a warm feeling is exchanged when one is given to someone who needs it. We look forward to knitting shawls for children and youth this year in order to celebrate special occasions, or warm them during stressful times. We encourage knitters to join this ministry and if you are not so inclined please suggest names of people who need the shawls with prayers in them. We meet 9 a.m. the third Sunday in September, November, January, March and April but are knitting shawls at home in between.

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: Jody Green

Organization

The 2014 Stewardship Ministry Team was represented by Jody Green '15, Ben Hynes '15, Nancy Piatczyc '16, Deborah Currie '16, David Dewey '16, Kevin Jones '17, Anne Skinner '17. Each of the team has been very dedicated to serving in their role of Scribe (Anne Skinner), Pledge drive chair (Dave Dewey), Personnel chair and Nominating representative (Deb Currie), Williams College Liaison (Nancy Piatczyc), Budget Task Force representative (Kevin Jones), Tag Sale representative (Jody Green), IT and Communications expert (Ben Hynes), Capital Projects representatives (ALL). We received tremendous support from others offering physical hands on work, advice and recommendations. Special thanks go to Keith Davis for his supervision of the new roof, gutter, placement of the window wells and tree trimming on the East side; special thanks go to Brian Handpicker for his work on IT and communications as he and Ben Hynes worked diligently on improving our sound system in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, have cleaned and organized the sound system closet, have organized our video equipment for easier and smoother programs (run handily by Brian and Ben). Special thanks go to Annie Parkman and Cynthia Payne for their work on the Tag Sale which raised \$16,000+ for our church budget. Special thanks go to John Craig as Treasurer for his advice and recommendations, for Annie Parkman for her timely financial reports and keeping us informed about the church/staff status. Special thanks to Moira Jones for attending each of our monthly meetings, giving her advice and counsel, keeping us updated on Church Council recommendations. Special thanks to Rev. Mark Longhurst for his involvement and advice to Stewardship team members as we pondered and discussed our many responsibilities of maintaining the building, of caring for staff issues and of reviewing/recommending financial issues. There are many others whom I may have missed who have offered us advice and support and for whom we give our thanks.

Donations and Income

Whitman Welch Society . The Society was 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, and Pauline Piper. Kindly inform our Financial Secretary, Annie Parkman, if you have already made such plans or will do so in the future so your name can be added to the list.

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 Dennison, Betsy Debevoise, Richard C. Donati, Doughty-Botsford, Ralston Doughty, Mary A. Flynt, 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, Suzanne and E.Wayne Wilkins and Anonymous.

Annual Pledge Committee. David Dewey led the 2015 Pledge Committee which included all of the Stewardship members, Moira Jones, Rev Mark Longhurst and Annie Parkman. The committee's goals were to encourage the congregation to understand the importance of pledging in support of our church's mission and to allow our church to grow and prosper. We now have a new

settled pastor and a growing congregation, a growing children's Sunday School group and increased participation in new/existing programs. We sent out pledge letters, made newsletter announcements, asked church members to speak during our Sunday service about the reasons for their support, leading up to Stewardship Sunday. We are so happy to report that our congregation responded enthusiastically in support of our growing church by increasing pledging amounts to 95 pledging units (up from 88 the previous year) and pledging total at the time of this report of \$223,756.00 (increase from previous year of \$194,584.20 at this same time in January, 2014). Dave and the Stewardship Committee want to thank the Church members and our friends for this tremendous support; you are all awesome!

2014 Pledges were given in honor or memory of the following: Nancy Alden, Richard Chenail, Mr. and Mrs. L. Stanley Ford, Daniel Galusha, Mr. and Mrs. D.A. Kearns-Preston, Hubert and Lottie Merrill Goodale, Sister Mary Edwing Luby, S.O.M. Una and Art Schwedner, R.G.L. Waite, and Fleta C. Wellcome.

The tag sale is a major recycling event in the community and has increasingly involved the Williams College organization's "Give It Up" campaign. The College transitioned the organizational center from the Chaplain's office (Rick Spalding) to the Center for Learning in Action (Paula Consolini and Colin Ovitsky). This Center has been incredibly helpful by providing information, supervision of volunteer students and actual hands on work to our church to make the annual Tag Sale a success. The tag sale provides a low cost shopping opportunity for members of the community who are facing hard times and those who like this opportunity to buy recycled things. The money earned, \$16,094, allows the church to continue our outreach efforts to help others in the community. Tag Sale organizational members, Jody Green, Annie Parkman and Cynthia Payne want to thank all of those who helped with this significant effort and volunteered their time picking up donated items from the PODS, cleaning and organizing, advertising to make it such a success. We are indebted to the Williams College students who volunteered their time and limitless energy to collecting, cleaning and organizing for our success in being ready for the big Tag Sale date of September 6th, 2014

Financial Review & Budgeting

Stewardship members have worked with the Treasurer, John Craig, and Financial Secretary, Annie Parkman, receiving monthly reports, including regular monitoring of income and expenditures for the church. Annie has provided expertly historical records and documentation in many endeavors.

Personnel & Legal Matters

Stewardship was involved in the celebration, November 30th, of our beloved Office Administrator and Building Manager, Gail Burns, who has resigned from these positions and moved on to other beneficial duties for our church as special projects administrator for the 250th church anniversary and other needed projects. It was a lovely celebration of Gail, who has been a pillar in the front office, offering friendship and cheer to all who entered the office door, encouraging our church's involvement in Higher Ground and providing support to the smooth functioning of our church's activities.

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 & 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 2015. An additional per hour raise for the Office Administrator and Building Manager were also recommended for 2015

Building/Meetinghouse's Maintenance, Repair, Capital Improvements

Roof and gutter replacement. This year Stewardship tackled the repair and replacement of the roof on the East side of Fellowship Hall. This roof has had water leakage problems for a few years and it was decided to replace the slates with a new “Majestic Slate” which is recycled rubber and plastic material. We hired Patrick's Quality to do the work and asked them to repair the sky light area which has been leaking, also with black rubber roofing. This work was started and completed in the fall of 2014. We also contracted with Patrick's to install a new larger gutter along that roof to handle the large volume of water which was overflowing and creating a muddy mess outside the back door. The new copper gutter has been built but was not able to be installed during the fall. Patrick's will install it in the spring when the weather warms up. The church borrowed the money for this work from our own budget (instead of a bank loan which had been considered) and used our Makepeace funds as well. The total cost of both the gutter and the roof was \$42,705. We are very pleased with the work done by Patrick's and with the look of our new roof which should last us many, many years and eliminate our leaking roof problems. Keith Davis supervised the work on the roof and many thanks to him for climbing up onto the roof to do this as none of the Stewardship members would have felt comfortable doing this.

Maintenance & Repair. We have a new building manager, Steve McMahon, who was hired to work on church maintenance and repairs. Many may know him for his work with HooRA and he has joined church staff for up to 12 hours per week. He has worked on replacing broken floor tiles, bathroom repairs, power washing the side entrance, building of our new teak bench which will be installed outside soon, repaired and painted wall around the church, including the pastor's office with a fresh coat of paint, repaired some of the church furniture, cleaned and set up his work area in the basement with plans to cover the hole in the basement with wooden platform and further expand his work area for carpentry and finally to supervise and assist the set up crew for placement of chairs/tables for special programs. His duties have been more than were enumerated and we thank him for his cheerfulness in tacking these projects. He is a blessed addition to our church staff.

Other Projects which have been completed this year have been maintenance and upkeep of our Buderus boiler, repair of our concrete back steps (thanks to Keith Davis), placement of new set of lights for the old Archive Room which is being used by ABC, excavating and replacement of two west side basement window wells which involved removing bushes by the back office door and replacing said bushes back in ground (thanks to Keith Davis and Deb Currie), maintenance and upkeep of the steeple clock, (thanks to Trevor Murphy who is also working on a manual for this), authorization for the upgrade of the pastor office's furniture and decorations (Rev Mark is very happy with the results).

Stewardship Technology Report:

New speakers were hung in the Sanctuary and sound equipment upgrades purchased over the past two years have been integrated into the equipment rack in the sound closet. We were able to clean up the temporary JavaJive sound system from the Sanctuary floor and the speaker stands on the Chancel in time for Christmas services. The reintegrated sound system allows our wireless microphones and hearing assists to be used in Fellowship Hall, as well as the Sanctuary - simplifying setup for both worship and 2nd Hour programs. It also returns our ability to monitor the worship service through the Fellowship Hall speakers - a useful feature for members setting up for coffee hour and Second Hour, or tending children. Sound engineers from Sonix Pro Audio visited in January to test all equipment and fine-tune the systems. (They had installed versions of the sound systems in 1970 and 2000.) They discovered that the ceiling speaker blew out a few years ago leading to our frustrations with the 2000 era sound system. We plan to have Sonix repair that speaker when we have scaffolding up for the Sanctuary painting project in the coming year. Once it is repaired, the new Chancel speakers will be moved into Fellowship Hall to replace the 1970 era speakers on either side of the stage.

Digital projector, Blu-Ray/DVD player, and laptop computer were installed on a new projector cart. A new projection screen was purchased for the library which can also be hung from a bulletin board for use in the Sanctuary or Parlor. The projector has been used to screen films in Fellowship Hall using the portable powered speaker and in the library using a powered speaker system installed in the bookcase. We hope to acquire an adapter from Sonix to be able to plug film sound directly into the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall sound systems, further simplifying setup for films and presentations in those spaces.

The large office printer/copier "Daisybelle" isn't breaking down as often, but is requiring more sensitive use. We should consider a rigorous RFP process for its replacement when the lease term ends. Our collection of office computers is sufficient for now - most folks either have new dual-core laptops (Pastor, CE Director) or speedy quad-core desktops. Our network will need two new routers (replacing aged routers in Finance/CE office and in CCB closet) this year to increase speed/capacity on the First Church wireless network. The church phone system is becoming obsolete and will need replacing in the next year or two. We have been considering replacing it with a Voice Over IP (VOIP) and the technology now appears to have matured enough to provide cost-effective turnkey VOIP phone system for a small church.

Future Projects under consideration. We are considering for the coming year the following projects: repair of the steeple leak, new gutter for east side of church, further subdivision of heating zone units for basement and rest of the church offices which may share heating thermostats, installation of emergency lighting at exits as required by Williamstown code this year, replacement of carpeting on the stairs from the foyer to the basement, conversion of boiler from oil to natural gas.

Building Use & Community Engagement

As part of the church's mission to serve the community our building is made available for use by various community groups as well as our own church members. This past year we have continued to approach the building users as "Mission Partners". With revised building use rates and member friendly fees and encouraged donations for free member sponsored events, we have maintained our building use revenue at \$27,726. Our church is alive with staff, family, friends and clients. We have come to understand that our meetinghouse is not just a building to be maintained, but an asset to be used for our missions and a place for people to come and join with others, relax in shared ideals. We now look not just to raise money but also to provide a building which is in the center of our community of Williamstown and can perform community services to all who live and work in this area of Berkshire County.

Martin Luther King Volunteer Monday was held January 20th with church members and student volunteers helping to clean and organize the church building. It was a productive day for all.

We support and are supported by our regular offices of Counseling Center of the Berkshires, the Hoosier River Watershed Assoc., COOL, Higher Ground. Unfortunately we have lost our partnership with Greylock ABC but will continue our relationship with Carolyn Behr's ABC group who wish to continue with this worthy project of providing financial support to the ABC program and wish to continue to rent space in the basement. In addition we have offered prayer and service space to a group of Quakers for their Sunday service. We have housed the programs of Meals-on-wheels, Berkshire Food Project, Music Together, Starlight Stage Youth Theater, Minerva Arts Center, Gentle Yoga, Red Cross, Spruces Tenants' Assoc., Habitat for Humanity, Buxton School, Williams College Davis Center events, Wild Oats, Caretaker Farm, Northern Berkshire Contra-dancing, Native American group concert and film, Berkshire Organizing Committee, Appalachian Mountain club and many others. This place is "hopping".

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 have been fortunate to have so many volunteers who have devoted many hours and hard work to these endeavors. Our church staff have also been very supportive in their duties to help the church to run smoothly, extending cheerfulness and assistance when asked. We can't thank them enough for all that they do. They are Terry Plumb-Clark, Office Administrator and Assistant to the Pastor; Steve McMahan, Building Manager; Annie Parkman, Financial Secretary; Kay Sherman, Assistant Treasurer and office assistant. Although he is not under auspices of Stewardship, thanks to Ed Lawrence for his awe inspiring music on Sundays. We have a dedicated set up crew who are supervised by Steve McMahan and Ben Hynes and who are quick to set up (and take down) for

special programs of which there are many lately. Outside companies provide profession services of cleaning and outdoor grounds maintenance; these are Inner Space and MountainHome Landscape.

Submitted,

Jody Green, Chair