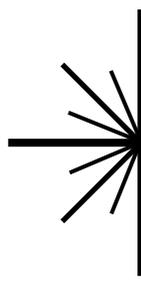


2012 Annual Reports

(Covering the period from January 1-December 31, 2012)

The 248th Annual Meeting



 FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, UCC
WILLIAMSTOWN, MA

Editor's Note

Individual reports are organized alphabetically under each Cluster, following the report of the Cluster Chair, if s/he chooses to 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 Cluster-related materials.

Gail M. Burns
Office Administrator and Assistant to the Pastor

On the Cover: Two wonderful photographs taken at the Sunday, January 20, 2013 gathering to celebrate the ministry of the Reverend Caroline Bail, Pastor of this congregation from 2000-2013, on her final day. The photo of Pastor Carrie is by Harry Montgomery. The photo of the beautiful and delicious cake made by Diego Uribe is by Cesar Silva

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**Agenda for the
248th Annual Meeting of the
First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ, Williamstown, Massachusetts
Sunday, 3 February 2013, 10:45 a.m.**

We continue our morning worship:

CALL TO CHURCH MEETING – Jean Donati, Clerk

READING OF THE NAMES OF DECEASED MEMBERS – Jean Donati

OWNING OF THE COVENANT – led by Samuel Humes

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 – Bruce Grinnell, Parliamentarian

BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH – Samuel Humes, Moderator

1. To hear summarized the minutes of the 247th Annual Meeting.
2. To read the names of deceased members and friends
3. To present awards and honor 50 year members.
4. To receive year-end 2012 Financial Report.
5. To act on the allocation of the Makepeace Funds.
6. To hear the report of the Pastoral Transition Team
7. To hear the reports of the clusters and other committees
8. To receive the report of the Nominating Committee and vote on new officers and members of clusters and committees.
9. To install new officers and members of ministry teams.
10. To extend our Covenant with Habitat for Humanity.
11. To consider sending greetings to previous pastors.
12. To act on any other business that may properly come before the meeting.

BENEDICTION

CLOSING HYMN #526 We Are Marching in the Light of God – Siyahamba

Minutes of the Annual Meeting January 29, 2012

The 247th annual meeting of the First Congregational Church of Williamstown convened at 10:55 a.m. following morning worship.

Parliamentarian Bruce Grinnell declared a quorum; there were more than 50 members present.

The names of deceased members and friends were read, and then the Moderator, Sam Humes, led the reading of the Owing of the Covenant.

The Clerk read a summary of the minutes of the 246th Annual Meeting, and the full minutes as printed in the report were unanimously approved.

Fifty-year members John and Judy Blackmer and Cecil and Betty Harvey were honored. Then special awards (framed maps of The Spruces) were given to Carrie Bail and Gail Burns in recognition of the extraordinary work they had done to assist those whose homes had been destroyed or damaged by Hurricane Irene.

The James Skinner Award, established in 1989 to recognize dedication to the service of the children of the church, was not presented this year.

The Green Award, to recognize someone who has demonstrated particular contributions to “being green,” was presented to Carolyn Behr by Lauren Stevens. The Marion Shaw Award, established in 1993 to recognize outstanding general volunteer services to the church, was shared this year by Susan Clarke (presented by Brian Handspicker) and Jan Keep (presented by Abbie Hatton).

The year-end Financial Report, in conjunction with the printed materials which accompanied the Annual Report and which had been approved at the Special Meeting in December 2011, was presented by Susan Clarke. At the end of 2011, we were blessed with an “excess” of revenue over expenses of some \$18,000, which enabled us to include a 4% raise in the Pastor’s salary (in the original budget there was provision of a 4% raise in the other staff salaries). A motion to approve the revised budget was seconded and passed.

Brian Handspicker for the Stewardship Cluster, Carolyn Behr for the Congregation Cluster, and Jina Ford for the Community Cluster explained the workings of those entities, and we heard that there will henceforward be eight Deacons. Carrie Waara said that each Cluster decides on its own Chairperson or Chairpersons. The new officers and committee members were then presented to the meeting by the Nominating Committee and we passed a motion to accept their nominations. Pastor Carrie then installed them.

Brian read our covenant with Habitat for Humanity, which we agreed to continue unanimously.

Blair Benjamin led us through a review of the Makepeace allocations and we voted unanimously to accept them.

Adriana Brown thanked those who have preached and will preach in Carrie’s absence, and asked for volunteers to step up during August when Carrie will take her vacation. Abbie Hatton explained a bit about the Pastoral Relations Committee, and Susan Yates asked for an explanation of the difference between that and the Committee on Pastoral Ministry. There followed a lengthy discussion about “sub rosa” rumors and harmful

“parking lot conversations.” We agreed that they can hurt, and asked that we move forward in openness and honest discussions. Sam also pointed out that everyone is always welcome to attend Church Council meetings.

There are two “ad hoc” committees, one to review the bylaws, and one to plan how best to celebrate two forthcoming celebrations: in 2014, the 100th anniversary of the building; and in 2015, the 250th anniversary of the formation of our church body. Volunteers to both committees are welcome.

We voted to accept the reports in the Annual Report.

We voted to send greetings to former pastors and/or their widows – i.e., Arnold Thomas, Robert Buckwalter, Thomas Leamon, and John Westerhoff.

Moira Jones, with her husband Kevin and son Schuyler, demonstrated the new website, and we unanimously voted thanks to the Jones family for all their work in setting it up.

Moderator Humes then thanked everyone for their continuing support, noted that the Community and Congregation clusters will meet immediately following this meeting, and then invited Carrie to give the benediction and lead us in the singing of Siyahamba.

There being no other business to come before the meeting, a motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Jean Donati, Clerk

Minutes of the Special Meeting of March 25, 2012

A good-sized crowd of members and friends of the First Congregational Church, Williamstown, gathered for a special meeting called by petition, after worship on Sunday, March 25th, 2012.

Moderator Samuel Humes called the meeting to order shortly after 11 a.m. and introduced Bruce Grinnell, Parliamentarian. Susan Yates Mulder led those present in a responsive reading based on the previous Sunday’s sermon by Rick Spalding.

Bruce outlined and clarified some rules for the meeting. (Disclaimer here: the Clerk has attempted to reduce the full minutes of the meeting to the actions taken. The meeting, which lasted more than two hours, consisted of much discussion which does not directly reflect the final result.)

Those present had access to various documents, including the original warrant which had been signed by well over the required five members; the agenda, which included revised versions of the original motions as approved and agreed upon by the signers of the petition; and a list of seven goals which had been prepared primarily by the Committee on Pastoral Ministries (COPM). These goals, which had no overall title, were individually titled (1) Communication goal; (2) 250th Anniversaries preparation goal; (3) Support for Second Hour; (4) Goal of reviewing and improving governance; (5) Membership and attendance goals; (6) Teen group goal; (7) Staff goal. (There was no action taken with respect to those goals.)

Susan Yates Mulder moved (as printed in the agenda): “that the Church Council consider the concerns raised at this meeting about respectful communication and transparency in the conducting of all church business, and take appropriate actions to address those concerns.” Jina Ford seconded the motion. After numerous questions and opinions were expressed, Cesar Silva moved that we table the motion. The move to table was rejected by a vote of 24 to 23. Then Michael Sussman (who as a non-member was allowed by carried motion to speak) suggested that we amend the proposed motion by adding the following phrase: “and that the Church Council report back via either a special meeting within six to nine months or at the next Annual Meeting on how they have addressed these concerns.” There was then a call for the question, a move for the amended motion, and the amended motion carried easily.

Susan Yates Mulder then moved a shortened version of the second motion printed in the agenda, as follows: “that the Church Council evaluate the staff and pastoral evaluation process and report back to the congregation when reporting about the first motion.” Margy O’Connor seconded the motion. After much further discussion, the question was called, and the motion as now changed was passed unanimously.

Susan Yates Mulder then moved “that the Church Council in consultation with the Pastor, and any other member who wants to join the meetings, help evaluate, reassess, and come up with specific conclusions and remedies to improve the present organizational structure of the church.” Carol Stein-Payne seconded the motion. Brought to a vote, the motion was passed with only a quiet few negative votes.

Together the assemblage read the Covenant as approved by the Founders of our church in 1765, and by motion the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Donati, Clerk

Addenda: A selection of paraphrased remarks is herewith included as part of a full report on the meeting.

Bruce Grinnell: any motion may be amended provided that it not deviate greatly from the intention of the original motion. Bruce declared himself somewhat mystified (as were many others) by the background events leading to this meeting. Bruce also reminded us to direct comments to the motions (and, for instance, not to the list of seven goals), and pleaded that remarks be based on personal experience rather than hearsay.

Susan Yates Mulder, in describing the process leading to a call for a meeting, said that the Pastor had felt marginalized and that numerous hard-working committee members felt that their opinions and contributions had been ignored. She emphasized that nobody was completely right or wrong. The goal-setting came out of the pastoral evaluation process.

Jina Ford, member of the COPM, said that “our minds are on the same track.”

Moira Jones reminded us that we are a congregation and that no individual may obstruct our path, but that all may step up to help do the work needed to keep the church alive and well. She noted that the COPM and current evaluation process were created precisely to make the process more inclusive.

Margy O'Connor felt that some want our work to be more like that of a corporation than of a fellowship, and reminded us that our bylaws provide that all decisions by the Church Council are subject to review by the congregation.

Jody Green asked whether Church Council meetings are open to all and was assured that they are. She suggested that the meetings be in a larger space such as Fellowship Hall and said she feels that actions at the Annual Meeting are taken too speedily.

Jan Keep, who was for many years Church Historian, suggested that for most of our history we have experienced some sort of difficulty about every ten years, but that we have faced each difficulty and "always survived."

Diego Uribe reminded us that our primary goal is to cement and enjoy our relationship with God. While his initial visit to this church was intimidating, he knows that "we all care about the church."

Anne Skinner asked what is "the behavioral covenant" and heard that none has been selected.

Michael Payne called First Church "an island of civility" made up of people who manifest "controlled intellectual fury" with intense, eager minds, expressing hope that we continue in that tradition.

Robin Lehleitner called for no further discussion of the goals set down here (which came from the COPM), reminding us that we are here to vote on the warrant motions.

Jean Vankin urged us to remember that our best contribution is to ask questions, to volunteer to take part, and to be informed about Council actions.

John Green (who as a non-member was permitted to speak) noted that "in human relations, we (naturally) back away from painful problems."

Miles Wheat, returning to the motion, said that the word "consider" is too vague in this context.

Cesar Silva called for clarification of the phrase "concerns raised at this meeting" and reminded us that we have already recently been through a process to reach the current structure of the church.

Nan Fritz as chair of the COPM described its membership, its charge, and the long and difficult process it went through, endeavoring to reflect comments from a large number of people ("maybe we should ask everyone in the congregation to take part"), and she clarified some of the questions considered as well as some not considered.

Jina Ford, a member of the COPM, remembered that its members started from different positions but ended up in agreement.

Cynthia Payne questioned what the exact "issues" are, but there was no easy or immediate response.

John Chandler asked whether the phrase “look at the evaluation process” implies that the product of this year’s COPM report should be re-worked, and Susan Yates Mulder replied that that was not at all the intent.

Robin Lehleitner (like Nan Fritz) said that she had offered to meet and talk with anyone who had questions – the offers are still open.

Margaret McComish reminded us of our responsibilities: “If you vote ‘yes’ on Motion #3, then you should be ready to take part.”

– Jean Donati

Minutes of the Special Meeting of December 16, 2012

A special meeting of the First Congregational Church, UCC, Williamstown, was held immediately following Sunday Worship on December 16, 2012 to hear and vote on the proposed budget for 2013 and the proposed changes to our bylaws. **(Please see Appendix A for the Report of the Bylaw Review Group to this meeting, and Appendix B for the Bylaws as amended and approved at this meeting.)**

After a prayer led by Pastor Carrie Bail, Moderator Sam Humes, declaring a quorum present, opened the meeting and called upon Treasurer Kevin Jones to present the budget. Copies of the proposed budget had previously been distributed.

Kevin pointed out that perhaps the most important difference from last year's budget was an attempt to provide more appropriate funding for Christian Education. (This followed the morning's Christmas pageant, in which some 20 children and young people had taken part.) By piecing together funds from each of the clusters, we would be able to pay a Christian Ed director approximately \$10,300, including fringe benefits. In addition, along with a general 2% salary increase for staff members, we will try to compensate those whose jobs are increased by the increased use of our building. The reason that the sexton's salary will actually be lower is that our new sexton is younger and does not need health insurance. In order to achieve all of this, a number of small cuts were made to other budget items.

Another part of the budget that required explanation and discussion had to do with the pastor's compensation. Since Carrie has announced her resignation and will be leaving as of January 20, 2013, we need to address that. The Church Council had at its December meeting voted to approve an agreement between Carrie and the Church, which essentially grants her a continuation of her salary for six months following her departure. We know that we will need to pay an interim pastor, but no details are yet available.

At this point, Kevin stressed that to date we have received pledges amounting to only about half of our goal, and of course it is impossible to make firm decisions until we know what our actual income will be. In response to a question, he said that yes, it is possible to revise this budget at annual meeting or any other time during the year. Also, he noted that the \$31,000 set aside for capital improvements is virtually all to pay for expenses necessary to allow A B(etter) C(hance) to use our facilities, a move that will be returned over the years in rent paid by them.

A motion to accept the budget as presented was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Susan Clarke then presented the proposed changes to our bylaws, the result of hard and long work by a number of people. Again, copies of the old bylaws, a document highlighting the changes, and a "clean" copy of the "new" ones had previously been distributed. As background, Susan said that this work was in direct response to a mandate passed at the special meeting in March, and that a church-wide invitation for input had brought some 34 comments and suggestions. One result is that each cluster (soon to be called "ministry team") is expected to create an "operations manual" in order to facilitate and clarify each group's tasks.

Susan went over each change, noting that the Pastoral Relations Committee is a question still to be debated and decided. The Koinonia group of caregivers does not need to be specified but will probably appear in the

Deacons' manual. In a motion that was made and seconded, we voted (with one abstention) that two delegates shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and that we use the terminology "shall support two delegates." A motion to retain the sentence "The Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet several times each year to discuss joys and concerns of the Pastor and Church family, to insure that the Pastor and the Congregation are listening to each other." was made and seconded and passed overwhelmingly.

It was moved and seconded that we accept as of February 3, 2013 the bylaws as amended today, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Susan Yates came forward to express on behalf of all sincere thanks for Susan Clarke and her committee for their hard work on the bylaws.

She then asked about the transition needed because of Carrie's resignation, and it was noted that we could discuss the question but not vote on it. There ensued considerable discussion about what we need to do and how to do it. Moira Jones as presumed Moderator-elect took the microphone to explain that Jill Graham, of the Massachusetts Conference, is ready and available to assist us. We are not willing to be rushed into any decisions, and hope to get considerable information at a forthcoming meeting with Jill, officers of the church (Moderator, the presumed Moderator-elect, and Treasurer, but not the Pastor or Clerk) and the chair or a representative from each cluster.

Upon that reassurance, there was a motion and second to adjourn the meeting and the motion was passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Donati, Clerk

Moderator's Report

As we begin the new year of 2013, let us heed St. Paul's counsel of: "forgetting what is behind and straining towards what lies ahead..." We need to move beyond divisive issues, emphasize all that we share in common, and work together collegially to continue to achieve the church community that we envision.

We can look back upon 2012 as a time of accomplishment and change. We have taken many actions related to the goals determined in our self assessment, including expanded programs, new building partners, adjustments to our organizational structure and enhanced communications. In December we accepted Pastor Carrie Bail's decision to end her 12 ½ years as the spiritual leader of our church and to seek another place for her ministry in order to fulfill God's call in her own life. Our church and congregational family have been a major part of her life for nearly half of her total ministry. She has ministered with care and thoughtfulness to many of our congregation who will mourn her departure. Carrie and her family, who have played a pivotal role in our fellowship have been feted at the luncheon on January 20th. We wish her good luck and Godspeed as she moves forward in her career and a new impetus in her life.

We begin 2013 knowing it will be active and challenging as we experience a transition of leadership. The Pastoral Transition Committee shall help us explore and determine what we need to accomplish in the interim

and in our transition to a settled pastor. To arrange for an interim pastor, we will look for help to the United Church of Christ Berkshire Association. To discern anew the vision of FCC's mission, we expect a time of introspection, open discussion, and prayer. Using our June 2011 self-assessment as a base, we will re-examine ourselves, our strengths, and our needs and determine adjustments and additions to the goals previously established. Working with revised by-laws and personnel policies, at this Annual Meeting we shall elect new officers and four new Ministry Teams. We look forward to supporting their efforts as we move toward celebrating our 250th anniversary.

My term as Moderator will end at this Annual Meeting. The Nominating Committee has been hard at work identifying candidates to fill all the open positions. We look forward to supporting the next Moderator, and all the new officers and committee members as we move forward in 2013 – confronting the challenges that face us and continuing efforts to develop the vibrant, growing church community that we have envisioned. Highlighting our agenda will be reducing tensions about the roles of professional and lay leaders in planning and orchestrating the aspirations and operations of our church community. A vital need is developing and expanding our membership, upon which we rely to support – with money, human energy, and Christian spirit – our worship, our outreach, our educational programs, our staff, and our building.

– Samuel Humes

Treasurer's Report

The Budget Task Force for 2013 consisted of Kevin Jones (Treasurer and Chair), Blair Benjamin (Community), Lynn Chick (Congregation), Brian Handspicker (Stewardship), Michael Sussman (Personnel) with non-voting members Carrie Bail (Pastor) and Sam Humes (Moderator). The 2013 budget proposed by this group sought to continue most programs with small reductions here and there to permit an expansion of the current two hour per week Sunday School Teacher position into a 12 hour per week Christian Education and Youth Leader position, albeit at a lower hourly rate. This is not a return to the level of Christian Ed staff that we enjoyed until a few years ago, but is a modest step in the direction of rebuilding our program. Modest 2% raises for the staff were proposed. Near the end of the budget planning period, Pastor Bail announced her resignation effective January 20, 2013. The church council approved a plan to continue to pay Pastor Bail for six additional months after her formal departure to provide her a "sabbatical" time in which to discern her next calling. The planning for the transition period after Pastor Bail's January departure is just getting underway and the 2013 budget will have to be revisited in light of the Deacon's plans for pulpit supply and/or an interim Pastor.

At the Special Budget Meeting on Dec. 16, 2012 the Congregation, after thoughtful discussion, unanimously passed the proposed budget, recognizing that modifications will need to be made as plans for this transitional year firm up.

The pledge drive committee for 2013 consisted of Kevin Jones (Treasurer and Chair), Brian Handspicker, David Dewey, Margaret McComish and Annie Parkman. On the three Sundays leading up to Stewardship Sunday, one of the Cluster Chairs delivered a brief description of one of their cluster's activities, collectively illustrating the breadth and vitality of activities at the church. On Stewardship Sunday the Deacons provided the stewardship moment. These statements by Brian Handspicker (Stewardship), Jina Ford (Community), Robin Lehleitner (Congregation) and Sam Smith (Deacons) were included in the pledge drive materials sent to the Congregation.

The 2013 budget was based on an anticipated pledge level of \$211,000, which was the actual pledge level in 2012. As of early January 2013, pledges stand at only \$169,000, suggesting an ultimate pledge level in the range of \$180,000 to 185,000. If this comes to pass, the Congregation will have to consider how to address the shortfall. A historical study of the pledge levels in the 21st century shows that pledge dollars rose almost 50% from 2000 to 2009, reaching a peak of \$236,000. Since 2009 pledge dollars have declined. Since 2000 the number of “pledging units” has dropped at an average rate of about 3.5 per year. The number of dollars per pledge unit has risen at a rate of about 5% although may be starting to turn down with 2012. While the church is not yet in financial crisis, it is clear that we cannot sustain the present program - a full time Pastor, the staff, the building, the outreach and the activities – in the face of steadily declining membership and pledge dollars. Rebuilding membership, attracting new people and bringing them to the point of making a financial and time commitment to the church, is a long-term process. As the Congregation plans for its future in this time of Pastoral transition, it is essential that the fiscal realities be honestly faced and be incorporated into the thinking about church priorities.

For 2012 the church ended up just about breaking even on the year, thanks in part to a record breaking effort by The FCC Tag Sale Team who raised \$22,338, double what was expected! We were also aided by a warm winter, which saved on oil, and a general effort to spend a little less where possible. While this balanced budget for the year was welcome good news, it is important to note that we did not complete the major building project of the year and significant costs have been pushed off onto the 2013 budget. The church is undertaking a renovation of a basement room (“the mango room”) so that it can be used by the local “A Better Chance House” charity as a storage facility for their annual clothing sale, long held at FCC. Bringing the ABC storage and the associated flow of volunteers into the building will help 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, has proven more expensive than anticipated. The 2013 building budget was already constrained by the need to pay off loans associated with repainting the steeple and fixing the roof. The remainder of the 2013 funds will be required to complete the basement renovations and there may be a small spill over into 2014. However, once this work is completed, we will have both a new revenue stream from our ABC partners and a start on a sprinkler system for the building.

As I step down as Treasurer I want to express a special thanks to Annie Parkman, our financial secretary, whose excellent record keeping and attention to detail greatly facilitates the job of the Treasurer and helps the church get the best possible use of every available dollar.

– Kevin Jones, Treasurer

Clerk’s Report

STATISTICS OF THE YEAR:

	Last Report	Current
Church Members	224	217
Pledging Families	109	

Members and Friends lost by death:

Nan Brooks Goodell* (not held here), Theodore Wynkoop Goodman*, Ralph Herne* (memorial as part of

Sunday worship), Rita Cecilia George Hoar*, Matthew Stuart Jenkins* (reception here), Alice Beatrice Cota Hynes, Berenice “Bunny” Hewitt Lothrop*, Jane McKnight Mesick*, Mary Patricia Macbeth Jones Short* (not held here),

* = FCC member

Transferred Membership: Carl Jenkins, Jane Jenkins

Received into Membership:

Peter Harold Witham

Weddings

Jason Michael Lowery and Jennifer Lynn Weingarten

Charles Eric O’Neill and Genevieve Rose St. Pierre-May

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)

Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee met many times throughout the fall. Phil Smith, Margy O'Connor, and Marilyn Faulkner were the committee with representatives from the three clusters: Beth Davis from Community, Jody Green from Stewardship, and Charles Fox from Congregation.

Many people were approached for the several vacancies and the committee is grateful to those who have agreed to step forward and take on the responsibilities of serving the congregation. The nominees are highlighted as follows. Positions are in line with the revised bylaws voted in December 2012 in terms of the 'teams.'

Moderator* Moira Jones '16

Treasurer Kevin Jones '14 (will continue until replacement found)

Clerk* Marilyn Faulkner '14

Outreach Ministry Team

Jean Vankin '14
Beth Davis (Habitat Liaison) '14
Robert Behr '14
Judy Wright '15
Susan Yates Mulder '15
Beth Goodman '16
Annette Triquère '16

Education and Fellowship Team

Carrie Waara '14
Karen Benko '15
Samuel Humes '15
Margaret Oxtoby '16
Rebecca Kamp '16
Richard Markham '16
Peter Witham '16

Stewardship Team

Brian Handspicker '14
Michael Sussman '14
Anne Skinner '14
Bruce Grinnell '15
Jody Green '15
Ben Hynes '15
Nancy Piatczyc '16
Deborah Currie '16
David Dewey '16

Deacon Ministry Team

Jeannie Ranney '14
Charles Fox '14
Ron Alund '14
Anne Atkinson '15
Cesar Silva '15
Nan Fritz '16
Jina Ford '16
Carol Paul '16

Church Council "At Large" Members

Lauren Stevens '14
Robin Lehleitner '15
Betsy Burris '16

Nominating Committee

Phil Smith '14
Margy O'Connor '15
Katherine Myers '16

Delegates: Sam & Elizabeth Smith '16

Respectfully Submitted, Marilyn Faulkner, Chair

Reports from the Community Cluster

The Community Cluster includes representatives from the Delegates, the Just Peace Coordinator, Meals-on-Wheels, the Open and Affirming Coordinator, the Outreach Allocations Committee, Makepeace Bequest Grants, the Shawl Ministry, and the Sudan Relief Task Force, as well as volunteers working with Habitat for Humanity, the Angel Tree, Hearts with Haiti, and the Family Life Support Center at Louison House.

CO-CHAIRS: Jina Ford and Susan Yates Mulder

Community Cluster Co-Chair's Report

The Community Cluster has continued to participate in Outreach Allocations and oversight that is our Cluster's primary task. A second task is to make certain that the congregation is aware of our Outreach commitments, which we did by newsletter articles and regular participation in Second Hour. The Outreach programs and projects that were supported this year include the Alternative Gift Fair, the Angel Tree, Higher Ground, Environmental Issues, Food Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, Helping Hands, Youth Outreach, Meals on Wheels, Shawl Ministry and the Sudan Relief Task Force. In addition, we participated in the By-Laws review, worked to develop a Cluster Manual, and had representation on the Personnel Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Budget Task Force, the committee assigned to carry out this year's Pastoral Evaluation, the Second Hour Committee, and the Church Council.

The Outreach efforts that we support are the means that we use to fulfill our commitment as a Just Peace Church. The idea of justice is not retribution, but the fair distribution of resources so that all people may fulfill their potential. We believe that our society benefits when all members are able to thrive and contribute to the common good. We also believe that peace is only possible when there is justice.

– Jina Ford, Co-Chair

Alternative Gift Fair Report

On Saturday 12/1/2012 we held the Alternative Gift Fair conjunction with the Williams College Students for Social Justice. The event coordinated with the Habitat Tree Showcase and Holiday Walk. More than 20 vendors participated representing social justice non-profit organizations as well as local sustainable agricultural goods.

– Susan Yates Mulder

Angel Tree Report

Barbara and Bob Hadden and Marilyn Faulkner took on this project for a second year. The Salvation Army provided 20 tags and the Louison House 10 tags. The Angel Tree was set up for Sunday, November 24, by the side entrance. The tags were all taken within two weeks time! Gifts were returned by December 12, for delivery to the Salvation Army and Louison House. Thanks to some cash donations bus passes were purchased along with some Walmart gift cards for the Louison folks. We extend a great big THANK YOU for helping to make Christmas merry for so many in our area!

– Bob & Barbara Hadden and Marilyn Faulkner

Delegates Report

Throughout the year 2012, the delegates represented our congregation at meetings of the Berkshire Association of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (MACUCC), at ordination and installation ceremonies of various county Congregational churches and at the 213th Annual Meeting of the MACUCC held in Sturbridge, MA June 16 & 17.

The full report of the MACUCC annual meeting as well as the meeting's Keynote Address by the Rev. J. Bennett Guess, Executive Minister for Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ National Staff, is available on the MACUCC web site.

In his address, Rev. Guess lifted up the primary concern and theme of the meeting: the institutional life

of all mainline churches. Guess, aware that he was ‘preaching to the choir,’ devoted little time to a recitation of the evidence—especially the deep reluctance among young/middle-aged adults to join a church—for the decline in church membership and attendance in the United States. Indeed asking—how many people are in church on Sunday, for example—is not the right measure for today. A congregation’s assessment of vitality will have to take a different form.

As Guess pointed out, “while no one can tell the future—especially when you’re wandering in a wilderness—the one thing that’s for certain is that we’re not going back to the place where we came from.

“One of the fortunate things about being in exile is that you learn to focus your attention on what really matters. In fact, you have no other choice. When all you carry must fit in a backpack, you can’t insist on bringing the dining room table.”

In other words, Guess says, many churches want to cross this current wilderness with everything and everyone intact. But such an ideal can’t happen. “You can’t go through deep change and remain unchanged at the same time. Transformation means something is being formed anew.”

The first step of adaptive change is coming to realize the urgency for change, and that urgency—while unsettling—is a blessing, not a curse.

People no longer join congregations because they need more relationships or because they want to be a ‘member.’ They already have as many social friendships as their time and lifestyle will allow.

But people, Guess affirmed, want to become active in something where they feel that they are having an impact, that they are making a difference, where they find a depth of honest exploration and real joy.

“Christianity, thank God,” said Guess, “is becoming deliberative again and that new intentionality means that, while our numbers may be adjusting to that new reality, the discipleship and stewardship of those who choose to remain is being reformed and deepened. We are no longer conforming to this world, but being transformed.”

There’s some real hope in that for our ecclesial community in Williamstown. It’s not that people don’t or won’t take the gospel seriously anymore. It’s that they want to explore it and engage it even more seriously.

POSTSCRIPT

The wider conversation at the MACUCC Annual Meeting can be summed up as a parallel—though milder—expression of the words of Walter Brueggemann:

In his book, Cadences of Home, Brueggemann summarizes the particular tasks that belong to communities of faith who understand themselves as communities in exile in the midst of empire. These practices will not be comfortable or safe, but filled with danger, for they may well set the faith communities that practice them against the empire that seeks to co-opt them. Brueggemann names six practices of hope and resistance.

Dangerous memories, reaching all the way back to our barren mother

Sarah.

Dangerous criticism that mocks the dead empire.

Dangerous promises that imagine a shift of power in the world.

Dangerous songs that sing of unexpected newness of life.

Dangerous bread free of all imperial ovens; all leading to

Dangerous departures of heart and body and mind, leavings undertaken
in trust and obedience.

– Sam and Elizabeth Smith

Helping Hands Report

Since 2006 "A Helping Hands for Helping Hands" (aka Helping Hands) training grant program has been administered by the outreach allocations committee, part of the church's community cluster/ministry team. The initial idea for this program came from a monthly outreach meeting and the original proposal written by Carl Westerdahl. The program has been coordinated thereafter by: Carl Westerdahl, Barbara Richardson and Sally Sussman. Funding for Helping Hands each year has come from an application to The Makepeace Bequest submitted by the outreach allocations committee.

Not-for-profit human service agencies serving the northern Berkshire community have applied for funds to upgrade their ability to "meet human needs and alleviate suffering". When budget cuts have been necessary; continuing education funds are frequently eliminated for staff, board members and volunteers. Helping Hands has assisted in making the difference for many local organizations in maintaining basic support for continuing education. In total, nearly fifty scholarships have been granted over the years by outreach allocations to individuals as well as organizations requesting support for group in-service. Guidelines and applications have been available on the church and Northern Berkshire Community Coalition websites.

2012 Helping Hands training grants recipients include: Northern Berkshire Neighbors, UNITY (\$150), Child Care of the Berkshires (\$300), Northern Berkshire Adult Basic Education Program (\$500), Adams Council on Aging (\$240), Berkshire Nursing Families (\$310).

– Sally Sussman

Report of the Just Peace Coordinator

This year, we have been dramatically reminded of the cost of climate change in the increase and impact of violent weather in our country and around the world. The impact of the super storm Sandy on the northeast coast commands our ongoing attention as delays in aid cause political turmoil. The cost to families and our economy is enormous. We have continued to house Higher Ground, the non-profit agency that was founded to deal with the devastation last year's Hurricane Irene wrought on our local trailer park, the Spruces. The need has intensified for a hard look at low income housing in Williamstown. Land that can be used to develop more permanent low income housing is being identified, and plans to use the space along the river that was occupied by the Spruces is considered for other uses of benefit to the town.

Our dependence on petroleum based fuel has become highlighted as the Alaskan pipeline across our country continues to be advocated for by oil interests. While the pipeline was initially targeted to end in Houston, alternate plans include a pipeline across the Northeast to Portland, Maine. It has become apparent that this oil is not needed by our country, but will most likely be shipped to other countries from these port cities. The impact of releasing that oil which when burned releases carbon into the atmosphere, is identified as a final act in bringing the world as we know it to an irreversible state of global warming. Members of our church are following that development closely, and we believe that it is important to make a strong statement that Northeast citizens will not assent to having a pipeline run across this land.

Our church continues to support services that aid those who are faced with poverty in these difficult economic times: Habitat for Humanity, Meals on Wheels, Sudan Relief Task Force, Shawl Ministry, and the Angel Tree. We have given support to agencies that provide services in the community through Helping Hands, mediation and Louison House. We are preparing our building to house the ABC clothing sale. By renting space to Mission Partners, we are using our building as a resource for programs that work for Justice and Peace. All of these programs represent our continuing commitment to Justice and Peace in our community and the wider world.

– Jina Ford, Just Peace Coordinator

Meals-on-Wheels Report

Approximately 25 church folk are carrying on this program, assumed by FCC in 2004, preparing and delivering about 700 meals for the year 2012 as part of the local ecumenical “Take and Eat” program.” This effort provides meals each Sunday prepared by the participating local churches to those in our community in need of nutritional and social support. Ours is the fourth Sunday of the month.

A well-earned respite was in order this fall with great thanks to Arletta Currie who was our crackerjack leader since 2004! The mantle was taken up by Marilyn Faulkner and Kay Sherman in September. Many thanks to our faithful supporters - Jean Vankin in charge of deliveries, Marian Wilkin for calling volunteers each month, the faithful ‘kitchen ladies’, and most of all to the willing delivery people. Blessings to all who continue to give generously of their time - and - new recruits are always needed!

– Marilyn Faulkner and Kay Sherman, Co-Organizers

Outreach Allocations Committee Report

The Outreach Allocations Committee has the duty to allocate budgeted funds for worthy mission work done locally and globally in the areas of hunger, poverty, homelessness, and education. Our various methods of collecting information on causes come from members and friends of the church and the overflowing outreach mailbox.

2012 Outreach Allocations Committee members – Robert Behr, Blair Benjamin, Bob Hadden, Janet Keep, Cynthia Payne, Carol Stein-Payne, and Judy Wright – participated as volunteers on this committee. The committee approved cash grants and building use subsidies from the Community Cluster’s \$10,000 Outreach Allocations budget line item, selected Helping Hands grant recipients, and made recommendations for use of the Community Cluster’s 2013 Makepeace grants budget. The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition’s monthly Friday meetings again served as an important link to our own area, as well as the committee members’ various affiliations with groups such as the Northern Berkshire United Way and Williamstown Community Chest.

Listed below are the names of recipients and amounts given through the \$10,000 of non-Makepeace Outreach funding:

Recipient or Project	Amount
ABC House Clothing Sale (Building Use Subsidy)	\$1,000.00
Habitat for Humanity Christmas Tree Sale (Building Use Subsidy)	\$650.00
Expense Paid for Cancelled Gardening Workshop	\$200.00
Friendship Center Food Pantry / Northern Berkshire Interfaith Initiative	\$1,500.00
Peter M. Goodrich Memorial Foundation	\$1,000.00
Equus Therapeutic	\$1,500.00
Berkshire Mediation Services	\$1,500.00
Salvation Army / North Adams	\$500.00
American Red Cross / Relief for Superstorm Sandy Victims	\$650.00
Williamstown Food Pantry	\$1,500.00
Total	\$10,000.00

Makepeace grant funds. Annually since 1987 the church has received funds from a bequest made to the church by Isabelle Makepeace, and we have distributed a portion to projects that help meet human need, relieve suffering, and/or promote education of the church family. The Community Cluster’s Outreach Allocations Committee reviewed requests (submitted through a formal application process) over meetings in November and December 2012. The amount of funding available for distribution of 2013 Makepeace grants is an increase of \$250 over 2012, bringing the total to \$26,150. Every year we are impressed by the quality of programming and services proposed by all of the applicants, and we are always pleased to be introduced to new programs and new organizations while maintaining connections with organizations and causes that have a long history of support from our church. The committee members recommend that the Congregation approve distribution of 2013 Makepeace grant funds as shown below.

Organization	Amount Requested	Amount Recommended by Outreach Allocations Committee	Purpose(s)
Development in Gardening	5000	1000	Support for ongoing operations assisting in the creation of sustainable vegetable gardens affiliated with health centers, orphanages and schools in Africa to improve the nutrition of HIV patients, orphans, pregnant women, and other vulnerable populations.
Higher Ground	3600	3600	Nonprofit organization, founded in large measure through the support of FCC, to assist residents of the Spruces mobile home park who were displaced by the flooding from Tropical Storm Irene. Our church has been deeply committed to this work, and the Outreach Allocations Committee recommends full funding for this organization to undertake its vital work in 2013.
FCC Youth Group	1000	1000	Support for a mission trip to New York City, allowing youth affiliated with FCC to participate in continued post-Sandy rebuilding and other mission work.
Berkshire Food Project	3000	4000	Provides free and nutritious meals to the needy in North Berkshire, serves as a community forum, provides information that is beneficial to the health and well-being of their clients, and encourages greater participation by their clients in decision-making that affects their lives.
Budondo Intercultural Center	1500	1500	The Suubi (Hope) Women's Reproductive Health Center will offer accessible health care and counseling for women and children living in Budondo, and eight surrounding villages in Uganda. The center aims to reduce the rates of maternal and infant mortality, unwanted pregnancies, malnutrition, and fatal diseases.

Church Outreach to Youth (COTY) Project	2000	2000	Support for the COTY Project to implement a new service-based youth development program for underprivileged teens in north Berkshire.
Family Life Support Center	3750	3750	Funding will help defray heating costs.
Hoosac Harvest	1300	1300	Hoosac Harvest provides subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares, allowing needy families in north Berkshire to access sustainably grown produce.
NAMI-BC	3374	2500	A grassroots organization for families and friends of people with mental illness, with a mission to support, educate, and advocate for those affected by mental illness in Berkshire County. NAMI has a vision of an integrated community where acceptance and hope are widespread.
National Night Out -- Williamstown Historic Mill District	1100	750	Funding will make it possible to hold a community-wide "block party" in Williamstown with a focus on crime/drug prevention and community-police partnerships.
Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative	3000	4250	Support for the Friendship Center Food Pantry on Eagle Street in North Adams, providing enhanced food security for 1000s of families and individuals in north Berkshire.
Turner House	500	500	Turner House in Williamstown provides transitional housing for homeless veterans, accepting residents from temporary shelters, detoxification and rehabilitation centers, hospitals, and U.S. Veterans Administration facilities. The program's purpose is to provide these men and women with shelter, food, and other necessities and to assist them to work toward dealing with and overcoming the issues and problems that have caused their homelessness. This grant will partially fund a new high-volume washing machine for the facility.
Total	39124	26150	

Respectfully submitted,
Blair Benjamin, Chair, Outreach Allocations Committee

Shawl Ministry Report

In 2012, thanks to knitters Anne Atkinson, Judy Blackmer, Arletta Currie, Marilyn Faulkner, Barbara Hadden, Abbie Hatton, Marge Janes and Jan Keep, 12 shawls were delivered to members and friends in need of comfort, joy, and love at the time of illness, grief, celebration and transition. 150 shawls have been given away since the ministry began in May 2004. Five meetings were held during the church year, the 2nd or 3rd Sunday of the months of September, November, January, March and May at 9 a.m. in the church parlor. At these meetings,

finished shawls were gathered in, a list of recipients made, the Pass and Pray circle held, and shawls were wrapped for delivery. Shawls were offered for dedication at several worship services and a once a year offering collected to buy yarn for the ministry. We wish to thank Pastor Carrie Bail for bringing this ministry to our attention over eight years ago. It continues to offer us an opportunity to express our love for people through the gift of our handwork and a channel to get to know one another better. More knitters are welcome. Contact any of the knitters for information if interested in this work of “Knitting into the Mystery”.

Sudan Relief Task Force Report

Life in southern Sudan remained difficult as the new nation struggled to organize an effective government and economy, with the lack of prior infrastructure greatly compounded by the multitudes of people returning from the north.

As reported in the April church newsletters, the SRTF suspended operations and monthly reports while seeking a new initiative to help with resettlement and literacy in the new nation. As no clear project or channel for our funds had emerged by November, we reluctantly decided not to sell lentil soup mix for the holiday season.

We plan to meet early in 2013 to decide whether to continue to retain our remaining funds, approximately \$750, to seed a future project, or give the money to a legitimate and accountable group whose mission is in line with that of our churches and the Task Force.

Please keep the peoples of Sudan in your thoughts and prayers as they face challenges to meet the most basic needs for survival as well as health and education. We are grateful for your individual and congregational support of our efforts over many years. Bless you for opening your hearts to care for needy people in distant lands as well as in our local community.

Members of the Sudan Relief Task Force:

St. Johns: Elizabeth Williams, Co-Chair, Peter Elvin, Jeanne Blake, Maria Greg Williams, “Sam” Coughlin

First Congregational: Lynne De Lay, Co-Chair Carrie Bail, Darius Jonathan, Jan Keep, Jina Ford, Abbie Hatton, Judy Reichert

– Abbie Hatton

Reports from the Congregation Cluster

The Congregation Cluster includes representatives from the Choir, Christian Education, Coffee Hour, the Deacons, the Flower Committee, the Hospitality Committee, Koinonia, Membership and Parish Life, the Librarians, the Pastoral Relations Committee, and all efforts at congregational photography. **CHAIR: Lynn Chick and Robin Lehleitner**

Congregation Cluster Co-Chair's Report

Since its inception several years ago, the Congregation Cluster has been charged with the implementation of worship, fellowship, and education, as well as with oversight of the staff that provides these services. This year saw another industrious overhaul of the By-Laws by a Council-appointed team culminating in a recommendation to separate the Board of Deacons from the Fellowship and Education portions of the cluster. Part of this recommendation was that the names of the individual clusters be retooled to more accurately reflect this anticipated structural change. As a result, the Congregation Cluster looks forward to serving, provisional to approval of the 2013 Annual Meeting, under a new title: “The Education and Fellowship Ministry Team.” We agree that this name aptly describes our likely future role in our church’s mission.

It is tempting to utilize this report to reflect broadly on the changes that have taken place within FCC during the past year, especially since, from our perspective, the Congregation Cluster has served until this point in its existence as what might best be called the “heart” of the church. Over the course of 2012, we saw a growing tendency to disputation in the church—between laity and laity, as well as between staff and lay leadership. This dispute may have played a role in cluster and worship attendance attrition, as experienced increasingly over the course of the year. The division announced itself most vocally in the Call for a Special Meeting of the Congregation in March. At this well-attended meeting the congregation voted in three motions that the Church Council was then taxed with implementing over the remainder of 2012: 1) That the Church Council consider improving respectful communication and transparency in the conducting of all church; 2) That the Church Council evaluate the staff and pastoral evaluation process and report back to the Congregation when reporting on the first motion; 3) That the Church Council, in consultation with the Pastor, and any other member who wants to join the meeting, help evaluate, reassess and come up with specific conclusions and remedies to improve the present organization structure of the church.

Betsy Burris (Church Council representative-at-large) was appointed by the Council to mount an effort to improve communications in the church, as required by Motion 1, and did so with the assistance of Congregation Cluster co-chair Robin Lehleitner; Lynn Chick, co-chair of the Congregation Cluster, was appointed by Church Council to conduct an evaluation of the pastor evaluation process, as required by Motion 2, a task she diligently carried out in the fall; and a Council-appointed by-laws reorganization team, chaired by Susan Clarke, worked to address Motion 3, a mission in which the Congregation Cluster participated wholeheartedly. None of us claims that our work was either perfect or complete, but it was carried out with the best of intentions and with a scrupulous adherence to the highest principles of fellowship and leadership. It is therefore reasonable to reflect that in 2012 the Congregation Cluster was deeply involved in the spiritual life of the church, especially in terms of its high level of participation in the work of resolving the motions passed by the congregation in March.

Nevertheless, in 2012 Congregation Cluster participation dropped to an all-time low. As the year went on, fewer and fewer cluster members attended meetings or participated in important decision-making processes, and even fewer were on hand to share the core work of the cluster, in terms of its ministries of education and fellowship. One problematic issue seemed to be the membership overlap between the Congregation Cluster and deacons. Four cluster members also served as active deacons in 2012, which meant tacitly carrying the responsibilities for meeting attendance and program support expected of both groups—a job much too large for most individuals. For this reason, we hope mightily that the separation of deacon from the cluster in 2013 may prove beneficial to future “Ministry Team” participation. Rumor has it that the cluster system was originally designed to reduce the number of meetings representatives would be expected to attend. In point of fact, however, the

cluster system, with its concomitant teams, task forces, committees, and councils seems to have spawned more meetings than ever. Such onerous attendance expectations not only make it unlikely that cluster members will continue functioning as such, but also make it less likely that they will feel free to participate in groups like the choir or events like Second Hour. In short, the current system invites burn-out in the workhorses of the clusters—especially the chairs of the teams and clusters themselves—and anticipates the likelihood that the most involved members of the leadership will choose to leave church behind altogether. This is our greatest concern.

Many enriching, popular programs envisioned and implemented by FCC in the last three years won't be continued in 2013 because they depend on the organizational talents of particular individuals who are now stepping down for a much-needed rest. These have been impressive and enjoyable experiences of fellowship, community, service, and education that require an inordinate amount of work to carry off. Many of these activities can not sustain themselves without a solid mass of lay personnel willing and able to support the necessary effort. We need to find a way to make service fulfilling, not exhausting. The three Congregation Cluster members who remained fully participatory through the end of 2012 are all women in their fifties with full-time jobs and college age children. Two of the three are retiring from the cluster this year and are unlikely to return to sustained church leadership roles in the near future. Chairs of other clusters and teams are also young-to-middle-aged professionals with full lives and a multitude of responsibilities. We think this is a good thing, and that the leadership of FCC should not be remanded to an army of retirement-age adults with enough time and energy on their hands to devote to the full-time volunteerism the present system demands. It is time to consider, deeply and rationally, how to distribute the burden and honor of church leadership more equally among the demographic of our congregation.

Lynn Chick
Robin Lehleitner
Congregation Cluster Co-Chairs

Christian Education Report

The First Congregational Christian Education Team is responsible for coordinating programs for children, youth, and adults. This year the Congregation Cluster began its ministry year by officially dividing the work of education into two separate teams: 1) Pre-School through High School and 2) Adult (including college age). 2012 members of the team responsible for the ministry to younger FCC folk included Diane Gottardi and Carrie Waara, co-chairs; Beth Davis, Sunday School teacher; and Robin Lehleitner, former CE Chair and current co-chair of the cluster. Several meetings were convened throughout the course of the year to steer this ministry, although some of the business of this team was conducted within the context of the larger cluster meetings. Adult Education in 2012 was chaired by cluster member Charles Fox. Adult Ed conducted most of its business—except for the Coffin Prize—through the vehicle of the Second Hour Task Force.

The focus of Sunday School for pre-school through high school is to provide rich educational experience whenever a young person is in church. In particular, Sunday School helps students learn about their religious heritage while encouraging tolerant, inclusive, and compassionate behavior. In 2012, FCC children's education remained in its traditional time slot during the second half of worship. Children once again attended worship with their parents and were released to a multi-age class with Beth Davis after Pastor Bail's Time for Children. Teens Katie Davis and Sarah Wong staffed the nursery next door to the FCC library, which was used as the Elementary classroom for most of the year, in order to provide easy accessibility to the nursery. Beth served as the adult supervisor of both classroom and nursery.

Sunday School

Typical Sunday School attendance for 2012 was between five and ten students, with a wide age range from pre-school to high school. Our church's strategy for 2012 was initially to hire Beth, who has training in differentiated instruction, as a teacher with for two to three hours per week. Beth prepares a multi-age lesson for each Sunday that is designed to include all students and parents present. As the year progressed, however, the CE Team agreed that it was advisable to offer Beth more hours per month as programming opportunities began to exceed Sunday morning.

Topics covered in Sunday school during 2012 included “The Third Way: Nonviolence, Civil Rights, Courage, and Compassion” (January and February); “Telling Stories About Jesus's Life”—using symbols to remember and organize details (Lent); “Growing Together”—planning and planting a garden in the vegetable plot in front of the church. From Easter through Children's Sunday at the end of May, the class learned about the early church and the letters its members wrote to one another while it planned the worship service it would lead in May. The Children’s Sunday service was a great success, and was followed by a church-wide picnic for all ages held outside on the west side of the church. Many of our beloved Children’s Fair games were resurrected for this event.

This fall Sunday School students learned about worship by following lectionary readings both in the service and Sunday school, and by learning about prayer and communion. A high point of the fall was a Halloween trip to the Williamstown Commons Alzheimer’s unit with fabric pumpkins to give as gifts. In Advent students learned about the story of Jesus’s birth and led worship with a Christmas pageant that included the O'Antiphons and the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

Sunday School students in 2012 included Klara Benko, Jacob Hillman, Ruth Wheat (Nursery: birth through pre-school); Miriam and Jude Bakija, Merry and Charlotte Benjamin, Adriel Benko, Sarah and Patrick Briggs, Mia and Isabella Currie, Theo and Felix King, Amelia and Teague Murphy, Alexander and Cameron Scott, and Isabel Trainer (Elementary). Katie Davis, Ben Hynes, Schuyler Jones, Benni and Karen McComish, Tenley Smith, and Sarah Wong were our middle and high school students.

Teen Activities

In February the Congregation Cluster and Christian Education Team hosted its second annual Valentine’s Rainbow Dance in the First Congo Fellowship Hall, in honor of LGBTQ teens in Northern Berkshire County. Schuyler Jones, Ben Hynes, Brian Handspicker, and Moira Jones offered their Java Jive-honed talents to create a distinctly FCC Open and Affirming Essence dance. They shared their professional level disco lighting and sound equipment expertise, joining forces with volunteers from the Williams College Queer Student Union, Berkshire Community College, Live Out Loud of Pittsfield, and the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition to host a colorful crowd of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, straight, and questioning teens who danced the night away to DJ Schuyler Jones’s tunes. Like last year, First Congo families and friends chaperoned and, under the leadership of the Congregation Cluster’s Jeannie Ranney, provided homemade snacks and refreshments. FCC teens Sarah Wong and Ben Hynes were on site as hosts to help non-FCC teens feel at home at this event.

Youth Groups

Fall 2012 saw the formation of new middle school and high school community service youth groups. Beth proposed the recruitment of these groups to the CE Team and cluster members, who were thrilled to support her vision. This fall there were three middle school “lunch and craft” meetings to make fabric pumpkins and couch

pups for the Williamstown Commons Alzheimers Unit, as well as puppets for the Christmas pageant. The high school group visited the Berkshire Food Project, Assisted HOORWA (Hoosac River Watershed Association) with its State of the River project, and helped out at the Habitat for Humanity tree showcase. The high schoolers are planning a mission trip to Staten Island during April vacation in 2013. Youth Group participants in 2012 were Aaron Burns, Miriam Bakija, Merry Benjamin, Sarah Briggs, Zachary Charbenau, Katie Davis, Ben Hynes, Schuyler Jones, Benni and Karen McComish, Amelia Murphy, Dan Packer, Jasper Rosenheim, Rose Shuker-Haines, Tenley Smith, Molly Wilson, and Sarah Wong.

Most importantly, the teens of our church are actively involved as role models and leaders for younger students each week. Sarah Wong and Katie Davis provide childcare in the nursery and assist with Sunday school every week. Joining them to support the 2012 Christmas pageant were Schuyler Jones, Ben Hynes, Benni and Karen McComish, and Tenley Smith. Special mention goes to Schuyler Jones for his ongoing weekly service to our church in technical sound and video expertise, and Ben Hynes for his service as a representative from the Stewardship Cluster to the Church Council.

Volunteers & Leadership

Adults who volunteered to help with Sunday School and Youth Group activities in 2012 included Karen Benko (classes, pageant, and field trips), Sue Wells (field trips and youth group), Jody Green (pageant), Elaine and Trevor Murphy (field trips), Brian Handspicker (classes, field trips, and pageant), Curt Tong (stories of courage and compassion), Elizabeth Smith and Lauren Stevens (help with garden), Sam Humes (contributor to class discussions) and Robin Lehleitner (refreshments).

The Congregation Cluster, in particular Robin Lehleitner and CE co-chair Carrie Waara (who labored alone after Diane Gottardi and her family moved to Princeton last summer), consider our gradual progress towards the re-establishment of solid, ongoing ministries to children and youth a success in 2012, largely due to Beth Davis. As we prepared to close up our 2012 fiscal year, the CE Team was extremely grateful to FCC Treasurer Kevin Jones for suggesting to Church Council and the Budget Task Force that now is the time to move boldly towards a gradual reinstatement of a salaried staff for CE and youth programming. The 2012 Budget Task Force has generously allocated enough money to allow the cluster to move forward in this goal. If the congregation passes this budgetary measure at the 2013 Annual Meeting, the 2013 Congregation Cluster (Education and Fellowship Ministry Team) will be able to advertise for and hire a 20-hour-per-week staff person—a big difference from the 2-3 hours per week with which we have made do in 2012. As a cluster, we have a strong, unified belief that providing our children and youth with an excellent staff person is necessary the growth and nurture of the church as a whole.

Adult Education & Second Hour@The Meetinghouse

In 2012, Adult Education became a separate entity within the Congregation Cluster. This year the team was chaired by cluster member Charles Fox, who in 2010 had pioneered FCC's successful adult education initiative "Forum on Contemporary Religious Issues"—an interview-style approach to spotlighting members of the Williams faculty who could contribute to the religious education conversation within our faith community. By the fall of 2011, via the FCC Self-assessment, the popular quarterly "Forum" expanded into Second Hour@the Meeting House, a weekly post-worship-service adult education program organized by an oversight team called the Second Hour Task Force. Second Hour comprised almost all of FCC's adult education programming in 2012, with the exception of the Coffin Prize (see below) and a four-week Lenten study group led by Fox on Paul Tillich's Dynamics of Faith. This series, held in the cozy atmosphere of the FCC library, was attended by

an average of twelve people each week from amongst the FCC membership and larger community.

2012 Second Hour programming was eclectic and did not limit itself to Williams College faculty. First in February and again in April, FCC member and MCLA Emeritus Professor of Cultural Studies Dick Markham led discussion sessions based on chapters of his book *Beyond Dogmatism: How Mystery Matters*. In February, Second Hour offered a three-part series on the Book of Genesis, conducted as an interview/discussion between Charles Fox and Williams Professor of Classics Edan Dekel. This series garnered the highest attendance of all FCC Adult Ed programming in the last three years, averaging 65 people per session, amongst them Williams students. Rick Spalding, FCC member and Williams College Chaplain, led a well-attended and highly personalized three-part series on the New Testament in March, and subsequently made it possible, with the support of Second Hour Task Force Committee member and Williams Fellowships Coordinator Lynn Chick, to bring activist/artist/Williams alum Elaine Denney to Second hour in April. Denney generously and enthusiastically shared her artistic vision of Latin America, as well as her actual art, with FCC. The final two Sundays in April, as well as the first Sunday in May, saw Williams College Chaplain and Cantor Bob Scherr leading FCC attendees in a study entitled “Judaism 101,” which featured a number of musical as well as text-oriented moments. May also brought a Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative-sponsored luncheon to FCC, which allowed former Forum guest and emeritus Williams Professor of Physics Stuart Crampton to speak to our congregation about hunger in Northern Berkshire County. The final Sunday in May was devoted to Children’s Sunday and an all-church potluck picnic.

Second Hour adjourned for the summer months, but reopened with a bang in September with a worship service performance by the Williams Gospel Choir and a sermon by Tirhakah Love ’14, a finalist in the 2012 Coffin Prize competition (see below). A welcome back student reception followed the service to become the first Second Hour program of the fall. A three-part series on “Death with Dignity,” hosted by Charles Fox and featuring medical ethicist Rachel Tarses and Williams philosophy professor Julie Pedroni speaking on the issue of assisted suicide. In October Berkshire County psychotherapist John Messerschmitt offered a three-part series called “Stages On Life’s Way,” which described human psycho-spiritual development from birth to old age. The last Sunday in October brought Professor Robison James all the way from Virginia to speak at both worship and Second Hour. Robison, and activist and politico in his own right, preached on Romans and offered a Second Hour talk on “Religion and Public Life Today.” In November and December Father Gary Caster, the Roman Catholic Chaplain at Williams, offered a three-part series entitled “Catholicism 101.” Father Gary was the hands-down favorite of a quickly accumulated and adoring fan club comprised of FCC members who enjoyed his humor and his stories. In 2012 Second Hour hosted its second annual pre-Thanksgiving Pie Palooza, an invention of original Task Force member and Community Cluster chair, Carl Westerdahl. Pie Palooza is a community-wide celebration of the glories of pie held in FCC’s Fellowship Hall after the worship service the week before Thanksgiving. Church and community members enter their special creations in an old fashioned pie-tasting contest (this year’s second place winner was one of our own First Congo kids, Merry Benjamin) and are also encouraged to bring a second pie to donate to the Berkshire Food Project Thanksgiving meal. The final event of Second Hour 2012 was Carolyn Behr’s interview of FCC members Wayne and Suki Wilkins, who simply and delightfully told the story of their lives, as lived in the context of FCC, Williams College, and the larger community.

Since its inception in September, Second Hour@The Meetinghouse has consistently garnered an average attendance of forty-five adults, though this fall attendance slipped significantly. A coffee hour spans the fifteen-to-twenty-minute time slot between worship and Second Hour. Many Second Hour programs are taped by

videographer Schuyler Jones, who also arranges sound equipment for the programs. It is the Congregation Cluster's hope that these important programs can continue to reach a wider audience via the local cable access channel, Willinet, and the FCC website.

In March 2012 the second Annual William Sloan Coffin Prize in Passionate Public Speaking welcomed six new contenders for its two first place slots. The prize was a brainchild of the Congregation Cluster in late 2010, but quickly found a perfect partnership with the Williams College Chaplain's Office. Current Coffin Committee members include Robin Lehleitner and Lynn Chick (co-chairs of the cluster) and Chaplain and FCC member Rick Spalding. In mid-winter, Williams undergraduates are invited to submit to the committee five-to-seven-minute speech manuscripts on topics of Faith and Spirituality or Social Justice/Activism. A team of FCC and community readers selects three finalists in each category to present their speeches from the FCC pulpit one Sunday night in the spring. Each of the six contestants wins a cash prize and a top winner is selected in each category. This year's speeches included "Medical Oppression of the Transgender Community," by Lysa Vola '13, a Psychology and Women's and Gender Studies major from Port St Lucie, Florida; "A War Against Hunger," by Hamza Farrukh '15, from Rawalpindi, Pakistan; "Lessons From a German Pastor"—a speech about Dietrich Bonhoeffer—by Andy Morgosh '12, an Economics and Religion major from Carlsbad, California; and "Who's the Man?"—a tribute to the importance of fathers, by Tirhakah Love '15, from Houston, Texas. The two winning speeches were "A Language of Belief for the Atheist," by Kate Flanagan '14, from New Bern, North Carolina, and "A Culture of Complicity," by Jimi Morales '12, a political science major from Houston, Texas, who brought down the house with his consciousness-raising rant about the importance of local sustainable agriculture. In 2012, Coffin (as it is fondly known by both the Williams and FCC communities) achieved official recognition from Williams College event, due, in part, to a generous donation by an alumnus who wanted to see the contest continue. Williams now features the Coffin Prize on its website. First Congo, however, continues to remember that the contest was first conceived by FCC members who dreamed of calling the next great public speaker out of Williams and into the FCC pulpit.

– Robin Lehleitner & Carrie Waara

Committee on Pastoral Ministries (COPM) Report

The COPM convened, but the Pastor's decision to resign made its work irrelevant.

Respectfully submitted, Charles Fox, Chair

Deacons' Report

Our Bylaws, both old and new, charge the Deacons with "responsibility for the spiritual life of the Church". The Deacons began their work for this year by seeking to understand what might be meant by "spiritual life". Under the current Bylaws the responsibilities of the Deacons were framed as a subset of the responsibilities of the Congregational Cluster. Over the past two years the Deacons have tried to encourage the view that the focal responsibility laid upon the diaconate required that they also have a separate status in the Cluster system and Council. With the development of our new Bylaws the Deacons have been granted an organizational role that more clearly enables the fulfillment of their fundamental charge in the life of the Church, as they become one of four parallel Ministry Teams in the larger ministry of our Church as a whole. This has been the most significant accomplishment by and for the role of the Deacons during this past year.

In the language of our new Bylaws the central responsibility of the Deacons for “the spiritual life of the Church” is further elaborated as a responsibility for our “worship” experience. On a weekly basis this is the most regular duty that Deacons perform, and this year we chose to designate two Deacons each month as “Deacons at the Door”. Their responsibility is not only to ensure that the details of service preparation and clean-up are efficiently handled, but also that there is a Deacon at both the front and rear of the worship area to greet people, especially new-comers and visitors. The Deacons have also met periodically with the Pastor and Minister of Music in the planning of seasonal emphases of the Church liturgical calendar, and they also organized two events of special music featuring the Williams College Gospel Choir. And once each month the Deacons have led in the preparation and service of communion, a practice that has been varied by the use of intinction during the services held in Fellowship Hall. The Deacons have supported and managed our transition to worship in Fellowship Hall during the winter season. The Deacons have also arranged for pulpit supply during the Pastor’s vacation and during one emergency situation in the Pastor’s personal life.

A second major role for the Deacons in the new Bylaw language is in regard to Church “membership”. The Deacons participated in the one sequence of new member classes we had this past year. The Deacons have also in a more basic way sought to reflect upon the problems of increasing loss of membership and attendance in the life of our Church over the course the past several years. The Deacons have realized that this is an area in which they must become much more proactive and imaginative in the year ahead. The Deacons have affirmed their commitment to the task of providing alternative opportunities for worship and religious reflection, and thus for the orderly coordination of the “First” and “Second” hours of our Sunday by Sunday experience of worship and reflection. And the Deacons have sought to establish a more close and conscious connection to the work of the Koinonia group in serving the vital pastoral tasks of comfort and aid to those whose circumstance may prevent or limit their regular participation in the communal life of our Church.

Finally, in the process of considering a new Bylaw arrangement among the members of the current “Congregational Cluster” and the current Deacon group, it became clear that a crucial part of the Deacon responsibility for the spiritual life of the Church should become the special charge of a separate Ministry Team. Thus in a process of joint reflection it was agreed that the Deacons should assume primary responsibility for worship and membership, and a newly defined group called the “Education and Fellowship Ministry Team” should have special responsibilities for Christian education at all ages (children, youth, and adults) as well as coordination of the social aspects of our worship and educational experiences. We heartily supported this division of labor.

All in all the Deacons are energized by these new organizational definitions and challenges, and we look forward to the further implementation of the close cooperative relationship that must exist between worship and education in securing the “spiritual” well-being of the whole “membership” of our Church. The Deacons concluded their year’s work by preparing a Manual detailing the implementation of Deacon responsibilities throughout the course of the year.

Respectfully submitted, Charles Fox, Chair of the Deacons

Flower Committee Report

Arrangers: Jytte Brooks, Audrey Clarkson, Arletta Currie, Deborah Currie, Marilyn Faulkner, Dolores Lovegreen, Katherine Myers, Suki Wilkins

Special events: Phil Smith, Carolyn Umlauf

Our fond memories of two of our members who passed away this year, Rita Hoar and Pat Short, whose sweet presence and wonderful skill with flowers will be sorely missed.

Thirty five lilies and spring plants were placed in the sanctuary for Easter Service. Members of Koinonia distributed the plants to shut-ins and to those who had lost loved ones in the past year,

Red poinsettias were arranged in the sanctuary for Dec. 16 and Christmas Eve Services. These plants and several cyclamen were distributed to special members of the congregation by Koinonia after New Year's. Deacons assisted with decorating the sanctuary for Advent.

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

Floral arrangements were provided for one Memorial Service.

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

– Arletta Currie & Deborah Currie

Hospitality Committee Report

The Hospitality Committee, part of the Membership and Parish Life 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 the Memorial Service for Rita Hoar, Matt Jenkins and Jane Mesick. 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

Koinonia Report

Koinonia, a word that means community in Greek, is the name given to fifteen members of FCC who try to help meet some of the pastoral needs of our Church. A list of active members and friends is divided among Koinonia members who stay in touch with our assigned families in ways that seem appropriate. We meet on the first Tuesday of every month to share our concerns. We are also available between meetings as extra needs arise. Our hope is to create a helpful and meaningful liaison between the pastor and the congregation.

This year Adriana Brown joined us as a member of the Deacons to help facilitate communication with them. Bob and Barbara Hadden resigned as they are planning to move to Lenox; we will miss our one male member and an imaginative and dependable part of our team. We are happy that Judy Wright has agreed to join us. Jody

Green has offered to reach out to those in nursing homes and has been invaluable in guiding us in that ministry.

The members of Koinonia are:

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

Respectfully submitted, Susan Smith, convener

Library Committee Report

A Library Committee has been formed including Abbie Hatton and Mary Ellen Pattee as consultant. We met twice this year to discuss alternative cataloging methods and library space and design possibilities. A field trip to St. John's Episcopal Church yielded a few ideas about alternative methods of organization.

– Arletta and Rutledge Currie, Librarians

Minister of Music's Report

I am writing this report late, as usual, following our last staff meeting with our departing Pastor, Carrie Bail. I would be remiss not to say how much I have appreciated the friendly collegiality we have shared. You can't imagine the delight of worship planning meetings with her, turning over thoughts about scripture selections and hymn possibilities. I feel that I have been truly blessed to be able to work with this fine woman.

Proud as we are of our historic building, our lovely Sanctuary and our beautiful organ, it is the people who make the church, of course. So, my report should begin with enormous thanks to the members of our choirs. We have such fine people, bringing many and diverse talents, and above all, dedication. Week after week, Thursday and Sunday following Thursday and Sunday, I have a remarkable group of folks eager to help make our worship better for all of us.

We have continued to spend the liturgical seasons of Epiphany and Lent worshipping in the Fellowship Hall. This provides the opportunity to rethink the interaction of choir and congregation, as we are closer to each other and all on the same level. It is a particular joy to be able to use the wonderful Steinway piano, acquired in memory of Beulah Warriner.

During the summer months, when the choir is "off," we have continued the basic idea of filling in with soloists, mostly from our choir, as the special music. Continuing in a more recent tradition, we have also taken the opportunity to put together a men's choir and a women's choir, for one Sunday each, with a single rehearsal. This makes it easy for us make a broad invitation for singers who may not otherwise be able to make the commitment to choir rehearsal during the regular program season. It's been a lot of fun: look for your chance to join us next summer!

For the most recent few years, we have worshiped with the Second Congregational Church in South Williamstown on the weekend of Williams' commencement. Lately, we've extended a return invitation for them to join us later in the summer. It's been good to "pool" our choirs and to enjoy the creative spirit of their director, Susan Matsui.

I had the chance this year to create a special arrangement for our choir of the hymn "I'm Pressing on the Upward Way," the "theme song" of Higher Ground, as well as a new arrangement for the Men's Choir for one

of the summer services. I was also lucky to be able to present two new solo pieces of my own, based on Colonial American sacred texts, sung by sopranos Moira Jones and Annette Triquère.

Once again, I was able to attend a national convention of the American Guild of Organists, this time held in (sweltering) Nashville, TN. It is always amazing to hear terrific instruments, stunning performances, great choirs, and meaningful worship services. It is marvelous to hear new pieces, and to be introduced to the latest the church music publishers have to offer. But probably the best feature of these events is the chance to meet with colleagues who struggle with the same issues of our profession and to share our experiences, our routes to success.

Our Junior Choir includes children in grades two through six. This year, that has meant that we acquired two more boys. We have had a stable singership for several years, now, so the older singers have a good track record to help bring along the younger voices. We have continued to sing in service about once a month, but learn many more things than we sing for church. The choir parents have been great at organizing regular snack and supervisory help. We close each choir year with a party including games and an ice cream treat.

Yours in Christ,

Edwin I. Lawrence, Minister of Music

Senior Choir Members

Sopranos

Penny Bucky
Jean Donati
Moira Jones
Margy O'Connor
Annette Triquère
Wendy VanOrden
Jill Wheat

Altos

Lynn DeLay
Jina Ford
Nancy Piaczyk
Carol Stocking
Susan Yates

Tenors

Phil Smith
Diego Uribe
Miles Wheat
Peter Witham

Basses

John Blackmer
Steven King
Mart Mulder

Junior Choir Members

First year (green ribbon)

Patrick Briggs
Nate Vertor

Second year (maroon ribbon)

Teague Murphy

Fourth year (yellow ribbon)

Miriam Bakija
Merri Benjamin
Sarah Briggs
Amelia Murphy

Fifth year (silver ribbon)

Karen Magnea McComish

Pastoral Relations Committee Report

The Pastoral Relations Committee held no meetings during the year. Due to a year of strife and frustration in the church, two members of the Pastoral Relations Committee, John Blackmer and Abbie Hatton found they were unable to serve and tendered their resignations, a few weeks apart in January 2012, which were accepted by the Moderator. However, no one was appointed to take their places so the PRC has not functioned as mandated in the BY-LAWS for a year. Carrie Waara remains as a member.

Abbie Hatton, for the committee

Pastor's Report

2012 was a difficult year. Thankfully the world did not end with the Mayan calendar's closing on 12/21/12! But it became clear to me in November that my ministry with you HAD drawn to a close after more than twelve years: truthfully I could no longer fulfill my call due to some breakdown in communications. Pastoral ministers are not like "ordinary" employees; they begin a pastoral relationship on the basis of a two-way call, from God and from a congregation, and are obliged to keep both covenants to the best of their ability. What happened? It's a long two-sided story that I need not tell here.

January was an interesting month: it brought a wedding of a couple from Boston in which the special music was played by friend of the bride whose instrument IS the "Red Violin" Stradivarius. Hearing that sweet strains of that instrument in FCC's sanctuary was an unforgettable acoustic moment, at least for Ed and me!

The early part of the year was also busy with preparations for the Second Annual Coffin contest for "passionate speaking." It was a great success once again, and this year we were able to have two of the six winning students actually return to our pulpit to speak during Sunday worship, one in April and one in September.

I continued on as President of the Higher Ground, Inc. board and deepened my interest in Disaster Ministry. In January I spoke at a county-wide conference on Emergency Preparedness. I took a three-day course at Hartford Seminary on Disaster Chaplaincy and was certified by the National Disaster Interfaith Network. Although the housing shortage crisis continues in Williamstown, Higher Ground has continued and slowly morphed into an organization that is planning to build some affordable housing for disaster survivors. In July, I resigned as the President as the organization since it was headed in a direction in which I had little experience. I will, however, continue to be a member of the Board until such time as I leave Williamstown.

This year has brought me some unique challenges in terms of pastoral care; one dear member who has had a long-drawn out recovery from surgery; a couple whose frailties of old age brought them both to the dementia unit of the local nursing home; and one person whose unique pastoral needs gave me an opportunity to minister within a complete shroud of confidence. As part of an aging congregation, we have had more than our share of funerals this year. To the stalwart care-givers of Koinonia I leave the task for caring for one another, at least in the absence of a pastor.

This year there has also been a great amount of turbulence and turnover in our staff. Part of it was caused by the tension around the pastorate, but another cause was simply the wear and tear of time. Our dearly beloved sexton of about ten years, Harry Lagess, "aged out" in terms of his ability to draw social security. We went

through a vigorous process to hire a replacement, and Joe Davis began working with us in April; he has, however, tendered his resignation at the beginning of January, 2012. We were very fortunate to have a pastoral "intern" during the summer months who came to us of her own volition. Kathleen Sheets, Presbyterian seminary graduate, had often worshipped with us while her family was on vacation in North Adams at a family homestead. She offered us 20 hours per week for a very modest stipend, and did a lot of work with us in multi-media and in Taize worship, as well as preaching several times. We are happy to report she has been called as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Jessup, Iowa, and we send her well-wishes and greetings.

In the middle of July, our beloved receptionist and office-administrator, Gail Burns, began experiencing extensive pain and lack of mobility in her hip. She took a month off with the hope of returning, but as of January 2012 she has been unable to do so. We're still hopeful! In the meanwhile, one of the stalwart engines of our congregation, Kay Sherman, has embraced the position with great gusto and a willingness to learn. I'm sure most of you have found that the office has not missed a beat!

We have continued our covenants with other UCC churches in the Association and in the statewide Conference. Unfortunately the very local organizations representing clergy have been faltering greatly this year, mostly because there are very few full-time clergy left in this shrinking community. I continue to pray for those interfaith efforts we do have going strong in the Northern Berkshires, such as the Interfaith Action Initiative's food pantry in North Adams.

As always, we enjoyed the events which have become part of the Christmas tradition here. On the weekend of the Holiday Walk we sponsored once again not only the Habitat Tree exhibit, but also the Alternative Gift Fair in conjunction with the Williams' Students for Social Justice. A small group of us enjoyed caroling to our shut-ins on the last Sunday before Christmas. And an even smaller group enjoyed caroling to the patients at Greylock Pavilion at North Adams hospital on Christmas Day.

It was an eventful year for me personally, as well. I traveled to the new country, the Republic of South Sudan, for 2-1/2 weeks during August, discovering Darius' homeland and his extended family for the first time: a powerful experience! Faced with the mortality of family members, I witnessed my eldest brother's need for a liver transplant, successfully implanted in August, and my only other sibling, a second brother's brush with open heart surgery, for which I traveled to Hawaii at the beginning of October. More air miles than I'd expected!

I offer you this, my final annual report to you, with love and good will and great hopes and prayers for your future as the people of God in this place.

Your former pastor and forever friend,
Carrie Bail

Reports from the Stewardship Cluster

The Stewardship Cluster's focus is on financial support and administrative operations to preserve the assets of the Church and support its mission. Together with the Pastor, its members have responsibility for the facilities, funding and financial oversight, fundraising, relations with Williams College, church history, and other related initiatives, activities and programs.

CHAIR: Brian Handspicker

Stewardship Cluster

The Stewardship Cluster 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. Its responsibilities include: (together with the Treasurer) funding and financial oversight, personnel and legal matters; our building; and certain aspects of community engagement (enabling building use and Williams College liaison).

Organization

Stewardship Cluster 2011 members have included: Keith Davis, Henry Flynt, Bruce Grinnell, Jody Green, Brian Handspicker, Ben Hynes, Kevin Jones, Michael Sussman, and Carolyn Umlauf. The cluster has held 9 meetings in 2012. Each member has brought a unique background in participation in the life of the church, has shared views and experiences, has contributed to decision-making, and has sought to broaden his or her understanding of the administrative operations of the church. Cluster members have worked closely with the Treasurer (an ex officio member of the cluster), have made policy and spending decisions, and have worked 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. Kevin Jones took on the task of Chairing and leading the 2013 Pledge Committee. Their goals included making the congregation aware of how important pledges are to the Church and its functions. A first reminder was sent via email to members and friends. Subsequent Sunday bulletins contained squibs about how pledges keep the Church running. Members of the committee gave short testimonials on the Sundays, noting what the FCC meant to them. A letter, pledge forms, and a brochure showing visually the sources of funds and how the church spends its funds were mailed to arrive after Stewardship Sunday. At press time we had received 78 pledges for \$169,104 on the way to goals of 108 pledges and \$211,000. We hope to shortly close the remaining gap through your generosity.

Pledges were given in honor or memory of the following: Nancy Alden, Dagmar Bubriski, Hazel Bullock, David MacGregor Burns, Richard Chenail, Betsy Debevoise, Dr. Raymond A. Dillon, Sam Edson, Barbara J. English, Richard Hoar, Jan Keep, Hodge Markgraf, Sheila O'Neill, Dr. Clarence H. Payne, Mr. & Mrs. Williams C. Preston, Una Schwedner, Al Shaw, Robert G.L. Waite, 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. The cluster 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. This year we sought volunteers from the Williams College community to help with the organization and cleaning with the “carrot offer” of early shopping.

This was a very successful year for the church’s tag sale, with total receipts of \$22,338.38 (after all expenses were paid) . Fortunately we had several large donations of furnishings and household items from church member estates and friends of our congregation. In recent years we have been able to earn about \$10,000 – 13,000. for the church’s budget, but this year was most unusual and we don’t anticipate that we will achieve this amount again. We will try but it is hopeful that expectations will be as reasonable as in the past. Many, many thanks and appreciation for everyone’s hard work. Tag Sale Committee: Annie Parkman, Cynthia Payne and Jody Green

Financial Review and Budgeting. Cluster members have worked with the Treasurer, Kevin Jones, receiving their monthly reports, including regular monitoring of income and expenditures, both for the cluster 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 2012 committee consisted of five individuals – Moderator Sam Humes, Clerk Jean Donati, Stewardship Cluster representative and chair Michael Sussman, Congregation Cluster representative Nan Fritz, and Community Cluster representative Judy Wright. Together they were responsible for:

- Reviewing individual job descriptions to assure they were up-to-date and inclusive
- Contributing to the performance evaluations given by the Pastor to staff members
- Recommending salaries for the upcoming year
- Reviewing and recommending adjustments to the general Personnel Policies for all employees
- Helping to resolve any personnel-related issues as they arose

During the summer the committee spent a number of meetings revising the Personnel Policies, which the Council approved in the fall. After reviewing our staff salaries and consulting with the Budget Task Force we recommended a 2% salary increase for all the staff in 2013.

Sadly, at in mid-July, Gail Burns had to start disability due to a hip injury. Kay Sherman stepped into the Office

Administrator role and ably supported the church. Gail volunteered support for Kay, the newsletter, website, and annual report from home. We need to thank both of them for their dedication in making sure the Church continue successfully in its many programs.

Unfortunately, at the end of the year our recently hired Sexton, Joseph Davis, resigned. Brandon Burns has been hired part time to do some of the Sexton's duties. Stewardship will be re-interviewing candidates for the Sexton position.

The Meetinghouse

Fire Sprinkler System and Basement Renovations. After multiple years investing in the exterior of the church, this year we have finally started to work on the interior. We are currently 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 will help 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, has proven more expensive than anticipated. All available building improvement funds for 2013 will be required to complete the basement renovations. However, once this work is completed, we will have both a new revenue stream from our ABC partners and a start on a sprinkler system for the building.

Winter Closing of the Sanctuary. Our 2011 experiment of worshiping during the winter months in Fellowship Hall instead of the Sanctuary was a great success and was extended through the Winter of 2011-2012, and already started for Winter 2012-2013. In hindsight it is still not clear how much fuel or money we save by not heating up the Sanctuary on Sundays, but the change in worship service congeniality and the opportunities to experiment with new worship ideas has been lauded by the Congregation.

Future Projects. Planning and implementation for major capital projects is ongoing and, though our 2013 funds are fully committed, 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 changed our approach to building use from viewing our renters as tenants to working collaboratively with them as "Mission Partners." Through careful tuning of rates and encouraging donations for otherwise free member-sponsored events, we have increased our building use revenue from \$22,000 in 2011 to \$24,230 in 2012. Perhaps more important than the increase in revenue is the increase in community use of our building. Each new Mission Partner to whom we rent or offer subsidized space brings in staff, family, friends and clients to our church. 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 community of the Church. We now look not just to raise money with our building, but also to perform community service and in so doing to increase membership in our Church community.

We support and are supported by the offices of The Counseling Center of the Berkshires, the Hoosic River Watershed Association, COOL, Higher Ground, and now Greylock ABC. In addition we house the efforts of Meals-on-Wheels, Berkshire Food Project, Music Together, Perri Morris Cello Lessons, Starlight Stage, Minerva Arts Center, Gentle Yoga, Dynamic Flow Yoga, Ciao Italia, Red Cross, Massachusetts Teachers Association, Spruces Tenant Association, Habitat for Humanities, Buxton School, Williams College Multicultural Center events, Wild Oats, Caretaker Farm, Grey Dogs, Northern Berkshire Contra-dancing, and JavaJive. 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 the Stewardship Cluster 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 the cluster—Gail Burns, Office Administrator/Assistant to the Pastor; Joe Davis, former Sexton; Annie Parkman, Financial Secretary; and Kay Sherman, Office Assistant and Assistant Treasurer. We thank our outgoing Pastor, Carrie Bail, for her leadership and participation.

– Brian D. Handspicker, Chair

APPENDIX A

Report of the Bylaw Review Group to the Special Meeting of the Congregation December 16, 2012

I. Background. The Church Council received a motion at the March 25, 2012 Special Meeting: “In consultation with the Pastor, and any other member who wants to join the meeting, help evaluate, reassess and come up with specific conclusions and remedies to improve the present organizational structure of the church.” The review group for this process, as appointed by the Church Council, comprised: Carrie Bail*, Betsy Burris, Susan Clarke (convener), John Craig**, Deborah Currie**, Bruce Grinnell**, Sam Humes*, Kevin Jones, Margaret Oxtoby (* ex officio, **legal resources).

Review included:

- Invitations (via bulletins, newsletters, email and website) to the Congregation at large to offer comments, either written and in conversation, to members of the review group
- Meetings with each cluster and the Personnel Committee chair to solicit their views
- Meeting (open to the congregation at large) to review findings and initial recommendations about bylaws adjustments versus changes in behaviors/procedures. (There were 34 comments about ways to improve the present organizational structure of the church, which included suggested changes in the bylaws.)
- Report to Church Council on July 10, 2012
- Report to the congregation at the Special Meeting on December 16, 2012

Initial Decisions

The initial results of the review were to:

- Make the bylaws less detailed and thereby more flexible and more concise but backed up by policy guidelines. Initially this recommendation resulted in adjusting requirements such as the number of members and requirements for meetings for each cluster.
- Re-locate the Deacons in a separate cluster.
- Change the term “cluster” to “ministry team” and name the teams: the Deacon, the Education and Fellowship, the Stewardship, and the Outreach (formerly Community Cluster) Ministry Teams.

Other changes, shown in smaller type below, were recommended in the course of additional reviewing of the proposed revisions by various individuals and clusters, the Deacons, and the Church Council. All were consistent with the recommendations to make the bylaws less detailed, more flexible and more concise, and reflective of actual practice.

Approval. The revised bylaws incorporating all these changes were approved by the Congregation at the Special Meeting of December 16, 2012 for implementation at the Annual Meeting, February 3, 2013. A complete copy of the revised bylaws can be found on the church website or obtained from the church office.

Specific Changes

Article III. Polity. As agreed upon by the Pastor and the Deacons, relocation from Article IV, Discipline, and adjustment, of the following statement: “In case of grave difficulty within the Congregation, the Pastor and/or the Deacons shall seek the counsel of the Massachusetts Conference.”

Article V. Religious Services. Change enables the option of deciding not to have a service on a particular Sunday and to join in the summer with area churches (cf. Williamstown churches).

Article VII. Governing Body

- Clarification of “two thirds majority vote to “two thirds vote of those present”
- Change the quorum of members for annual meetings from twenty five to “forty members or thirty percent of currently active members, whichever number is less.” The thirty percent “back-stop” for a quorum would be triggered if the membership fell below 134 members.
- Relocation from the Stewardship article of the provision for approval of real estate transactions and replacement of the language about church property.
- Annual Meeting. Change from the month of January to within five weeks of the start of the calendar year. Remove here and in Special Meetings the language about church property, to be consistent with the real estate provision.
- Special Meetings. Include the same quorum requirement. Since special meetings have the potential for making decisions with congregation-wide impact, they should have the same quorum requirements as annual meetings to prevent a small portion of the congregation making binding decisions without representation of the full congregation.

Article VIII. The Church Council

- Adjust the requirements for delegates from ministry team and at large members to be church members under conditions of approval of exceptions.
- Replace “Church” with “Congregation.”
- Specifically authorizes the Church Council to appoint committees, task forces and other groups.
- Remove requirement for substitute to be a church member.
- Provide for all groups to follow *Robert’s Rules* in their procedures, except where specific provisions to the contrary are made in the bylaws.

Article IX. Officers

- Adjust the requirements for officers to be church members under conditions of approval of exceptions.
- Deletion of “for an unspecified term” in calling a Pastor, to enable future Pastoral search committees to continue to make a call for an unspecified term but no longer be required to do so.
- The Clerk’s role has been re-drafted for greater clarity and to remove the requirement and inconsistency of serving on the Budget Task Force
- Treasurer’s role has removed the requirement to be a church member, as noted in first bullet.

Article X. Ministry Teams

Descriptions (reviewed by the Church Council at its October meeting) reflect revised responsibilities and provide more flexibility in the number of members. Each Ministry Team is encouraged to publicize its activities as appropriate to the Congregation and wider community. Inclusion has been made of the Minister of Music as also responsible for worship services. Removal has been made of “care giving” in the Education and Fellowship Ministry Team role to avoid confusion with Koinonia. Delegates are to be recommended by the Nominating Committee but supported by the Outreach Ministry Team.

Article XII. Staff

Language has been adjusted for consistency with the Personnel Policies.

Article XIII. Committees and Budget Task Force

- Nominating Committee has been increased to reflect the existence of four ministry teams.
- Personnel Committee has been increased to reflect the ministry teams.

- Responsibility for evaluation is covered in the Personnel Policies and the material has been removed to assure consistency and eliminate duplication.
- Budget Task Force has had removal of the Church Council’s determining the date for it to convene. Provision is made for representatives to be named.

Article XIV Discipline

As agreed upon by the Pastor and Deacons, the first part of the article has been removed and the second part relocated.

APPENDIX B

Bylaws as amended and approved on December 16, 2012

BYLAWS

**WILLIAMSTOWN CONGREGATIONAL PARISH
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
IN WILLIAMSTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS**

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this Church shall be THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The avowed purpose of this Church shall be to worship God, to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the Sacraments; to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this Church and the Church Universal; to render loving service toward all people; and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

ARTICLE III

POLITY

We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul, and the right of private judgment. We hold to the autonomy of the local church and its independence of all ecclesiastical control. The government of this Church is vested in its members, who exercise the right to administer all its affairs, subject to the corporate laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

We affirm that this Church is part of the United Church of Christ, the Massachusetts Conference and the Berkshire Association; we cherish the counsel and cooperation of these bodies. In case of grave difficulty within the congregation the Pastor and/or the Deacons shall seek the counsel of the Massachusetts Conference.

While affirming the liberty of our churches and the validity of our ministry, we hold to the unity and universality of the Church of Christ. We will work with all its branches in hearty cooperation and, so far as in us lies, earnestly strive to fulfill the prayer of our Lord for his disciples that “they all may be one.”

ARTICLE IV

FAITH AND COVENANT

The faith that unites us and to which we bear witness is the faith in God which the scriptures set forth, which the ancient church expressed in the ecumenical creeds and to which our spiritual forebears gave utterance in the evangelical confessions of the Reformation. This faith we are in duty bound to express in the words of our time as God gives us light. We seek to preserve unity of heart and spirit with those who have gone before us as well as those who now labor with us. In token of that faith we unite in the following Statement of Faith, not as a test, but as a testimony, embodying those things most surely believed among us. Each person has the obligation to study and understand the following Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ and to interpret it according to the dictates of individual conscience.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe in God, the Eternal spirit, who is made known to us in Jesus, the son of God, and to whose deeds we testify;

God calls the world into being,
creates us in the divine image,
and sets before us the ways of life and death.

God seeks in Holy love to save all people from
aimlessness and sin.

God judges individuals and nations with righteousness
as declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified
and risen Lord, God has come to us
and shared our common lot,
conquering sin and death
and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit,
creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ,
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

God calls us into the Church
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,
to be servants in the service of the whole human family,
to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil,
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,
to join him in his passion and victory.

All who trust in God are promised
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,
the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing,
and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God. Amen

THE COVENANT

The covenant is based on the original 1765 covenant of this Church. The original document was destroyed in the fire of 1866. The covenant has been reconstructed from later versions and installed by the Board of Deacons on the occasion of the Church's bicentennial, May, 1965, then later revised to add inclusive language.

“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.”

ARTICLE V

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Public services of worship shall be held each Sunday except as specified by the Deacons. Additional services of various forms may be held at other times at the discretion of the Deacons. Further, as approved by the Deacons, services may be held in cooperation with other area churches, especially during the summer months. The Lord’s Supper shall be celebrated at least six times each year on dates fixed by the Deacons. Baptism may be celebrated at any worship service.

ARTICLE VI

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in this Church shall consist of those persons who are, at the time of the adoption of these bylaws, members of this Church, and those persons thereafter admitted to membership.

Membership shall be open to all persons who have been baptized and have made public confession of their faith in Jesus as the Christ. Members shall promise, as far as they are able, to join regularly in public worship, to celebrate the sacraments, to attend Church meetings and to share in the work of the Church.

Admission to membership in this Church shall be through Confirmation, Confession of Faith, Reaffirmation of Faith, or by letter of transfer from another Christian Church. A dual member shall be a member of another Christian church who does not wish to give up membership in that church but also joins our Church. A person seeking membership will be received by recommendation and action of the Pastor and the Deacons. New members shall be publicly received into the Church through the “owning of the covenant” of this Church at any service of worship. Any person unable to attend such service may be received by the Pastor and the Deacons acting in behalf of the Church.

The Clerk shall monitor a list of all members, but in the annual report of this Church to the Massachusetts Conference, the Clerk shall record only the number of active members. An active member is one who has joined the Church and does any of the following: attends, contributes to, or serves the Church. Any member of the Church may request a letter of transfer out of this Church. All Church members shall seek, welcome, introduce and integrate new people into the life of the Church.

ARTICLE VII

GOVERNING BODY

The governing body of this Church shall be the membership assembled in Annual Meeting or Special Meeting. The vote of a majority of the members present at the meeting shall be the action of the Church with the following exceptions (where a two-thirds vote of those present shall be mandatory): calling or dismissing of a pastor; alteration of covenants or denominational affiliation of this Church; adoption or amendment of these bylaws. The church membership must specifically authorize any purchase, sale, mortgage, or transfer of any real estate by a two-thirds vote of those present at an Annual or Special Meeting. A quorum shall consist of forty members or thirty percent of currently active members, whichever number is smaller.

Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting shall be held within five weeks of the start of the calendar year immediately following a service of worship. The warrant for the Annual Meeting shall be issued by the Clerk at least fourteen days before the meeting date. Any item proposed by a Church member for inclusion on the warrant, shall be delivered, in writing, to the Moderator in advance of the December Church Council meeting. The warrant shall state the day and hour and describe the purpose of the meeting, except that any proposed amendment to the bylaws shall be stated in full detail. The warrant shall be posted near the principal entrance of the Church and read by the Clerk at Sunday worship services within fourteen days of the meeting date. Members shall also be notified by mail or other means.

The Moderator shall conduct the business meeting at which the records of the last Annual Meeting shall be read, the annual reports of officers, ministry teams, and organizations given, the officers, ministry teams, at-large members of the Church Council and Nominating Committee elected, and such other business transacted as may properly come before said meeting.

New Church officers, ministry team members, at-large members of the Church Council and the Nominating Committee shall officially assume their duties immediately following the Annual Meeting.

Special Meetings. Special Meetings shall be called by the Clerk within three weeks of receipt of a written petition to the Moderator from the Church Council, or the Pastor, or any five members of the Church. The warrant for Special Meetings shall be issued by the Clerk at least seven days before the meeting date. The warrant shall state the day and hour and describe the purpose of the meeting, except that any proposed amendment to the bylaws shall be stated in full detail. The warrant shall be posted near the principal entrance of the Church and read by the Clerk at Sunday worship service. Members shall also be notified by mail or other means. No business except that announced in the warrant shall be considered at a Special Meeting. A quorum shall consist of forty members or thirty percent of currently active members, whichever number is smaller.

ARTICLE VIII

THE CHURCH COUNCIL

The Church Council shall consist of:

1. The Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer;
2. Two Delegates from each ministry team who shall be members of and selected by the ministry team; and
3. Three at-large members of the Church Council, who shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. All shall be members of the Church unless an exception is specifically approved by the Church Council and the fact of non-church membership noted at the time of election.

The Council shall act on behalf of the Church between annual meetings, but all of its decisions are subject to the review and will of the Congregation. The Church Council may review and shall endeavor to affirm and support the work of the ministry teams. It shall ordinarily meet monthly at a time and place known to the Church membership generally, and shall give a hearing to all matters appropriately brought before it by members, ministry teams, committees, officers, or employees of the Church. The Church Council shall have the authority

appoint individuals and form committees, task forces and other groups, as well as the authority to discontinue groups that are no longer active or needed. If any regular ministry team delegate to the Council is unable to attend a Council meeting, he or she may send a substitute who is a member of the ministry team. A quorum shall be fifty percent of the membership of the Council. Meetings of the Church Council, ministry teams and other groups at the church shall follow Robert's Rules, except where specific provisions to the contrary are made in these bylaws.

ARTICLE IX

OFFICERS

The officers of the Church are the Pastor, the Moderator, the Clerk and the Treasurer. All shall be members of the Church unless an exception is specifically approved by the Church Council and the fact of non-church membership noted at the time of election. An office may be shared by two individuals. In the event that an office is shared, the shared position has one vote at Church Council. If the shared vote is split, their vote is recorded as an abstention.

The Pastor shall care for the spiritual welfare of the Church. He or she shall be responsible for all services of worship, and the supervision and evaluation of the Church staff. The Pastor shall be concerned with all activities of the Church, and shall be an ex officio member without vote at all of its ministry team, group, committee and task force meetings, except at the Church Council, where the Pastor shall have a vote. The Pastor shall be bonded and empowered to sign Church checks.

The Pastor shall be called by a two-thirds vote of those members present at the Annual Meeting or a Special Meeting. Upon accepting a call, he or she shall be formally received into membership at the first service attended, and shall be installed by the Berkshire Association of the United Church of Christ as soon as possible.

The Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet several times each year to discuss joys and concerns of the Pastor and Church family, to insure that the Pastor and the Congregation are listening to each other.

When a vacancy occurs, the Church Council shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee of not fewer than six members. Terms of employment for a new pastor shall be determined by the general Personnel Policies of the Church and by the Church Council in consultation with the Personnel Committee. The Search Committee, after due investigation of candidates and consultation with Conference executives, shall invite its candidate to preach at a regular Sunday service of worship. A Special Meeting of the Church shall be held on the following Sunday to act on the Committee's recommendation. If an interim pastor is needed, the Deacons shall recommend a candidate or other arrangement to the Church Council for approval. The Council shall then call a Special Meeting of the Congregation at the earliest possible date for ratification by simple majority vote.

The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Church, and of the Church Council. The Moderator, as the Administrator of the Church, shall be responsible for seeing that the Church is operating according to its bylaws and, as an ex officio member without vote at all ministry team, group, committee and task force meetings, shall see that they are fulfilling their responsibilities. The Moderator shall have a vote at Church Council and at Annual and Special Meetings. In the absence of the Moderator, the Clerk shall preside until a Moderator pro tempore is elected. The Moderator shall be elected at the Annual Meeting to serve for three years, or until a successor is elected and takes office.

The Clerk. At the call of the Moderator, the Clerk shall prepare and post warrants of all official meetings. The Clerk shall take minutes at Annual and Special Church meetings of the Congregation and at meetings of the Church Council. The Clerk shall serve as a member of the Personnel Committee. The Clerk shall regularly monitor Church membership records and reports of officers and ministry teams.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for the financial affairs of the Church. The Treasurer shall oversee the receipt, holding, and disbursement of the funds of the Church. The Treasurer shall oversee the accounts of the

Church, and cause separate records of all funds of the Church to be maintained. The Treasurer shall cause all monies received by the Church to be deposited in the name of the Church, and all checks drawn to be in the name of the Church. The Treasurer shall cause the financial records of the Church to be periodically reviewed by a qualified and disinterested individual.

The Treasurer shall prepare and present to the Stewardship Ministry Team financial reports as agreed upon with the ministry team members. The Treasurer shall also prepare and present to the Church an annual report of receipts and disbursements. Such report shall be subject to periodic review as required by the Stewardship Ministry Team. The Treasurer shall be bonded and empowered to sign Church checks. The Treasurer shall be elected at the Annual Meeting and serve for three years or until a successor is elected and takes office. The Treasurer shall serve as Chairperson of the Budget Task Force. The Treasurer shall cause contributors to be advised of the status of payment of their pledges at regular intervals.

ARTICLE X

MINISTRY TEAMS

The missions, ministry and the business of the Church shall be performed by four ministry teams serving the distinct missions of the Church. The names of the Teams shall be the Deacon, the Education and Fellowship, the Stewardship, and the Outreach Ministry Teams.

Each ministry team shall have at least six and not more than nine members, four of whom shall be Church members, with the exception of the Deacon Team, all of whom shall be Church members ordained as Deacons. Members of each ministry team shall be proposed by the Nominating Committee for election at the Annual Meeting for a term of three years. Immediately following the Annual Meeting, each ministry team shall meet to elect its chairperson, and team representatives to each of the Church Council, Personnel Committee, Budget Task Force and Nominating Committee, to serve for one year.

Each ministry team shall have the authority to appoint individuals and form appropriate subgroups to carry out its assigned functions, as well as the authority to discontinue subgroups that are no longer active or needed. Each ministry team may determine the size, term and titles of its subgroups. Ministry team members shall be responsible for the review of the work of their subgroups.

Each ministry team is encouraged to publicize its activities as appropriate to the Congregation and wider community.

Meetings. Each ministry team shall meet at least once every three months or more frequently, at a time and place known to the Church membership generally. At a ministry team meeting, a quorum shall consist of one-half the currently active members of the team, and the business activity and decisions of the team shall be recorded in minutes of the meeting.

The following describes the focus of each ministry team. The specific procedures of each ministry team are described in its operations manual.

Deacon Ministry Team. As ordained members of the Church, the Deacons, with the Pastor, have responsibility for the spiritual life of the Church. Deacons are ordained for life, and new Deacons shall be ordained to their ministry at a worship service following their approval by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting. The entire Deaconate is encouraged to meet periodically to sustain and enrich their collective vocation.

- **Worship.** The Deacon Ministry Team, together with the Pastor and Minister of Music, shall have responsibility for the service of worship, worship planning, the role of music and other arts in the service, and alternative services and spiritual practices. The Deacons shall assist in the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the absence of the Pastor, the Deacons and Minister of Music shall be responsible for all devotional services of the Church.
- **Membership.** The Deacon Ministry Team shall assist the Pastor in seeking new members, preparing

them for Church membership, integrating them into the life of the Church, and supporting their continuing commitment to the Church. With regard to the loss of members through death, the Deacons shall assist in the bereavement and memorial process.

The **Education and Fellowship Ministry Team's** work is focused on serving members and friends, educating all ages, and carrying out related Church events that give concrete definition to our spiritual and communal life.

- **Education and Nurturing Discipleship.** The Education and Fellowship Ministry Team shall have charge of policies and programs of Christian Education, including the Sunday School, confirmation classes, youth groups, adult education and library resources.
- **Communal Life.** The Education and Fellowship Ministry Team shall encourage fellowship among all members of the Church family, including arranging hospitality events associated with the educational programs and life passage celebrations. It shall also pursue ways to encourage current members to play an active role in the Church.

The **Stewardship Ministry Team's** focus is on financial support and administrative operations to preserve the assets of the Church and support its mission. The Stewardship Ministry Team, with the Pastor, shall have responsibility for the following, as well as any other related initiatives, activities and programs.

- **Facility.** The Stewardship Ministry Team shall be responsible for the maintenance, improvement and management of the physical property of the Church, except as these bylaws may otherwise provide.
- **Building Use.** The Stewardship Ministry Team has responsibility for coordinating and encouraging building use by church members, community members, and Mission Partners (e.g. renters, lessors). They shall establish and enforce general rules and conditions for the use of Church property, except that the use of the Sanctuary must be approved by the Pastor and the Deacon Ministry Team. The decision to waive or reduce fees related to the use of the Church shall be made by the Stewardship Ministry Team in consultation with the appropriate ministry team(s).
- **Funding and Financial Oversight.** Designated members of the Stewardship Ministry Team who are Church members shall be authorized to negotiate and sign contracts on behalf of the Church. Three members of the Stewardship Ministry Team who are Church members shall be empowered to sign Church checks and shall be bonded.
- **Fund Raising.** The Stewardship Ministry Team shall conduct an annual pledge drive and will report on its progress to assure that sufficient funds will be available to meet the budgeted expenses of the Church. The Ministry Team will also assure that other fund raising activities are carried out.
- **Relations with Williams College.** The Stewardship Ministry Team shall be responsible for working with Williams College on matters related to the operation of the Church.
- **Historian.** The Stewardship Ministry Team shall appoint the historian of the Church and shall oversee his or her work.

The **Outreach Ministry Team's** focus is serving others near and far, as we would wish to be served, particularly those without the opportunities or the means that are ours. The Outreach Ministry Team, with the Pastor, shall have responsibility for the following, as well as any other related initiatives, activities and programs.

- **World and Local Missions.** The Outreach Ministry Team shall promote outreach to the community and the world. It shall coordinate and promote the active involvement of the Church and all Church members and friends in the areas of missions and charity, both in the local community and in the world at large. The Ministry Team shall be responsible for allocation of mission funds on behalf of the Church.
- **Living our Covenants.** The Outreach Ministry Team shall promote the ideals of our covenants, such as Just Peace, Open and Affirming and Habitat for Humanity.
- **Community.** The Outreach Ministry Team shall encourage positive relations with the community. It

shall seek, welcome, introduce and integrate new people into the life of the Church. It shall pursue ways to encourage current members and friends to play an active role in the Church and community.

- **Publicity and Communications.** The Ministry Team shall announce and promote its missions and activities to the Church and local community through advertising, press releases, the web site and other means.
- **Delegates.** The Outreach Ministry Team shall support at least two Delegates, who shall be Church members. The Delegates shall represent the Church at meetings of the United Church of Christ, the Massachusetts Conference, the Berkshire Association, the Williamstown Ecumenical Association, and wherever else Delegates may be required.

ARTICLE XI

TERM LIMITS

After serving two full terms, any elected officer, ministry team member, Nominating Committee member and at-large member of the Church Council shall be ineligible for re-election to the same position or ministry team for one year. The term limitation does not prohibit the officer or member from being elected to other positions in the Church. If the Nominating Committee is unsuccessful in identifying a candidate for nomination to fill an elected position in which an officer or member has served two full terms, then that officer or member may continue to serve until the next Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE XII

STAFF

Responsibility for hiring staff and terminating employment lies with the designated ministry team, with consultation with the Pastor, the Personnel Committee and Church Council, as described in the Personnel Policies.

ARTICLE XIII

COMMITTEES AND BUDGET TASK FORCE

The Nominating Committee shall consist of seven members: one representative from each of the four ministry teams, and three members elected at Annual Meeting. One member shall be elected at each Annual Meeting for a term of three years. Immediately following the Annual Meeting, the Nominating Committee shall meet to elect a Chairperson to serve for one year.

The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for the nomination of Church members or friends, as appropriate, to fill vacancies among the Church officers, ministry teams, at-large members of the Church Council, Delegates, and the Nominating Committee. These nominations must be presented to the Clerk at least two weeks before the Annual Meeting to be voted on at the Annual Meeting. The Nominating Committee shall actively encourage broad participation in the governance of the Church.

In addition, the Nominating Committee shall be responsible for the volunteer talent database including regular maintenance and updates to the database, and periodically distributing and tabulating an interest/talent survey among members and friends of the Church. The volunteer talent database will serve as a resource for the ministry teams and others who are looking for individuals to help with tasks and projects. The Nominating Committee shall pursue ways to encourage current members and friends to play an active role in the Church.

The Personnel Committee shall be comprised of the Moderator, the Clerk, and one representative from each of the ministry teams. The Chairperson shall be the member from the Stewardship Ministry Team.

The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for establishing the Personnel Policies and job descriptions for

all Church employees. These shall be reviewed annually and any changes approved by the Church Council.

The Budget Task Force shall convene to direct the preparation of an operating budget prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year.

The Budget Task Force shall be comprised of the Treasurer, one representative from each of the ministry teams, the Chairperson of the Personnel Committee and the Chairperson of the Annual Pledge Campaign or their designated representatives. The Treasurer shall serve as Chairperson of the Budget Task Force.

Each ministry team shall submit a proposed budget for the ministry team to the Budget Task Force. The Budget Task Force shall prepare and present in writing an operating budget of the Church's anticipated income and expenses to a Special Meeting of the Church in December, so that a budget can be in place at the beginning of each fiscal year on January 1. The Budget Task Force may propose amendments to the budget for action by the Church membership at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE XIV

ENACTING CLAUSE

These bylaws shall become effective upon adoption and shall supersede any previous bylaws.

As revised and adopted at the Special Meeting, October 9, 1994

Amended at the Annual Meeting, May 17, 1998

Amended at the Special Meeting, December 6, 1998

Amended at the Annual Meeting, January 25, 2009

Amended at the Special Meeting December 16, 2012