**UNITED CHURCH OF HINESBURG**

*P.O. Box 39, 10570 Route 116, Hinesburg, VT 05461*

**Annual Report for 2018**

Presented at the February 10, 2019 Annual Membership Meeting

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Minutes of the United Church of Hinesburg 2017 Annual Membership Meeting

**February 18, 2018**

Call to Order & Welcome

Reviewed the agenda and information packet - Phil

Opening Prayer - Jared

Phil asks for any questions and contributions.

An attendance sheet was called for. Bob Forauer asked if there is a minimum number that has to be met to validate the meeting. Jared will look in the By-Laws. The total required minimum of 12 has been met.

Phil announced that Kate Schubart has agreed to continue as Recording Secretary. Vote taken later.

Review of Meeting Minutes from February 12, 2017.

Received Reports

Treasurer’s report

Yvonne Whitaker gave the highlights on the yellow pages provided in the meeting packet. She drew attention to the small drawdown from the money market funds, mentioning that this is expected/planned for.

The year 2017 was kind to us in the investments area.

She thanked Barbara Herrington for being the auditor—a mammoth task. She will be reporting on 2017 in another month or so and recommending any changes in our accounting methods. Phil spoke to the more formal processes now in place as Barbara has consulted these last few years.

Staff Parish report

Marie Eddy gave an update on staff hires for the church office. Annual evaluations have been completed as well as looking at the needs of staff.

New hire for the nursery. (Laughter, as she walked through with a child.)

Part-time administrative assistant has been hired for six months. This allows Heather to have time to do institutional development work, volunteer coordination, youth projects that are expanding. Amy Patrick has been hired for eight hours a week.

Trustees’ report

Andy Seaton updated the congregation on the vestry building issue. We used to store things there but it has been cleaned out. We own the building but not the land, which complicates deciding how to extricate the church from the long-term leased land and the building—a Baldwin owns the land, which has been leased to the church for church use for many decades. It was on the back burner to do something until the roof blew off into Jared’s driveway a while ago. One option would have been to renovate the property but that would have cost over $200,000, so the trustees agreed that it should be demolished and, in examining the options, it appears that it is unlikely there is enough land to allow for new construction. The only item to be preserved is a window that came from the original 19th century Congregational Church. The UCH has consulted with the Historical Society and the town and lawyers on what the process should be now. The Town will have to provide a permit for demolition. Further efforts will be made to see if any other organizations want to do something with the property.

The figure of $10,000 came up in regard to legal and other expenses surrounding the closing out of the Vestry issue. Wayne Schwab asked if that might make sense, since title issues can be important. Phil explained that the fee was suggested in connection with possibly selling both the building and the land. He notes that many townspeople will have questions and concerns and “we want to be responsive to that”. Efforts will be made to make this an open process, inform the community and be responsive to them.

Rufus said, in speaking of clearing the vestry out, that it’s “almost scary going into it”.

Phil commented that the land documents go back to the mid-1800s.

Jared says the ultimate goal is to be completely done with this project by the end of 2018.

 Other committee reports are in the packet. Phil asked if any committee would like to bring up something to the group. There were no issues raised.

Vote: Approval of minutes and receipt of the reports. Affirmed.

Goals for 2018 discussed.

Jared reported on the process for developing church goals based on individual committee goals.

He then spoke to the fact that the church is growing and in some non-traditional ways. The idea is to meet the needs of the community even as those needs are changing. He feels the loss of some important people in the United Church community but at the same time programs like the youth groups are growing so fast that there are now two youth groups, one for high school and one for the middle school.

Jared introduced the idea of re-imagining the governance structure to meet the new demands on this church.

The growing budget is also making demands. We have had a lot of success with our investments as the market has boomed. In addition, things like the youth trip are not in the church budget as it is. This is a learning process for us.

Visioning Project

Phil - Looking at the last 20 years there were the same committees as we have now. About 10 or 15 years ago, things began to slow down and then in the last few years the youth program, for example, has developed. We are trying to meet new needs, which is exciting, but the system we have is somewhat inflexible.

Yvonne - gave an overview of the Visioning Project. It launched last March with a presentation by Rev. Jim Thomas. The goal is to reach out to the larger community. A committee was formed and as of late last year there is a proposal in the works to help us develop a mission and vision for our future planning, which will potentially help us as we do an asset review—people not just funds. We need to know what we need. This review will help get us moving in that direction. There will also be a recommendation about the church governance structure. But the vision and mission statement comes first.

2017 Treasurer’s report review. Approved.

Proposed 2018 budget review

Yvonne reviewed. Music Fund is set apart—shown through shading. Offering income was a little lower than budgeted but it has been made up—a “faith-based budget”.

For some income categories a higher income is predicted and some a bit lower. There are a few changes such as pulling in the Financial Assistance Requests to the budget. A new goal is to beef up donations to the missions lines.

Contingency funds are available from investment income.

Bob asked if there was a fund for upcoming repairs or improvements on buildings. These are going to be looked at in the visioning process with the idea that a five-year plan is a good idea. Andy points out that we have had a budget line for major repairs and replacement, planning ahead for, say, replacing the roof.

Vote to approve the 2018 budget. Approved.

Other business? None.

    Phil announces the 3rd Sunday of the month Council Meetings and an upcoming retreat.

    A Note: Jared has been here 4.5 years!

Closing prayer and adjournment.

# Report of the Pastor

“My Cup Runneth Over”

 - Psalm 23:5

There are different interpretations of this short verse from the Shepherd Psalm. For some, these words tell of God’s provision—that God provides more than enough for our needs. Of course, there are some stories where God’s abundance is described as too much of a good thing, characterized by gobs of leftover fish and bread after a miraculous meal and net-breaking fish catches. Ed Ames did something different with this verse, making the words, “My Cup Runneth Over” into a love song. It’s wonderfully covered by Aretha Franklin and worth a listen. The saying is sometimes used sarcastically to imply that someone is being less than generous. Others might even hear these words and consider the mess being made of a cup runneth-ing over—a reading about taking on too much.

Our UCH cup ranneth over in 2018. We worked on our stated 2018 goals that were approved at the February 2018 annual meeting. These goals focused on three areas: 1) Defining our mission and vision, 2) Strengthening or establishing internal standards, and 3) Providing greater care and connection for folks in the church and wider community. We were also blessed with many opportunities and a host of devoted folks to bring new and continued life to our faith community. It was truly a busy and fruitful year.

The Visioning Team was formed in 2017 to help the congregation clarify who we are, where we wish to go, and how to get there. In 2018 the team focused on finding a consultant to facilitate a formal mission, vision and strategic development process. A well-regarded consulting firm was approached and work began, but our efforts were stalled when the consulting firm experienced significant turnover, which led us to move in a new direction. The work was not lost, however, and we feel blessed to have found Carla Wuthrich, a local Hinesburg resident and an advisor from Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center, who will facilitate our work in 2019.

The office, committees and key individualsworked throughout the year to describe all that we do at United Church of Hinesburg and how we currently do it. Procedures were written for events like the Plant Sale, and the Holiday Bazaar. Manuals were created that describe the work of committees like the Worship Committee and the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Office and other internal processes were documented. This important work will continue in 2019, and, I believe, will help us for years to come.

Finally, the church worked to provide greater care and connection for folks in the church and the wider community. We continued to focus on service, charity and outreach work, raising over $7,800 for the VT Foodbank Backpack program through the Annual Hearts for Hunger Fun Run in May. Thirty-six zero-degree rated sleeping bags were donated to Safe Harbor in Burlington for people that sleep out over the winter months, and nearly $3,000 was given in direct assistance to help our neighbors during challenging times. This money helped to cover electric and heating oil bills, rent and groceries. A new addition, the Little Free Pantry (a type of miniature, always open, crowd-sourced food bank) now sits outside our Parish Hall. Sponsored by the Rotary Club, this project meets the real needs of our neighbors on an ongoing basis.

Lay visitation was an important cause of the folks that served on the Membership Care Committee in 2018. Throughout the year this group of individuals took time to check-in on people that were in the hospital ore rehabilitation, going through illness or a time of difficulty, or temporarily shut-in. Realizing that many in our faith community and communities had experienced grief and loss in the last year, a small group was formed to explore these issues during Advent. We are thankful to have had Francesca Arnoldy, an End-of-Life Doula facilitate this group. The church also held its first “Blue Christmas Service” that provided a place to acknowledge our grief during the Christmas Season.

New opportunities also presented themselves in 2018 for the United Church of Hinesburg. The growth of the youth program led us to split the group, creating a middle school group and a high school group and two summer youth trips. Both groups met throughout the year on Sunday evenings. The two groups (sometimes numbering in the forties) shared dinner each evening and each group explored Christian faith and practices, current social justice issues, and topics relevant to their summer trips. In June, the high school group traveled to Puerto Rico for nine days of hurricane relief. Eighteen youth and eight adults worked on organic farms, in a supply distribution center and on building projects. In August, the middle school group spent three days at the Berkshire Outdoor Center and volunteered in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

There were other opportunities as well. Several capital improvements took place including new lighting for the front of the church, the parking lot and the parish hall, the purchase of a new zero-turn mower, and the construction of a new playground. The church, perceiving a full workload in 2018, contracted with Amy Patrick as administrative support staff for eight months. We are certainly thankful for Amy’s time with us. After a Church Council retreat in May, a steering committee was also formed to ensure that our full year did not become too much for our volunteers and staff. This group was instrumental in helping us get the right work done without burning out.

Professionally, I was fortunate to serve on the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ committee on Ministerial Standings and Standards in 2018. This committee is responsible for guiding pastors-in-training through the ordination process and holding United Church of Christ pastors in Vermont accountable to appropriate and ethical practices. I also continued in the Next Generation Leadership Initiative program through the United Church of Christ. This program allowed me to travel to Phoenix in January for a conference on *Leading Faithful and Fruitful Congregations* and to San Francisco in May for a conference on *Human-Centered Design*. Finally, I was able to participate in the Society of Biblical Literature’s Annual Meeting in Denver during November. This five-day-long event highlights current work being done in the fields of Biblical Studies, Religious History, Theology, Ethics and Faith Practices. I’ve been a member of the SBL for fifteen years and being able to attend this meeting renews my spirit each year.

Personally, I want to thank the church for the care and support my family and I received during a very full year. A “cup runneth over” year like 2018 could have been very messy. Instead, it was a year of God’s abundance, where collaboration, thoughtfulness, prayer, laughter and hard work showed us the incredible impact a faithful little church in rural Vermont can make.

Blessings,

Reverend Jared M. Hamilton, Pastor

# United Church of Hinesburg Ministry Teams and Committees

(as described in the current United Church of Hinesburg By-laws)

Christian Education

Lead, plan and share faith with children through our Sunday School program.

Finance

Oversee budget.

Membership Care

Reach out to members at times of particular need; new member orientation; maintain membership rolls.

Missions & Social Justice

Plan and implement projects to relieve human needs, locally and beyond.

Nominating

Recruit leaders and members for all church roles and committees.

Spiritual Formation

Develop small groups and activities for spiritual growth.

Staff-Parish Relations

Foster relations between the congregation and the pastor and staff members; perform annual performance evaluations; recruit temporary staff as needed.

Stewardship

Develop year-round stewardship activities.

Trustees

Oversee church buildings and properties.

Visioning

The Visioning Team is charged with guiding a strategic planning and visioning process.

Worship

Coordinate worship with the pastor; consider and implement new forms of worship and special services; enlist worship service participants; oversee music programs.

# Christian Education

**VISION:** Our Christian Education committee provides leadership, creative energy, spiritual direction and guidance while promoting congregational unity and involvement in teaching and supporting our children and youth in their journey of faith.

 Looking back over the past year, we can celebrate many successes. Over 30 children and youth are currently active in our Sunday school, youth and nursery programs and new families continue to join us in worship on Sunday mornings to participate in our vibrant Sunday school and youth programs. We continue to explore new ways to engage our children in ways that grow their faith in our congregation, our local community, and beyond. Some of the highlights of this past year are outlined below:

* We are continuing to use the *Faith Practices* curriculum in our 2 Sunday school classrooms. The children and teachers have really enjoyed the experiential and hands-on lessons and activities.
* We held a Childrens’ Sunday service in April. The children were involved in all aspects of the service – greeting, ushering, reading, performing music, leading prayers, performing in a scripture drama and lighting candles.
* We continue to offer monthly Friday Night social Events (movie and game nights), including dinner, for nursery and Sunday school age children. These events are generally very well attended and children (and parents) look forward to a FUN night out! Please contact Heather if you are willing to help out with these events that usually take place on the first Friday of every month.
* We welcomed Ashley Williams-Wenschhof to lead a yoga class during Sunday School in March.
* Mission projects:
	+ The Sunday School children shoveled snow (and ice!) for two private homes and the Hinesburg Nursery School after a large storm in January
	+ The Sunday school children planned, prepared and served the monthly free community meal in March
	+ Sunday school children assembled beautiful Easter baskets on Palm Sunday which were delivered to homebound church members.
	+ Sunday school children potted flowers for Mother’s Day and made cookies for Father’s Day.
	+ The Sunday School children made pretzels on the day of our “Churchtoberfest” celebration in October to share with the congregation during our German-themed coffee hour.
	+ Sunday school children made soup mix for the Little Free Pantry in November.
	+ HYP and Sunday school children made cookies and the Sunday School helped the Missions Committee assemble holiday food baskets for neighbors in need in December.
* The Christmas Pageant, “The First Christmas”, starring 20 children from ages 0 to 11, was enjoyed by all ages. The children enjoyed a cast party with Christmas movies and refreshments after the performance.
* As director of our Childrens’ Music Program, Leah Hamilton led the children in one music performance in the Spring and the Christmas pageant in December.

# Finance

The Finance Committee is charged with assessing the financial needs of the church, developing a budget, and monitoring the budget throughout the year. The committee reviews the monthly Treasurer’s Report prior to presentation to Church Council and meets quarterly to assess the church finances.

The members of the Finance Committee are the Financial Secretary (Sandy Milbank), Assistant Financial Secretary (Ellen Dooley), Treasurer (Yvonne Whitaker), three at-large members (Phil Pouech, Keith Roberts and Mary Eddy Stewart) and Pastor Jared. The Financial Secretary and Assistant Financial Secretary are responsible for recording the monies coming into the church, either electronically or by check or cash, and depositing cash and checks into the bank. Our procedures require that two individuals count cash and checks together, with each counter recording a total on a form designed for the purpose and signing the form, which is then filed for audit. Several members of the congregation, in addition to the Financial Secretary and Assistant Financial Secretary, are trained as counters. The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that the church’s obligations are paid, the monthly Treasurer’s Report is prepared and distributed, all Federal and State taxes are withheld and reported correctly, and all Federal and State reporting requirements are met.

As shown in the financial report, the church met all of its obligations in 2018 but did have to rely quite heavily on investment accounts. The downturn in the stock market at the end of 2018 has impacted the church’s finances and will be felt in the 2019 budget.

The Finance Committee is also responsible for facilitating an annual audit of church accounts. Barbara Herrington will perform the 2018 audit; we greatly appreciate her taking on this responsibility again this year.

Submitted by Yvonne Whitaker for the Finance Committee

# Membership Care

The Membership Care Committee faced some challenges in 2018.  The scope of the committee has grown since the dismantling of the United Church Auxiliary and there has been an ongoing effort to fit everything under the Membership Care umbrella.  We have had many discussions regarding this and have yet to come up with a solid plan to restructure the committee.  We are doing more than is outlined in our by-laws (perhaps other committees are as well).  No one is complaining about the work, however we would most likely do a better job with some clearer guidelines.

Unfortunately, during the year some of our committee members resigned including our chair, Sherrie Simmons.  This was truly a loss to our team.  2019 will be a year of rebuilding and reorganizing.  We would like to add two or three new members to our committee and work on amending the by-laws that guide Membership Care.

Our attendance continues to be strong – roughly flat from the previous year - and the "red book method" of keeping track is serving our needs.  We managed to spend less than we budgeted for the year!!  Birthday, anniversary and get well cards continue to be sent to the congregation.  We welcomed 6 new members to the church in December after a few scheduling delays.  We are working to come up with a specific date(s) set aside for New Member Sunday.  Lay visitation goes on by some committee members and some “saints” within the congregation.  Several funeral receptions were successfully organized by Judy Parker and her dedicated team, Coffee Hour continues under the steadfast leadership of Sandy White and the Christmas Breakfast was enjoyed by many thanks to Mary Eddy Stewart and her helpers. The knitters and crocheters continue to keep up a good supply of prayer shawls.

In spite of the logistical issues we are faced with the work of the committee goes on and we are doing our best to meet the needs of the congregation.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Hall, Interim Chair

# Missions & Social Justice

* Annual retreat #3 held in Jan. 2018. Focus on spiritual exploration and highlighted goals for committee in 2018.
* Community meals continued monthly in 2018 for their 7th year. In 2018, we had 2 new community groups host, both as part of their organization’s commitment to service.
* Participation in World Day of Prayer worship service.
* Karen Newman, author, triathlete, and cancer survivor spoke in church about her faith.
* 6th annual Hearts for Hunger Fun run/walk held in May, with $7800 donated to the VT Foodbank Backpack Program.
* Donation of $200 to Global Giving for tsunami disaster relief in Indonesia, hit by two disasters in 2018; our commitment to global mission/outreach
* Donation of $1900 to Hinesburg Youth Program from fundraiser “Basket of Hope” distributed during their service trip to Puerto Rico; commitment for global mission
* Initiation of Little Free Pantry concept to pastor and church council, and subsequent set up of this community service which has been well-utilized and supported. $100 donation to pantry for food supplies. Commitment for local mission.
* Participation in the Salvation Army bell ringing campaign.
* Sleeping bag fundraiser/drive for Safe Harbor to support the needs of neighbors who are homeless. Financial donation of $300 to kick start event.
* Mission’s moments offered during worship 3 times to inform the congregation about missions and social justice efforts
* Christmas brunch offered following worship in December in collaboration with coffee hour committee. A thank you to congregation for missions support.
* Holiday food baskets offered to families in CVUHS catchment area; home delivery piloted.
* Planning stages with Hinesburg Resource Center director Rachel Kring, to partner for possible summer food initiative to address needs of local children when other food options less available (e.g. during school vacations).
* Global church partnership was hoped to be established in Puerto Rico during HYP service trip; unsuccessful; this is on hold at the moment.
* Financial support for those who call the church office in need (electric bills, special projects/hardships) on-going.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori P. McKenna, committee chair

# Staff-Parish Relations

This year was a busy year for the Staff Parish Relations Committee. In the spring, we decided that the Committee would conduct a membership survey, partly to get a handle on how the church community was feeling and also as a way to introduce ourselves and our committee to the church family. We sent out a link to this online survey via our June e-mails to the membership. We also had copies in the church for those who aren’t e-mail users. Within a month, we had twenty-two responses, and responses continued to trickle in after that. Based on the comments church members made, we made adjustments. It was really helpful to know what people were thinking!

This year we hired a temporary administrative assistant for six months, to give Heather time to work on policy updates and organization of documentation. Amy Patrick covered the day-to-day stuff, and also was on board to cover Heather’s vacation in the summer. This extra help gave the church a jumpstart in the process of creating protocols for various church activities.

Early on, we realized that our “pain point” was keeping the nursery covered each Sunday. It seemed that no sooner would we hire someone, than we’d have to start the hiring process all over again. Finally, at our September meeting we sat down with Pastor Jared and Heather and created a protocol, which streamlined things and clarified who was responsible for what part of the process. A major accomplishment!

We had a committee retreat in August, where we began the process of formalizing what the SPRC does. At the retreat, we created an evaluation document that could be used for all annual evaluations of staff. This was another major step in streamlining a process. We also reviewed the job descriptions of staff, and updated them.

Overall, we feel we had a productive year.

Respectfully submitted,

The SPRC: Marie Eddy, David Eddy, Ellen Dooley, Deanna Utter, Sheri Hanlon

# Trustees

Church and Parish House

We added additional lighting in the church parking lot and a spot light for the front of the church. The lights in the parish house have been upgraded to LED lights. The church and parish house were pressure washed. We had a trench installed in southwest corner of the church parking lot to improve drainage for the parking lot. A grab bar was added to the parish house bathroom.

Church-wide Work Day

With the help of many parishioners, we had very successful and well attended work day(s). Work items completed were:

* Edge around the playground
* Haul off old swing set
* Fill in ruts by new playground
* Organize basement
* Organize plant sale shed
* Dig trench for church lighting
* Dig trench to bury power from Parsonage to garage
* Hang new cabinets in parish house kitchen
* Weed and deadhead church gardens
* Prune Trees in front of church

Parsonage

* Finished the Laundry Room renovation.
* Buried Powerline from house to garage
* Plumbing renovations and upgrade in the basement
* Installed 2 new raised beds

Vestry

Last year at this time we had decided to demolish the vestry and moved forward with the talks with the town and obtained quotes for demolition. Before we demolished the building, we wanted to make sure we had explored all other possible options. We were contacted by a local private Hinesburg Citizens Group interested in the preservation of the Vestry. They are proposing a long-term plan to restore the vestry (finishing sometime in 2020) with a short-term plan to stabilize the roof (January-February 2019). The group intent is that the structure, once rehabilitated, could be of use to a variety of citizen and town groups from the Boy Scouts, the Historical Society and a modestly sized community center for residents of varying ages. Even the adjoining Catholic Church and the UHC’s Pastor’s house could make use of the structure, once renovated. We will be meeting with the group early this year to move this process forward.

Baptist Lot

We currently have several beehives on the lot.

Snow Removal/Mowing

* Doug Olufsen continues to plow and sand the church parking lot and parsonage driveway this winter.
* With the help of many generous donations, we purchased a new zero turn mower.

Ongoing Activities

In addition to the above special projects, the Trustees continue to coordinate the snow shoveling and lawn mowing schedule, oversee and fund the church insurance, make sure all lights, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, etc. are maintained and in working order, and respond to any other property-related issues.

# Visioning

The Visioning Team is charged with guiding a strategic planning and visioning process to include:

* Listening to each other and the wider community to ascertain:
	+ Core Values
	+ Key Programs
	+ Areas of Unmet Need
* Developing vision and mission statements - a road map for our future
* Engaging a consultant to facilitate our work
* Determining next steps if building renovations and improvements are recommended

Initial work began on March 12, 2017 with a congregational meeting facilitated by then Vermont United Church of Christ (UCC) Associate Conference Minister Rev. Jim Thomas. Shortly thereafter, a Vision Facilitation Team was put together to:

* review similar work done between 2010 and 2012 by the church
* better understand the church’s current mission, vision, and governance structure (both stated and functional)
* assess perceived needs of the church

The team worked to define the scope of this work, receive community feedback, and hire a consultant that might guide the church through this process. Several consultants were approached. Partners for Sacred Places was judged to be a good fit, but after several months of failed correspondence, missed calls and delays, the committee agreed that it must look elsewhere. In late December 2018, the church entered into a six-month contract with Carla Wuthrich, a Professional Manufacturing and Business Growth Advisor for the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center with experience in the area of strategic development. Carla will guide the team and the church in the defining of a vision, a lens through which we will view our decisions and activities, and instituting a process for making progress toward achieving the vision. A kick-off meeting was scheduled for January 2019.

A timeline for 2019 was developed and is provided in the “Actions for 2019” document.

# Worship

We are fortunate that Pastor Jared plans the services months in advance and gives us a written Worship Schedule. At our meetings (lengthy sometimes) we give input to make our Sunday and other services interesting, inspiring and welcoming as we put the final plan together. Some basic services are the same every liturgical year like Lent/Easter and Advent/Christmas. But Pastor Jared also offers a variety of services which make the church year more interesting.

We have had a number of services including: varied Communion services; a Churchtoberfest (with special food); a few outdoor services by the solar panels; a hymn sing; Brunch Church in the Parish Hall on World Communion Sunday, led by Youth; filled a Thankful Tree with leaves of thankfulness; hung quilts in the sanctuary; had a Blue Christmas service connected with Grief workshops and a number of Laity Services with a variety of participants leading and speaking on different topics. A World Day of Prayer service was also held in the sanctuary.

This year Rev. Marjorie MacNeill graced us with her enthusiasm a number of times. We also did a pulpit exchange and had a neutral pulpit for another church. Memorial flowers decorated the sanctuary for Easter and Christmas. During Lent we held services for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Easter (including communion). The Sunrise service was held in front of the church and included a fire with the flame being carried into the sanctuary. There were 2 Christmas Eve services, a family program at 5PM and Lessons and Carols at 10PM. There were a number of baptisms this year. We continue to have very interesting special music and the Choir continues to inspire us with anthems from September to June.

We continue to have Ecumenical services with St. Jude Catholic Church for Good Friday, Prayer for Christian Unity Sunday and a Town Memorial Day service with other Hinesburg churches.

We hope everyone is enjoying the variety of services. We are glad to listen to any suggestions.

# Youth Programming

Youth Program Sessions

2018 was another year of growth for the youth programs at the United Church of Hinesburg. There were two youth groups, a middle school group for youth in 5th-7th grades and a high school group for youth in 8th grade and above. These groups met on Sunday evenings for five- or six-week sessions three times during the year. They focused on a variety of issues and themes including Christian faith and practices, hunger, Puerto Rico’s recovery after Hurricane Maria, teambuilding, rural poverty and a food and faith curriculum called “Eating the Bible.” The two groups had dinner together every gathering, which, along with parent volunteers, could be as many as forty-five people.

High School Youth Trip

The high school youth program decided in late 2017 to take a leap of faith and plan a service trip to Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Grants were written, yards were raked, fundraisers were held, planning groups gathered and the young people worked tirelessly to make this trip possible. We met regularly to discuss the impact of last September’s hurricane on the island. After many months of planning and hard work, twenty-four people travelled to Puerto Rico from Hinesburg for nine days of service in late June. The group included sixteen high school students and eight adults.

While on the island, we volunteered with Daniella Rodriquez Besosa of Siembra Tres Vidas, an organic farmer and community organizer in the central mountain town of Aibonto, as well as other small scale market farmers like Maria, Jessica and Antonio. We worked in a warehouse with Yvette Acevedo and Sara Lopez of Puerto Rico Rises on the western shore town of Aguadilla and delivered items from PRR to the residents of a small town called Juncos with Celine, a member of the IDDPMI Pentecostal Church. We built temporary housing in San Isidro with Derlis, Jaclyn, Sophia, Andrea and many other young volunteers with TECHO (*roof* in Spanish), a group that was working in one of the hardest hit pockets of the Island.

This service trip was a formative experience for all who went, one that will stick with all of us. It also would not have been possible without the many folks that helped along the way. We greatly appreciate everyone that donated time, money and resources to make this trip possible. This is especially true of the parents of the kids that travelled who were proactive in fundraising and planning. We are thankful for a generous grant from SCHIP, the Quincy, MA National Honor Society and many other groups. And I want especially to thank Eileen and Wes Ashe, Penny and Casey Grant, Ryan and Carla Wuthrich and Leah Hamilton for sharing the lead on this trip.

Middle School Youth Trip

2018 also marked the first Middle School Youth Trip for the United Church of Hinesburg. In late August, eight young people and three chaperones travelled to Western Massachusetts for three days of adventure, team building and service. Youth participated in a number of adventure activities including a zip line, alpine tower, Gaga Ball, camp fires, low and high ropes courses and archery through the Berkshire Outdoor Center. At the end of the trip we served dinner at the Pittsfield, MA Salvation Army, plating over seventy servings of meatballs and pasta. The youth showed great courage and teamwork throughout the weekend, challenging themselves individually and working for common goals. The trip would not have been possible without the help of chaperones Drew Lepple and Amy Sayre, Captain Elliot of the Pittsfield Salvation Army and our BOC group leader Ben, a camp counselor from New Zealand.

The youth program is now three years old and, with its continued growth, we will look to develop a Youth Group Committee to help accomplish our work in 2019.

# SCHIP

Shelburne Charlotte Hinesburg Interfaith Projects, Inc. (SCHIP) was formed in 2003 by ten faith communities in the three towns with the intention of working together to raise funds for grants to improve the lives of neighbors and strengthen the communities. Funds are raised through the operations of SCHIP’s Treasure Resale Shop where donated “gently used” clothing and household items are sold.

The representatives from the United Church of Hinesburg are Kristi Johnson and Anne Carter Mahaffey. They would be happy to answer any questions you may have.