**UNITED CHURCH OF HINESBURG**

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

**Annual Report for 2019**

Presented at the February 9, 2020 Annual Membership Meeting

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Minutes of the United Church of Hinesburg 2018 Annual Membership Meeting

**February 10, 2019**

Call to Order & Welcome—-Phil, chair, reviewed the agenda & information packet

Opening Prayer — Rev. Jared Hamilton

Election of Recording Secretary — Kate Schubart re-elected

Approve Meeting Minutes for Feb. 18, 2018. Move to approve Minutes. Approved.

CHAIR PHIL POUECH GIVES AN OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE WORK

Phil noted that there are quite a number of committees, but some are more continuously active than others. Brief printed reports were provided for Christian Education, Finance, Membership Care, Missions & Social Justice, Staff-Parish Relations, Trustees, Visioning, Worship and Youth Programming as well as SCHIP.

The only item brought up for discussion was the planned removal of part of a pew to provide seating for a wheelchair — Andy spoke to this. Renate asked if it could be done in the front of the church, as some who need wheelchairs might also have hearing problems. Andy says that the only requirement is that they be in the center set of pews, so it could be up front. Sharonlee asked if the idea is to have just one wheelchair space or two and Andy said the current plan is to provide for just one. Sharonlee was among those agreeing with Renate’s point about the hearing issue.

Phil then gave a quick outline on the subject of divesting the vestry building on Rte 116.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Among the items brought up for discussion: Grace Farley asked about the Nominating Committee responsibilities. Jared says there is not, for now, a slate of nominees for church positions or a report from the Nominating Committee because the Steering Committee is looking over the UCH governance model with a view to bringing it up-to-date. It would not make sense to nominate people for committees that may not exist any longer. This process should be completed by June.

Melissa Loretan asked if there is still a Stewardship Committee. Jared said yes and that its work will be highlighted this year after the revisions are made to the governance model.

Phil elaborated that what prompted the review of the governance model was that the work of some committees has naturally grown and changed over the years and it is time to review and have the committees and their responsibilities better reflect what is actually going on.

2018 Treasurer/Budget Report from Mary Eddy Stewart, for Yvonne Whitaker, who is away—3 reports were included in the packet for the Annual Meeting. Last year was healthy financially. Mary’s comment: The investments did well in 2016 and 2017 which we tapped into to help meet our 2018 financial budget. The investments didn’t fare as well in 2018 and we won’t have the investment income that we’ve had in the past years to tap into for 2019. We met our goals for fundraising— such as for the youth group—and the investments did well. No vote needed on this report.

On the Steering Committee: It was constituted in 2018 and the members are Pastor Jared, Phil Pouech, Heather Roberts, Yvonne Whitaker, Andy Seaton and Mary Eddy Stewart. They meet periodically to work on moving things that are important forward. The structure may be made more permanent. This is helpful to Jared as we figure out where we are going and get there as smoothly as possible.

In that context, Phil reports that the Church Council does not any longer meet monthly. We’ve cut back on the number of Church Council meetings to 3 times a year. This ensures we have a quorum for any votes.

Sharonlee notes Jared’s past activities in pastoral development and asked what he is doing this year. The UCH is part of the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ. Jared says his active involvement in the conference’s Ministerial Standing & Standards Committee will continue until sometime next year. This committee oversees the process is for pastors-in-training. He is finding it fun, as the committee for ministerial development is a great place to gather new ideas for our church. The group also oversees ministers’ ethical behavior using the UCC Code of Ethics. The ethics group did two fitness reviews in the last year.

He is still part of a national UCC young ministers group but no longer attends the national conference. Instead now, and for the next six years, he will get a $2,000 annual grant to do something he wants to do as “continuing education.” This year he will go to the international conference in Rome for the Society of Biblical Literature. There are about 300 sessions to choose from, with a huge range. He has signed up for the ones on Bible and ecology, Bible and family structure rather than the more esoteric ones such as linguistic studies of Greek Biblical passages.

Jared says he and others can and have gone to the annual meeting of the United Church of Christ. He recommends expanding that to meetings of our other denominations.

2019 BUDGET

There was a shout-out for Yvonne Whitaker. Phil spoke to her strong understanding of the complexities of the budget.

Mary Eddy Stewart reviewed the highlights of the 2019 budget. Expenses are relatively even. She noted that the Finance Committee gets recommendations from other committees for their budget line rather than dictating what each committee will spend. Their responsibility is to match it all up and see what they can do to reconcile the needs. Mary highlighted the loss of some older regular contributors and the lower return on interest and income from investments as reasons for some financial stress, despite the tight ship we already run. The total shortfall we will have to deal with, as it stands, is $12,000. Stewardship will focus on income to help close the gap. We used to have a separate ‘auxiliary budget’ and it is now part of the regular budget. Barbara Herrington noted that there are efforts in the works to find ways to keep the music budget at the current level rather than cut it as is shown in the 2019 budget line.

Phil talked about having matured our process in collecting and registering donations rather than, as has happened, leaving it in the glove compartment. The point is that we have transitioned to a more ordered process for the kinds of things that were much more informal in the past. One example is that Barbara Herrington has been auditing the books for the last six years.

Ellen Dooley thanked Mary Stewart and all who do good work for the church.

Approval: Thea Gaudette moved to approve the 2019 budget. Sharonlee Trefry seconded. APPROVED.

GOALS FOR 2019

(refer to the “Actions for 2019” sheet in the Annual Meeting packet)

Phil gave an update on the Visioning Process, which is now underway in earnest.

The 100th anniversary of the church is this year and the plan is to have a committee and plan a public celebration and “create a physical recognition.”

Update to Church Governance, as discussed above. Six points are listed on the Actions for 2019 report. Phil expressed strong support for a trained Deacon position, so the gaggle of jobs doesn’t always fall on Jared. Renate mentioned that in her previous church the deacon position was less physical housekeeping and more spiritual outreach, for example to shut-ins. Jared said deacons do both technical services and spiritual services in many churches. Spiritual Formation and 2 other committees do these in our church currently and the Steering Committee is working on this and “will figure it out, I’m confident.”

Develop Manuals and Procedures. Some of this has been done. Phil hopes the written guides that are being created will help involve more church members in the work of the church. Sharonlee has just been involved in creating operating guidelines for a nonprofit and noted that each part of the nonprofit had its own format, making for many versions for the guidelines. She suggests a template be used to ensure some standardization. It is agreed that we are entering a new era when it isn’t enough to have individuals be the repository of the knowledge of how things work. We are getting more and more new members and we want to engage them. Carla Wuthrich says guides to the different tasks we need members of the congregation to do help people feel welcome. Kate Schubart spoke to the need to relieve the old hands of all the responsibility. Ellen Dooley spoke to the value to each person of belonging to a committee, so long as they know what they are there for.

Another goal is to “Improve Communications Processes.” Phil said the Church Council suggested this goal and the Steering Committee agreed it is appropriate.

Phil moved to accept the 2019 Goals, seconded.

Discussion: Sharonlee spoke re: the use of the word “minutes,” saying that that means they are recorded and approved in detail. Since we don’t always need such formal records from meetings, she suggested revising the language to say “minutes or notes.” Ellen Dooley said that since some committees do take minutes, we should use both words. Wayne urged that whether “minutes” or “notes,” they be reviewed. APPROVED Goals for 2019 with language changed to say “minutes or notes” under “Improve Communication Processes.”

VISIONING AND STRATEGY REPORT from Carla Wuthrich

She presented a whiteboard sketch of the images used in the December Visioning Retreat, saying that the group, which intentionally included a diverse group of UCH members, looked first at what got us to where we are now under our current mission, then at some examples of how others churches in the area and beyond have developed their vision and strategized. For those interested in more detail, she has created documents showing the steps in the project starting with the preparation phase that began with the retreat in January. The Strategy Development phase is next and will take place from mid-February to mid-March, beginning with a meeting after church on Feb 17.

Carla showed some of the insights in short phrases and then gave a quick report on the results of the survey sent electronically and also in print form enclosed in the Sunday service programs for two weeks in January this year. There have been 54 replies. The next steps are to, in her terms “develop a sustainable cadence to engage & listen….analyze & synthesize…communicate & coordinate.” The goal is to engage people and focus our resources “to move toward what we envision.”

The Visioning group will also get down to specifics like whether to make room for a wheelchair in the church. As Carla put it “Our work is to decide what things we will do better or differently.”

She urged us to look for voices we haven’t been hearing and how to bring them into the discussion. Sharonlee Trefry asked if youth voices have been drawn in. We need to be creative about doing that, Carla agreed. Jared says we will be doing that along with bringing in voices from the wider community.

Barbara asked what Carla would like us to do. There were ‘stickies’ on the tables at the meeting to be used to propose ideas and anyone can email Carla with ideas.

Jared asked that each of us spend perhaps ten minutes this week thinking about our church and how we want to move forward and then communicate our thoughts to Carla as well as to him and Heather.

OTHER BUSINESS — None

CLOSING AND ADJOURNMENT — Phil

# Report of the Pastor

*“Haven’t I commanded you? Strength! Courage! Don’t be timid; don’t get discouraged. God, your God, is with you every step you take.”* - Joshua 1:9 *(Message)*

2019 was marked by a number of transitions in the life of the United Church of Hinesburg. We cast a new mission and vision for the church, celebrated our 100th anniversary and made significant changes to our properties. Through all of this, we’ve maintained our identity, working diligently in the community to address hunger insecurity, holding engaging and thoughtful worship services and engaging youth through learning and service.

Knowing that 2019 would be a big year, the church worked on a number of goals that were identified and approved at the February 2019 annual meeting. These goals were: 1) Complete the Vision Project that we began in 2018, 2) Celebrate the 100-year Anniversary, 3) Update Church Governance, 4) Develop Manuals and Procedures for all standard church processes and work, and 5) Improve our Communication process.

The Visioning and Strategic Planning team met during the first have of the year with facilitator Carla Wuthrich to address two questions: 1) Who are we? and 2) What do we want to become? Through feedback from our congregation and wider community, and input by a representative group in our church, the committee developed two statements. Our new mission statement (who we are) is:

**The United Church of Hinesburg is a welcoming and inclusive community where all are invited to connect, serve, worship, celebrate, learn and grow with God’s help.**

A vision statement helps us to understand the work we would like to go about doing.

**The United Church of Hinesburg seeks to build a more just, loving and sustainable world through acts of fellowship, community service and joyful worship.**

These statements give us clarity about what the United Church of Hinesburg is all about, and guidance as we understand what work to take on moving forward.

Much of this work was done with our 100th anniversary celebration in mind. We celebrated the centennial of the federation of the Baptist, Methodist and Congregational churches in September at a special service. In addition, work began on a centennial quilt, a new tree and benches were dedicated and the church announced plans to create a green space on the recently reclaimed church soccer field. Finally, and with gratitude, folks from UCH brought back the town-wide Fall Festival, which brought vendors, activities and people out in community.

2019 also saw us practice a new form of church governance as we worked on a formal restructuring. A Steering Committee, with oversight from Church Council went about the business of the church when the annual meeting was not in session. This small group of church leaders helped to define tasks, make important decisions and implement the work of achieving our church goals while adapting to the challenges of the year. I am thankful for Phil Poeuch, Mary Eddy Stewart, Andy Seaton, Yvonne Whitaker and Heather Roberts who generously gave of their time and energy and allowed us to make important church decisions effectively.

We continued to make strides in our desire to communicate more effectively. We received feedback from the congregation about the best way to communicate new events, overhauled our weekly update email system, improved our bulletin messaging and begun work on a revamped website, which will go live in early 2020. Additionally, we made more regular use of our Facebook page, and used other online programs like Signup Genius and Doodle to create signups and plan meetings.

While the completion of some of these goals remains outstanding, we made progress in every area in 2019. This work was in addition to our hallmark programs, events and fundamental causes. We continue to address the issue of food insecurity by running a monthly community meal, operating the Little Free Pantry and giving out food baskets during Advent. In May, our sixth annual Hearts for Hunger 5k raised another $7,800 for the Vermont Foodbank Backpack program and more than twenty of us enjoyed a fun day packing food at a Feed My Starving Children Mobile Packing Event in Essex Junction, Vermont. Youth focused on issues of rural poverty and accessibility this year and young people and adults from our youth program, the Hinesburg Youth Project, offered over 900 hours(!) of volunteer service at the Service Dog Project in Ipswich, Massachusetts, H.O.M.E. Inc. in Orland, Maine and by volunteering at local organizations like the New Community Project in Starksboro, Vermont. In the fall, we raised money for eight tents and tarps for Safe Harbor in Burlington, Vermont to help those that sleep out during the winter, and we’ve given out over $2,700 in direct assistance to community members in temporary need in 2019.

Professionally, I was fortunate to serve on the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ Ministerial Standing and Standards Committee for another year. This committee is responsible for guiding pastors-in-training through the path to ordination and holding UCC pastors in Vermont accountable to appropriate and ethical practices. In the fall, I was asked to coach the Williamstown United Federated Church in reviving Sunday morning worship. I also continued in the Next Generation Leadership Initiative program through the UCC by attending the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Rome, Italy.

Personally, this was full year. Leah and I decided at the end of 2018 that we would like to purchase a home with more land for our children, chickens, and gardens. I am thankful that this was made possible by the church. In September, we moved to a log cabin on 10 acres in Starksboro, Vermont and have loved every minute. To make this arrangement work, the church parsonage was sold and the money made from the sale was reinvested. This arrangement eliminated the ongoing and expensive upkeep of a 150-year-old building, and the money made by the reinvestment will help to cover the pastor’s housing allowance for years to come.

Through this time of transition, celebration, and renewal, I am truly thankful that God has given us all strength and courage and has been with us every step.

Blessings,

Reverend Jared M. Hamilton, Pastor

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# Reports of Ministry Teams and Committees

# Church Council & Steering Committee

The church has gone through significant changes over the last couple of years including changes in our long-standing governing procedures. One significant change was the establishment of a Steering Committee and a reduction of Church Council meetings.

The Steering Committee has been operating for two years. During this time the members of the Steering Committee have been Yvonne Whitaker, Mary Eddy Stewart, Phil Pouech, Andy Seaton, Heather Roberts and Jared Hamilton. The committee has been meeting almost once per month. Agendas are developed and meeting minutes are kept.

Our Steering Committee members feel the meetings are effective and decisions are made quickly and efficiently. A good example of this committee effectiveness is the recent sale of the Parsonage. The sale required several important decisions and fast actions to complete the sale. Quick decisions and actions allowed this sale to be done in a timely manner. This type of action would have been more difficult if it needed to flow through our previous Council process. With that said, the Steering Committee was careful to ensure the council was informed on the sale and consulted the Council, sought and gained approval to move the sale forward. While the Steering Committee appears to be working well, there are areas for improvement. The present committee members do not fully reflect all of our primary governing committees resulting in some “holes” in representation. As we move forward revisions to our governing structure, we hope to include wider representation and clear lines of responsibility between committees and the Steering Committee structure or leadership.

The Church Council met three times during the year. This allowed us to bring all committees together in order to properly plan church business, make church-wide decisions and share issues. The Council did engage in critical church decisions and discuss plans and strategy for the future. Council meetings have been very well attended, with 10-15 attendees with representation by operating committees. Minutes were kept and are available to all church members. In past years, when the Council structure was used to run all church business, meetings were sometimes lightly attended, in some cases lacking appropriate quorum resulting in delayed critical decisions. Fewer meetings for the Council allows better planning and effectiveness.

Now with some experience in this new structure, we are ready to revise our by-laws to reflect better ways to conduct church business. In 2020, we will continue to use the new structure of a “Steering Committee” (the name will be changed to “Board of Directors”) meeting regularly, to include wider committee representation and fewer “Council” meetings to bring all church functions together to make church-wide decisions. It is expected the by-laws will be modified during 2020 based on our experiences over the last two years. We expect to vote on new by-laws at our 2021 annual meeting. Until then, we remain open to finding the best processes to run our church, meet member needs and continue to serve our local community.

# 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. Approximately 25 children are currently active in our Sunday School and nursery programs. 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:

* In September, we introduced a new curriculum in our 2 Sunday School classrooms called *A Joyful Path*. This behavior-over-belief curriculum connects children and their adult teachers with their own inner wisdom. Using the Bible and other wisdom stories, *A Joyful Path* helps children learn how to follow the path of Jesus in today’s world. The children and teachers have really enjoyed exploring this curriculum that teaches interdependence, self-awareness, respect for nature, stillness, forgiveness, prayer, meditation, and integrity. Please contact Heather if you are interested in helping with Sunday school teaching.
* Our annual Christmas Pageant starred Caroline Billingsley as baby Jesus, along with 22 other children. The pageant, entitled “Night of the Stars”, was enjoyed by all ages. The children enjoyed a cast party with Christmas movies and refreshments after the performance.
* On April 7th, we celebrated our annual Childrens’ Sunday service with our Sunday School children and youth involved in the service as greeters, ushers, readers, lay liturgists, prayer leaders and drama participants.
* We continue to offer monthly Friday Night Social Events (movie and game nights), including dinner, for Sunday School-age children. These events are well attended and children (and parents) look forward to a FUN night out! Please contact Heather if you are willing to help with these events that usually take place on the first Friday of every month during the program year.
* We welcomed Ashley Williams-Wenschhof to our Friday Night event in February to lead a yoga class for the kids.
* Mission projects:
  + Planned, prepared and served the March 2019 Community Dinner
  + Made soup mix for the Little Free Pantry, to provide a hearty, protein-filled meal to our neighbors in need during the winter months when cans and jars cannot be placed in the LFP
  + Made pretzels to share during coffee hour on the first Sunday of Lent – and then again during our Churchtoberfest celebration in October
  + Assembled beautiful Easter baskets which were delivered to homebound church members
  + Potted flowers for Mother’s Day
  + Kicked off the program year with a school supply drive for Hinesburg Community School and a One Room Schoolhouse making pumpkin pie spice for Grandparent’s Day
  + Made cookies and assembled holiday food baskets for the Missions & Social Justice Committee
* Leah Hamilton led our Children’s Choir in a performance during the worship service on Palm Sunday. We are working to identify a leader for the Children’s Choir in the 2019-2020 program year. If you are interested, please contact Heather.

Respectfully submitted by Eileen Ashe

Christian Education Committee members: Eileen Ashe, Chair; Heather Roberts, Christian Education Coordinator; Leah Hamilton, Mary Hong, Theron Main, Renate Parke, and Sharonlee Trefry

# 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 that come into the church electronically, by check or in cash, in the church’s electronic system, and depositing cash and checks in 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. While not a member of the Finance Committee, the Administrative Assistant (Heather Roberts) performs a critical bookkeeping role maintaining the church accounting system (QuickBooks), reviewing invoices and preparing bi-weekly checks for the Treasurer’s signature, monitoring cash flow, and running reports.

As shown in the financial report, the church met all of its obligations in 2019 but again this year, we had to rely heavily on our investment accounts. While we are fortunate that the investments did well in 2019, relying on investments to cover deficits is not sustainable.

The Finance Committee is also responsible for facilitating an annual audit of church accounts. Barbara Herrington will perform the 2019 audit; we greatly appreciate her taking on this responsibility again this year.

Yvonne Whitaker for the Finance Committee

# Membership Care

It's been a good year for the Membership Care Committee.  Church attendance is strong and steady!  Thank you all for signing and passing along the "red books".

Alice Cobb has been doing lots of visiting and helping folks in our congregation.  Other folks not on our committee have also been helping out with visitation.  Thanks to all of you!

Bonnie Farrow has been keeping track of our card sending mission.  We continue to send birthday and anniversary cards and have also added get well and "keeping in touch" cards.  We have had positive feedback from card receivers.

Coffee hour had its ups and downs, with some folks stepping down and new ones stepping up.  Sandy White always does a great job of keeping us organized and the coffee, good food and fellowship continues each Sunday.

Our Christmas Breakfast was a big success this year with more than forty people attending.  Lots of new faces!  The food was great and everyone received a small gift, but the best part was the fellowship and laughter!  Thanks to Mary Stewart for her hard work getting the event organized.

The prayer shawl mission continues.  Many shawls were gifted to those in need of some prayerful support.  Thanks to those who donate their time and talent making these lovely shawls.

All of us on the Membership Care Committee - Barbara Lyman, Grace Farley, Carrie Huestis, Bonnie Farrow, Alice Cobb, Heather Roberts, Judy Parker, Sandy White, Mary Thompson, and Mary Eddy Stewart - are dedicated to the committee and the work we do for the congregation.

Dianne Hall, Interim Chair

# Missions & Social Justice

* Annual retreat #4 was held in Feb. 2018 with the focus on immigration and migrant issues.
* Monthly community meals without charge, continued for the 8th year. Donations supported local efforts towards food insecurity.
* Participation in World Day of Prayer worship service.
* 7th annual Hearts for Hunger fun run/walk was held in May 2109 with several changes in terms of route and improvements toward safety. We were able to donate $7,800 to the VT Foodbank Backpack program. The foodbank indicates that, with our donation, they were able to roll out a new phase of the Backpack program, specifically targeted toward high school children who are food insecure. When we began this initiative in 2013, 1 in 4 VT children were food insecure; in 2019, that has improved; 1 in 6 VT children remain food insecure.
* A donation of $200 was given to the Robinswood Middle School in Orlando, Florida to assist with gardening projects to address the complicated challenges of young children living on the outskirts of the theme parks, violence and other hardships such as food insecurity.
* A donation was given to the Hinesburg Youth Project to support a mission of their choice during their service trip to H.O.M.E. Inc. in northern Maine.
* Missions has continued to support the Little Free Panty, a community service of food that has been well utilized and supported.
* Participation in the Salvation Army bell ringing campaign.
* Fundraiser for Safe Harbor of 8 “Tents and Tarps” to support the needs of those who are chronically homeless. Financial donation to kick start this event.
* Twenty-two members of the congregation participated in a mobile pack event in September for the organization Feed My Starving Children, to fulfil our goal of addressing local, national and international missions.
* Mission’s moments were offered during worship to inform congregation of missions and social justice issues.
* Christmas brunch was offered for the 3rd time for the congregation following worship in December, in collaboration with coffee hour committee.
* $200 honorarium was given to guest speaker David Radcliff of The New Community Project for his participation in worship service.
* Outreach funds have provided financial support for those who call the church office in need (electric bills, special projects/hardships etc.); this mission is on-going.

Respectfully submitted; Lori P. McKenna, committee chair

Committee members: Sue Barden, Karen Farnsworth, Barbara Forauer, Cathy Foutz, Penny Grant, Kristi Johnson, Kristi Kilbride, Melissa Loretan, Meaghan McKenna, Katie Dooley-Morris

# Staff-Parish Relations

The SPRC focused on two items this year—organizing volunteer opportunities and Jared’s upcoming 2020 sabbatical. In our first two meetings after the February annual meeting, we sought feedback from Heather on areas where volunteers could help her with the day-to-day running of the church. She came up with a list, we reviewed and discussed each item, and then made recommendations for seeking volunteers. We also discussed recognizing our volunteers more, as truly this is a church where volunteers get things done. Just look at the many ways volunteers help out: coffee hour, snow shoveling/lawn mowing, Sunday school teaching, plant sale, chicken pie supper, community dinner food prep/serving, November bazaar, weekly Sunday program folding, and so much more!

The next couple of SPRC meetings centered on what needs to happen to keep our church running while Pastor Jared is on his well-deserved sabbatical. Pastor Jared has decided to take a two-month sabbatical during our slower months, July and August. Coverage will mainly be about pulpit supply and pastoral care. The SPRC has lined up Rev. Debbie Ingram to cover the two communion Sundays and pastoral care during the sabbatical. We have enough talented members of the church community to cover the other six Sundays with lay ministers. With the help of other committees such as Steering, Worship and Missions, we feel we can plan some interesting Sunday programs.

The nursery staffing issues that plagued us in 2018 worked themselves out and we are pleased to report that there’s been consistency in the nursery, thanks to the wonderful people we’ve hired: Julie Scribner and Ryan Walker. We can’t thank them enough!

This fall we conducted our annual employee reviews, which are basically a conversation with each person employed by the church, providing time for them to let us know their achievements and challenges. We always come away feeling that we have an excellent group of people supporting the work of this church.

Our committee would welcome some new members. If you have any interest, please speak to one of us some Sunday!

Respectfully submitted,

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

# Trustees

Church and Parish House

We have repaired the soffit near the steeple and have removed the chimney and patched the roof. In addition, the roofer replaced all the soft or broken tiles on the church roof. We have removed part of a pew to make room for a wheelchair. A deadbolt has been added to the outside door of the church office and one of the kitchen sink faucets was replaced.

Vestry

For the past year we have been working with a local private Hinesburg Citizens Group interested in the preservation of the Vestry. 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. If all goes well, we will be transferring the ownership of the Vestry to the local group sometime in the first or second quarter of 2020. They still have a few issues to resolve and if they do not take ownership, we will pursue the demolition of the vestry.

Baptist Lot

We are looking into selling the 18+ acre lot and have looked at several options. Unfortunately, due to the high-water table, the lot is unsuitable for a house or a mound system. Connection to the town sewer is also not an option, so we are exploring the sale of the property to the Hinesburg Land Trust with Andrea Morgante.

Parsonage

One of our 2019 goals was to explore the option of selling the Parsonage to establish a fund for a housing allowance for the pastor. The Parsonage was sold in August and the proceeds have been invested.

Green Space (Soccer Field behind the Parish House)

For many years the Iroquois Soccer Club has maintained and utilized the field that UCH owns behind the Parish House. With the development of the Bissonette recreation area, their games have moved to those fields. The Trustees have taken over the maintenance of our field and it has been and will continue to be mowed.

We have had several meetings and discussions about reclaiming this field to create a contemplative green space. Ideas have included trees, benches, garden type spaces and possibly some type of labyrinth. We have started discussions with the town and Lewis Creek Association, as there is interest on their part to work with us and provide resources to also address village stormwater and water quality issues into the design of this space.

Snow Removal/Mowing

Doug Olufsen continues to plow and sand the church parking lot this winter.

In addition to the regular mowing duties, the Iroquois Soccer Club is no longer using the field behind the Parish House and we have taken over mowing of the lot.

Many thanks to the volunteers who mow and shovel.

Other 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.

**Trustees:** Andy Seaton, Chair, Wes Ashe, Phil Pouech, Chip Foutz, Bob Forauer, JP Hong, Matt Sayre, Ken Cudney and Art Thompson

# Visioning

The visioning work for our church began with a congregational meeting in 2017, facilitated by then VTUCC Associate Conference Minister Rev. Jim Thomas, and was continued by the Visioning Team. The Visioning Team was charged with better understanding the church’s current mission, vision and governing structure and assessing the perceived needs of the church. The team worked to define the scope of this work, receive community feedback, and hire a consultant to facilitate the church through this process.

In late 2018 Carla Wuthrich, a member of our congregation with years of experience in the area of strategic development, was engaged to facilitate the next phase of the visioning work. A Strategic Working Group was created to work with Carla. Members of the working group are: David Eddy, Marie Eddy, Rev. Jared Hamilton, Barbara Herrington, Meg Little Reilly, Heather Roberts, Amy Sayre, Kate Schubart, Rev. Wayne Schwab, Yvonne Whitaker, and Carla Wuthrich. The following is a summary of the group’s activities.

**Approach:**

Engage and Listen…Analyze and Synthesize…Communicate and Coordinate...*repeat*

*Take small steps towards big goals... repeat*

 We used a range of collaboration and facilitation models and approaches, including:

* small-group facilitated exercises
* one-on-one questioning and listening
* storytelling
* right- and left-brain activities, such as drawing activity landscapes
* paper and electronic surveys
* communication planning

Meetings ranged from 5-minute check-ins to a several hour-long retreat (with delicious soups!).

**Outcomes:**

1. Determined that our Strategic Focus Areas for the next 3-5 years are:
   * Spiritual Growth/Support
   * Advocacy and Service
   * Securing and Effectively Utilizing Resources
2. Developed and Evolved Mission and Vision Statements

Our mission statement (“What we do”):

The United Church of Hinesburg is a welcoming and inclusive community where all are invited to connect, serve, worship, celebrate, learn and grow with God's help.

Our vision statement (“What we want to be”):

The United Church of Hinesburg seeks to build a more just, loving, and sustainable world through acts of fellowship, community service, and joyful worship.

1. Used shared time together, as a congregation, to explore and deepen our connection to the mission and vision through:
   * Individual reflection
   * Pair and share in June worship service
   * Coffee Hour table talk in July and August
   * Sermons, Children’s Messages, Youth Group discussions - Summer 2019
   * Centennial Celebration communications - Fall 2019
   * Community conversations - ongoing

The visioning work is on-going as the church integrates a strategic planning process with the governance changes being considered. Directly connecting the goals and the work of our church, both internal and external, to our mission/vision statements and strategic focus areas will help us to make confident, joyful, strategic and responsible decisions and adapt to and meet the needs of our church and our community.

# Worship

This has been an exciting and busy year for all of us. In addition to our regular services, Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter, some of our other services included:

* hymn sings (using our new hymnals)
* varied communion services
* Churchtoberfest with the band and a fun coffee hour
* a Blue Christmas service for those dealing with grief at that time of year
* A Youth-in-Action service
* World Day of Prayer
* Frequent talks by the Missions Committee and the young people during the worship service
* During Lent, our usual Maundy Thursday dinner and service as well as a Good Friday service with St. Jude’s Catholic Church.
* A Prayer for Christian Unity program with St. Jude where we "swap" readers for each service
* A Memorial Day service held at the park in Hinesburg, shared with two other churches and drawing more people each year.
* Our special music is enjoyed and a nice addition is the hand bell choir.
* Last, but not least,…..no "Bee" Sunday was held this summer outside, but maybe in 2020?

We purchased new hymnals this year and are in the process of locating family or friends who would like one or more of the old hymnals that have dedications in them. If you would like one, please notify the church office.

Your Worship Committee

# Youth Programming

Youth Program Sessions

2019 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, rural poverty, accessibility issues, 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

In late June, 15 high school students from Hinesburg spent a week offering their services at H.O.M.E. Inc. in Orland, Maine. Work included splitting and stacking firewood, gardening, fence building, clothes sorting, picnic table refurbishing, deck staining, meal making, and food sorting. All told, the group of 15 young people and their 5 adult leaders put in over 630 hours of service.

This year’s high school service trip was unlike any of the other three trips in the recent past. In New York City, Boston and Puerto Rico we spend a day or two at each site, making a meal at a soup kitchen, stacking food pantry shelves, learning about environmental racism, or building temporary housing. We got to know the causes and the people from many organizations as well as we could in a day or two. Sometimes our experiences were immersive – working side-by-side with the people that benefitted from our work. But that experience was pretty rare.

H.O.M.E. Inc. was a different experience. We worked on the organization’s campus every day of the week. We worked for, with, and under the supervision of employees, volunteers and people living in homeless and transitional housing at H.O.M.E. We took our lunches from the kitchen every day, eating with employees and volunteers and people from the community that needed an extra meal that week. Many of us on the trip experienced the “provider/client” division that sometimes defines human services broken down; there were times when we simply could not tell the difference between H.O.M.E. employees and the women and men staying in the transitional housing and shelters.

The young people in this group were impressive. Some have been on this trip together for years, while it was the first HYP trip for others. Newcomers and grizzled veterans alike worked hard, encouraged one another, and were gracious with each other. It’s truly astounding to me that these fifteen young people spent the last year working hard to raise money for a trip where they would go and work harder. It shows their devotion to service, to adventure and to one another.

We were also blessed to have had Wes and Eileen Ashe, and Casey and Penny Grant as adult leaders on this trip. The Ashes and Grants were adult leaders on last year’s Puerto Rico trip and it was immensely helpful this go around to count on their experience and gifts.

This year’s participants were: Jacob Ashe, Katie Ashe, Graycie Elkins, Rose Gladstone, Gregory Goldsmith, Julia Grant, Sarah Johnson, Amelie Lepple, Tom Roberts, Josie Sayre, Erik Simkins, Grace Thorburn, Nora Van Vranken, Calvin Wuthrich, and Tyler Wuthrich.

Middle School Youth Trip

Here is Emma Main’s, participant on the middle school trip to Service Dog Project’s, report on the middle school trip:

We started our youth group trip from church on a scorching hot Sunday. We drove to Salem, Massachusetts in two cars. It was already exciting. We arrived in Salem and found the house we were staying in. It was amazing. We settled in, got groceries, and had dinner. The next day we arrived to the Service Dog Project around 9:00 a.m. Everybody was excited. Our first job was to clean out the barn attic. The next hour everyone was moving, sorting, counting, and labeling all the boxes. When we were done, we went outside to clean some cages. We had a hose, and some soap. Somehow we all managed to get wet. After we finished our work at Service Dog Project we went to Crane Beach. We played volleyball, buried people in the sand, and just hung out. Everyone had a blast. When we got home we played the best game of Hide and Seek ever!

The next day at the Service Dog project we cleaned out the basement. We all stood next to each other and passed the boxes down the line. It was really fun. After lunch Carlene the owner of Service Dog Project sat with us and told us about how she made the Service Dog Project. It was really amazing to hear all about how much hard work went into making everything possible. It is incredible how much of an impact these dogs have on people. These dogs stabilize people who need assistance getting around, provide support for those who need it, and are a loyal companion. The Service Dog Project has helped many people find a furry friend that helps them throughout their day.

That night we went on a ghost tour of Salem. We walked around Salem and saw lots of “haunted” houses, and heard lots of spooky stories. We learned about the Salem Witch trials. It might have been less scary if it wasn’t so dark. Afterwards we made ice cream sundaes. We went through the fridge trying to find toppings. We did find some 8-year-old chocolate sauce. Though we didn’t realize how old it was until after we ate it.

 We spent our final day in Massachusetts at Canobie Lake Park. We all had fun on the many rides before heading back to Hinesburg. It was such a great trip!

What I’ve learned the most when being part of the Hinesburg Youth Project is how great it feels to help people. When I am assisting others I have an amazing feeling that I am making a difference. And anyone can feel that way when they are helping others. I’ve also learned how much we can accomplish when we work together.

Thank you Pastor Jared, Barbara Forauer, and Amy Patrick for all their hard work to make this trip possible.

This year’s participants were: Jacob Lepple, Emma Main, Ella O’Neil, Maeve O’Neil, Kate Roberts, Kate Sayre, Brian Simkins, Kyle Walker, and Annalise Wood.

# 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 current representative from the United Church of Hinesburg is Kristi Johnson and she would be happy to answer any questions you may have. We have an open position on the SCHIP board so, if you are interested in joining Kristi, please contact the church office.