

United Church of Hinesburg

2023 Annual Meeting Report

A Brief Introduction to the 2022-2023 UCH Annual Report

Greetings!

The 2022-2023 United Church of Hinesburg Annual report provides a snapshot of church activities as we worked to restart programming after the worst phase of the COVID-19 pandemic had run its course. These activities cover our program year and fiscal year – July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. The bulleted list of events and accomplishments represents the work of talented and dedicated people in our community. The financial statements attached to this document represent the generosity of real people.

I want to highlight the restart of children and youth programming as noteworthy for our congregation. Like other area churches, children and youth programming became unsustainable during the pandemic. In the fall of 2022, we began a two-month “trial run” of Sunday morning children’s programming with volunteers and were excited to have young people and their families back with us. The Sunday evening youth programming restart also proved to be a fruitful use of our time and energy. Rev. Sherry Osborn joined us in November to support these programs, and her time with us this year has been a blessing.

I would also like to highlight the work of the choir this last year. We have been fortunate to have new choir members and new music this last year. This has added life and depth to our worship time together and brought us all joy. Thank you to Rufus Patrick, Sammy Angstman, and the many folks who came early for choir rehearsals each week.

Overall, I believe this report highlights the dedication and hope found in the members and friends of the United Church of Hinesburg as we searched for ways – old and new - to be faithful to God’s calling in this present age. If you would like more background or context on the activities and events listed below, reach out to me, and I would be happy to provide more information.

Blessings,

Rev. Jared M. Hamilton

Worship and Membership Care

- Lay-led “This I Believe” worship services held in the fall and spring
- Music ministry included guest musicians, handbell choir, and special music
- Attendance at weekly worship services continued to grow throughout the year with new faces in the pews
- Worship Ministry Team coordinated readers, greeters, and communion setup volunteers and decorated the sanctuary for Christmas and Easter, including memorial poinsettias and spring flowers
- Membership Ministry Team continued sending birthday, get well, thinking of you, and sympathy cards

- A long-overdue project of updating the church directory, with photos submitted by individuals and families, begun with distribution planned for June
- New Member Orientation conducted in May; four individuals welcomed into membership at a New Member Sunday on June 4th.
- The Disciplines group regathered on Monday mornings throughout the year.
- Wednesday evening Lenten Book Study held via Zoom to discuss the book *Lent in Plain Sight* by Jill Duffield
- Provided pastoral support and memorial services for Chip Ward, Brian Busier, Doug Lantman, Ila Hall, Roy Irish, Tony Pezzimenti, Wayne Schwab, Chip Foutz, Sandy White, and Walter Knox.

Sunday School and Youth

- Restarted Sunday morning programming in September. Averaged between 4-12 young people each Sunday.
- Restarted the nursery care program.
- Restarted the Sunday evening Hinesburg Youth Project Sunday evening program. Averaged between 3 – 8 middle and high school youth each gathering.
- Sunday school programming involved outdoor classroom events at the Russell farm.
- Worked with worship folks to put together 4 “All Together Sundays” that provided worship activities for all ages during Sunday morning worship.

Missions & Social Justice

- With the support of donations from the congregation and funds from the Missions program budget, 21 grocery gift cards, in the amount of \$75 each, were purchased for distribution to families in need who were identified by the Hinesburg Community School social worker and the church
- After the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria the church made a \$850 donation to World Central Kitchen, with monies received from the congregation in response to an appeal made by the Missions and Social Justice Ministry Team, and additional funds allocated from the Missions budget
- Online sales of tourtieres in November and biscotti in May (in conjunction with the online plant sale) raised \$1,019 for the VT Foodbank Backpack Program
- A \$200 memorial donation for Fern Feather was made to VT Pride Center of Vermont from the Missions program budget funds

- **Little Free Pantry**

While the Little Free Pantry (LFP) is essentially a stand-alone initiative and not an official program of the Missions and Social Justice Ministry Team, it serves as a vital component in addressing the church’s overarching goal to reduce food insecurity. LFP funds are administered by the church through a restricted account.

- Continued community education regarding local food insecurity and fundraising to sustain the LFP
- Collaboration with local farmers through purchases of goods and gift cards
- Coordination of LFP volunteers who oversee quality control of foods, grocery shop and stock the pantry daily
- Planning for future needs and collaboration with the HCRC Food Shelf

Fundraising Events

- November Holiday Bazaar raised a record \$4,637
- A Chicken Barbeque Community Dinner, put on in October with the help of the Williston USDA Office, raised \$1,209 for hurricane relief in Puerto Rico. Those funds, plus \$200 from the Missions program budget (total \$1,409), were disbursed to HASER, a Puerto Rican non-profit promoting social well-being. HASER helps to support Enlace Tres Vidas, an ecosystem of farms including the farms the Hinesburg Youth Project worked at during their youth trip to PR in 2018.
- Plant Sale was held over two Saturdays again this year, with pickup of perennial plants ordered online on May 6th and an in-person sale of annuals and a selection of perennials on the following Saturday, May 13th. The in-person sale included a very successful sale of pies instead of the usual bake sale items.

Good weather and many volunteers, including community members not affiliated with the church, helped make both events a success with gross sales (before expenses) of \$14,802 (net \$11,189). This includes \$450 in receipts from the pie sale.

Personnel and Administrative

- Job description for the Christian Education Coordinator position revised and renamed “Pastoral Assistant for Church Programming”
- Rev. Sherry Osborn hired as the Pastoral Assistant for Church Programming in September
- Yvonne Whitaker continued to provide administrative support on a voluntary basis
- Personnel Committee (formerly Staff Parish Relations Committee) designed a church-wide survey to solicit feedback on paid employee performance prior to conducting their annual reviews
- Annual performance reviews held with pastor, pastoral assistant, music director and accompanist included self-evaluations and an in-person meeting; compensation increases were provided to the Finance Committee for FY24 budget consideration

Governance

- Revised bylaws approved by the membership at the September 2022 Annual Meeting
- Marie Eddy elected Chair of the Board of Directors (formerly the Steering Committee) at the Annual Meeting
- March Board of Directors retreat to set goals for the FY24 program year
- FY24 budget approved

Finance and Stewardship

- Offering remains strong, thanks in large part to our many members and friends who make regular, monthly electronic donations
- In anticipation of a deficit at the end of the fiscal year, the Stewardship Committee sent a letter in May asking families to consider making an additional donation
- A generous donation allowed us to purchase a new sound system for the church, new tables for the Parish House, a new laptop for Pastor Jared, and cover some of the costs of replacing the front steps; the remainder of the donation held for future projects, including relocating the playground once the wetland restoration project is complete (see Property for details)
- Investments have gradually increased in value since 6/30/2022

Property

- Shingles on the Parish House roof replaced
- Church front steps replaced
- New sound system installed in the church
- Storm windows on the west side of the church repaired
- Teams of volunteers tended the gardens, mowed the grass and shoveled the walks
- Work day held in June concentrated on cleaning the Parish House kitchen, the sanctuary and the church basement
- Title to the Vestry building (white building adjacent to the St. Jude's driveway and next to the former parsonage) was transferred to a local non-profit group, The Vestry Community Center, Inc. for renovation and is no longer our church responsibility
- A conservation easement purchase agreement for 16 acres (primarily wetland) of the so-called "Baptist Lot", a 17.3 acre plot of land deeded to the church in 1876 and located to the west of Silver Street and just south of the Hinesburg Community School and the LaPlatte River, was signed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Closing date is expected to be after August, 2023. The church will continue to own and pay taxes on the property. A path has been carved out on a section outside of the easement for the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) to use. In return VAST will mow the section of the property that is not covered by the easement.
- After several years of planning, design plans were finalized for the restoration of a wetland on a section of church property that had been used as a playing field, which will help mitigate the impact of stormwater runoff that floods a large area behind the church. Construction work is scheduled to be completed in two phases, in July and September/October. The Lewis Creek Association (LCA) was instrumental in getting this project off the ground in 2019, shepherding it through the permit processes, and obtaining grants to fund the work to design and construct the restoration. In preparation for the work the playground structure was taken down and stored.
- New tables purchased for the Parish House

Outside Groups

- In September the Hinesburg Community Resource Center began holding their Friends of Families playgroups in the Parish House on Thursday mornings from 10:00 to 11:30, following the school calendar. This collaboration has been very successful
- Friends of Families held their fall and spring clothing swaps in the Parish House
- Red Cross blood drives continue to be held in the Parish House
- Senior Meals are offered on the 2nd Friday of every month
- Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts have been meeting in the Parish House
- The Parish House has been rented for events such as birthday parties and memorial receptions