



United Church of Hinesburg

2024 Annual Meeting Report

June, 2024

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
2023-2024 Goals	5
Ministry Team Reports.....	6
Christian Education	6
Hospitality and Member Care.....	7
Missions and Social Justice	7
Worship.....	8
Youth Programming.....	9
Governance Reports	9
Board of Directors.....	9
Finance Committee.....	10
Personnel Committee	10
Property	11
Stewardship	13
2024-2025 Goals	14

Mission Statement

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.

Vision Statement

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

United Church of Hinesburg

2024 Annual Meeting Report

Introduction

Greetings!

The 2023-2024 United Church of Hinesburg annual report provides a snapshot of church activities for the fiscal year July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. 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, and our work to manage our resources ethically and transparently.

Significant changes this year have centered on the children and youth programs and worship. I have had the opportunity to spend time teaching our children in Sunday School and had great fun with our kiddos at special evening events like Lego night. The worship team has worked to make this possible, finding speakers when I step away to be with the kids, and planning “This I Believe” services that express the variety and depth of faith and beliefs among UCH’s members and friends. Youth programming was relaunched and is now a consistent, lively part of our time together. As I write this, I am preparing for a youth service trip to Boston with ten young people June 17th to 21st. This work could not have been accomplished without Eileen Ashe, Heather Roberts Mary Hong, Leah Hamilton, Howdy Russell, Joanne Russell, and many others.

I would like to especially highlight the commitment of Yvonne Whitaker, who serves this church administratively as a volunteer. She brings great skill, patience, and insight to her work, and I am thankful for the many hours she gives serving our faith community.

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

2023-2024 Goals

The Board of Directors is tasked with setting annual and long-term goals to guide the work of the church and its Ministry Teams. Goals are presented for adoption by members of the United Church at the Annual Meeting.

Ministry Teams, which perform the core functions of the church as defined by our bylaws (Worship, Hospitality & Membership Care, Missions & Social Justice, Christian Education, and Youth Programming), and Operating Committees (Finance, Stewardship, Personnel, and Nominating) are responsible for setting goals and taking actions that are relevant to their team’s work and support the church goals, with the help of the Board member identified as the team’s liaison.

External Goal: Increase our engagement with the people and organizations in our local community

Internal Goal: Recognize and support members and friends of our church for their work in the church community.

Process Goal: We will work to rebuild a stewardship program with the Board of Directors taking on the role of a Stewardship Committee in 2023-2024.

Programming Goal: We will work to build off the restart of our children and youth programming in the coming year with the support of volunteers and Pastor Jared.

The reports that follow reflect the progress made toward these goals.

Ministry Team Reports

Christian Education

The Christian Education Team is responsible for ministering to the spiritual needs of children associated with the church and the wider community. Our duties include identifying Christian Education needs; studying and selecting materials, equipment, and curriculum; operating a Sunday School program for children; recruiting and training teachers; and maintaining guidelines for the Caring Community Policy.

Sunday School: We continue to grow and welcome NEW families and children to our Sunday School and children's programs. Our fall and winter lessons focused on themes related to "Experiencing Beauty". In the spring we explored faith practices related to "Praying and Making Ritual". Our children have really enjoyed having Pastor Jared as a Sunday School leader in the classroom this past year.

Christmas Pageant: The sanctuary was full of smiles, joy and laughter as our children reenacted the Christmas Story. Thoroughly entertaining and a true Christmas-time favorite - over 15 children ranging in age from 4 months-10 years old participated in our annual pageant and we welcomed several new faces and families!



Mission and Outreach: 4 children participated in the *Feed My Starving Children* program, a Christian non-profit organization that coordinates the packaging and distribution of food to people in developing nations. Additionally, Sunday school children made holiday cookies in a jar for the Christmas baskets and the Little Free Pantry; helped to prepare food for coffee hour; and planted flowers for Mother's Day.



Fun Times: Family fun night and dinner activities included: playing board games and Lego building. 13 children and youth enjoyed an outing and pizza party@ Get Air Trampoline Park. Our year-end celebration included a surprise visit from Mr. Ding-A-Ling's Ice Cream Truck - "I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream!"

Volunteering: There are numerous opportunities... We are always looking for volunteers to teach or assist in our Sunday school classroom. If teaching is not your thing, maybe you have a talent to share or are willing to lead a mission or outreach project. Please reach out to Eileen or Heather if you can help or have an idea that you would like to explore further – Thank you for considering!

Eileen Ashe and Heather Roberts, Team Co-Leaders

Hospitality and Member Care

Our Team's charge is to support church members and the wider community, and offer hospitality during community events. In addition to coordinating the weekly coffee hour and funeral receptions we are responsible for providing support to members at times of particular need, reaching out to visitors with welcome, providing orientations to prospective new members, and planning New Member Sunday services.

Leadership handoff in the fall of 2023 to Team Co-Leaders Laurie Danforth and Carla Wuthrich was smooth and thorough. There is a leadership position available for the upcoming year if someone is called to serve as a co-leader with Carla.

The Hospitality and Member Care Team has been active continuously this year, most visibly serving weekly, with the coordination of 11 chairs and co-chairs of the Monthly Coffee Hour Crews. New checklists were developed and are available digitally for further improvement and simplification. In addition, the coffee hour checklists are posted on the refrigerator. Thanks to all crews, both seasoned and new, who provided the insight and adjustments.

Funerals and other community events, with many hands making light work, will continue to be coordinated by Laurie Danforth. This past year, we held a multi-generational Board Game night, designed with the help of one of our newcomers, Aiden. A couple dozen people played and snacked together, budding some new friendships and an appreciation for laughter and good-natured competition.



While we do have some newcomers this year, we have not had a special Newcomer Orientation or New Member Sunday. We love seeing the new and returning faces in church and also in our many activities. We will revisit having an orientation and service later this fall.

"Sunshine List": Prayer Shawls, Prayer Squares, Connection Cards, blank cards at the back of the church, and cards that arrive on special days of the year, are part of the way we all spread sunshine. Members of the church also visited other members throughout the year who were not able to come to church. Thanks to each one of us who wonder, ask, and use our resources and gifts to spread sunshine. In the coming year, we plan to put more energy into this part of our mission, to systematize the previous and new ideas. Our intention is to be more confident and connected when we serve, mindful of who, what, when, where and how individuals like and need to receive their "sunshine".

Membership statistics of 5/31/24:

Active and Associate Members – 102 (UCC: 42; UMC: 37; Ecumenical: 21; Baptist: 2)

Inactive Members - 39

Active Non-Members: - 37

Missions and Social Justice

The Missions and Social Justice Team serves to support the social work and outreach of the Church and its members. In doing so the team has focused on several events over the past year. Financial donations described below were funded through the church's budget for Missions and through fundraisers. We send a heartfelt thank you to the congregation and the wider community for your ongoing support!

Support for those impacted by the historic July floods

- We purchased approximately \$700 worth of supplies that were delivered to a local state representative who used her home as a distribution site.
- An initial \$500 was donated to AALV's New Farms for New Americans program to assist with relief efforts for their Intervale farms that were damaged by the floods, with an additional \$300 from designated contributions from individuals.
- In September we co-hosted a community meal with the Williston USDA Office. Donations totaling \$1,000 were contributed to NOFA-VT's Farmer Emergency Fund.

Helping those who are food insecure

- We continue to support the Little Free Pantry with financial administration, ongoing fundraising, and the coordination of volunteers who manage the pantry.
- Our Hearts for Hunger fundraising continues with our biscotti sales in the Spring and tourtiere sales in the Fall. This year's sales raised \$875 that will be donated to the Vermont Foodbank's Backpack Program, which provides food that is distributed to school children in need at participating schools.
- Twenty-two food gift cards of \$75 each were distributed to local families who are food insecure, over the holidays with funds coming from generous donations and proceeds from the Cookie Walk.
- An introductory four-session mahjong class open to the community was hosted by the church in the fall. Informal play continues every Tuesday evening, with a group of about 13. Participants are asked to contribute an item to the Little Free Pantry.
- The Hinesburg Girl Scouts, who meet regularly in the Parish House, hosted two food drives in November and December in support of the Little Free Pantry.



Other initiatives

- After our "Gifts for Baby Jesus" campaign in December we passed along 12 pairs of warm socks to the Community Health Center's Homeless Healthcare Program, and 25 hats, 8 pairs of gloves and mittens, 2 wonderful scarves, and a pair of new boots to the U.S. Refugee and Immigrant Service.
- Ezra Pouech died tragically in December while protecting his girlfriend and her children from the hands of a domestic abuser. A \$300 donation was made to the GoFundMe campaign established to help with her medical and other expenses.
- A \$100 donation was made to a GoFundMe campaign in support of young woman in Ukraine whose medical needs were brought to our attention via a member of the congregation.

Lori McKenna, Team Leader

Worship

The Worship Team is responsible for fostering spiritual development by supporting Pastor Jared in planning, implementing, and supporting all public worship. In addition to our ongoing responsibilities that include scheduling readers and greeters, making arrangements for monthly communion, and providing flowers and seasonal decorations for the sanctuary the team has continued our efforts to encourage the participation of many voices during worship services and introduced a new initiative:

- We worked with Pastor Jared to plan for and provide guest speakers and/or liturgists for the latter half of the monthly services when he teaches Sunday School, and provide other support as needed.
- In the fall we began hosting Soup and Bread Conversations on the last Sunday of every month during which we invite and encourage conversation about our faith journeys and ways to be inclusive in our

church practices. Discussion is sparked by questions such as “What are some of the ways that our church demonstrates our desire to be an inclusive community?”, “What are some ways we might decide to be more open and inclusive?”, and “How do we find the balance between inclusivity and tradition?”. The questions are shared in the Weekly Update preceding the scheduled discussion. Other topics will be explored based on where our conversations lead. All are welcome to attend and participate. We will start these conversations again in the fall.

- “This I Believe” services continue. To date we have held six of these services wherein we invite two members of the congregation to share their most central beliefs. We aim to hold three of these a year, with our next scheduled for Sunday, June 9. If you would like to be one of the speakers at one of these upcoming services, please speak to one of our team members or Pastor Jared.
- Music is an essential part of our worship services and we are very blessed to have Music Director Rufus Patrick, Accompanist/Organist Sammy Angstman, the choir, the handbell choir at Christmastime and several guest musicians throughout the year.

Howdy Russell and Joanne Russell, Team Co-Leaders

Youth Programming

The Youth Program Team serves to organize and support youth programming at the Church by planning and providing support for youth programming during calendar year, planning and coordinating summer trips, as applicable, and strengthening youth program’s connection to other aspects of the church community.

- The UCH youth program – sometimes called the “Hinesburg Youth Project” restarted last fall with the hope of organizing a summer youth service trip in 2024.
- The group met throughout the year and explored religious faith and practices in a comparative religions format. Topics included: prayer, scriptures, storytelling, almsgiving, service, worship, and images of divinity.
- The group volunteered at the New Community Project Community gardens and with the Hinesburg Community Resource Center.
- The group organized a Mid-Winter Book Sale in February.
- As of this writing, 10 young people will travel to the Boston area June 17-21st to provide a week of service and volunteering at community organizations and non-profits. Because this group is young, the focus is an “Introduction to Service” and will highlight the many ways people give their time to support their communities and take care of their environments.

Rev. Jared Hamilton

Governance Reports

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for the smooth running of the business of the church. The Board also helps establish the goals that guide our work for the year and provides support to the ministry teams and the committees that perform the major ministry and work of the church.

FY24 was a productive year for the Board. While there were some property issues that fell into the “hurry up and wait category,” namely the start of our Wetlands Restoration Project (too wet last year to start!) and the conservation of the Baptist Lot (almost there!), we did manage to get a lot done.

One of our goals for the year was the creation of a Stewardship procedures manual. We spent a section of each meeting for the first few months discussing what this would entail, and by February, we approved a draft. Since we took on the role of Stewardship Committee for the year, we planned and implemented a stewardship campaign during the month of April. With Brian Bock’s guidance, we spearheaded a Lake Monsters fundraiser for this coming summer.

Phil Pouech presented a plan to use a portion of the Baptist Lot that will not be conserved for a solar lease (see Property section of this report). We spent a few meetings discussing the pros and cons, and met with Dave Blittersdorf of All Earth Renewables, and this spring we approved the project.

One of the main jobs of the Board is to constantly monitor our financial status and property maintenance needs. Based on current projections it appears we may end the year with a small surplus and we have made some physical improvements to the church. As I like to say, “many hands make light work” and there are many, many people who provide their time and talents to making our church community a thriving one! Thank you to everyone for your continued support and dedication.

Marie Eddy, Board Chair

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is responsible for drafting a budget for the upcoming fiscal year for approval by the Board of Directors. The approved FY25 budget (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025) will be presented at the meeting.

The Committee reviews the monthly Treasurer’s Reports and provides them to the Board of Directors. We do much of our work by email but we meet quarterly to review assess the church’s current financial condition and, if applicable, make recommendations regarding modifications to the budget. One of the Committee’s responsibilities is the administration of the church’s restricted and unrestricted investment funds. A summary of the church’s investments will be included on the financial report presented at the meeting.

In addition to budgeted income and expenses we manage funds received for a specific purpose, such as memorial donations and financial donations for the Little Free Pantry. Financial Secretaries Ellen Dooley and Joanne Russell are responsible for recording and depositing the funds that come into the church and providing annual giving statements.

Ellen Dooley, Chair

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee acts as the human resources department for our church. The following are our 2023-2024 goals and progress on those goals:

- Continue to update job descriptions, as necessary
 - * We updated all job descriptions for positions in our church, including a recent update to Pastor Jared’s contract which had not been formally updated and signed for several years.
- Complete yearly employee evaluations
 - * One of our main duties is to evaluate employees on an annual basis, give them feedback, and recommend wage rates for the upcoming year. We completed that process for the upcoming fiscal

year. This included surveying the congregation, church committees, and church ministry teams in January. This feedback was then conveyed to our employees during the formal evaluation process.

- Hire for any positions that come available
 - * Currently no new or vacant positions are anticipated. If any occur, the Personnel Committee will help recruit and hire for them.
- Prepare for Pastor Jared's sabbatical in the summer of 2024.
 - * We arranged for ministerial coverage of Pastor Jared's sabbatical this summer. Pastor Debbie Ingram will be filling in for him during his sabbatical which runs from June 24th through August 25th.

David Eddy, Chair

Property

Property Management

- Parish House and Church Sanctuary Usage
 - * The Parish House is being used by several groups on a regular basis, including the Friends of Families playgroup, Hinesburg Girl Scouts, a monthly senior meal, and an informal mahjong game group, a Spanish language group, and by individuals who rent the space for birthday parties, showers, and family celebrations on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.
 - * The HCRC Friends of Families playgroup for children ages 0-5 with their caregiver meets every Thursday morning during the school year. They also hold their Fall and Spring Clothing Swap in the Parish House.
 - * The kick-off event for the 2023 Hinesburg Fall Festival was the No Strings Marionette Company's Jack and the Beanstalk puppet show, co-sponsored by the church and HCRC and held in the Parish House.
 - * The church sanctuary is the venue for Social Band concerts, Hinesburg Children's Choir concerts, piano recitals, piano lessons, and occasionally for Hinesburg Artist Series chorus rehearsals.
- Renovations
 - * We modified a second pew to accommodate a wheelchair.
 - * The altar rail built by Leland Lyman circa 1955 was removed and put into storage; the Worship Committee is looking at purchasing a new communion table for the area.
- Mowing and snow shoveling:
 - * We continue to have enough excellent volunteers to mow the grass and shovel the walkways, with many performing both tasks several times during the year. Thanks to all of you for your great work.
- Parking lot maintenance:
 - * After many years of great service plowing and sanding our parking lot, Doug Olufsun retired his plow at the end of last season; we contracted with a new service for the 2023-2024 season.
 - * Ponds that had formed in the parking lot were filled in with gravel in the fall and will need more maintenance during the upcoming year.
- Pest control:
 - * Miller Pest control performed quarterly inspections to stay on top of the mouse population in both buildings. To be evaluated at the end of the year to determine if we continue it.
- Cleaners
 - * Last fall we transitioned to a new company for the weekly cleaning of the church and Parish House. Their schedule may change from week-to-week depending on when the Parish House is being used.

- Insurance Coverage
 - * We negotiated a new insurance policy for the church properties and workers compensation insurance and were able to reduce our annual cost by over \$1,000.
- Ongoing Maintenance
 - * We replace old light bulbs with LED light bulbs when the old lights fail and respond to any issues brought to our attention. Volunteers continue to help with other upkeep items and special projects.

Wetlands Restoration

- * The project to restore the wetland behind the church that was scheduled for last summer was put on hold until this spring/summer, ironically, because of last year's rain and flooding. The work is scheduled to begin in mid-July.
- * The project is paid for through grants secured by the Lewis Creek Association.

Green Space

- * Work on the initial phases of a planned green space ("an area of grass, trees, or other vegetation set apart for recreational or aesthetic purposes in an otherwise urban environment") located adjacent to the wetland will begin once that project is near completion.
- * Donations made in memory of Paul Eddy and Sandy White will fund the initial phase, which includes the purchase of trees and benches.

Playground

- * The playground, which was severely affected by the flooding, was taken down, the parts stored behind the Parish House, and replacement parts purchased. The playground will be installed in a new location in conjunction with the wetlands project.

Baptist Lot Conservation Easement and Solar Land Lease

Background

- * In 1876 and 1913 two plots of land located to the west of Silver Street and just south of the Hinesburg Community School and the LaPlatte River were deeded to the Baptist Society.
- * The land (17.3 acres) is primarily wetlands and cannot support any type of septic system because the water table is too high. Due to its location connecting to the town sewer system is not an option.

Conservation Easement

- * The USDA approved an application submitted by the church for a conservation easement purchase that will cover approximately 16 acres of the land; the church will continue to own and pay taxes on the property (taxes are assessed because the property is not used for religious purposes and is not contiguous to the land on which the church buildings sit).
- * A legal issue with a reversionary clause in one of the deeds has been resolved and the easement purchase will move forward over the coming months.

Solar Land Lease Agreement

- * The church has entered into a land lease agreement with Cornerstone Renewables who will install six (6) AllEarth trackers on a portion of the Baptist Lot that is not included in the conservation easement. The church will receive rent in an amount that is equal to 5% of the dollar value of the net metering credits generated by the trackers. The rent will help to offset the \$800 per year in taxes the church pays on the property.

VAST Trail

- * VAST (Vermont Association of Snow Travelers) continues to use the area of the Baptist lot that is outside of the easement boundaries in exchange for annual brush hogging of this area

Andy Seaton, Property Team Leader

Stewardship

As noted in the 2023-2024 Goals and the Board of Directors report, the Board took on the role of a Stewardship Committee this year. One of the responsibilities of the Stewardship Committee is to oversee fundraising events.

Fundraising events bring much-needed funds into the church and foster connections. Whether it is baking a pie (or more!) for the Bazaar and the Plants Sale or cookies for the Cookie Walk, potting plants, cashiering at our in-person sales, donating items for Grandmother's Attic or the Jewelry Corner, setting up and breaking down tables, marketing our events, making and decorating the much-anticipated Brown Bobbies for the Bazaar, assisting customers, supplying soup and sandwiches for the Bazaar lunch, and many, many other tasks, we are building and strengthening the ties that help make our church the welcoming and joyful place that it is. We are grateful to all our volunteers including the several members of the Hinesburg community and beyond who are not affiliated with the church but who enthusiastically lend a helping hand for these events.

Here are a few quotes that capture the joy:

"We are so fortunate to have a dedicated group of people who like to work hard and have fun. What I find myself listening for is laughter as we hustle around to set up, sell, and pick up, and I heard lots of it."

"...it was another heart-warming year with the generosity of giving along with new faces in our church and the community in purchases!!"

"The amount of money raised is amazing, I especially enjoyed working with all of you on this great activity. Thanks for including me!"

"Lots of hard work from so many people, but additionally, many compliments, happy gardeners and heartwarming "community" connections made while working together and with our continued customer base. Felt like another very successful year."

"So thankful for all the helping hands and knowledge of plants keep bringing in more new buyers every year. It's such a spectacular event - kudos to all!"



2024-2025 Goals

The Board of Directors present the following goals for adoption by the United Church of Hinesburg membership. These goals are intended to help to guide the work of the church and our Ministry Teams for the coming year.

1. Strengthen the multi-generational life of our church
2. Pursue new funding sources to improve our financial sustainability
3. Recognize and support members and friends of our church for their work in the church community

In addition, the Board has identified the following long-term goals:

1. Create a financial strategy that is both stable and sustainable.
2. Expand the membership of our church community.