



UNITED CHURCH OF HINESBURG

Newsletter – January 2024

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Pastor's Page

"Resolutions"

"The best time to plant a tree was thirty years ago; the second-best time is today."

- Georgia Game and Fish, November 25, 1969

Many of us make New Year's resolutions this time of year. Often, these resolutions center on personal health and well-being or family finances. Sometimes, they focus on managing time. Occasionally, resolutions highlight our desire to learn something new or reengage in an important volunteer effort.

Resolutions are really just goals that we set for ourselves, and the calendar year provides a nice framework for goal setting and follow-through.

The church calendar year is a little different. Like most mainline faith communities, our program calendar looks very similar to the school calendars of our local school districts. The goals we set (or the resolutions we made) were affirmed at the annual meeting last June. These are our goals for 2023-24:

1. **Increase our engagement** with the people and organizations in our local community.
2. **Recognize and support** members and friends of our church for their work in the church community.
3. **Work to rebuild** the stewardship program.
4. **Continue to support** the restart of the children and youth programs.

It is beneficial to check our goals and see where we stand midway through the program year. The January 2024 Newsletter provides a snapshot of our activities and highlights some of the work left to do.

Blessings,

Pastor Jared

Introduction to Reports

The reports that follow appear under the heading of either Ministry Team Reports or Governance Reports. In September, 2022 the congregation adopted a new set of bylaws for our church. These bylaws, which can be accessed from the church website: www.ucofh.org/by-laws.html, make the distinction between Governance structure (Board of Directors and Finance, Nominating, Personnel, Property, and Stewardship Operating Committees) and Ministry Teams.

Ministry Teams carry out core ministry and outreach functions, which are currently identified as Christian Education, Hospitality and Member Care, Missions and Social Justice, Worship, and Youth Programming.

All committee members are elected at the congregation's Annual Meeting. The Ministry Team Leaders are elected at the meeting, with team members determined by Pastor Jared and the Team Leader(s). Church members and non-members can serve on Ministry Teams.

Ministry Team Reports

Christian Education

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 have focused on themes related to "Experiencing Beauty". In the spring we will explore faith practices related to "Praying and Making Ritual". Our children have really enjoyed having Pastor Jared as a Sunday School leader in the classroom throughout the fall and winter.

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 6 months-10 years old participated in our annual pageant and we welcomed several new faces and families!



Fun Times: Children and families have enjoyed participating in Family Fun Nights with dinner and Hangout Sundays. Activities have included: playing board games, Lego building and making cookies in a jar for the Christmas baskets and the Little Free Pantry. All ages are welcome! Look for more information about upcoming activities in the Weekly Update.

Volunteers Needed: We are always looking for volunteers. Can you help? Please contact Eileen Ashe or Pastor Jared if you are able to help with leading or assisting in our Sunday School classroom. Not able to teach? We are also looking for volunteers who might like to share a special talent or lead a mission project. We are open to all ideas and suggestions.

Eileen Ashe and Heather Roberts (Team Co-Leaders)

Hospitality and Membership 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.

Hospitality

- Many thanks to the monthly coffee hour chairs and their teams for providing delicious refreshments for an important fellowship time after Sunday worship services.
- We recently supported the family of Carolyn Duffy, a Hinesburg community member, by providing volunteers to assist with calling hours and a reception after her funeral service. Many thanks to all who helped set up the Parish Hall, park cars, keep the food and drinks flowing, and cleaning up afterwards.
- We held our first Family Board Game Night on Friday, January 26th. Over 34 adults and children played games, both old and new, and enjoyed some delicious snacks.

Church Directory

- A new church directory was published last summer and an addendum last fall. Prior to publication the congregation was invited to submit a photo for inclusion. If you did not receive a copy, pick one up from the back table in the church or from the church office.

Visitations

- Plans are underway to establish a program of visitations. If you are interested in visiting our older adults who are not able to leave their homes please contact Laurie Danforth or Carla Wuthrich. A training session will be offered in the spring.

Prayer Shawl Mission

This mission began several years ago with a small group who met weekly to knit or crochet. Anne Carter Mahaffey, who now lives in California, suggested that we donate our handiwork to the church and make prayer shawls. While our group no longer meets our mission continues. If you knit or crochet and would like to donate your time and talent, we welcome your help. There is yarn in bottom of the glass-fronted cabinet in the church entry. Shawls that are ready to give to recipients are behind the glass. If you take one, please write your name and the recipient's name in the book provided.

Our shawls are not necessarily to wear while you pray, as in some other religions. It's a warm hug, a comfort when things are just not right, a reminder that you are being thought of. It was made with love and prayers.

Many thanks to Judy Parker who recently revived our Prayer Shawl Mission. Judy has given shawls to folks in our congregation and the greater community who were experiencing challenges with their health or a recent loss. By doing this she reminds us to be givers as well. During church services Judy has read notes she received from shawl recipients expressing their gratitude and how much it meant to know someone from our church was thinking of them. And, a BIG thank you to Laurie Barnett who knits "at warp speed", for the many, many beautiful shawls she has made.

This Prayer Shawl Blessing is attached to each shawl.

This shawl was made just for you
To bring comfort
To know you are loved
To share in your joy.

This shawl is to wrap you up
When you're cold
When you're hurting
When you need to snuggle.
This shawl was knit or crocheted
With Blessings
With Love
With Prayers.

Carla Wuthrich and Laurie Danforth (Team Co-Leaders), Dianne Hall

Missions and Social Justice

The Mission and Social Justice Team has focused on several events over the past six months. Financial donations described below were funded through the church's budget for Missions and 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 online biscotti sales in the Spring and tourtiere sales in the Fall. \$1,325 from these fundraisers and an additional contribution was 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.
- 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), Sue Barden, Karen Farnsworth, Barb Forauer, Cathy Foutz, Penny Grant, Kristi Johnson, Meaghan McKenna and Katie Morris

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 work 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.
- “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, March 3. 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.

Howdy Russell and Joanne Russell (Team Co-Leaders), Anne Donegan, Barbara Forauer, Cathy Foutz, Barbara Herrington, and Kate Schubart.

Youth Programming

We continued the relaunch of our youth program, the Hinesburg Youth Project (HYP), last fall with several local service projects and time in the Parish Hall.

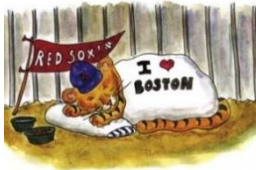


- We put together over 700 snack bags and wrapped Christmas gifts for the Hinesburg Community Resource Center.

- We also worked with the youth group from the Charlotte Congregational Church at the New Community Project's food garden in Starksboro.



- We will hold our (near) annual Winter Book Sale, Saturday, February 10th from 9 am to 12 pm. This event is a community-wide effort that raises money for the HYP program.
- Finally, the 2024 Summer Service trip is on! We are planning a summer service trip for our young people the week of June 16th.



This year we will be traveling to the Boston area. Because many of our young people are new to HYP, we will focus on an introduction to volunteering, and provide a range of volunteer options in the city and the North Shore.

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. One of our goals this year is to rebuild our stewardship program. The Board will be rolling out a Stewardship Campaign this spring and will create a procedural manual for future stewardship teams.

The Board also provides support to the teams and committees that perform the major ministry and work of the church. If you have questions or concerns or are interested in serving on any of the operating committees or ministry teams described in this newsletter article, please talk with one of us. We meet on the third Sunday of the month, from 11:30 am-12:30 pm.

Marie Eddy (Board Chair), Brian Bock, Barbara Herrington, Phil Poeuch, Heather Roberts (Secretary), Andy Seaton, and Yvonne Whitaker (Treasurer). Pastor Jared is an ex-officio (non-voting) member.

Finance

The Finance Committee reviews the monthly Treasurer's Report and provides those reports to the Board of Directors. The Committee can do much of its work by email but meets quarterly to review assess the church's current financial condition and, if applicable, make recommendations regarding modifications to the budget. The Board of Directors passed a deficit budget for FY24, so the committee will be looking closely at income and expenses to close the gap. The committee will begin work on the FY25 (July 1 – June 30) budget shortly.

A snapshot of our budgeted income and expenses for the first six months of FY24 (July 1-December 31) follows:

	7/1/23 to 12/31/23	% of Budget
Income <i>(Budget \$172,237)</i>		
Offering	\$56,760	
Investments	\$19,603	
Other	\$ 9,356	
Total	\$85,719	50%
Expenses <i>(Budget \$184,492)</i>		
Salaries/Benefits	\$58,462	
Other	\$27,438	
Total	\$85,900	47%

The “Other” income category includes rental income (see Parish House and Church Sanctuary Usage in the Property and Grounds report), and income from last November’s very successful Holiday Bazaar.

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. As of December 31, the church held just over \$42K in restricted funds.

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.

Donating to the church electronically has benefits for both the giver and the church. If you have questions about how to donate electronically or would like help modifying the amount of your donation, please contact Yvonne Whitaker through the church office.

Ellen Dooley (Chair and Financial Secretary), Dave Eddy, Phil Pouech, and Yvonne Whitaker (Treasurer)

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee acts as the human resources department for our church. The following are our current year goals and progress to date:

- Continue to update job descriptions, as necessary
 - ✓ We have continued to update all job descriptions for positions within our church, including a recent update to Pastor Jared’s contract, which had not been signed and formally updated for a number of years.
- Continue the yearly evaluation cycle for employees
 - ✓ 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 are beginning that process this January by making a survey available to the congregation and church committee and ministry team members to provide input on our employees. We will accumulate this information and share it with our employees. This information and our committee’s own observations will then be the basis for our formal evaluation of each employee this spring.

- 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 are consulting with Pastor Jared as to what his sabbatical, scheduled for this summer, will look like.

David Eddy (Chair), Sheri Brody Hanlon, and Laurie Locke

Property and Grounds

Property Management

- Parish House and Church Sanctuary Usage
 - * The Parish House is being used by a number of groups on a regular basis, including the Hinesburg Girl Scouts, a monthly senior meal, and an informal mahjong game group, and by individuals who rent the space for birthday parties, showers, and even family celebrations on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. There is something going on every day of the week! Our Google calendar, which can be accessed from our website (ucofh.org/calendar.html) keeps track of them all.
 - * 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, and occasionally for Hinesburg Artist Series chorus rehearsals.
- 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.
 - * We are always looking for new recruits to help lighten the load. If you are interested, contact Andy Seaton (aseaton61@gmail.com or 802-999-7598).
- 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 have contracted with Brad Leggett to plow and sand for the 2023-2024 season.
 - * Ponds that had formed in the parking lot were filled in with gravel in the fall.
- Pest control:
 - * We contracted with Miller Pest control for quarterly inspections to keep on top of the mouse population in the church and Parish House. This is the first year we have tried this and will evaluate the results at the end of the year to determine if we continue the service for another year.
- Cleaners
 - * Last fall we transitioned to a new company for the weekly cleaning of the church and Parish House (approximately three hours/week). Their schedule may change from week-to-week depending on

when the Parish House is being used. Vacuuming or running the carpet sweeper over the Parish House floor after an event helps to keep it clean between the regular cleanings.

- Insurance Coverage
 - * We contacted two insurance companies for quotes on the church properties and workers compensation insurance. We evaluated both companies and were able to reduce our annual insurance cost by over \$1,000.
- Ongoing Maintenance
 - * We continue to replace old light bulbs with LED light bulbs when the old lights fail and respond to any issues brought to our attention.

Wetlands Restoration, Green Space, and the Playground

- 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. More details will be shared once we have a firm schedule.
 - * 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, has been taken down and the parts stored behind the Parish House. Replacement parts have been purchased
 - * It will be installed in a new location in conjunction with the wetlands project

For more information on these projects, go to: www.ucofh.org/property-updates.html

The "Baptist Lot" Conservation Easement

- 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, as the water table is too high, and 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).
 - * Closing on the purchase is on hold until a legal issue with a reversionary clause in one of the deeds is resolved.

Andy Seaton (Property Team Leader)

Community News



The Red Cross holds blood drives at the church three times a year, in coordination with blood drives at St. Jude's Church. The next UCH drive is scheduled for **Friday, March 1st** from noon to 4:30 pm. Blood donors are urgently needed to help ensure patients at hospitals across the country continue to receive critical medical care. To schedule an appointment, go to www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive or call 1-800-RED CROSS.

Church Membership



Are you interested in becoming a member of the United Church?

Joining a church is one way of acknowledging the bond between individuals and a community of faith. When new members join, the entire community has the opportunity to pledge their care, support and commitment to the new member and the new member does the same.

If you are new to the United Church of Hinesburg and are interested in learning more about the church and/or joining as a member, please contact Pastor Jared at revjared@gmavt.net or the church office at 802-482-3352 or unitedchurch@gmavt.net

Calendar

Events

Community – Community wide events, all invited
CE – Christian Education, children's programming
HYP – Hinesburg Youth Project, youth group

Sunday, January 28th

- Community/CE: 10 am -Sunday Morning Worship and Sunday School
- HYP: 12:30 – 3 pm – Get Air (RSVP, Bring \$10, sign waiver here).

Sunday, February 4th

- Community/CE: 10 am -Sunday Morning Worship and Sunday School
- HYP: 12:30 – 2 pm in Parish Hall

Friday, February 9th

- HYP: Book Sale Setup – 5-7 pm

Saturday, February 10th

- Community/HYP: 9 am to 12 pm – Winter Book Sale at UCH

Sunday, February 11th

- Community/CE: 10 am -Sunday Morning Worship and Sunday School
- HYP 12:30 – 2 pm in Parish Hall

Tuesday, February 13th

- Community/CE: 5 to 6:30 pm - Shrove Tuesday Meal

Saturday, February 17th

- Community: 11 am – Celebration of Life Service for Ezra Pouech

Sunday, February 18th

- Community: 10 am -Sunday Morning Worship
- CE: Sunday School w/ Pastor Jared
- HYP: 12:30 – 2 pm in Parish Hall

Sunday, February 25th

- Community: 10 am -Sunday Morning Worship with Rev. Bill Neil
- CE: “All Together Sunday” kiddos in church

Sunday, March 3rd

- Community: 10 am -Sunday Morning Worship, communion, “This I Believe”
- CE: “All Together Sunday” kiddos in church

Sunday, March 10th, March 17th, and March 24th

- Community/CE: 10 am -Sunday Morning Worship and Sunday School

Thursday, March 28th

- Community: 6 pm - Maundy Thursday meal in Parish Hall
- Community: 7 pm – Maundy Thursday service

Sunday, March 31st

- Community: 10 am -Easter Sunday Morning Worship
- CE: “All Together Sunday” kiddos in church

Contact Information

The United Church of Hinesburg

Pastor: Reverend Jared M. Hamilton

Pastor’s Email: revjared@gmavt.net

Office Email: unitedchurch@gmavt.net

Office Phone: 802-482-3352

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 9 am to noon, and by appointment

Website: www.ucofh.org