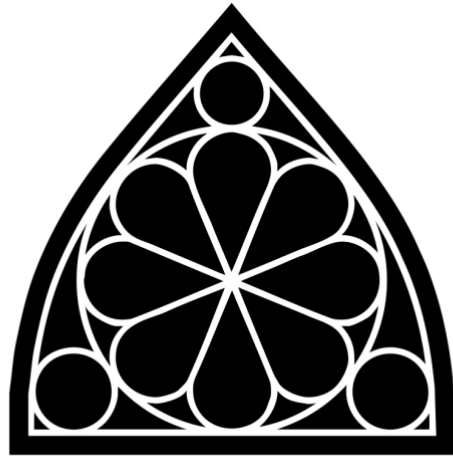


2020 Annual Report

**Annual Meeting
January 24, 2021**



**First United Church of Christ
(Congregational)
Northfield, Minnesota**

**300 Union Street
Northfield, Minnesota 55057
www.firstucc.org**

Church Covenant

“We covenant together with God and one another,
trusting in God’s continuing guidance,
to seek to understand and do God’s will
to explore the mystery of Christ
and to witness to God’s reconciling love.”

STAFF

Rev. Wendy Vander Hart, Interim Senior Minister
Rev. Lauren Baske Davis, Minister for Congregational Life
Christopher Brunelle, Director of Music
Theo Wee, Organist
Bob Gregory-Bjorklund, *Spirit Voices* Choir Director
Mark Fischer, Sexton
Grace Muth, Temporary Office Manager
Ben Gottfried, Tech Steward

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Agenda
January 24, 2021

Opening Hymn

Welcome

Opening Prayer

Declaration of a Quorum

Approval of the Agenda

Approval of Annual Meeting 2020 Minutes

2021 Budget

Nominations Report and Blessing the Search Committee

Search Process Addendum

Report from the Immigration Team

Other Updates

Recognition of Outgoing Leaders

Closing

Adjourn

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REPORT OF THE INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER

REV. WENDY VANDER HART

*God is my light and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?
Psalm 27:1*

Grace and Peace to you dear First UCC.

A year ago January, when I interviewed for the position of Interim Senior Minister, none of us could have foreseen what the year 2020 would hold for First UCC, this time of transition nor in our nation. A pandemic, local and national racial reckoning and disruptive political forces could not be completely predicted. And still, here we are looking back on a year past, reflecting on a congregation where hope thrives, justice is primary and the love of God in Jesus is wrestled.

I began the first six weeks of ministry with First UCC remotely- serving, preaching, meeting, praying, leading all from our spare bedroom in our home in Arlington, MA. With 1383 miles between us, together we learned to worship on Zoom, meet and greet online, and innovate (sometimes scramble) to foster connection. It has truly been a learning experience and the resilience of this congregation, staff and leaders has shone through.

It is also important to say that there has been loss in this time- loss of proximity and the informal ways we communicate, grief at the departure of beloved pastors and nursery care worker, changes in staff that have shaken up systems, goodbye to some pillars in the faith, a shift in ministry for children and youth, no meals shared or music made all together. And this is not an exhaustive list of loss!

And yet, resilience, hope, continuity and connection have been built and maintained- praise God! A few examples of the ways we have innovated our ministry:

- Small groups meeting on Zoom
- Creation of a Covid-19 Task Force
- Images and video incorporated into our Zoom worship life leading to a purchase of cameras for the Sanctuary that will facilitate livestream
- Added the practice of Testimony and Welcome to our gathering in worship
- Stewardship and Trustees collaborated on a Narrative Budget to tell our ministry story
- Adoption of a Racial Justice Pledge that maps out proactive ministry and accountability with six other congregations in Northfield
- Book groups, Brave Conversations on White Privilege, Monday rallies, and Thursday chalking of the names of unarmed people of color killed all broadened our engagement in anti-racist actions
- Centered the voices of preachers of color by utilizing access to online videos
- In-person compassionately distanced Touchstone Events- Summer blessing at Valley Grove, Blessing the Animals, Little Hill Farm, on the day after the election, the start of Advent, Christmas Eve and Epiphany
- Drop-in Office hours with the Pastors
- Faith Formation to go- equipping homes and families to engage
- Initiated a Communications Team to look at overall systems and media

The pandemic did not tamp down our commitments to ISAIAH, learning about being an Immigrant Welcoming Church, or caring about creation. Nor did the pandemic impede our work of transition and positioning the congregation for the pastoral search process. The Transition and Search Teams faithfully engaged good process

leading to a challenging sense that God is calling First UCC to practice the courageous love and justice of Jesus. We will enact our covenant to live into that emerging sense of purpose. While the pandemic did keep us physically separated the digital ways we created community provide new pathways for connection and growth.

Even as the public and confidential phase of the search gets underway, there is plenty of transition work yet to do. Attention to grief work, on-boarding processes, communication infrastructure, building a new website consistent with our covenant and sense of purpose, back-filling systems, hiring new administrative staff yet await. Whew!

Let me offer a deep and full throated thank you to the staff and leaders of First UCC. Our staff has met weekly and built bonds through intentional reflective time as well as tackling the challenges of adaptation. I cannot praise or thank Pastor Lauren, Chris, Theo, Bob, Mark, Andrea, Gladys and Grace enough for their warm welcome to me, and their flexibility and adaptability in all that has come our way. First UCC is truly blessed with a delightful staff whose ministry is significant and impactful- yay God!

Moderator Janet Muth and Vice Moderator Sam Steinberg are stellar leaders. The vigor of care, vision, and attention they have dedicated to their roles steadied the course in trying times. They thoughtfully ministered to this congregation and significantly contributed to its resilience. Treasurer Nalani McCutcheon went above and beyond the call of duty many times. Her planful experience and knack for drawing out voices around “the table” have served us so well. The Transition Team worked urgently and contemplatively in their process. Sarah Carlsen dedicated her profound faith and skill in coaching to chair the Transition team through its process. My weekly Zoom with Sarah grounded my experience of First UCC. Ben Gottfried stepped into the role of Tech Steward, created for the service he was volunteering. Our Zoom worship would be quite rocky without his steady hand. Chairperson Linda Larson and the Care Team orchestrated a number of phone call outreach campaigns- so important in our isolating times.

This report would be too long if I named every leader by name and the significant gifts they have dedicated to our collective ministry, but here are some groups that deserve to be spotlighted. The Council tackled sensitive and timely issues with integrity and great heart. Stewardship forged new paths of messaging and communication. Trustees, Stewardship, Gift Planning and Council came together to re-imagine funding our ministry for the next five years. Nominating finished their work in record time. The Covid-19 Task Force applied science and attended to the spiritual and emotional dimensions of decisions about gathering and building use. Small groups, book groups, Connect groups, Team leaders, musicians, garden tenders- all provided important continuity of contact and ministry. The Search Team contributed to the transition process and is poised to take the reins. Wow!

Then there is each and every one of you who continue to show up, step in and give generously in so many ways. Thank you! I shared a verse from the Psalms at the top of this report. There has been much reason to fear over the past year. There has also been much reason to be faithful to the God that has seen us through. I trust God will continue to illuminate the way forward and hold us together as we practice the courageous love and justice of Jesus.

Thank you First UCC for trusting me as a partner on this path. You have blessed my life and my prayers for your significant ministry will always be nearby.

REPORT OF THE MINISTER FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

REV. LAUREN
BASKE DAVIS

“I am your God who holds your strong hand, who says to you, ‘do not fear; I will help you.’” Isaiah 41:13

It has been a year! There is much to say regarding this time of transition, pandemic, anti-racism awakening, and political upheaval. While we are quite ready to leave 2020 behind, I must say that despite the anxiety and grief, I am grateful to be a part of this congregation—people who softly grieve together, who persevere in hope, who work for justice, and who lovingly uplift one another. We are getting through this time together, with the Spirit’s love and help.

In **January**, we prepared for Pastor Todd Smith Lippert to leave First UCC as he embraced a call to his work in the state legislature. As a staff, we planned goodbyes and managed transfers of ministry and administrative work. At the direction of the Council, the Interim Hiring Team of Elise Eslinger, Janet Muth, Bill Poehlmann, and I met regularly, with the guidance of the Conference, having put together a church biography and call out to hire an Interim Senior Minister in December. We interviewed candidates in January.

We said our official farewell to Pastor Todd the first week of **February**, and for the next 8 weeks, I continued pastoral ministry duties and functioned as acting head of staff. In that time, many people stepped forward to facilitate ministries of the church, including Children’s ministry, Connect, Adult Education, and supplemental preaching. I am grateful for the incredible support and care that was offered in that time. We really do have the most wonderful people!

We began the month of **March** with the baptism of Seth and Caitlyn Huiras’ daughter, Vivian on March 1! But soon, news of Covid-19 became central to all areas of our lives. With so little known about this novel coronavirus, the newly formed Covid-19 Task Force team of Erin Barnett, Gary Carlson, Linda Larson, Anne Meyer-Ruppel, Greg Muth, Janet Muth (and soon, Ben Miller!) and I prayerfully made the decision on Mar. 13, that we would worship from home due to what was now a pandemic. Ben Gottfried offered his technology know-how to us in that time, and we have been unbelievably blessed with his generosity, kindness, and wizard-like technology skills. We have continued worshiping on Zoom on Sundays, for special services, and funerals, and with special projects with his help. On Mar. 29, Rev. Wendy Vander Hart joined the First UCC community from Massachusetts as Interim Senior Minister.

April began with Palm Sunday and self-serve palm leaf pick up, followed by Easter celebration on Zoom the following week. We welcomed and oriented Pastor Wendy more fully as she got to know folks and different ministries at First UCC. As a staff, we began meeting more regularly, compassionately distanced or on Zoom, to coordinate our shared ministries in the pandemic.

May brought the conclusion of our largest-ever 29-student-strong Middle School OWL (Our Whole Lives) program co-led by trained leaders Dena Stulken and me, as well as Brad Hoff and Abby Benusa. Though we ended the year on Zoom, I am grateful to these rock star leaders, and to the amazing students. We said thank you to our faith formation teachers, OWL and WFFF (Wednesdays for Faith, Food and Fun) leaders in worship. Care Team spent tireless hours calling to check in with *all* of the members and friends of the church to see how people were faring in the pandemic and if there was anything with which the church could help. They did this on top of already coordinating care for members and friends of the congregation! What comes to the forefront for May, too, is the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, coinciding with the church’s observation of Pentecost (when God’s Spirit spread among the people). The revitalized efforts for anti-racism and peaceful protests following Floyd’s murder sparked new anti-racist ministries in the congregation and collaborated efforts in the community.

June, July, August brought about the virtual MN Conference UCC Annual Meeting, as well as two anti-racism Adult Education book groups that went into the fall: Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist*, led by Sarah Carlsen and Carrie Menk, and Resmaa Manakem's *My Grandmother's Hands: Healing Racialized Trauma*, led by Dorothea Hrossowyc. Care and Stewardship Teams made a monumental amount of calls again as they checked-in with the congregation and verified contact information. We also expanded the Children's Faith Formation Team to include 5 leaders: Kent Freeze, Deb Gottfried, Crystal Henslin, Marja Steinberg, and Laura Turek. Together, we mapped out a year of Children's Faith Formation that would inevitably look very different, and brainstormed about supporting families through the pandemic. A monthly faith formation schedule, which also includes monthly themed take-home bags, filled with treats and family faith activities, was part of that effort.

In **September**, we had a masked, distanced church picnic at Valley Grove to be together in a creative way. It was wonderful to see everyone! The UCC Adult Education white privilege curriculum began as a collaboration between First UCC and Carleton College. It was co-led by Pastor Wendy and Asst. Chaplain Hannah Campbell Gustafson. It will run again this January. I also started taking part (thank you!) in a 4-month intensive continuing education program called Renewing Leadership through the LeaderWise clergy organization. It involved deep work, as well as a 360-evaluation by 25 people in all areas of my life. I am grateful for the wisdom and the clarity it brought! I also officially began my tenure on the MN Conference UCC Board of Directors, alongside another of our First UCCers, Shawn Neubel.

In **October** we had another church gathering and CAC food drive outdoors, hosted by Aaron Wills and Molly McGovern Wills at their farm, Little Hill Berry Farm. Between food and diapers, we collected 167 pounds! It was lovely to be together safely and watch kids run through the fields. Office Manager Gladys Ehn resigned, and the shape of our staff changed again, but Finance Manager Andrea Pegram stepped in to cover both roles temporarily.

November arrived, as did big feelings for many, as the election took place Nov. 3. Not yet knowing the results, Pastor Wendy and I hosted a walk through event, Nov. 4, inviting folks to walk through, light a candle, and bring an item of hope to place on the communion table. We were guided by the expertise of epidemiologist and Covid Task Force Ben Miller, who ensured a plan to keep people safe while also being able to be in the building. This kicked off an effort to create a monthly drive or walk through event to keep us connecting at the church grounds. I was also able to collaborate with area churches on a J-Term-like Confirmation program kick-off, which invites speakers and discussion around current events including cancer, immigration, racism, and Northfield youth homelessness on Zoom.

December meant Advent and Christmas were upon us! Pastor Wendy and I hosted an Advent drive through, where we were able to connect with folks and hand out Advent calendars and devotionals. I coordinated the Longest Night Service for Dec 21, and Pastor Wendy coordinated the Christmas Eve service, all with our very talented musicians. The sad news was that Andrea Pegram resigned after being offered a full time job she couldn't refuse. We were exceedingly sad to say goodbye to her, but wish her very well, too. Grace Muth, home from college, has stepped in for communications and operations duties, and Treasurer Nalani McCutcheon is doing a lion's share of financial work, for which we are so very grateful in this transition time.

Transition has been the theme, but I feel lucky to be a part of a vibrant church full of compassionate leaders who are doing ministry in creative ways. I am grateful for my colleagues, as we have all dug deep this year to continue our ministries. Big thanks to Chris Brunelle, Theo Wee, Bob Gregory-Bjorklund, Grace Muth, Andrea Pegram (in absentia), Mark Fischer, Ben Gottfried, and of course to Pastor Wendy, who has worked with a congregation she has not had the joy of being with in person, as she lives and works in far from her home. May 2021 bring us all safely together in a more stable and just world.

REPORT OF THE MODERATOR

JANET LEWIS MUTH

“And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;” Luke 1:46-48

“She’d in fact painted the Virgin Mary. Elderly. Abandoned by a world weary and wary of miracles. A world too busy to notice a stone rolled back... This was Mary in the final years. Forgotten. Alone... Worn down by age and rage, by resentments real and manufactured. By friendships soured. By entitlements denied and love withheld. But there was something else. A vague suggestion in those weary eyes. Not even seen really. More of a promise. A rumor in the distance. ...[She] had painted the moment despair became hope.” From “A Trick of the Light” by Louise Penny

I’ve been holding these two images in my mind lately, trying to let them dance with each other. The first, Mary’s magnificat, articulates her immense hope and gratitude at having been chosen to carry God’s child, to be the vehicle for God’s love delivered to the world. The second is a description of a fictional painting of Mary long after Jesus’ death, of a woman who after watching the rise and fall of her son, the brutal death of her baby boy, is bitter almost beyond recognition, yet still has a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

I don’t mean to be melodramatic about 2020, but I think perhaps there are ways in which our experience is not that dissimilar from the Mary in the fictional painting. Just as a reminder, let’s review what this year has brought us. We started in January at the annual meeting with the painful acknowledgement that our role as a sanctuary church was not what we had hoped it would be, and agreed to support the Immigration Task Force in pursuing the option of becoming an Immigrant Welcoming congregation. In February we said good-bye to Todd and announced the hiring of Wendy as our Interim Senior Minister while relying on Lauren to shepherd to the whole flock on her own. In March, we formed a COVID Task Force which had the unfortunate job of closing our building and asking staff to move all of our activities online. In April we welcomed Wendy to our virtual space – though it would still be many weeks before it was safe for her to physically join us in Northfield. In May, George Floyd was murdered, and Minnesota became the epicenter for demonstrations demanding that we as a nation finally grapple with our racist history. Over the summer we were simultaneously building our transition and search processes while engaging in our own anti-racism work. We held a special congregational meeting to bless and launch our transition team, tasking them with listening to the congregation and our neighbors to discern who God is calling us to be in the next chapter of First UCC’s life of faith. And a tiny respite from the pandemic allowed us to have a few outdoor gatherings and connect. Many of us met Wendy in person for the first time! We discussed a racial justice pledge that other congregations in the Northfield area had signed, and in September we committed to our own version of the pledge, highlighting our desire to unmask our own racist history, strengthen bridges with our neighbors in pursuit of racial equity, and work toward the re-enfranchisement of black, indigenous, and people of color. In October, the stewardship committee filled us with messages of hope in the midst of one of the most contentious elections in recent memory. Also in October, Gladys made the decision to end her time as our Office Manager. In November, while the election was contested, the Trustees and Council wrestled with the reality of our changing financial situation; our congregation is aging, and we will need to find new sources of revenue beyond the generosity of our oldest members if we want to sustain our programming and ministerial staffing. And in December, Andrea made the decision to end her 13-year tenure as our Finance Manager, while the pandemic surge forced the COVID Task Force to dial back and reinstate the restrictions on building use and in person gatherings.

I suspect that most of you are as tired as I am, that if we examine each other’s faces beneath our masks both literal and figurative, we will see evidence of a very difficult year indeed. We have an awful lot of grief to process as a congregation, and there is still much transition in front of us. But I also suspect that if we look closely in each other’s eyes, we will see glimmers of hope. Did you know that there is a group working to write a land acknowledgement that we as a congregation could consider and adopt, to own our history and pledge to

do better moving forward? Did you know that even in zoom we have had steady, high attendance at worship thanks to the extra efforts of Pastor Wendy, Pastor Lauren, Ben Gottfried, Chris Brunelle, Theo Wee, Bob Gregory-Bjorklund, and many members? Did you know that the Transition Team has reached out to and heard from hundreds of members and friends of First UCC to help us discern who God is calling us to be? Did you know that Pastor Wendy used \$5000 of the Pastor's discretionary fund to contribute to an affordable housing project through the CAC, and that we will have the opportunity to match that contribution in future years? Did you know that through our membership in Isaiah, we have called upon legislators to create a more just and equitable Minnesota? We can look back upon the past year with bitterness and resentment, allow ourselves to feel all the weight and grief like that fictional Mary in the painting, AND we can also hold on to the hope of the Magnificat and keep those tiny glimmers alive. The two don't have to be mutually exclusive.

There is so much about this year that has been very hard work, and I can't honestly say that it has been a *pleasure* to serve as your moderator. But it has been an incredibly meaningful year, and it has been an *honor* to serve with such a capable leadership team. Thank you for putting your trust in us and for continuing to be the amazing community we call First UCC.

UCC Northfield Annual Meeting
Minutes
January 26, 2020
11:50am

The meeting was opened by Vice Chair, Janet Lewis Muth. The opening was by members singing Happy Birthday to Pastor Todd followed by singing *Rejoice Your Pure of Heart*.

Welcoming prayer was offered by Pastor Todd.

Janet Lewis Muth declared there was a quorum. Motion to approve the Agenda was made by Jane Mc Williams and seconded by Elizabeth Olson. Approved.

Treasurer, Tom Gagnon, presented the 2020 operating budget. His comments on items in the budget include that pledges are just a little less than last year but the amount stays the same, salaries and housing allowance is included for two ministers. General maintenance increased this year; and he called notice of money that is budgeted for youth ministry. Motion to approve the 2020 operating budget made by Tom/Nalani McCutcheon. Approved.

Nominations Report was provided by Nancy Johnson-Maloney. A change noted in the nomination roster is that Lynne Pederson is nominated for Clerk, Nancy Johnson-Maloney is Council At-Large, Sam Steinberg moves into the vice chair. Nomination moves that the nomination slate be approved. Motion approved.

Report from the Immigration Team was made by various members. A hand out with updates was provided. Work noted: planning Service trips for youth, building local partnerships for more involvement with community, and making connections with Mayflower UCC in Twin cities to partner for youth trips. A separate website for the committee is being worked on and will be launched in the following months.

Other updates Interim Senior Search- National pool of candidates is moving forward and hope to have information to announce in the very near future. Committee is feeling good about the process and outcome.

Pastor Todd recognized and thanked outstanding leaders that are stepping down from their roles in committees and volunteer jobs. He mentioned snippets of information about the talents that each have shared with the church. He recognized all of the leaders in the church that have done an outstanding job and all are thanked from the congregation. He commented on how he feels the church is in a good place as he leaves the ministry. Janet recognized Todd for his years of service at 1st UCC and that there will be a celebration for his work in the coming weeks.

Motion made to adjourn made by Carol Rutz/Chris Brunelle. Motion approved.

Respectively submitted by: Lynne Pederson, Clerk

REPORT OF THE CLERK

LYNNE PEDERSON

Active Full Memberships reported as of 01/01/2020	415	
*Unreported Confirmands in 2019	11	
**Unreported new member 5/5/2019	1	
Total Active Full Memberships as of 01/01/2020	427	
Active Associate Memberships as of 01/01/2020	7	
Additions to Full Membership during 2020	12	
Additions to Associate Membership during 2020	0	
Members/Associate Members transferred	- 2	Todd Lippert, Lynne Severson
Memberships – Retired	- 3	Connie Ryberg, Dave Johnson, Terry Petek
Members – deaths	- 5	
Associate Members – deaths	- 1	
Members Unaccounted for	- 4	
Active Full Memberships as of 12/31/2020	425	
Active Associate Members as of 12/31/2020	6	

Member Deaths

William “Bill” Woehrlin

Arthur Campbell

Lynne Jordan*

Don Leff

Marge Tarr

Yvonne “Bonnie” Turnquist*

Harold “David” Walters

William “Bill” Haslett

*Indicates Friends who have died

New Members May 17, 2020

Randy Hachfield

Muriel Hachfield

Erin Janssens

Susie Johnson

Todd Johnson

Elizabeth O’Sullivan

Katharine Powers

Caitlin Reuter

Steven Reuter

Stuart Sexton

Lisa Sexton

New Members November 22, 2020

Rich Graves

Baptisms

Vivian Huiras
Elizabeth O’Sullivan

***2019 Confirmands 5/5/19**

Jacob Reister
Clara Lippert
Amelia Arnold
Liv Fossum
Madison Josephson
Nathan Wolff
Teigen Hoff
Owen Lehmkul
Isaac Warren
Lydia Buckmeier
Maggie Muth

****1/20/19 Add’l New Member:**

Tate Journell

2020 Pastor’s Discretionary Fund Expenses

June 18 2020 to Northfield Community Action Center for local family emergency assistance	\$1,000.00
November 18 2020 to Northfield Community Action Center to purchase TORCH snacks	\$1,000.00
<i>Pledged</i> , not yet paid, to Northfield CAC Capital Campaign for Affordable Housing	\$5,000.00

Total 2020 Pastor’s Discretionary Fund Expenses = \$2,000.00

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

CHRISTOPHER BRUNELLE

*In the dark times
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing.
About the dark times.*

—Bertolt Brecht

This difficult, difficult year has lain heavy on our communal need for music. Ten months (and counting) without the chance to make, hear, and share our songs together in person parch the soul, and while I am profoundly grateful for the technological adaptability and the artistic creativity that has allowed our church to flourish even in these times, I also know that my longing to sing and play and listen together again is shared by everyone. May we soon be able to put away the psalms of exile and take up the psalms of restoration.

One bright spot of timing came this year on March 8, which turned out to be our final in-person Sunday worship service as well as the opportunity for a final celebration of Theo's first 50 years at the organ bench. That afternoon, Byron Almén, Philip Brunelle, and I offered a concert of organ and piano music in honor of Theo and of the restoration of the pipe organ—and Theo herself joined in on the last piece, featuring all four of us at one piano! Later in the spring, on May 17, Lori Dokken joined us (by Zoom) and offered her wonderful music. At the end of the calendar year, the choir's usual Advent extravaganza was replaced by Myrtle Lemon-Todd, who provided a beautiful rendition of Gerald Finzi's cantata *Dies Natalis (The Birth-Day)*.

The choirs (Senior Choir and Spirit Voices) filled the first few months of the year with their expected beauty, and Amanda Goldberg and Katie Hagaman led the children in singing. Once worship moved from the sanctuary to Zoom, our musical practices necessarily made a great shift as well. We have incorporated live music (myself at the piano, playing and singing) and prerecorded music, much of it recorded at church by a small, stalwart crew in the week or two before each service. In making those weekly recordings I have been deeply grateful for my fellow staffers Mark Fischer (for his skills at recording and editing), Bob Gregory-Bjorklund, and Theo Wee as well as for several faithful singers in particular, who have contributed to dozens of services: Donna MacMillan, Carol Trosset, and Marty Hodel. Many other members of the congregation and community have sung and played at various points, and I am thankful to all of them: Holly Fischer, Mary Carlsen, Peter Dahlen, Ann Gregory-Bjorklund, Rachel Wolff, Andrea Een (violin and viola), Ben Reister (trumpet), David Hougen-Eitzman (mandolin), Bruce McWilliams (trumpet), Kay Sahlin (flute), Connie Martin (bass), and Dan Dressen

In a church, good music does not come to pass without good communication and good planning. It has been a blessing this year to work with such talented and committed staff and clergy: Todd (before his departure in February) and Lauren and Wendy (how fortunate we are as a church to have such strong pastoral leadership in such tumultuous times!) and Mark and Bob and Theo. I am grateful to the whole team, without which none of us would be able to accomplish what we do. And a special thanks to our tech steward Ben Gottfried, who unfailingly fills the congregation's speakers with music at just the right time.

I have ended my annual reports for years with the same call to music, but this year I will adapt it to our distanced circumstances: Music is a gift from God, and the best way to enjoy God's gift is to give it right back and to share it with each other. And it may seem strange, but online worship makes that just a little more possible; if you've been abashed about the sound of your voice, have no fear, because on Zoom, no one can hear you sing. So, even if you're muted, please join in the rich musical life of our beautiful church. Come share your gifts.

- Christopher Brunelle, Director of Music

MINISTRY REPORTS

TRANSITION TEAM

“Looking for God’s movement in a time of change of leadership, the Transition Team can be a key instrument for guiding the congregation in its work. With [the] Intentional Interim Pastor, [the Transition Team can] lead the congregation in a variety of small group and church-wide activities that are building blocks for an insightful pastoral search process. The Team engages community partners in conversation to test and further strengthen its reach and ministry.”

~ taken from the UCC Transition Team Overview

We entered 2020 knowing that as Pastor Todd completed his ministry with us, we would begin an interim reflection period as a congregation, designed to help us prepare to call a new Senior Minister. We had no idea how different this “interim” time would be. The pandemic, the racial reckoning and the divisive election have exposed the vulnerabilities of our assumptions, our systems and our democracy. 2020 has given us many reasons to reflect on what is important for us as a congregation, and how our faith and practice together inform our action in the world. The Church Council decided that a transition team and a search team could share the work of engagement and discernment about what God is calling the congregation to be and ultimately call a new pastor.

The Process

When we started our work in July, the Transition Team was asked to complete two efforts:

- Engage the congregation and community leaders in helping us discern answers to three core questions:
 - Who are we now?
 - Who are our neighbors?
 - Who is God calling us to be?

- Complete our Local Church Profile (LCP) in a way that would tell our communal story and articulate a vision for our next chapter together.

From August through early December, we heard from over 300 members and friends in various forms. Whether through individual interviews, small group listening sessions, email and/or the congregational survey, we are grateful for all the ways you have openly shared your insights. Several members of the Search team helped facilitate sessions, and we are grateful for the ways they deepened and expanded our understanding.

After additional reflection, prayer and continual wordsmithing, we completed our portion of the LCP in early January. On January 12th, we met with Associate Conference Minister Sheresa Simpson-Rice, Pastor Wendy, Moderator Janet Muth, the Search team and our incoming Moderator Sam Steinberg to complete our handoff. The Search team is now in the process of filling in more specific position details and will begin the search process soon.

Themes Heard

- Our covenant grounds us and provides a welcome to new people wherever they are on their path.
- The way we care for each other within the congregation needs to refresh and renew us for the external work to continue.
- We value wrestling with challenging questions together. Doing so is a core part of who we are together.
- While many of Jesus' teachings are a source of our extravagant welcome and practice of inclusion, we find unifying language about Jesus elusive.

With that understanding, we chose to ground our vision in our covenant, by using it as both a comfort and a challenge. We captured it this way:

“During this search process we have been asking ourselves “WHY are we a congregation? WHAT motivates us to move even further out of our comfort zone and into the many complex challenges that surround us?” Viewing our covenant not only as a comfort, but also a challenge may help us understand our need to listen more humbly to those around us and listen more carefully to ourselves. A commitment “to witness to God’s reconciling love” is not easy.”

Summary Ministry Description

The LCP begins with a Summary Ministry Description that will be part of the public position posting with the UCC. This summary helps articulate for candidates who we believe God is calling us to be:

“We covenant together with God and one another, trusting in God’s continuing guidance, to seek to understand and do God’s will, to explore the mystery of Christ, and to witness to God’s reconciling love.”

1st UCC Northfield is being called to challenge ourselves and our ministry to practice our church’s covenant more deeply, more widely, and more inclusively.

We begin our covenant with “we covenant together with God and one another.” We have a history of practicing our faith together in our commitments to our youth, social and racial justice, environmental stewardship, Open and Affirming and Just Peace pledges, and our extravagant welcome. We are being called to expand our definition of “together” to include a wider community in Northfield and the world beyond through traditional and innovative ways.

Our covenant continues, “[we] seek to understand and do God’s will [and] to explore the mystery of Christ.” Our church history is closely tied to the founding of Carleton College, a 4-year liberal arts college that is now non-denominational. Many members have connections with both Carleton and St. Olaf College, more have college and graduate degrees, most are working professionals. We use our heads a lot. Now we are being called urgently and humbly to move deeply into our hearts as we seek to understand and do God’s will and explore the mystery of Christ. We are being called to practice the courageous love and justice of Jesus. Practicing because we want to be better at it. Love because it is who God is and the way Jesus called us to live. Justice because our practice should comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, to quote Reinhold Neibuhr.

We conclude the covenant with “witness to God’s reconciling love.” 1st UCC has a long history of witnessing our faith through community engagement and personal connections. Members laid the foundation for the Community Action Center. We were the first church in Northfield to become Open and Affirming. Our members are instrumental in Northfield’s Climate Action Coalition. 1st UCC is known to be engaged, open, welcoming, inclusive, and progressive. We are a safe haven for those seeking to be inspired, challenged and nurtured, in the same way that we are inspired, challenged and

nurtured by one another. We seek to open our doors even wider and invite others to gather at our communion table, even when we differ in understanding, expression and action.

Our practice of love and justice needs to infuse everything we do as a congregation. We seek to include people of all ages from all walks of life. We seek a Senior Minister who will walk arm-in-arm with us and with many community members as we work together for peace and justice in the Northfield area and the wider world. We seek to live into our covenant more fully and more faithfully.

During these months of isolation, grief and uncertainty, this work has inspired, challenged and nurtured the 7 of us. We hand off to a gifted and committed Search team, trusting in God's continuing guidance for them and for all of us.

In gratitude,
Sarah Carlsen (Chair)

Bob Bruce
Margit Johnson
Shawn Nuebel
Laura Turek
Janet Muth, Moderator
Pastor Wendy, Interim Senior Minister

MEMBERSHIP TEAM

Current Team Members are: Pat Kriesel, Marsha Kitchel, Heather Cannady, Jean Haslett, and Rev. Wendy Vander Hart, Staff.

For the first few months of 2020, Team members maintained the "Welcome Pads"—with Welcome Pad inserts (ordered from Carleton College Print Shop), Prayer Request forms, blank nametags and pencils. "Welcome Pad" pages with entries of worshipers were collected each week by a team member. Visitors and potential members (Friends) were recorded in the computer CDM+ data base by the Office Manager, Gladys Ehn. Gladys prepared letters to first-time visitors for one of the pastors to sign. Emails were sent to first-time visiting St. Olaf and Carleton Students by the pastors. When requested, nametags were prepared by Gladys for members and frequent visitors.

Beginning in September, the estimated attendance figures were derived by Jean Haslett from the Zoom Worship Services and forwarded to the Office Manager along with the names of attending Visitors and Friends to be recorded in CDM+.

The current procedure relating to visitors is that a Pastor sends a note for first-time visitors and the Membership Team sends a letter with a First UCC brochure and magnet after the third visit.

Two New Member Sundays were held via Zoom during the Worship Services on May 17, 2020, and November 22, 2020. A total of twelve (12) new members were received into membership. Their names are listed in the Clerk's Report. Photographs of the new members will be taken when we return to the Church building to worship and will be mounted in the New Member photo frame that is displayed in the hallway near the Assembly Room.

Although attending a *Connect* group is not a requirement for becoming a member, potential new members as

well as current members and friends were encouraged to attend a *Connect* group via reminder e-mails. These groups are a wonderful way to have meaningful conversations and get to know one another better.

- Jean Haslett, Chair

OUR WHOLE LIVES/CONFIRMATION

Our Whole Lives (OWL) helps senior high (11th-12th grade) and middle school (7th-8th grade) youth participants make informed and responsible decisions about relationships, health and behavior in the context of their faith community's values. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. It provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills and understand the social, emotional and spiritual aspects of sexuality. This is a vital ministry that First UCC is uniquely poised to offer our youth.

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP

The Middle School Youth Group (MSYG) is composed of our amazing youth in grades 6th – 8th and is being led by Jami Reister. In 2020, the middle school youth group met weekly on Sunday mornings and utilized the Spark House Reform curriculum. Each week, we concentrated on a various Old or New Testament character and reflected upon how her or his faith journey may or may not have resembled our own. Our overriding message was always one of love, acceptance, and belonging; our focus was one of creating community within our peer group while affirming the importance of youth in our greater church family. In addition to our basic curriculum work, the MSYG began work to raise funds for the purchase and installation of a Little Free Pantry on the church grounds in order to carry out our mission of service and social responsibility. Bean soup kits and homemade soap sales generated money for our project. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic cut short our youth group experience in 2020, and shipping difficulties and other logistical issues has delayed the pantry project. We hope to resume and complete the Little Free Pantry in early 2021. We look forward to the time we can join together again in community with one another.

- Submitted by: Jami Reister

JUNIOR WORSHIP TEAM

The Jr. Worship Team was created by Jami Reister and Lynne Severson in order to more fully and intentionally incorporate children into the worship experience. JWT members are first grade and older and meet each fall for an orientation and a training pizza party. Each Sunday, these team members perform the following duties: hand out children's and adult bulletins, light and extinguish the candle, and collect, present, and count the children's offering. On communion Sundays, two JWT members help distribute the communion bread. The JWT team is often called upon for additional tasks, such as special Advent and Christmas candle lighting. JWT members play a vital role in our worship experience. Not only do they fulfill important and meaningful roles each week, but they continually remind us of the significance of children in our church family and congregational life. We are

fortunate to have such a dedicated team of youth eager to contribute to our faith experience. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the work of the JWT was cut short in 2020, but we eagerly look forward to resuming our important duties once in-person worship resumes.

- Submitted by: Jami Reister

MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

This year, All Saints Day was on November 3. At that time, we remembered five individuals who had ties to our UCC community. They were:

Bill Woehrlin
Arthur Campbell
Lynne Jordan
Don Leff
Marge Tarr

- Respectfully,
Barb Howe

MEALS ON WHEELS

In 2020, 1st UCC completed three weeks of meal delivery for Northfield's Meals on Wheels program. Seventy-two routes were assigned to us, and fifty-seven individual volunteers handled those routes. Our delivery schedule in March happened to coincide with the beginning of lockdown for Covid-19. Our team of volunteers gave helpful and needed safety feedback to the Northfield Hospital Committee for Meals on Wheels, which was gratefully acknowledged by the committee members. Because of the issues raised by our drivers, new protocols were quickly in place to protect drivers and clients of Meals on Wheels. The generous spirit of our volunteers is greatly appreciated!

- Annie Kramer, coordinator of Meals on Wheels

IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE – 2020

The Task Force had five objectives for 2020:

1. To prepare and present to the Church Council a resolution to allow the Task Force to explore a recommendation to the congregation for a vote on becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation.
2. To develop and launch a faith curriculum to assist the congregation in their discernment of First UCC to become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation.
3. Build a portal on the Church's website explaining what it means to be an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation and to identify and direct congregants to local resources which support our immigrant community.
4. Organize a Service-Learning Trip to the border in conjunction with the Mayflower Church in Minneapolis
5. Provide on-going information to the congregation on the plight of immigrants at the border.

Resolution

Task Force members John Barbour and Matt Rohn prepared an Immigrant Welcoming Resolution which was approved by the Task Force and forwarded to the Church Council for their consideration.

In January, 2020, the Council unanimously granted approval for the Church's Immigrant Task Force to explore and work to recommend that our Church become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation.

Faith Curriculum

John Barbour and Matt Rohn prepared a draft curriculum which was reviewed and approved by the Task Force. Due to COVID-19, the launch of the adult education classes was delayed until 2021. The first in the four-part series begins January 25th with a presentation by Kathryn Tegtmeyer-Pak. Subsequent presentations will follow in two-week intervals into the Spring of 2021.

Build a Website Portal

Task Force member, Shari Sneary, working with Matt Detert, built a portal on the First UCC website under the tab: "Get Involved" which explains what it means to become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation. Additional tabs within the portal include: "Who We Are", "Resources", "Get involved", "Calendar", "Updates" and "Contact". The Resources tab explains local resources and directs congregants for volunteering and donating to local services serving our immigrant community.

Organize a Service-Learning Trip to the Border

Due to COVID-19, this objective was tabled until 2021. Conversations with Mayflower will resume in the first quarter of the new year with the hope that members will be able to travel to the border by the fall of 2021.

Provide On-going information to the Congregation

Task Force member Gina Washburn has been preparing articles this year for publication in The Chronicle informing the congregation of conditions at the border as provided by Marie Gery who spends time at the border and forwards to the Task Force the Green Valley Sahuarita Samaritans' newsletter.

- Respectfully Submitted,
Gina Washburn

LANDSCAPING TASK FORCE

Due to the corona virus the landscaping/gardening task force put all projects on hold. Individual church members took it upon themselves to weed the gardens as well as trim the shrubs and trees. A big thank you to all who saw a need and took action.

- Respectfully Submitted,
Elizabeth Olson, chair

SPECIAL FUNCTIONS TEAM

The Special Functions Committee assisted with the memorial service for Bill Woehrlin in February. In early March we served treats after the final Sunday afternoon concert celebrating Theo Wee's 50 years of service and the return of the refurbished organ.

Little did we know that the rest of 2020 we would be off-duty! It was disappointing when we were unable to offer our support service when people in our church family died later in the year. There were no Fall care center

birthday parties. Our regular kitchen cleaning visits wound down and we have been “on leave” for most of the year.

Membership on Special Functions shifted in the Spring when Lynne Severson moved and ended her significant and long-time participation with us. She will be missed, but we were so happy that Sheri McNally agreed to take Lynne’s spot on our team. Sheri has often helped with our events in the past.

Members: Sarah Dennett, Garda Kahn, Sheri McNally, Jan Mitchell, Connie Nuebel, Bobbie Peterson, Janette Stromley, Linda Wagenbach

- Submitted by Bobbie Peterson, chair.

PRAYER SHAWL KNITTING GROUP

The Prayer Shawl ministry has continued right through the pandemic and have been meeting on Zoom monthly to check in with one another. Thanks to Kris Felbeck for using her Zoom account and setting us up each month. Prayer shawls are now being distributed by Linda Larson from the Care Team. Each shawl is placed in a gift bag with a special note and finds its way to those who are ill, isolated and lonely, dealing with grief, facing surgery, in hospice, etc. Many people have given memorial money to assist in buying yarn for our projects. We encourage and welcome new people to join us!

- Submitted by Liz Hankins

CONNECT GROUPS

Three Connect groups began meeting in the winter in 2020, and each of these transitioned to an online format in the spring. One group with 16 participants met weekly for the remainder of 2020 and beyond, using a shared facilitation model beginning in April. Another group met on Sunday mornings and slowly read and reflected together on a book by Richard Rohr; they, too, continue to meet as we move into 2021. The third Connect group met through late spring, took a break in the summer, and then reconvened with some new members in the late fall to reflect together on Advent and prepare for Christmas. A new Connect group came together in December and is meeting through the end of January. Meeting online has been challenging, but many Connect participants have expressed that the support they receive from the group and the deepened relationships Connect helps them create have been important parts of their support system through the pandemic.

- Erin Barnett

HOSPITALITY TEAM REPORT

The ritual of gathering for coffee hour was one of many aspects of congregational life impacted by the pandemic this year. Thanks to those who contributed to our First UCC hospitality ministry during the first quarter of the year by hosting coffee and bringing our community together for conversation and sharing time together. We look forward to the day when it is safe to gather again in person for fellowship and conversation. We are always in need of volunteers to host, and if you are new or newly interested, please email Sarah Forster at sarahjforster@gmail.com to join the team.

Hospitality Team Members for 2020 included: Barb Altstaetter, Betsy Barrett, David & Sarah Beimers, Judith Bond, Linda Burdell, Mary Carlsen & Peter Dahlen, Sarah Carlsen & Brad Hoff; Sarah Dennett & Hans Muessig, Jodi Doeden, Amanda Eastvold-Pettis and Matt Eastvold, Debra Ehret Miller, Sarah & Bob Entenmann, Susan Evans, Kristina Felbeck, Sarah & Matt Forster, Tracy Fossum, Laura Funke, Linda Gagnon,

Marie Gery, Gretchen Gillis, Ben Gottfried, Liz Hankins, Abigail Henderson, Shana Hodel, Jane & Loy Jeffrey, Garda Kahn, Beth Kallestad, Phil Kasten, Judy Kinstad, Marsha Kitchel, Annie Kramer, Patricia Kriesel, Ed & Lois Langerak, Linda Larson, Dianne & Jeffrey Latterell, Mary Cay Longley, Chuck & Tina Madson, Kaara Maki, Michelle Moad, Janet & Greg Muth, Elizabeth Olson, Jean & Phil Parsons, Lynne Pederson, Bobbie Peterson, Bill Poehlmann, Jami & Randy Reister, Scott & Pat Richardson, Fred Rogers, Christine Sartor, John & Lynne Severson, Marja Steinberg, Jan Stevens, Katie Tetreault, Linda Wagenbach (and with apologies for any omissions).

- Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Forster

FIRST UCC'S WORK WITH ISAIAH MN IN 2020

Our congregation belongs to ISAIAH, a faith based coalition that works for a multi-racial democracy and an economy where everyone can thrive. This year many people in our congregation participated in our work which was loosely led by Leota Goodney, Carolyn Fure-Slocum, Matt Rohn and Lisa Sexton. Pastor Wendy and Pastor Lauren provided support and continue to call us into action in the political arena as part of our work for justice.

Early in the year the Northfield ISAIAH Housing Team worked with the Northfield Affordable Housing Task force and Northfield City staff about the local rental code. St. Olaf and Carleton students under the guidance of Carolyn Fure-Slocum researched best practices around safety issues and conveyed those to City staff. An informational report was also given in a forum to the Congregation followed by discussion. Various members of the congregation helped publicize and raise money for immigrant neighbors facing deportation, as well as attending hearings and writing letters of support.

The Northfield ISAIAH group includes people from several Northfield congregations, including many people from the UCC. This group organized trips to St. Paul (before the COVID restrictions) to support paid family and medical leave, and support for childcare and childcare workers. After the COVID restrictions were in place, we continued to encourage people to write letters to the editor and to call elected officials about paid family and medical leave, rental and mortgage assistance, fair voting processes, and police accountability. We also met regularly with our Northfield representative Todd Lippert to understand ways in which we could help move particular legislation.

In work related to the elections we:

Submitted questions related to paid family leave, support for childcare and healthcare, environmental issues, and racial equity issues for inclusion in candidate debates before the primaries.

Participated in statewide and regional ISAIAH zoom events and kept the congregation informed about opportunities to live out our faith in the political arena.

Encouraged people in the congregation to participate in the electoral process, to engage with their friends and neighbors about what will make a better Minnesota and to encourage everyone to vote in the fall elections.

Some of us participated in ISAIAH-sponsored race class narrative training so that we can more clearly articulate a positive vision that comes out of our faith and includes everyone, no matter their age, color, sexual orientation, or home address.

Since the election, we are regrouping and will refocus on local housing and environmental issues as well as supporting items of our legislative agenda in St. Paul. We will continue to support work towards racial equity in our congregation, Northfield and beyond.

- Leota Goodney

STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

GREG MUTH

In addition to routine maintenance on items such as lawn care, snow removal, elevator, custodial, carpet cleaning, HVAC and fire safety equipment the Facilities Committee saw to some additional projects. Completed in 2020 were a phone system upgrade, storage room cleaning, senior high room carpet replacement, a new water softener installed, sanctuary lighting upgrade to LED and window replacement in the assembly room and kitchen.

The Committee continues to hold as its goals wise and prudent use of our precious resources and being good stewards of God's creation. To this end we are currently working on adding composting to our kitchen, reviewing building security, adding additional technology in the sanctuary for livestreaming worship and finishing the window replacement in the library.

Solar Update:

Back in early September 2016, one of our three 5kW solar arrays was rendered inoperable due to a microinverter failure. The Minnesota-based manufacturer of our solar panels, TenK Solar, had a proprietary design that directly incorporated the microinverter into the panels themselves in an effort to optimize efficient transfer of the DC electricity produced into usable AC electricity. This design flaw was not unique to First UCC's solar panels and led to the ultimate bankruptcy of TenK Solar (May 2017). Perhaps the most important aspect of this story is the timing of our discovery of the dramatic decrease in solar panel production. In the spring of 2018 we conducted an energy audit to understand our gas and electric usage. After an initial analysis of the data, and a consultation with a solar expert at the National Renewable Energy Lab, the Facilities Committee began a year-long exploration into troubleshooting and addressing the solar production. The Facilities Committee left no stone unturned including site visits from AllEnergy Solar (the installers), consultations with a former TenK engineer, examination of all warranties and contracts including insurance claims and our own cost-benefit analysis. The combination of the late discovery of the problem, the bankruptcy of TenK Solar and the nationwide unavailability of parts, replacement of the failed 5kW array was the only option and the cost would far exceed the potential revenue generated by the electricity produced. The Facilities Committee grudgingly concluded that since the ultimate financial responsibility was with the manufacturer and since the manufacturer no longer existed, we were left with no viable solution to repair the failed array.

But there is good news too. In 2020 the remaining 10kW of functional solar panels supplied 77% of the Church's need for electricity. This means we have only had to spend approximately \$400 on electricity this year. Since February 2015 the panels have generated 57% of the Church's need for electricity saving approximately \$9500 on our electric bills. In terms of carbon offset we have prevented 108,000 pounds of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere an equivalent to 5,500 gallons of gas used. Facilities now reviews solar panel data on a quarterly schedule and you too can see the data at (<http://egauge16734.egaug.es/index.html>).

STEWARDSHIP

The Stewardship Committee began its work this year learning. The Committee read the book *Embracing Stewardship* and attended webinars. Applying some of the lessons learned, as well as relying on faithful past practices, the Committee reached out to First UCC with a theme of “Where Hope Thrives.”

Mailings (both hard copy and email) were sent to the Congregation at the beginning of October introducing our theme and providing a narrative budget that highlighted in graph and text form how the money comes in to support First UCC and how it is spent. We also produced and debuted a video (which can be seen on the home page of our website) that spoke to the hope that shines so brightly at First UCC as well as introduced the practice of Welcome and Testimony at the beginning of worship. A highlight of the witnessing was hearing Mary Wood speak on her 99th birthday. On Commitment Sunday, the congregation blessed the donations and the donors and although no celebratory sundaes were enjoyed this year, great thanks for the generosity of our members was celebrated by all.

Our 2021 estimates of giving are \$407,254 compared to \$428,606 for 2020. Additionally, we expect to have \$67,331.50 for Our Church’s Wider Mission which was lower than last year’s amount of \$93,885. Here are further results of the campaign in statistics below.

A total of 175 estimates of giving received (including 20 new pledging households!)

- 83 increased their estimates of giving
- 65 kept their estimates of giving the same
- 27 decreased their estimates of giving

Additionally, there were 19 previous givers we hoped to hear from but did not.

We learned new information about our givers, especially about the older age of our donors. We collaborated with the Trustees on a Narrative Budget to tell the story of our ministry beyond the numbers. We participated in a Budget Summit with the Trustees, Gift Planning and Council to plot a five year financial plan ensuring sustainability.

As the budget conversations will reveal, and especially in a pandemic, there is evidence of work that yet lies ahead. There is also great reason to rejoice. We are grateful for all the ways our mission and ministry in the Northfield Area is supported and our role in strengthening it.

The committee is thankful to all who participated so generously this year!

Linda Burdell, Meleah Follen, Marie Gerry, Ann Sullivan, Pastor Wendy

TREASURER

NALANI MCCUTCHEON

To say that 2020 was not a normal year would be an understatement. The process of monitoring the church's financial matters changed dramatically over the year as we transitioned from in-person worship and pledge collection to Zoom worship.

Trustees anticipated that 2020 would be a difficult year for our congregation both emotionally and financially due to the pandemic. The stresses were intensified by the racial injustice and political instability our country experienced this year as well. It was, and is, important for the church to adjust to the changing needs of our congregation in this physically distant and emotionally unsettling time.

We lost several members of our congregation who relocated or who passed away. Their absence resulted in a substantial loss of contributions, both in presence and in financial support. At the same time we experienced the need to expend resources to keep our congregation connected despite the distance. Together, these changes created stress on the original 2020 operating budget. The church community, and Trustees, trimmed where possible while spending where necessary to ensure that our congregation stayed connected and supported. While we were anticipating a significant deficit at the end of 2020, the congregation and broader community answered our call, providing additional unplanned donations that not only filled the gap but also provided a significant surplus for 2020.

Key tasks that were accomplished by the Trustees in 2020 include:

- Installation of the Organ Chimes, completing the organ restoration project.
- Designating a tree at Valley Grove Church in honor of Pastor Todd Lippert's service.
- Installed a new phone system.
- Reworked the library ceiling structure to facilitate removal and replacement of the window.
- Worked with the City of Northfield to obtain a 90% reduction from the original street assessment.
- Forgave the day care rent until it was able to obtain PPP funding support and reopen.
- Subscribed to Zoom and created a Tech Steward Position to facilitate remote worship.
- Established a money market account and moved Intermediate Reserves into that designated account.
- Developed a narrative budget for our stewardship campaign
- Approved moving forward with cameras in the Sanctuary to enhance Zoom worship.
- Held a listening session with the Church Council, Stewardship Committee, and Planned Giving Committee to discuss the 2021 budget before recommending it to Council and the Congregation.
- Accepted the resignation of the Finance Manager and facilitated the transition to Clergy Financial Services for at least a portion of 2021.

The development of the 2021 budget has forced conversations about our budgetary reliance on pledge donations and the impact of lost pledging units on our ability to support our church's mission. Decisions made in 2019 in large part locked in the expense side of the 2021 budget, and while the stewardship committee is revitalizing its work, increasing revenue will grow more slowly than necessary to balance the 2021 budget by year end. Thankfully, the surplus from 2020 can be applied to the 2021 budget, nearly filling the anticipated gap. There is, however, a long-term sustainability question. Trustees will be leading a process to build a new 2022 budget that is in line with revenues we anticipate our congregation can sustain in the long term. Everyone's participation and generosity contributes to the overall strength and success of our work together. Thank you.

Annual financial statements for 2020 and the budget for 2021 are included with this report.

Trustees want to recognize and thank Finance Manager Andrea Pegram for her extraordinary efforts on behalf of the church over her years of service. Her work has been crucial to the operations of the Trustees and she will be greatly missed.

Nalani McCutcheon, treasurer

2020 Trustees: Wes Kinstad, Chuck Follen, Adam Hoffman, Carrie Menk and Fred Rodgers
Pastor Wendy Vander Hart and Finance Manager Andrea Pegram support the trustees in an ex officio capacity.

Balance Sheet
 First United Church of Christ
 300 Union Street
 Northfield, MN 55057
 507-645-7532

Dec 31 2020

<u>ASSETS</u>			
	Merchants Bank Checking	192,156.29	
	Merchants Bank Money Market	68,033.48	
	Schwab Long Term Reserves	609,711.83	
	LED Lighting	7,002.37	
Total			876,903.97
TOTAL ASSETS			876,903.97
<u>LIABILITIES AND FUNDS</u>			
LIABILITIES			
	Center for Energy & Environment Loan (for LED Lighting)	7,002.37	
Total			7,002.37
TOTAL LIABILITIES			7,002.37
FUND BALANCES			
SHORT TERM RESERVES			
	Operating Fund	68,598.36	
SHORT TERM RESERVES Total			68,598.36
INTERMEDIATE RESERVES			
	Intermediate Reserves	68,033.48	
INTERMEDIATE RESERVES Total			68,033.48
LONG TERM RESERVES			
	Long Term Reserves	609,711.83	
LONG TERM RESERVES Total			609,711.83
RESTRICTED RESERVES			
	90% OCWM	5,316.26	
	Pastor's Discretionary Fund	11,473.11	
	One Great Hour of Sharing	354.00	
	Neighbors in Need	308.00	
	Food Share	32.00	
	Christmas Eve Offering	4,279.00	
	CAC and Christmas Sharing	287.00	
	Strengthen the Church	33.00	
	Misc. Designated Contributions	8,844.14	
	Children's Offering	939.54	
	Adult Ed Projects/Events	609.84	
	Youth Mission Trip	1,601.44	
	Youth Special Projects	114.18	
	Congregational Care	796.24	
	WFFF	906.45	

Dec 31 2020

Flower Power	1,502.81	
Courtyard Memorial Garden	1,881.43	
Special Functions	1,665.71	
Softball Team	28.47	
Pilgrim Point Retreat	1,341.17	
Minister Sabbatical	9,500.00	
Organ Restoration	(13,500.36)	
Prepaid Local	72,029.00	
Prepaid OCWM	13,215.50	
RESTRICTED RESERVES Total		123,557.93
TOTAL FUNDS		<u><u>869,901.60</u></u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUNDS		<u><u>876,903.97</u></u>
Difference		0.00

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Item	Description	2016 Actual	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Budget
INCOME							
Donations	Annual pledges and offerings	453,570	412,846	469,444	460,413	431,580	420,609
Other Income	Income & building use fees	26,191	37,414	37,426	30,085	35,448	45,834
Missions Income	OCWM pledges & other special offerings	80,388	82,242	83,290	92,863	99,115	TBD
TOTAL OPERATING INCOME		479,760	460,280	506,870	490,498	467,028	466,443
Operating Transfer from Intermediate Reserves					17,219		20,018
TOTAL INCOME					484,247		486,461
EXPENSES							
Personnel Compensation Includes the following:	Salaries & benefits for ministers and staff	271,588	293,793	291,498	298,939	318,135	325,237
	Senior Minister Compensation	95,037	104,709	108,441	80,122	116,099	129,732
	Associate Minister Compensation	76,845	83,733	82,284	51,230	0	0
	Minister for Congregational Life Compensation	0	0	0	73,218	109,467	109,483
	All Other Staff Compensation	99,706	105,351	100,773	94,370	92,569	86,021
Personnel- Other	Auto expenses, continuing education, other professional expenses, workers compensation, and future sabbatical	6,548	7,090	31,065	7,617	5,071	19,760
Administration	Printing, copier maintenance & supplies, office supplies, phone, postage, computer maintenance & software	13,476	15,042	20,115	19,423	19,394	28,485
Building Operation	Utilities, building & organ maintenance, insurance, and future maintenance	79,182	87,791	77,204	111,866	95,722	79,104
Committees & Programs	All Boards & Committees	17,043	13,933	14,008	14,599	12,658	20,150
Dues & Seminary Support	Conference Dues & Seminary support	7,510	7,470	11,975	13,080	13,250	16,320
TOTAL LOCAL EXPENSES		395,346	425,118	445,865	465,524	464,229	489,056
Missions Expense	OCWM (100%)	69,621	64,815	68,786	77,650	79,816	TBD
	OGHS, NIN, Christmas Eve, and other	10,768	17,427	14,504	15,213	11,725	TBD
	Special Offerings	80,388	82,242	83,290	92,863	91,541	TBD
TOTAL MISSIONS EXPENSE		395,346	425,118	445,865	465,524	464,229	489,056
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE		84,414	26,142	61,004	24,974	20,018	(2,599)
OPERATING INCOME LESS EXPENSE							

First United Church of Christ

	2020 Actual	Budget for 2021
Income Accounts		
Income		
Pledged Donations	401,966	402,609
Current Year	318,908	407,254
Previous Year	5,645	3,500
Pledged, Prepaid	77,413	
Uncollected Pledge Allowance	0	-8,145
Unpledged Donations	29,615	18,000
Unpledged Gifts	27,620	15,000
Estate Gifts	0	0
Unrestricted Memorial Gifts	1,995	3,000
Investment Income	19,971	28,738
Building Income	12,400	13,960
Day Care Rent	11,880	12,960
Miscellaneous Building Rent	520	1,000
Miscellaneous Income	3,076	3,136
Miscellaneous Income	1,107	1,200
Realized Gain on Contributions	33	0
Solar Panel Incentive Rebate Income	1,936	1,936
Total Operating Income	467,028	466,443
Operating Transfer from Intermediate Reserves	17,219	20,018
Total Income	484,247	486,461
Expense Accounts		
Expense		
Payroll Expenses	312,990.77	319,737
Wages	180,497.32	220,429
Interim Senior Minister	47,751	45,048
Senior Minister	0	15,996
Congregational Life Minister	51,132	83,044
Communications/Operations Director	0	39,000
Office Manager & Finance Manager	45,533	
Music Director	13,734	13,734
Spirit Voices Director/Arts Coordinator	6,030	6,031
Organist	11,512	11,823
Sexton	3,717	3,717
Child Care Coordinator	347	2,036
Staff Bonuses	741	0

First United Church of Christ

	2020 Actual	Budget for 2021
Benefits	38,723.36	41,521
Health & Dental - Interim Senior Minister	17,000	11,712
Health & Dental - Senior Minister	0	7,047
Health & Dental - Congregational Life Minister	6,937	7,215
Health & Dental - Communications/Operations Director	0	0
Social Security Offset - Interim Senior	5,893	4,793
Social Security Offset - Senior Minister		1,853
Social Security Offset - Congregational Life Minister	6,295	6,353
Disability - Interim Senior Minister	1,249	940
Disability - Senior Minister	0	363
Disability - Congregational Life Minister	1,350	1,246
Disability - Communications/Operations Director	0	0
Housing Allowance	60,441	25,820
Interim Senior Minister	29,283	17,600
Senior Minister	0	8,220
Congregational Life Minister	31,159	0
Retirement	27,020	26,127
Interim Senior Minister	11,653	8,771
Senior Minister	0	3,390
Congregational Life Minister	12,595	11,626
Communications/Operations Director	0	2,340
Office Manager & Finance Manager	2,772	0
Taxes	6,308	5,840
Education / Training	750	1,000
Conferences and Meetings/Professional Expenses	717	1,500
Contractors/Professional Fees	4,125	13,836
Clergy Financial Services - Bookkeeping	0	6,240
Clergy Financial Services - Payroll	0	1,036
Clergy Financial Services - Human Resources	0	600
Junior Choir Director	1,875	1,500
Other contracted services	990	1,500
ASL Interpretation	1,260	2,160
Tech Steward	0	800
Insurance	22,986.25	28,254
Worker's Compensation	-295	1,489
Property & Liability Insurance	23,281	26,765
Advertising & Marketing	1,571	5,300
Equipment/Computer	0	0
Internet/Email	975	9,000
Mileage	232	2,350
Miscellaneous	3,796	4,045
Postage & Delivery	1,013	1,200

First United Church of Christ

	2020 Actual	Budget for 2021
Printing & Reproduction	883	1,000
Rental / Lease	2,720	2,500
Service Charges	720	1,150
Supplies	2,200	3,000
Telephone	2,511	2,400
Travel	3,269	4,000
Grounds and Facilities	11,285	10,355
Repairs / Maintenance	45,358.18	25,254
Organ Maintenance	2,748	2,000
Elevator/Boiler Maintenance	1,578	1,024
Air Conditioning Maintenance	2,980	3,070
Fire/Safety Inspections	1,160	1,160
General Maintenance - Operating	22,525	6,000
General Maintenance - Capital	0	12,000
Capital Project Expense (non operating)	14,367	
Utilities	13,748.10	12,678
Gas	5,888	6,000
Electricity	4,442	4,500
Trash	796	878
Water/City Utilities	2,622	1,200
Water Softener	0	100
Committee and Program Expenses	12,657.70	13,350
Guest Preachers	525	500
Music	776	1,750
Visual Team	144	300
Worship Team	6,154	400
Hospitality	848	600
Congregational Care	118	350
Children's Education	1,454	3,500
Confirmation	200	500
Youth Ministries	788	3,500
Adult Education	0	200
Stewardship	1,481	1,500
Annual Meeting Delegates	0	0
Membership	169	250
Dues, Subscriptions, Licenses	11,170.00	18,095
UCC Minnesota Conference Per Capita Dues	4,250	4,320
ISIAIH Dues	5,000	5,000
CDM+	1,920	2,100
Zoom	0	6,000
Vimeo Premium	0	675

First United Church of Christ

	2020 Actual	Budget for 2021
Charitable Contributions	4,000	7,000
United Theological Seminary Support	4,000	4,000
Racial Justice Support	0	3,000
Total Expense	464,228.53	489,056
Net Ordinary Income	20,018.13	-2,594.67
Net Income		-2,595

What is OCWM?

OCWM stands for “Our Church’s Wider Mission.”

During our annual stewardship time, we invite you to divide your financial pledge into two amounts: a local estimate of giving and an OCWM estimate of giving. A suggested contribution to OCWM is 10-30% of your total annual church giving.

OCWM funds the work the UCC does in its associations and conferences, and in the national and global church. OCWM funds are invested in programs, resources, and tools needed to keep local UCC churches strong, effective, and growing. OCWM is the shared funds of the United Church of Christ that makes all the UCC does at the state, national, and global levels possible.

Local congregations make important decisions about how much OCWM they will give to support the wider ministries of the United Church of Christ, and from there (in Minnesota) OCWM dollars are split between the Minnesota Conference and the national setting. The Minnesota Conference keeps 65.25% of all OCWM gifts received from our local churches, and shares 34.75% of all OCWM gifts received with the national setting.

At First UCC Northfield, 90% of OCWM funds collected are passed to the Minnesota Conference UCC. Here are examples of OCWM dollars in action at that level:

- When one of your church staff or members attends a leadership training, congregational vitality workshop, a faith formation seminar, or a compassionate service or prophetic witness event.
- When a Conference staff person helps a congregation that is experiencing hard times, a conflict, or other crisis.
- When you see the prophetic work of the UCC around social justice issues like LGBTQ rights, anti-racism, immigration, hunger, peace, and environmental quality locally, nationally, and internationally.
- When you have prayed for the critical mission work of people working on behalf of the UCC in countries all across the globe, providing critical presence in places of undeniable need.

The remaining 10% is kept by our congregation. Historically, a social justice committee was in charge of the disbursement of these funds. As that committee became inactive in recent years, the Council voted in December 2016 to shift these dollars to the Pastors Discretionary Fund. The detail of this spending is included in the monthly ministerial reports provided by the pastors to church leadership for Church Council meetings. The Pastors’ Discretionary Fund supports a variety of local and global projects and concerns, as well as individuals in crisis.

OCWM and the Pastor's Discretionary Fund are both non-operating funds which appear on First UCC's balance sheet. It should also be noted that OCWM is a separate offering from First UCC’s five special annual collections: MN Food Share, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and the Christmas Eve Offering.

We are very proud that First UCC Northfield is among the strongest givers to OCWM both in Minnesota and nationally. Thank you for your generosity.

FIRST UCC NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT (2021)

Members: Mary Carlson, Nancy Johnson-Maloney, Laura Turek and Pastor Wendy Vanderhart

The Nominating Committee worked from September through December to identify individuals for specific leadership positions on our standing committees. Our nominees for the coming year are (new nominees and/or new positions are in **bold**):

Church Council (7)

Moderator: Sam Steinberg ('22)

Vice Moderator: **Deb Gottfried ('23)**

Treasurer: Nalani McCutcheon ('22)

Clerk: **Judy Bond ('21)**

At-Large Members

Don Perkins ('22)

Anne Sawyer Heinz ('23)

Anne Meyer Ruppel('23)

Nominating Committee (3)

Mary Carlson ('21)

Laura Turek ('22)

Don Perkins ('23)

Board of Trustees (6)

Treasurer: Nalani McCutcheon ('22)

Wes Kinstad ('22)

Fred Rogers ('23)

Carrie Menk ('23)

Brian Turek ('24)

David Beimers ('24)

TBD (Staff)

Facilities Committee (6)

Kathryn Jamison ('21)

John Menk ('21)

Andy Henslin ('22)

Steve Pak ('22)

Emily Schwamb ('23)

Rachel Egeberg ('23)

Stewardship Committee (4)

Marie Gery ('21)

Linda Burdell ('22)

Ann Sullivan ('22)

Marty Hodel ('23)

**APPENDIX A - OUTSIDE GROUPS THAT USED THE FIRST UCC BUILDING
IN 2020:**

City of Northfield
Girl Scout Troop 25410
ISALAH
Northfield Handbell Choir
Stepsisters of Northfield #113
Vintage Band Board of Directors