



UNITED CHURCH OF STRAFFORD

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018





United Church of Strafford Annual Report for 2017-2018



Contents

Warning.....	4
Agenda	4
Minutes of the 2017 Annual Meeting.....	5
Pastor's Report.....	6
Board of Deacons Report.....	10
Board of Trustees Report 2017-2018.....	11
Treasurer's Report	13
Endowment Committee Report.....	13
Religious Education Report.....	15
Mission Committee Report.....	15
Music Director's Report	18
Stewardship Committee Report	21
Addendum A – Endowment Funds Budget Report.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Addendum B – 2017-2018 Budget.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Warning
United Church of Strafford
ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
Sunday, September 16, 2018
Following the Sunday morning service

The congregation will be asked to act on committee and board reports and to vote on nominees for boards and committees and the annual church budget.

The congregation will also be asked to approve a transfer of \$25,000 from the Endowment to the Cumulative Income Account for anticipated major capital costs and operating deficits over the next three years. This motion further allows a change of the name of the Cumulative Income Account to the Cumulative Income Capital Account.

The congregation may also act on any other issues that are legally brought before the meeting

Agenda

AGENDA FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF
THE UNITED CHURCH OF STRAFFORD

Sunday, September 16, 2018

- I. Moderator call meeting to order
- II. Elect a moderator- one year term
- III. Call to Covenant
- IV. Review the minutes of the 2017 Annual Meeting
- V. Review and act upon the reports of the church officers and committees
 - a. Pastor's Report
 - b. Council report
 - c. Board of Deacons report
 - d. Deacon's fund report
 - e. Board of Trustees report
 - f. Treasurer's report

- g. Endowment committee report
- h. Religious Education report
- i. Mission committee report
- j. Music Director's report
- k. Stewardship committee report
- VI. Review and act upon the proposed budget for the 2018-2019 fiscal year
- VII. Any other business
- VIII. Meeting adjournment

Minutes of the 2017 Annual Meeting

United Church of Strafford

Minutes 9-16-17

Annual Meeting

There were 23 members present.

I. The meeting was called to order at 11:30 by Moderator Bill Burden.

II. Bill continued to run the meeting, though he stepped aside at the end for new moderator John Hawkins to take on this job (see new nominations).

III. Pastor Tom Kinder called the meeting to covenant.

IV. The minutes of the 2016 Annual Meeting were read and accepted.

V. The reports of various committees were read and accepted. These included:

a. the Council report, in which Bill noted with gratitude all the accomplishments of the last year, including hiring new pastor Tom Kinder who began service in September 2017.

b. the Board of Deacons report was accepted and filed.

c. the Board of Trustees report was accepted and filed. The trustees reported that the church had significant expenses this year, including major septic repair at the parsonage and mold remediation at the parish hall. This has all been taken into account for the budget for the upcoming year.

d. the Religious Education was accepted and filed. Danette and Joey will undertake this again this fall to see if we have any takers.

e. the Mission Committee report was accepted and filed. They have been active with a number of projects, including the school-based Health Hub.

f. the Music Director's report was accepted and filed. The congregation is very grateful to have Annemieke!

g. the Stewardship Committee report was accepted and filed. A pledge letter has just gone out for the 2017-2018 church year.

h. the Pastoral Search Committee report was accepted and filed. The congregation is pleased to have Tom Kinder as our new pastor!

i. the Nominating Committee did not file a report, as there were no new nominations. Nominations from the floor included Bill Burden for trustee for a term of three years, and John Hawkins for moderator for a term of one year. John Echeverria will continue as trustee for one year, and Kerry Claffey will continue as treasurer. Currently the deacons are Becky Bailey, Kim Welsh, and Gretchen Hannon. The deacons are looking for an additional deacon or two, who will be appointed. Other committees (Danette Harris, Missions) and Joey Hawkins (Stewardship) remain the same. We are presently operating without a clerk or a Hospitality Committee.

j. the Financial Report was presented this morning. Since the trustees have not yet had an opportunity to read it, it was accepted provisionally with the understanding that the trustees will meet within a week or so to make some final budget adjustments and review the budget written by the treasurer. The budget is up significantly for several reasons (the above –mentioned expenses, health insurance for the pastor), which will mean using more of the funds generated by the Endowment Fund than we have done recently. The report was discussed and passed with the understanding that the trustees will review it.

k. there was no Pastoral Relations report, as the committee did not meet.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15.

Respectfully submitted,
Joey Hawkins, acting clerk

Pastor's Report

The United Church of Stratford covenant says that we will “nurture contemplation and action.” This has been a rich year for both. The congregation contemplated what we appreciate about the church and dream it will be and do, and we also were active in a remarkable number of ways as you will see in these pages, including new programs nurturing contemplative spiritual practices.

My family and I moved into the parsonage in July 2017 and I began my half-time ministry here at the end of August. We appreciated the church's graciousness as we cleaned and painted and took time to settle into the community. We felt enthusiastically welcomed and we reciprocated and celebrated with a parsonage open house for the congregation after worship on September 10th.

In the fall I led worship, provided pastoral care and met with committees and boards. I also worked with the Deacons and Church Council on a process to help me get to know the congregation and get a sense of where the Spirit was leading us as a church. We held small gatherings at the homes of John and Gretchen Hannon, John and Joey Hawkins, Melvin and Sue Coburn and Martha Manheim and one in the Pastor's Study. I took careful notes at each gathering. We circulated a questionnaire to the entire church family as well.

The Council established a Future Directions Study Group to look at all the notes and questionnaire responses. Laura Martineau was part of the Study Group initially and contributed significantly with insights and interpretations. John Hawkins, Danette Harris and I then continued to condense all the comments on given topics into summary statements of what we appreciated about the church or what we dreamed for it or both. By May we had drafted twenty-two summary statements in thirteen topic areas.

We shared the Future Directions Summary Statements with the Church Council and then the entire church family. We asked people to respond over the course of a month telling us whether the statements reflected the spirit of the congregation as they understood it, and how important or high a priority each statement seemed to them.

The results were overwhelmingly positive, affirming that the Statements describe the church we feel called to be. The Statements and comments will help guide our work in the time ahead.

The church expressed the hope during the search process that the pastor would serve as a chaplain to the town and be a visible presence in the community. Those are challenging for a half-time pastor to accomplish on top of the already overfull agenda of worship, pastoral care to the congregation and administrative tasks.

I attend senior meals and other community events when I can and chat with people at Coburns, but the most efficient and far-reaching way for me to establish a townwide presence and chaplaincy is online. I created a new website for the congregation and have used it extensively for posting sermons, upcoming service notes and church news. We have logged over 5,400 views on it this year. I have used Facebook and the Strafford listserv to let the community know what the church is doing and to give people a feel for who I am, and also to connect the town to our website's offerings. We reach dozens and sometimes hundreds with those weekly postings.

I have heard from many townspeople in response and served some of them as chaplain. Several attending worship for the first time have said it was the internet presence that drew their interest.

Among many important areas of focus, our Future Directions conversations in the fall revealed a passion for serving children, youth and young families and a strong interest in contemplative practices. We had wonderful programs in both of these areas over the past year.

Danette Harris and Joey Hawkins created superb religious exploration sessions for children during the traditional Sunday School time, one on prayer in different religious traditions and another on the life and teachings of Jesus and their relevance to us today. Annemieke McLane created a lovely laughter and light-filled Christmas pageant that many town children performed to a large crowd during an Advent worship service.

Annemieke and I also designed a program called “Songs That Can Change the World” for youth, although in the end we had far more adults in attendance. The first set of events was before Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday in January, watching the film *Freedom Song* and learning songs of the Civil Rights Movement which an expanded choir then sang in worship. The second set of events focused on the anti-apartheid movement of South Africa. We watched the films *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* and *Invictus* as well as some clips from a documentary on South African freedom songs. We learned some of those songs and once again an expanded choir sang them during worship, this time joined by master drummer, Steve Ferraris of Norwich.

The congregation expressed in the fall a desire to learn more about the Christian contemplative tradition and practices. The timing could not have been better because Christian contemplative teachers Mark and Lisa Kutolowski had just moved to Strafford. The first program they offered was “Transforming Fear into Trust: A Contemplative Journey Through Advent,” engaging with five traditional figures from the Advent readings, discovering what spiritual lessons they teach us, and learning corresponding contemplative prayer practices. The program was designed to help us find a way to live in hope and trust in our personal lives and in a world that often feels unjust and endangered.

The people who attended that program expressed a desire to learn and practice more. Lisa, Mark and I launched Heartfulness Contemplative Training, a program offering a weekly gathering for contemplative training and practice as well as opportunities for spiritual direction and deeper immersion. The first immersion experience was a well-attended half-day Lenten Centering Prayer retreat, an introductory workshop led by Mark.

We then began our weekly Heartfulness Contemplative Training Circle. It includes two silent meditation sessions with conversation in between. We spent the first six sessions during Lent studying Thomas Keating’s classic introduction to Centering Prayer, *Open Mind, Open Heart*. The Circle continues to meet on Thursday afternoons from 5:45 to 6:45 PM in the Parish Hall.

Looking back over the year I am amazed and moved by how rich it was: the Rummage Sale; the Lord’s Acre performance that Joey Hawkins and Annemieke McLane created and led; the beautiful Advent and Christmas Eve rituals; Annemieke’s astounding, transporting monthly concerts with the Manheim Fund for the Arts’ support; the many moving moments of beauty provided by the choir and Annemieke every week; the delight of children’s contributions to worship including Emmett’s candle lighting and Luke’s exuberance; supporting good causes

through the Mission Committee, contributing this year to the work of grown children of the congregation out in the world and sending delegations to the Poor People's Campaign rallies in Montpelier; the Deacon's Fund and Food Shelf helping local people in need; Mel Goertz's haiku; the prophetic voices, voices of gladness or pain—sharing our lives in meaningful ways during Joys and Concerns each week; Maggie Hooker's extraordinary telling of her story during worship; Dot Burden's vigilant pew button ministry; the tender loving care of the church and parsonage given by Bill Burden, Kerry Claffey, John Echeverria, John Hawkins and Jack Welsh and Ed Eastman and the prolific stewardship of the endowment committee; the 50th anniversary of the official uniting of the United Church of Strafford; the 45th anniversary of the dedication of the Parish Hall with a fun and exciting concert by John Atwood who had given the recital at the original dedication (this winter John refurbished the organ that he had helped David Moore build not long before the dedication recital); deeply moving memorial services and the community Thanksgiving service that brought many diverse people from town together; an attempt to add a harmonization to the Lord's Prayer so that everyone may find their theological part; the mix of festive joy and holy gloom at the Maundy Thursday Last Supper Seder Dinner Theater; the beautiful but bone crushingly cold Easter Sunrise service on Gove Hill followed by the warmth of the pancake breakfast put on by Jim Schley and Becky Bailey and a radiantly joyous indoor Easter service.

This is just a partial list—I cannot begin to mention all the readers and child care and refreshment providers and flower arrangers and gardeners and everything Jane Prescott does and so many volunteers who lovingly give of themselves to make this village church the treasure that it is to us all.

Thank you so much. It is a joy to be here with you.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tom Kinder

Church Council Report

As Moderator, the officer responsible for calling and setting the agenda for church Council meetings, I've been in a position to see and appreciate the immense amount of work that our Pastor, the church officers, and the committees have put in on behalf of the congregation over the past year.

I want to refer back to Bill Burden's Moderator's Report from last year. He did a wonderful job of summarizing all the things that he felt thankful for during the year. While I won't repeat his words, I do feel the same gratitude to all of you that he expressed so well last year.

The committee chairs and officers will report on their many accomplishments but there are a few specifics I'd like to mention.

A highlight from this year's Council meetings and subsequent work was the questionnaire and small group gathering process that Tom initiated and carried out. This led to the Future Directions committee work on the distillation and presentation of Summary Statements from the questionnaire and gatherings last fall. The Statements were universally approved this past June and the committee will draft a 1-2 paragraph Mission/Identity/vision statement that will capture the work.

The Trustees have worked hard on the finances, even though they faced a second year of unplanned capital expenses at the Parsonage.

The Safe Church policies work is ongoing (so far changes in childcare policy) and the Council is committed to continue work on this until we have a more comprehensive statement approved and all volunteers are properly trained.

I'm thankful for Tom's leadership in so many ways and appreciative for all the effort the Council has put into this past year!

John Hawkins
Moderator

Board of Deacons Report

The Board of Deacons oversees the religious life of the church and manages the Deacons Fund, a discretionary fund for helping people through times of financial hardship. We have subcommittees on Hospitality (a "fast squad" for providing refreshments for funerals and other special events) and Worship Assistance. The three Deacons continue to be Becky Bailey (chair), Gretchen Hannon (treasurer) and Kim Welsh.

The Deacons loved working with Tom this past year. He contributed great ideas to every aspect of our work, and he engaged us in his quest to make our church and worship service feel truly inclusive to people from many backgrounds while staying in touch with its traditions.

This past year, the Deacons fulfilled many requests for help with a variety of needs, including utility bills and car payments. We also partnered with the Coburns Food Shelf to provide Thanksgiving baskets to families in need in the community; made and delivered "Christmas cheer bags" to numerous families; organized Lenten celebrations, including a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper; special services on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday; and a joyful Easter Sunday pancake breakfast, following a sunrise service on Gove Hill conducted with the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Strafford. The Deacons provided hospitality and support for numerous memorial services held at the United Church this past year. Details of the Deacons Fund income and expenditures are in the report submitted by our treasurer, Gretchen Hannon.

Our goals for this next year include: continuing to work with Tom on the religious life of the church, including worship services, community outreach and overseeing religious education; recruiting at least one more deacon and several people to help with subcommittees; and creating or supporting events outside of worship services that enhance the life of the church.

Respectfully submitted,
Becky Bailey (chair), Gretchen Hannon (treasurer), and Kim Welsh

Annual Deacons' Treasurer's Report August 1, 2017 through July 31, 2018

Checkbook balance July 31, 2017	\$ 5389.71
---------------------------------	------------

Income:

Monthly Deacons' Fund	\$ 1600.00
UCS Rummage Sale (2017)	<u>\$ 1418.00</u>

Total Income	\$ 2018.00
--------------	------------

Expenses

Deacons' supplies	(candles, Christmas baskets)	\$ 82.00
Funeral expenses	(supplies, heat)	\$ 206.00
Individual Help		<u>\$ 2280.00</u>
rent	\$475	
hospital	\$200	
car repair	\$483	
gas	\$200	
electricity	\$732	
misc	\$190	

Total Expenses	\$ 2568.00
----------------	------------

Checkbook balance July 31, 2018	\$ 5989.48
---------------------------------	------------

Respectfully submitted, Gretchen Hannon, Deacon Treasurer

Board of Trustees Report 2017-2018

This year's Trustees included John Echeverria, Bill Burden (Chair) and our treasurer was Kerry Claffey. We were not able to recruit a third Trustee.

The church facilities consist of two very old structures- the sanctuary and the parsonage. Even with the major renovation of the sanctuary some years ago and significant repairs to the parsonage recently, the maintenance costs of both buildings continue to increase. We are very grateful to congregation volunteers who help keep things running and who dealt with some repair issues, but we still have to contract and pay for the big repairs and refurbishments that are ongoing.

Parsonage maintenance- The parsonage furnace was inspected by Ben Linehan and the recommendation was to replace the furnace as rust (there were rust holes in the sheet metal casing of the boiler) and other damage has impaired furnace operation. The installation was completed in May of 2018, including a gas fuel tank from Rymes.

When Lynn Wickberg completed her term as interim pastor, she left a list of parsonage small maintenance items that she experienced. We have worked our way through this list- mostly the problems of an old house needing constant maintenance. In November, the dishwasher failed to operate. A plumber was called in and found that the shut-off valve had failed and it was replaced.

Jack Welsh came on board as our church Sexton early this year. We developed a job description for Jack that works for his available time and he has been able to deal with many issues both in the church and at the parsonage.

Sanctuary and Parish Hall maintenance- A number of significant issues developed in both the Sanctuary and Parish Hall that required our attention.

The odor and presence of mold became a problem in the Parish Hall and resulted in a cleanup and installation of a large dehumidifier in the Parish Hall. This has greatly diminished the odor and kept the room dry.

Problems with the organ resulted in our contacting John Atwood, one of the original installers of the organ, to get the organ maintained and repaired. The cost came to \$4000 plus some mileage and the refurbished organ was “exercised” at a recital by John Atwood on June 29, 2018.

There was some maintenance and repair work done on the furnaces that heat the sanctuary and parish hall related to repeat failures of one of the furnaces to start when the thermostat called for heat. Jack Welsh found and opened up an outside air vent in the furnace room that was almost completely plugged with dust, etc.

John Echeverria arranged for Dottie Dubey to repair and paint the window shutters and decorative fans on the sanctuary. Time and weather had done some damage and worn off paint.

Currently, we have a donation of \$2000 toward refurbishing the cement walkway into the sanctuary. We have an estimate of \$3500 to remove and replace the damaged sections of the cement walkway including the section at the base of the steps. We plan to get this project done before cold weather sets in and would appreciate any financial donations to support this effort.

We were able to bring Ed Eastman in to do the sanctuary and parish hall clean-ups. He is doing a clean-up every other week and stripped, cleaned and waxed the parish hall floor in late July.

I met with Strafford fire chief, Shawn Harlow and did a walk-through of the sanctuary and parish hall. Shawn provided recommendations on fire extinguishers, the main exit doors in the sanctuary and placement of paper rubbish and other flammable waste. Emergency exit, "Last Person Leaving" and church contact lists have been posted in the sanctuary and parish hall.

2017-18 Budget results

Last year's budget (2017-18) income was \$81,800 and expenses were budgeted at \$97,500, resulting in a projected deficit of -\$15,700. Our expenses at year end were slightly less than expected. (See year-end financial report)

Approximately 66% of last year's budget paid for employee's salaries and associated costs that include retirement plan, Dental insurance, Vision insurance, life insurance, health insurance, reimbursed expenses, housing and Social Security.

Insurance for the church and parsonage has been reviewed and found to be inadequate. We are working on building replacement and building content information for the insurance company.

Related to the budget, we have embarked on an effort to establish a capital fund within the Endowment to be used for near-term capital improvements of the facilities. This is still a work-in-process. We will be working on a plan for upgrades/major repairs we anticipate will be needed in the next few years both at the church and the parsonage and will make this plan available to the congregation for comments.

For the Trustees;

Bill Burden, chairperson

Treasurer's Report for the Fiscal Year August 1, 2017 – July 31, 2018

Attached is the three sections that make up the report that I handed out --

Part ONE: the "Cash Flow sheet" that ties everything together.

Part TWO: the "Budgeted income and Expenses"

Part THREE: the reports of all of the "Reserve Funds"

I Believe that ALL of the ending dates have been corrected to read 7/31/2018.

As you know, it was an eventful and exciting year for the Trustees and Treasurer.

Although both our income and expenses closely followed the budget, that budget was created with a deficit of \$15,700. Our actual budget deficit ended up being only \$13,477. The budget deficit was covered by the transfer of funds from the Endowment (\$6,939) and by using a small amount of the Bequests from Ned Coffin and Nancy Gerlach (\$8,0000) to help support the budget that contained the expenses our new minister half-time minister.

The two major projects this year were 1.) the Organ Refurbishment (\$4,125), which was covered by the Coffin Bequest, and the unexpected cost of replacing the failed furnace in the Parsonage (\$10,319), which was 90% covered by a withdrawal from the Endowment Fund with a small amount being covered by the Ruby Lornell Fund.

The other withdrawal from the Endowment fund (\$13,061) was to cover the deficit in, and close out, the Trustees Reserve Fund – the deficit in this fund was caused by the replacement of the failed septic system at the parsonage near the end of the '16-'17 fiscal year.

In February (as the Trustees began thinking about budget for the new fiscal year), John Hawkins led a successful fundraising campaign to help support our wonderful music program. Thanks to this campaign, we have funds in hand to support one half of the compensation for our music director for the coming Fiscal Year.

Kerry

Endowment Committee Report

Annual Report

Fiscal Year Ending July 31 2018

Your Endowment Fund totaled \$377,795 at year-end. We received three gift donations totaling \$49,526. There were three disbursements totaling \$32,400: \$2,600 for mission work, \$20,000 to cover last year's operating deficit, and \$9,800 for a new parsonage boiler. In accordance with the Endowment Committee's rules of operation and policy, we credited the cumulative income account with \$9,946 on July 31 2018. This represents 3% of the average of the last three years value. The cumulative income account now totals \$11,743. Thanks to the generous gifts and a rising stock market, our year end corpus account totaled \$366,052 a 24% increase over the July 31, 2017 balance of \$295,206.

Your committee met twice in the 2018 fiscal year. We review our asset allocation, investment diversification, fund performance, and criteria for selection of funds. We added an initial investment of \$36,000 in two of the Parnassus socially responsible funds. We ended the year with 78.9% of the funds invested in equities and 21.1% in fixed income instruments.

We encourage our members and friends to make special monetary gifts to the Church's Endowment Funds. Stock, bond, check and cash donations are welcomed and accepted. Appreciated stock donations may be tax beneficial to the donor. Additional information for gifting appreciated assets is available from any committee member.

In addition, we strongly encourage church members and friends to consider making provisions in their wills and estate plans for a gift to the Church. There is no better way to create a lasting contribution for the future of our church family and home.

Respectfully Submitted

Ken Bushnell Chair
John Hawkins
Kevin Plunkett

United Church of Strafford Endowment Funds

See Addendum A

Religious Education Report

This year, it was a pleasure for us to work closely with Pastor Tom Kinder as we planned for the religious education of our children. We thank Tom for his time and input. We also thank the parents who met with us and talked with us about what they desire for religious education for their own children.

There were two sessions of religious education created and presented in the past year. The first session addressed prayer.

We started out by talking about why, when and where people pray. We focused on the Lord's Prayer during each lesson, discussing each section of the prayer and what the words actually meant. Then, we looked at different ways that people of many religions (such as Gandhi and Thich Nhat Hahn and John Newton) prayed in and how prayer, in each circumstance, was trying to make a spiritual connection. The second session focused on the life and teachings of Jesus. In each lesson, we talked about "Who is Jesus?", "What did he teach us?" and "Why does it matter?"

We started with Jesus' birth, then went on to tell the only story mentioned in the Bible about his childhood, discussed his baptism, then we talked of his teachings and then his death and resurrection. A poster was made for each lesson and these posters can be viewed in the Parish Hall.

We thank the wonderfully curious students for their participation. It was our honor and joy to have worked with them!

Faithfully submitted,
Danette Harris
Joey Hawkins

Mission Committee Report

Mission Committee Report

This year, the committee has been thankful to welcome Pastor Tom Kinder to our meetings. We are grateful for his perspective, his experience, his new ideas, his willingness to come to meetings and to be an active participant on the committee. We appreciate all of his contributions. Thanks, Tom!

It has been another busy year for the Mission Committee, which tries to meet at least once a month but also communicates and votes on projects via email. We would like to thank the community and congregation for their support by helping with a couple of projects that we took on and for donating food for various organizations. We would also like to thank the United Church of Strafford trustees who, for a third year, have granted us an amount of money to donate to the Newton School Health Hub. This year, the trustees granted us an additional amount of money so that we could make a sizable contribution to the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program. Thank you, all, for your continued support!

This year our income came from five sources:

- \$1014.00 from the congregation and community for hurricane relief
- \$88.59 from the Christmas Pageant
- \$1250.00 from the church budget
- \$1000 gift from B. Mark Sigmon
- \$1418.11 from the proceeds of the rummage sale.

(Note that the check from the trustees for the Newton School Health Hub and the VT Refugee Resettlement Program was presented to us in August, 2017, so it was received in the last fiscal year, but dispersed to the two organizations in this fiscal year.)

As the committee considers all of the many organizations that need help, we try our best to think about helping others on all levels....locally, nationally and on a global level. Since the needs have been so great close to home, we have tended this year to keep much of our funding locally.

On a local level, we were able to provide support for the following organizations:

- the Newton School Health Hub (as mentioned above) This supports the health and well-being of Strafford's children. A check was sent for \$2100. This money was provided to us by the trustees. We thank them.
- Crop Walk- This supports hunger issues locally. We donated \$100.
- Vermont Conservation Camp- We sent \$250 to support one Strafford camper.
- Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program- We were granted \$500 by the trustees and sent this to help meet the needs of refugees settling in VT.
- Sharon Food Shelf-\$200 was sent for holiday baskets.
- Willing Hands- We made two donations totaling \$200 this year so that food may be gathered from farms, stores, etc. and distributed to food shelves.
- The Veteran's Place-We sent \$220 for new cookware for their kitchen.
- Strafford Senior Lunch Program for meal delivery to homes- We donated twice this year and sent a total of \$300.
- Strafford Neighbors Helping Neighbors - We sent \$250 for gas money for volunteer drivers.
- Ed Eastman purchased a new oven for Barrett Hall so that he is able to cook for the senior lunches. We contributed \$100 to this new oven and Dot and Bill Burden kindly matched this donation with another \$100 donation. Thank you, Bill and Dot!
- COVER Home Repair- We contributed \$300 this year so that home repairs may be made for people who are unable to afford them.
- Safeline- We donated \$100 to this organization which addresses domestic abuse.

On a national level, we donated to the following organizations:

- Our own Thomas Leddy-Cecere worked with a program at the University of Texas in Austin that helps provide volunteer mentors for refugee

children so that they may be successful in school. We were honored to donate \$100 to this program.

-Southern Poverty Law Center-We donated \$200 to this organization that is “dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society”.

Globally, we were able to provide assistance to the following organizations:

-American Red Cross-With funds collected from the community and the congregation, we were able to send \$1014 for hurricane relief.

Then from our own budget, we sent \$250.

-Former Strafford resident Sara Stender works with an organization called Africa Healing Exchange and we were honored to send AHE \$100. "The AHE Restoring Resiliency program is delivered to individuals and organizations in the U.S. and Rwanda who are working to help end the cycle of trauma, with particular emphasis on supporting mothers and children in Rwanda.”

-Our own Iva Wich traveled to Costa Rica to do volunteer work this past winter. We sent Iva with \$100 to “do good” on her travels.

-Through Doug and Judy Moore, we found out about a church in Puerto Rico that was struck by both hurricanes and that is struggling to re-build yet is serving 1500-1700 meals per week. We happily sent \$250 to help with the rebuilding.

We also sponsor the food basket in the back of the church which helps to feed folks locally. We thank you all for your contributions of food!

As chair, I would like to personally thank Dot and Bill Burden, Kim Welsh and Martha Manheim, who serve as hard-working, thoughtful and dedicated committee members. Working with you all is such a joy! Thank you, thank you.

Again, we also thank everyone who has given us ideas or support in so many ways. We are thankful for the opportunity to work together to serve our church and God by helping others as best as we can. We are always open to new ideas for Mission Work and welcome input and ideas from you all.

Faithfully submitted,
Danette Harris, chair

Music Director's Report

Summer 2018, reflection on the past year of being music director at the United Church and some ideas for upcoming year.

I will try to mentioning all blessings, and I won't be able to, but here is a try (random order)

Weekly 1:

Working with a committed group of adult singers, year-round, is wonderful.

It is a drivers group with different singer-backgrounds, but all helping each other, and singing their hearts out and in tune!

Weekly 2:

Working with minister Tom Kinder has been great. Both of us want to create our little piece of art every Sunday, but trying to fit lectures/themes/ things happening in the world in musical coherent service. Music/ hymns/ texts all belong together.

Weekly 3:

Working as a servant for God, for community, being a musical messenger makes me personally feel useful in this world that seems to be looking for good things in life, giving up on God and Love.

Monthly 1:

The Concert Series are bringing in some Funding for the Mannheim Fund, but most of all, are also inviting non-church goers to enter a church building. Community seems to welcome this.

Monthly 2:

Refreshments after concerts are indeed inviting people to connect.

Monthly 3:

By playing the series, I hope to widen musical awareness. Teach the audience about the power of music throughout the ages, and how composers were influenced by their times and beliefs.

Throughout the Church year:

1. The Summer workshop with Julie Ness and Jeremiah McLane was a success. Will be returning in 2019.

2. The movie/songs events are powerful.

Some comments I heard were not just positive. "Hard to sing as a white person. Does not sound right." I 'defended' it by saying that it is part of history, song-repertoire we should all know, to be aware. So for youth chorus, (restart?) age 8-14? and movie events 14+-adults?

2a. The movies are maybe too intense for youth (our original hope to draw them in). Age group 8-14 may need something 'lighter' but with a message? For 14+ I think it is okay.

3. Inviting instrumentalists for church services, especially youth/students (Laila did a great job!)
4. Youth choir is busy with other things (Revels/sports), but thanks to childcare ideas, we see the younger ones in our midst!
4. Pageant was a joy, thanks to adults joining in. Some \$ for music purchase Christmas season is welcome. i can re-use songs, and I will try to use free domain music.
5. Lord's Acre was fun. Thanks to Joey. Could not do it without her!

Upcoming year/ideas, and of course we'll have meetings beforehand;

1. For Lord's Acre 2018: "Charlotte Web" (suggestion Joey Hawkins) **1a.** How to draw people? we can maybe give a little 'wireless'/ use of the www jokes (keep your eyes off the screens but look around sort of thing-hints)
2. Pageant. I will write it before October 10th. last year's 'Little Angel' perspective, this year maybe from the Star or a sheep. (more to follow)
3. Advent/Christmas: 'Noel' Concert will come back with Julie Ness, Tim Cummings, and McLanes.
4. Instrumentalists for Christmas service!! Youth!
5. Encourage people to ask for 'Fav. Hymns.'
6. Invite Jody Albright for a jazz/gospel Sunday (from Burlington area, amazing person/singer)
7. I would like to focus on Native American music/blessings (maybe October/harvest/ thinking about the Earth)
8. With the coming of the new school year, let's try to invite kids to sing 11:20-11:50 Sunday mornings. Happy to try it again. I need help from 'callers'/ add in list-serve.
9. Concert series continues. -August 31st "Cassotto duo"
 - September 21st, "Etudes", Teachings- October 26th
 "Emily Dickenson" set to music with soprano Rebekah Schweitzer. Poetry and songs.
 - November 9, Matthew Marsit & Annemieke McLane, clarinet/piano - December 7th, "Noel".
10. July- summer workshop will be again happening.
11. Last but not least, all prayers for all this work are welcome. Could not do without.

Blessings,
Sing on,

Annemieke McLane

Stewardship Committee Report

Stewardship is the act of making a commitment to sustain the church. It takes many forms, and we want to acknowledge all of them: serving on committees and boards, raking the lawn, visiting the sick, baking for memorial services, washing dishes at Lords Acre, working on the rummage sale – the list goes on. People who are formal members of the church and people who are not are stewards in many, many ways.

Supporting the church financially is also – of course – a critical part of stewardship. This past year, 2017-2018, the church received pledges from 32 families or individuals, for a total amount that was somewhat more than the budget had called for. The pledges ranged widely, with people pledging what they felt they could afford, and the money they represented was critical. In addition to pledges, we had another highly successful rummage sale in late July (an integral part of our stewardship effort), raising over \$4,000; as has become usual, nearly 30 people worked at the rummage sale in some way, with only about half of those being church members.

Lords Acre was also a success in the fall of 2017. We held a dinner, and a show (“All You Need Is Soup” performed by members of the church and directed by Annemieke). This year, we hope to perform a version of “Charlotte’s Web”. We are also hoping to have a silent auction this year, but this will depend on whether we can find anyone to take it on.

We are just about to begin the pledge drive for the current year, 2018 – 19. We are cautiously optimistic that it will be successful in helping us reach our goal and meet the budget.

Joey Hawkins, June Solsaa