

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking,

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First Congregational United Church of Christ – Sarasota
Annual Meeting: January 28, 2018 – 12:30 p.m.

Call to Order	Lynn Jones, Moderator
Opening Prayer	Bob Goldman, Vice Moderator
Confirmation of a Quorum	Janet Tipton, Parliamentarian
2017 Annual Report	
Approval of Team Annual Reports & Membership Report	Lynn Jones, Moderator
Review & Approval of 2016 Annual Meeting Minutes	Susan Moore, Secretary
Nominations Committee Report	Lynn Jones, Moderator
• Nomination & Election of Team Members	
• Nomination & Election of Officers	
Financial Reports	
• Endowment Fund	Rick McDaniel, Chair, Endowment
• 2017 Balance Sheet	Jean Walker, Treasurer
• 2018 Budget	Bill Wendling, Chair Finance, Funding, Stewardship
Recognition of Volunteer Treasurer, Jean Walker	Lynn Jones, Moderator
Recognition of Immediate Past Moderator, Myron Robinson	Lynn Jones and Bob Goldman
Passing of Gavel	Lynn Jones
Closing Prayer	Myron Robinson
Adjournment	

Necrology 2017

Name	Date Joined	Date of Death
Menchinger, Edwin	April 22, 1984	January 23
Williams, Cole	March 6, 2016	February 25
Magno, Arlene	May 11, 2003	February 26
Mosher, Paul	December 12, 1999	March 5
Dwinell, Ruth	October 12, 1954	March 22
McGrail, Dorothy		March 26
Troendle, Richard	October 9, 1994	April 1
Truedinger, Philip	November 22, 2015	May 14
Pursley, Bill	March 23, 2008	May 22
Johnson, Geraldine	January 25, 2004	August 4
Schmidt, Adolph		August 23
Roberts, Benjamin	March 24, 2002	August 26
Brackett, Ann	January 13, 2013	September 12
Lewis, Judie	January 28, 2017	September 22
Sargent, Elizabeth	November 24, 1985	October 21, 2017
Bollman Florence	December 20, 2007	November 20
Stormzand, Ann	January 3, 2011	December 2

Minutes of the 2016 Annual Meeting

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Sarasota

January 29, 2017

Moderator Myron Robinson called the meeting to order at 12:25 PM.

Vice Moderator Lynn Jones offered an opening prayer.

Parliamentarian Janet Tipton confirmed the presence of a quorum.

Past Moderator Susan Raines presented the report of the Nominating Committee. Gib Mitchell moved and Nancy Kavanaugh seconded acceptance of the report. Officers are:

Myron Robinson, Immediate Past Moderator

Lynn Jones, Moderator

Bob Goldman, Vice Moderator

Susan Moore, Secretary

Jean Walker, Treasurer

Outgoing secretary Lynne Woodman asked for acceptance of the 2016 Annual Report; Jean Walker moved and Susan Raines seconded acceptance of the report.

Moderator Myron Robinson presented a vision report, reviewing the history and accomplishments of the congregation since its inception, and calling on the church to envision what its third generation – its third quarter-century – will be.

Cindy Woodling, a former moderator, delivered the report for the Endowment Committee. We had an overall increase of funds of 10.9%. Designated funds are used throughout the year for their intended purpose; in 2016, about 14% of those funds were used. They stand at \$424,340 today. Undesignated funds stand at \$850,926; four percent of these funds are placed in the operating budget of the upcoming year.

Finance, Funding and Stewardship committee chair Bill Wendling delivered a year-end report. Gib Mitchell moved and Susan Moore seconded acceptance.

Immediate Past Moderator Susan Raines was recognized for her work in acting as a bridge to the new Moderator, as well as her work over the past three years. She responded with thanks for the privilege of serving.

Myron Robinson turned over the gavel and a gift Bible to the new Moderator, Lynn Jones.

Pastor Wes Bixby closed the meeting with prayer, and the assembled group sang "We Are Called." The meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Pastor's Annual Report 2017

We are completing our fourth year of ministry together and just concluded our Advent theme, "Playing with Words". So, I thought I would offer one last reflection using three words that stir and swirl in my heart at this time.

~ **Gratitude** ~ I am blessed to be your pastor beyond words. I am grateful to work with a talented staff of Greg Chestnut, George Cubberly, Leigh Melton, Julie Pennella, Bobbi Miller, Gordon Quimby, Mark Swain, and Sue Spiegel. This year we bid a fond farewell and God's blessings to Donna McCalden who retired as Office Manager. The transition was full of grace because of Donna and Bobbi working faithfully to make everything seamless. We will also be bidding a fond farewell to George Cubberly as bookkeeper in early January as we welcome Bill Lewis into the position. In addition, to the day-to-day staff, I am also grateful for our Moderators ~ Lynn Jones, Bob Goldman, and Myron Robinson. These three key lay leaders offer support, love, and thoughtfulness every day! Our moderators handle endless emails, phone calls, and meetings with me with amazing grace. Thank you to everyone who served on a Team last year. In particular, thank you to Janet Tipton, Bill Wendling, and Jean-Marie Steele, who are all stepping away from being chairs/Council members. We will miss their wisdom, but have benefitted greatly from each of these key leaders. Last, but not least, thank you to **YOU** for all you do to make our church the incredible and extravagant place it is.

~ **Generosity** ~ This was our theme for Stewardship and it fits our congregation like a glove. You all give tirelessly and faithfully of your time, talent and treasure. We are ending 2017 in the black. The surplus income over expense from the last few years has gone to making continued capital improvements to our campus. When I came four years ago, the Search Team said the campus needed major improvements. I am pleased with the strides we have made together, including this year making the sanctuary more safe/secure with a new roof and hurricane glass (thanks to the gift in memory of Minton Tinsley). We have made the two restrooms off the sanctuary fully accessible in memory of Charlaire Ream. We have replaced Syster Hall entry doors with fully accessible in memory of Robert Eaton and Joyce Mahon. On the other hand, we are facing the reality that our projected pledge income for 2018 will not reach the set goal. I believe there are many factors for this. For some members, their personal income has decreased. For others, the last few years have given the impression the church is doing fine financially. For others, they just are not sure about pledging to an institution. Please know your leadership will be discussing this prayerfully in 2018 and I welcome the chance to talk to any of you about these realities and your ideas.

~ **Grace** ~ This is a place where God's grace is experienced in real ways. I feel God's presence every Sunday morning as we are singing with full voice. I feel God's presence when I make a pastoral visit. I feel God's spirit moving at committee meetings. I see God when I attend a SURE meeting, looking out to see all of you there supporting our justice ministry. God is there when people step up and sign up to help at Family Promise. I see God at Bible Study, book discussions, and after worship as we eat cookies together. This is a place where grace becomes flesh and is felt in life-giving ways.

With a glad and grateful heart for your love, care, and support that you offer me every day. I look forward to 2018 as we begin to write a new chapter of our fifth year together. With much love ~~ Wes

Moderator's Annual Report 2017

As I reflect on the past year, I have so much pride at having been able to represent all of you as Moderator. I feel truly blessed to have had this opportunity and I pray that I can continue to contribute to the life of our church as Immediate Past Moderator in 2018.

Specifically, the highlights of 2017 at First Congregational UCC, for me, certainly include:

- The privilege of chairing an incredibly committed Church Council who worked well together and led their teams with creativity, integrity, and enthusiasm
- Witnessing so many amazing changes to our church campus...new windows, sanctuary roof, accessible doors, kitchen floor, narthex bathrooms...to name just a few
- An opportunity to represent our church at the Florida Conference Fall Gathering in Daytona Beach and at UCC General Synod in Baltimore
- Some key staffing changes which demonstrated seamless transitions and brought us wonderful new talent.
- Another year of beautiful, creative, and diverse musical performances...not just on Sunday mornings, but throughout the year with so many outside groups performing on our campus, bringing joy to our church and the wider community.
- Welcoming more than two dozen new members to our church, which is always a blessing. Sadly, we also said farewell to several church members who passed from this life, but their fingerprints remain on our hearts and their spirits are very much alive through their gifts of time, talent, and treasure.
- Watching our incredible involvement as a congregation with Family Promise, SURE, Sarasota PRIDE, The Brady Campaign, and so many other community organizations where our support and action are recognized and impactful.
- Most importantly, during a year of turmoil and unrest in our country and our world, having First Congregational UCC, Sarasota, provide a warm, welcoming sanctuary for our members and guests, is a tremendous gift. There is no where I would rather be when things seem uncertain and a bit unnerving, than in and around our church.

I am sure that I speak for many of you when I say that we are more than blessed to have Wes as our Senior Pastor, Greg as our Music Minister, and the rest of our staff to help support all that goes into making FCUCC so special. It has been a joy to work closely with all of these "angels" who work tirelessly to provide us with the best of everything a church can offer, and I pray that they will remain with us for as long as they possibly can.

Looking ahead, I am excited about working with Bob Goldman and Lori White next year as they lead our Church Council and continue with many of the projects that we began this year. And, most importantly, I look forward to engaging in fellowship & community with our loving, caring members who make up the most incredible "church family".

Submitted With Tremendous Gratitude,

Lynn Jones, Moderator

BOARD and COMMITTEE REPORTS

Caring for the Congregation

Caring for the Congregation Team worked to develop policies and implement programs assisting in the spiritual growth, emotional and physical needs of our congregation during 2017. Our team developed a prayer booklet to be given with the Easter flowers delivered to members and shut-ins. We helped our church nurse, Julie, manage the Health Fair in March while also hosting coffee fellowship for the month. We encouraged members to update the emergency forms retained in the church office. We continued the "Thank You" Grams in the pews during the Thanksgiving season of November. We arranged the delivery of over 30 Easter plants with the new prayer booklet and arranged delivery of nearly 30 Christmas poinsettias with a Christmas card from the Caring Team. We are working on a new prayer booklet for the Christmas season and a booklet for "Thinking of You" occasions. Members provide occasional rides to church for individuals who need transportation. Fran Collier continues to make birthday and anniversary phone calls when she is able. Julie made many calls to shut-ins during Hurricane Irma to see if assistance was needed. We have members on the Prayer Chain Team and the Visitation Team who keep us up to date on the needs of members.

Celebrating Worship

The team ensured that various supporting roles were staffed for each and every worship service. We are thankful for the many faithful congregants who welcomed visitors; and who served as greeters, ushers, liturgists, and communion servers. In striving to make the worship service even more welcoming for congregants and visitors, modifications were made to the welcome center and greeter functions. The October 14th worship service, "Priesthood of All Believers," was conducted by the team. We were all very gratified by the many positive comments we received that Sunday.

COLLAGE

Collage continued their ministry of service to the congregation and outreach to the community in 2017. This ministry team is made up of members of the LGBTQ in the congregation and friends within the greater church who support and identify with their message. Collage meets regularly after church for brunch on the 4th Sunday of each month. Due to an increasing attendance throughout 2017 the group has had to move that meeting to Denny's on Bee Ridge starting in 2018. Additionally there is a group of members from Collage that meets every Sunday for brunch at The Silver Star restaurant following the 9:00 am service. Again this year new, interesting and talented persons have joined the team making it as diverse in its makeup as is the congregation. There are now 73 people, men and women who come prepared and eager to serve God in various ways. They have played a number of active roles in the congregation including serving on Boards and Committees, being responsible to see that the elements for Communion are provided, leading services, driving the bus, teaching, singing in the choir, and in so many other ways. Collage hosted the church at what has now become their traditional Mother's Day Fellowship, providing goodies and tables decorated with pictures of our mothers. Members of Collage have been responsible for the memorial dinners for some 15 families at the church this year. Thanks to all those members who worked on these and other projects.

Collage members also provide a support system for each other in times of need or crisis. And we like to have fun. Throughout the year Collage likes to get together for good fellowship and to celebrate important events, such as our Christmas party which was attended by many of the group and their friends.

In 2017 Collage invited speakers from the community to educate the team on other needs which impact both our church and the LGBTQ community in Sarasota and to discover how we can be a part of resolving some of those needs. We collected funds to assist a young couple who had been turned out by their family, we learned of the first efforts to meet the needs of young men who have been victims of the sex trafficking, supported the church's effort to provide services to a local rehabilitation and nursing home. We hosted booths at both The Manatee County and Sarasota Pride events to inform the community about our congregation, Collage, and needs in the community. We discussed ways we can be supportive of one another in these very uncertain times for the LGBTQ community in our nation's discourse and actions.

Collage reaffirmed our congregation's support of and involvement in GAIN (Gulfcoast Area Interfaith Network) by helping plan, and take part in the memorial community service on International Aids Remembrance Day. Members are also involved in community programs like Equality Florida and S.U.R.E. and many others.

In a special service in July we celebrated the 15th anniversary of the First Congregational United Church of Christ being an open and affirming congregation. It was great to have people like Jaci Tutt, Bill Moore, Scott Nutter, David York and others who were a part of that momentous decision so many years ago recount for us that journey.

We are now looking forward to an exciting and fulfilling year in 2018.

Facilities & Grounds

Your facilities and grounds team has had another busy year making much-needed renovations and repairs to our beautiful campus. We have been extremely blessed to have received generous memorial gifts to accomplish major projects this year:

- New Sanctuary windows & roof- gift in memory of Milton Tinsley
- Sacristy automated door- gift in memory of Charlaine Ream
- New front doors for Syster Hall- gift in memory of Robert Eaton and Joyce Mahon
- New ice maker in Syster Hall kitchen- anonymous gift
- Sanctuary restrooms renovation- gift from Plymouth Harbor

In addition, funding from the church council enabled us to do the following:

- Resurfaced Syster Hall kitchen floor and alcove wings
- Purchased new lawnmower
- Installed new carpet for music minister office
- Syster Hall sewer line plumbing repairs
- Re-asphalt driveway
- Campus mapping of utilities
- Landscaping improvements outside Syster Hall and by front sign

We are thankful for our Green Thumbers who mow and maintain our grounds, and for our campus maintenance manager, Mark Swain, who does a yeoman's job of keeping our campus in tip-top shape.

Fellowship & Special Events

" Coffee Hour – following worship at Syster Hall after service(s).

Last year Fran Stubblefield took on the duties as coffee hour co-coordinator which included review of the procedures and team assignments for coffee hours. She assigned a team each month and added UCC Women to participate. Updates are being drafted for 2018 on coffee hour procedures taking into consideration some feedback and suggestions from other teams. The coffee hour host calendar will be provided at the January 2018 council meeting to team leaders and staff

" Birthday Cake Sunday - Sandy Smith suggested and the team adopted that the first Sunday of each month at coffee hour we will celebrate birthdays of our members for that month where cake is served. Sandy coordinates with the host teams each month.

" March Spring Fling – March 28, 2017. The team assisted Vince Amoroso with the meet and greet event. BBQ pork roast and fixings were served. In the spirit of co-sponsoring events we held the dinner on Thursday so that the TK and

Wings could help with set up and serving and their parents could enjoy the meal. The event was a success, and with income from raffles, Vince donating the meat and wine and the free-will donations we were under budget. The new event planning work sheet was used for the event. This year the event is scheduled for March 22, 2018 with a Hawaiian themed "Who done it" dinner event.

- " April 9th, 2017 Hot Cross Buns were donated by Detwiler's and the youth group decorated and gave out after Easter Services at coffee hour.
- " April 16 Egg hunt and we provided the Rice Krispie treats
- " Ash Wednesday pancake dinner fund raiser for youth group we helped co-ordinate. Donations of juice and fruit from Detwiler's. Additional food was biscuits and gravy which was a popular item. We assisted the youth group with cooking. It was a successful fund-raising event.
- " Back to school Bash was scheduled for August 15 which replaced the fall picnic. We worked with the youth group and after several delays because of weather the event was moved to an indoor trampoline facility. The event was very successful at that location, well received by youth and parents and within budget. They hope to do the event again 2018 at same location.
- " Thanksgiving 2017 was again for the third year held at Der Dutchman restaurant. Member Joan Beach was the coordinator of the event. The tickets sales were lower than the years past. It was determined not to reserve the room for the next year and the team will consider some alternative suggestions for 2018.
- " On Christmas Eve, the team provided a special coffee hour after the one 10:30 service where breakfast casseroles were served.
- " In 2018, we will continue efforts to co-chair events with other teams such as an event that gathers people from same geographic areas and a movie and chili night.
- " Working with Steve Mayers and Ruth Swain to offer kitchen solutions to assist with the goals to become a "Creation Justice Church".
- " Working with the Kitchen clean up team in efforts to assist the team with a clean-up calendar. Drue will attend their meeting and give suggestions. New carts and some needed kitchen items have been discussed and Drue presented a proposal of financial support to UCC women which will be considered in 2018.
- " Working with Growing and inviting to offer our help with a new member reunion event.

Finance, Funding & Stewardship

We are pleased to report that the church had an excellent financial performance during 2017. For the fourth year in a row, our income was greater than expenses. A significant reason for our strong performance is the constant attention to containing expenses. Our staff and team members held their expenses to more than \$44,000 below the amounts we had budgeted for the year. These savings were reinvested as additions to both our Operating Reserves and our Capital Reserves. Over the past three years, we have now restored more than \$150,000 in reserve funds that were drawn down during the Great Recession. During the past year, we have also taken steps to enable our church to plan for needs well into the future. The FF&S team developed a written plan for dealing with the church's physical needs over the next 15 years. This plan identifies the life-expectancy of big-ticket items like air conditioners, roofs and windows, identifies the timeframe in which those major repairs might be required, and offers a funding plan to ensure that we have the money necessary when the items are replaced. The team completed a professional appraisal of our church property and possessions including the stained-glass window, fine art, and organs, to ensure they are accurately appraised and appropriately insured against loss. This appraisal also resulted in a reduction in our property and casualty insurance. It is no coincidence that the improved financial picture has occurred during the period when Jean Walker has served as our church treasurer. A volunteer member of the church and ex officio member of the FF&S team, Jean has brought extensive experience in financial management. She is the person directly responsible for authorizing expenditures, signing checks and maintaining accurate financial records. She has been instrumental to our success in implementing the Power Church software program. This software helps us track revenues, control expenditures, and assess our performance on a real-time basis, so that we can share financial results with each team every month and can report to the congregation on a quarterly basis. Jean is stepping down as treasurer, but we are grateful to know that she will

continue to be available to the Finance team for advice and guidance. We deeply appreciate her countless hours of work and her many contributions. Last year was a year of significant improvement to our campus, much of it made possible by gifts from our members and friends. We completed a \$100,000 modernization to the sanctuary that included hurricane-standard windows and new roof, funded by a gift from Sandra Tinsley in memory of her late husband Minton Tinsley. Friends at Plymouth Harbor have completely renovated two restrooms near the sanctuary, and provided additional funds that will be used for other improvements to our campus. During the year, we received a number of gifts in tribute to other members and friends who have passed away. These gifts are retained in our Memorial Fund and are available for use by Church Council at its discretion. Tribute gifts have provided devices that make our campus more accessible to our guests who face accessibility challenges, and new hurricane-standard, accessible doors have been installed at Syster Hall. During 2017, we also received a number of gifts from the estates of deceased members. These bequests are held within the church's Endowment, and are managed by the Endowment Committee, which seeks to establish a financial foundation that will sustain the church in the future. We are grateful to church members who have pledged their financial support to the church for our operations in 2018. Your generosity during the most recent stewardship drive should give us the resources to strengthen the church's ongoing Worship, Service and Community in the coming year. While we have been blessed with strong financial support and conscientious spending over the past several years, we need to explore ways beyond the annual pledge campaign to meet the financial needs of the church. During the coming year, we hope to establish a Celebration Fund whereby members and guests can direct contributions to fund specific campus needs or ministries of the church. This fund will be a great way for members to direct gifts in tribute to birthdays, anniversaries, memorials, or other blessings in life. This coming year will be an exciting one for our church, as we strengthen our service to one another, our community and God. If you would like to be in the middle of things, please contact the FF&S team about volunteer opportunities.

Growing & Inviting

The G&I team this year consisted of four members: Felix McElroy, Steve Moore, Dale Woodling and Lynne Woodman. With few exceptions, the team met monthly, primarily focusing on ways to push FCUCC's name out into the community, and how best to attract new members. We hosted five "new member" lunches, held directly after a Sunday service. These events are for those who have expressed interest in possibly joining the church; the conversation is designed both to provide information on how our church functions, and to help our congregation learn more about those who are expressing interest. Our major project has been a collaboration with Norman Hervieux, a member of the church and retired Professor of Design at Ringling College. We are collaborating on a project to make the campus more immediately welcoming by hanging colorful banners, bearing key words about our church ("service," "worship", "community", etc.) from the parking lot light fixtures. The colors would be repeated on a large campus map. This is viewed as a first step in an ongoing effort to color-code the campus for easier way-finding, and eventually to develop a welcoming plaza. At year-end, the project was still being reviewed.

Missions

The Mission team helps our congregation fulfill its core value of reaching out beyond our walls to neighbors near and far. A major responsibility of the team is to plan and administer the Christmas and Easter Love Offerings. This includes preparing the mailings and publicizing the offerings to the congregation, deciding on the recipient organizations, and arranging for distribution of the funds. The Christmas Love Offering gives to organizations in our local community. In January 2017 we distributed the \$17,500 collected by the 2016 Christmas Love Offering to All Faiths Food Bank and its Backpack Program; ALSO Youth; Baby Basics; Bethesda House; Children First; Mental Health Community Center; Family Promise; JOY; Little Pilgrim Preschool; Orchard Place; Resurrection House; SURE; Second Chance, Last Opportunity; and the UCC Christmas Fund. The Easter Love Offering is designed to help people throughout the world. For the first time in 2017, we emphasized contributing to each of the UCC denomination's special offerings, to make our congregation a "5 for 5" church. We distributed \$16,000 among the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, and Strengthen Our Church, and among Church World Service, Back Bay Mission, the Joseph Evans Scholarship Fund (for seminary students), the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Open and Affirming Coalition of the UCC, Partners in Health, and Helps

International. Another project of the Mission Team is organizing collection of items in our Narthex baskets for local organizations. We collect food the first Sunday of each month for All Faiths Food Bank, and in addition collected food each week during May and June for the Campaign against Summer Hunger. In July and August, we collected backpacks and school supplies that were given to Alta Vista School and Little Pilgrim Preschool. During November, we collected baby items for Second Chance, Last Opportunity's Teen Mother's program. The 2017 Christmas Love offering has exceeded its goal and funds will be distributed in January, 2018.

Music & Fine Arts

Wow! What a year we had! Our mission was to provide inspiration through our music program not only to our members but also to our community at large. And we did it. In addition to the music we provided at our regular services, we brought the unique talents of Ken Medema in February, the Four4 Horns of the Sarasota Orchestra, and the ensemblenewSRQ, who publicly thank First Congregational for our support. We all remember the fabulous concert that Vincent DuBois, titular organist of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, performed. Then, we hosted 40 singers from the Piedmont College choir when we not only enjoyed their music but we also provided dinner for them. We supported Upward Notes in their new endeavor to bring music out of the music hall and into parts of the community who generally do not have this opportunity. The Music & fine Arts team joined forces with the Celebrating Worship team in leading worship on October 15. We also were inspired by the talents of the musicians from the Sarasota Festival of Music. We can all agree that various members of the Sarasota Orchestra enhanced our worship several times during the year. Along other lines, Greg represented the UCC Musicians Association at General Synod where he and Pastor Wes taught a workshop to encourage more participation in worship. We supplied snacks for the children who performed the Christmas Pageant and just as other teams did, we hosted the Sunday coffee hour in May.

Peace and Justice

This past year has been a busy one for our network especially in light of all that is going on across our nation as well as Sarasota County. Our group has been actively involved in the SURE movement which has seen the successful implementation of the civil citation policy used by the police instead of prosecution of juvenile offenders for non-violent crimes, the reduction in the issuance of out of school suspensions in the elementary schools of our county, and the practice of restorative justice circles in the elementary schools to deal with issues of bullying, resolution of interpersonal student conflict and improving the respect of students of one another. SURE's primary focus for 2018 will be affordable housing. Our network has also been advocating against gun violence under the direction of our own Carol Rescigno. On December 14, 2017 our church hosted a remembrance vigil of the Sandy Hook victims. Finally, after more than 5 years of faithful service as chairman and secretary of our network, our own Fred and Lee Brockmann stepped down but continue to remain active members and assist the current chairman.

Spiritual Education and Growth

Returning members of SEG from 2016 were Nancy McElroy, Colby McAnarney, Sydney Starcher and Janet Tipton, chair. Nancy Roberts was a new member this year. Leigh Melton, in her capacity as Christian Education Administrator, was an ex-officio member. Adult Programming: A Lenten FEAST was attended by approximately 40 participants. Sessions offered were Health Topics by Julie Pennella, Parish Nurse; Finding Your Why by Pastor Wes; A Lenten Labyrinth Journey by Jim Cross; and Listening for God through contemporary literature by Sandy Smith. Children/Youth Programming: · To finish the updating of the Youth Room which was begun in 2016, Nancy Roberts donated and installed new blinds, which were a very attractive and a welcome addition to the Youth space. An additional ottoman was also purchased. · Thursday Knights and Wings continued for all children and youth in the spring semester and again in the fall, with 18 children/youth enrolled for the fall session.

· Sunday School also continued as usual, with the Youth attending worship on the first Sunday of each month. Volunteer Sunday School teachers were Ashley Burroughs, Gina Bixby, Christy Boyer, John Bryant, Toska Strong, Gianna Werner

and Janet Tipton. Leigh Melton also taught most Sundays. We lost our paid nursery worker, due to her death, so we decided to try staffing the nursery with volunteers to see how that would go. We have not chosen to hire anyone yet, as this seems to be going well, with few—if any—children in the nursery. Curriculum for Sunday School was “Deep Blue” for the children and “Groove” for the youth.

There were several outings for our children and youth:

Spring Bash at Cedarkirk Campgrounds, 9 kids and 3 chaperones attending (Marc Boyer, Eric Bailey and Toska Strong.)

" Florida Conference Youth Event at Dayspring Conference Center was attended by 14 youth.

" Roller Skating at Stardust was attended by 21 children and youth.

" Ringling Pizza, pool and video games, 11 youth attended.

" Back-to-School Bash at Jumpin’ Fun Trampoline Park, Full attendance by all but two families. It was a huge success and kids requested to do this again!

" Christmas Caroling at Sunnyside Village was attended by approximately 25 children, youth and their parents.

" Leigh, assisted by Eric VanArsdall, held a youth gathering at the church on a Thursday evening in June. This consisted of recreation, snacks and a lesson. It was well attended.

· Youth Fundraisers:

" The youth hosted a Pancake Dinner on Ash Wednesday. It was a success, with all but three youth participating, who had prior commitments.

" Pie sales were held again this fall. Pie vouchers for Der Dutchman were sold. Some of these were not sold, so we will be offering them again in the spring.

Miscellaneous:

· We worked very hard to pare down our budget for 2017 and were very successful in keeping expenses down.

· We changed how we did Coffee Hour when it was our turn, and we like the new method. Each member of SEG took one Sunday of the month. On that Sunday, that member brought all of the treats and staffed the Coffee Hour. That way, we each had only to commit to one Sunday. When other SEG members were available, they jumped in to help as well. We did ask to have a summer coffee hour slot, since so many of our SEG members are also Sunday School teachers, and it is difficult to make it all happen on Sunday morning when there are two services. We hope to continue that in the future.

· Scholarships were awarded in the spring to Katie Kleppinger, Sydney Starcher and Jocelyn Starcher. Jocelyn was our only high school graduate, and she was also presented with a graduation gift.

· Sunday School teachers were also recognized in May during worship.

· Our plans for Summer Arts Blast did not come to fruition, as we had very low enrollment. So, it was cancelled. The plans for art, drama, storytelling, origami, and photography will be carried over into our Thursday Knights and Wings program starting in January 2018.

Staffing

The Staffing Team consisting of Florence Jackson, Dennis Crooks, Dick Miller and Judith Black, with Pastor Wes Bixby and Moderator Lynn Jones, who worked together with church staff to accomplish three important personnel transitions in 2017. The first was the retirement of twelve-year pillar of the office, Donna McCalden. The team assisted with reviewing applicants’ resumes and interviewing candidates. Also, alignment of some managerial aspects of Donna’s duties was re-engineered to reassign certain responsibilities to alternate staff members. Bobbi Miller was selected to step up to the position; and Donna worked together with Bobbi, establishing a seamless transition of this most important function. Donna McCalden’s contributions to the well-being of First Congregational UCC were stellar throughout her tenure. The church as it is today would not be in its current position without Donna’s ongoing enthusiasm, caring, technical and administrative skills, and willingness to assume working professionally with new people and modernized techniques. We could not have done it without her! The reins of administration at the Church are functioning well in the very capable hands of Bobbi Miller. The second personnel position that changed its configuration of duties and person responsible was that of Collector. Gordon Quimby was hired to carry out these very responsible duties and is proving to be excellent at this essential job. The third change in personnel in 2017 was the retirement at year end of George Cubberly as

Bookkeeper. He accomplished those duties faithfully with dedication and accuracy. During the end of 2017 he worked with his replacement, Bill Lewis, to affect a smooth handover. Bill solo's beginning in January 2018; in retirement George will continue to be a resource if needed by the Church or Bill. The team continued to refine job descriptions, matching realigned skill sets of new personnel and perceived opportunities to consolidate or gain efficiencies. As always Staffing Team attempts to spot and respond to opportunities to keep expenses under control by reducing office hours required (as a result of economies of scale and improved software) and repositioning duties and routine time frames. Annual reviews of all personnel were accomplished, including people's progress toward their professional goals. Working with Finance, Funding & Stewardship team, annual salary adjustments were put into place. Staffing Team is grateful to Moderator Lynn Jones for HR practice expertise and advice as well as her caring and knowledgeable input concerning individuals.