

Regular Meeting of the Congregation



ANNUAL REPORT May 2, 2021



The First Church in Oberlin, United Church of Christ

106 N. Main Street, Oberlin OH 44074

(440) 775-1711

Firstchurchoberlin.org

This page was intentionally left blank.

AGENDA

Call to Order
 Opening Prayer
 Report of the Nominating Committee
 Agenda Items from the floor
 Discussion
 Closing Song

Mike Schmid
 Rev. David T. Hill
 Karla Sanderson

Shalom

Shalom, my friends, shalom my friends. Shalom, shalom!
May peace be with you, may peace be with you. Shalom, shalom!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Agenda.....	3
Table of Contents	3
2021 Nominating Committee Report	4 & 5
Moderator's Report (Mike Schmid)	6
Recap of Resolutions	
Congregational Meetings—April 2020-present	7-9
Executive Council Meetings	
Committee Reports	
Christian Education	10-11
Facilities	11-12
Fellowship	12
Finance	13
Outreach and Service	14
Stewardship	15
Witness and Membership	15-16
Worship	16-17
Pastor's Report	18
Director of Faith Formation Report	19
Campaign for the Future	20

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE:

Our constitution specifies that "Regular Meetings of the Congregation shall be held, at times designated by the Executive Council, to ... receive the reports of the Standing Committees, and elect the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, ... At any Congregational Meeting, fifty (50) member shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Members present shall have the right to vote." Due to the COVID-19 crisis and governmental edicts restricting large assemblies, we are unable to schedule a meeting requiring 50 or more people to meet. The Executive Council has voted to accept the recommendations of the Nominating Committee and authorize each appointment to "acting" status until those appointments can be voted on at a Congregational Meeting. Members with unexpired terms will continue to serve. We will announce a Regular Meeting as soon as one can safely be conducted in accordance with recommended practices.

Nominating Committee Report for the First Church in Oberlin, UCC • Congregational Annual Meeting: May 2021
NEW COMMITTEE CANDIDATES (in bold and highlighted)

POSITION	CANDIDATES - new term beg. - 05/01/21	Term Start	Term exp.	Term Length	Eligible for re-election	Notes	OUTGOING members
Moderator	Schmid, Mike	2018	2022	2	N		
Clerk	Richards, Prue	2021	2023	2	Y	(no term limit)	Gates, Linda
Treasurer	Richards, Pete	2021	2022	1	Y	(no term limit)	Buck, Marty
Executive Council	Clark, Ruthann	2020	2023	3	Y		
	Sprague, Anne	2020	2023	3	Y		
	Mathews, Gene	2021	2024	3	Y		Bandy, Rebecca
	Conway, Anne	2018	2024	3	N	2nd term	Conway, Anne
	Longworth, Carol	2019	2022	3	Y		
Christian Education	Thompson, Ralph	2019	2022	3	Y		
	Schaum, JJ	2017	2023	3	N	2nd term	
	Wilburn, Drew	2020	2023	3	Y		
	Baumann, Karyn	2021	2024	3	Y		Ring, Jen
	OPEN	2021	2024	3	Y		Dakos, Jessica
Facilities	Campbell, Matt	2016	2022	3	N	2nd term	
	Kepner, Val	2016	2022	3	N	2nd term	
	Buck, Marty	2021	2024	3	N	Co-Chair, 2nd term	
	Thompson, Rob	2017	2023	3	N	2nd term	
	Andrew Garver	2021	2024	3	Y	replaced S. Dakos	Garver, Andrew
Fellowship*	Price-Jones, Laurel	2021	2024	3	Y		Matthews, Gene
	Zwegat, Tina	2016	2022	3	N	2nd term	
	Scheufler, David	2019	2022	3	Y		
	Mathews, Sandy	2020	2023	3	Y		
	Scotch, Denise	2019	2023	3	Y	2nd term	
Finance	Scheufler, Janice	2018	2024	3	N	2nd term	Scheufler, Janice
	Gueulette, Margaret	2021	2024	3	Y		Heard, Hannah
	Colson, Sarah	2019	2022	3	Y	Chair, filled vacancy	
	Velto, Margaret	2019	2022	3	Y		
	Remster, Eric	2020	2022	3	Y		
Ministerial Relations <i>(appointed not nominated)</i>	Barlow, Bill	2020	2023	3	Y		
	Schaum, Anne	2018	2024	3	N	Chr, 2nd term	Schaum, Anne
	Clark, Ruth Ann	2020	2022	3		EC – at large	
	Richards, Pete	2021	2022	1		Treasurer	Buck, Marty
	Sprague, Anne	2020	2022	3		EC – at large	
Ministerial Relations <i>(appointed not nominated)</i>	Ralph Thompson						
	Ken Cheek						
	Kristin Peterson						
	Catherine Hoyle						

POSITION	NAME	Start Term	End Term	Term Length	Eligible for re-election	Notes	OUTGOING Members
Nominating	McKibben, Jeanne	2018	2022	2	N	2 nd term	
	Sanderson, Karla	2020	2022	2	Y	Chair	
	Longworth, Bob	2020	2022	2	Y		
	Dakos, Jessica	2019	2023	2	N	2 nd term	
	Andrews, Erik	2021	2023	2	Y		
	Jindra, Robin	2021	2023	2	Y		
Outreach and Service	Burke, Carol	2020	2023	3	Y		
	Jacobson, Carl	2017	2023	3	N	2 nd term, Chair	
	Parish, Mark	2021	2024	3	Y		McKibben, Jeanne
	Preston, Thayer	2021	2024	3	Y		Hall, Carol
	Kris Carter	2016	2022	3	N	2 nd term	
	Schaum, Miranda	2019	2022	3	Y		
Personnel (positions are appointed, not nominated)	Schmid, Mike	2018	2022			Moderator	
	Schaum, Anne	2019	2023			Finance	Schaum, Anne
	Conway, Anne	2019	2023			EC - at large	Conway, Anne
	Clark, Ruth Ann	2020	2022			EC - at large	
	Hill, Rev. David T.					Pastor	
Stewardship	Conway, Rollin	2017	2023	3	N	2 nd Term	
	Taylor, Tom	2019	2023	3	N	2 nd Term	
	Preston, Dale	2018	2024	3	N	2 nd term	Preston, Dale
	Steel, Diana	2021	2024	3	Y		Wettersten, Jill
	Gates, John	2020	2022	3	Y		
	Peterson, Kristin	2019	2022	3	Y		
Witness and Membership	Cheek, Ken	2017	2022	3	N	2 nd term	
	McDaniel, Mary	2017	2023	3	N	Chair, 2 nd term	
	Stefanidis, Gabe	2021	2024	3	Y		Wettersten, Vern
	Garver, Nancy	2021	2024	3	Y		Nelson, Mary
	Orr, Elaine	2016	2022	3	N	2 nd term	
	Slocum, Linda	2016	2022	3	N	2 nd term	
Worship	Davis, Barbara	2020	2023	3	Y		
	Slocum, Harold	2017	2023	3	N	2 nd term	
	Hayes, Ardith	2019	2024	3	N	2 nd term	Hayes, Ardith
	Thompson, Becky	2018	2024	3	N	2 nd term	Thompson, Becky
	Peterson, Marci	2017	2022	3	N		
	McKibben, Jeanne	2021	2024	3	Y		replaced Carol Harvey

*Note: Deidre Gargas is the point person for funeral/memorial receptions

**Report of the Moderator
Michael Schmid
2019-2020**

“Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we must be saved by love.” Reinhold Niebuhr

“In everything the purpose must weigh with the folly.” Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part II, ii. 2

Here we sit literally waiting to restart our lives as individuals and as a congregation. Nevertheless, I believe we restarted First Church in Oberlin a year ago at the close of the sabbatical period and the start of this new congregational year marked by our annual meeting. We do not know when we will be able to conduct our annual meeting, but we have resolved to continue as if we had met and agreed to go forward, pending congregational approval.

Thanks to those who have accepted the new positions on our committees and the Executive Council. Your willingness to contribute while restricted at home is commendable.

This past year, our congregation endorsed the challenge of the Capital Campaign for the Future and successfully raised funds allowing us to pursue long delayed plans to renovate and refresh our tired facilities. Little did we know at the time that had we not pursued the campaign, collected a significant portion of the promised gifts, and placed the proceeds in safe, liquid financial assets, we would have missed the opportunity now closed by the virus induced economic panic.

Thanks to those that dreamed, looked to the past and the future for inspiration, organized and planned. Thanks to those who boldly believed we could ask for and receive the needed funding. Thanks to each of you that pledged. Thanks to those who implemented and managed the resulting projects. Thanks to all of you who have assisted in many ways to keep us moving forward.

So what does folly have to do with these notable efforts? Well, for every fix, we seemed to find another broken item. We demolished walls and discovered that we lacked insulation. We replaced windows and suffered water damage from failed steam pipes and leaking roofs. We pulled carpets and discovered asbestos. It is folly to think this process is ever complete.

And yet we move forward with a new view to Oberlin. First Church now looks east with a welcoming terrace, multiple new entrance doors and accessible entryways. We have announced to the community and college that we are alive and growing and here to serve. We have preserved the history reflected in our sandstone steps and have built new ways to share our faith with Oberlin and the world. I look forward to rejoining this community with you together in our reconfigured Meeting House whenever that may happen.

2021 Annual Report from the Clerk

Due to restrictions on large group gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, the regular meeting of the congregation, traditionally held in late April or early May, did not take place in 2020. In April 2020, the Church Office published the Annual Report for 2019-

20 and the Executive Council approved the 2020 slate of committee members and officers pro-tem until the congregation could ratify those appointments.

Since the beginning of the COVID shut-down in March 2020, the Executive Council has continued to meet monthly via Zoom providing leadership and support for the mission of the church and addressing financial obligations, including those occasioned because of emergencies (e.g., broken steam pipe, leak in MH roof), matters which would normally have come before the congregation at a regular or called meeting of the congregation.

A virtual meeting of the congregation was held after the worship service on January 24, 2021 via Zoom to approve the 2021 budget; and (retroactively) the May 2020 committee/officer appointments and emergency expenditures approved by the EC since the last meeting of the congregation. Anne Schaum (Finance Committee) presented the proposed budget and Moderator Mike Schmid presented the resolutions recommended by the Executive Council. Those resolutions were put to a vote by mail-in ballot. The results of those actions are included in the body of resolutions approved by the EC from May 2020 to April 2021 below:

(2020-07) RESOLVED, May 26, 2020, that Martin L. Buck, Treasurer, is authorized to claim death benefits on the annuity contract (for Sabra Henke) on behalf of The First Church in Oberlin, UCC. Further resolved, in the event of any change in the office or power of the Designee, The Officer/Authorized Party will immediately certify those changes to AGL/USL in writing. Further resolved, the Life Company is hereby released from any liability and shall be indemnified against any loss, liability, or expense arising from honoring these Resolutions. **Motion:** Carol Longsworth. **Second:** Anne Sprague. The motion passed unanimously.

(2020-08) RESOLVED, June 1, 2020, that First Church enter into negotiations with Oberlin Conservatory of Music to craft an agreement that would allow a limited number of pianos to be moved to First Church and that a limited number of Oberlin Conservatory students would be allowed to use First Church to practice until the end of August. Further resolved that a memorandum of understanding will be drafted that will describe the requirements and restrictions of any such arrangements. Further resolved that the agreement be reviewed at the end of August 2020.

Motion: Anne Sprague **Second:** Rebecca Bandy. The motion passed 5-0. No abstentions.

(2020-09) RESOLVED, June 10, 2020, that the First Church in Oberlin affirms and endorses the statement drafted by the Outreach and Service Committee in response to the recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Further resolved that this statement be distributed to the members and friends of First Church and to the press for publication. The EC endorsed this resolution unanimously by electronic vote on June 12, 2020.

First Church in Oberlin Statement on Anti-racism 6/9/20

We, the members of The First Church in Oberlin United Church of Christ, are dismayed by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. These injustices are only the most recent examples of a national disgrace. Their deaths demonstrate

how Black citizens are daily held in suspicion by neighbors, threatened by authorities and subjected to bias by police as they are pre-judged, searched, discouraged and disregarded. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed for all to see the disparities by race in access to healthcare and rates of incarceration.

There is a wide gulf between Blacks and Whites in terms of access to education, jobs, loans and housing. All of these aspects of racism are evident in Oberlin. We recognize that race is fundamental to these disparities. What we see today in terms of the depth of grief and outrage are direct responses to racism and discrimination that are part of our history and remain today. This must end.

The First Church in Oberlin seeks to be an ally of our Black sisters and brothers in combating racism and hate in our country. We recognize that our church has not fully addressed its own racism. We recognize that we need to become more aware of our own biases and arrive at ways to combat racism within ourselves, our community, our nation and our world. We pledge to educate ourselves individually and collectively and take part in activities in our community that help heal these wounds.

Guided by the teachings of Christ and informed by listening and learning we hope to find strength in each other to stand up and be active participants in the struggle to end racism and discrimination. Black Lives Matter.

Approved by Executive Council by electronic vote 6/12/2020.

(2020-10) RESOLVED August 24, 2020, that an unrestricted fund be established in memory of Herb and Sabra Henke who bequeathed \$75,756.52 to First Church, with gratitude for their generosity. **Motion:** Carol Longworth. **Second:** Anne Conway. The motion passed unanimously.

(2020-11) RESOLVED September 29, 2020, that First Church will purchase equipment necessary to facilitate broadcasting worship services and other events from the Meeting House: camera, laptop, and other technical equipment to support these services. Funds for these purchases will be taken from the Herb and Sabra Henke Memorial fund to a maximum of \$6000. **Motion:** Ralph Thompson. **Second:** Rebecca Bandy. The motion passed unanimously.

(2020-12) Resolved, October 28, 2020, to authorize the expenditure of an estimated \$22,000 (twenty-two thousand dollars) to make the necessary repairs on the roof of the Meeting House.

Motion: Ruth Ann Clark. **Second:** Anne Conway. The motion passed unanimously by all present.

(2020-13) Resolved, October 28, 2020, that in response to a request from Oberlin College to use the First Church organ and to teach the Sacred Music Skills Class in the Meeting House in the Spring semester 2021, David Hill will confer with Oberlin College representatives to draft an MOU. Further resolved that granting this request does not establish a precedent and that each request from the College will be considered on a case by case basis. **Motion to accept the resolution:** Anne Sprague. **Second:** Carol Longworth. The motion passed unanimously by those present.

(2020-14) RESOLVED, November 23, 2020, that \$24,000 of First Church (UCC) in Oberlin Pastor David Hill's 2021 salary be designated as a housing allowance.

Motion: Ralph Thompson. **Second:** Rebecca Bandy. Approval was unanimous by all present.

Resolutions 2021-01 through 2021-05 from the January 2021 Congregational Mail-In Ballot:

(2021-01) Resolved, January 16, 2021, to retroactively accept the report of the Nominating Committee confirming appointments to the Standing Committees for May 2020 - May 2021. **Passed: Yes 109, No 3, Abstain 0**

(2021-02) Whereas, unplanned facility maintenance issues occurred during the COVID 19 shutdown requiring repairs to the James Brand House and the Meeting House: [Fransiscus Roofing \$31,674; Ohio Roofing \$22,000; Geisel Plumbing \$26,200], and **whereas** the maintenance repairs required expenditures greater than 2% (2 percent) of the approved 2020 budget, and **whereas**, in order to preserve our facilities and protect from additional damage, the maintenance issues were corrected; Therefore, **resolved,, January 16, 2021,,** to retroactively approve the expenditure of funds to support emergency repairs. **Passed: Yes 107, No 5, Abstain 0**

(2021-03) Whereas, the Project has completed or will be completed by January 3, 2021, the activities in compliance with the Not For Us Alone Campaign, the Campaign for the Future and the Supplemental Project, **resolved, January 16, 2021**, that First Church endorses the final Summary Capital Campaign report (below), approves the payment of open supplier balances, and closes the Project except for the continuation of the collections of funds pledged in these efforts and

2020 Not for Us Alone; Campaign for the Future; Supplemental Campaign Summary

Income		Pledge		
		Pledges	Payments	Balance Due
Not for Us Alone		\$ 650,191	\$ 585,963	\$ 64,228
White Bequest		\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ -
Campaign for the Future: Individual Pledg		\$ 944,080	\$ 740,876	\$ 203,204
State of Ohio		\$ 64,444	\$ 64,444	\$ -
National Trust		\$ 250,000	\$ 125,000	\$ 125,000
		\$ 2,058,714	\$ 1,666,283	\$ 392,431

Expense		Major Suppliers		Payment Source
2015-2017	Midstate; Weber Murphy	\$	189,619	Not for Us Alone
2018	Weber Murphy Fox; Partners	\$	30,543	Not for Us Alone
2019	Fiorilli; Weber Murphy Fox	\$	315,490	Not for Us Alone
2019	Fiorilli; Joyce; RWClark	\$	379,418	Campaign for Future
2020	Fiorilli; Gilmore; Weber	\$	725,054	Campaign for Future
2020	M&A; Fiorilli; Gilmore	\$	429,351	Cornerstone Loan
2021	M&A; Permanent; Lighting	\$	86,041	Scheduled for Jan 2021 payment
		\$	2,155,515	
	Under (Over) Budget	\$	(96,801)	

Explanation of			
Unplanned Expenses	Primary Contractor	\$ 30,000	All bids submitted exceeded original contract estimate
	Fiorilli Net Changes Aprvd	\$ 37,772	Emergency Exit Signage required to meet Code (\$27K)
	Insulation for JFO & FH	\$ 6,850	Unknown deficiency discovered with plaster removal
	Gilmore Security Overrun	\$ 2,946	Added alarms and sensor replacements
	Flooring Overrun	\$ 10,771	Increased asbestos removal vs forecasted mitigation
	M&A Chancel Overrun	\$ 6,428	Development of structural specifications (Perspectus)
	M&A Repair of Thresholds	\$ 2,500	Unexpected repair to JBH & MH Thresholds
		\$ 97,267	

furthermore, commends the efforts of those who faithfully and tirelessly participated in the design, planning, fund-raising and execution of the Project with special commendation to Gene Matthews, the Project Manager for his tireless work and leadership and to members of the Facilities Committee and others who supplied the needed labor to supplement our suppliers' contractual efforts. **Passed: Yes 109, No 3, Abstain 0**

(2021-04) Resolved, January 16, 2021, to elect the following Nominating Committee Candidates: Jessica Dakos (re-up), Eric Andrews, Robin Jindra. **Passed: Yes 109, No 2, Abstain 1**

(2021-05) Resolved, January 16, 2021, to approve the 2021 Budget. **Passed: Yes 103, No 6, Abstain**

Resolutions from Executive Council:

(2021-06) Resolved, February 23, 2021, that Room 8 be designated for archives and records and that items in the First Church that belong in those categories be housed there; that any further expense associated with the creation of this Archive Room be directed through the Executive Council; and **furthermore** that the Executive Council create a task group to develop policies and procedures that govern the collection and maintenance of materials for the archives. **Motion: Anne Conway. Second: Ralph Thompson.** The motion passed unanimously.

(2021-07) Resolved, February 23, 2021, that First Church accept with gratitude the gift of \$5000 from Ed Long to support the establishment of an Archive Room; that these funds be placed in a designated fund; and that expenditures from this fund be reviewed and approved by the Executive Council. **Motion:** Ruth Ann Clark. **Second.** Carol Longworth. The motion passed unanimously.

(2021-08) Resolved, February 23, 2021, that First Church apply for PPP funds, and **furthermore**, If the PPP loan is approved, and if it is forgiven, that a congregational meeting be called to discuss the impact on the church budget and how those funds might be allocated. **Motion:** Ralph Thompson. **Second:** Anne Conway. Yes: 5 Abstention: 1. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Gates, Clerk

Christian Education Committee Annual Report 2020-21

The Christian Education Committee met on the first Thursday of most months and consisted of the following members: Jen Bertoni, Faith Formation- Jessica Dakos, Chair; Drew Wilburn; Matt Campbell; Val Kepner; J.J. Schaum; Jen Ring; and Rebecca Bandy—liaison to Executive Council

The biggest change this year was Covid. This forced the curriculum to go online. Sunday school happened at two separate times this year. For the 5th grade and younger it was before church via zoom and for youth it was after church via zoom. Sunday school was lead by a few volunteers and Jen Bertoni. Friday night hangout was the first Friday of each month and was filled with games and activities. Teachers/Helpers: Kris Carter, Jessica Dakos, Marleen Caldwell and Val Kepner

The nursery and children spaces have been remodeled including the flooring, painting, and moving the nursery room next to the multigenerational play room.

This year Adult Ed was done over zoom. It included several topics over the course of the year. It was lead primary by David Hill and Jen Bertoni.

This year we added a story time twice a month geared towards Pre-K-5th grade. This was lead by Jen Bertoni.

Over the summer we had volunteers read and record story lessons to replace Sunday school. This year was filled with many challenges and changes as we persevered, and continue to, through Covid-19.

Thank you, Jessica Dakos for CE Chair

2020 was an extremely busy year for the Facilities Committee. In addition to all of the Capital Campaign Project work there were a number of related projects that the Committee undertook. Below is a bullet point list of the Facilities projects.

- Replaced the deteriorated, underground steam and condensate piping, as well as the domestic water line and pneumatic tubing which runs between the basement of the James Brand House and the Meeting House.
- Installed a water leak detection and reporting system at critical locations throughout the facility as required by our insurance carrier.
- Installed new digital thermostats in the Meeting House.
- Replaced the undersized heating water circulating pump for the 1967 Addition.
- Oversaw the deconstruction of the Rental House North of the church.
- Installed rollers on the Altar table.
- Purchased and installed a new storage barn in the Rental Property parking lot
- Installed leak remediation equipment in the attic of the Meeting House and 2nd floor of the James Brand House.
- Replaced the slate roof on the James Brand House with a shingle roof
- Repaired the slate roof on the Meeting House.
- Repaired damaged plaster and painted the ceiling of the Meeting House, resulting from roof leaks.
- Personally removed all carpeting, tack strips, and nails and staples from the corridors and rooms of the James Brand House and the Gallery, in preparation for new flooring.
- Removed the Gallery ramp to the Meeting House to allow installation of new flooring, then replaced it, secured it in place, painted its rails, and manufactured an appropriately-sloped transition to the Gallery floor at the bottom.
- Prepared the James Brand House and Fellowship Hall for new flooring installations. This work involved removing (and later reinstalling) toilets from the bathrooms in James Brand House, as well as several workdays to relocate materials and furniture in advance of new floors being installed.
- Contracted for painting services for all areas not covered by the Capital Campaign.
- Removed old sinks and plumbing from Nursery School rooms and corridors. Installed new vanities in Room 1 and 5.
- Modified Room 5 (the old Nursery) to be the new Library / Meeting Room.
- Renovated Room 8 to become the Archives.
- Upgraded the lighting in Fellowship Hall and the James Brand and Gallery corridors. We received a rebate from Efficiency Smart for using energy efficient lighting.
- Donated all of the 8ft wooden tables in the Fellowship Hall to the Boys and Girls Club of Lorain.
- Purchased 8 round plastic tables and 5 new 6ft plastic tables for Fellowship Hall.
- Initiated the development of a comprehensive facility operations manual.
- Watered and weeded the new landscaping adjacent to the patio, three times weekly, during most of a dry summer when the new plantings were not yet well established.

- Advised and assisted in the improvement of our equipment and techniques for streaming our Sunday services live to a growing audience.

What is not evident in this list is the generous amount of time that was donated by members of the Committee, and many other members of the church, during several workdays throughout the year.

In addition, the Committee sought to donate materials or to recycle materials wherever possible. Examples include selling one refrigerator from the rental house and recycling the remainder through Efficiency Smart. Several pieces of equipment were donated to the Habitat Restore.

As we move into 2021 the Committee is looking at three building projects and two exterior projects. The basement doors to the James Brand House are being replaced, the exterior doors to the Undercroft need to be replaced, and we have received bids for upgrading the heating controls system. In the next couple of years, the steam heating system in the Meeting House will need replacement with a hot-water system as the College changes their system, upon which we rely.

Respectfully submitted,
Gene Matthews & Pete Richards, Co-chairs

Fellowship Committee Annual Report 2020-21

Due to the pandemic, fellowship opportunities have remained online in the past year. At a November meeting on Zoom, the Committee tried to come up with a way to have an online Christmas party. We decided to pursue Christmas caroling online. When we approached Tom Bandy with this idea, he took the ball and ran with it! First Church congregants were able to join Tom and Jen Bertoni on December 13 on Zoom to sing along to our favorite Christmas carols. Later in December and into January, Janice Scheufler sent greetings from the Committee to more isolated members of our church family. Beginning in March, the Committee hosted an online fellowship time immediately following the worship service. Response to this opportunity to see and talk with church friends has increased every week. We now offer Breakout Rooms where people can mingle in smaller groups.

The Committee has also dared to dream about future fellowship opportunities when we are once again able to gather in person. We are looking forward to working with other committees to celebrate returning to worship in the Meeting House and dedicating the new terrace.

Respectfully submitted -- Sarah Colson

Finance Committee Report 2020-2021

As reported last year, our financial picture has not changed; First Church is spending more than is taken in by a significant amount. The endowment is still performing in line with long term assumptions thanks largely to devoted congregation members leaving estate gifts to the

church. An endowment, over time, should return about 7% annually, though there is substantial variation within and among years. A draw on that endowment of 4.5% annually is considered a healthy draw – the remaining 2.5% of the average growth gets reinvested as a hedge against inflation, and thus the endowment will sustain the same purchasing power in perpetuity. From 2009-2020, the average yield of the endowment has exceeded 7%. Thanks to unwavering operating support of our generous congregation, strong stock market performance, and significant expense for unanticipated facility repairs being covered through a supplemental capital campaign, the pandemic did not have a tremendous impact on the church's overall financial position. While we lost revenue from building rentals and from the absence of a physical collection plate, expense savings helped balance the impact. For example, we did not incur expenses for choral scholars, altar flowers, and bulletins, but we did maintain our pre-pandemic staffing levels. The pandemic directly caused some unanticipated expenses including an upgrade to our Wi-Fi and new equipment because of the Zoom/Facebook Live worship format. Though they opted out of the first round of funding, the Executive Council accepted the Finance Committee's recommendation to pursue the second round of federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP or CARES Act) funding of \$45k. **We preapproval.**

In addition to our routine duties, the committee embarked on a few other projects this year.

- The Finance and Stewardship committees met (virtually) to discuss the relationship between our roles and the importance of clear messaging. Moving forward, the committees will hold a joint meeting before the stewardship campaign goal is set. The joint committee suggested the Executive Council address the larger strategic issues the congregation faces that result in too little revenue to cover expense.
- We are pursuing an informal audit to ensure our newly updated policies and procedures being followed and to review our financials as we prepare for the Treasurer transition. Our hope is to conduct a regular external audit moving forward.
- We rebalanced our investments to align with the policy which protects us in the event of stock market instability.
- Ruth Ann helped focus the committee on the impact of generosity that has helped our balance sheet continuously grow over the last 20 years despite our use of investment funds.
- Marty doggedly pursued a discount offer for our payroll services that is due to us through the UCC and pursued a change in taxable status on the rental house lot following its deconstruction.
- Pete filled the role of Bookkeeper during his training period and investigated several complicated financial inquiries.
-

As with all functions of our faith family, the work of the Finance Committee is reliant upon an army of volunteers and workers. I offer profound thanks to the committee members themselves (including Bill Barlow, Marty Buck, Ruth Ann Clark, Eric Remster, and Anne Sprague,); to our incoming Treasurer, Pete Richards, who began his orientation early; to our Moderator, Mike Schmid, who attended all of our meetings; to our Financial Secretary, Diana Pierson, who has agreed to continue serving in this role; and to Laurel Price Jones who worked with Bill Barlow, Mike Schmid and me on the unanticipated supplemental campaign **(final amount?)**.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Schaum

Christian Outreach and Service Committee

First Church contributed \$63,594.68 to organizations and individuals engaged in progressive social action endeavors. Of this First Church contributed \$32,925 to the UCC's Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM).

Locally, recipients of benevolences included Oberlin Community Services, Community Meals, Ruby Jones Scholarship Fund, and Oberlin Kids.

At the county level donations included to the Lorain County Free Clinic, Second Harvest, Genesis House and El Centro.

State entities included the Temples Hills Capital Campaign, HOLA OHIO, Ohioans to Stop Executions (OTSE), Jobs with Justice, and Ohio Immigrant Alliance.

National benevolences included Crossroad Child and Family Services and to Chicago, and United and Eden (CUE) Seminaries.

International donations were made to SEPA Guatemala and Lady Doak College, India. In addition, special offerings were collected and made to One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need and the Christmas Fund/Veterans of the Cross. In June, 2020 the committee faced the challenge of responding to the murder of George Floyd. We went into extra meetings and developed the First Church Statement on Anti-Racism. We also developed the Anti-Racism Resource Guide and purchased the Black Lives Matter Banner that hangs on the front of the church.

We purchased a Peace Pole which has unfortunately not yet been placed.

We contributed to the League of Women Voters Candidates night, this year held in a virtual format.

During the summer we offered financial assistance through Oberlin Community Services for virtual school connectivity for underprivileged families, and in the fall helped with the backpack effort to provide needed schools supplies to needy families.

In late August we participated in a letter-writing campaign to convince the Lorain County Fair Board to ban the sale of the Confederate Flag at the County Fair.

More recently we have been considering how we should best approach our committee mandate to lead the congregation in rendering service to our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Jacobson
Outreach and Service
Committee Chair

Stewardship Committee

Members of the Stewardship Committee for 2020-2021 are: Rollin Conway, chair, Dale Preston, vice chair & secretary, John Gates, Kristin Peterson, Tom Taylor, and Jill Wettersten. Ralph Thompson is the Executive Council liaison. Financial Secretary, Diana Pierson, and Treasurer, Marty Buck, have provided data and information for this report. The comparative table below reflects totals as of March 21, 2021. The total number of pledges is 99, an increase of 9 over 2020. There were 18 new pledges, 24 increased pledges, 42 that stayed the same, and 14 decreased pledges compared to 2020. 16 pledging units who made a pledge for 2020 did not make one for 2021.

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total amount pledged	\$303,859	\$294,122	\$303,671	\$279,416	\$283,476.36
Total number of pledging units / households	103	100	100	90	99

Report of the Witness & Membership Committee 2020-2021

In light of Covid restrictions, the Witness and Membership Committee has not been able to meet in person or to fulfill our charge to welcome people, to visit friends in their homes, to serve communion to those unable to come to church or to hold inquirer's suppers for those interested in learning more about First Church. The committee has held its meetings on the second Wednesday afternoon of each month via ZOOM since last spring. It has been a joy to see each member's face and to hear their voice as we have tried to meet the needs of our congregation.

A list of the names of members and friends of First Church who are alone, experienced a loss, are caring for a loved one or just in need of socialization was created. Because our committee was unable to do its work at the Welcome Table in person or hosting inquirer's

suppers at church, committee members made contact twice a month with folks through phone calls, emails or snail mail notes. It was interesting to see how many people responded to our notes by writing, emailing or calling us.

Our church manager, Diana Pierson, became an integral part of our note writing exchange. She took photos of the outside and inside of First Church as the renovations progressed and made beautiful note cards which she put in stamped envelopes with a First Church return address label. Others like Betty Morris and Jeanne McKibben sent Diana photos they took of Oberlin in spring and summer giving Diana a wider variety of photos for note cards. (Many thanks to Diana for your skill and commitment to keeping people connected and to our photographers who sent her photos!!) It was a wonderful way to stay connected to members and friends of First Church.

Two people visiting our services virtually expressed a desire to learn more about First Church in terms of membership. Thus the committee held an Inquirer's event via ZOOM in March. Since the Reopening the Church Safely committee is working hard to make that a reality, we are anxious for the time when we can again welcome perspective people in person as new members.

Marci Peterson, with help from the church manager and David Hill has taken the role of head of Called to Care. There has been little in-person contact but Marci has been faithful in emailing folks on the Called to Care committee and Witness and Membership committee as well as the church book group for prayer requests.

We look forward to continuing our efforts to welcome and support new members and participants and to deepen our understanding and sharing of our faith.

Committee members are: Ken Cheek, Mary McDaniel (chair), Mary Nelson, Elaine Orr, Linda Slocum (secretary) and Vern Wettersten. Anne Conway serves as our liaison with executive council.

As we begin a new "committee year", we want to thank Vern Wettersten and Mary Nelson for their faithful service and welcome Nancy Garver to our group. I offer my gratitude to the committee for their support and my personal prayers and best wishes to them as we all move into the next church year.

Worship Committee Annual Report: 2021

March 31, 2021, bst

The Worship Committee and larger Worship Planning Group: David Hill, Pastor; Thomas Bandy, Organist and Director of Music; Jen Bertoni, Director of Faith Formation; Carol Longworth, Liaison; Prue Richards, Ad Hoc; Barbara Davis, Carol Harvey (1.20-4.21), Ardith Hayes, Marci Peterson, Harold Slocum, and Becky Thompson, Worship Committee members.

Our committee's February 2020 planning included awareness of significant change due to church renovations, our consequent meeting for worship in the Fellowship Hall, and multi-dimensional changes in our society. Since then, we have sought to survive and care during

this COVID19 Pandemic. Below follows a report of our Worship Committee's activities during this past year.

We worked to facilitate the transition from the Meeting House to the Fellowship Hall (January 5, 2020) and then to virtual worship (March 2020). Throughout the year, we met as often as needed, sometimes weekly, more often bi-weekly, as we considered worship needs and hopes through the liturgical seasons: Fall, special Sundays, Advent, Christmas, and now Lent and Eastertide. We adapted to a time line as dictated by the pandemic, e.g., in March and April 2020 we envisioned liturgy and process for returning to worship in the Meeting House!

We reviewed protocols for returning to in-person worship.

Palm/Passion Sunday Worship included a virtual walk from Fellowship Hall into the Meeting House. The remainder of the service was live-streamed from the Meeting House. David Hill offered his home to be accessed for Maundy Thursday worship, at which time we shared in the Lord's supper. Easter worship was live-streamed from David's living room due to a Meeting House steam-line rupture and Wi-Fi issues. The issues continued, and David offered his home to be accessed for worship for a number of subsequent Sundays. The Worship Committee shared congregant feedback as well as personal experience that the gift of David's home was providing comfort, closeness, and the familiar during a period of distress, distance, and the unknown. We returned to worship in the Meeting House on May 24th, during which David provided a virtual tour. Many commented on how special it was to see the Meeting House and its renovated beauty. General feedback regarding congregants' experience of the Worship Services has also been positive. A couple of congregants have shared that their experience in worship has been "spirituality strong," and have noted that they "felt God's presence."

Throughout our planning, the committee, staff, and others directly involved in envisioning, planning, and lead in worship, sought to create balance in worship by including much of the traditional, the necessarily new, and the carefully chosen new.

In May, we honored the service of our senior Choral Scholar, with Prue's significant help, by sending her a card, a special mug, and a \$50.00 gift certificate.

We formed a Technology Support Sub-Committee during May and June, contacted three churches and interviewed tech persons about live-streaming, and reported considerable information to David Hill and to the Executive Council regarding resources available and needed. David has continued to give the Worship Committee regular updates on worship-related technology issues, resources, and progress.

Via live-streaming, Fairport Harbor, Ohio UCC church joined First Church in worship in August. First Church congregants joined Oberlin's Peace Community Church in worship in September.

Totenfest was planned with the strong awareness of the world's suffering and our connection to the world. We raised up John Lewis, as well as others. Committee members expressed appreciation for Adelaide Thomas and her offering of a violin piece during the service. Advent and Christmas Eve. Worship took place via live-streaming. We formed two Sub-committees that worked to incorporate the overarching theme of "What Child is This," with the sub-themes of waiting, watching, rejoicing, and trusting. One member believes that next year

we might earlier divide into sub-committees to support our process of more fully integrating our main theme and sub-themes. The staff honored and went beyond our imaginings through their offerings of liturgy, prayers, messages, special music, Christmas pageant, and more.

We attended six Webinar Workshops by Marcia McFee: As shared by one of the committee members, “This to me, was a definite highlight in our year. A valuable takeaway was renewed attention to ways we incorporate elements of the sensory – color, poetry, music, chancel arrangement – into our virtual worship.” Other members also reported having gained an appreciation for the sensory, as well as for sharing in leadership, creating themes, and making worship intergenerational and inclusive.

Prue has continued to prepare the sanctuary with color, flowers, tapestry, advent wreath, candles, and additional images. We are grateful.

The committee reviewed the budget in January and has made and submitted a 2021 Worship Committee Budget Proposal.

We have been actively planning for Lent, Maundy Thursday, and Easter. This report is being prepared as we are living in Holy Week.

Going forward, a committee member has expressed concern that this time of Pandemic has made more evident our need for greater communication between First Church Committees. We will keep this feedback in consideration

One member has shared her understanding of “ongoing value: Working together to bring into focus the texts, feelings, spiritual challenges, and hungers of a liturgical season for staff to draw upon as they plan each service. We are truly blessed by David, Jen, and Tom’s openness to our participation.”

Hopefully, with God and each other, we will co-create a year in new living.

Pastor’s Report—Rev. David T. Hill

What a difference a year makes. At this time last year we were emerging from a time of sabbatical and entering into a new era as pastor and congregation. We were wrapping up a successful capital campaign in preparation for some major renovations to our church facility. We imagined a “year of discovery” as we explored a renewed sense of what it means to be the church. Change was expected but I don’t think anyone, myself included, imagined the degree of change we’ve experience in just one year.

In May, we celebrated the music ministry of Bill Davis upon his retirement. With the return of college students in the Fall, we welcomed Tom Bandy as our new Director of Music. As October passed into November we were blessed with the return of Diana Pierson as our Office Manager. With the coming of the new year we prepared to say goodbye to our Commissioned Minister for Faith Formation and Youth, Brandy Bring as she embarked on a new vocation. In our final few weeks of worshipping together before Ohio’s “stay at home” order we became acquainted with Jen Bertoni, our new Director of Faith Formation. Between the end of the sabbatical and the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic we navigated three major staffing transitions.

Change came not just in the form of staffing but also to the very core of our ministry: worship. New and renewed worship leadership brought change to the look, feel, and sound of worship as we leaned into anticipated changes to the Meeting House. While construction in other parts of the building necessitated some altered use of the building we were at least able to continue to gather on Sunday in our customary fashion. At the end of 2019, however, with the first phase of construction complete, renovations began in the Meeting House and Sunday worship moved to the Fellowship Hall. In that space we rediscovered the joy of greater physical closeness and spiritual intimacy. Just as we were anticipating moving into a newly renovated Meeting House Covid-19 took hold and we found ourselves fumbling with technology to connect to live streamed services from the pastor's living room. In less than three months' time our expectations and experiences of "where" worship occurs moved from grand auditorium to social hall to our individual homes.

There is tremendous comfort and strength in familiar patterns and known ways of being in the world. Change, while inevitable and often valuable, is also unsettling and exhausting. All of us depend on some perceived certainties in life to remain grounded. Scripture reveals, however, a God who has a known proclivity for shaking things up as a means of re-creation, renewal, and transformation. Yet even as God's dynamic Spirit works with us, through us and upon us, we are assured of God's love and constant presence. Knowing that even while God is stirring the pot God's love for us is unwavering allows us to bend and adapt rather than become uprooted. One of the greatest gifts of faith is resiliency.

Even as Covid-19 forces us to surrender to changes beyond our control God remains with us refashioning even this crisis into an opportunity for greater connectedness. One of the lessons of the sabbatical that several parishioners have shared with me was the sense that "we are all in this together." As we move through these uncertain times, we do so together: together as a congregation and pastor; together as a people called by God; together in the faith that, come what may, God is with us. I look forward to continuing to journey with you into a year of not just challenge and change but promise and hope. May this time in the wilderness of physical separation lead us to a richer sense of relationship both with one another and with the God we worship.

Annual Report - Faith Formation Director

It has been an amazing and surprising first year of service to this congregation. The pandemic has presented challenges and, just as importantly, opportunities to the Faith Formation program and the church as a whole.

Although we have been gathering remotely this past year, that doesn't mean Faith Formation has stopped! We started re-imagining our programs in the Spring by offering written Children's Church and Faith Formation resources for families to explore. We held youth fellowship meetings every other Friday on Zoom, and created a storytime program that also met twice monthly. Since we weren't using our spaces, I took the opportunity to reorganize and clean the supply closets in the James Brand House and the Undercroft. Spring also presented opportunities to be more involved in worship than the Faith Formation Director usually is, and I greatly enjoyed being able to contribute.

In summer, we created and delivered a weekly puzzle kit - called *Top Secret* - where the kids were invited to solve clues and track down the Apostle Paul through his many travels. These "house calls" enabled us to stay more connected to our families. I'm hoping we all learned a little bit about the book of Acts in the process! We also moved our Summer Storytime

program on to YouTube, and had different church members volunteer to record a story from the multicultural collection *Rhinos and Raspberries*, published by Teaching Tolerance. Several children also participated in virtual camp activities, sponsored by Temples Hills. When the Black Lives Matter protests began in midsummer, we started a monthly “Hot Topic” discussion with the older youth on Sunday evenings.

With the coming of Fall, we began virtual Sunday School and Adult Ed. programs on Zoom. The fall K-5 rotation curriculum was written in-house, and focused on telling the story of Jesus’ life and ministry. It was loosely based on the book *What Jesus Did*, by Theodore Parker Ferris. Our children in grades 5-12 explored the *Caffeine + Christ* curriculum, published by the UCC’s Pilgrim Press. Our first Adult Ed. program was an exploration of Ibram X. Kendi’s book, *How to be an Anti-Racist*. We continued offering Storytimes twice monthly, and shifted Friday Night Hangouts back to once a month starting in November. Plans for Advent Workshop tours had to be altered, as COVID case numbers made it unsafe. Online resources were sent out instead, with a craft and story about A Child of Hope (Ruby Bridges); Children of Peace (The March for Our Lives activists); A Child of Joy (Little Stevie Wonder); A Child of Love (Alex Scott of Alex’s Lemonade Stand); and the Child who is God With Us (Jesus of Nazareth). Sunday School was devoted in December to rehearsals for the Christmas Zoom pageant, Illustrated Ministry’s “Do Not Be Afraid,” which was very well received.

Our Adult Ed. sessions in November and December focused on spiritual practices, including Lectio and Visio Divina, Prayer Beads, and Meditation. The sessions were recorded so that people who could not attend the sessions as scheduled could watch at their convenience. Since our Fall Sunday School classes were about the New Testament, we spent the winter and spring telling the stories of the First Testament. Our older youth are exploring the “Ancestors - Old Testament” curriculum from Sparkhouse, and the younger kids are getting a rotation curriculum (compiled in-house) featuring similar stories. The younger kids spent five weeks exploring the life of Moses and the Israelites’ wilderness wanderings during Lent. Our Adult Ed. program during Lent also focused on this idea of “Wilderness Wanderings.” Five speakers addressed our sessions on various topics, linked to Israel’s time in the wilderness. The topics were transitions, adolescence, providing for the needy, trust, and desert spirituality, and each was tied back to a scriptural passage from the Mosaic books of the Bible. Again, sessions were recorded so that people could watch at their convenience. We had about 30 people register for the program.

The end of winter has meant that construction in the church is wrapping up, and we are resetting the rooms in the hope of visitors! There have been some shifts in room use: the nursery has been moved to Room 1 to facilitate childcare staffing, and the old nursery room is being converted into a library/conference room. Rooms 9 and 11 upstairs will be used as the primary Sunday School rooms, with Room 10 as the music room. Room 8 is now the new archive room, and we are using Room 7 to store items that cannot be used during COVID. Thanks to Gene Matthews and the rest of the Facilities Team for all their help resetting these spaces - and for installing our brand-new sink and vanity!

Our holiday celebrations this winter and spring have been muted, but we were able to send out written resources for Epiphany, MLK Jr. Day, and Palm Sunday. The kids celebrated other holidays (Valentine’s Day and St. Patrick’s Day) during Friday Night Hangouts. And our downtown storefront Easter Egg Picture Hunt netted 44 participants!

As we turn our thoughts toward summer, I am excited by the warm weather and the possibilities it brings. The reopening committee is working hard to develop protocols that will hopefully allow us to gather soon - at least in small groups. I am checking with local childcare organizations and the CDC, State of Ohio, and Lorain County Health Department websites to develop guidelines that will make our childcare, youth fellowship, and Sunday School offerings as safe as possible.

In the meantime, plans are in the works for this year's Summer Storytime recordings, so I am looking for volunteers to read stories for the church's Youtube channel! (Hint, hint...)
It has been an amazing, challenging, surprising year, and I feel blessed to have been part of this community during it. It has been wonderful meeting you online and in person, and sharing this beautiful faith, which can sustain us through the hard times.

At the end of the Passover Seder, there is a cry of, "next year, in Jerusalem!" I will add my personal cry of, "next year, in person!" I so look forward to getting to know many of you in person and face to face as the world warms and the pandemic turns.

Respectfully submitted,
Jen Bertoni