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To my fellow GUCC members,

I stepped into the Moderator role in the first quarter of this year as our previous Moderator, Christine Syltevik, began preparations to move out of the area. She and her husband, Stein, are now happily ensconced in their new home in the Toms River area. First and foremost, I want to thank Christine and Stein for their many contributions to Grace over the years and to remind them that, near or far, they are beloved in this community. We will continue to hold them in prayer, and we wish them well in their new life chapter.

We started out the year hopeful that the pandemic would soon be behind us as the vaccine became available. As we moved into Spring, we began discussions around how to transition back into in-person Worship without losing the unexpected blessing of the virtual experience. Don Manning and his son, Chris, spearheaded a committee that took on designing what hybrid worship might look like, and Deb and Don Manning very generously donated the equipment needed to make the vision into a reality.

As the pandemic resurged, we pushed back our plans to return to the building, but throughout the summer a team trained by Don learned how to set-up, run, and break-down the equipment. In September Pastor Dan began leading the service from the Women's Club once again with a handful of Council members participating in person. In November we began inviting our congregants to join us either in person, or via Zoom, as they so choose. One of the unexpected blessings of Zoom is that we can now welcome participants outside of the geographic area who might not otherwise be able to be part of our congregation. We have gained several regular attendees in this manner, and our new hybrid worship will allow them to continue to worship with us.

As Christine Syltevik noted in her Moderator's letter last year, the church made a commitment to further our Justice work in 2021, and we kept that promise. The justice blog continues to go out every Monday morning, putting a week's worth of justice action opportunities right in our inboxes. One of those is our monthly commitment to join Marie Knapp and members of the Alexandria Presbyterian Church, along with other area churches, in their Saturday morning vigils in Milford as they stand in solidarity with Hunterdon County residents of color. GUCC has committed to joining the vigil the last Saturday of every month; however, I am pleased to report that numerous GUCC members participate on many of the other Saturdays each month.

Another of the justice-related activities that the church has embraced is supporting the RARE program at Lehigh University. We helped one of the students in the RARE program travel home to see his family in Africa for the first time since the pandemic began. We have also provided support for Mike and Maggie D'Aversa's egg donations to area food pantries by helping them with chicken feed, and we made a donation to help with the construction of a rehab facility in West Virginia that Mike is helping to build. We have continued our support for the Flemington Food Pantry as well as joining with the Lutheran Church to keep the emergency overnight mini-food pantry box stocked. Numerous volunteers from GUCC participate weekly in the America's Grow-A-Row supermarket gleaning program, which involves picking up produce donated by local supermarkets and delivering it to local food pantries for distribution to families in need of fresh produce. We helped a sister UCC congregation in Newark that needed support when their soup kitchen and clothing pantry was damaged by Storm Ida, we provided beds, pillows, and

blankets for more than twenty human trafficking victims here in New Jersey, and our EMF fund continues to provide emergency support for those in need in our congregation and in the wider community. Numerous GUCC members continue to participate in the interfaith anti-racism book club and discussion group, now in its third year, that meets weekly. And, of course, we continue to support the annual YMCA Coat Drive, and we have adopted four local families this Christmas through our annual Angel Patrol efforts.

We recently refreshed our website to better describe our mission priorities (those being food insecurity, housing insecurity, anti-discrimination, peace and justice action, and emergency community support), and we added a “How do I know if GUCC is right for me?” page to help interested visitors get to know what we’re about.

As we look ahead to 2022, one of our priorities will be to grow our congregation and share our little gem of a church with others. At our January meeting, Council will be embarking on creating a marketing and outreach plan to help us transform our ideas into action. In the meantime, we had business cards printed with our Zoom links and our mission and vision statements that we can all use to get the word out about GUCC to a wider audience. (Anyone who would like some cards can email me at Kelly.Ospina@graceuccnj.org).

Finally, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone on Church Council for the hard work they do, day in and day out, to help keep our congregation running... not only the Trustees that care for the assets of the church, but also the Deacons who minister to the needs of our congregation. I would also like to thank our Pastor, Dan Lundquist, for his amazing sermons and leadership. His sermons have played no small part in helping us all get through this very distressing pandemic. Special thanks to our Treasurer, Bill Taylor, and our Financial Secretary, Jeanne Taylor, for the work they do to keep our finances in order, and thanks to Duncan Taylor for his work as our Secretary, and to Peggy Taylor for taking on the Vice Moderator role. A hearty thanks also goes out Carol and Jack Johnson, who keep our monthly Laity services rolling. Last, but not least, I would like to acknowledge and thank all of our congregants for sticking with us as we found our way through the unique challenges of the pandemic. Grace UCC is special, and it is special because of all of you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

In closing, I wish us all a new year full of love and peace as we continue to work together to Serve Justice and Love Kindness.

Kelly Ospina, Moderator

Grace UCC

2021 Annual Report- Pastor Report

Submitted by the Reverend Dr. Daniel J. Lundquist

INTRODUCTION

Almost seventeen (December 4, 2004) years ago we began the community of Grace United Church of Christ. Seventeen years and many wonderful, exciting, and blessed things have happened in our community.

Serving Justice, Loving Kindness: Grace UCC's mission statement is alive and well. We continue to refer to that statement, along with *No Matter Who You Are or Where You Are on Life's Journey You Are Welcome Here* as we name who and what we are as a church and community gathered together. It has been and continues to be an honor to work with each and every one of you. I truly believe Grace United Church of Christ takes to heart its mission and its vision. As such, we continue to be a welcoming and vibrant community.

The year 2021 has been an eventful one, primarily due to COVID-19 and our need to go online for the majority of our times together. Despite this struggle, both on an individual basis and as a church, our ZOOM experience has been filled with great worship experiences, bible studies, laity worship, council meetings and fellowship. It shows how resilient and caring we all can be! That being said, ZOOM fatigue has set in for some and I am grateful we are now transitioning to a hybrid worship where we have some remaining on ZOOM while others are now in the building. I want to thank Don and Chris Manning, along with others, for helping us set up the technology to make this happen.

WORSHIP/ SUNDAY

As we transition to hybrid worship, we are also continuing with "hybrid music" if you will. One of the joys of this time has been incorporating secular music into worship. Listening to familiar songs has led many to say to me something like "I heard that song many times but never knew the lyrics had a spiritual meaning." I like that not only for its simplicity in meaning but it also speaks to a larger theological truth – God is around us everywhere but we need to work on seeing and listening for that voice. (Of note: much thanks is extended to Jack and Duncan who week after week have been "behind the scenes" putting together, and then running, the slides and music for worship each Sunday. Worship as we have come to experience it these past months would not be the same without their efforts. Thank you!!)

Joanne Hardgrove is now our pianist, albeit for only two Sundays per month as she has other commitments. I am grateful for her (and her husband Ted) presence on the Sundays she is with us as she brings love and joy to her calling. On a personal note, I am also grateful to have Joanne with us as I have known her for many years. She was the organist at Christ Congregation in Princeton where I first joined a UCC church back in the 80s.

We continue to see wonderful monthly laity worship, where one Sunday per month (usually the last Sunday of each month) we are blessed with the laity leading every aspect of the worship experience. I have enjoyed the different voices and messages as well. This has been met with wonderful praise as we not only hear and give witness to many different voices in the church but give testimony to the concept of "the priesthood of all believers". (If you would like to participate, let Carol J. know as she organizes these Sundays and we continue to be fortunate to have her in this role.)

In conjunction with the laity worship, 2021 continues to have three “gathering at the table” leaders on those laity Sundays: Bill Taylor, Marianne F., and Jack J. If you are interested in being a communion leader, please speak with Dan. Thank you all for making Sunday such a wonderful experience!

MISSIONS

As we worship, as we study and learn, we also reach out and help. A simple word for this is “mission”. That being said, did you know we, as a church, have given over \$125,000.00 in the past five years in the name of “mission”. Wow. What a testimony to our values.

Two of my favorite passages of the bible are a) Matthew 25: 31 ff. where we are encouraged to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit those in prison; and b) James 2: 14ff. where it states, “So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” Both of these passages are prophetic and we here at Grace do a lot to make our faith not dead, but alive. Here are but some examples from 2021:

- **Pennies and Nickels:** This continues to be a great and well-received program. Each Sunday there is a silver, *change bowl* that is sent around during the offering. In it is placed loose change that is later converted to the support of mission projects both local and global. Then, led by Christine O., the children are given a choice of projects to support. Hundreds of dollars have been donated! This too has taken a somewhat of a hiatus given the epidemic, but monies are still being collected. Thank you!
- **Family Promise (FP):** Led by Bill T. we continue to help the homeless in Hunterdon County. From being a support church, to helping raise emergency funds, to helping with moves, we continued our assistance efforts to those in our community who are without homes and/ or struggling to make ends meet.
- **Coat Drive:** In conjunction with the United Way, we support a yearly coat drive (which began at Grace UCC many years ago).
- **EMF Fund:** Helping others with medical, food related, etc. expenses. Of note, just this past week, the EMF gave \$3,000.00 to help those impacted by the recent fire in Flemington. This combined with an additional \$3,200.00 this past Sunday is just one example of how generous our congregation can be. Thank you!
- **Child/ Elder Sponsorship:** We, as a congregation, support both a child named Messia via the Christian Children’s Fund and an elder named Ms. Lhako. You get a chance to support this effort each Sunday as a small bag with their names is passed around during the offering.
- **Flemington Food Pantry:** Led by Elaine, we bring needed items for the local food pantry to church the last Sunday of each month. They are then brought to the pantry and distributed to those who are in need. We continue to see more and more support with this effort, and it is greatly appreciated. Of course, this ended in March of 2020, but we still support FFP with our prayers and monetary donations.
- **Coalition for Peace Action:** Led by Peter, we continue to be involved with supporting the peace coalition. We are also a co-sponsor of their yearly conference held in Princeton.
- Another wonderful mission project every year is the **Angel Patrol program** where Christmas gifts are given to families and children. Thank you, Bill T., for leading this effort!
- **RARE program:** Support of college students at LeHigh University.
- We are a “**Five for Five**” congregation which means we support the greater denomination (UCC) in their five wider offerings, which are:

1. UCC Basic Support (OCWM- Our Church’s Wider Mission): Provides funding from congregations for Conferences and the national ministries of the United Church of Christ

(Wider Church Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, General Ministries, and Pension Boards).

2. One Great Hour of Sharing (Fourth Sunday in Lent): Channels resources for international programs in health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response, administered by Wider Church Ministries, Global Sharing of Resources.

3. Strengthen the Church (Pentecost Sunday): Supports leadership for new and revitalizing congregations, programs for youth and young adults, and leadership development for the whole church. UCC Conference and Local Church Ministries carry out these ministries.

4. Neighbors in Need (First Sunday in October): Supports ministries of justice and comparison throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, including the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM), justice and advocacy, and direct service projects supported by Justice and Witness Ministries.

5. The Christmas Fund (Sunday before Christmas): Helps provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retired church workers, emergency assistance to clergy families in need, and Christmas checks to hundreds of annuitants, as administered by the Pension Boards.

JUSTICE

In addition to Mission Projects we have added a new section to our work — JUSTICE. The council believed it was important to do this to live out our calling better programmatically to “serving justice and loving kindness”. In other words, it is felt that the “kindness” part of this phrase is going well, but we could do better in the “justice” area.

One of the ways we have worked on justice is to be part of a gathering held in Milford where those in attendance carry signs and have a presence in the support of anti-racism. We as a church have committed to be a part of this effort (thanks to the organizer named Marie) the last Saturday of each month. However, everyone is invited each Saturday and some from the church go there more than the aforementioned once per month. Thank you!

Another way justice is being worked on in our church is via the weekly blog sent out by Kelly O. It is a wonderful addition to our church as we are shown ways we can do justice work each week. Thank you, Kelly!

Another area of justice work is in the educational arena. On a “Fifth Wednesday”, which occurs every few months, Peter S. leads us in showing a movie and discussion on a justice topic. These have been very educational and thank you Peter for leading us in this.

FELLOWSHIP

In addition to these mission projects we have had wonderful fellowship- of course impacted now by COVID. From potlucks, to breakfasts to dinners, we continue to develop and grow, in large part, because of the relationships we share and nurture. Of note:

- Men’s Breakfast: we have now returned to gathering at least once per month for breakfast at the Country Griddle in Flemington. The socialization and laughter are very welcome.
- Women’s gatherings: restarted this year.

These mission projects and fellowship, their support and desire to continue to be involved with them come from our heart and our minds where we seek to be instruments of Christ's peace and love here on earth. To come to this point, in addition to our worship celebrations, mission projects, and fellowship, we gather on a regular basis for Christian and Religious Education.

EDUCATION

- Adult Bible Study: Wednesday evening Bible Study meets by Zoom.
- Anti-Racism Book Reading/ Group: Held by Zoom each Wednesday morning with the Flemington Presbyterian Church and the Flemington Jewish Community Center.

These small groups continue to be great gatherings of support as we question, learn and process our faith and life journeys.

COUNCIL

None of the above could have happened without the ongoing support and vision of Grace UCC's council.

Kelly O. is our moderator, replacing Christine S. We are grateful for Christine's service and have already been blessed with Kelly's leadership.

Peggy T. is our vice-moderator.

Duncan T. is our secretary after replacing Robert D. Thank you, Robert, for your service!

Bill T. is our treasurer, and we are blessed to have him continue to do all those things needed, oftentimes behind the scenes, of our church.

Jeanne T. is our financial secretary. She has done a great job and we are so blessed to have her on the council.

We have "deacons and trustees" and yet, as we move forward, these roles have become interchangeable and it actually makes church work all that more inclusive! Those on the council except for the above: Jack J., Keith Y., Sarah L., Don M., Robert D., Elaine D., Mary Kate L., and Dan L.

Of note: we are once again indebted to Kelly O. who is also our webmaster! She has also added a blog to her repertoire which is very informative. Thank you, Kelly!

Thank you all on the council for doing those things that are oftentimes done with little recognition.

If you feel called to be a deacon or a trustee, feel free to contact Kelly O. or myself. We would love to have you join the council!

CONCLUSION

A lot to report from 2021. All good, all blessings and all things for which we can be grateful. I apologize if I have left anyone out by name, as I most likely did.

What a great place, what a great vision. What a unique church. Doing church here in and of itself is a mission; being ***Open and Affirming is a mission*** – let us never forget that. Let us never forget we did not exist until December of 2004. A lot of ground and growth has occurred in these past almost seventeen years. This is a place worthy of our time and our commitments. A place which tries to live its values which are:

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

- We are guided by the teachings of Jesus.
- We make decisions with integrity in accordance with our beliefs.
- We act in the interest of peace and social justice.
- We promote and support opportunities for lay leadership.
- We conduct ourselves in a transparent and ethical manner.
- We maximize our community presence through collaboration and partnership.
- We continually act and reflect as we promote a learning culture.
- We nurture a community of extravagant welcome and hospitality.
- We celebrate our strengths and accomplishments and appreciate our fears and doubts.
- We embrace the diversity of each person's culture and spiritual journey.
- We seek out and use the knowledge and wisdom of our congregation in decision-making.

May we continue to live out these values as a church. May we point to them in all that we do and decide to do in the future. Lives have been transformed with each of the above points. We have discovered so many people's gifts. Let us continue to nurture each other's gifts. Let us continue to share these gifts with the larger community. Let us continue to define how we can continue to share these gifts and continue to be a place where, truly, ***no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.***

This is a special and unique place. God bless. Let us continue to grow and to help transform others from worry to hope, from fear to love (coat drive these next couple of weeks), from rejection to acceptance, from imprisonment to freedom. Let us continue to be agents of love, of salvation. Let us also stand up for those who need defending...

I also want to include here a quote from a recent Sojourners (sojo.net) article sent to me from Duncan. The article was discussing the state of "doing church" today and why pastors are resigning because of their struggles in churches given current politics and the struggle with the virus, and why pastors who remain do so:

"But what we gain as pastors — and why we continue in low-to-middle pay work — is the opportunity to help forge communities held by common commitments to the gospel. We get to nurture generosity, redistribute our money, and create forms of mutual aid and care. We learn to get along with people with whom we disagree. We carve out new ways for conflict, repair, and restoration."

We do this. Despite all else, we do this. And that, in and of itself, is cause for celebration.

Respectfully and lovingly submitted,

Daniel J. Lundquist

Treasurer's Annual Report for 2021

It is my honor to team with the rest of Council in managing the financial affairs of the church. I am blessed to be aided in my responsibilities by Jeanne Taylor, who handles aggregating and paying all our bills on a timely basis. Her contribution is invaluable. It allows me to focus on my primary responsibilities of (1) capturing and reporting our financial transactions and (2) leading our financial risk management.

Overview of 2020 Results

Despite the pandemic, 2021 will be a good year from a financial perspective. I am projecting our revenue will match our expenses. Many churches are struggling with the pandemic. But Grace continues to be blessed with a congregation that donates regularly via mail and online. **In my opinion, our church continues to be in a solid financial position.** The key areas I would highlight:

A. Hybrid Worship Services

Preparations were made to recommence in-person worship services at the FWC. It was decided that it was essential to continue to provide participation via Zoom. That meant making a significant investment in video and other equipment for use at the FWC (\$6k). In addition, it required the installation of Internet Wi-Fi capability. In addition to installation cost, GUCC now has an additional monthly internet provider expense. Lastly, we evaluated our insurance limits and needed to increase our property coverage at the FWC in event of fire or theft.

B. Staff Management

There was significant expense savings this year because we did not fill the full-time pianist position. The possibility of in-person worship service did not develop until late summer; however, once we began to use the FWC as the host location of our Zoom worship services, we contracted with a part-time pianist.

C. Attendance

Attendance at worship services was reduced significantly this year as shown in the table below.

Avg YTD Attendance								
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	43.3	41.3	42.8	31.0	33.0	31.5	31.5	35.4
February	39.5	34.8	38.0	38.5	31.8	29.8	27.3	41.3
March	40.2	38.8	51.8	34.5	40.0	28.6	34.0	37.5
April	60.5	59.0	32.3	48.6	45.6	44.3	51.8	35.5
May	37.0	58.0	39.2	34.0	23.0	29.5	43.2	31.8
June	35.8	48.0	29.0	48.3	30.0	29.0	36.8	29.3
July	39.8	40.3	28.2	34.0	29.6	30.0	34.3	27.3
August	29.2	36.6	34.0	32.8	31.3	24.8	34.2	28.2
September	33.0	41.0	35.5	31.0	29.0	28.8	37.3	29.0
October	44.0	49.5	35.0	34.0	29.0	27.0	36.0	31.2
November	36.4	46.8	41.3	34.3	31.3	33.3	39.4	26.8
Grand Average	39.5	45.0	37.0	36.5	32.5	30.5	37.0	32.1

D. Mission spending

Our 2021 year-to-date as of the end of November has totaled \$19,522.74. Mission spending was spread over our restricted accounts and regular operating account (as shown below).

1. Pennies & Nickels	\$0.00	Restricted
2. Messia/Ms. Lomo	\$603.00	Restricted
3. Emergency Mission Fund	\$10,117.26	Restricted
4. Operating	<u>\$8,802.48</u>	Unrestricted
Total	<u>\$19,522.74</u>	

Here is a more detailed listing of the recipients of our mission spending.

GUCC Full Year 2021 Mission Spending			Anticipated December
Members of our congregation		\$4,992.42	\$500.00
Local non-members		\$2,571.09	\$9,200.00
Human Trafficking Relief		\$3,243.71	
Missing Children		\$309.60	
Massai Fund		\$750.00	
First Congregational Church		\$2,000.00	
West Virginia Rehab Center		\$2,000.00	
World Food Program		\$77.25	
Family Promise			\$500.00
America's Grow A Row			\$500.00
Peace Action Committee		\$350.00	
Flemington Food Pantry		\$350.00	\$500.00
Messia/Ms. Lomo		\$603.00	\$54.00
RARE Program (Lehigh)		\$2,275.67	
Central Atlantic Confrence of the UCC			\$5,000.00
Hunterdon Interfaith Outreach Council			\$500.00
Pennies & Nickels			\$500.00
Grand Total		\$19,522.74	\$17,254.00

Mission related stewardship plea: Mission Spending for the year is projected to be approximately \$36,750. That level of spending is reflective that the need for support in our community persists. Our congregation has a big heart. Our church is committed to being a beacon of love for families in need, so it is important that our members continue to be generous in their financial support and in volunteering to support others.

E. Balance Sheet

As of November 30th, we have unrestricted assets totaling \$89,484.97 and restricted assets totaling \$11,836.17 (highlighted in yellow below).

Grace UCC - Summary of Financial Assets as of November 30, 2021

Restricted Accounts				
Pennies and Nickels	\$360.19			
Messia / Ms. Lomo	(\$345.56)			
Emergency Missions (cash)	\$11,821.54			
EMF (gift certificates)	\$0.00		Prior Year Nov	
Grants	\$0.00		Month End	Prior Year End
Total	\$11,836.17		\$12,178.20	\$9,060.45
Unrestricted Accounts				
Checking	\$9,744.63			
PayPal / Other Receivables	\$0.00	<u>YTD interest</u>		
Savings/Money Market	\$60,707.14	\$57.21		
Certificates of Deposit	\$0.00			
Stocks	\$16,553.76	\$5,630.46		
Loans	\$5,225.00		Prior Year Nov	
Prepaid assets or (Unpaid obligations)	(\$2,745.56)		Month End	Prior Year End
Total	\$89,484.97		\$70,750.95	\$81,716.50
Total Assets	\$101,321.14		\$82,929.15	\$90,776.95
Net Worth (approximate)	\$89,484.97			

At the end of the 2020, our unrestricted assets were \$81,716.50. The increase to \$89,484.97 at the end of November is primarily because of the increase in value of our stock portfolio.

F. Financial Results

So far this year, we've had an operating gain of \$2,081 in our unrestricted account. Primarily because of substantial anticipated mission spending in December, I project we will end the year with a small (\$343) loss. Our budget for the year was an (\$11,780) loss. I expect we will far exceed our budget. (See page 12 for the detailed line items.)

I believe our church is well-managed financially by our Council. We do not have any debt or other significant obligations. But our most important asset continues to be the generous support of the congregation.

Total Unrestricted and Restricted Accounts Summary Results

Grace UCC Projected Full Year Financial Results For 2021 and Proposed Budget For 2022							
	Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	
	Nov YTD 2021	Full Year 2019	Full Year 2020	Projected 2021	Budget 2021	Budget 2022	
Revenue							
1	Sunday Offerings	\$100,805	\$99,644	\$111,786	\$119,976.33	\$105,000	\$118,000
2	Other (Golf/AmazonSmile)	\$6,723	\$31,142	\$163	\$6,839	\$150	\$1,375
3	Restricted (Mes/P&N/EMF/Gran						
4	Total Income	\$107,527	\$130,785	\$112,749	\$126,815	\$106,350	\$119,375
Expenses							
5	Staff related	\$69,425	\$88,638	\$83,221	\$79,718	\$86,900	\$83,189
6	Office lease	\$6,600	\$8,400	\$7,200	\$7,200	\$7,200	\$7,200
7	Rent FWC	\$7,920	\$7,800	\$8,580	\$8,580	\$8,580	\$8,580
8	Advertising/Website	\$931	\$2,029	\$1,125	\$931	\$1,100	\$250
9	Missions	\$7,302	\$13,724	\$7,861	\$16,302	\$8,500	\$10,000
10	EAD/Peace Conference	\$0	\$1,602	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
11	Insurance	\$2,140	\$2,130	\$2,211	\$2,140	\$2,300	\$2,200
12	Worship/Programs	\$3,106	\$634	\$562	\$4,128	\$700	\$7,832
13	Miscellaneous Other	\$8,022	\$3,178	\$2,163	\$8,160	\$2,850	\$2,493
14	Total Expenses	\$105,447	\$128,134	\$112,923	\$127,159	\$118,130	\$121,744
15	Change in Surplus	\$2,081	\$2,651	(\$174)	(\$343)	(\$11,780)	(\$2,369)

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Taylor

Bill Taylor, Treasurer, Grace UCC