

**Grace United Church of Christ  
Annual Report – December 4, 2016**



**To Grace UCC from the desk of The Moderator –**

We have so very much to be grateful for not the least of which is the church family which we are a part of. Throughout the year we share our joys and sorrows together, laughing and crying and in many ways share our experience and understanding of God with each other. I am grateful to work with such a wonderful group of people on council. We strive to be open and transparent with each other and to the Spirit of God that leads us as we work through decisions and discussions that shape the direction of the church.

In the beginning of the year, Mary Bernard stepped down as Moderator after 6 years of service and transferred that responsibility to Mike Sisco. We want to thank Mary for her many years of leadership and for sharing her tremendous talent with us. Her organization and dedication has been an inspiration to me.

There are also several changes taking place in council for next year.

- Kathleen Schupner and Chris Levins will be stepping down from council.
- Jack Johnson and Keith Yowell will be joining council.
- Chis Syltevik will become Secretary replacing Stein Syltevik.
- Stein Syltevik will become Financial Secretary replacing Chris Syltevik.
- Kelly Ospina will take on full administration of our Website along with support from Chris Levins. She began part of this role this year.

We want to thank Kathleen for all she has done coordinating our set of support teams that manage the church worship area and our wonderful Laity Services. Gratefully, she will be continuing to serve in this capacity outside of council.

We want to thank Chris Levins who was instrumental in redesigning and administering our website which continues to be a very valuable portal for those who are seeking a church home with the openness and warmth that we bring. We are very grateful for his direction and insights to lead us in this direction. In addition, we are grateful to Kelly for stepping up to take over this new responsibility.

Being on council provides a great opportunity to use your gifts and to see the gifts of others in action. Everyone has something wonderful to contribute.

The church continues as a vibrant and warm light to the community both in the many ways that we reach out as well as in the sense of community which is experienced in our shared life here at Grace.

May you continue to find your path toward God, to share it with those around you, and to live out your expression of God's care and compassion for the world in this coming year.

Mike Sisco  
Moderator

# **2016 Annual Report- Pastor Report**

**Submitted by the Reverend Daniel J. Lundquist**



## **INTRODUCTION**

Exactly twelve (December 4, 2004) years ago we began the community of Grace United Church of Christ. Twelve 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 2016 has been an eventful one, filled with great worship experiences, bible studies, laity worship, council meetings, fellowship, interfaith gatherings, community dinners, breakfasts, and mission and outreach work- just to name a few.

## **WORSHIP/ SUNDAY**

Shelly is our music coordinator and we are grateful for her ministry. We have been blessed with her gifts as well as she leads the church with our music programs. Of note, if you have something to sing or play, Shelly is always open to your participation!

This year we have seen the continuation and refinement of 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 Kathleen S. know as she organizes these Sundays and we are fortunate to have her in this role.)

In conjunction with the laity worship, 2016 continues to have three licensed ministers preside at communion on those laity Sundays. This is a three-year cycle, with our being in the third year for Geoff Marsh, Chris Syltevik, and Bill Taylor as those in this role. If you are interested in being a licensed minister at Grace UCC for communion, please speak with Dan.

Thank you all for making Sunday such a wonderful experience!

In addition, to our Sunday worship we have had the children remain in worship and those 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and below leave after the Lord's Prayer and join Carol in the backroom for Story Circle. This has been going very well and we thank Carol for this as we continue our intergenerational worship experience.

As mentioned last year, if there is anyone who is interested in putting together and educational program for those between the grades of 3-8, please let us know. An idea would be for this age group to be offered a class at the same time the 9-12 graders are meeting, over in the office around 10:15 am each Sunday morning before church.

## **MISSIONS**

As we worship, as we study and learn, we also reach out and help. A simple word for this is “mission”.

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 2011:

- Habitat for Humanity: we continue to support the local chapter (Raritan Valley) both financially and in our participation in at least one workday per year. Look for more workdays in the future! Thank you to all who are helping bring affordable and safe housing to those in need.
- Can Help: With the leadership of Ed and Chris this has been a great success in the past by collecting aluminum and helping to pay for needed items like oil and heat. However, given the price of aluminum, we have decided to suspend this program in 2016. Thank you Ed and Chris!
- 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. This year four different charities were picked, being given a total of \$1,600!!
- Relay for Life: Led by the Schupners we had a great team and great turn out this year. This year’s Relay was held again at the Hunterdon Central Regional High School and we had a great time. 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.
- 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. (If possible, try to remember to pick up a few items whenever you are at the grocery store and bring them to church...)

- 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.
- SAFE in Hunterdon; Serving Women, Men and Families in Crisis: We continue to support this organization both with their annual candlelight vigil (clergy participation) and, this and in future years, their *Men in Heels* program.
- *Love the World: The Church Has Left the Building*: now in its third year for Grace UCC, we were involved with a multi-church (in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey) event where local mission projects are done to, in part, show the church and the community the need to “leave the building” and help neighbors more often (which Grace does a great job at!).

This year we supported this effort via a great gathering at Grow-a-Row where we helped clear and clean a field this fall. (Thank you Bill T. for organizing this event.) The event culminated with a worship gathering at the Hopewell Methodist church where members from the churches involved gathered, sang and shared stories about how God touched them and their congregations during this event.

- Another wonderful mission project this year was our being able to obtain another grant which helped the Small family receive respite care. Thank you!
- 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 compassion 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.

## **FELLOWSHIP**

In addition to these mission projects we have wonderful fellowship. 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:

- Community Dinners: Led by Marianne, 2016 brought to us our eighth series of community dinners. This is where Grace UCC members and friends hosted a dinner where others from the church gathered and shared community and a meal together. Thank you to all the wonderful hosts! The ninth series will begin in 2017.
- Men's Breakfast: At least once per month, the men in the church are invited to gather for breakfast at the Country Griddle in Flemington. The socialization and laughter is very welcome.
- Golf Outing: Our third annual golf outing was held at the Hopewell Valley Golf Club. Thank you to Christine O. and Paul A. as another time of fun and fundraising was had my many.
- Koinonia Retreat: thanks to Chris S., many gathered at the Koinonia retreat center in New York for our third annual church retreat. A great time was had and we look forward to holding this event each year.
- Epiphany Party: held every year at Dan and Mary Kate's.

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**

- Story Circle during worship for those 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and below. Thank you Carol for hosting and sharing those important Bible stories!
- Teen Sunday School: Led by Bill, and Michaela, our teens (ages @13-18) are offered a Bible Study lesson before worship over at the church office from 10:00-10:45 am. This is a wonderful component of our church program and we are blessed to have it in our midst.
- Confirmation: no one this year but we look forward to more in the future.
- Adult Bible Study:
  - Wed. (9:30 am.) adult study meets at Grateful Bites in Flemington.
  - Wednesday evening Bible Study meets at the church office at 7 pm.

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.**

Mike S. is our moderator. Thank you Mike as you lead us forward.

Christine O. is our vice-moderator. She leads us well as well...

Stein S. is our secretary...a great writer!

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.

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

Our deacons for 2016: Christine O., Bill T., Kathleen S. (who has gone off council this year- thank you Kathleen!), Stein S., Kelly O., Jeanne T., and Peggy T. Thank you to you all as you continue to help minister to the congregation. (Note here- in addition to the deacons, we have continued a prayer and support e-mail list that has turned out to be invaluable in its efficiency and effectiveness. To date, we have 47 people praying and supporting those who submit their requests. In addition, we are lucky to have Jeanne paying our bills and Kelly putting together and sending out our newsletter!)

Our trustees for 2016: Christine S., Mike S., Mary B., Geoff M., Bill T., and Chris L.

Of note: I am indebted to Chris L. for revamping and moderating the new web site. It is a wonderful site! He will be going off council this year but will continue to help with the web site. Thank you Chris!

In addition, coming on board will be Jack J. and Keith Y. Thank you!

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 Mary or myself. We would love to have you join the council!**

## **CONCLUSION**

A lot to report from 2016. 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 ten 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 (great coat drive this past week- thank you!), from fear to love (Angel Patrol 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...

Respectfully and lovingly submitted,

Daniel J. Lundquist



## Treasurer's Annual Report for 2016



This is my first Annual Report as Treasurer. As background, I became Treasurer at the beginning of the year, when Mike Sisco was elevated from Treasurer to Council Moderator. It has been my honor to volunteer with the rest of Council in managing the financial affairs of the church. And along those lines, it is important that I first acknowledge that I am very much aided in my responsibilities by Jeanne Taylor, who has graciously continued to take responsibility for aggregating and paying our various bills. Jeanne's contribution has been invaluable and has allowed me to spend the majority of my time making sure our financial transactions are properly captured, categorized and reported to Council on a monthly basis.

Over the course of this first year, I have become better familiar and comfortable with the financial condition of our church. Grace UCC was started in 2004 and has been in existence for only 12 years. In my opinion, we are in a very enviable position financially given our young age. As of the end of November, we have \$73,624 in our Operating account and \$21,409 in our Savings account.

### **Financial Strength**

We have no debt burden and minimal facility maintenance. We don't own a building. We don't have a mortgage obligation. And we don't have significant facility maintenance costs. We are blessed to have a good relationship with the Flemington Women's Center and the use of their facility every Sunday morning at a very attractive price.

### **Financial Threat**

We rely almost 100% on the donations of members. Currently, a significant portion of our revenue comes from a very small number of members. That is not usual for a relatively new church with a small membership base. But it would be advisable to make every effort to grow our donor base/membership in order to reduce the revenue concentration risk on a small number of households.

## **2016 Financial Results**

- As of the end of November, we are having a good year. Our revenue exceeds our expenses by \$8,361.
- So far this year, donations made through PayPal are now 14% of our total revenue and continues to grow. That is a very positive development because most PayPal donations are set up on an automatic monthly basis. That means the donations to the church are received consistently, even if the donor's attendance is inconsistent.
- We received a \$6,240 grant from the UCC to assist the Small Family with caring for their son. Because 100% of the grant was earmarked for that specific purpose, both our revenue and the associated expenses were increased by that exact same amount.
- Based upon the results through November, projected Full Year 2016 results are expected to fall short of our budget by about \$5,000. That shortfall is directly attributable to the anticipated Council decision to make a catch up payment into our pastor's pension plan. We have only made the required pension payments since 2011 (5 years). No payments were made during the church's first 7 years.

## **Budget for 2017**

### Revenue assumptions:

- Revenue from Sunday offerings is expected to remain flat.
- Other (non-restricted) revenue is expected to be \$700 lower because we are no longer subleasing our office.
- Restricted revenue will be \$6,240 lower because of no housing grant.

## Expense assumptions:

- Staff related expenses, which included the additional \$5,000 pension plan payment, are expected to remain flat. The extra \$5,000 will be used next year to cover salary increases and/or additional pension plan payments.
- With the exception of Missions expenses, all other expenses are assumed to be consistent with 2016.
- Mission expenses are assumed to be \$6,240 less because of no housing grant.

## Surplus results:

- 2017 Budget surplus of \$8,000 is expected to be slightly better than what is being projected for 2016.

Grace UCC 2016 Full Year Projected Financial Results and 2017 Proposed Budget						
		Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E
			Prior Year	Projected	Budget	Proposed
		YTD Nov	2015	2016	2016	Budget
						2017
	<u>Revenue</u>					
1	Sunday Offerings	\$105,257	\$114,539	\$124,322	\$125,000	\$125,000
2	Other (Golf/AmazonSmile)	\$2,176	\$460	\$2,180		\$1,400
3	Restricted (Mes/P&N/Grants)	\$7,594		\$7,717		\$1,400
4	Total Income	\$115,027	\$114,999	\$134,219	\$125,000	\$127,800
	<u>Expenses</u>					
5	Staff related	\$72,132	\$78,621.00	\$84,172	\$81,850	\$84,200
6	Office lease	\$7,700	\$8,400	\$8,400	\$8,400	\$8,400
7	Rent FWC	\$7,200	\$8,550	\$7,800	\$8,200	\$7,800
8	Advertising/Website	\$1,255	\$1,530	\$1,506	\$1,000	\$1,500
9	Missions	\$9,773	\$9,561	\$17,097	\$9,400	\$9,500
10	EAD/Peace Conference	\$1,685		\$1,685		\$1,500
11	Insurance	\$3,068	\$2,292	\$3,068	\$2,300	\$3,100
12	Worship/Programs	\$1,279	\$1,684	\$1,395	\$700	\$1,400
13	Miscellaneous Other	\$2,573	\$2,122	\$2,656	\$1,460	\$2,400
14	Total Expenses	\$106,666	\$112,760	\$127,779	\$113,310	\$119,800
15	Change in Surplus	\$8,361	\$2,239	\$6,440	\$11,690	\$8,000

Respectfully submitted by  
Bill Taylor, Treasurer, Grace UCC