

# Barre Congregational Church Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024



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### **Warning of the Annual Meeting**

The members of the Barre Congregational Church are hereby notified and warned that the Annual Meeting of the church will be held Sunday, May 19, 2024, at 10:30 am, both in the Sanctuary and on Zoom to report the results of voting on the following:

The Annual Report for the fiscal year July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024;

The slate of new officers: Bonita Cortese for Clerk, Jerry Osterman for Treasurer, and Amanda Pugliese for Moderator.

Members will receive a printed copy of the Annual Report, the slate of officers, and a ballot on May 5, 12 and 19 in church and on May 8 and 15 by email. We will mail these materials to any members upon request. Please return your ballot (just once!) by email, by postal mail or in person by May 17. If you use a paper ballot, be sure to sign it. You may vote in person at Annual Meeting on May 19 as well.

# Annual Meeting Agenda

AGENDA for the May 2024 Annual Meeting

Call to Order

Opening Prayer

Count how many members are present to determine if we have a quorum

Present the results of the voting for:

- The Annual Report for 2023/2024
- The slate of officers for 2024/2026

Discussion about Church finances.

Transact business that may properly come before this meeting

Moderator's remarks

Closing Prayer

Adjournment

## May 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

### **Annual Meeting**

Sunday, May 21, 2023

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### **Agenda**

**Call To Order** - Cary

**Opening Prayer** - Leigh

**Quorum Declaration:**

Cary - To proceed, we need to confirm that we have reached a quorum. I'd like to ask Amanda Pugliese, Clerk of the Church, to certify the number of confirmed ballots we have received by email and on paper from active church members.

Amanda - Thank you, Madam Moderator. We have received, verified, and certified 52 active church member votes. Is there any member present who would like to cast a ballot before we announce the results?

### **Announcement of Voting Results**

Item 1 - To approve the (half) Annual Report

Yes - 52      No – 0

Item 2 - To approve the Proposed 2023-2024 Budget

Yes - 51      No – 1

Moderator's remarks: Good morning! Welcome to our second Annual Meeting this calendar year, as we transition to a new fiscal year starting on July 1. If you are feeling a little burdened by these meetings, rest assured that our next Annual Meeting won't be for another whole year, in May of 2024, at which point I will step down as your moderator. I enjoy this role and I look forward to another year of leadership alongside the Council and Pastor Leigh, all the members of all the ministries, the Deacons, and our very capable staff.

I am going to tell you about safety and security here at church for a few minutes this morning because we will focus on that during the next 6 - 12 months. It won't be our only priority, for sure, but it will be one of them and I want you to be in the know. In February of 2023, the Council turned our attention to improving our safety and security both during the week and on Sunday mornings. As we all know if we pay attention to the news, Houses of Worship are ONE: targets of violence, and TWO: places where people can find respite after disasters of various kinds.

As you may also know, we have done some things to improve our safety and security during recent months. We installed a video doorbell so that when it rings, staff are notified on their phones and can see on their phones who is at the door. We have improved the outdoor lighting for increased safety in the evening hours just outside the entrance that we have adopted. For now, we are not using the main entrance because the steps and the lead up to the steps are not safe and we can't provide the security inside that entrance that we can at the smaller point of entry. We will replace the stubborn heavy and sticky kitchen door that doesn't close easily and therefore isn't always safe. And we have tightened up our greeting practices on Sunday mornings that include locking the door after worship starts, a big and somewhat reluctant step. I hope you know that we hang a very friendly and welcoming sign on the door after 9:30 am, inviting latecomers to text a greeter who immediately lets them in and ushers them to a seat. We have happily welcomed latecomers three times so far. We are safer than we used to be, although the system isn't foolproof.

I look at the adaptations I just listed as being safety measures that enclose us, that put up walls, that keep threats out. Many of us do this at home when we put up fences and lock our doors and shut our windows and maybe even install security systems. It makes sense. But there is another way to be safe that complements the "closing in", and that is in fact, "opening up." God wants us to welcome strangers. We do and we will. We also need to reach out to our neighbors and Barre emergency responders to help us all be safe. Also, we want to serve as a safe place for Barre citizens when needed.

We plan to develop relationships with the Barre Police Department, the Fire Department and First Responders. We want to know their names and we want them to know ours. We will do a walk-through with them, and we will discuss and plan for

various emergency scenarios. We want these local safety experts to become familiar with our labyrinth-like building. We are already connected to our neighbor churches through the clergy group that Leigh belongs to, and we can build relationships with their congregations too. Surely there will be times when we can help each other. In general, we can be more hospitable than ever to the people of Barre and surrounding towns in our newly renovated space downstairs. Especially after disasters.

We can strive to prevent potentially dangerous episodes involving upset people through the power of “Hello”. That means when anyone, including a stranger enters our church, we can welcome and engage and assess them with conversation. We can even help someone calm down by learning “de-escalation” skills that include listening to, respecting and caring about a person whose emotions are getting out of control, who might become unsafe to themselves or to others. We have a date already set for early September for all of us who are interested in de-escalation training. You might use these skills at home with your young grandchildren, at work with an irate customer or an angry co-worker, in your neighborhood or in your travels on vacation. You never know. See me or see Leigh to sign up. We will invite our neighboring churches’ members as well.

If an incident occurs here, whether it’s an upset person on a Sunday morning, or a fire or a medical emergency for one of us, most of us need to be ready to exit the building quickly and safely. This will first require cleaning and clearing out our exits, making sure they are safe and passable, putting up clear signage, and practicing with a “fire drill” or two. When was the last time you took part in a fire drill? We will do that.

Some of us need to be ready to tend to each other while we wait for emergency experts including First Responders to arrive. We will become adept at using fire extinguishers and automatic emergency defibrillators (AED’s) and other life saving devices. We ought to train or retrain in administering CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

Let me finish with this: We - all of us - already are the leaders we need. If you would like to join us in any of the efforts I have mentioned - including greeting; meeting the Barre police, firefighters, and first responders; establishing or deepening friendships with our clergy neighbors and their church members; getting trained in de-escalation techniques; preparing for and executing a fire drill; learning how to use emergency medical equipment and a fire extinguisher; suggesting other ways to be ready for a medical emergency; or if you know CPR, tell Leigh or me. We will call the police in an emergency of course, but WE are the actual first responders before the professional First Responders arrive. Ordinary citizens like us can do extraordinary things. We need to think ahead and plan. We need to use common sense. We need to upgrade our skills and be ready to help each other. We need to stay calm. Stay tuned for updates on safety and security in the newsletter and during announcements on Sundays.

Our Safety team currently consists of Don Singer, our vice moderator, who served 23 years in the Army, primarily as a communications officer. Upon retirement, he taught high school for 16 years. He is now a part time school bus driver; Kris Kirby, our building manager; Pastor Leigh, who has led during many church emergencies

throughout her career; Larry Beebe, a retired teacher who represents Property on the Safety Team; Mary Ann Johnson, our parish nurse; and me, a retired guidance counselor. If you have expertise to lend and want to become involved, we welcome you with open arms.

I have confidence in us. Thank you.

#### Leigh - Pastor's Report

I want to start by saying if you haven't read my report in this week's newsletter, please do. The building is coming back! There is stuff happening - sometimes more stuff than we know what to do with. We recently hosted the annual meeting of the VT UCC conference, and here is the certificate that recognizes our contributions to the VT Conference and our church's mission. It pays for staffing, and our membership to the Washington association. We have reformed and talked about old things and new things that we could be doing together, mostly in Washington county, but also the Stowe church. It was exciting to have 20 people here after 10 years of not having any association meetings at all.

We also have the Barre Interfaith Group - clergy who work together and help each other out- everything from small things and big things. To the really big things - it looks as though many people who have been living in motels during the pandemic will no longer have shelter. We have been waiting to help come up with a plan as churches. We are now back to emergency footing that the clergy were on at the beginning of the pandemic. We meet every other week. We want to see what the legislature is going to do. We are working really hard to help find housing for people who will be suddenly homeless. It will not be ideal - most likely we will be reduced to bringing tents for people to live in. This will change our little corner of the world here. I hope you will keep up to date on what's going on. I hope that you'll call our legislators when it's appropriate. Right now we're waiting. We believe that there are good solutions out there but they will take time. All the churches in Barre, regardless of theological leanings, are working together. Everyone wants everyone to have a decent place to live and for our streets to be safe. Now that we're starting this new fiscal year - we can do something that we haven't been able to do. We are starting the fiscal year with a budget!

#### Introduction of staff and appreciation -

Eric Tuper Giles - He's been here longer than anyone and does ALL the things!

Aly Marshall - You know her voice on the phone - - thank you for all the things that keep us in line.

Kris Kirby - He's back! Although Don did an excellent job last week with tech during the service, Kris is back at the helm. If anyone is interested in "pulling a Don Singer," Kris will be doing some training. Kris is our IT specialist and building manager.

I want to thank the staff. There have been a lot of bumps in the road this year and unexpected things have happened. I want to thank everyone for coming together as a team.

Cary: We asked that any additional agenda items be raised in advance of this meeting, and there were none that required a vote. Are there any other issues that members would like to bring up for the purpose of discussion?

Peter Anthony - He misses summer services with our neighboring churches. He did not see any mention of how that will be revitalized and reorganized. He has many friends that are in other congregations, and he would love to see them on Sunday mornings. He is hoping that interfaith services can continue.

Cary would like everyone to linger outside - ice cream and planting flowers!  
Pastor Leigh offered a benediction.

Cary asked for a motion to adjourn. Cathy James made the motion, and Jan Aldrich seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The annual meeting adjourned at 10:55.

## Report of the Pastor

My fiscal year started with a trip to Indianapolis for the General Synod of the United Church of Christ. This “family reunion” was a chance for me to reflect on where our denomination has been and where it is going. The election of a new General Minister and President and time spent with colleagues from all the conferences in which I have served, gave me a long view of ministry which was really refreshing. I returned looking forward to preparations during the summer that I hoped would lead to a vigorous program in the fall.

But July also brought the devastating floods that washed out nearly all of downtown, and changed the lives of some of our neighbors forever. The floods and the recovery efforts that followed required a rapid reordering of our priorities. We were blessed not to have had property damage at 35 Church. I felt that the best use of my energies was supporting the relief efforts at Hedding UMC, and working with Barre Up, a long-term recovery group. I have great memories of a long bucket brigade of volunteers from all over the area unloading huge semi-trucks to get water into storage. Later, we would find out that our new bookkeeper, Debbie had been picking up water to take to Marshfield and Plainfield. Aly was instrumental in connecting young people through Vermont Mutual Aid, and facilitating a delivery of food, cleaning supplies and water. The most lasting change was to Laundry Love. Our Moderator and Mission & Outreach ministry ramped up this long-standing program to twice a week, and then once a week, and now once every other week, adding a new laundromat and many new volunteers. They have touched countless lives with this simple program and their caring response.

We thought then that the renovation project was finally done, and we could clean up and begin to use the building in the way we had envisioned. Unfortunately, problems with the heating and ventilation system lasted long into winter. But in general, having a clean, bright and appealing space downstairs has led to some great potlucks, coffee hours and meetings. Many thanks to the “kitchen crew” who cleaned and re-organized the kitchen space. We are just now getting used to the comfort of the Don Allen room for gatherings. “Music Pups”, a program for families with toddlers, continues to meet downstairs. And AA, which was so patient during our renovations, now has a bright and comfortable space to meet.

September saw some efforts to bring more people into our space, with mixed results. The Deacons did a very interesting outreach meeting on Emergency Disaster Response, with Cathy James offering a great demonstration CB radio communication. Coffee hours resumed in earnest. But attendance stayed spotty, at worship and other events. The Deacons also sponsored a presentation by Brendan Hogan on Medicaid, during and after worship. The program quality was great, but these were more fellowship than outreach events.

Notable in September was our de-escalation training, intended to train our members and community partners in techniques to de-fuse high intensity situations. There was a great response from community non-profits (the hall was full for coffee hour), and some great connections made. However, fewer than 20 of our members participated. The new



staff have asked for similar training on a smaller scale to help them feel safe and confident in our facility.

My announcement in October that I would be ending my ministry at Barre Congregational Church sped up the hiring process to replace Kris Kirby and Aly Marshall. Members of various ministries cooperated to recruit and hire Debbie Ziter as bookkeeper, Peggy Johnson as building supervisor and Lydia Welch as Church Administrator. Mary Ann Johnson, our intrepid Parish Nurse, asked to be relieved of her duties for family reasons; after amazing volunteer service, especially during COVID. Kris will be staying on for Sunday morning videos, and Eric Tuper-Giles will remain as Music Director. The church is blessed to have such high-energy and highly competent staff in place.

The Pastoral Relations Committee facilitated two different exit interviews to assist the leadership in identifying areas for growth; one in public after service, and a more in-depth meeting with just the members of the PRC.

As the calendar year ends, the stage is set for a productive interim period of discernment and a search committee is already at work to write the church's profile and seek new pastoral leadership. I will be keeping you all in prayer through this process, confident that God has for you a pastor to lead you faithfully into the future.

Pastor Leigh McCaffrey

## Report of the Moderator

This has got to be a “first”. A moderator’s report for a year that was half-led by a minister and half-led by members without a minister at all. I am writing and talking to you about the fiscal year that began July 1, 2023, until today, May 19, 2024. (The fiscal year will end on June 30, of course.) It has been my privilege and joy to serve the Barre Congregational Church during this hybrid year: this year of difficult and big decisions, disappointments, and departures; notable accomplishments; controversial, emotional and brave discussions; and countless productive hours spent on church related work by our staff, our ministries, our Council, our interim period task groups, and myself.

At the first Annual Meeting of 2023 in January, we voted to spend some of Don Allen’s legacy on a Christian Education Arts Academy. Because that was a congregational decision, I want to address what happened next. Faith Formation ministry met with Aly Marshall and Eric Giles several times to hear and support their plans to offer free arts education to children and adults here at church, grounded in Christian values of love, kindness and respect. The BCC would pay the teachers, and students would attend for free. It was a promising idea that did not come to fruition for many reasons. By October of 2023 it was clear that the academy would not happen soon. Only a very small portion of the agreed upon allocated funds was spent on time planning the academy, and on compensating Eric for the extra time he spent as the musical director of the community theater production, “Scrooge”, which was rehearsed and produced here at church, free of charge for the use of our space and for attendees. At this point the Christian Education Arts Academy is not on the drawing board. Don Allen’s Christian Education funds remain, however, as a generous source for future use.

The minutes from our second Annual Meeting of 2023, a year ago this month, (we needed a second Annual Meeting because we were embarking on a new fiscal year), include detailed remarks from me about safety initiatives we would take to increase our security here at church. Many of those measures did not occur. Council and I got sidetracked by Leigh’s departure and our focus on transitioning to this interim time. I apologize for the lack of follow through and I take responsibility for it.

We lost Pastor Leigh long before we expected to for a variety of reasons which we tried mightily to understand before she left. Throughout October, November and December of 2023 we faced her departure with humility, courage and love and tried to discern what was ours to learn. Three things she told us on her way out: ask Barre what it needs and see what the BCC can offer; reach out to former and absent members for conversation and connection; and be willing to learn new things as you lean on each other and deepen your relationships. By those measures, I give us high praise.

What can we be proud of, specifically, over the past 12 months?

We responded to the flood during the summer of 2023 by offering Laundry Love twice a week instead of once a month throughout the fall. At this point, we have settled on once a week. We have a cadre of volunteers who enjoy doing it. I think I speak for other

volunteers when I say that Laundry Love feels like we are taking church to the people. It is so much more than quarters and debit cards and laundry detergent. We offer smiles, hugs, familiarity, comfort, kindness, and deep respect. And we get the same in return along with sincere appreciation. We aren't washing people's feet, but we are helping people and their families feel good - and feel more human - in clean clothes.

In September, we offered De-escalation training for free to over 30 representatives from non-profit organizations and businesses along with individuals from the surrounding community who needed to learn to be more prepared in scary situations with upset people.

Three ministries stepped up to join in the hiring process for our office administrator, our building supervisor and our bookkeeper. This was work that required writing job descriptions, putting ads in The World, interviewing and hiring. Ministries had never done this before and they were surprised and a bit reluctant to do it, but Leigh insisted, and we learned a lot. Now these ministries have a sense of "ownership" in the best sense of that word, of our new staff. The Administration ministry cares about and feels some sense of responsibility for Lydia Welch's success; the Property ministry cares about Peggy Johnson, valuing and using her incredible energy and initiative to get things done; and Pam Murphy, our treasurer, along with the entire Finance ministry, developed a mutually supportive relationship with our bookkeeper, Debbie Ziter.

We brainstormed our priorities for the interim period together after worship one Sunday last fall. I listened and then it was easy for me to create a list of interim tasks that needed our commitment. You stepped up. Karen Campbell-Nelson created the most thorough calendar you can imagine to keep us on track. We have a team of five people who bring together a new and fresh worship service every Sunday: Linda West and me, Lydia Welch, Eric Giles, and Kris Kirby. We have a pastoral care team led by Susan McKnight and Karen Gordon who respond quickly with deep compassion when members are near death, or someone in their family is, or people are facing any number of life's trials. This group also calls or visits former or absent members to say hello, listen, and of course welcome them back to church. The Pastoral Care Team is adept at delicate conversations, done with great care. I hope this team continues after our new minister arrives.

Then there was the Christmas decorations/banners brouhaha. Speaking for myself, I learned how diverse we are. We have some left leaners and some right leaners among us, thanks be to God. And I learned to be very optimistic that if we could navigate those waters and discuss the myriad issues underpinning that controversy, we could definitely hang together throughout the interim period without a minister. My anxiety about being your temporary leader lessened considerably on the day of that discussion in January of 2024. In fact, members still mention to me the turning point in the life of the church that occurred that day when we felt safe to share our feelings and opinions with each other. And icing on the cake - we reached consensus on how we show our welcome to all.

Our search committee, led by Cathy James, held 7 focus groups to listen to nearly 50 members talk about our priorities for the attributes of our new minister. Those sessions

required planning, execution and most importantly, compiling and analyzing the results. We know the search committee is meeting frequently and writing the church profile now, to be posted when it is ready. We thank the search committee for your careful work and your exciting work soon to come when you interview candidates. Carry on, with our gratitude and blessings.

Linda West and I enjoy organizing pulpit supply together. At first it seemed that we didn't have enough available ministers to invite to guide us in worship. We filled in with our own members, Jackie Johnson and Brendan Hogan, and a friend of mine, Owen Bradley. By God's grace and people's schedules opening up, we now have a wonderful handful of ordained ministers including Susan McKnight, John Campbell-Nelson, Glen Moyer, Simon Ruth de Voil, and Carol Ann Barker who we can call on a rotating basis. Recently three members, Lee Rousseau, Cathy James and Kerrick Johnson also stepped into the pulpit. I must thank Eric Giles and Lydia Welch again who coordinate the music and bulletin details that are new and different every week and reflect the worship leader's creation of the service.

Bonita Cortese helped us organize and carry out the straightforward but formerly vexing task of sharing essential duties on Sunday mornings. We now hum like a well-oiled machine.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding work of the Property ministry, Mission and Outreach, the Deacons and Finance. Property for tending to every building need large and small on a timely basis; Mission and Outreach for their vigilant attention to and practical help for our neighbors who struggle; the Deacons for going above and beyond their typical duties by inviting us to potluck dinners and other programs scheduled just often enough, and Finance for quietly and diligently making myriad decisions large and small that keep us afloat financially. We would crumble without a conscientious Finance Ministry.

It feels good to be at church on Sundays and it feels good to be here during the week. It is my pleasure to spend time with Lydia, Peggy and Debbie, making decisions together that improve how the staff works. Eric joins us on Zoom for occasional staff meetings here during the week. It would feel even better if we could fill our empty spaces downstairs on a regular basis or even just now and then with community groups - especially nonprofit groups - who need space to do their work. What does Barre need, and what can the BCC provide? If a gathering place is on that list, we have a large, functional and beautiful space downstairs. Thanks to the Property ministry, the Art committee (with a special nod to Linda Kiniry and Kate Duffy), and Lajeunesse Construction.

I will finish by circling back to my big "Aha moment" on January 14 when we agreed to stand behind our Welcoming Covenant and also decided to hang one rainbow banner visible from outside and inside church to signify our enthusiastic welcome to ALL. As I already mentioned, I fully recognized that day that we are very diverse. Our lives - our backgrounds, our faith journeys, our sexual orientations, our politics, our families, our lifestyles - are diverse. We are different, of course. And yet, we each keep coming back to

the Barre Congregational Church. At this point we can safely say, we aren't here for the minister. This beloved and loving building, including this sanctuary, welcomes us in. We love this physical space and it loves us back. Maybe we can't imagine worshipping God anywhere else.

My most fervent hope is that five months into this interim period, we recognize that one main reason we are here is that we are drawn to each other. This is the group of people we want to pray with and for; this is the group of people we want to be honest and brave with; this is the group of people we want by our side when life is too hard; this is the group of people we want to celebrate with and have fun with; and this is the group of people we want to expand with new members who are looking for a church of their own.

We can reach out to Barre and offer our gifts, we can take care of each other, and we can grow together in new and unexpected ways. Hold on, keep showing up. Our interim time isn't over. I know now we can flourish even without a settled minister, and most importantly, you know it too. Look around, we are succeeding because of each of you.

Thank you.

Cary Friberg

## Report of the Clerk

### Current church membership

Added as new members	0	
Removed by request	8	
Deceased	4	Ida Sanborn 10/26/2023 Beverly Wilmott 1/4/2024 Mathew Stafford 1/22/24 Anita Friot 3/4/2024
Baptisms	0	

Amanda Pugliese, Clerk  
Linda West, Historian

## Report of the Diaconate

The Diaconate Ministry, better known as the Deacons, is responsible for supporting the pastor's and the congregation's spiritual needs as well as facilitating conflict resolution management amongst the congregants as may be needed. We strive to be a welcoming church for all. This year we have also started to reach out to serve the needs of the community as well.

The Deacons oversee the Pastoral Relations Committee Team which is dedicated to the pastors' self-care and well-being.

We also assist in the administration of the sacraments including communion and baptisms.

The Deacons do the outside Christmas decorating for the Advent season as well supplying the palms for Palm Sunday.

The activities Deacons have sponsored this past year include:

May - Cathy James facilitated an Emergency Preparedness Meeting. This was a meeting to inform people on how to prepare for emergencies in Vermont. It included how to create an emergency family plan that would include such information as how to contact each other, a disaster preparedness check list, what to have on hand ready in your home or car, what would happen to pets and farm animals, how to protect important documents and which should be protected from floodwaters just to name a few. VT Alert and Vermont 211 are two good sources for all to be aware of. It was very informative and turned out to be timely too. There was a great handout included along with a ham radio presentation.

September – Brendan Hogan led a presentation during church on Medicare. Agency contact information and Q+A followed during coffee hour which was provided by the deacons.

Currently the Deacons are wearing a few different hats: Cathy (Chair), Janice and Brendan are on the search committee, Jan is on the Pastoral Relations team, Darlene will continue working with the Barre community and Sherry has been traveling with her husband.

Future endeavors the Deacons wish to pursue are welcoming new members to our church with a breakfast for the new members, furnishing short biographies on each new member to share in the newsletter, recruit new deacons, and having more input into parts of the worship service itself.

Janice Aldrich, Chair

Darlene Clark, Brendan Hogan, Cathy James, Sherry Singer

## Report of the Faith Formation Ministry

Faith Formation continued to talk about plans for the Barre Congregational Church Arts Academy throughout the summer and early fall of 2023. The project ended when the two leaders were unable to continue. Perhaps Faith Formation will take up a new plan in the future to use Don Allen Funds for Christian education.

Several Faith Formation members joined with Mission and Outreach and other BCC members to offer Laundry Love twice a week instead of once a month to meet the needs of those in central Vermont who were impacted by the summer of 2023 flood. The BCC now offers Laundry Love once a week.

In keeping with Faith Formation's goal to offer mental health presentations and training, we gave our support to de-escalation training in September which attracted about 30 people from the community. The BCC paid for this with Don Allen funds, so participants came for free. Non-profit groups and individuals attended. We learned to communicate effectively with someone who is upset and might possibly pose a threat to safety. A month later, Carl Yalicki, a substance use counselor, spoke to the congregation about addiction and many of its impacts.

Susan McKnight and Mike Bransfield hosted a potluck supper and a bonfire at their lovely home in Moretown. Several BCC members attended and enjoyed delicious food, camaraderie and a beautiful sunset.

Faith Formation gave, delivered, or mailed many BCC members an Advent themed Devotional booklet. We held Advent discussions on four Advent Sundays after worship during coffee hour.

Leadership of Faith Formation changed from Cary Friberg to Hillary Cole after Advent. Cary took over leading the church during the interim period and Susan McKnight and Karen Gordon turned their attention to leading the Pastoral Care team.

Members of Faith Formation now include Hillary Cole as leader, John Campbell-Nelson, Lee Rousseau, Christine Rousseau, and Mary Ronson.

# Report of the Finance Committee

## Summation of Finance activity by months during the Fiscal year 7/1/23 - 6/30/24

During every month, as we always do, we reviewed the financial statements (a balance sheet and a "Profit & Loss statement" (yes, Quicken insists on calling it that, even though we're a non-profit) from the bookkeeper.

During most months, we also talked about how things were going with the church with various projects (the organ project was one, various Property Committee projects and others) and debated whether or not money is being spent properly out of our budget.

### July, 2023

The last payment was made to LaJeunesse Construction after the HVAC work was completed.

We agreed to spend \$10,000 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year for Laundry Love to switch from once/month to twice a week (during what eventually became the July - December time period), from the Don Allen General fund, following the early July flooding in Barre and Montpelier, VT.

Peter created a stewardship letter for non-pledgers that was eventually sent out to those who had not created pledges during this fiscal year.

### August, 2023

We found the necessary funding sources for the bonus to Eric that was requested by Worship and Arts.

We found funding (the Anonymous Gift Fund) for replacing the downstairs refrigerator whose gasket had failed.

### September, 2023

We held the fundraising event at Rockfire on September 16th, where we raised \$600 selling pie slices. (This ultimately went to Hedding church for flood relief.)

### October, 2023

We interviewed candidates and hired a bookkeeper (Deb Ziter) after Aly left the bookkeeper position.

### November, 2023

Pam rolled over a \$250,000 CD for 18 months at Northfield Bank, getting an interest rate of 4.15%.



### January, 2024

We agreed with Deb that committee chairs would sign off on bills paid from their committee budgets and that committees would keep track of their budgets.

We agreed to create a \$3,000 line item in the budget for the Pastor Search Committee.

We agreed to have Pledge Sunday on April 14th.

We agreed to create a health benefit (not true health insurance) for our staff, pay them for federal holidays, a week of vacation after one year service, and pay state-mandated sick time.

### February, 2024

We agreed to spend up to \$400 on advertising for Easter.

We discussed an expected upcoming request for money for the Hope Fund.

We agreed to pay for a new monitor for Deb and a new computer for Lydia.

March, 2024 and early April 2024 (some of these are prospective things that we expect will happen by the time the Annual Reports are written but haven't happened yet as of 3/12/24)

Created a budget for the 7/1/24 - 6/30/25 fiscal year. We discussed various committees' requests for this budget in detail. We agreed to estimate that we will have pulpit supply for the first half of this fiscal year and a pastor for the second half of this fiscal year.

We agreed to estimate pledges at \$70,000 for the 7/1/24 - 6/30/25 fiscal year.

We agreed that we would hold a financial review this fall.

Sally wrote us a pledge letter that went to the congregation for this budget cycle.

We discussed whether or not to fund Laundry Love for the next year and at what level.

We met with the bankers in late March and discussed our investments and how much we can take out of investments each year without touching the principal.

Pam Murphy, Treasurer  
Peter James  
Ed Friot  
Sally Beebe  
Tim Barre

## Report of the Mission and Outreach Ministry

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Our church continues to reach out to the Barre community in many ways. We provide the dinner meal for the Good Samaritan Haven every Monday night, community takeout breakfasts on Saturday mornings, donations of gift cards to Good Beginnings from our Angel Tree Project at Christmas, help sort donations to Amy's Armoire which assists foster and adoptive families, and Laundry Love held once a week at either Busy Bubbles or Doubles Bubbles laundromat.

Laundry Love was increased to twice a week from once a month as a response to the flooding that devastated the central Vermont area in July. Funding this was made possible by a generous allotment from one of the Don Allen funds that provides for emergency situations. We did this for the months of July, August, and September. Starting in October we decreased the schedule to once a week and have continued with this schedule with the help of many volunteers who have come forward for this ministry. Laundry Love is a great help to many people who are still struggling to find permanent housing as well as those who find it hard to make ends meet month to month.

We also made a significant donation to Hedding Methodist Church which distributed many of the flood relief supplies in the form of personal hygiene items that were given out to people affected by the flood. A pie fundraiser organized by the finance ministry was held at the Rockfire event held in September and the money raised was donated to Hedding to support their food pantry. We collected donations of baby wipes for a month, and these were donated to Hedding's ministry that helps families with new babies.

The Good Samaritan Haven began a program called the Employee Investment Program to help train and improve employee compensation and retention. Our church made a 3-year commitment to support this and we made the final donation of our 3-year pledge of \$3000 this year.

Our main fundraiser continues to be the Gobble Wobble Turkey Trot which once again was very successful in November. After expenses a total of \$6027 was raised. Lauren Jo Chase and Don Singer have organized this for many years and they deserve much of the credit for its success. We did not solicit donations from business sponsors this year because many of them were affected by the flood. A letter was sent to all of them thanking them for their support over the years and letting them know we would still advertise their names on the back of our event T-shirts. Many of them graciously donated anyway which was so appreciated.

Mission and Outreach members voted to make donations to People's Health and Wellness, Circle and Vermont Interfaith Action this year. These have been sent out to them already.

We hope to continue to provide outreach to our community through all the activities mentioned in this report. This only can happen because of the number of you who are faithful volunteers and the generous donations we receive. The Mission and Outreach Ministry thank you so very much for your support. We believe we are truly serving God when we reach out to those in need.

Blessings to all of you!

Serving in Christ's love,

Darlene Clark, chair, Lauren Jo Chase, Bev Thomas, Mary Anne Johnson, Nancy O'Leary and Jean Brown

## Report of the Administration Ministry

This year has been a transition year for the Administration Ministry. Prior to Leigh leaving, she created our meeting schedule and agendas. Spearheaded by Aly, we began working on a new church directory in the spring. We were thrilled to have the opportunity to interview and offer our enthusiastic support to hire Lydia Welch as our new Office Administrator in November. Lydia has been a fabulous addition to our church family. Karen Campbell-Nelson tackled the BCC "Big Picture" calendar this winter. Through her hard work, the church has a well-organized digital calendar outlining the worship calendar, interim tasks, ministry calendar, and community calendar. With everything located in one place, it is easy to see where help is needed for things like the Haven Meals, community breakfasts, Laundry Love, and more. We are excited to begin meeting regularly again in the second half of 2024.

Amanda Pugliese, Chair

Bonnie Finn

Karen Campbell-Nelson

## Report of the Property Ministry

Property started the 2023/2024 fiscal year continuing with and eventually finishing the building HVAC/Basement project. At that point in the project the church was dealing with adjustments and tweaks to the new systems which were noted by BCC's building supervisor Kris Kirby. Kris would contact the mechanical contractor and walk through the issue with them. Kris did a great job of staying on top of things. The larger project was ending so Property shifted their focus to more building maintenance items. Such items consisted of replacing the side door (kitchen door) with a new door and door hardware. The original door would not shut properly, sometimes preventing it from being fully closed and locked.

As the calendar year was ending, Property was faced with replacing the BCC's Building Supervisor. Kris had accepted a new job away from the church, opening his position. Property eventually landed on hiring Peggy Johnson who has been a great asset to the church in her short time here. Property works with Peggy to get her thoughts on things we as a ministry need to address.

Other items Property tackled during these last 12 months have been the purchase of a new kitchen refrigerator, miscellaneous electrical improvements in the staff office and at the front of the building and planning the repair/replacement of the storm windows on the east side of the building.

Property Ministry started this fiscal year with participation from Pastor Leigh, Kris Kirby, Eric Tuper-Giles, Linda Comstock (co-chair), Larry Beebe, Jay Tosi, and Todd Ronson (co-chair). Currently the group consists of Linda, Larry, and Todd with the occasional visit from Peggy. Property looks forward to implementing more building improvements next year.

## Historian's Report

The following is a summary of my activities as Church Historian over the past year.

1. Continued to update roll book of members
2. Compiled obituaries and placed them in a notebook
3. Framed and displayed the Open and Affirming Covenant and had it hung in the entryway hall
4. Created historic displays
5. Rotated shadow box displays
6. Wrote a brief history of the Church for member directory

I hope to continue to create displays throughout the coming year and to give a presentation about the history of the Church and a tour of the building in the coming months.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Portalupi West

Church Historian

## Report of the Pastoral Relations Committee

Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) members: Janice Aldrich, Rev. John Campbell-Nelson, Bonita Cortese

The Pastoral Relations Committee was formed in June 2023 to fulfill a requirement of the Church bylaws. The purpose of the committee is to support the pastor and facilitate healthy communication between the pastor and the congregation. The committee serves in an advisory capacity to the pastor and advocates for the pastor's leadership. Since forming, the committee met for one members-only meeting and twice in conference with Pastor Leigh.

# Report of the Search Committee

Pastor Search Committee (SC) members:

Cathy James, Chair  
Bonnie Finn, Vice Chair  
Brendan Hogan, Secretary  
Bonita Cortese, Chaplain  
Jan Aldrich

The SC was formed in November 2023 to manage the process of determining the requirements for the next pastor of Barre Congregational Church, interview members of the BCC congregation to understand their needs and desires, update the church profile, create a job posting for the new minister, interview candidates for the minister position, recommend a candidate to the congregation, and oversee the process of negotiating employment terms.

The SC met with Rev. Paul Sangree of the Vermont UCC Conference on Sunday, December 10 to be briefed on the standard UCC minister search process. This process includes holding focus groups with members of the congregation, and interviews with selected groups or individuals outside the congregation.

A budget of \$3,000 was requested and approved. The only expenditure to date was the purchase of a lightweight portable easel, large paper tablets for the easel, and markers, all of which were used to good effect in the focus groups. It is anticipated that most of the budgetary spending of the SC will fall between May and December, after the position is posted and recruiting begins, so it is recommended that SC funds of \$3,000 be put in the 2024-25 budget.

Six focus groups and two individual interviews were held with congregants, giving the SC a good sense of what the primary needs of BCC will be for our next minister. A discussion was held between Council and an SC representative. Rev. Emeritus David Vanderlinde-Abernathy was also interviewed, and plans are in place to interview Rev. Earl of the Barre Episcopal Church and Rev. Rae of the Barre Methodist Church to gain additional insights.

The profile will be rewritten and updated from late March to early April. Once the SC has completed the update, it will be sent to Rev. Paul Sangree for review and approval. Once completed it will be posted at the UCC Vermont conference site.

Minister candidates may be either UCC or from other denominations, but all must apply through UCC.

Once the profile and request for applications are posted, the SC will begin selecting candidates to move through the remaining steps of the process.

## Report of the Pastoral Care Team

We see the basic mission of the church as two-fold: caring for God's community (our city and beyond) and showing love towards each other within the congregation. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of this mission that is the focus of the newly formed Pastoral Care Team. Formed in January 2024--the beginning of our do-it-ourselves Interim Period--it is our goal to offer what many churches consider a ministerial function: care and outreach to the members and friends of the Barre Congregational Church. Ten people stepped forward to help with the ministry of caring for folks who are housebound, ill, hospitalized, grieving or in any other way dis-eased. Two more offered to reach out especially to people who have been absent from our fellowship for one reason or another. We had 2 training sessions to sharpen our skills (listening, communicating, etc.) so as to be as effective as possible. We found materials from the UCC *Called to Care* Program very helpful in this. As of the beginning of March, more than 40 outreach efforts have been made in the form of visits, letters, emails and texts.

Some of our members are working hard to log and organize these efforts so that we address the needs of all who could use outreach, but not be redundant in our endeavors. Currently, we are in the process of sending out Easter cards to everyone in the congregation, reminding us one and all that we are a resurrection community. It is a privilege to be a part of such a creative, caring and industrious team!

Sincerely,

Karen Gordon and Susan McKnight, Co-Chairs  
John Campbell-Nelson  
Peter Anthony  
Janice Aldrich  
Sally Beebe  
Jean Brown  
Linda Comstock  
Bonita Cortese  
Jerry and Susan Osterman  
Bev Thomas  
Kate Duffy  
Carol Ellison

## Report on the Organ Project

There are several updates to report on the Pipe Organ project since last year's annual meeting, with a lot of good news. A portion of the new organ has been actively used in our worship services during the past year. Our contract with Walker Pipe Organs may seem to be taking longer than expected to complete. The global pandemic has had multiple effects on the project, including supplier lead-times on organ parts. A lot of woodwork in the sanctuary and renovation needed for the new organ is nearly complete. But there is still more work to be done on placing some of the larger pipes.

For those familiar with the upstairs rooms adjacent to the old organ chamber, we have expanded the original space on both sides. One side now houses a chamber for the swell division and the other side (nearest to the Choir's Practice room) will be the new home of the chamber for the choir division. The Great Chamber will be the last portion of the project to be completed – this was originally planned to be the second phase. Of course, our final payment to the vendor will not be made until the project is completed.

While everyone has certainly been able to hear the Swell Chamber pipes and can appreciate how many different sounds the organist can use from our pipe organ it should be mentioned that the fully completed project will have an even greater breadth of voices from which to choose.

The terms of our ongoing contract with Walker Pipe Organs are to rebuild, enlarge, and install Aeolian-Skinner Opus 868A in Barre Congregational Church located in Barre, Vermont. The organ is comprised of three manuals as well as pedals. The instrument will contain 54 stops and 46 ranks. While the list of stops and ranks may seem like simply a measure of how big the instrument is physically – what it really expresses is the variety of voices and sounds that are available to be heard by the listening audience. It means we have a wonderfully expressive organ with brilliant color and character; it provides unmatched potential for music from any organ in the state. There are few other comparable instruments in the whole northeast region, and we should be proud to offer a home to such a significant organ.

Aeolian Skinner organs are considered among the leading instruments in the world of pipe organs. The years during which this specific instrument was originally installed, and was later enhanced at its location in Schenectady NY, were some of the peak years of the organ company.

For those who have been watching the progress, the front of the church now has three areas where the organ will be installed. The portion that has been completed so far is the Swell Division. The Great Division and Pedal Division are where our old organ had been previously located, and the Choir Division is the portion which is currently underway.

It may help to describe the locations of the multiple chambers, or Divisions of our Pipe Organ. A common practice with Pipe Organs is to have multiple manuals or keyboards, and each can be associated to any chamber where the pipes are located. It is generally the case that groups of pipes can be played on any keyboard that the organist prefers to use.



It is expected the entire project will be completed during the calendar year 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Donovan

Eric Giles

Peter Walker

## Cub Scouts Report

Barre Congregational Church was glad to welcome the Scouts back in the church in 2023. 2023 also marked the 60th year that the Church has sponsored Cub Scout Pack 717.

The Pack had quite a large group age out of Cub Scouts last year, along with the parents, and we are still struggling to recover from this loss. We currently have 7 Scouts enrolled in the program and 3 leaders.

Five scouts with five adults went to Cub Scout Camp in July at Mount Norris Scout Reservation in Eden and lived the adventure of camping during the week of The Flood. Rising lake waters caused a hasty evacuation of their campsite. They moved to higher ground, and all but the youngest continued to participate in a fun camp program despite the rain that continued most of the week.

Rain or shine, Scouts is a year-round program. Boys and girls in kindergarten through fifth grade are invited to join Pack 717. For more information you can email [BarrePack717@gmail.com](mailto:BarrePack717@gmail.com).

Jan Aldrich, Chartered Organization Representative