



**2021 Annual Reports**



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## Senior Minister's Report

January 23, 2022

**Worship.** This year began where last year ended: in pandemic isolation. Worship services were still being pre-recorded and uploaded to YouTube on Sunday mornings. The building remained empty, except for people who stayed for Code Purple when temperatures dipped below 32 degrees. Happily, with the installation of AV equipment and the surge of vaccinations, we were able to resume in-person worship in May. We continue to meet in person and live-stream our services each week. We also continue to explore what it means to welcome our online congregation to our in-person congregation. That work will continue.

**Racial equity work.** As we've navigated the constantly shifting landscape of how to do church in the last year, the Racial Justice Team has kept us focused on racial equity work. Even in our isolation, we have continued to work for justice in substantive ways. Many thanks to the RJT for their leadership.

**New members!** We have welcomed 20 new members this year! For a congregation our size, that is remarkable. During a pandemic? It's even more remarkable. In talking with the new people, three things seem to be bringing them to First Congregational and keeping them here: the updated website, the online worship services, and the warm welcome they receive from members when they attend. Well done, friends! It's my hope that we will continue this important work of welcoming new folks.

**Healing our community.** During times of stress, old wounds and frustrations sometimes emerge. That's happened for us this year. In response to the pandemic, we've had to rethink how we do church, sometimes, on a weekly basis. Simply trying to keep our community together has taken a lot of hard work. For us to be in as strong a place as we are after the stress we've experienced since March 2020 is a tribute to the good work of many and the love of us all for our community.

Pandemic stress also has revealed old wounds. Those wounds were evident at a painful congregational conversation on February 14th this year. We've had a couple of congregational conversations about the conflict since then. The Board has explored some options for helping us work through our conflict, including engaging a consultant skilled in working with conflicted congregations. It's my hope that we will—as a community—become even more intentional about acting our FCUCC community into wellbeing in 2022.

**Signs of hope!** Despite the difficulties we've experienced this year, there are vibrant signs of hope in our congregation. Hiring Wayne Smith as organist, then Chuck Taft as Music Director were terrific decisions. The quality—and heart—of music in our worship services has increased dramatically. Our benevolence work continues in strong ways. Forming a Sister Art Gallery partnership with the YMI Cultural Center is keeping us engaged with the wider community and with our work for justice. Our times of hospitality are stronger now with Dennis McLain and David Turner at the helm.

After nearly two years of upheaval caused by the pandemic, we are poised to move forward together in some pretty remarkable ways. In 2022, I look forward to seeing where our journey will take us!



*Rev. Dr. Kimberleigh Buchanan*

Study by Hartford International University for Religion and Peace, *Navigating the Pandemic: A first Look at Congregational Responses*.

“Researchers found that the pandemic is not affecting churches’ attendance equally.

“Since 2019, 35 percent of churches saw a decline of 25 percent or more. But 28 percent of congregations said they grew in the past two years, with 18 percent reporting growth of 25 percent or more.

“The mode of delivery of worship services was a major factor in whether median attendance increased or fell. For example, the 15 percent of churches that met solely in person saw the steepest decline in attendance—15.7 percent. The 5 percent of congregations that offered only online worship had a decline of 7.3 percent.

“But the 80 percent of congregations offering hybrid worship experienced an overall growth of 4.5 percent.” (Christian Century, December 15, 2021, p.15)

### **Report of the 2021 Moderator**

I had not anticipated serving as Moderator in 2021. The Board had met and elected its officers, but after a few weeks, the elected Moderator felt it necessary to resign from the Board and I was elected to step in as Moderator. It has been a great privilege to work with a very dedicated group of church members on the Board. It is also gratifying to belong to a such a community of committed Christians seeking to live into the message of the gospel in Asheville.

We began 2021 as we ended 2020 under strict curtailment of normal church due to the continued COVID19 pandemic. Worship services continued to be prerecorded and other church meetings continued to be held via Zoom. With the introduction of new vaccines in late 2020, we began to see a path to a more normal way of operating.

The decision by the Board in late 2020 to install an audio-visual system in the sanctuary to enable the live streaming of services from the sanctuary rather than continuing with prerecorded services without first seeking congregational approval proved to be an unwise and quite controversial one. The controversy focused on two points: (1) expenditure of more than \$30,000 without congregational approval and (2) installation of video monitors (screens) in the sanctuary. There was much discussion and argument over the Board’s decision, but ultimately the congregation voted to uphold the contract signed by the Board and have a trial period of 4 months using the

monitors after resuming in-person worship services. In a subsequent meeting in September 2021, the congregation voted to retain the monitors in the sanctuary. We added an Audio-Visual Technician staff position to support the livestreaming. The Board adopted a policy which will require Building Fund expenditures of greater than \$10,000 to be approved by the congregation.

The acrimony and harsh language used in the discussions of the audio-visual system led several members to ask the Board to consider engaging an outside mediator to assist the congregation in reaching a healthier state of community. In a congregational conversation, it became clear that there was not a consensus to engage a third-party mediator. Without a consensus, the Board did not pursue the matter.

During the winter months before we began to resume activities in the church building, FCUCC partnered with Asheville City to host Code Purple nights for the homeless. There were 68 Code Purple nights, and FCUC supported 379 unduplicated individuals for a total of 2,021 stays. We were happy to provide this assistance to the homeless population at a time when we were not using our facilities for church activities. Later, the city approached us with the proposal that we again partner with the city to host a “low-barrier” shelter. As we were beginning to reopen the church to activities, this proposal was problematic. After a congregational discussion, we reluctantly determined that a low-barrier shelter location was not a viable option for First Congregational.

The Racial Justice Team launched a significant initiative, beginning with an all-church read, *Me and White Supremacy*, with focused discussion groups led by members of the team. Other activities in this initiative have included art exhibits by local African American artists. These various activities and opportunities have been highlighted in various church media and in the Racial Justice Team report.

Board member Richard Jones led efforts to significantly revise the church website. A web designer was engaged to construct the revisions. The revised site launched in late spring and continues to be refined based on user experiences. Among the new features is a “Members Only” section where members can access directory information, Board meeting minutes and other information of concern to members. We are monitoring use of the website in efforts to continually improve the site.

After some exploration, we added VANCO as a digital giving platform for the church. With this addition, supporters have another avenue to contribute.

As part of ongoing efforts to improve communication between the Board and the congregation, the Board began approval of meeting minutes via e-mail within a week of meeting so that the minutes are posted quickly for viewing by members.

Significant staff hires included Amanda McCauley, AV Technician; Chuck Taft, Music Director; and Wayne Smith, Organist/Accompanist. These positions have significantly enhanced the worship experiences and extended our outreach through the live streaming of Sunday worship and other services.

After hearing from several congregants that our current governance model, adopted in 2012, seemed to have some problems in actual operation, the Board appointed a Governance Review Task Force (GRTF) in early summer to conduct a review of the model. The GRTF interviewed twenty-two current and former leaders of the church and all current staff members. An online survey was sent to congregants on June 21 and July 9th and tabulated on July 13, 2021. Twenty-eight people responded to the online survey. The COVID Pandemic, with its all-encompassing effects on the Congregation, had particularly specific and extensive impacts on all church operations and the Board, staff, and available volunteers. There was universal agreement that the previous 23-25-member Board, with representatives from all committees, ministries, and staff, did not work effectively and we should not go back to that form of governance. The size of the Board was too

unwieldy to effectively make decisions and some ministries were either floundering or stymied by the lack of decisions or guidance.

Since our initial report to the congregation in late August, the Board and Pastor have been engaged in discussions regarding the implications of the findings of the GRTF relative to job performance issues of key staff personnel. As we indicated in the first report to the congregation, Pastor Kim had requested Situational Support from the Western Association staff following the initial discussions between her and the Board. Both the Board and Pastor Kim have met with the Association Minister and we have had additional telephone conversations. Discussions with the Association representatives are on-going.

The findings from the GRTF report include issues related to work performance of staff members. Because of privacy regulations related to individual performance, details regarding these issues cannot be shared. Since First Congregational has a small staff, problems related to staff can have implications for overall work of the church. Thus, the Board has felt it necessary to focus on these issues to ensure that problems related to staff work performance are addressed. This process has occupied much of the Board's attention during this fall and is continuing.

As we close 2021, First Congregational has increased its membership number by a net gain of twelve new members. Twenty new members joined by confession, transfer, or confirmation. We lost eight members through resignations, transfer, or death. This net growth in new members is exciting as we look ahead to 2022.



*Jerry Dillashaw, 2021 Moderator*

### **FCUCC 2019 TREASURER'S REPORT**

Dear Members of FCUCC:

My heart is full of gratitude as I write this report because you are a MOST FAITHFUL community of givers. This year has been full of challenges, but by meeting your pledge commitments throughout the year we have had adequate cash to pay our bills and keep a positive balance in the operating account. Giving to the Building Fund through your pledges and a bequest from the Sandra Hoskins estate allowed us to pay \$25,000 on our mortgage, complete the AV system investment, and make needed repairs to our roof and handicap doors.

In addition to Pledge giving there was additional giving that supported benevolent ministries in the community. Volunteers organized Saturday lunches for the Homeward Bound sheltered homeless people at Red Roof Inn. Laundry Love, Backpacks for the Ledgewood Apt. children, and support for Emma School continued this year. A moving art display in our Gallery supported the African American community and educated us on the continuing racial injustice in our community

and country. A special fund to support those in our church community with unexpected needs was created. The Racial Justice team was underwritten by generous donors which allowed them to challenge us with information and events to encourage meditation and introspection on our role in discrimination against minorities.

## **Operating Budget Report**

### 2021 INCOME

Pledge commitments were 81% of our projected income. At year end 95% of those commitments were met. Our plate donations and rental income met budget projections. Sales Tax returns of \$3000 exceeded projections. This created a total income of \$311,010 which was \$8500 below original budget projections.

### 2021 Expenses

The staff and other stakeholders did as excellent job of managing expenses. This budget year was difficult to predict because we didn't know when we would begin to be in the building. Total expenses were \$303,136 which created a net income of \$7874. Our ending checking account balance was \$-3067 which is an indication of narrow cash flow periods in the last quarter of 2021. Fortunately, the next deposit erased this deficit.

## **Building Fund Report**

The Building Fund has operated as planned when we created it to replace the Capital Campaign Fund. Due to the problems we had related to funding the AV System from this Fund, the Board adopted a Building Fund Policy that clearly states how the fund will be used and when the congregation will be informed of its use. A copy of this policy is posted in the Members Section of the Website for reference.

The Fund started the year with a Balance of \$64,053. Income from pledges and a bequest totaled \$94,801. Expenses totaled \$119,976. Expenses were as follows: completing the AV Project expense, Brokerage fees related to income, Roofing repairs (\$4100), new furnace in educational wing (\$6411), repair of the handicap accessible door (\$2163), and \$65000 payment toward the principal of the loan (made in January 2021 \$40,000 and December 2021 \$25,000). The ending balance is \$38,878. There is \$2350 outstanding from Capital Campaign pledges. The total 2021 building fund pledges of \$55,900 was paid in full. We anticipate 2022 Mortgage payments will be \$18-20,000. Pledges for 2022 total \$41,000.

## **2022 Projections, Concerns**

Working through the proposed 2022 budget provided some challenges to the Board, Finance and Personnel committees.

### 1. Salaries

The living wage for Asheville is projected to be \$17.80/hr. for all employees. This is calculated annually by Just Economics. The details of this calculation can be found on their website. Before the pandemic FCUCC was a certified Living Wage employer. This budget year we determined we could not meet this standard with our current income projection.



## 2021 ANNUAL REPORTS

The COLA for 2022 is 5.9% and the inflation rate in Asheville is 5.4%. After much discussion and number crunching the personnel and finance committees recommended to the Board a 3% increase in salaries for 2022. This is what is in the Proposed 2022 budget which will be presented to the congregation of approval January 23, 2022.

### 2. Program Needs and Requests

With our projected income we have not been able to fully fund the requests of Benevolence, Music, and Youth programming. The Special Art Project and Racial Justice Team have remained in the operating budget. In 2021 their expenses were covered by generous donors.

### 3. Building Needs

Increase in Utilities, repairs and maintenance are universal truths and we have tried to make realistic projections for these costs.

### 4. Operations

We have renegotiated the copier lease and exchanged the copier for one that meets our needs. This will reduce copier expense by \$4000 per year.

Any questions or concerns regarding this report are welcome. Please contact me at [jroudebush5@gmail.com](mailto:jroudebush5@gmail.com) or text/call 785-221-0390.



*Joanne Roudebush, Treasurer FCUCC*

## **FCUCC Ministries – 2021 Annual Report**

### **1. Worship**

Over the past year, the Worship Team has worked to continue to adapt worship services to the new pandemic reality. Worship at FCUCC has undergone many changes through 2021. From January through April, we continued pre-recording our services as we had been doing since the end of 2020. Even with this, however, we began to explore new ways of doing these recordings that would reduce the heavy workload of editing and splicing video that fell to our Administrator Casey Clark, and to Pastor Kim. Part of this was made possible by having the new AV equipment and monitors that were installed early in the year. The congregation, early in the year, voted to give the monitors a trial, and to make a final decision after seeing how they were used for a few months once we were back to in-person worship.

That return to the sanctuary for Sunday morning worship services came in May. At this point, the Worship Team had been working in conjunction with the Reopening Team not only to provide safe in-person worship, but also to continue providing an online option for those who



preferred to worship in that way. The new AV Tech, Amanda McCauley, did an amazing job working to make worship available live on YouTube. Our Team also began conversations about how best to offer music, once worship services were happening live. The Team recommended starting by hiring a part-time accompanist, and FCUCC was fortunate to hire Wayne Smith in that capacity. At the same time, the Team was having conversations about recommending beginning the search for a Music Director, and that process began in the summer of this year. It resulted in the hiring of Chuck Taft, who has contributed enormously to our worship life.

One of the particular challenges of worship during this pandemic time has been communion. We had many conversations about how to do this safely, and since returning to the Sanctuary, we have most often used pre-packaged communion sets, though the celebration of communion in November was regular (gluten-free) bread, with congregants invited to come forward to receive it. The Worship Team will continue to make decisions about communion that hold our community's safety as the highest priority, and so this may continue to vary from month to month.

Various aspects of worship that have been meaningful to the community over the years have had to go through some changes, and even suspensions over the last two years. We have been fortunate to have enjoyed pre-recorded offerings from the Dance Team, and then a return to in-person dance offerings by the end of this year. Our representative from the Dance Team, Sandy Clark, has continued to help us find creative ways to incorporate dance into our worship of God.

Over the last year, particularly when singing together was not yet safe, our handbell choirs, under the direction of Betty Dillshaw, provided us with the opportunity to have choir music be part of our worship. Betty worked with adults and children to provide these offerings in different ways, both recorded and live, throughout our services.

As we rejoiced in being back in the Sanctuary this year, the Chancel team part of our Worship Team worked to make our space even more beautiful by commissioning a local artist, Alycia Johnson, to create new Advent paraments. These were debuted this Advent season, and in worship we were able to hear from the Alycia about how she created them. The Chancel team will continue to work on bringing new paraments for each church season in the coming year or years, as budget allows.

Lastly, we would like to extend an enormous thanks to Ty Moser, who chaired our Team for many years, and provided steady, kind and compassionate leadership in that time. Ty worked in so many ways, seen and unseen, from filming worship services, to readying communion packets, scheduling our liturgists, typing up notes from our meeting, coordinating with the Reopen Team, and so much more. Our Worship Team and FCUCC as a whole are deeply grateful to Ty for all his hard work and wish him good rest as he steps back to take a breather for a bit.



*Kirstin Batchelor, on behalf of the Worship Team.*

## 2. Music Ministry

Flexible and Faithful - these two words may describe aptly Music Ministry at FCUCC in 2021. Held together by Pastor Kim and a team of Volunteers, music occurred in fits and starts as the Pandemic prevailed upon all community gatherings for the first half of 2021. Yet groups were gathered, videos recorded and synced and used creatively in Worship. Everyone valiantly did their best to continue under very difficult circumstances, and in wildly uncharted territory. And yet...as the third verse from the old hymn “Holy God We Praise Your Name” says: “through the church the song goes on.”

On September 5th, I was hired to be the next Music Director. I quickly set about accessing, planning, and executing on several tasks/areas simultaneously. I delineate below several of those action steps. But first, I must note what I have discovered since starting here: the Staff at FCUCC is truly outstanding - especially under Pastor Kim’s leadership. She empowers us to “do our jobs with excellence,” but also encourages us to keep mission and ministry at the forefront of what we do. The support and collegial atmosphere between the Staff and incredible volunteers has been important to my quick success and mostly frictionless transition. I’m very grateful for such a gracious and enlivened welcome.

Since Sept. 2021:

- Assessed the Music Library and found it wanting. :)
- Started a rhythm of Weekly Worship Planning with Pastor Kim.
- Established/furnished & moved into the “new” Music Office off the old Youth Room (above the Choir Room).
- Restarted Wednesday Night Choir Rehearsals.
- Planned anthems for most Sundays from September - the end of the year.
- Ordered a BUNCH of Music to fit the size and ability of the current choir members and church.
- Began the Reorganization of the Music Library (well...I asked for help...and Donna Nelson volunteered).
- Began the long-term project of developing a comprehensive online database of the music in our Music Library (Jim Canty & Dona Nelson).



*Chuck Taft, Music Director*

### 3. Youth Ministry

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, youth group gatherings have been continued to be different and difficult. Despite weekly worship gatherings beginning in-person earlier this year, the FCUCC youth have continued meeting weekly on Zoom.

Our gatherings have consisted of casual conversations, theological questions directed to the students, discussions centering on issues of social justice, and the completion of confirmation for three of our current students. I have also hosted a couple of virtual game nights with the students in an attempt to avoid Zoom burnout.

As I mentioned above, I have experienced some difficulties, such as attempting to engage our students via the Zoom platform. Most of the time when we meet, they want to hang out and chat instead of giving their attention to a prescribed lesson plan. Honestly, I cannot blame them for their inattention because Zoom, especially for teenagers, is *not* engaging and is difficult to utilize as a tool for engaging. I have done my best at engaging them through the platform, but some weeks are more difficult than others because of the lack of enthusiasm for meeting across this platform.

Over the last several months, our newest members, Mars and Gabriel Taft have begun assisting with our monthly service opportunity at La Fiesta Laundromat—Laundry Love.



*Rev. Andrew Hoots, Youth Ministry Coordinator*

### 4. Adult Faith Formation

Now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year, **Sacred Pause** is going strong! We continue to act the world into well-being by offering spiritual nurture to church members and visitors in a small group setting. We emphasize reflection, prayer, silence, and creativity as pathways to authentic living at First Congregational. Highly popular is the discussion time, where we reflect on the work of our in-house devotional writers, sermons by Pastor Kim, or outside and diverse voices such as Mary Oliver and Henri Nouwen. During Covid, we enjoyed outdoor social events, notably fall picnics at Weaver Park and the Folk Art Center, which were well-attended. We typically meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of the month on Zoom, with the possibility of a hybrid (in-person) option in near future.

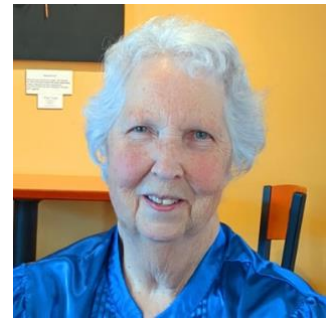


*Eric Lyons, Sacred Pause Leader*

In 2020, **Stir the Soul Café Ministries (Team)** had a schedule change from Wednesday to Thursday for its Winter Women and Creative Aging groups and the hope that the pandemic which disrupted our lives would soon be behind us. Unfortunately, that did not happen. **2021**, though it brought us vaccines, did not bring us bodily back together, and we have not been able to meet in person for a year and a half. Our regular Women's retreats were cancelled, plus there was no hope for a pilgrimage.

However, we were not idle. Throughout the year, there were several meditations and personal retreat materials prepared for WW and CA. Plus the invitation was extended for anyone to drop into the Library on Thursdays for conversation and a little work: on the books and in preparation of booklets for study. Some of you did drop by and we were able to keep up appearances. Thank you for that. Now we need prayers for our world to gain some common sense and common purpose for the sake of others.

We will explore using Zoom for 2022. We want to keep everyone safe, but we also wish to see your faces once in a while! Meanwhile keep watching for more information on up-coming personal meditations and retreats.



*Loraine Tuenge, Coordinator*

## 6. Peacemaking

### Racial Justice

#### Racial Justice Team Mission Statement

Following the teachings of Jesus and believing in the power of Love, we work to dismantle systemic racism and to advocate for racial equity in our congregation and the community. The implementation of this statement involves the following actions:

- Grounding ourselves through spiritual practices.
- Educating ourselves and each other about the origins and effects of white privilege and white supremacy.
- Examining the role of Christian history and theology in promoting and protecting white supremacy.
- Creating safe space for honest and grace-filled dialogue.
- Cultivating an anti-racist congregation.
- Collaborating with local racial justice organizations.
- Advocating on issues that build racial equity.

As I look and think back over this year's work of the Racial Justice Team (RJT), I am thankful. The team has focused its energies on several important tasks and deepened its commitment to living into an anti-racist culture. Here are some of the highlights of the year:

Early in the year, RJT engaged a local consulting group, Collaborative Organizing (CO), to work with both our team and other members of the congregation. alexandria ravenel and david greenson from CO led this process, which lasted throughout the late winter and into early summer, beginning with offering a survey of our members' understanding of racism/anti-racism (41 persons participated in this survey). CO led teachings/reflections for three 90-minute sessions open to members/friends of the congregation. These teachings focused on our shared history in this country, the increasing awareness of the use of microaggressions, and the challenge of white fragility. A group of seven people offered to be members of the Cultural Change Agent Team (CCAT), a group which helps to facilitate the ongoing work of the RJT and congregation. For CCAT, CO led additional teachings/reflections for three additional 90-minute sessions, including guidance on the awareness of barriers and incentives on this journey, the importance of healthy communication, and the value of a revised RJT mission statement. In an additional couple of meetings in the fall, CCAT gathered again with alexandria and david to receive guidance on the Anti-Racism Statement (ARS) being prepared for the congregation's reflection in 2022.

In the summer and fall, the work of both CCAT and RJT focused on completing the ARS. Both groups contributed to the development of a plan to introduce the statement to the congregation. As of this writing, RJT has supported three sessions of "Growing Up White," in which a total of 28 participants shared their experiences of discovering their whiteness during the years of the Civil Rights movement and into current times. More of these kinds of sessions are already scheduled for January 2022, with hopes for additional gatherings in the spring.

Our primary focus in the fall was on preparing and leading a worship service on October 10. A number of RJT members either participated in the service itself and/or its planning. The team worked together beautifully in shaping and offering this meaningful time of worship, singing, giving/hearing "testimonies," and prayer.

Leadership of the team changed in the spring when Alice Martin-Adkins took a leave of absence. Dorri Sherrill stepped into this role temporarily when invited by Pastor Kim. Members of the team have remained faithful to the work of anti-racism. We hope to introduce the Anti-Racism Statement to the congregation in 2022.

The Racial Justice Team remains open to participation by members and friends of the church. There still is much work to do!



*Dorri Sherrill, Chair, Racial Justice Committee*

## 7. Benevolence/Service

- The Benevolence was budgeted \$8000 for 2021.
- Room in The Inn \$2500
- Pastor's Discretionary Fund \$1000
- Benevolence Discretionary Fund \$4500
- Room in the Inn funds were not spent and went back into the FCUCC General Fund.

Of the discretionary funds \$2000 went to Dr. Michelle Alvarez for mental health work with our local minority populations including LBGTQ+, \$1000 went to Sunrise Community for Recovery and Wellness, \$1000 went to Open Hearts Art Center which serves mentally and physically challenged adults, & \$500 went to the ABCCM safe and warm program.

The Benevolence Ministry also spends nonbudgeted funds or donated funds. Of these \$733.44 was spent on backpacks and school supplies which went to Ledgewood Apartments, Children First, and A Hope. \$325 went to YMI Cultural Center for 2 bricks. \$5726.06 was spent from the School/Food Ministry. Donations were made to ABCCM-clothing, Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries-food and clothing, Loving Food Re-sources-food, Senior Opportunity-food, St James AME Church Pantry-food, Ledgewood-clothing, refugees-clothing and household items, A Hope-clothing (adult diapers), Project Dignity-feminine hygiene items, Ministry of Hope-food for Women's Correctional Facility in Swannanoa (\$80 at Christmas). The long-standing Sacred Travel Scholarship Fund which hadn't been used for that purpose was completely spent this year with most of the money going to a school in Nicaragua, a portion going to support the Racial Justice Team, and a small portion of \$291.74 for the purchase of the above mentioned bricks.

Laundry Love continued its work donating transportation and monies for those in need of providing themselves and their families with clean laundry. FCUCC members and friends sponsored 30 children for Christmas through our partnership with Children First.



*Peggy Grant*  
*Chair of Benevolence Ministry*

## 8. Wellbeing

### Social Justice Arts Ministry

This ministry which highlights social justice themes has had three amazing exhibits at the Oak Street Gallery this year.



The first one in January highlighted Farhad Kanuga's dramatic photographs of the environments of people with mental disabilities. We had a virtual opening with Farhad and some excellent music centering around themes of mental illness. Umoja was the community organization that we partnered with for this show and Michael Hughes spoke at the opening and in worship about the excellent work Umoja is doing to heal people of color who have suffered trauma as a result of racism.

Our second exhibit in May premiered the art and photography of two artists who are Black: Heather Tolbot and Kai Lenzion. The art gallery was absolutely filled with their work which highlighted the impact of white supremacy on the Black community. Kai's protest photography and Heather's provocative acrylic paintings mesmerized all who saw them.

This exhibit had a live "pull-out-all-the-stops" opening on our church patio with music, delicious food, and highlighted by an unforgettable performance by Michael Hughes. This was attended by as many non FCUCC members as members. With the wind blowing through the trees, it was as if Spirit was truly moving amongst us!

The final exhibit of the year was the artwork of Jenny Pickens. Her colorful art was magical in our gallery, and we all enjoyed seeing her Afro-centric art and her images of memories of growing up as a Black child in Asheville. She also brought in her dolls, cards, candles, and journals. One passer-by just looking into our windows when her art was up said, "This is the most beautiful gallery I have seen in Asheville!"



*Mandy Kjellstrom*

### **9. Membership**

There are several facets to our Membership Team and with Covid-19, these facets were hard to keep polished.

- (1) The Welcoming Table, which was introduced in 2019, still welcomes folk into our midst, but is not steadily managed to make sure people have name tags and are invited to Friendship Time, or answer questions when necessary. Since we reopened, we have had many visitors decide to join our church.
- (2) Pew Pad Registration requires someone to keep red booklets filled with pew pads, pencils or pens, and prayer cards. In addition, the information needs to be gathered after worship, and shared with staff. Presently, Lynn Lewis and Anne Beggs have stepped forward to gather the forms, but we are still in need of a collator.
- (3) There are several other areas which could benefit from few volunteers. Please check in the Narthex or in the Newsletter for Membership Ministry positions.

Membership Statistics for 2021:

144 (As of January 2021)

## New members

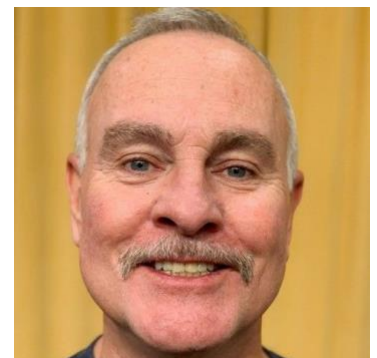
By Confession,	
Transfer, Confirmation	<u>+20</u>
	164
Resignations -	<u>-5</u>
	159
Deaths	<u>-3</u>
	156 (As of December 21, 2021)



*Loraine Tuenge, Membership Coordinator*

## **10. Deacons**

- Started Care Fund
- Welcomed John Mercer to Deacons
- Loss of Ellie and Carol from Deacons
- Updated Deacons Flock List several times due to loss or addition of church members
- Helped in addition of photos for Directory
- Helped Mr. Duin with greeting at the front door and handicap door



*Jim Canty, Head Deacon*

## 11. Building and Grounds Committee Report

The Building & Grounds Committee, usually comprised of three individuals, has been without members and leadership since the resignation of Committee Chair Noreen Bania back in July. However, Wes Heath has been serving as the Executive Board Liaison since that time and has been communicating with Building & Grounds Keeper Anthony Sumner each month to keep the Board up to date on all matters of importance. Wes will need to be replaced in that capacity in January, however, when he rotates off the Board. (He does not foresee any further involvement with the B&G Committee after the end of his term on January 23.)

Anthony and the Committee dealt with a number of major issues this year. These included the management of First Congregational's participation in the Code Purple program to house the homeless on sub-freezing nights for several months last winter; the purchase and installation of a significant upgrade to the Audio/Visual system in the sanctuary; the installation of city-mandated BFPs (backflow preventers) on the church plumbing system; repairs to the organ; repairs to portions of the roofs over the sanctuary and Education Building by Pisgah Roofing in October; repairs to the Handicapped Door near the elevator in October by ICI Door Control of Candler; and the purchase and installation of a new furnace for the first floor of the Education Building in November. (The upstairs furnace was replaced several years ago.) Also, our kitchen tenant, Asheville Pro Kitchen, donated a commercial freezer to us in June in exchange for one month's rent. He is also now renting some additional storage space from us on the first floor of the Education Building.



*Submitted by Westleigh Heath*

## 12. FCUCC Personnel Committee 2021 Annual Report

John Whitener, Mary Kancevitch and Bruce Holcombe served as your Personnel Committee (PC) during the past year. 2021 was another busy year with transitions of staff, periodic performance reviews and, of course, committee meetings.

Over the year the PC met with Pastor Kim to review her assessments of church operations and staff performance, discussing progress, issues and approaches needed to address any concerns. In addition to reviewing the performance of staff, the Personnel Committee in coordination with the

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Board, assisted in the Annual Review of Pastor Kim. Due to COVID restrictions, the congregational survey of the Senior Pastor was placed online and data collected using the online survey.

During the first months of 2021, the worship services continued on-line only, which proved time consuming for staff for some months. The hiring of a new audio/visual tech, Amanda McCauley, helped ease the workload of the staff, and we were able to bring live services from the sanctuary on YouTube.

We were able to hire a part-time organist/accompanist, Wayne Smith, and in August hired a Music Director, Chuck Taft. These two hires have been a blessing to our music program.

The Personnel Committee tried unsuccessfully to hire nursery workers. We conducted numerous interviews, but concluded that until children under age 5 can be vaccinated, we will not be able to staff the nursery.

The PC worked with the Finance Committee to make budget recommendations for FY 2022.



*John C. Whitener, Chair  
FCUCC Personnel Committee*