

Annual Reports

2013 Annual Report of the Conference Minister

Rev. Lynn Bujnak

The Vermont Conference:

“Equipping congregations for Christ’s ministry and mission today and tomorrow”

In the past year, your Vermont Conference staff, Board of Directors and Departments has used the above purpose statement as the guiding principle for all we do. To that end I would like to highlight a few concrete examples.

- **Year-long theme: Faith @ the Edges**
We have offered a variety of ways to help us talk together about living our faith at the edges instead of in the middle of our society. Many of our congregations have engaged in book studies, discussion groups, used the “banquet” of resources for Lent that was developed by the Department of Christian Education and attended one or more all-conference events.
- **Diana Butler Bass Conference**
Over 180 people registered for the day with this incredible American church historian who engaged us around “spiritual climate change.” Kudos to Jim Thomas the members of the Congregational Growth and Vitality Task Force for all their efforts to make this event a success!
- **Mission 4/1 Earth**
The conference provided support to our Department of Missions’ task force on environmental justice to encourage our participation in the UCC 4/1 Earth project during the Great Fifty Days of the Easter season. This included two day-long retreats.
- **Church Retreats and Workshops**
Jim, Pam and I have all led workshops or retreats in our local churches on subjects such as: congregational purpose and visioning, planning for vitality, stewardship that works, trends in faith formation/Christian education, and spiritual renewal.
- **Expansion of the Resource Center**
The Conference Resource Center has worked hard to broaden the resources available to our churches. In addition to adult, youth and children’s educational resources, we have beefed up books and materials in areas of congregational vitality and several social justice issues as well. If you haven’t browsed the online catalogue for a while, take a look. If you need suggestions, please call Sybil McShane who is always ready to help.
- **Completion of the Small Church Search and Call Resource**
While it has taken us longer than expected, the newly designed resource to assist our small, part-time churches with pastoral transitions is now finished. An initial training will be held in June with a more thorough training to follow in the fall.
- **217 Campaign**
Thanks to the joint efforts of the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors, a campaign was launched to seek \$217,000 in donations to celebrate the Vermont Conference’s 217 years of ministry. This money will enable us to pay back our endowment for the cost of retiring the mortgage on our conference office and jumpstart new initiatives of experimentation and vitality for the future. Please consider giving a gift in any multiple of \$217.00.
- **Conference Staff Presence**
Jim Thomas, Pam Lucas and I continue to make ourselves available as often as we can to preach or worship in our local congregations, to assist with Search and Call, to attend Association meetings in the spring and the fall, and to support the leaders and pastors of our conference with our time, prayers, energy, expertise and a listening ear. Please give us a call; we’d love to come to your church! And, none of us could do our work without the skill, expertise and steady presence of Lynn Thomas.

What’s Next?

- Work with UCC partners to create a program of **education and formation for licensed pastors** with a goal of beginning the program in 2014.

- Partner with the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont to offer **continuing education and training** for both clergy and lay leaders.
- **Identify Annual Theme** for 2014 along with suggested readings, speakers and other resources
- Form a task force to explore planting a **new faith community** that is intentionally designed without a building and targeting the population that does not attend traditional church.
- Encouraging and providing resources for **spiritual practices and faith formation**
- Continued support for **congregational vitality**

Together, may we continue to live out our faith by doing what God requires of us: doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God.

Thank you for letting me walk this journey with you! I feel so blessed to be your conference minister.

Associate Conference Minister for Search & Call and Small Church Ministry Rev. Pamela Y. Lucas

Sometimes I think...I hope...I pray that you and I, the Vermont Conference and our local churches and the United Church of Christ are like our ancestor Abraham – called by God to go out to a place where he was to receive an inheritance and he went out, not knowing where he was to go – but going anyway. Living by faith and not necessarily by sight!

Sometimes I think...I hope...I pray that all of us are like our ancestors, the disciples – called by God to go out to share the Good News of Jesus Christ – and they went out living by faith and not necessarily by sight!

In this time of uncertainty in our church we are tempted to stay stuck where we are rather than open the doors – called by God to walk into the future where God already has made a way even if we don't recognize it yet – even if we aren't sure where to go or how to do it – but going anyway. Living by faith even when we can't see the results...yet, if ever.

What an exciting time to be church! God never promised God's people 'success' as the world measures it. God promised God's presence in the in-between places where we try to find God's way forward instead of the world's way.

Our Conference Minister, Lynn Bujnak has outlined our work for the past year and our hopes for the next year. But I would witness to the life and energy in many of our churches where people are beginning to be less anxious about the future and more focused on praying and discovering what God might want to be up to in their lives together. I would witness to the life and energy in many of our churches where people are beginning to let go of old answers to old problems and start asking new questions about how to do ministry in new ways with new people.

I pray that as we follow Jesus we will become a brighter light to the world – a saltier salt of the earth – pointing the way to peace and justice for all peoples.

Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship, Church Vitality and Finance Jim Thomas

Change is Hard. Even Good Change.

Since Annual Meeting 2012 (a wonderfully affirming event for me, thank you) I've been living into my call as best I can by balancing the many facets of my position. Here is some of what I've been about:

- **Joining congregations** for Sunday worship, bringing a message about Stewardship or Vitality or the 21st Century Church, and many times staying after for a workshop with the congregation or its leadership
- **Leading church leadership retreats** on governance, strategic planning, stewardship, and visioning

- **Presenting local church workshops** on the topics above, plus narrative budgeting, planned giving, and capital campaigns
- **Participating in the Northeast Ecumenical Stewardship Council**, including planning for the Liberating Generosity event and presenting two workshops.
- **Support for the Conference Church Growth and Vitality Committee**, as they planned and led the April 2013 Diana Butler Bass event
- **Support to the Stewardship Department**, as they developed and began presenting an all new Stewardship/OCWM PowerPoint presentation to local churches
- **Support to the Conference Investment and Finance Committees** as they monitored our investments and developed our Conference budget
- **Fiscal Management of Conference Finances**, the day to day work of accounts receivable and payable, payroll, tax filings and donor acknowledgement
- **Assisted Churches in Transition** as they considered issues around properties, policies, and closings

This past year has seen an acceleration in the number of churches engaging in the conversation about what it means to 'be' church in the 21st century. We are getting unstuck – unstuck from the 1950's time warp we fell into – and are demonstrating a willingness to change not for change's sake, but because it will make an expression of the church of Jesus Christ relevant and participatory in your communities and the wider church.

But change is hard. It requires a gentle touch and an affirmation of the saints who came before us while acknowledging that what nurtures us may not be the best way to nurture those who will come after. And time is short to reach them. As Mike Piazza says, perhaps it's time to put down our bibs and reach for an apron. Our congregations have served us well, and now it's time to serve our congregations and our communities, preparing them for a future beyond us.

Do be in touch if your congregation wants to begin or further your work in these areas. I am eager to be with you and assist as you would find helpful.

Treasurer's Report 2013

David K. Damkot

It is my distinct pleasure to present to you my final Treasurer's Report. It has been an honor to serve on your finance committee for several years, and the past five years as Treasurer has been enlightening; including work on the investment committee and the Board of Directors. You have many dedicated, caring, and loving people serving the Vermont Conference, and the best of the best serve you and your churches in the Vermont Conference office as your dedicated staff: Lynn, Pam, Jim, Lynn, and Sybil. I salute them and I salute your Board of Directors.

Let us note the good news of finance as we proclaim the Good News of Christ. The financial books of the VT Conference are kept in clear and transparent manner and appropriate cross-checks are in place. In virtually all income and expenditures two sets of eyes review and then initials show approval of checks and deposits. My lay audits have consistently found transparency. All questions were answered and requested backup documentation was promptly provided to me.

Last year the delegates to the annual meeting voted to pay-off the mortgage on the VT Conference office by using funds from the unrestricted account. That has been done so we have no more mortgage payments. On the other hand, we have less money in the unrestricted account now to earn income. Paying off the mortgage used about \$155,000.

The VT Conference office is open with staff attending four days/week to reduce costs. It has been suggested to me this change is working well and provides somewhat greater face-to-face time for staff as they are on more similar schedules. The invested assets are gaining slowly as our economy improves, but as I noted we now have less base money with which to earn income since we paid off the mortgage.

Funding for all Departments is tight as our income continues to erode. It would be wonderful if we could see more income from Our Church's Wider Mission, Friends of the VT Conference, and the Celebrate 217 campaign. We have lofty covenantal words, but precious few churches actually fulfill that commitment.

Please indulge me as I share a few numbers with you. Celebrate 217 campaign was initiated to raise as much money as possible to replace, and hopefully to exceed, the \$155,000 needed for mortgage payoff—we donated just over \$10,000 so far. Friends of the VT Conference was, and is, an effort to raise personal gifts to the VT Conference, with the hope it would be able to fill budget holes and would not be shared with the National Headquarters—during 2012 and so far in 2013 it has raised just a little over \$22,000.

Our Church's Wider Mission is a large portion of our budget. Each year we have voted that our churches could/should contribute 10% of their operating budget to the VT Conference and then the VT Conference would pass through a large portion of that to National Headquarters. The combined operating budgets of our churches are approximately \$12.7 M. Our Covenantal commitment would thus raise \$1.27 M—our churches actually gave this past year \$398,600. We pass through to National Headquarters for missions and other work just 35% of that figure as we cannot afford the 45% or 50% we have done in the past. **WOULDN'T IT BE AMAZING IF WE ACTUALLY HONORED OUR VOTED COMMITMENT???? WHAT COULD WE ACCOMPLISH?**

Can we, will we, change our commitments? Can we, will we, increase our gifts to match our vote? Can we, will we, remain covenantal through our intertwined relationships? Pastors, Delegates, will we challenge our churches and friends?

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you as your Treasurer. It has been an honor.

Board of Directors

Rev. Amy Pitton-Chair

While I have been a member of the Board of Directors, on and off, for more than 10 years, this is the first year I have had the privilege to lead this august group as Chair. I am humbled and grateful that the Board put its trust in me, and I must say, I have learned a lot, as well as been able to hone my "chairing" skills.

It has been a somewhat uncertain year for the Board, mostly because we had some struggles with filling three vacated positions on the Board, those of the Vice Moderator, and members from the Champlain and Windham-Union Associations. As a result, there were more meetings than I would have liked where we barely made it to our required quorum of 7 attendees, and one meeting where we did not achieve the quorum. However, at our April meeting we were able to celebrate the election of a new Vice- Moderator in Rona Kinsley, as well as the election of Wendy Farber from the Champlain Association and Anne Miller from the Windham Union Association, and we are now at full strength. I regret that the Department of Christian Education has had to go through most of this year without a liaison because of the vacancies, and I apologize for that void. I trust that that position will be filled by the time of the 2013 Annual Meeting.

Over the course of the year, the Board has had two foci. The first is the expected job of the Board, which is the general control, and management of the affairs of the Conference. We have received reports from our staff and departments, we have carefully monitored the financial position of the Conference, and we have dealt with other issues, such as updating the Personnel Policies, as they have arisen. We had the honor of welcoming Rev. Geoffrey Black, Executive Minister of the UCC, as a guest at our November meeting. We have also had several creative and thoughtful sessions as we have sought to discern a vision and priorities for the Conference. To that end, at the April meeting, the Board determined three priorities:

1. The financial health of conference
2. Equipping our faith communities to live courageously outside their existing boundaries
3. Plant a faith community (without a building)

We believe that these priorities will allow us to begin to meet the enormous challenges that lie ahead of us in the Vermont Conference. We know that we are living in formidable times as the church, and you can be assured that the Board of Directors is prayerfully seeking effective ways of navigating the path ahead.

That discernment has been helped along by the second focus that the Board has had this year, that of reading two books together and discussing them. The first book we read was Christianity After Religion, by Diana Butler Bass. We found this book to be helpful in understanding the place of the church in our society today, and the need to be courageous as well as flexible as we look to the future. We also read Robin Meyer's book, The Underground Church, which continued the conversations that Butler's book began. While none of us know what the future of organized religion in the United States is going to look like, I can say with confidence that your Board of Directors and staff are doing everything that they can to imagine, discern, and dare to meet whatever lies ahead.

I want to conclude by recognizing the wonderfully competent staff of the Conference. We are so fortunate to be led by the Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak, our Conference Minister. Lynn possesses the ability to strike a balance between honoring where the church has been while still being able to encourage us into an unknown future. Rev. Pam Lucas, Associate Conference Minister, has a calm and deeply faithful presence that is grounding and reassuring for the departments and churches with whom she works. Jim Thomas, Associate Conference Minister, is endlessly curious and creative about new ways to meet the challenges that lie ahead, both with the finances of the Conference and with church growth and vitality. Lynn Thomas, with her well-honed organizational skills, keeps the Conference Office, as well as Placement and the Annual Meeting Committee, on track. Sybil McShane has most ably met the challenge of providing our electronic communications, as well as keeping our Resource Center in good order. I am especially grateful for all the ways that they have enabled me to do my work as Board Chair. Thank you to all of them for jobs well done!

Department of Church & Ministry

David Durfee-Chair

The Department takes the Conference's Mission Statement, "Equipping congregations for Christ's ministry and mission seriously." That is the task of any Department, and, therefore of any committee within it. "Equipping" is an interesting word. It doesn't mean doing for churches what they can do for themselves, but helping provide ideas, training, and leaders they need to be able to do effective ministry and mission themselves. The same equipping caveat applies to the Department's relationship with its committees. Where, as in the case of Ministerial Standing and Standards, Convocation, and Church Growth and Vitality, the committee has shown itself effective in working to equip churches, the Department keeps itself interested and available but does not interfere. These might be called Vital Committees, a parallel to the Vital Churches leg in the Board of Directors famous three-legged stool.

Further using the three-legged stool metaphor, the Department found that it also had Legacy Committees. The Continuing Education Committee had been a valuable asset at a time when there were few convenient places for Pastors to take courses. There are many more resources now, including ones just an electronic click away. For the last few years the Staff had been taking what action was necessary to fill special needs, not the Committee. The Committee on Healing Ministry, for more than 20 years, enthusiastically practiced and promoted sacred healing. More recently, however, it had found it more and more difficult to agree on priorities. Its effectiveness as a group declined. The Women's Fellowship had a much longer history, beginning when it was needed to help women get seats at the male dominated church leadership tables. Needless to say, things have changed. It was originally independent from but parallel to the Conference, not a segment of it. It decided that it still should be so. These three committees were removed from the Department with thanks for all that they had done.

Finally, there are Emerging Department Entities. There had been a Ministerial Compensation Committee with members chosen for a full-year term to do a single job which usually took less than a month. It is not an efficient way to use scarce volunteer power. Instead of that Committee the Department Council, in the spring, asks three of its members to form a group to do the job – with the ever-capable assistance of Jim Thomas – and then ends the group. A small number of lay persons, gathered by Pam Lucas, attended ministerial Boundary Awareness Training and recognized the need to train lay leaders in churches. The group then, meeting with Pam, developed a

workshop including not only the topic of pastor-lay member boundaries but also those of lay to lay and protection of the most vulnerable. The Department Council has agreed to sponsor this. It will hold a full day training workshop in September for association leaders and potential association trainers to work with lay leaders of local churches. Also emerging slowly is the new Committee on Church Standing and Standards voted into existence at the 2012 Annual Meeting. It has been snowed out in its first two attempts to get together. But it will emerge.

Department of Mission

Jeanne Zammataro-Chair

Attached are the reports of the various committees of the Department of Mission. The following consists of the highlights of activities within the DOM

Responding to the United Church of Christ's Easter season environmental mission, 4/1 the earth, DOM created a 4/1 the earth task force to bring resources and inspiration to Vermont churches to carry out environmental ministries. This was a great example of tying in all levels of the UCC, national, conference, association and local church. The task force met with Jim Deming, the UCC's minister for environmental justice to formulate plans, including a kick off retreat and a follow up retreat led by Jim that explored how to build a project into a movement. Through the efforts of the Task force, the UCC named Guilford Community Church's tree planting program in Kenya as one of the tree planting programs to participate in the UCC's national tree planting fund raising drive.

Each year, the Just Peace Advocates Committee produces the Peacemakers' Breakfast at the Conferences' Annual Meeting. It is one of the most popular events of Annual Meeting, and provides attendees a chance to present and learn about mission projects in churches throughout Vermont. New this year, Peacemakers' Breakfast will be recorded and made available to congregations on DVD. Also new this year, once a month JPA is publishing "Peacemaker's Pulpit" in E-KIT. "Peacemaker's Pulpit" is a series of messages addressing peace and justice issues and encouraging congregations to engage in Just Peace initiatives. JPA is also offering congregations and associations a four session series, "Building Peace One Person at a Time" led by Betty Edson. And available through the Conference office is JPA's Just Peace Resource Notebook, which includes resolutions, theological reflections, group study guides, and many examples of just peace activities.

Global Ministries is inviting churches with active global ministries to partner with neighboring smaller churches to provide guidance to those churches or to involve those other churches in their own projects. An example of such partnering is Guilford Community Church's recent youth tree planting trip to Kenya that included youth from neighboring UCC churches. Additionally, the DOM is considering other opportunities for VTCUCC churches to participate in Global Ministries' projects through the national setting of the UCC.

The DOM continues its financial support of Vermont Low Income Advocacy, the only lobbyist for poor Vermonters, and Judi Joy is the DOM's new liaison to VLIAC. Through Judi's efforts, DOM and VLIAC are working together more closely. For example, VLIAC has included the Blue Spruce House project, an interest of DOM, as one of its legislative priorities. Additionally, VLIAC will be a co-presenter at a workshop at this year's Annual Meeting with Vermont Interfaith Action, Two Effective Approaches to Addressing Social Justice Issues. Finally, DOM supported VLIAC's Neighbor In Need grant request, as it did for the NIN grant requests of Vermont Works for Women and the Burlington Dismas House.

The Prison Justice Committee continues to make churches and individuals aware of opportunities for prison ministries in its various forms. PJC has added stories of prison ministries to its page on the Conference's website and has publicized the prison ministries of a number of churches in E-KIT.

Last, but not least, the Summer Lunch Program Committee provided a total of \$3,400 in grants to 19 church sponsored summer lunch programs in 2012 in amounts ranging from \$150 to \$200. These summer lunch programs are a huge help to families with school age children who receive free or reduced lunches during the school year, but not during the summer.

Disaster Response Team

Suzanna Griefen-Chair

This has been an organizing year for the Disaster Response Team formed by Resolution at the Annual Meeting 2012. We spent some time clarifying what we could do effectively. We have represented the VT Conference on the VT steering Committee of Volunteer Organizations Assisting in Disaster (VTVOAD), and through them were able to help match resources to need in the state.

We have assisted in-state and out-of-state UCC groups and individuals who came or will come to assist in response and recovery, acting as an interface for volunteer groups and the local Long Term Recovery Committees. We have encouraged churches to sign-up as hosts for visiting work groups and have been gratified by the eight churches who have volunteered. Those who have hosted have found it a meaningful ministry, and we hope more churches will volunteer to host work groups so that when another disaster hits, we will not have to turn away for lack of housing volunteer groups eager to help, as we did immediately after Irene.

One problem we initially encountered was the feeling that host churches would have to provide showering facilities; but we soon learned that other community facilities were available (schools, health clubs, town facilities.) We have developed resource material for local churches and planned the Disaster Response workshop and resource table for annual meeting 2013. We helped collect 38 Clean-Up Buckets and eight cartons Hygiene and School Kits and transport them to CWS in Ludlow MA. We are preparing a traveling worship service and workshop on disaster preparedness to go to local churches and an on-line resource notebook. We are in the process of trying to identify a contact person in each congregation who will be a liaison to our committee. We have published disaster training opportunities in E-Kit and have kept in close touch with the National Disaster Ministries office.

Seeking to be geographically representative of the VT Conference, we have met primarily by conference call. Recognizing the many ways in which we might be more helpful, and knowing the limits of our time and talents, we applied for a FEMA Community Resilience Innovation Challenge Grant to fund a part-time Disaster Assistance Resource person for the conference, but did not receive the grant.

This spring, we were delighted to have Regina Cooper, MPH, member of the Hartland Church and Vermont Department of Health Emergency Preparedness Specialist offer to share her expertise with the committee. Our primary focus now is to help the conference and local churches be prepared to respond quickly and effectively the next time disaster comes our way. We have learned a lot. Our hope is that we will be an effective standing committee, ready to be of service in time of need. We would be glad to have you join us.

Suzanna Griefen, Out-going Chair

Peter Plagge, Sandra Daly, Deborah Adams, Daun Smith, Chris Southworth, Muriel Roth, Bess Richardson

Global Ministries Committee

Members, Advisors, and Consultants: Dr. Dorothy B. Keller and Dr. Robert S. Keller (Dee and Bob), Co-chairs; Rev. Deborah Adams, Rev. Adrienne Carr, Rev. Jordan (Skip) Dickinson, Rev. Dr. Mary Hawkes, Ms. Gail Hurd, Ms. Theresa Lever, Rev. Joan O’Gorman, and Pastor Lise Sparrow.

The mission of the Global Ministries Committee is to support and help the Vermont Conference, UCC, and Vermont UCC Churches to participate in the world wide missions of the Common Global Ministries Board. The mission is also to encourage churches in whatever unique program of international involvement and service they might feel called to develop.

Continuing focus areas include: The resolutions to study Islam and to further the Charter of Compassion continue to be important mission study and action programs. (1) The video series on Islam by leading educator, John Esposito, (available in the Conference office) and his book, “What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam”, (currently the study book for Adult Ed at Centre Congregational Church) are excellent resources. (2) Karen Armstrong’s book “Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life” is a good study tool in developing insights and behavior for compassionate problem solving and living.

Current efforts in mission include: Youth/adult trips to several parts of the globe have brought connections and energy in mission to several churches. The Guilford Community Church, UCC took youth to Kenya related to

orphanage contacts and tree planting. Centre Congregational Church youth went to El Salvador to visit young people in their partner church, and to study non-violent communication. Please let us know of other youth/adult mission trips

Future directions which we may add to the above focus areas are:

1. Mission work related to environmental issues.
2. Food and agricultural justice missions. A very good video program on the problems of agribusiness monopolies of all seeds is a documentary, "Bitter Seeds", about the plight of small farmers in India, an increasing number of who commit suicide when they cannot pay for the extra cost of the often genetically modified seeds, and the extra fertilizer and herbicides they require. The work of the Asian Rural Institute in Japan is another excellent focus for study, support and action. (Contact the Rev. Mary Hawkes and the Rev. Skip Dickinson about this work.)

The Conference DOM is encouraging the larger churches of Vermont, or those churches of any size with strong mission programs, to invite persons from smaller churches in their areas to participate in whatever aspect of their mission program they identify. In this way churches can partner together to extend the reach and hopefully the effectiveness and joy of their mission work. Please contact Dee and Bob Keller if you are willing to participate in this effort.

Just Peace Advocates Report

Betty Edson and Theresa Lever

As a committee of the Department of Mission, we concern ourselves with following the non-violent way Jesus modeled for us, in matters of peace and justice. We seek to assist the Conference in being a witness for justice and peace, and to resource local churches and Associations in their efforts to increase peace and justice in the world.

Just Peace Advocates (JPA) works every year on Annual Meeting's Peacemakers' Breakfast and supports the Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council by organizing the Legislative Day and Legislative Dinner. A new project this year is the Peacemaker's Pulpit, a justice and peace message published monthly in e-KIT. These pieces reflect the opinion of the writer and attempt to address current peace and justice issues and provide encouragement for our congregations to engage in Just Peace activities.

The 2011 resolution reaffirming the Vermont Conference's Just Peace identity requires the Department of Mission to resource Associations and local churches. In that regard, the JPA has three things to offer. The first is a one-page document entitled "Engaging in Just Peace Activities," which demonstrates how churches can address the justice issues related to their specific mission and charity work. The second is a comprehensive Just Peace Resource Notebook, which includes resolutions, theological reflections, group study guides, and many examples of just peace activities. Our third offering comes out of Betty Edson's participation in the National Peace Academy's Peace-Building Peace-Learning Intensive. She has created a four-session series, entitled "Building Peace One Person At A Time," which she is offering to lead in churches and Associations. The series is based on Betty's belief that "it ain't gonna happen" if we individuals are not peaceful within, as well as actively involved "without."

We have arranged to share these resources at Association meetings this year and to encourage churches to use them to help the Conference live into its Just Peace identity.

As our Statement of Faith proclaims, may God continue to give us courage in the struggle for justice and peace.

Prison Justice Committee Report

The Prison Justice Committee continues to make churches and individuals aware of opportunities for prison ministries in its various forms. PJC has added stories of prison ministries to its page on the Conference's

website and has publicized the prison ministries of a number of churches in E-KIT. Prison ministries have a wide range of activities as illustrated by the following examples:

1. Camp Agape—A camp for children who have at least one parent who is or has been under Department of Corrections supervision. Opportunities include financial contributions, contributions of items for campers' backpacks, being on staff and volunteering for a day to help with activities such as fishing. UCCers have recently served as camp chaplain and counselor to the counselors.
2. Dismas House—Currently, there are three Dismas Houses in Burlington, Winooski and Rutland, with a fourth planned near White River Junction. Dismas House is transitional housing for furloughed individuals that seeks to reconcile them to society and society to them. Many churches in Vermont support a Dismas House with financial contributions and/or members and friends who cook and eat the evening meal with residents.
3. Circles of Support and Accountability—Volunteers serve for a year on a COSA to provide support to a recently furloughed individual.
4. DOC facilities—Volunteers provide traditional church activities, including leading Bible study and worship. Other opportunities exist such as music lessons (currently two persons from the VTCUCC provide keyboard and guitar lessons), hospice chaplaincy and bereavement support and supervising a chess club.
5. Sisters of Mercy/Vermont Works for Women offer an opportunity to mentor women leaving incarceration.
6. Blue Spruce House-- A proposed holistic program for women either being released from prison, or in lieu of prison. Blue Spruce would provide a safe place to live, as well as mental health and substance abuse treatment, education, life skills, employment and other programs. Currently, volunteers have been readying Blue Spruce for occupancy, and when Blue Spruce is operational, there will be volunteer opportunities to engage with the women living there.

Vermont Mission 4/1 Earth Task Force

Fred Taylor-Chair

Mission 4/1 Earth is a project of the national UCC to highlight Earth Care during the 50 days of Easter this year. The program focuses on three goals: Power Down, Green Up and Shout Out, to encourage congregations to 1) engage in service projects on behalf of the Earth, 2) plant trees in our home communities and around the world, and 3) write letters of advocacy on environmental issues. Vermont's Mission 4/1 Earth project began well before the April 1 start-date, when the Department of Missions appointed a task force around the beginning of the year: Fred Taylor, chair, from Dummerston UCC; Judi Joy from Bethany UCC Montpelier, and Andy Nagy-Benson, pastor of UCC Middlebury. The task force met with Jim Deming, the Environmental Justice coordinator of the national UCC to develop a strategy for supporting and inspiring Vermont congregations in the Mission 4/1 Earth project. Jim encouraged us to build on the many strengths and unique qualities of Vermont culture and congregations, to develop our own "home-grown" projects to maximize participation. Among other projects with a Vermont focus, we decided to highlight the Kenya tree planting project that the Guilford Community Church has been developing for years, working with Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement.

The task force decided to make central in our efforts a series of retreats for clergy and lay leaders in the state, to give them a chance to explore overall perspectives on environmental stewardship and its importance, and to share ideas about particular ideas of projects for implementation. The first retreat was held at Bethany Church in Randolph on March 7, with approximately 30 people attending. The program for the day featured:

- Worship focused around environmental themes, as model and inspiration for liturgies during 4/1 Earth;
- a keynote presentation by Sister Bernadette Bostwick of the Green Mountain Monastery; a panel featuring Bill Fifield from Middlebury UCC, Lise Sparrow from Guilford Community Church, and Betsy Hardy from Vermont Interfaith power and Light.
- A brainstorming session to share what our congregations have already been doing, and explore new resources/ideas for programs, including curricula for adult and youth Religious Education; tree planting in Kenya; and the Carbon Fast.

- Clips of films for programs to inspire discussions: “Tipping Point,” about the Tar Sands, and “Taking Root: the Story of Wangari Maathai.”

The second retreat took place on May 9, also at Bethany Church in Randolph, with 25 people attending. Jim Deming facilitated an exciting discussion that included the following:

- Sharing experiences from 4/1 Earth: what worked for our communities and how can we build on success?
- Reflection on the moral call to action on climate change and other environmental issues: how can our faith and our theology continue to inform our activism and advocacy? Jim presented five themes of theological and Biblical reflection to help ground our work: Creation, Humility, Responsibility, Justice and Community.
- Discussion of how to keep our momentum going, to “develop the project into a movement”: How do we expand beyond our doors – reaching out to the environmentally unconverted; how do we build a state-wide, even national coalition of UCC churches committed to Earth care.

By all reports, the Fifty Days of Easter have been active and exciting for Vermont Congregations. Here are just a few of the featured events and projects:

- Middlebury UCC has collected \$600 for the planting of 600 trees in Kenya. They also plan to complete 2,000 hours of service, through Green-up Day, work on the town trail, and a week-long project for Hurricane Sandy relief by the high school youth group: the youth group has issued a challenge to the adults to match their 1,000 hours of service.
- Bethany UCC Montpelier had a “Service of Service” on May 5, in which, among other things, they wrote approximately 100 advocacy letters, and children wrote poems that they posted in the park.
- First Church in Burlington reports 825 hours of service, 60 Trees, and 37 letters.

The minister's wife made a huge banner that's placed in the midway entrance. She adds leaves (hours), flowers (trees planted) and birds (letter written) to the banner each week based on reported accomplishments through the time cards which are handed in in the collection plate each week.

- Dummerston UCC celebrated Earth Sabbath on April 21, with a service which included poems, songs and readings; and an Earth Day Energy fair that included exhibits on the Vermont Home Energy Challenge, and letter writing in response to the Tar Sands Keystone XL Pipeline.

The program has generated a great deal of interest in Vermont UCC congregations, and there was a strong sentiment expressed at the second retreat that this is a program that will be important to continue in the future, with support both from the conference (which has already written it into next year's budget) and the national office. We are grateful for all the support of the Conference and the Department of Missions in this venture, and look forward to continuing in this important work.

Summer Lunch Grant Committee

Mary Lou DeCosta and Grace Cleary

Our 7 Goals for 2012 were all met or exceeded. The number of requesters went from seventeen in 2011 to nineteen in 2012. Weekly articles were published in E-kit encouraging people to apply. Helpful hints were also published, as well as stories of how different congregations were meeting the summer hunger needs in their communities.

Nineteen churches received grants totaling \$3400.

Summer Lunch Grants - Vermont Conference DOM 2012

CHURCHES RECEIVING GRANTS	AMOUNT
United Church of Bellows Falls	150
Centre Congregational Brattleboro	180
United Church of Chelsea	200
Malletts Bay CCUCC, Colchester	200
United Church of Dorset UCC	150
Dummerston Congregational Church	200
Federated Church of E. Arlington	200
Congregational Church of Middlebury	180
United Church of Northfield	180
Pittsford Congregational Church	180

First Congregational Church Springfield	180
Richmond Congregational Church	180
Congregational Church of Rupert	180
Christ's Church - Saxton's River	200
Sharon Congregational Church	180
Congregational Church of South Hero	150
United Church of Underhill	180
Williston Federated Church	180
Windham Congregational Church	150

Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council (VLIAC)

Judi Joy, UCC Representative on the VLIAC Board of Directors.

“Celebrating 41 years of representing low income Vermonters”

VLIAC is committed to empowering the poor to speak for themselves, and to speak for those who cannot. VLIAC believes that it is our responsibility to bring the needs of low income Vermonters to the forefront of the Legislative agenda!

The VTUCC is a major supporter of VLIAC and its representative to the Legislature, Karen Moran Lafayette. The VLIAC Board of Directors meets at least twice a month, beginning in September to hear from organizations who work on behalf of low income Vermonters. They let us know what they are doing and ask for our support in the Legislature. Some examples are: Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition, Vermont Center for Independent Living, Vermont Legal Aid, and Vermont Childhood Poverty Council. We heard about issues such as weatherization, fuel, healthcare, nutrition, childcare, mental and developmental health, substance abuse and micro-business development, among many others. We then decide on our Legislative Priorities. This has been an extremely difficult year for low income people with programs being cut, and benefits reduced. It is more necessary now than ever before to provide witness for low income people and Karen has been working tirelessly to be a voice for the low income people of Vermont.

Last fall she traveled to the VTUCC Conference Center in Randolph to meet with some representatives from the Board of Missions and at that meeting we got an overview of what VLIAC does and Karen agreed to do a workshop at the annual Meeting in June.

Karen applied for and received a “Neighbors in Need” Grant for \$1000 which is being used to set up a website and enhance communication. We greatly appreciated the grant and maybe VLIAC won’t be such a well-kept secret in the future.

Each fall we hold an Advocate Dinner, at Bethany UCC Church in Montpelier, at which advocates, Legislators, church members and the public can share a wonderful meal, ideas and sometimes even a song or two.

On March 15th we gathered at the State House for VLIAC’s Annual Legislative Day. After devotions by UCC Minister, Rev. Mark Pitton, we were introduced on the House Floor and then were free to sit in on sessions, meet with Legislators or learn more about the work of the CAP agencies. At noon we enjoyed bag lunches, provided by the Vermont Conference Board of Missions, and prepared by a few folks from Bethany Church, after which we heard a number of presentations by Legislators and other speakers which Karen had arranged.

VLIAC’s 2013 Legislative Priorities have been set and will be mailed out, following a big envelope-stuffing day on April 29th.

A workshop is being co-planned by Karen Lafayette and Rev. Deb Ingram, Executive Director of Vermont Interfaith Action and will be presented at the Annual Meeting in June. It should help us learn about how advocacy and political action can work together for the good of those in need.

Department of Christian Education

Rev. Sandy Daly-Chair

This year we continued to consider how to support our goals, as stated below:

Strengthen the Resource Center – Our resource librarian, Sybil McShane does an amazing job of keeping our resources organized and current. She is very helpful in responding to specific requests by phone, email or a visit to the resource center. Other important means of sharing CE information and resources are the weekly E-Kit, quarterly (CE) E-Link and the online resource center catalog. The CE Dept. has a representative to a separate committee focused on exploring ways of connecting our local churches with the many wonderful resources available.

Maintain our Covenantal Partnerships –

New England Association of Church Educators - We continue our connection with NEAUCE through dues and scholarships for participation in their annual conference in Craigville, MA. This year's theme is "***Vibrant Colors of Faith***" with presenter John Roberto and worship leader Rev. Adele Crawford. Usually about 20 Vermont educators attend.

Community of Practice - We continue to support the group in the Essex Junction area and hope to initiate more "COPs" around the state. These are cluster groups of Christian educators who can exchange ideas, and provide support and encouragement to one another. We are also exploring the possibility of a "virtual" Community of Practice through Facebook.

Provide Quality CE Programs and Activities for Adults and Youth in Vermont Conference

Exploring Christian Education in the Vermont Conference - We have developed phone interview questionnaires to assess both what is currently happening in our conference with regard to Christian Education and to better understand some of the needs and how we might respond to those needs. These interviews have been conducted throughout the year and will continue, with the hope of reaching every church.

Faith at the Edges Lenten Study – At the request of the Board of Directors, the CE Dept. took this 2013 theme and brought together resources and ideas for churches to use during Lent. These were available through E-Kit, (CE) E-Link, at the resource center and upon request.

National Youth Event 2012 ("Imagine") - July 10-13 at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN. We were happy to provide scholarships for up to 20 of our youths to come together with others from around the country to learn and experience spiritual growth and leadership formation.

Celia Whittler Events ("Together We Can" for youth and "Table Talk" for women) Friday Oct 5-6, 2012 were successful and engaging events co-sponsored by the Community of Practice and CE Dept. and hosted by the Barre Cong. Church.

VAST (Vermont Academy for Spiritual Training) seeks to offer adults an opportunity to deepen their spiritual journey and sense of call through classes on biblical studies and the foundations for ministry. This year classes were offered in Manchester and Norwich. Next year will be the third and final year of this graduating class, and the last year that the program will be offered in this format. A focus committee is exploring different models of online learning, and the possibility of two tracks: one for personal enrichment and one as preparation for licensed ministry.

Strengthen our Commitment to Outdoor Ministry and Covenant Hills

NOMA (National Outdoor Ministries Association) We continue our membership in NOMA with Ryan Gackenheimer as our rep. This serves as a source of information and support for outdoor ministry. Christian Camping experiences are so often life-changing in a young person's faith formation, so the greatest portion of our CE budget supports this through our partnership with United Methodist Church at Covenant Hills Campground.

Covenant Hills Campground - members of our department serve on the board and participate as leaders, this year inviting Dave MacGowen from the CHC Board of Directors to meet with us, discuss statistics, finances, operational structure and ways of promoting more participation of our UCC children and youth. Another camping

partnership we *Camp Agape* - is a program in partnership with the Episcopal Dioceses of Vermont for children with incarcerated parents.

Looking forward – We continue to learn from the UCC Report “Faith Formation Findings” and plan to find ways of implementing and sharing these learnings. The Diana Butler bass event “Christianity After Religion” has given us insights and a common language for discussion the future of the church. We are working on the possibility of a youth event for late fall 2013 and will continue to reach out to local educators in support - welcoming ideas, needs, and hopes. I’d like to thank those who have served on the department and are now moving on, as well as those who plan to continue.

Covenant Hills Christian Camp 2012 Annual Report

Dave MacGowan-Chair

Covenant Hills Board of Directors
January 20, 2013

Mission Statement

“The mission of Covenant Hills Christian Camp is to provide experiences which enable people of all ages to grow in their awareness of and response to God as they live in Christian community and in harmony with God’s creation.”

Covenant Hills continues to fulfill its mission with joy. Camper numbers were up in summer 2012, reversing a 10-year decline (complete numbers are available at the end of this report). A diverse set of camp offerings offered a range of experiences for all ages of campers. Our partnership with Camp Agape continues to provide opportunities for children with an incarcerated parent. Camp also partnered with Central Vermont Mission to host several mission groups in Vermont to help repair the damage caused by Hurricane Irene. Our Executive Director, Kelley Alderman, with Todd Marlow filling in for several weeks, provided strong leadership for our staff and welcome to campers and volunteers. The summer staff was excellent, enthusiastic and willing to take on many roles. Our registrar, Dora Klofach, continues her tireless work enrolling campers. Dora also applies for and receives federal subsidies for our summer food program. Volunteers of all types are vital to this mission: board members, weekly directors and counselors and maintenance helpers are just some of all who chip in to make camp go.

The New England Conference UMC and the Vermont Conference UCC are the bedrock from which camp springs. Rev. James McPhee, Director of Connectional Ministries for the NEUMC, is the supervisor of our Executive Director, our prime contact with the New England conference, and a supporter of and advisor to camp. NEUMC provides significant financial support to Covenant Hills. The Vermont Conference UCC, through its Department of Christian Education, also provides significant annual funding. UMC and UCC churches are our network to recruit campers, volunteers, and additional financial support.

The Board of Directors of Covenant Hills partners with the Executive Director to oversee the operations of the camp. The Board has had a busy year, to say the least. Board restructuring was undertaken this year under the guidance of Barb Lemmel, a member of the New England Parish Consultant Network. The result of restructuring was a better understanding of the role and practices of the Board, and a name change. The old “Executive Committee” has now become the Board of Directors. The “Executive Committee,” had replaced the long time supervising group called the “Site” Committee” when Vermont moved from the Troy Conference UMC to the New England Conference UMC in 2008.

The BOD and its sub-committees now look like this:

Board of Directors
David MacGowan, Chair
Rev. David Murphy, Secretary
Bill Backhaus, Chair, Promotions
David Blanshine, Chair, Site
Leslie Desrosiers, Chair, Program. Camp Agape liaison
Rev. Ryan Gackenheimer, Co-Chair, Governance

Vivian Marlow, Chair, Personnel
 Rev. Kirk Thompson, Co-Chair, Governance
 Laurie Chipman, Program
 Lindsay Townsend, At-large

Sub-committees:

Governance Personnel Program Promotions Site

In 2012, Governance began the process of clarifying and formalizing the functions of the Board of Directors. Our Personnel committee hired the summer staff, reviewed their performance, and is currently in the process of hiring staff for summer 2013. The Program committee reviewed this past summers' program, designed this coming summer program, and working in conjunction with the Promotions committee, created and published the camp brochure. Aside from its role creating the brochure, the Promotions committee distributed the brochure, advertised, conducted church visits, and publishes a monthly camp newsletter. The Site Committee continues its vital role in opening, closing, and maintaining our beautiful site and buildings.

After two years of steadfast service to camp, Kelley Alderman resigned this past fall. The Board has begun, in conjunction with the NEUMC, a search for a new Executive Director. The job description has been modified and the position will be advertised soon. Todd Marlow is serving as the interim Executive Director until the new ED is hired. The Board is also undergoing, along with the four other New England UMC Camp and Retreat Centers, a review of our mission and practices with the consultant group "Run River." This work will be concluded and recommendations made in the fall of 2013.

Financially, our ED continues to balance our annual budget. The Covenant Hills budget is composed of two parts: camper fees and financial support. In very approximate terms, only about half of the funds needed to operate camp are received from camper fees. The sub-cost pricing of our camps is intentional. We keep costs low to keep our experience available to all. Direct conference financial support, gifts from foundations, donations from churches and individuals, and thousands of hours of volunteer work fill the gap between what we charge and what it costs.

We are, and have been, concerned about our camper numbers. Our mission statement makes our goal clear, our capacity to host more campers exists, and therefore our goal is to fill the camp to capacity. The Board understands that reaching this goal requires a broad and sustained effort to connect with the two conferences, their churches, and their children. We invite and welcome all to join us to support and expand the vital mission of Covenant Hills. I would be happy to talk to you about how you can get involved. You can reach me with the contact information listed below. Thanks for reading!

The chart below shows the annual camper visits for the past ten years, broken down by denomination.

	<u>UCC</u>	<u>UMC</u>	<u>UMC/UCC</u>	<u>Total Campers</u>
2012	61	102	2	239
2011	69	69	10	216
2010	65	74	10	225
2009	90	77	6	241
2008	77	85	1	247
2007	99	108	5	290
2006	122	101	9	311
2005	128	87	5	285
2004	146	95	8	326
2003	162	136	4	405

Stewardship Department Report

Rev. Mary Abbott-Co-Chair

The Stewardship Department has thoroughly adopted the focus of the new Conference mission statement – equipping churches for mission and ministry. We developed and began presenting a program that demystifies money in the church, helping church members learn to talk in new ways about money and mission in the congregation. This presentation, “Generosity: Changing Lives,” has now been seen in 8 churches in the last year, and the response in those congregations has been overwhelmingly positive, increasing energy for the church’s ministries, and increasing both pledging amounts and total number of pledging units. We hope to take the presentation to more churches in the year ahead – please talk with Jim Thomas, Lucia Jackson, or Mary Nelson Abbott if you are interested in bringing us to your congregation. A version of this presentation, using the Conference budget, will be given at this year’s Annual Meeting, so please come check it out!

The Stewardship Department, through the work of the Finance Committee, has also worked to establish greater transparency with the Conference budget. Individual dollar amounts have not changed significantly, but the way the budget line items are presented is now more in line with current Conference operations (e.g.: Conference office expenses were once listed under the Stewardship Department, but are now listed under a separate line item for the Conference Office, more clearly reflecting the Office’s usefulness to the whole Conference, not just to the Stewardship Department).

Many thanks are due to the members of the Stewardship Department: Lucia Jackson and Mary Nelson Abbott, co-chairs; Chuck Barnum, Kathy Clark, Mike Ford, Jeff Olson, Jeanne Zammataro, and Eleanor Zue. We also appreciate the work of the Finance Committee and Investment Committee. And, of course, our work would be so much more difficult without the work of our fantastic Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship, Church Vitality, and Finance, Jim Thomas.

Investment Committee Report

Paul Simpson-Chair

The year has been full of uncertainty with a presidential election, finding a solution to the fiscal cliff, continued economic slow growth, high unemployment, low interest rates, and dealing with a political body unable to find common ground or even common sense. The problems in Europe have continued to be a concern as we live in a global economy.

The Board decided to pay off the mortgage for our Conference Center in Randolph. The hope was to reduce our monthly budget obligations and begin a capital campaign to replace the funds. Planned Giving programs are very important for the future of the conference.

Our unrestricted account was up 7.38% this year with a socially responsible diversified portfolio. We continue to withdraw funds for the operating budget at the rate of 4.25% over a four year average. This disciplined formula hopefully will allow a current income stream to the conference and growth for future generations.

I would like to thank all the members of the conference for their stewardship and discipline in this time of belt tightening. Special thanks must go out to our business manager, James Thomas for his devotion, clarity and guidance to the conference.

Annual Campus Minister's Report 2011-2012

Rev. Abby Gackenheimer

This is the annual report of the Campus Minister from July 1st, 2011 to June 5th, 2012. As the part-time Protestant Campus Minister at UVM, I continue to reach out to our Protestant students as well as those who are seekers, inquirers, or simply looking for some answers. Through brochures and flyers, I invite students/staff/faculty to stop by my office as well as attend various activities and lectures throughout the semester. Below you will find a report of some of the highlights of this last year.

Our new fiscal year began with a busy June, as I attended First Year Orientation throughout the month of June. During this time, as well as First Year Picnic in August and Activities Fest in September, we added another 50 plus students to our e-mail list.

At the end of June and the beginning of July, I attended, as a delegate, the United Church of Christ's General Synod in Tapa Bay, FL. During this time I had an opportunity to network once again with various individuals throughout the nation as well as spread the news of CCM@UVM for those students who might venture this way.

During the Summer and early Fall, I created a new website (same web address) for CCM@UVM. I continue to update and improve the website as needed. I also created/updated our brochures for CCM@UVM and placed them in various places around campus for students to pick up if interested.

During the Fall Semester, I held a weekly night of worship and bible study on Sunday evenings. We saw a great number of students (about 20) during this semester, however, as the homework load got heavier and the Spring semester dawned upon us, I switched it to Thursday Bible Study, which saw a few students able to attend. During the Season of Advent we did an Advent Bible study through ReThink Church, a UMC publication, and in Lent we did a study on Creation through the Anglican/Episcopal Church.

In the Fall, I was blessed with a HESA (Higher Education Student Association) practicum student, Miracle Husband, whose hope was to learn a little more about the ins and outs of campus ministry. She was put in charge of making contacts with a band for our Coffee House in November, as well as rounding up volunteers for and participating in the COTS Phonathon in December. She was a blessing to this ministry and continues to be an active participant and resource for CCM@UVM.

Throughout the semesters, I continued to see a number of students in my office, as well as an occasional counselor looking for resources. I would also meet the students for lunch or coffee in the Davis Center or if preferred, off campus for ice cream or coffee/tea. I also had the great opportunity to sit with a CPE Student (Clinical Pastoral Education) as well as a number of students from Champlain College.

In an attempt to spread the news of CCM@UVM to our wider communities, especially the UCC, I have reached out to a number of pastors as well as the Associations of the UCC. These endeavors have seen success as well as the hope of monetary gifts coming our way this next year.

Through the initiative of the Catholic Center, CCM@UVM, and Hillel we brought back the Spiritual and Religious Council at UVM. In the early Fall, somehow, I was elected as the "leader" of the Spiritual and Religious Life Council, after a few years of not functioning, we are up and running and I have walked them through the beginning of creating a new vision/mission statement for the council. We are working on being more visible on campus as a council and as individual ministries – we will meet in June with the Presidents Commission on Diversity and Inclusion as a council this year, rather than a few of us as last year.

In February of this year, CCM@UVM invited/sponsored Bill McKibben to campus with the monetary and advertising support of various groups on campus – the first session was filled with 100 plus students/faculty/staff with standing room only and the second session was much larger in the Ira Allen Theatre with 400 plus students/faculty/staff with many standing in the back or sitting on the stairs. I was given the privilege of introducing Bill at the beginning of the second session. It was a successful and enlightening lecture.

In April, I returned to my seminary for a week of continuing education where I heard Dr. Douglas Hicks speak on “Occupy the Church” and Ched Myers on “Capital vs Community”. At the end of June, I will be attending the Global Chaplains Conference at Yale University – I have received a scholarship from the National Campus Ministry Association as well as the Vermont Conference of the UCC for this continuing education experience.

In the early Spring, I was invited to attend the memorial service of a Jewish Student on campus, “Avil” Kurganoff. I was there as a representative of the Spiritual and Religious Life Council as well as a support for students and others in need.

Easter Sunday I provided, with help from the Board of Directors, an Easter Dinner for the Students – we saw 15 plus students filter in and out and had a good size group stay to socialize – Christian, Muslim, Russian Orthodox, and non-religious.

I continue to read about how to effectively “do” Campus Ministry as well as various studies on Spirituality on Campus. I have given two talks on Spiritual and Religious Diversity on Campus – one was a training session for RA’s and RDA’s and the other was for a Hall meeting. Both went very well and I have since had contact with a number of those students.

I have already had contact with a number of incoming students who have found my information through our website in the hopes they might have a spiritual/religious community to come to in the Fall. One student said that my answer back to her was what made her want to come to UVM. It was important for all of these students to have a spiritual/religious community to be a part of once they are on campus.

I have created a calendar for the Fall Semester which includes activities such as the Lake Monster’s Game on the 2nd of September in which I will raffle off 2 tickets during June Orientation/First Year Picnic...etc. Welcome Back BBQ, Our Faith, Our Voice, Our Vote for the November Election, Movie Night in October, COTS Phonathon at the end of November, as well as other various gatherings. We will be meeting for Bible Study/Worship on Tuesday evenings starting this Fall.

I thank you for this opportunity to work with our students in a unique and fulfilling way. My prayer is that our ministry continues to thrive on this campus as we welcome all, no matter where they are on their journey.

VERMONT CONGREGATIONAL HOME, INC.
dba FRANCES ATKINSON RESIDENCE FOR THE RETIRED

THE YEAR IN REVIEW
JUNE 2012 – MAY 2013

This year marks our first 50 years of service as a home for elders. Originally created to serve older Vermonters connected with VTCUCC member churches, the Atkinson Residence now welcomes all seniors whose level of care needs are appropriate and can be fulfilled in our home. We are a licensed Level IV Residential Care Home, with a capacity for up to 15 residents.

In June 2012, we welcomed a new director, Karen Crowe of Dalton, New Hampshire, whose experience in eldercare spans 30 years. During its annual inspection in 2011, the State of Vermont cited a significant number of deficiencies and the board of directors determined that a change in management was in order. An interim director served from December 2011 through May 2012, and began the process of correcting the problems.

Today, we enjoy a stable and qualified staff, a full census, open communication between board and director, and a solid reputation in the community and among our referral sources. Improved dining services and menus, expanded activities programming have enhanced resident satisfaction.

Increased rates, new efficiencies and cost control measures and policies have helped to stem our financial losses. New overhead fluorescent lighting in the kitchen has greatly improved staff comfort and made meal preparation and cleaning much easier and safer. Updated office and telephone equipment and bundling our communications services have resulted in significant cost savings and improved capabilities. A newly replaced driveway and parking area make access for residents and visitors safer and easier. Plans to remove unsightly and diseased trees from the front of the house will eliminate the hazards they pose to the house and to passersby and greatly improve our appearance. Our new sign is highly visible and attractive. A new website and printed materials (created *gratis* by Community College of Vermont students), additional advertising, and membership in local organizations will all enhance our visibility in our region and strengthen our position as a qualified and desirable provider in the eldercare continuum.

While our staff, director and board are committed to ensuring the Atkinson Residence is equipped to continue its mission for the next 50 years, we face significant challenges: Our building, equipment and systems (including our elevator, nurse call system, electrical, plumbing and heating) are aging or inadequate and in need of repairs or replacement. Some of our appliances (our range/oven, a hot water tank, refrigerators and freezers) are old and not energy-efficient. All of these cost us a great deal in down time and service calls, and probably higher utility costs. A number of old windows still need to be replaced with thermal windows. Our generator, which helps us to stay in place safely and comfortably during power outages, is reportedly nearly 50 years old. Lighting in common areas and residents' rooms needs improvement. Carpets are in need of replacement. Access to some residents' bathrooms is difficult and, in some cases, impossible for persons with walkers. Some tub, toilet and shower fixtures need refinishing or replacement. Some interior walls and ceilings need repair and paint,

and the flooring in some bathrooms needs replacement. Our dining room chairs are not well suited to their purpose and have been repaired repeatedly. Our finished basement has suffered water damage over the years due to leaks in our aged plumbing; this space is unusable as office or safe storage for records or supplies due to its condition, though we do need space for these purposes. Exterior lighting around the house is inadequate for staff and visitors. The barn behind the house serves no useful purpose, is deteriorating, sheds broken shingles in the wind, harbors vermin, and adds to our property liability insurance costs.

Attracting and retaining qualified and dedicated staff requires adequate compensation, and we must ensure our rates and benefits are competitive with other employers seeking the same skill sets we do.

Maintaining our homelike environment while meeting the needs of our residents and requirements of our licensure is challenging and costly, but not impossible. Our primary source of revenue is the fees our residents pay. Our small endowment generates some income which has been needed to fund operations. Monetary contributions from the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, member churches and fellowships, and to our annual campaign are also important to our mission.

However, we are in need of a great deal more in funding. Increasing our rates to residents must be done with care to avoid becoming unaffordable to current or future residents. Relying on and using all of the income generated from our investments to fund routine operations means that the endowment's growth is slowed when we don't reinvest the income. Enrolling in the Vermont Medicaid Choices for Care program to pay the rent for indigent residents is not fiscally viable at this time, as its rates are well below what we currently charge. While we rely on and appreciate the annual donations, we need to seek additional benefactors who are able to make substantial contributions on a one-time or continual basis. Research of private foundations, trusts and other grantors reveals that there is very little for which our work might qualify for support.

In summary, the Frances Atkinson Residence for the Retired, has had an extraordinary first 50 years of service and has evolved with the times but not quite kept pace with all of the changes brought on by an aging population with ever greater care needs and limitations, greater regulatory demands, more competitors in the eldercare services market, and reduction in many older persons' assets with the market downturns, decreased property values and inflation. Our commitment to the vision and mission of the VTCUCC and the future of our home remains strong, and we welcome the ongoing support of the VTCUCC and its members.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Crowe, Director
Frances Atkinson Residence for the Retired