



First Congregational Church
Different Paths. Same Journey.

Annual Report
for
Annual Meeting of 2011

April 22, 2012

11:00 a.m.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
161th ANNUAL MEETING - APRIL 22, 2012

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Winifred Larson

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Carol Thompson

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN – April 10, 2011

Moderator Maria Talin called the 160th Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church to order following the morning worship service. Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder opened the meeting with prayer. Throughout the meeting, power point slides prepared by Joe Wiedenmeier illustrated the business items.

The Annual Reports booklet with reports of Officers and Ministry Groups for the 2010-2011 year was distributed. Minutes of the 2010 Annual Meeting were approved as printed.

Finances and Update of OACF: Mary Beth Bossert, Treasurer, and Chris Laufer, Finance Ministry Group, presented an overview of the 2011 Budget. There is a projected deficit of about \$47,000, due to increased costs (such as health insurance) and slightly reduced pledge income. Investment funds transferred to the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation have done well; 2011 budget includes \$25,000 income from investments.

Money Matters: Meeting the challenge of sustaining our church in a changing world:

Jen Norden, Moderator-elect, described the task force “Money Matters” which is currently meeting to address the issue of ongoing deficits. Task force members represent Benevolence, Personnel and Finance Ministry Groups. The task force is researching trends of giving, expenses, demographics in our congregation as well as national trends. Workshop meetings for the congregation will be held in Fall 2011 to gather recommendations for planning future budgets. Goal is to have a balanced budget by 2014.

Personnel Ministry Group: Jeff Puhlmann-Becker reported on staff changes in the past year. Kay Quinney-Burnard and Diane Gibson both left their positions. Prior to hiring new staff, the positions were re-configured to reflect current needs of our congregation, with a savings on salary (which, however, was offset by an overall increase in health insurance). New hires: Cynthia Hunt, office administrator, works a 4-day week, with volunteers in the office Friday mornings. Ginnie Sherer is Nurture Ministries Coordinator and Tina Haffeman is Lay Ministry Coordinator, both part-time positions. Sandie Miller, Teaching & Learning Coordinator, is currently on a 4-month Sabbatical.

Sanctuary Centennial: Maria Talin thanked Buildings and Grounds Ministry Group; Dennis Rioux, Facilitator of B&G, and Terry Laib, general contractor, for the successful completion of the Sanctuary refurbishing during Summer 2010. The Sanctuary will be the setting for several events in the coming year to mark its centennial.

FCC in our Community: Maria Talin reported on the local organizations which benefit from grants from our Benevolences. In addition, several outside groups make regular use of our building.

Youth and Special Events: Slides pictured a year’s worth of youth activities and special events, such as the Mission Trip to South Dakota, 1st Tuesdays, and intergenerational activities.

Co-Pastors’ Report: Ralph and Carol DiBiasio-Snyder read a letter to the members of First Congregational Church in the year 2111 – one hundred years from now – gathered in their 200-hundred-year-old Sanctuary! The letter reflected on the blessings and challenges for FCC in the year 2011, and our hopes for the coming years. As a result of the “Holy Conversations” held several years ago, we chose six characteristics describing our congregation. In recent years, we focused our efforts on the qualities of *welcoming* and *caring*. This spring we chose as the focus for the next few years:

- *encouraging* a thoughtful faith that expresses itself in action
- sharing* our resources generously with our community and the world

Ralph and Carol expressed their appreciation to Maria Talin for her leadership and dedication to the congregation during her two years as Moderator. They presented her with a gift of pottery and a “packet of blessings.”

Co-Pastors’ Compensation: Jeff Puhlmann-Becker presented the compensation package for Ralph and Carol DiBiasio-Snyder, as recommended by the Personnel MG. Compensation includes a 2% salary increase.

Motion made/seconded (Thatcher Peterson/Lurton Blassingame) that the compensation for the co-pastors be approved as presented. Motion carried.

Elections: Moderator-elect Jen Norden, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, presented the following slate of officers:

Moderator:	Jen Norden
Moderator-elect:	Anne Romond
Treasurer:	Mary Beth Bossert
Clerk:	Susan Coghill

Motion made/seconded (Thatcher Peterson/Jeff Puhlmann-Becker) that the nominees for church officers be elected. Motion carried.

The list of nominees to the various ministry groups for 2011-2012 was distributed.

Motion made/seconded (Thatcher Peterson/Joyce Frohn) that the nominees for ministry groups be elected. Motion carried.

Ministry Group members for 2011-2012 are:

Worship Ministry Group: Dave Elbing, Kathy Chapman, Carl Chapman,
Corinne Saidla, Jack Frohn, Kay Sanders,
Miriam Grill, Pat Nichols, Bethany Estrada

Music Ministry Group: James Grine, Pat Inch, Susan Leonard, Cathy Wille,
Lynn Fulcher, Vernice Haase

Church School Ministry Group: Lorie Hadel, McKenna Hadel, Corinne Saidla,
Val Williams, *Amanda Hammond, Chris Hammond, Joe Wagner*

Youth Ministry Group: Rebecca Briski, Stacey Otto, Vicki Sheehan, Terry Thomas,
Kevin & Theresa Brewer, Ethan Kargus, Bridget Thorpe-Kavanaugh

Adult Education Ministry Group: Cheryl Hentz, David Jones, Bethany Jorenby,
Val Williams, *Jim Paulson, Nick Schneider*

Benevolence Ministry Group: Ann Marshall, Anne Romond, John Sheehan,
Chris Tower, *Len Herricks, Gary Wilner*

Social Justice Ministry Group: Ted Balsler, Leah Foerster, Jody Harrell, Ron Harrell,
John Oman, Jone Oman, Dorry Wilner, *Pam Koster, Brian Tokoph*

New Member Development Ministry Group: Carolyn Blassingame, James Brown,
Lee Fenendael, Becky Gratz, Cheryl Hentz, Cynthia Thorpe, Joe Wiedenmeier, Dorry Wilner, Lorie Yaste-Zajicek,

Fellowship Ministry Group: Karen Bowen, Vonnie Cushman, Kitty Day, Tom Hallquist,

Rebecca Robe, Steve Robe, *Sue Heft, Phyllis Thompson, Brian Tokoph*

Finance Ministry Group: Eric Kropp, Chris Laufer, John Oman, Sr., Mary Beth Bossert

(Treasurer), Kathy Jameson (Ex Officio), *Paul Stellpflug, Stan Ziblut*

Financial Stewardship Committee: Mary Beth Bossert, Jack Frohn, Corinne Saidla,

Maria Talin, Dorry Wilner, Liaison from Finance MG

Personnel Ministry Group: Howard Blades, Lurton Blassingame, Cyndi DeVoe,

Jeff Puhmann-Becker, Cynthia Thorpe,

Building and Grounds Ministry Group: Eric Braun, John Oman Jr., Bruce Thomas,

Gary Wilner, *Dave Ruby, Dave Seeley*

Landscape Committee: Carolyn Blassingame, Eric Kropp, Jen Stellpflug,

Lisa Wesenberg, Carol Williams, Dorry Wilner

Memorial Committee: Dixie Laehn, Ann Marshall, Deanie Minniear, Maria Talin,

Dorothy Unger

Pastor/Congregation Relations Committee: Jen Norden (Moderator), Liz Kaprelian,

Dennis Kavanaugh, Shelly Rutz, Tracie Schlaak, Tom Zak

Teaching and Learning Coordinator/Congregation Relations Committee:

Anne Romond (Moderator-elect) Bruce Abraham, Lorie Hadel, Bethany Jorenby, Chris Laufer, Deb Nelson

Library Committee: Joyce Frohn, Carol Ann Henkle

Women's Fellowship Representative to Ministry Council: Karen LaBorde

Names in italics are new members.

Following the benediction, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 Noon.

A soup and salad luncheon prepared by Sue Heft, Jack Talin and crew was served in Fellowship Hall after the meeting.

Susan Coghill

Church Clerk

REPORT OF THE MODERATOR, MODERATOR ELECT, AND THE MINISTRY COUNCIL

We are truly blessed to be able to be a part of this church community. Our church is known as a welcoming church with respect for diversity. People come for the fellowship and friendship, sacred space, music, great ministers and education--all identified as strengths of our church. This year, ministry groups have focused on two goals from Holy Conversations: First Congregational Church is widely known as a vibrant community that reflects the example of Jesus by encouraging a thoughtful faith that expresses itself in action and by sharing our resources generously with our community and the world.

As we celebrate our centennial year, the renovated sanctuary has been shared with the congregation and community in a series of wonderful concerts, in addition to the First Tuesday concerts. Our sacred space continues to be used by the Emmaus Ecumenical Catholic Communion, as well as a Zen Buddhist group, and other community groups. Our building is in excellent shape, with the exception of the kitchen. Fund raising has officially started for the renovation of the kitchen, with plans already developed by Women's Fellowship.

Our church continues to be recognized for its role in community service. This year, Tina Haffeman and the ESTHER group received the 2012 Community Service Award for establishing the Day by Day Warming Shelter at the Martin Luther King, Jr. community celebration. In addition, Servapalooza, an interfaith Sunday morning of volunteer work, was a great success. Many individuals and groups in our church share generously with our community, especially the social justice group, ESTHER, and the benevolence ministry group.

Church staffing continues to evolve--this year with the resignation of Kathy Jameson, the financial secretary. We thank her for many years of service. Fortunately, these duties have been taken over by Cynthia, our wonderful and capable office administrator. Special thanks to Mary Beth Bossert for all the extra work she has done to allow for this transition.

"Money Matters: Meeting the challenge of sustaining our church in a changing world" This group continued its work this year on exploring options to keep our church spiritually and financially sustainable. With input from a workshop in October, small group meetings for the fall stewardship campaign, and ESTHER Holy Conversations meetings, we are better prepared to make decisions regarding the future of the church. A series of emails entitled "Counting Ourselves Blessed" addressed many of the topics that came up during these conversations, and is available on the website.

Although we anticipated another significant deficit for 2011, the final numbers show only a \$2,029.92 deficit! This is much better than the previous two years' deficits of \$25,000 and \$30,000. There are two reasons for this:

- + Income was almost \$19,000 more than expected, due to some extra contributions as well as a higher return on investment income.

- + Church leaders worked hard to reduce expenses and successfully cut almost \$26,000 in costs, a third of that from reducing the hours of the office, financial secretary, as well as the Lay Ministry and Nurture Ministry Coordinator positions. Each ministry group spent wisely and came in under budgeted costs, with the exception of the Benevolence Ministry Group which always spends its 16% of pledged donations.

With the recession, however, our church and many individuals in our congregation continue to face financial challenges. Based on Money Matters work, we will continue to look at ways to increase income, and best manage expenses. Fortunately, our church has assets, but we still need to be proactive in finding ways for our church to thrive spiritually and financially.

Thank you to everyone for contributing time, money and talent to make this a wonderful worship community.

Your moderator,
Jen Norden

REPORT OF THE CHURCH CLERK

Members received by:		Members lost by:	
Confirmation	6	Death	5
Affirmation	5	Ministry Council Action	70
Letter of Transfer	3		
	14		75

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP – March 15, 2012: 449

Members received by Confirmation:

Michael Becker
Emilie Braun
Brian Kaprelian
Casey Nelson
Rachel Schwebke
Elizabeth Thomas

Members received by Affirmation of Faith:

Joseph Lehocky
Clyde Moench
Jean Moench
Doug Pire
Rebecca Romenesko

Members received by Letter of Transfer:

Jennifer Burgess
Kristen Burgess
Sue Verzal

Members lost by Death:

Esther Bohlssen
Luanne Grignon
Patricia Kaprelian
Winifred Larson
Robert Strehlow
Carol Thompson

Members lost by Action of Ministry Council:

Kristine Anderson	Lawrence Hanson	Jeff Schlaak
Shirley Anderson	David Herrin	Pat Schuttenhelm
Douglas Becker	Christine Jameson	Robert Schuttenhelm
Jennifer Becker	Gary Kandell	Joseph Scheuers Sobiech
Matthew Becker	Pat Kandell	Anne Spangler
Donald Below	Tony Karl	Sally Stafford
F. Townsend Below	Joshua Lacey	Andrea Steineke
Steve Bohlssen	Robert Lee	Sheryl Stessman
Thomas Burns	Bee Lo	Janet Stevens
Deborah Carls	Catherine Loos	Steven Stremmer
Pam Duncan	Steven Makar	Kristine Sweeting
Kathy Erickson	Mark Maples	Jennifer Tarantino
Kathleen Fallon	Sandra Magnuson Maples	Anders Taylor
Michael Fallon	Susan Marggraf	Beth Corey Taylor
Amy Franson	Carey Nadeau	Bron Taylor
Kyle Franson	Karen Neubauer	Peter Thompson
Karin Gehrke	Ann Perrott	Debra Troxell
Beth Grams	Sara Peterson	Rob Wagner
Robert Grant	Pamela Pistohl	Matt Weidemann
Gertrude Graves	Ronald Pistohl	Jennifer Weiland
Amalia Guldán	Robin Pressley	JoAnn Wittenmeier
John Haase	Constance Roe	Bradd Yenor
Gretchen Hansen	Shirley Rolfes	
Debra Hanson	Laura Rooney	

2011 TREASURER'S REPORT

John Oman, Finance Ministry Group facilitator, ably summarized the financial picture for First Congregational Church in 2011.

Additionally in 2011, First Congregational Church renewed its insurance relationship with Cincinnati Insurance for the building, liability, etc. We did change insurance agencies and are currently with Servant Insurance and have Mary Murken as our agent. In the future, I would recommend that the insurance decisions be handle by Finance MG and Buildings and Grounds MG to insure appropriate coverage.

After many years as Financial Secretary, Kathy Jameson retired her post at the end of June 2011. Cynthia Hunt stepped in to absorb Kathy's duties and has done an admirable job learning a new computer program for church accounting and preparing the necessary reports for the various groups within the church. I was fortunate to be able to aid Cynthia in learning the system as I had used the same program in my capacity as treasurer for another religious institution. It has been a challenge!

As John mentioned in his report, our relationship with the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation continues to flourish. We are still working to finalize the transfer of the last two funds, the New Century Fund and the Undesignated Reserve Fund. Having our assets in one place should ensure the continuity of management far into the future.

Finally, I will be resigning my position as Treasurer as of the annual meeting in April 2012. I have appreciated the opportunity to serve our congregation in this capacity for the past 3 years. I believe strongly in the future of this faith community and its ability to sustain itself for the indefinite future.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Beth Bossert, Treasurer

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
BALANCE SHEET STATEMENT**

Fiscal Year 2011

ASSETS

Total Cash & Money Markets	124,988.95
Current Receivables	-
Prepaid Insurance & Expenses	-
Mutual Funds	381,888.86
OACF General Fund	475,080.11
OACF Endowment Fund	25,376.37
OACF Marquart Maintenance Fund	25,398.16
OACF Manser Memorial Fund	54,867.43
OACF Triss Fund	126,248.72
CD Old Natl Bank-Drebus/Redfd	1,500.00
	<hr/>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>1,215,348.60</u>

LIABILITIES/CAPITAL FUNDS

Current Liabilities	49,322.74
Maintenance Reserve Fund	27,049.96
Memorials	26,057.21
New Century Fund	135,391.64
Undesignated Reserve Fund	258,644.34
OACF General Fund	475,080.11
OACF General Fund Interest Income	-
OACF Endowment Fund	24,794.26
OACF Endowment Interest Income	582.11
OACF Triss Fund	100,000.00
OACF Triss Fund Interest Income	26,248.72
OACF Manser Memorial Fund	53,450.68
OACF Manser Memorial Interest Income	1,416.75
OACF Marquart Maint. Fund	24,794.37
OACF Marquart Maint. Interest Income	603.79
Centennial Celebration Fund	7,076.78
Kitchen Fund	6,865.06
<i>Current Surplus (Deficit)</i>	<u>(2,029.92)</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES/CAPITAL FUNDS	<u>1,215,348.60</u>

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
INCOME & EXPENSE STATEMENT**

Description	Fiscal Year 2011		
	2011 'Y-T-D	2011'Y-T-D Budget	2011'Annual Budget
INCOME			
Contributions	277,483.06	277,928.00	277,928.00
Other Contributions	28,393.93	17,000.00	17,000.00
Plate Income	4,928.18	5,000.01	5,000.01
Interest & Dividend Income	31,864.57	25,000.00	25,000.00
Rent Income	2,026.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Miscellaneous Income	129.54	-	-
TOTAL INCOME	344,825.28	325,928.01	325,928.01
EXPENSES			
Co-Pastors' Salary/Benefits	85,924.77	88,118.00	88,118.00
Staff Salaries/Expenses	150,822.36	160,400.00	160,400.00
Administrative & Office	12,497.01	13,800.00	13,800.00
Building	37,981.78	40,900.00	40,900.00
Finance Ministry Group	127.79	925.00	925.00
Personnel Ministry Group	10.47	-	-
Buildings & Grounds	1,687.46	2,000.00	2,000.00
Maintenance Reserve	2,599.99	2,000.00	2,000.00
Fellowship Ministry Group	556.81	1,400.00	1,400.00
Church School	2,765.08	4,761.00	4,761.00
Youth Ministry Group	824.98	1,500.00	1,500.00
Adult Education	485.58	750.00	750.00
Music Ministry Group	2,246.30	3,713.00	3,713.00
Worship Ministry Group	1,637.17	2,710.00	2,710.00
Benevolence Ministry Group	44,468.00	44,468.00	44,468.00
New Member Ministry Group	1,212.16	3,250.00	3,250.00
Social Justice Ministry Group	124.85	300.00	300.00
Ministry Council	489.16	750.00	750.00
Stephen Ministry Group	393.48	1,000.00	1,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	346,855.20	372,745.00	372,745.00
NET INCOME/(LOSS)	(2,029.92)	(46,816.99)	(46,816.99)

REPORT OF THE WORSHIP MINISTRY GROUP(2011)

We recently reviewed and updated the mission of our group.
That mission is to meet with and work with our Pastors to:
Evaluate worship services.

Coordinate and support the teams that are part of our responsibility .ushers, communion servers, scripture readers, and acolytes. And encourage participation of all members and friends of FCC.

Plan worship that is creative, diverse way that touches the mind, spirit, and heart.

Work in partnership with the Music Ministry Group.

Although it is critical that at least one of the Pastors attend each meeting, we have told them that, based on their busy schedules, it is not mandatory that they both attend all meetings. We also agreed that we would not have a meeting if there was no business to discuss. We are currently meeting 9-10 times/year.

We are very pleased with the suggestions made by Ralph and Carol and by the creativity they have displayed in the diversification they present in worship services. Since the feedback from the congregation has been very positive we will continue to proceed in the same direction.

Dave Elbing, Facilitator

REPORT OF THE MUSIC MINISTRY GROUP

The mission of the music ministry group is to enrich the music ministry of the church by supporting our music staff and think creatively about how music can be part of the life of the congregation.

We are pleased to have such talented musicians in Joanne Peterson, Christina Conn and Patrick Meyer. They are truly gifted and serve our congregation with warmth and devotion. We are especially appreciative of the leadership that Joanne provides as the head of staff for the music program.

We have served as a clearing house for constructive feedback regarding the music program. We actively support special community musical events by supervising the use of our sanctuary and musical instruments.

This past year we have had the opportunity to support the 100th Anniversary Celebration committee by offering a special program each month featuring the organ, piano, and musicians from the area – past and present.

We were also the recipient of a couple of monetary gifts from faithful members of the congregation who believed in the music program of the church and have passed away. We are deeply appreciative of these gifts and are very carefully considering how we might use these gifts to enhance the wonderful music program we already enjoy.

I am grateful for the committed members of the ministry group and am pleased to have served as facilitator for this past year.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathleen Starck Wille

REPORT OF THE NURTURE MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

Nurture Ministries at First Congregational Church currently encompasses the following ministries of the church:

Stephen Ministry

Visitation Ministry

Flower Delivery Ministry

Meal Delivery Ministry

Prayer Shawl and Pillow Ministry

Prayer Circle

Fellowship Ministry

The Nurture Ministries Coordinator provides staff support to these caring ministries. The Coordinator provides staff support to the Fellowship Ministry Group.

Stephen Ministry and Visitation Ministry are coordinated directly by the Nurture Ministries Coordinator. Referrals to these ministries most often come from Carol and Ralph with the Nurture Ministries Coordinator making the determination which ministry might be the best fit for the individual who has care needs. The Nurture Ministries Coordinator is responsible for matching the persons serving in these ministry areas with the individual needing care.

Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry is led by Ginnie Sherer, Dick Oelschlager and Cynthia Thorpe-Kavanaugh. They provide training and on-going education for this ministry. They also lead the monthly Supportivision group. Supportivision is a peer supervision/support group that provides support and oversight to those involved in this lay ministry program. Members of Stephen Ministry report that Supportivision is vital to this ministry. It provides Stephen Ministers with regular peer and leader support to help the Stephen Minister grow in their ministry to their care receiver. This helps to ensure that care receivers are given the best possible care while participating in this ministry.

Currently 10 individuals are serving as Stephen Ministers in the congregation. Nine of the 10 ministers are currently matched with care receivers. All of these matches have been in place over the past year. Stephen Ministers meet one-on-one with their care receivers for approximately 1 hour per week. This has led to hundreds of hours of lay ministry care being provided over the past year.

In April 2012, two additional people, Sue Coghill and Brian Tokoph, will be attending Stephen Leader Training in St. Louis. Once trained, Sue and Brian will join Ginnie, Dick and Cynthia in leading Stephen Ministry at FCC.

Visitation Ministry

Visitation Ministry has been a vital ministry to those homebound members of FCC. Volunteers are assigned one person to visit on a monthly basis. Over the past year, 10 individuals have been making visits with 9 homebound people.

Flower Delivery Ministry

Volunteers in the Flower Delivery Ministry group deliver Sunday's alter flowers people who are homebound, recovering from hospitalization or are unable to come to worship services. Currently there are 8 people who assist in delivering flowers. Rebecca Robe coordinates the schedule for this ministry. In 2011, 33 flower arrangements were delivered to 22 individuals.

Meal Ministry

Meal Ministry is coordinated by four volunteers from the congregation: Andrea Schneider, Jodi Braun, Vicki Sheehan and Sue Coghil. Each coordinator takes lead responsibility for a two month period of time. Their role is to contact people to deliver meals to those that need them. There is a list of approximately 32 volunteers that can be called to prepare meals for home delivery. Persons served by this ministry are most commonly people who are recovering from surgery, illness or injury. Meals have also been offered to those who have experienced a loss in their family. Over the past year, meals were offered to at least 12 people, resulting in approximately 20 meals being delivered to those who needed them.

Prayer Shawl and Pillow Ministry

Pray Shawl and Pillow Ministry is coordinated by Sue Coghil. Volunteers in this ministry make shawls and pillows that can be delivered to people who are ill, recovering from surgery or are homebound. These items are distributed primarily by Carol and Ralph during pastoral visits to shut-ins.

Prayer Circle

The prayer circle allows those with the gift of intercession to serve others at FCC by praying for concerns that are submitted. Prayers are listed on a password protected website that members of the pray circle access from their home computers. Evelyn Bowerman provides coordination for this ministry. She edits the website information for the circle and sends emails to members of the pray circle when new prayer requests are added. Currently 20 people participate in raising other's concerns in prayer via the pray circle. Evelyn also initiates phone calls to those who are made aware of pray requests by phone so that people who do not have Internet access can also participate in the Prayer Circle.

Ginnie Sherer

REPORT OF FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY GROUP

The Fellowship Ministry Group continues its activities in support of the fellowship of the congregation.

The committee has worked on our traditional activities including pumpkin carving (no trunk-o-treat this year, Hanging of the Greens and the upcoming Easter Breakfast on April 4th. The event will be co-sponsored with the Mission Trip youth, and proceeds will go toward their trip this year. The menu for the event will be less oriented toward hot food and more like a continental breakfast. This year we also continued the Kickoff - Cookout Coffee Hour.

The Fellowship Ministry group continues to need people to host Coffee Hour; we have tried to make things easier by letting everyone know that there is NO NEED to bring food items from home and that the lounge will be set up in advance so there should be no furniture set up for the hosts. The new look with table and chair seating seems to be inviting to people who tend to sit and chat in small groups. We met with the Adult Education Ministry to iron out some difficulties in setup while their event is still going on each Sunday, and we agreed that advance set up of tables and chairs in the lounge and that hosts would begin setup no earlier than 9:45 a.m. and that their activities would be ending at that time, without fail.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has helped with our activities. Clearly, fellowship remains important to the First Congregational family.

Karen Bowen

SANCTUARY CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE REPORT:

Members: Howard Blades, Jody Harrell, Frank Hoffmeister, Karen LaBorde, Patrick Meyer, Deanie Minniear, Joanne Peterson, Thatcher Peterson, Chris Dempsey/Chair.

The mission of this ad hoc committee was to organize the celebration and recognition of **100 years** of worship in this Sanctuary within 163 years of this Church's existence and ministry.

The centennial committee met monthly to plan and to execute the details necessary for the celebrations. The celebrations occurred from September, 1911, through July, 2012. With the completion of the scheduled events, this committee will dissolve.

From our Centennial Brochure

This year we are celebrating the 100th year that First Congregational Church has worshiped in the present – their third – sanctuary since the church was formed in 1849.

From the start, the Oshkosh community was welcomed into this building for worship, weddings and funerals, of course, but also for public lectures on current events, community meetings, and musical concerts – all the events that mark a vibrant culture. The sanctuary also served as the city's concert hall for many decades.

The people of First Congregational – stewards of a great trust given them by the men and women who built this sanctuary – continue to share it with Oshkosh. Join us in celebration during the 2011-2012 year as we host the many events listed on the next page. Join us in giving thanks to God for this gift not only to us, but also to our community.

The committee was asked to prepare a policy with respect to funding these concerts. This is the policy statement:

1. Concerts supported by the Haase Memorial Music Fund.

Concert expenses first would be paid out of audience contributions and, if the contributions fail to cover the expenses, then the balance will be covered by the Haase Memorial Music Fund. If contributions are greater than the expenses, the excess amount will be deposited in the Haase Memorial Music Fund.

2. Centennial Concerts Not Supported by Memorial Funds.

50% of contributions [whether by ticket admission price or free-will offering] will be shared with the performers and 50% will be deposited in the Centennial Concert account.

All of the celebration recitals were free to the public and supported in part by free-will offerings.

This is the first and final report of the Centennial Committee.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Dempsey, Chair

2011-2012 CENTENNIAL EVENTS:

	<i>Centennial Event</i>
Sun. 9/18/2011	4:30 – 6:30 PM Centennial Event Catered Dinner from The Roxy FCC Fellowship Hall Continuous (2011-2012) historical exhibit displayed in Balcony area
Sun. 9/25	Handbell Choir Celebration Guest Minister: The Reverend Robert Spaulding (FCC 1978-88)
Sat. 10/15	9:00 AM - 1:00PM FCC-Fest! Incorporate Women’s Fellowship Chronology : Cookbook
Sun. 10/16	4:00 PM Poetry Ensemble of Oshkosh “Poetry and Song” Christina Conn/ Bridget Duffy, Songs; Senior Center Poetry Ensemble, Betty Butcher, director
Sat. 10/29	7:30 PM Oshkosh Chamber Singers Fall Concert Rutter <i>Gloria</i>
Sat. 11/5	6:00-9:00 Gallery Walk Concert Dr. Marty Robinson/UWO Jazz Ensemble
Sun. 12/4 Tues. 12/6	10:00 AM Guest Worship Leader First Tuesday: Encore Handbell Ensemble
Sun. 12/18	10:00 AM Worship/Christmas Pageant
Sun. 12/18	4:00 PM Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” performed by Peter Baker
Sat.1/7/20 1	7:30-8:30 PM 100 th Anniversary Pipe Organ Recital: T. Jared Stellmacher:Reception follows.
Sun.1/8	Rededication Service of Sanctuary and Organ Eric Koepnick-Guest Worship Leader, a new graduate in ministry, symbolic of a church in the coming second century Special Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall/Kitty Day
Tues.1/10	Catherine Kautsky in Concert /Piano J.S. Bach: French Suite No. 2 in C Minor Ludwig van Beethoven: Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Op. 101
Sun. 1/22	A History of Handbell Choir/ Performance
Tues.2/7	12 Noon Emily Helvering Concert Oboe
Sun. 2/12	Kendall Nordstrom-Guest Minister (son of FCC pastor before 1978)
Sun. 2/19	4:00-5:30 PM “Voices of Praise”
Sun. 3/18	4:00-5:00 PM The Music of William Waters: Maryellen Pung/ Joanne Peterson - Recital/Piano and Organ.James Grine: Lecture/Slides presentation Wm Waters. Readers’ Theatre: Letters from 1911-12
Sun. 3/25	Special Choral Work, Faure <i>Requiem</i> /Choir Recognition
Tues.4/10	12 Noon Eli Kalman/Sharon Tenhundfeld Piano Recital
Sun. 4/15	4:00-5:30 PM UWO Chamber Ensemble
Sat.5/5	7:00 PM Gallery Walk Concert Gershwin <i>Rhapsody in Blue</i> Joanne Peterson, organ and Jeri-Mae Astolfi, piano
Tues. 7/10	Green Lake Festival of Music – recital by Andrew Armstrong, pianist with the Amelia Piano Trio

2011 Annual Report of the Benevolence Ministry Group

Members: Ann Marshall, Anne Romond, Chris Tower, Gary Wilner, Len Herricks, John Sheehan

This group determines where to donate allocated church funds in the broader community and world. It also selects the projects, agencies and organizations to receive our special offerings. The congregation decided many years ago to designate 16% of pledged income for charitable giving. FCC has historically been and continues to be a caring giving church. In light of economic challenges facing the church, there has been much conversation this year about reconsidering our approaches to giving charitably. At this time no changes have been implemented, but the conversations will continue.

In 2011 we did implement a process by which various local organizations would be able to apply for benevolence funds. In order to be considered for donations, organizations must now provide information about their operations, expenses, goals, etc.

Part of benevolence money is used to support the two denominations to which FCC belongs: the United Church of Christ and the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. Both organizations offer many services to their member churches and support national and international missions and disaster relief efforts. This year there has been much conversation within the congregation, especially the Financial and Benevolence Ministry Groups, about the value and sustainability of our financial support of both denominations.

Parent Connection received \$2,000.00 for the second year of our three year commitment. In 2011 we decided to support the Red Cross Bridges program with a three year commitment of \$2,000.00 each year. The Bridges Program works with low income families facing temporary emergency situations. This may take the form of assistance with rent, utilities, or work related needs.

Special Offerings:

Easter offering of 1362.35 went to One Great Hour of Sharing

The Thanksgiving offering of \$469.00 went to the Tri-County dental Clinic

Christmas offering of \$786.00 was split between the UCC "Christmas Fund" and the NACCC "Ministerial Assistance and Enrichment Fund".

Special offerings included Japan relief of \$189 and tornado relief of \$379.00

Locally, financial support was also given to:

FCC Minister's Discretionary Fund

The Day-by-Day Warming Shelter of Oshkosh

The Samaritan Counseling Center

The Back to School Fair

The Bethel Foundation

The Christine Ann Center

The Hope and Care Inn

We also made a one time payment to cover church dues to the Esther organization.

Thank you for your continued generous giving. If you know of local services or agencies that could benefit from FCC Benevolence dollars, please let us know.

-- John Sheehan, Facilitator

REPORT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY GROUP 2011-2012

The Social Justice Ministry Group was founded in July of 2010 to help replace the Social Concerns Ministry Group that had been founded in 2005. This year (2011-2012) was a productive one for the 13 members.

Members of the group were John and Jone Oman, Ron and Jody Harrell, Dorry Wilner, Amy Smith, Ted Balser, Leah Foerster, Pam Koster, Brian Tokopf, Tina Haffeman and Ralph and Carol Dibiasio-Snyder. Ron served as chairperson and Jody was the secretary. Amy Smith was the group's Ministry Council representative.

At the July 2010 organizational meeting, the SJMG formulated its purpose/mission statement: **This Ministry Group emphasizes faith in action by raising awareness of and providing hands-on opportunities for bringing justice to our community and beyond. The Social Justice Ministry Group may work in partnership and coordination with other groups such as the Benevolence Ministry Group, the Adult Education Ministry Group, the Mission Team and groups beyond First Congregational Church as well. Under its umbrella is the Esther Core Team that was formed in 2011.**

Most meetings began with a speaker (on a social justice issue), a discussion of activities the group could undertake, and a to-do list for the next month. Speakers who enlightened the group included Tom Grogan and Karlene Grabner from the Oshkosh Civility Project; Laura Glaeser, an early warning and response specialist for the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance II Project, Tina Haffeman from the Day by Day Warming Shelter, Katie LaViolette from ReStore and Norm Leatherwood from World Relief.

In January 2011 the group passed a resolution suggesting that FCC establish an ESTHER Core Team affiliated with Oshkosh ESTHER to function under the umbrella of the Social Justice Ministry Group. Ministry Council later adopted the resolution. The Core Team's purpose is to identify social justice issues in our community, develop leadership for action, and analyze and define practices of faith to improve the human condition. The team trained several members to conduct More Holy Conversations later in the year, which led to over 50 interviews and the compilation of several issues the church might become involved with. At a January 2012 meeting the Core Team took one of those issues, the Oaklawn referendum, and began a campaign to inform church members about it. Social Justice also decided to pay half of the church's ESTHER dues for 2012.

In the summer, the group planted and maintained a garden plot at the Community Gardens near the state hospital. Group members then took the produce they raised to the Oshkosh Community Pantry. In all, SJ contributed over 400 pounds of produce to the pantry.

Members helped out with the Christmas in July and Christmas Teen Gift projects, the October CROP Walk, Empty Bowls, and Servapalooza. They also led a small Holiday Gift Bag donation drive for the Day by Day Warming Shelter. Leah Foerster continued publishing A Olive Branch@ which highlighted social justice issues in and around Oshkosh, several members attended the Samaritan Counseling fundraiser in Appleton, and the group informed the 2011-2012 confirmands about Social Justice Ministry Group at its January 2012 meeting.

Ron Harrell, Chair

MORE HOLY CONVERSATIONS

More Holy Conversations (MHC) was an initiative started in the fall of 2011 and continued until the first of the year. The More Holy Conversations Team interviewed nearly 60 members of FCC. The purpose of the interviews was to:

- deepen relationships
- introduce the concept of reflecting on how our faith forms our opinions, decisions and actions
- identify social justice issues in our community and discern what moves us to action

There was a wealth of responses indicating concerns in the following categories:

- Basic needs and lack thereof for a growing population in Oshkosh
- Health care cost and access
- Collaboration of services to those in need
- Local, state, and national economy
- Education/ Children/ Families (with concerns ranging from Oaklawn School referendum to anti-bullying)
- Discrimination/ Civility/ Interfaith cooperation
- Prisons
- Transportation

The project was a big success. People found the experience very valuable in creating more meaningful relationships within our faith community and also generally appreciated the opportunity to talk about what's on their mind and in their hearts when it comes to issues of justice in the community at large.

What happens now?

First of all, while there was no clear consensus on areas of issue, the team agreed that educational opportunities need to be made available to members of the congregation to explore the concepts of charity and justice. What is the difference between offering immediate tangible help and working to address the core and systemic issues that cause the problem? And, as important, how do the teachings of our faith inform our participation in systemic change using an opportunity to work with our friends in faith communities. The staff, FCC ESTHER Core Team, and some members of the MHC Team will be working on providing those opportunities throughout the next year.

Secondly, the FCC ESTHER Core Team (a group open to anyone at FCC) will use the information gathered to discern actions that may be taken up by a task force group within the congregation. At this point the action(s) will be announced to the congregation so that anyone who wishes may participate.

Issues may be brought to the attention of the Core team by any member of FCC.

Thirdly some members of the MHC team will continue these conversations with any members that may request one. The team thought it might be a good idea to set aside several weeks each year to build on this project and also make it available to new members.

We hope to continue the practice of More Holy Conversations on a regular basis. We believe that this project is important to the future of FCC as a vital member of the Oshkosh community.

ESTHER Core Team

The purpose of the First Congregational Church ESTHER Core Team is:

- To identify social justice issues in our community
- Develop leadership for action
- Apply principles of faith to improve the human condition

First Congregational Oshkosh ESTHER Core Group is part of the Social Justice Ministry here at FCC. The Team participates with the other Oshkosh and Fox Valley Churches in addressing issues of justice that affect the lives of families and individuals in the Oshkosh area. ESTHER provides education on issues and acts to address systemic change.

First Congregational ESTHER Core Team has worked to help to create the Day by Day Warming Shelter for the homeless; conducted a forum on the effects of the proposed 2012 state budget on the lives of our neighbors and friends; conducted the More Holy Conversations project (see separate report); and worked to educate FCC members on the Oaklawn School referendum which appeared on the ballot for the April 3rd election. A public forum on the referendum topic was held on March 12th at FCC.

NEW MEMBER DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY GROUP

During the past year, the New Member Development Ministry Group has tackled many projects in an effort to grow the church membership and the community's awareness of our existence. Following are some of the more significant things we did throughout the year:

We reviewed our mission statement and looked at how our mission can better help the church meet its ministry goals.

As part of the third and final year of a three-year plan Blue Door Consulting worked with staff to create a new e-news, called Member Bridge, which contains graphics and an overall improved appearance.

We also started placing member info on the web site and in the weekly Member Bridge with the intent of not only helping existing members get to know each other better, but also to let the community know who goes to FCC, and why.

Emails were sent out to members of the various ministry groups and to everyone on the church's email list, asking things like why they like FCC and how they found us so we can share their information with others, as well.

Blue Door Consulting did a survey of members to learn what brought them to FCC, what their level of involvement is in the church and their level of comfort in discussing the church with people they know or otherwise come across in their daily lives. Then, based on survey results and discussions with our ministry group, new member "training" and a discussion of windows of opportunity were incorporated into a Stepping Out worship service held on Sunday, Oct. 23. Several members of the congregation played roles in small skits that showed how we can turn every day conversations into windows of opportunity to pique people's curiosity and perhaps get them interested in coming to a service to see what we're all about. Blue Door Consulting was instrumental in helping develop the program.

Also introduced on that Stepping Out Sunday were "business cards" that were handed out to the congregation that they

can share with others, telling them when our services are and offering a brief description of what we have to offer.

We received word of a weeknight worship service, something that will be starting March 1, 2012. This is good for our own church members who can't attend Sunday service. New Membership supports this endeavor as it will broaden our base and appeal to others looking for church options.

We continued to submit articles to the Oshkosh Northwestern's Community Newsroom. This year the articles included special Centennial year concerts, First Tuesdays, Newcomer Classes, the new weeknight worship service, Lifelong Learning presentations that might be of interest to the general community-at-large, etc. These no-cost articles appear both online and in hard copy format and are designed to draw people's interest to FCC.

Several new member (Newcomer) classes were held throughout the year. Snacks and beverages were served in an inviting atmosphere and people heard a short history of the church, and learned from others what makes the church special to them. A short tour of the building was also offered.

We reorganized the name tags so it will be easier for people to find and wear them when attending worship services or other church events.

Several people, including a member of the media who was coming to the church to cover an event, have said that after normal business hours it is hard to know where to enter the building and even harder, at times, gaining access. The comment was made by more than a few that while we say all are welcome and warmly invited, it's difficult to feel welcome when they can't get in the building. We've identified this as an accessibility issue and hospitality issue. Toward that end the Ministry Group developed some new signs for the exterior doors which are larger than the older ones, and hopefully are more inviting toward welcoming people and explaining where they need to enter the building. We are also working with Building and Grounds to make the building more accessible to members and visitors alike during evenings and other non-church hours.

We continued to recognize and emphasize the importance of creating a warm, welcoming and hospitable atmosphere for both our current members and guests.

Submitted by: Cheryl Hentz

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS MINISTRY GROUP

2011 Annual Report

The **Buildings and Grounds Ministry Group** is responsible for maintaining the entirety of the church facility and property, including heating and cooling systems, snow removal, security, phone and elevator systems. A separate Landscaping Committee, which is part of the Group, operates autonomously and handles landscaping.

Though the B&G Ministry Group is continuously busy with routine maintenance challenges, here are a few of the more visible activities we have been involved with:

- New equipment shed at the west end of the building was built and installed by the group and Steve Hafemeister on a new cement foundation
- Contracted for and installed a chandelier, similar but smaller than those in the narthex
- Reached an agreement that reduced costs for snow removal. We had incredible amounts of snow in the spring of 2011 more than making up for the warm and almost snowless winter of 2011.

-Along with the Personnel Ministry Group and Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder, hired a new Facilities Manager, Steve Robe

The **Landscaping Committee** was very busy as well. Here are just a few of the activities they quarterbacked:

- Maintained the garden area on the east side of building
- Saw that a dead crabapple tree removed
- Removed all the old, dead or dying dogwood shrubs on the front side of church and replaced them
- New planters and plants were added at the front entrances

Respectfully Submitted by:

Buildings and Grounds Ministry Group

Eric Braun, John Oman, Jr., David Ruby, David Seeley, Bruce Thomas, Jesse Rhinehart, Gary Wilner

Landscaping Committee:

Carolyn Blassingame, Eric Kropp, Jen Stellflug, Lisa Wesenberg, Carol Williams, Dorry Wilner

FINANCE MINISTRY GROUP REPORT

The year 2011 was an interesting year for the finances of First Congregational Church. Many positive developments occurred despite a poor economy. The vitality of the congregation has carried over into the finances of the congregation. A few highlights are listed.

The deficit for 2011 was less than projected. This occurred because giving and other income was greater than expected and the expenses were less than expected. We need to give thanks to all those for gave as much as possible and those who worked to hold down expenses. This is a positive sign after several years of large deficits.

The transfer of Church funds for other accounts to the Oshkosh Community Foundation continued throughout the year and will continue in 2012. This has been positive from a financial point of view and should make it easier for the congregation to manage funds in the future.

The Money Matters taskforce has worked to study past and future finances of the congregation. Their hard work has produced several reports to the congregation on what has been happening and on the future. They are continuing to study and look for ways to improve the financial bottom line and the life of the congregation in future years.

The Stewardship group put in extreme effort in educating and meeting with the congregation during the fall. This hard work produced a good Estimate of Giving during hard financial period. More importantly it disseminated a lot of information and gathered a lot of opinions from the congregation.

There is much left to do, but there have been many positive signs that we are headed in the right direction. A great many in the congregation spent a lot of time and effort in the above activities. We all give them thanks.

Respectfully submitted,

John Oman

REPORT OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Members: Mary Beth Bossert, Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, Dorry Wilner, Maria Talin, John Oman, Sr., Corinne Saidla, and Ralph DB-S.

This year's theme was "Count Yourself Blessed." Stewardship, in these difficult financial times, can be a hard subject to explore. This year the committee spent considerable time discussing what stewardship means and how that message gets conveyed to the congregation. We decided that for the campaign we would have "house meetings" and some meetings at the church to discuss more in depth where we are financially, what are ways to increase income and decrease expenses, do we continue to be a part of UCC and NACCC and/or both, and to have a discussion with members and friends and

hear what their concerns are as well as what is going well for the church as a whole.

In response to questions raised at the meetings, seven articles were written up with information about finances, staffing, trends, and needs. Also, in the Thursday Member Bridge people wrote about why and how FCC is a part of their life and why they continue to come and be an active participant in the life of the church.

The Stewardship Committee this year produced a brochure titled, *Count Yourself Blessed!* This was done with much input from the committee and a lot of technical work by Jeff Puhlman-Becker and his son Matt. Thank you! The goal was to focus on six areas of our life together as a congregation: Encouraging, Sharing, Welcoming, Honoring, Caring and Gathering. Through words, scripture and photos, the brochure is an inspiring snapshot of our life at FCC and beyond its doors.

Corinne Saidla, Committee Chair

REPORT OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee has one main task – to make sure we have the right people in the paid positions in our church, and to support them so they can be effective leaders with and among us. If we have great people on our staff this is an easy task for the Personnel Committee. We do have a great staff – so it has been a relatively easy year to serve on this committee!

We had one staff change over the last twelve months. Earlier this winter Steve Hafemeister resigned as the building manager / custodian. Steve Robe, a member of our congregation, filled in on a temporary basis after Steve Hafemeister left. The Personnel and Buildings and Grounds Committees were so impressed with his work and we were happy to learn he was interested in the position. He applied, we interviewed him, and he's now our Building Manager / Custodian!

Steve Robe's got a love for the church – a clean church – in his blood. Steve's dad was a church custodian, and Steve remembers many times helping dad with tasks around the church. Steve has an eye for detail, and a passion to do the job well. We are blessed to have found Steve right among us and sitting in the pews with us!

As good as Steve is, he is but one of many gifted and dedicated people who serve on our staff! Every Sunday we see a list of the name of our staff in the bulletin, and so often we take them for granted. When things are going well – and they almost always do on our staff – we sometimes forget how lucky and blessed we are. Indeed, we are blessed over and over by each one of these people!

As I said, the Personnel Committee has but one major task - to make sure we have the right people in the paid positions in our church, and to support them so they can be effective leaders with and among us. It is a pleasure to do so on behalf of the congregation!

The Personnel Ministry Group

Cyndi DeVoe, Cynthia Thorpe-Kavanaugh, Howard Blades, Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, Facilitator, Lurton Blassingame.

REPORT ON THE USE OF THE BUILDING

First Congregational Church facilities are used regularly by a number of groups from the Oshkosh Community. These groups include Emmaus Ecumenical Catholic Communion (EECC) the ZEN Buddha Group; Oshkosh Photography Club/Photoshop users group; ESTHER and the Day by Day Warming Shelter; Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gay; Oshkosh Suzuki Music; WINR; Wisconsin Council of Children & Families; Gymanfa Planning Group; Oshkosh Diversity Council; Grine-Fisher Recitals; UW-Oshkosh Horn Concert; Welsh Weekend; ½ Marathon Pasta dinner supporting Advocap; PEO; Call to Action Board; Christine Anne Center; Muslims for Life Interfaith Blood Drive; Oshkosh Chamber Singers; Senior Center Spanish Classes well as many member personal use events. The Centennial Celebration events have otherwise utilized the building more than normal and will continue to into 2012.

Cynthia Hunt, Office Administrator

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011 OF THE ADULT EDUCATION MINISTRY GROUP –

Members: Bethany Jorenby, Cheryl Hentz, David Jones, Val Williams, Nick Schneider, and Jim Paulson.

Co-Facilitators: Bethany Jorenby and Cheryl Hentz

Staff Liaison: Sandie Miller-Schreiter

We met several times over the summer to review our mission statement and consider how our mission can better help the church meet its ministry goals. Toward that end we put together many diverse programs throughout the year, several of which were well-attended and had paid nice compliments paid about them.

This year we tried something new whereby in addition to announcing upcoming programs in the bulletins, Member Bridge, Tidings and on the web site, we put together program guides that listed the weekly topics and offered a brief description of each. Guides covered 4 to 5 months of sessions at a time, allowing people to see in advance what was scheduled and when so they could make arrangements ahead of time to be there if they wanted to participate in something special.

We also had received requests to videotape sessions for those people involved in choir or church school who can never attend, or for those people who miss a session for whatever reason. In discussing this with Carol DBS before we made a final decision, she stated she felt it would be a good idea and suggested we put them on the church's web site, saying by doing that we wouldn't have to have people checking out a DVD and returning it for the next person who wanted to view it. It would be available for anyone to see at any time and we wouldn't have to keep buying DVDs either. The group thought these were all good reasons to move forward and a sample videotaped session was done in the fall. It turned out rather nicely so arrangements were made to begin taping weekly sessions at the start of 2012, with rare exceptions. With the church's new video camera, taping was made even easier and Joe W. is quickly able to get the video uploaded to the Internet. Program listings and a description of each are posted on the church's web site with links to each program.

While some of the programs are geared more toward FCC members there are also some that would be of interest to the general public. So Cheryl H. started promoting those types of Lifelong Learning programs in the Oshkosh Northwestern's Community Newsroom also. (In a cross-promotions move, this and the videotaping will ideally help bring in new members to the church, as people might see a session that want to attend, or see some of them on the Internet and want to check out FCC further. So these are things the New Member Development Ministry Group was happy about, as well.)

As in the past certain Sundays had no Lifelong Learning presentation because those were Together Sundays. However, newspapers continued to be provided every Sunday by David Jones for people who wanted to sit quietly and read before the start of worship.

There was some brief concern expressed by a few members about low attendance for some of the presentations, especially when the speakers were from outside the church. Attendance has historically been a problem at times throughout the years and there doesn't seem to be an easy "fix" to this problem. But the group encourages anyone with ideas on how to increase attendance to please contact one of the facilitators or Sandie Miller-Schreiter. People attending are also encouraged to bring others with them to the Lifelong Learning presentations. Failing that, it is believed that even though it would be wonderful to see a packed room, lack of attendance should not diminish the importance or the impact the presentation may have had for the people who did attend; and people, including presenters, should not be discouraged by low in-person attendance because their message is potentially being heard by a much larger audience through the ability to view past presentations on the Internet.

We continue to offer a weeknight opportunity for ongoing learning and spirituality, led by Bethany J. In late October/early November the Tuesday Night Bible Study group changed its name to Tuesday Night Spirituality Discussion Group, since they do much more than just study the Bible. They also started more heavily promoting their discussion topics, which resulted in several new people starting to come to the group, a few who weren't even FCC members. Average attendance is about 10-12. As a reminder to folks, every session is designed to be stand-alone, so if someone misses a week or joins after a session has already started, there is nothing for them to really catch up on and they can easily join in.

As a result of this growth, the Adult Ed Ministry Group is also encouraged by the movement by Buildings and Grounds toward making the building more accessible in the evenings, especially from the bell tower door. The building is very busy on several weeknights, Tuesdays being one of them, and on-street parking is at a premium. The only other option is walking from the church parking lot or the parking lot by Kitz & Pfeil to the eastern-most entrance on Algoma, but neither of these seem to be suitable options for people, particularly in winter months or during inclement weather, especially for those with mobility issues.

For our upcoming year, we still have several topics left over from this year and last that we were unable to get to, plus we may be sending out another survey to see what people are again interested in having during Sunday morning Life-long Learning, so that we can continue to explore how to better meet the needs of our congregation in this area.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Hentz

Adult Education Ministry Group Co-Facilitator

REPORT OF THE YOUTH MINISTRY GROUP

The youth ministry group is comprised of the following church members: Sandie Miller-Schreiter (staff support), Terry Thomas, Vickie Sheehan and Stacey Otto and Bridget and Eathan Thorpe-Kavanaugh. The group meets to plan events for the youth of the FCC and discover ways to make the youth feel welcome and accepted in the church family.

This year, we have held events for two age groups; middle and high-schoolers and 3rd through 5th graders. The middle and high schoolers have enjoyed events such as baking for the church bazaar, ringing bells for the Salvation Army and a 'Minute to Win it' game night. As always, the lock-ins are popular with this age group, and we have held two with themes of Service and We are all connected.

The 3rd and 5th grade group meets regularly and have held events including making Christmas crafts, swimming at the YMCA, pottery with Carol DiBiasio-Snyder and more. This group is supported by Dorry Wilner, Corinne Saidla and Nichole Hall with help from Sandie Miller-Schreiter.

The youth ministry group also organizes the annual mission trip. In 2011, the mission trip was to Rockford Illinois. Special thanks to Terry Thomas who took on extra responsibility in leading the trip. Thanks also to Eric Kropp and Mary Beth Bossert who were adult leaders on the trip.

We thank the members of the youth ministry group, the youth of the FCC and their parents for making the group successful. We welcome suggestions and new members.

REPORT OF THE CHURCH SCHOOL MINISTRY GROUP

Members: Lorie Hadel, McKenna Hadel, Amanda Hammond, Chris Hammond, Val Williams, and Corinne Saidla.

The Church School Ministry Group began preparations for the 2011-2012 church school year by recruiting teachers. Group members made personal phone calls to potential teachers and shepherds. Volunteers for the "Kid Vid" series during the summer and childcare were also recruited.

We didn't offer Vacation Bible School this year because Sandie Miller-Schreiter was on Sabbatical.

Sandie found a "new" program to use during the "Ready to Worship" program to get the children who do not stay during the sermon portion of the service more ready to stay in the church service. The children and adults are getting use to the new program.

The rotation format continues to be used for students in second through sixth grade. The preschool, kindergarten/first grade, middle school and high school continue the classroom approach. The same topics were used for the rotations as they were for the worship services. This seems to have been a good format.

The group continues to review Middle School curriculum for the 2011-2012 year. The group is looking for curriculum that is a good match theologically and is user friendly.

The group assisted with the organization of the Christmas Pageant i.e.: checking costumes in and out, assisting children with getting ready for the pageant.

The group did some revamping of the Church School rooms by using cloth and other materials to make the rooms more inviting to the children.

The group continues to schedule Toy Washes. This year, we have been washing the toys one day and then letting them air dry and putting them away a different day mostly Sunday mornings. This system seems to be working well.

The group continues to work on incorporating the Holy Conversations of encouraging and sharing into our ministry.

Corinne Saidla
Church School Ministry Group-

CHURCH LIBRARY REPORT

At the library we have added approximately 250 new items to the library. We have also had to weed out some older pieces to make room for new donations that you might give us. We are still hoping to increase our circulation. Remember any member or friend of the church may check books out. Just stamp the date on the card, write your name and put it in the front of the box. Materials are due in three months except for daily devotions which may be checked out for a year. Books can be returned in the return box. Please lift the lid of the return box. Please check Tidings for our recommendations each month and help our shelves by checking out books.

Joyce Frohn & Carol Henkle

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL COMMITTEE - 2011

Members: Dixie Laehn, Ann Marshall, Deanie Minnear, Maria Talin and Dorothy Unger

Friends and family members often give a monetary gift to the church in memory of a loved one. These gifts are put into a memorial fund account and the money is used to meet needs of the church that fall outside the operations budget. When appropriate, the family is consulted when use of their relative's memorial is being considered. Usually the money goes toward projects that will pay a lasting tribute.

In 2011 the family of our former custodian, John Jones, requested his memorial money be used for the Kitchen Refurbish Fund that has been established by Women's Fellowship. You may have noticed a new chandelier in the "handicap entrance" that matches the ones in the narthex. This was provided in memory of Orin Kutz and Barbara Lueck. Many of you will remember Geraldine Roels. With some of the money given in her memory a new Memorial Book was purchased and is available for viewing in the narthex.

The committee always welcomes suggestions for use of memorial monies. Contact any member of the committee and your proposal will receive consideration.

Ann Marshall

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP REPORT 2011

Karen LaBorde President, Deanie Minnear Vice President, Marilyn Ward Treasurer, Lynnel Arndt Recording Secretary, Kitty Day Corresponding Secretary, Nancy Norgord, Carol Henkle, Nancy Lloyd, Vonnie Cushman, and Chris Dempsey Team Members.

Women's Fellowship had a very busy as well as sad year during 2011. Two of our longtime members died this past year, Pat Kaprelian and Esther Bohlessen. In order to recognize the service of these two amazing women, the board gave gifts to both the kitchen fund and the Hope and Care Center of Oshkosh. These endeavors were important to Pat and Esther and the board felt it was a fitting way to pay tribute to both of them.

The church has been supported by Women's Fellowship in many ways during 2011. We have always sent flowers to those who are in the hospital. This year twelve bouquets were sent out. We also send get well cards, sympathy cards, Christmas cards, etc. This year a total of forty cards were sent. Altar flowers were given in memory of Adaline Choate, who set-up a fund for Women's Fellowship to use for benevolent purposes.

During 2011 money was given to the scholarship fund for the Women's Retreat. It is important for the women of the church and the friends to be able to attend the retreat and not be hampered by financial restraints. In this small way the board is able to help with the retreat.

In March of 2011 we hosted coffee hour. In 2012 we are increasing our participation to two times during the year. We also bought an industrial roll of foil for the kitchen downstairs to be used by who ever may need it.

Our efforts also include the community and larger area. Money was given to the Tornado and Flood Victims through the UCC fund. We also gave to the Community Back to School Fund. At Christmas we gave to the Hope and Care Center in honor of the wonderful staff that we have at FCC.

The main focus this past year and in the next several years will be on the remodeling of our very outdated church kitchen. In spring we held a plant sale which we hope to have again in 2012. The big money raiser for the kitchen was the FCC Fest in October. In November we provided bars, hot chocolate and coffee during the Gallery Walk jazz performance. December gave us the opportunity to sell Aunt Marnie's carmel corn again, for the benefit of the kitchen. Lastly two new women joined our board. They are Kitty Day and Vonnie Cushman. Thank you to everyone, we have worked extremely hard this year.

Karen Zentner LaBorde

REPORT OF THE WISCONSIN CONFERENCE MINISTER -- 2011

Grace and hope to you in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Thank you for the opportunity to be included in your congregation's annual report as a means of remaining connected and honoring our covenant through our four Associations, the Wisconsin Conference, national United Church of Christ, and a variety of UCC and ecumenical partners.

2011 has been one of the most challenging years in the now nearly 50 year history of the Wisconsin Conference, as we have lived into significant changes.

Association Transitions: The four Association offices have been closed and two regional Associate Conference Ministers now serve where we have had four Association Ministers. Association Moderators and divisions/teams have stepped up to take on much of the Association programming, and staff has begun to work in different ways to provide support to Church and Ministry Committees, Search and Call, and pastoral care. A "Common Life Team" made up of Association and Conference leaders met to provide feedback on changes and suggestions to help Associations work together more effectively. Moderators' conference calls have helped communication.

Support of Clergy: New groups were formed for clergy to work together on issues in their ministries and to offer intentional support and accountability. These groups are staffed with facilitators trained through the Samaritan Counseling Center. Two new groups have formed and two Development Groups in the Southwest Association continue. Association clergy are also forming new cluster and interest groups.

Lay spiritual Growth and Leadership: Lay Academy continues to draw together lay leaders from congregations to learn from some of the finest teachers in the UCC. We said 'good bye' to Gail O'Neal, who retired this year, but the program hasn't missed a beat under Debbie Payden's leadership. The energy in the building on the Friday/Saturday Lay Academy weekends is inspiring. Online courses in "UCC History and Polity" continue to be very popular. Youth events offer formation in the faith for teens in our congregations.

Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference brought us speakers from the "emerging church" and challenges to find ways to reach a rapidly changing culture. The Thursday prior to Annual Meeting focused on immigration and was led by UCC professor, Eleazar Fernandez of United Seminary. The 2012 Annual Meeting is June 8-10 at Green Lake Conference Center. The program is on interfaith understanding among Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The Thursday Seminar is at Pilgrim Center and will feature the UCC General Minister and President, Geoffrey Black.

Ecumenical Partnerships: We welcomed Christine Busch and Manfred Rekowsky to our Annual Meeting as representatives of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland in Germany. We signed a new ecumenical partnership agreement with this church that was the home to many of our UCC ancestors in the Evangelical and Reformed tradition. Conference representatives will be at the EKIR Synod in Germany in January 2012 to complete the signing of the agreement.

Church Development and Renewal: Training was offered to congregational teams from congregations seeking renewal, including workshops in "Five Practices" for renewal. We continue to support several intentional church renewal projects and the congregation of Grace UCC in Milwaukee. A disappointment for the year was the closing of the La Vina congregation in Waukesha. We continue to work with some of the members of that congregation in the hope of renewing a ministry with Latino Christians.

Outdoor Ministry: Both Pilgrim Center and Moon Beach Camp had full camping programs during the past summer and both sites continue to host full retreat schedules. Look for the camp brochures early in the year and sign up for the 2012 camping season.

General Synod: Our delegation represented us in Tampa as the UCC took historic action to move to a “unified governance” model for our national setting. This new structure will provide a more flexible decision-making process and significant financial savings. The Synod also elected three new officers for our church. Invite a General Synod delegate to visit your church and report.

Staff Transitions: The church is founded on relationships, beginning with our relationship to Christ and, through Christ, with one another. 2011 has been a year of so many staffing changes and changes in significant relationships in both the Conference and Associations. Two members of our support staff with more than 25 years of service each left the staff, Carol Martell in the Conference office and Carol Mirshak in the Southwest Association. Association Minister, Jeanny House, and Acting Association Minister, Karen Elizabeth King no longer serve with us in those roles. Gail O’Neal, the leader of our education and Lay Academy program, retired in the summer after 14 years of service. Each change brought the grief of loss of relationships.

While he is a member of the staff of United Church Camps, Inc., I want to mention with great appreciation Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, who was, for 26 years, the managing director of Pilgrim Center. Jeff will leave his ministry at the end of the year and will be deeply missed for his leadership and hospitality at the camp. Retiring at the end of 2011 is Southwest Association Minister, Bob Mutton. Bob has served the Conference and Association for 35 years. A lecture-ship in theology and the practice of pastoral ministry has been established in Bob’s honor, and the first event will be in 2012.

We have also been joined by new persons on our staff, welcoming Kent Ulery as the Associate Conference Minister working with the two southern Associations, Debbie Payden as Director of Lay Academy, and Deb Simon as Communications Director. I am very grateful to all of our staff. All have taken on additional work, and all have worked hard to make the new structures work and to continue service to churches.

Thank you for your ministry and especially for your support of Our Church’s Wider Ministry (OCWM) and the Special Offerings of the UCC and other special appeals. The heart of our UCC is the congregation, and I am grateful to live in covenant with you. Thank you especially for your prayers as we move forward together.

Wishing you many blessings.

David S. Moyer
Conference Minister

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CO-PASTORS
APRIL 22, 2012

We begin with thanks: Thanks to the welcoming, talented and open people who are this church; and thanks to God by whose gracious Presence we together have worshipped and served in Christ's name this past year.

The 100th Anniversary of our holy place – our sanctuary -- the William Waters masterpiece this congregation has the unique privilege of calling “home,” has spurred a variety of wonderful and inspiring activities this year.

The summer of 2011 saw the entire sanctuary repainted, and recarpeted, with much needed repairs of walls and pews accomplished along the way. The place where we worship looks as bright and inspiring as the day it was dedicated. In addition, major repairs were done in the tower, narthex, choir room and handicap entrance room. To cap it off, the 1911 pulpit was fully restored to its original glory.

Then too an enthusiastic Centennial Celebration Committee planned wonderful events through the year, from a “kick-off” dinner in the Fall to concerts through this spring. Chris Dempsey chaired this ambitious group, with Joanne and Thatcher Peterson taking the lead in the many great musical events.

In worship we sought to strike a balance between remembering the past and leaning toward the future. Bob Spalding, our pastor from 1977 to 1987, gave a great sermon in September, reflecting on those years and the outreach that marked the church then and now; Mick McCain, who grew up in this church, now a retired UCC pastor and missionary, inspired us by talking about how he learned “reverence” in our sanctuary; Erik Koepnick who attended FCC as a college student, and a recent graduate of Chicago Theological Seminary, invited us to worship in a ‘slam poetry’ style, and shared a wonderful message of hope; and Nels Kendell Nordstrom, son of Nels Francis Nordstrom who was our pastor from 1958 to 1971, delivered a moving and profound sermon about how his faith was formed by the sights, sounds, even smells of the sanctuary, but especially by the people of FCC as he grew up here.

The fall was a season of “listening” for us as a church. Two major activities – the stewardship campaign, with discussions held in 20 homes, and “More Holy Conversations,” with one-to-one interviews with 50 people – were designed to hear the values, concerns, questions and suggestions of the congregation. As we together seek to be a vital church in these changing and challenging times, the leadership of the church – professional and lay – want to hear what the congregation as a whole is saying and feeling. Of the many things heard was a reaffirmation that our two most prized attributes as a church are that we are welcoming to all, and we want our faith to always look outward to make a meaningful difference in the world.

Sunday morning worship this year has included “Together @ Ten” Sundays most months – when the whole congregation meets at 10:00 for worship that is especially “kid friendly.” And last fall our second “Servapoloosa” Sunday morning – when, after a brief worship time, everyone scatters to do various service projects around town, or in the building – had the added feature of including the Emmaus Catholics, the Ahmadya Muslim community, the Oshkosh synagogue, and the Zen Buddhists who meet at FCC. It was a wonderful interfaith experience!

With nearly every church in the land in these days of the Great Recession, FCC continued to face financial challenges in 2011. Significant shortfalls in 2009 and 2010 made us look more methodically and seriously at making the church sustainable in the coming years. The “Money Matters” group worked diligently to inform the entire congregation not only about finances, but also about the changing role of churches, and changing needs and expectations of people in these days. A series of communications – brief, but thorough – sent to the congregation responded to questions raised in the home stewardship meetings. And, as Moderator Jennifer Norden reports elsewhere, the congregation responded generously. That combined with significant cost savings allowed the church to close the books on 2011 with only a \$2,000 shortfall. In 2012 we will continue to seriously address the sustainability of the church for not just another year, but for years to come.

We have welcomed into our midst a number of new families this year, reflecting the church's value of being welcoming to all. Our being an Open and Affirming church has been a draw to many who, when asked why they first visited and then stayed, often put at the top of the list our welcoming atmosphere. Close behind is the congregation's openness to new ideas, diversity of thought, and honor of individuals' unique journeys. These two attributes are reflected in the phrase coined by Nels Nordstrom a half century ago: *Independent of Mind, and Open of Heart*. And as we say today: *Different Paths, Same Journey*.

The reputation of FCC in the community is that we are an active and progressive congregation that welcomes all and seeks to make a difference in society. FCC people can be found on many community betterment boards, from the Oshkosh Area Community Pantry, League of Women Voters, Boys and Girls Club, Day by Day Warming Shelter and more. We are honored to be part of this sort of faith community.

The church is fortunate to have a strong and dedicated staff, and we as your Co-pastors are grateful for each of them. Sandie Miller-Schreiter enjoyed a much deserved sabbatical, returning with fresh ideas to add to her excellent ministry. Tina Haffeman and Ginnie Sherer had their first almost-full year in their ministries, and we are grateful for the gifts they bring. Cynthia Hunt likewise has finished her first year, adding the duties of Financial Secretary to her Office Administrator responsibilities, and we are glad she is here. Kathy Jameson, Financial Secretary, for many years, and before that the church secretary as far back as Bob Spalding's days, left the staff, and we thank her for all that she did for the church for so long.

Our senior staff member, Joanne Peterson, continues her outstanding ministry of music. Joanne began with FCC in 1968, and her energy and love both for music and for people continues to grow. The music staff is completed by Christina Conn and Patrick Meyer, and we are grateful to them for all they do.

All the other staff – Joe Wiedenmeier (Media Ministry Coordinator), Theresa Brewer (Child Care Coordinator), Kevin Frank (Sunday Custodian), our newest staff member Building Manager Steve Robe (starting February 2012) and Wedding Coordinator Tania Harrison – these all are invaluable to the life of this church, and we thank them all.

The lay leadership of FCC continues to shine too. Moderator Jennifer Norden has done an excellent job, especially in leading the Money Matters work that is crucial for our future. And Treasurer Mary Beth Bossert in this transition year (fund transfers to the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, change of Financial Secretaries) has devoted many hours to her work for all of us. Clerk Sue Coghil has done special work this year updating our membership roles (we stand at 450); and Moderator-Elect Anne Romond has been very active with Ministry Council, Money Matters, and the Benevolence Ministry Group. To all our church leaders, but especially these church officers, we say "Thank you!"

Looking forward to the year ahead,

Ralph and Carol DiBiasio-Snyder, Co-pastors

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE TEACHING AND LEARNING MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

I am THRILLED to be writing my 8th report for the annual meeting. Working here is truly a blessing to me. I am honored to be able to support the Teaching and Learning efforts here at First Congregational and I am excited about the opportunities for the upcoming year.

This was my Sabbatical year and the time away was rejuvenating and re-energizing. During my time away, I was able to spend time with family and friends, including a trip to Alaska to see my friend Becky Black and time with my grandson who was born in April. I also visited other churches, attended seminars, started some spiritual direction and read books on nurturing faith at home. Our Ready for Worship time at 10:00 has changed because of an idea I learned about during Sabbatical and I am sure other changes will come from that time away as well.

I would like to thank Vicki Sheehan for being the interim Church School Coordinator while I was away and Terry Thomas who took on additional responsibility for the youth mission trip. Thanks also to many others who covered for me while I was away.

Theresa Brewer, our Child Care Coordinator, has been on staff for over four years now. Thank you Theresa and the adult volunteers that provide care in the nursery and toddler rooms. Having a staff person to be with our children each week during the Church school year has brought consistency to the Nursery and help make it a warm and welcoming place to our youngest.

This is our second year of Together Sundays. We continue to try new ways to meet the spiritual needs of our children, youth and adults.

Pumpkin Caroling and Christmas caroling was shared with Ginnie Sherer and Christina Conn. These events bring joy to both the singers and our home-bound friends/members.

Thank you to all who have participated in the life of the Teaching and Learning Ministries! I look forward to continuing our ministry together in the upcoming year.

With much Gratitude,
Sandie Miller-Schreiter
Teaching and Learning Ministries Coordinator

REPORT OF THE LAY MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

Over 90 members of FCC used their spiritual gifts to serve on ministry groups, committees and temporary task forces over the last year. This congregation can be proud of the large number of members will to devote time and energy to maintain the vitality for which FCC is known.

This year, in addition to the traditional ministry groups, there were a number of special committees and task forces who worked on a short term and/or one time basis. These included: Servapalooza, More Holy Conversations, Centennial, Women's Retreat, and Money Matters.

As of this writing, the 2013 Nomination Committee is in full swing to gather members for the 2012-13 year. Nominating committee members are: Maria Talin, Karen Bowen, Cheryl Hentz, Gary Wilner, and Anne Romond. A list of new Ministry Group members in new booklet form, will be available at annual meeting.

The Adult Spiritual Gifts Inventory was revised and given 4 times in the last year at new member classes. The youth version was given to the Confirmation class last spring.

I continue to be gratified by the willingness of members at FCC to serve the church community with strong commitment and faith

Tina Haffeman

REPORT OF THE CHANCEL CHOIR DIRECTOR AND ORGANIST - 2012

The Chancel Choir sings regularly from September through May.

Regular Chancel Choir members were Terry Thomas, Bridget Thorpe-Kavanaugh, Bethany Estrada, Nancy Lloyd, Karen LaBorde, Judy DeBroux, Pat Dwyer-Hallquist, Darcy Duffy, Vernice Haase, Carol Niendorf, Jacki Mueller, Cathy Wille, Ed Schneider, Patrick Meyer, George Coghill, Doug Henkle, Eric Kropp, Thatcher Peterson, and Art Wille. Jen Stellflug rejoined, Doug Pire joined, and Nancy Lloyd retired from the Chancel Choir.

Both Christina Conn, our Angel Choir Director, and Bridget Duffy provided competent and musical substitution for the Choir Director and Organist throughout the year. Kathleen McGregor substituted during summer absences. Organ scholarship students Ellie Thomas and Noah Bossert also provided service as organists and pianists for summer worship.

The Choir performed John Stainer's *Crucifixion* at Eastertime with UWO students Jon Westbrook, bass, and Jonathan Delray, tenor. With the middle school choir of four, the Choir performed Advent anthems from *100 Carols for Choirs*, edited by Sir David Willcocks, (and, as a matter of obscure music history, ordered by him specifically for the Chancel Choir, on account of his connection with First Congregational Church of Oshkosh: he twice conducted choirs here as part of the Green Lake Festival of Music; I sang in those choirs for 20 years under his direction; and we visited at his open house in Cambridge, England, on December 23, 1993.)

Respectfully submitted,
Joanne Peterson
Chancel Choir Director & Organist

FAITH RINGERS/ HANDBELL CHOIR

This year presented itself with a variety of ways the bells were used in worship. Many were of them wound up getting pretty involved. In February, we collaborated with the Chancel Choir and performed “May the Peace of the Lord”. March’s selection was a beautiful piece entitled “Meditation of Lord I Want to be a Christian” by my friend Sandra Eithun. Jim Grine was our featured soloist on flute. Easter’s anthem was a pure joy—entitled “Easter Joy” it featured many handbell techniques and used chimes, too. It was just pure fun to play.

November and December were our busiest month. “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” was an ambitious bit of music arranged by Joel Raney and Arnold Sherman. It not only featured handbells, but organ, piano (Tanya Paulson), the Chancel Choir, and our congregation. It certainly kept all of us “on our toes” that Sunday morning! Christmas Eve’s included Cynthia Dubrinski’s “Adeste Fidelis”, our opening hymn (Bells, organ, Chancel Choir, & Congregation), “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” (Bells, organ, & Chancel Choir), and an old standard, “In the Bleak Midwinter”.

In May, the handbell choir had a potluck meal. At that time, I related to everyone there that the bells and chimes might have the possibility of being refurbished. And, so they were in July. They were packed up and sent to Malmark in Pennsylvania—a three to four week process. They were beautiful and sounded great. It had been 12 years in September since we purchased the bells. This process was well overdo.

Another big reason for having this done was our Centennial Celebration. The goal was to have the bells worked on and back in time to have practices begin on the work I had written “This Joyous Celebration”. September’s performance was all ready to go, but there was a snag in all our planning. One of our ringers was very ill and could not play. I was already playing one part, and I had exhausted all my ringers on my list that could step in and play on short notice. They looked great on display on the tables, but when you have holes in your choir, you can’t perform. Hopefully you will finally hear it in the fall.

As you can see, the bell choir finally has a name—Faith Ringers. In essence, we are ringing our faith.

The Handbell Musicians of America has an accredited director’s forum that I started this summer. There a three levels of certification and I am well into the first level being completed.

Goals for the coming year are to develop the chime choir for grades 2-5, and spark an interest in a middle school/sr. high bell choir.

The members of our ensemble included: Tony Hangst, Thom Hadel, Barbara Ziblut, Danny & Emily Schiel, Pat Nichols, Patrick Meyer, Pat Hallquist, Andrea Schneider, & Paula Allen. Members of Encore! Handbell Ensemble—Emily Loper, Darcy Duffy—also, added their talents.

I wish to thank you all for your dedication and service to this congregation!

Respectfully Submitted,
Patrick W. Meyer
Faith Ringers Handbell Choir Director

REPORT OF THE ANGEL CHOIR DIRECTOR

This year's Angel Choir members are Alice Rioux, Elizabeth Frohn-Hengst, Claire Veard, Anna Wiedman, Sianna Robe, and McKenna Haedl, Kassie Herring and Brandon and Ethan Moench. Angel Choir has been accompanied by Ellie Thomas and Noah Bossert on piano this year and the choir has even sung a cappella! Our Angel Choir room looks a little different this year with the addition of some wooden risers. Along with our floor space and chairs, the room is wide open for a range of activities including movement and music games.

Our Middle School Choir members include Sydney Hall, Martha Becker, Ellen Otto, and Kiera Robe. We are still trying to find a more fitting name for our group, since two of it's members are in 5th grade and not middle school just yet. Because Angel Choir is such a young group this year, with lots of first and second graders, the older choir was a better fit for our 5th graders.

Our tradition of pumpkin caroling and Christmas caroling continued this year and we spread some holiday cheer to folks who weren't able to make it in to church. Sandy Miller-Schreiter and Ginnie Sherer also helped coordinate both caroling events by organizing a list of people and figuring out our caroling routes. This year our pumpkin caroling took place during Servapalooza and Christmas caroling was right after church instead of on a Wednesday evening. Because of other opportunities available during Servapalooza and conflicts and illness in December, our caroling numbers were smaller this year, but those that went had a great time! We will wrap up our singing season on Mother's Day with a song for our Moms.

Christina Conn
Angel Choir Director

LITURGICAL MOVEMENT CHOIRS:

We have two liturgical movement choirs here at First Congregational.

The youngest choir - Faith in Motion - consists of 6 girls and 2 boys, ranging in age from Kindergarten through sixth grade.

The older choir - Dancing Spirit - consists of 6 girls ranging from middle school through college.

The calendar of performances for 2011 was:

1) February 6th - Dancing Spirit and Faith in Motion (9 girls) performed with Bryan Sirchio as he sang "Something Beautiful for God" This was quite an honor and a great experience for the girls to perform with a live solo vocalist.

2) February 20th - Faith in Motion (10 little girls) performed the "Gaelic Benediction" with our own adult choir.

3) May 1st - Faith in Motion (11 little girls) again performed the "Gaelic Benediction"

4) November 13th - Faith in Motion (6 girls & 2 boys) performed a jazz dance "Ode to Joy" from Sister Act II. Followed by the Dancing Spirit Choir (6 girls) who performed "I Will Follow Him" from Sister Act I.

5) December 18th - Both choirs performed together, dancing to Charlotte Church - "Ding Dong Merrily on High"

I thought it was a very exciting year for both choirs. We did get 2 boys to dance with us and hopefully we can get more in the future,

As always, it is a pleasure for me to work with the youth of FCC.

Respectfully submitted by,
Missy Allen