

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Church on the Hill

United Church of Christ
Lenox, Massachusetts

*Led by the Holy Spirit, this congregation is committed to
being Christ's disciples in the community.*

Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 26, 2025

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Order of Annual Meeting

The Church on the Hill
The United Church of Christ in Lenox
January 28, 2023

The Warrant for the Meeting Emily Johnson, Clerk
The Declaration of a Quorum Emily Johnson, Clerk
Moment of Prayer Pastor Liz Goodman

Moment of Silence for Deceased Members and Friends of the Congregation



Susan McNinch
Cathleen “Sweetie” Nolan

*For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who to the world their steadfast faith confessed,
Your name, O Jesus, be forever blessed,
Alleluia! Alleluia!*

Article I: Acceptance of minutes of previous Annual Meeting held on January 28, 2024

Article II: Acceptance of reports of 2024 as printed in the Annual Report

Article III: Adoption of the 2025 budget

Article IV: Election of officers, boards, and committees

Article V: Finance Committee’s proposed Amendment in Endowment Funds Policy

Transaction of any other business that may legally come before the meeting

Benediction

Minutes of Previous Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting minutes
January 28, 2024

Members present: Bob Gardiner, Terry Weaver, Emily Johnson, Carol Powell, John Powell, Amy Chin, Arthur Oliver, Mark Farrell, Liz Goodman, Louise McCue, Ticki Winsor, Peter Metz, Ellen Merritt, Jesse Goodman, Davis Dyer, Quentin Chin, Allegra Chin, Carol Maynard, Emily Wilson, Susan Foulds

Meeting was called to order at 12:03pm.

Article I: all in favor of accepting minutes from last year's meeting

Article II: all in favor of accepting the annual reports

Article III: Had a surplus in 2023, we are looking at a very modest deficit in 2024. Carol Powell had a correction to the printed budget, listing "Actual 2023" instead of "Actual 2024." Davis Dyer agreed on the correction. All in favor of approving the budget for 2024.

Article IV: all in favor of approving the slate of officers

Article V: Amy Chin presented the bylaws, reminding the congregation that the bylaws are a living document and ever changing with our church. We have added a listing of "associate members" who will now be allowed to serve on committees and can vote in congregational meetings. An associate member will retain their membership in their primary church. Quentin suggested a clarification to add "and associate members" to the voting privileges, but it was decided to accept the bylaws as is with small corrections to be voted on next year as needed. We have also added a term limit to the treasurer's position; this states that the treasurer will be elected for a two-year term and no more than two consecutive terms. The collector position has been eliminated and the role has been added to the assistant treasurer position; this will require the assistant treasurer's role to always be filled. The final big change is updating the continuity of ministry of our church and organizing how we make decisions about the changes in our church. We wanted to add a spiritual aspect to the wording to include discussions on how we will spread our monetary gifts faithfully if we ever decide to become a legacy church. Discussion was had about adding wording in the bylaws about members voting virtually or by proxy. Liz explained that the council has been working to keep the bylaws concise and "lean and mean" without adding too many specifics.

Other business: Carol Powell thanked Ticki Winsor for all her years and wisdom on the board of trustees. Even in the years where there was a small committee. Amy Chin thanked all the outgoing committee members, and especially John Powell for his work as moderator.

Liz announced that the Monterey Church has voted to put their building on the market, a heartbreaking but liberating experience for Liz. The Monterey congregation will continue meeting, but they will not have a traditional meeting house building.

Meeting was called to a close at 12:30pm.

Emily Johnson
Clerk

Reports

Clerk's Statistical Report

Active Membership as of 1/1/2024	66
Baptisms	0
Weddings	0
Confirmed into Membership	5 Arturo Bagley David Benzenhafer Emily Benzenhafer Jenny Daily Lucy Kennedy
Letters of Transfer	0
Welcomed into our Fellowship	0
Deaths	1 Susan McNinch
Friend of the Church	0
Moved/Transfers	0
Total Active Membership as of 12/31/2024	70

Report of the Pastor

2024 started off hard, with Susan McNinch's death. A life-long member of this church, and one who was very active here in her adulthood, "Sue Sue" was less a presence at church in recent years, but her funeral indicated that her life was bound up in this town and this congregation.

From that monumental occasion, we moved into what I'm beginning to feel as the regular yearly routines of this congregation. January has us focused on the year that was and the year ahead, February brings the blessings of worship in the chapel and a Valentine's Day celebration there, March has us looking to the summer and filling up the schedule at the meeting house.

Round and round. I love it!

2024 was also the year I took on many of the jobs in the church that would have been done by a separate staff person. With lots of help from Becky, our finance administrator, I served as the church administrator. And with the position of sexton being filled by a young person who needs more managing and backing up than Jenn ever did, I'm helping out with building tasks as well. This is all with an eye for where I imagine we'll be as a congregation in five years, with more activity in our buildings that the congregation neither generates nor manages. Then, I imagine we'll want a full-time manager of the building(s) and the pastoral role will become more in line with what's traditionally been the case.

As for what has traditionally been the case, I outline here what those tasks are:

Leading Worship

My highest priority any given week is preparing for and leading worship. I believe the worship life of a congregation is its beating heart and therefore deserves a lot of planning and attention. This

generally takes about 5 hours a week and contemplating and eventually writing the sermon generally takes me about 10. (These are hours largely shared with Monterey.)

Committee work

I attend monthly meetings of the Council, Deacons, and Trustees. This tends to be 4-5 hours per month. I'm also active with the Friends of the Meeting House, not technically a church committee now that it's a separate 501(c)(3) with its own board of officers. But the pastor will always be an important person in that group. We tend to meet weekly for an hour.

Communication (Hilltopics, web site, bulletin, email messages, podcast, etc.)

Messaging with the congregation and wider public generally takes about 10-15 hours a month.

Pastoral Care

This is as need or requested. As I do every year, I remind you of my availability for care however it might be needed. I also encourage people to let me know when a pastoral emergency arises. Never assume I already know or someone else has already told me.

Faith Formation

The (both-church) book club, which meets on Zoom, has been active all year. We read *The Wisdom Jesus, Christianity's Surprise*, sermons of Martin Luther King, and a commentary on Gospel of John. This is about 2-3 hours per week.

Administrative Odds and Ends

The buildings have become steadily more in demand from outside groups. The meeting house tends to be busiest May-Oct while the chapel is the opposite, Oct-May. This takes about 1-5 hours per week. I print bulletins generally on Saturdays, and get the sanctuary ready for worship then. During the cold months in the MH, this is when I turn the heat on for worship as well. I keep the phone book up to date as we go, making changes as needed. Most in-coming messages to the church and/or its pastor come through email and not phone, but I do check the phone messages every other day at least. I've gotten used to the schedule of the annual building inspection and all it requires. I "manage" our staff more than in the past, our sexton becoming a position intended to train a young person in the ways of the world of work.

Conclusion

This year might well have been exemplary of the "new normal." After a decade of change in leadership, loss of membership, and a pandemic, we might finally have found our footing as a congregation, 2024 enjoying the presence of five new members and associate members while renewing long-time Church on the Hill traditions and tendencies. I look back with appreciation and gratitude.

Faithfully submitted,
Rev. Liz Goodman

Report of the Music Minister

2024 was a year uninterrupted by Covid. Neither Liz nor I missed a service because of it, although the first service of the year, on Jan. 8, was canceled due to snow (on the day after a funeral that was attended by nearly 300 people). Unfortunately, your intrepid Minister of Music was felled for 2 weeks in April by a case of MRSA, which included 5 days in the hospital. This came just a few weeks after missing 2 Sundays in April while I was in Scotland. Thanks once again to Church on the Hill's reliable subs, Emily Johnson and Peter Metz.

The year began, a week late, with Jack Brown's annual appearance, always a memorable event. But, in Feb., we commenced what has so far been a monthly appearance by singer Maureen O'Flynn, who agreed to this schedule in exchange for using the chapel for voice lessons. We also had some guest musicians over the summer, two Sundays in July featured performances by students from nearby Belvoir Terrace, the end of August we were visited by the Berkshire Hillsmen.

This Christmas was the first one I've missed since joining the Church on the Hill staff (visiting in-laws in Mexico!) Thanks again to Peter, and especially Emily, for leading the Christmas Eve service.

Here's to an uninterrupted 2025!

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Fitzhugh

Report of the Moderator

We have been called “a small but mighty church” and “a small congregation with a big heart.” We are all of those and more. We are an active, engaged, passionate group of Jesus’s followers who care deeply about Church on the Hill and each other.

2024 was a full and fulfilling year of mission and ministry. We hosted summer concerts in the Meeting House, gave space to several groups for rehearsals and performances including the Berkshire Music School Orchestra and BUTI. Our chapel was buzzing all year with a diverse group of renters enjoying the comfort and beauty of our spaces including Women of Spirit, Walking our Talk, Elder Ensemble, Devising Theatre en Español, the Berkshire Association, teen ensemble art weekend, Berkshire Children’s Chorus retreat, Gyro-kinesis, Café Français, Kinetic Movement, AA, voice lessons with our artist in residence, and Qi Gong. And of course, the WAM theatre offices and rehearsal space in our fellowship hall.

It was great to get back into the swing of having church suppers again. This year we had four gathering meals – a wonderful Indian meal made by our own Rox David, a summer picnic on the lawn outside the Meeting House, our annual Maundy Thursday meal and Tenebrae service and the Harvest Supper in October. Thank you to all who made these happen. All the preparations for a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper and celebration were set to go but our Berkshire weather put a halt on that one. We’ll try again in 2025.

We were fortunate to host many guest musicians in our Sunday worship including Jack Brown, Belvoir Terrace, BUTI, the Berkshire Hillsmen, and Berkshire Lyric Melodious Accord, as well as a trombonist on Christmas Eve. In addition, we were so pleased to have our artist in residence, professional singer Maureen O’Flynn, provide beautiful and moving vocal performances almost every month. These musicians and our faithful music minister, Charlie Fitzhugh, enhance our worship time and provide a holy backdrop for Liz’s thought-provoking, edifying, and inspiring sermons.

For the first time a group of us from Church on the Hill, myself, Ellen Merritt, Mark Farrell, Bob Gardiner, and Liz Goodman, joined members of many of the churches in our community to march with the hundreds of others in the Berkshire Pride Parade. It was an uplifting experience, and we all enjoyed it. I recommend that many others join us next June.

Church on the Hill, United Church of Christ

Five new members and associate members joined our church in 2024 - Jenny Daily, Lucy Kennedy, Emily and Dave Benzenhafer, and Arturo Bagley. We welcome them and their gifts to our congregation. In addition, I'd like to thank Holly Benzenhafer for filling the pulpit in Liz's absence. It is always a pleasure to hear Holly's sermons and to listen to a different perspective.

Also in Sunday worship, we gave a rousing and joyful send-off to Jack Goodman as he left for college in the fall and we celebrated John Powell for his lifetime of service to Church on the Hill ably and faithfully serving in so many capacities over the last 30 plus years as moderator, trustee, deacon, lay visitation, nominations, missions, cleanup crews, and all the many ad hoc volunteer functions throughout the years, always signing up to provide a helping hand and bring supplies. I thank John for providing all of us with a model of faithful service in Jesus's name.

One of the new features we began this Advent season was an Advent Vespers, three Wednesday evenings of sharing spiritual practices. We were so blessed to have Emily Benzenhafer, Emily Wilson, and Peter Metz bring their personal stories to life. Emily B shared her incredible journey through Scotland on a spiritual pilgrimage. Emily W. explained for us the intricate details (that we never noticed before) of her exquisite quilt that hangs in our worship space (whether Meeting House or Chapel). We were fascinated by the truly spiritual thought and labor that Emily gave in creating all the pieces of the quilt even down to the quilt stitching designs. We were treated to the beautiful piano performance by Peter Metz and his description of how his playing is a spiritual experience for him. He described his process of choosing music, his practice sessions, and the joy of mastering a piece of music along with a brief history of the selected pieces by Debussy and Chopin. I hope that more people can join us next year as we continue to grow this marvelous program of sharing our own spiritual gifts. What a joy it was.

Our capital campaign committee formed a 501(c)(3) organization - The Friends of the Lenox Meeting House - and have really become a cohesive working group accomplishing so much this year from winning some important grants to solidifying the plans for our Meeting House to raising funds from local community members who are passionate about the preservation of the building. I would like to thank all the members of the Friends, Janice McCormick, president, Dave Dyer, Susan Foulds, Lucy Kennedy, Peter Metz, Dan Bross, and Liz Goodman. Each member has worked tirelessly in their own capacities. I want to especially recognize Janice who, with Dave's help, has done the yeomen's job of writing grants, organizing house parties, keeping track of income, and bringing in much needed funds for this project. The tower restoration is well underway, and the priceless original clockworks are on display in our sanctuary thanks to their efforts.

I am filled with joy at the gathering of the holy spirit that is present in each and every member and friend of the Church on the Hill. I would like to thank those her serve on committees, who volunteer for the many activities we participate in, for those who bring food and beverage to Sunday fellowship and who bake and cook, set up and clean up, plan and decorate for all our gatherings throughout the year. I am grateful for the honor of being your moderator and thankful that we are God's people doing good and faithful work in ministry to our church. Finally, I would like to thank Liz, our spiritual leader, who empowers us to walk in Jesus's path through her sermons, bible study, book study, special services and activities, expertly leading us into the future.

Faithfully and respectfully submitted by,

Amy Chin
Moderator

Report of the Diaconate

It was a very good year at Church on the Hill. In 2024, our faith community reveled in celebration, song, camaraderie, and joy. The Deacons welcomed five new members to our congregation, two of whom are our first Associate Members. The Board of Deacons determined that these members join us with "distinction with no difference", but with full participation in all church activities. They bring to us an abundance of experience, love and joy. Our new members include Arturo Bagley, David and Emily Benzenhafer, Lucy Kennedy, and Jenny Daily.

Memories were made this year with our musical offerings in worship, thanks to Charlie Fitzhugh, our Music Director, and those who helped arrange these performances. We enjoyed Jack Brown, the Belvoir Terrace musicians and vocalists, the Berkshire Hillsmen, Emily Johnson, Peter Metz, Amy and Allegra Chin, and the Melodius Accord choir among others. Of special note are the offerings of our Artist-in-Residence Maureen O'Flynn, well known opera singer, who has graced our Sunday services with her glorious voice. Thanks to deacon Arthur Oliver for bringing Maureen's involvement to the Church. As we enjoyed these performances, the Deacons considered the appropriateness of applause during worship and concluded that there should be no "rule" for this and we should react "as the spirit moves us".

For Lent, the Deacons provided Lenten Devotional booklets. An Ash Wednesday service was held in the Chapel. Palms were provided for Palm Sunday. A very successful soup and bread supper and worship service on Maundy Thursday was prepared and hosted by the Deacons and Liz. This event seems to only grow in popularity each year it is offered.

Our Easter service this year, though early in the spring, was made especially meaningful with the inclusion of Maureen's singing and the bountiful spring flowers so capably managed by Susan Foulds.

The Deacons instituted a Policy for Inclement Weather if predicted for Sunday worship services. It was decided that if a storm warning is predicted, the Pastor, Moderator, and Deacons Chair will decide by 4:00PM on Saturday if Sunday worship will be in person or by Zoom. All will be notified by Liz through email beforehand.

Traditional special services were recognized by the Deacons for both Mother's and Father's Day with the distribution of flowers on both occasions. Our flamboyant celebration of Pentecost Sunday with banners, flag waving and everything red was observed again this year, as well as an "International Dinner" hosted by the Deacons and our friend Rox David who provided not only her native dishes from India for us but also explained some of her faith experiences and family traditions. What a delightful evening we shared together! A robust Harvest Dinner, hosted by the Deacons, celebrated the conclusion of our Stewardship campaign, following an outdoor picnic on a windy September Sunday organized by our Moderator, Amy Chin and our Pastor, Liz.

Opportunities for fun, fellowship, and faith abounded with the camaraderie experienced this year at Church on the Hill.

The Deacons decided to discontinue our annual Ecumenical Thanksgiving service next year due to a lack of significant participation from the Lenox community this year in particular, although attendance and support have been diminishing in the last several years, despite Liz's outreach.

Our observance of Advent concluded the year with a variety of activities, both new and traditional. Deacons provided Advent Devotional booklets, hosted our annual cookie exchange, and aided Liz in our Community Christmas Eve service. We appreciate the efforts of Susan Foulds in providing

the poinsettia plants for this service. Ellen Merritt, deacon, lead the congregation in providing gifts for those in need in our community in this season. In addition, the Meetinghouse was resplendent with decorations, an Advent wreath generously provided by John and Carol Powell, and a series of weekly Advent meetings arranged by Pastor Liz, which included presentations by Church members telling of their personal spiritual practices: Emily Wilson, quilting; Emily Benzenhafer, a pilgrimage journey; and Peter Metz playing piano selections. These were memorable experiences for all who attended. Thank you to our presenters.

Providing liturgists and hosting refreshments for each worship service continues to be a weekly function of the Board of Deacons; this year Liz added a volunteer sign-up sheet to our website. Deacons provided assistance to our Pastor for several funerals this year in addition to serving communion on the first Sunday of the month. The Deacons instituted a practice of sending hand written notes to members and friends of our congregation with whom we wanted to share our thoughts, prayers, congratulations, and love.

It feels as if the spirit of hospitality and abundance have surely moved among us this year as we continue to honor beloved traditions and find new ways to fulfill our commitments to each other and the wider community. We are especially appreciative of Rev. Dr. Holly Benzenhafer who has so graciously and lovingly lead many of our worship services. To Emily Wilson, Deacon, a huge and heartfelt thank you for your dedication to Church on the Hill. I am honored and humbled to have had the opportunity to work with my fellow Deacons: Ellen Merritt, Arthur Oliver, and Emily Wilson. I, and all of the Deacons, recognize the extraordinary blessing of having our Pastor Liz Goodman as our spiritual guide. Thank you to everyone.

Respectfully submitted,
Louise McCue

Report of the Trustees

The Trustee Committee in 2024 consisted of Peter Metz, Jessee Goodman, Carol Maynard and Carol Powell, Chairperson.

In 2024 Davis Dyer, treasurer and Becky Jankowski, bookkeeper, with suggestions from the trustees simplified and shortened the budget. There are now two large categories under expenses, Worship and Outreach and Administration and Assets. All of the line items fit under one of these categories.

Capital Campaign money has been separated from The Church on the Hill budget into a Fidelity Money Market.

One of the biggest moves we made this year in our endowment is to move the Goessel gift out of restricted category to unrestricted. This move was done after contacting the Goessels' daughters and determining that to restrict the use of the money was never the intention of Bill Goessel, Moving the money into unrestricted category gives us more flexibility to use the money where most needed. It has also been decided to only take out of the endowment the amount needed to balance the budget and not money the endowment policy allows us to if not needed.

These changes will be added to the Statement of Investment Policy once the congregation votes on it.

Repairs made to the Chapel this year is a water leak, and the Chapel ceiling from he water leak. A walkway was installed on the roof to make it easier to access the roof and the bell.

The Church's round window inside, had the plaster edge repainted. Restoration on the clock and the steeple have been completed. The clock has been automated and the original mechanism has been brought downstairs to the sanctuary to be on display. Rentals of the Church have picked up this past year. BUTI (Boston University Tanglewood Institute continues to rent the space for their summer concerts. Some new conditions have been put in place. There will be a walkthrough after their rental is finished to access any damage done, any extra administration costs are BUTI's responsibility, and additional concert time meets our standard contract. Besides BUTI, the Birch Society, Robert Morrison, and Berkshire Music school have used the sanctuary for concerts.

Maureen O'Flynn, a professional opera singer, sings at service once a month and at special services in exchange for space in the Chapel to teach students.

In our Chapel our rentals continue, BUTI continues to rent the space as well as the for their summer program. Our weekly groups continue to rent our space as well as the single time rentals. WAM (Where Arts & Activism Meet) still are our permanent renters of the downstairs.

I personally want to thank Peter Metz, Jessee Goodman and Carol Maynard fellow Trustees for all their time, work and input throughout the year. Davis Dyer our Treasurer, Mark Farrell Assistant Treasurer and Becky Jankowski, our bookkeeper who have attended our meetings and patiently answered all our questions on the budget.

A big thank you to Liz Goodman, our pastor, for her continued guidance and support.

Respectively submitted,
Carol Powell, chairperson

Report of the Treasurer

As you can see from the accompanying budget, we finished 2024 with a sizeable surplus. A word of explanation is in order.

When we set up the budget a year ago, we treated one of our investment funds—the Physical Assets Fund—as restricted income to support repairs and maintenance (including utilities) at the Meeting House and Chapel. Because significant repairs were not required this year, we did not use all the funds automatically withdrawn and sent to us, which is the primary cause of the budget surplus. An additional important factor is that we began 2024 with a surplus of nearly \$7,000 carried over from 2023.

In January 2025, the Trustees voted to return much of the surplus to the endowment, while also using a portion to pay for the relocation of the historic mechanical clockworks from the Tower to the Sanctuary, and also carrying over a modest amount of funds to help manage cash flow during 2025.

As noted in the Investment Committee report, during the year we learned that the Goessel gift in 2017, which we used to establish the Physical Assets Fund, was never intended to be restricted. It

has now been consolidated with the Operating Fund and the combined draw appears in the Unrestricted Income budget for 2025. The Trustees voted to withdraw less than the full amount available but enough to produce a budget close to balanced with a very modest surplus forecast for the year.

Other items of note in 2024:

- The integration of the traditional Collector's responsibilities with those of the Treasurer went well thanks to the hard work of Becky Jankowski and helpful and timely support from Amy Chin.
- Feedback on the simplified and reorganized budget adopted last year has been positive as it has proved both easier to maintain and easier to track for those who oversee it.
- We enjoyed healthy income during 2024 not only because of the endowment but also because, as evident in the Collections Report, nearly all the pledge income forecast for the year came in on time. In addition, at the end of the year, we received several unsolicited gifts that were unusually generous. Rental income was down slightly from the budgeted total but still contributed importantly to our financial results.
- On the expense side, we overshot the budget for administrative personnel. In my view, this resulted from inadequate understanding of the complexity of the administrative assignments when the 2024 budget was put together a year ago. We now have a more realistic picture of what's involved, and I expect 2025 expenditures in this category to fall within the budgeted amount—or at least closer to it.
- We underspent on a few items last year, most notably in the Trustees' budget, where spending allocated funds either proved difficult — we were unable to obtain an outside auditor, for example—or unnecessary (stewardship supplies were donated by a volunteer).
- Finding an auditor remains an ongoing challenge, given that it has been several years since the last audit. This should be a priority for the Trustees and the Treasurer next year.

Looking ahead to 2025, the proposed budget forecasts a very small surplus. (Please note that the budget presented here is condensed and simplified and that members of the congregation are welcome to see a more detailed version — just ask.) The projected surplus is due not only to the endowment, a partial carry-over of the 2024 surplus, and rental income but also to the annual generosity of our members and friends — a cause for annual celebration.

Finally, with the annual meeting in January 2025 I conclude two years of service as Treasurer. One of the glories of congregational churches is that many people pitch in to help when needed, often without prompting and never with hesitation. My work benefited greatly from the support of Becky Jankowski, our dedicated and meticulous bookkeeper, Mark Farrell, assistant treasurer, Carol Powell, chair of the Trustees, Amy Chin, moderator, Jesse Goodman, chair of the Finance Committee, and, of course, Rev. Elizabeth Goodman. I thank all of them for making my life easier this year. I'm certain that my successor, Arturo Bagley, can look forward to similar support and encouragement.

Respectfully submitted,
Davis Dyer, Treasurer

Report of the Memorial Committee

The Memorial Committee was once again dormant, in spite of the goal to reconstitute itself and to continue in its work. We'll reset that as a goal for the coming year.

Faithfully submitted,
Liz Goodman on behalf of the Mem. Com.

Report of the Friends of the Lenox Meeting House (once known as the Capital Campaign Committee)

During 2024, the Friends of the Lenox Meeting House, Inc. (FLMH) came into being to oversee fundraising and renovation of the church-owned Meeting House. As such, FLMH succeeds the former Capital Campaign Committee, which had organized two years ago to raise money and implement the Master Plan approved by the congregation in 2021.

FLMH fully embraces the high-level mission to make the Meeting House a community asset as well as a home of continuing worship. To this end, FLMH is focusing on three objectives: *preservation* of the building; improving *accessibility*; and opening the building to the *community*.

Notable accomplishments in 2024, with some continuing into 2025:

Organization:

- In May, we applied for federal and state approval of the incorporation of FLMH as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation capable of receiving funds from a wider array of sources than churches typically attract. In September, we were notified that our applications were successful. As a result, donations to FLMH are tax-free.
- Over the summer, working with our architect, Robert Harrison of Berkshire Design, we developed a phased approach to implementing the Master Plan. (See below under Construction for sketches of Phases I-III.)
- In September, we received conceptual approval of the overall project plan from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), which oversees improvements to historical buildings like the Meeting House. This is a very significant milestone that will enable us to locate a new, ADA-compliant bathroom and kitchenette in the Narthex of the Meeting House.
- Since the early fall we've benefited from consulting advice from AHF Boston, which specializes in historic preservation projects. AHFB delivered a report that helped us sharpen our focus and strategy for fundraising.
- Between September and November, the original Capital Campaign Committee (Davis Dyer, Rev. Elizabeth Goodman, Janice McCormick, and Peter Metz), reconstituted as the FLMH leadership team, added three new members—Daniel Bross, Susan Foulds, and Lucy Kennedy—who bring new ideas and energy to the initiative.
- FLMH now has working groups focused on financial management; marketing and communications; and construction management.
- In the early fall, Amy Chin lent her expertise to help set up a database of donors and potential donors that will greatly assist fundraising and reporting.
- Lucy Kennedy and Rev. Goodman set up the beta version of a website for FLMH, which provides both information about the nonprofit and its projects but can also accept donations. See <https://lenoxmeetinghouse.org>.
- FLMH is currently recruiting additional expertise in accounting and donor solicitation, especially for major gifts.

Fundraising:

- We received \$274,712 in donations during the year as well as pledges between 2025 and 2028 totaling \$326,000.
- Added to funds donated in 2022 and 2023, as well as grants received from the Lenox Community Preservation Commission in 2022 and 2024, we've now raised more than \$640,000 toward our overall current goal of \$1.5 million.
- In September, the Meeting House hosted a gathering of neighbors across Main Street between Hubbard Ave and Taconic Ave. The occasion was designed as a pilot program to introduce our project and share information. Our neighbors were delighted to see the building and expressed enthusiasm about the project. It was not a fundraising occasion but one neighbor followed up with a donation.
- In October, we submitted a new application to the Lenox CPC seeking a grant of \$117,152 toward a new phase of construction (see below). We expect to hear on the grant proposal in the next month or so.
- In December we submitted an application to the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) for \$25,000 to help support the costs of retaining a consultant to help with donor solicitation.
- During the year we held promising discussions with other foundations and expect to submit applications in 2025 or 2026.
- Early in 2025, we will solicit donations from the congregation with a goal of 100% participation of members.
- Finally, we are preparing a second grant application to the MCC, which funds preservation projects for historic buildings, to defray some of our expected construction costs in 2025 and 2026.

Construction:

- In October, contractors began work to complete Phase I of the Master Plan: renovations of the Meeting House clock, bell, tower, cupola, and weathervane begun in 2022. We anticipate that this work, partly funded by two matching grants from the Lenox CPC, will be completed in the next few weeks.
- Detailed planning is under way for Phase II of the project, which will focus primarily on preservation and accessibility. The work will include foundation repairs, a new ramp, upgraded exterior lighting, and refurbished entry stairs, doors, and windows. Robert Harrison will soon submit detailed architectural documents for MHC review, with construction documents soon to follow. If our latest proposal to the Lenox CPC is successful, construction may begin early in 2026.
- Finally, we are developing general plans for Phase III, which will enable us to finish the project, we hope, in 2027. Phase III work will focus on interior renovations including the removal of the fixed pews, leveling and refinishing of the sanctuary floor, the installation of storm windows, the addition of the new bathroom and kitchenette, new heating and lighting systems, and a lift to the pulpit platform, and possibly a second lift to the refurbished balcony.

All in all, it's been a very busy year. On behalf of the FLMH leadership team—Peter Metz, treasurer, Rev. Elizabeth Goodman, secretary, Daniel Bross, Davis Dyer, Susan Foulds, and Lucy Kennedy—I respectfully submit this report on our activities and progress during 2024.

Submitted by,
Janice McCormick, president
Friends of the Lenox Meeting House

Report of Buildings Use (Highlighted means MH; otherwise chapel)

Leased

- [WAM](#)—Downstairs of chapel (three small offices & shared fellowship hall) \$884 a month, 4% increase annually through 2026

Sub-let w/WAM

- [SAGE](#) Teen Drama Course ~\$35 an hour split with WAM

Regular/Frequent

- AA—weekly, \$50 a month, upstairs of chapel
- [Kinesphere Studio](#) (movement and dance classes)—1-2 weekly \$35 an hour, chapel parlor or labyrinth room
- [Maureen O'Flynn](#) voice lessons in labyrinth room, several times a week as needed; payment is her singing in church once a month (MH when chapel is too hot or BUTI is there.)

Regular/Frequent/Seasonal

- Qi Gong (weekly, Nov-May)—chapel parlor, \$35 an hour
- Café Français (weekly, Oct-May)—chapel parlor & labyrinth room~\$35 an hour per room
- Berkshire Clergy Community of Practice (monthly, Sept-June)—chapel parlor—free of charge (MH when chapel is busy)

Regular/Infrequent

- BUTI—annual 10-day residency, chapel & MH, \$1750
- [Judy Fox's](#) Citizens' Climate Group~\$35 an hour
- [Berkshire Children's Chorus](#)—chapel labyrinth room & fellowship hall, \$35 an hour per room
- [Women of Spirit](#)—monthly-ish in chapel parlor, \$35 an hour
- [Birch Festival](#)—\$250 for MH, yoga classes in chapel parlor \$35 an hour

One Time in 2024:

- [Circus Arts Panel](#) Discussion in MH, \$200 for event
- Mary Angela Talbot Jazz concert in MH, \$200 for event
- Robert Morrison & [Ivan Dalia](#), Pianist in MH (3x and interest in more) \$200 for event
- WAM Teen workshop at the MH and cemetery—free (b/c mostly in cemetery)
- Goetz Wedding Anniversary Party chapel fellowship hall & kitchen, \$35 an hour split with WAM
- T Club (a women's supper club), chapel parlor-\$35 an hour
- BMS Symphony concert in MH—no charge (b/c no heat)
- Morgan Manner Annual Meeting (usually meet at LCC but renovation had them looking elsewhere)
- [Walking Our Talk](#) chapel basement, \$35 an hour split w/WAM
- In 2025: film student from Emerson BFA

In development

- Shake & Co. Summer Professional Development Week for Teachers—parlor & labyrinth room
- Inquiry about transcendental meditation

Report of the Collector

The information presented in this report includes donations that came in through the year excluding Endowment Income and Bank Interest Income.

2024 Pledges Budgeted	\$ 69,586.00
2024 Pledges Received (includes overpaid pledges)	\$ 68,076.00
Difference (note some late pledges will be paid in 2025)	<u><u>\$ (1,510.00)</u></u>

Unrestricted Donations

2023 Pledge Paid in 2024	\$ 1,000.00
2024 Pledges	\$ 68,076.00
2025 Prepaid Pledges	\$ 1,200.00
Unsolicited Gifts	\$ 8,506.00
Loose Plate	\$ 4,100.00
Labyrinth Donations	\$ 28.00
Subtotal Unrestricted Donations	<u><u>\$ 82,910.00</u></u>

Restricted Donations

Memorial Fund Contributions	\$ 900.00
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$ 1,250.00
Subtotal Restricted Donations	<u><u>\$ 2,150.00</u></u>

Special Offerings (passed through to the UCC)

One Great Hour of Sharing	\$ 370.00
Pension Board Christmas Fund (combines Jan 2024 and Dec 2024)	\$ 810.00
Hurricane Disaster Relief	\$ 820.00
Subtotal Collections Received	<u><u>\$ 2,000.00</u></u>

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Jankowski, Finance Administrator / Collector

Report of the Finance Committee

The task of the Finance Committee is to oversee the financial assets of the church in conjunction with a financial advisor. The members during 2024 were Susan Foulds, David Benzenhafer, Jesse Goodman, Treasurer Davis Dyer, and Moderator Amy Chin. Renaissance Investment Group in Lenox has served as our professional advisor, selecting and managing our investments. The assets are actively invested in a combination of approximately 65% US equities, 30% bonds and 5% cash. It is the assessment of the committee that the Renaissance Group has been managing the investments competently, and we intend to continue to rely on their work.

Two key decisions shaped the work of the finance committee during 2024. The first was to decide how to invest the contributions to the Capital Campaign, prior to the creation of the Friends of the Meetinghouse entity. Before the Friends of the Meetinghouse had a bank account, contributions were deposited to the Endowment. We consulted with Christopher Silipigno of

Renaissance Group, letting him know we anticipated that the fund would be accumulating assets for one to two years, and then drawing it down between years two to five years. Mr. Silipigno recommended investing the contributions in short term treasury bonds because they have very low risk and were earning about 4% interest at that time. We authorized him to invest the assets according to that recommendation.

The second decision related to the Trustees' exploration of the intention of the 2017 gift of Nancy and Bill Goessel to Church on the Hill, the largest gift to the church in its history. This gift was understood to be restricted to the maintenance of the building. However, the Trustees thoroughly explored the intention of the gift through interviews with the Goessel's children and their financial manager. Both said that the Goessels did not state to any of them any restriction of the use of the funds. In addition, the letter accompanying the gift from their attorney did not mention any restriction of the gift. On September 15, 2024, the finance committee voted and approved to move the funds in the Physical Assets Fund to the Operating Fund. This allowed the gift to be used more flexibly.

After this decision, \$ 695,311 was transferred from the Physical Assets fund to the Operating fund, which represented 95% of the value of the Physical Assets fund at the time. This estimate was derived from the size of the gift representing 95% of the value of that fund when it was received.

Because the maximum withdrawal is determined by the average value of each fund for the previous three years, the amount that represented 95% of the Physical Assets Fund was considered to be transferred to the Operating fund for the 2022 and 2023 years for the purposes of identifying the maximum withdrawals.

The operating fund is permitted to withdraw a maximum of 4.5% of its value each year, compared to 4% for the Physical Assets and Outreach funds. The committee carefully considered this, and decided to retain the 4.5% maximum withdrawal, but to aim to draw 4% or less, based on the budget. In December 2024, the Trustees voted to withdraw \$ 35,000 from the endowment, less than the maximum allowable \$ 46,873.

The Endowment Fund Resolutions document describes the purposes and contents of the three funds of the Endowment. Because this document cited the Goessel gift as part of the Physical Assets Fund, the committee created a proposal to the congregation to vote to change the language of the document to accurately reflect that the Goessel gift is now part of the Operations Fund.

Figure 1 - Church on the Hill - 2024 Report from Renaissance Investment Group

Combined Total Value:

January 1, 2024	\$ 1,138,175
December 31, 2024	\$ 1,183,863
Total Deposits:	\$ -
Total Withdrawals:	\$ 47,007
2024 Combined Portfolio Return:	13.65%
2024 Combined Equity Return:	19.08%

Comparative Indices:

S&P 500 Total Return:	25.02%
S&P 500 Equal Weighted	13.01%

Church on the Hill, The United Church of Christ in Lenox

Asset Allocation:	CASH	EQUITY	FIXED	TOTAL
Operating	\$ 54,499	\$ 793,433	\$ 246,604	\$ 1,094,536
Physical Assets	\$ 997	\$ 26,886	\$ 14,950	\$ 42,833
Outreach	\$ 1,665	\$ 31,084	\$ 13,020	\$ 45,769
TOTAL	\$ 57,161	\$ 851,403	\$ 274,574	\$ 1,183,138
Asset %	5%	72%	23%	100%

NOTE: On 10/18/24, 95% (\$695,311) of MV was transferred from physical fund to operating fund.

Figure 2 - Summary of Investments

	<u>December 31, 2023</u>	<u>December 31, 2024</u>
Outreach Fund	\$ 41,211	\$ 45,770
Physical Assets Fund	\$ 721,770	\$ 42,833
<u>Operating Fund</u>	<u>\$ 375,194</u>	<u>\$ 1,094,537</u>
Total	\$ 1,138,175	\$ 1,183,140

Figure 3 - Maximum Allowable Withdrawal Calculation

The Adjusted Value adds 95% of the value of the Physical Assets fund to the Operating fund.

Operating Fund	End of	Value	95%	Adjusted Value
	2022	346,686	622,366	969,052
	2023	375,194	685,681	1,060,875
	<u>2024</u>	<u>1,094,937</u>		<u>1,094,937</u>
	Total			3,152,574

Divided by three and multiplied by 0.045 - \$ 46,873.

The Adjusted Value subtracts 95% of the value of the Physical Assets fund.

Physical Assets Fund	End of	Value	95%	Adjusted Value
	2022	655,091	622,366	32,375
	2023	721,770	685,681	36,089
	2024	42,833		42,833
	Total			111,297

Divided by three and multiplied by 0.04 - \$ 1,483

Outreach Fund	End of	Value
	2022	36,300
	2023	41,200
	2024	45,770

Church on the Hill, United Church of Christ

Total 123,270

Divided by three and multiplied by 0.04 - \$ 1,644.

Respectfully submitted,
Jesse Goodman

Church Budget 2025

Description	Budget 2024	Actual 2024	Budget 2025
INCOME			
UNRESTRICTED			
Prior-Year Surplus	\$6,936	\$6,936	\$7,000
Current Pledges	\$69,586	\$68,076	\$68,790
Prior-Year Pledges	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$1,300
Pre-Paid Following-Year Pledges		\$1,200	\$1,200
Plate Offerings	\$4,000	\$4,100	\$4,000
Unsolicited Income	\$5,000	\$8,534	\$5,000
Bank Account Interest	\$25	\$35	\$35
Meeting House Rentals	\$1,800	\$3,858	\$3,500
Chapel Rentals	\$23,000	\$20,003	\$21,000
Unrestricted Endowment Funds	\$17,195	\$17,195	\$35,000
Subtotal Unrestricted Income	\$130,042	\$130,937	\$146,825
RESTRICTED			
Endowment Physical Assets	\$22,504	\$21,987	NA
Utilities Fund	\$6,700	\$6,192	NA
Endowment Outreach	\$1,633	\$1,633	\$1,643
Memorial Donations	\$0	\$903	\$750
Cell Tower Electricity Reimbursement	\$10,000	\$10,618	\$11,000
Discretionary Fund	\$2,000	\$791	\$750
Pass-Through Income	\$1,200	\$3,250	\$3,300
Subtotal Restricted Income	\$44,037	\$45,374	\$17,443
TOTAL INCOME	\$174,079	\$176,311	\$164,268

Description	Budget 2024	Actual 2024	Budget 2025
EXPENSES			
WORSHIP & OUTREACH			
Personnel	\$67,164	\$66,118	\$70,446
Diaconate	\$2,050	\$1,778	\$2,350
Outreach & Missions	\$6,783	\$8,709	\$6,063
Pass-Through Expenses	\$1,200	\$3,250	\$3,300
Subtotal Worship & Outreach	\$77,197	\$79,855	\$82,159
ADMINISTRATION & ASSETS			
Trustees	\$5,300	\$926	\$4,250
Administrative Payroll	\$20,700	\$26,679	\$27,900
Office Administration	\$5,850	\$6,643	\$6,950
Maintenance and Repair	\$22,654	\$5,826	\$10,100
Utilities	\$17,875	\$16,810	\$18,615
Insurance	\$11,000	\$11,123	\$12,235
Town of Lenox	\$1,450	\$1,178	\$1,450
Subtotal Administration & Assets	\$84,829	\$69,185	\$81,500
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$162,026	\$149,040	\$163,659
TOTAL INCOME	\$174,079	\$176,311	\$164,268
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	\$12,053	\$27,271	\$609

Note: certain numbers here differ from those in the 2024 Annual Report due to changed budget categories from last year, as well as end-of-year timing of receipts and payments.

Proposed Nominations for Ministries in 2025

Terms of office begin day after Annual Meeting (January 2024)

Bold - to be elected

Elected Ministries

Officers

"Officers are elected to a one-year, renewable term."

(By-Laws, Article V, Section 1)

Amy Chin
Moderator

Emily Johnson
Clerk

Arturo Bagley
Treasurer
vacant
Ass't Treasurer

Committee of Deacons

"There shall be five members on the Diaconate who shall be elected annually for a term of three years. After serving one full term, such members(s) may be re-elected for an additional one year term each year for a maximum of three additional years."

"The Diaconate shall cooperate with the Pastor in ministering to the spiritual needs of the Church and community. It shall aid the Pastor in caring for the poor, the sick and the sorrowing. It shall help the Pastor in extending an invitation to strangers to worship with us." *(excerpted from By-Laws, Article VI, Section 2)*

1 year (Jan. 2026)

Arthur Oliver

2 years (Jan. 2027)

Louise McCue

3 years (Jan. 2028)

Mark Farrell
Ellen Merritt
Emily Benzenhafer

Committee of Trustees

"There shall be five members on the Trustees who shall be elected to serve one three-year term. After serving one full term, such members(s) may be re-elected for an additional one-year term each year for a maximum of three additional years."

"The Trustees hold, maintain, and provide insurance for all Church assets; supervise the Church budget; hire all paid staff (excepting the pastor)." *(excerpted from By-Laws, Article VI, Section 3)*

1 Year (Jan. 2026)

Peter Metz
Jesse Goodman

2 Years (Jan. 2027)

Carol Maynard

3 Years (Jan. 2028)

??

Committee of Delegates

“The Committee of Delegates shall consist of two people, one elected annually for a period of two years (term renewable). It is the duty of this Committee to attend those Area, Association, Conference and National meetings of the United Church of Christ at which the Church is allowed representation. The Delegates shall vote in the name of the Church and, periodically, give reports of such meetings to the Church Council, and at the Annual Meeting of the Church.”
 (excerpted from By-Laws, Article VI, Section 5)

1 Year (Jan. 2026)	2 Years (Jan. 2027)
Amy Chin	???
Emily Johnson	

Non-elected Ministries

Church Council

“The Church Council consists of the Moderator (presiding), the Pastor, the Clerk (as secretary), the Treasurer, the Collector and one representative each from the Diaconate, the Trustees, Christian Education Ministry, the Committee of Delegates, and the Outreach Ministry.”

“It shall be the function of the Church Council to visualize the entire task of the Church and to coordinate its activities.”
 (excerpted from By-Laws, Article VI, Section 1)

Amy Chin (Moderator)	Liz Goodman (Pastor)	Emily Johnson (Clerk)
Arturo Bagley (Treasurer)	???	Louise McCue (Deacon Rep)
Emily Johnson (Delegate)	Amy Chin (Outreach rep)	

Finance Committee

“The Finance Committee is a sub-committee of the Trustees and shall consist of the Moderator, Treasurer, and at least three members appointed by the Trustees. The Finance Committee shall be responsible for overseeing the financial assets of the Church, in conjunction with a financial advisor.”
 (excerpted from By-Laws, Article VI, Section 3)

1 year (Jan. 2027)	2 years (Jan 2027)	3 years (Jan.2028)
Amy Chin (Moderator)	Jesse Goodman	Susan Foulds
Arturo Bagley (Treasurer)		
David Benzenhafer		

Memorial Committee

“The Memorial Committee is a sub-committee of the Diaconate. Its members shall consist of the Pastor, a member of the Diaconate, and the Assistant Treasurer. This committee is responsible for receiving, acknowledging, and dispensing of memorial gifts.”
 (excerpted from By-Laws, Article VI, Section 2)

Pastor (ex officio)	_____	Asst. Treasurer, (ex officio)
	(Deacon Rep)	

Amendment Proposal from Finance Committee

November 12, 2024
Church on the Hill Membership

On behalf of the Trustees of the Church on the Hill, I propose an amendment to the Endowment Funds Resolutions.

Context: This past year, the Trustees explored the intention of the gift of the 2017 gift of Nancy and Bill Goessel to Church on the Hill. This gift was understood to be restricted to the maintenance of the building. However, the Trustees thoroughly explored the intention of the gift through interviews with the Goessel's children and their financial manager. Both said that the Goessels did not state to any of them any restriction of the use of the funds. In addition, the letter accompanying the gift from their attorney did not mention any restriction of the gift. On September 15, 2024, the finance committee voted and approved to move the funds in the Physical Assets Fund to the Operating Fund. This allows the gift to be used where it is most needed.

The current Endowment Funds Resolutions identify the Goessel fund as a part of the restricted use Maintenance Fund. For this reason, we propose that the sentence be moved to the Operating Fund section of the resolutions.

Proposal: Remove the sentence marked below (strikethrough text)

2. Restricted

a. MAINTENANCE FUND

The purpose of this fund is to provide a dedicated source of revenue to help cover maintenance and preservation expenses of the Meeting House and the Chapel. The intent is to use only income and not to invade the principle.

The *Fund* is composed of a preexisting restricted *Fund* of about \$27,000.00, to which was added \$23,000.00 received from the dissolution of the Interlaken UCC Church. ~~In 2017 a donation of \$500,000 was received from long term members Nancy and Bill Goessel, the largest gift to the Church on the Hill in its history.~~

The majority of the money in this *Fund* is expected to be invested in income producing investments, in order to generate the largest amount of income possible and to protect the value of the fund from stock market fluctuations. The remainder should be placed in stable, high-quality growth investments as an inflation hedge and to provide appreciation.

If the Trustees should determine there is a need for funds required for the proper maintenance or preservation of the Meeting House or Chapel which exceed the amount budgeted for buildings and grounds in that fiscal year, they may authorize the withdrawal of such funds from the *Fund*. Such withdrawal(s) in any fiscal year shall not exceed an amount equal to 4.0% of the average closing balance of the *Fund* on December 31st of the preceding three years. The withdrawal of additional funds which exceed this 4.0% limit shall require approval by the Trustees and Church Council and a two thirds vote of a quorum of the members of the Church at an annual or special meeting which is to be posted to the members at least two weeks in advance.

And add the sentence to the Operating Fund section as follows (in bold):

1. Unrestricted

a. OPERATING FUND

The purpose of this fund is to provide a source of revenue to supplement the total income budgeted for the current fiscal year of the Church. Up to 4.5% of the average market value of this *Fund* for the previous three years may be utilized by the Trustees to supplement the Annual Budget of the Church. This figure shall be determined by totaling the ending values of the *Fund* on December 31st of the preceding three years, dividing the sum by three and multiplying by 0.045. This amount shall be distributed in 4 quarterly payments to the Treasurer. In the event that additional funds are needed to supplement the budget during the current fiscal year such an appropriation must be approved by a majority vote of the Trustees and the Church Council and a two thirds vote of a quorum of the members of the Church at an annual or special meeting which is to be posted to the members at least two weeks in advance.

In 2017, long term members Nancy and Bill Goessel donated \$500,000 to the church, the largest gift to Church on the Hill in its history.

Sincerely,
Jesse Goodman