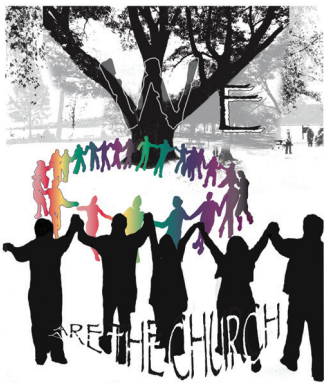


607-273-5800; www.firstbaptistithaca.org; email: fbithaca@gmail.com



Janet and Betty Brown Gift First Baptist with a Bequest

At the January 24th Congregational meeting Trustees Convener Anne Farrell announced that the church will receive a bequest in excess of \$116,000 from the estate of longtime First Baptist members Janet and Betty Brown.

At the January Cabinet meeting, the bequest was made known and the Cabinet charged the Trustees with developing a policy about how to use memorial gifts. To date, memorial bequests have generally gone into a Memorial Fund to be drawn upon as needed. It was suggested that when the church receives a substantial bequest, an *ad hoc* committee be formed to solicit ideas from the congregation on ways the monies could be used. Within the next few weeks that committee will be set up and a survey will go out to the entire congregation asking for suggestions for creative uses for this generous bequest.



Marlene Sack and Keagan Fitzgerald join to ring the First Baptist chimes on Christmas Eve along with other downtown churches.

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What does the Lord require of you?

To do justice,
Love mercy and
Walk humbly with our God
Micah 6:8

Pledge Update

Financial Secretary Marlene Sack reports that, as of January 24, 52 pledges have been received for a total of \$196,178.76.

In 2020 over 99.7% of the \$186,896 Pledge Income was received: 42 Pledges were paid in full; 6 were over paid and 6 were under paid.

First Baptist Ends 2020 with a Surplus

At the January 24th Congregational meeting held on Zoom following worship Treasurer David Caughey summarized the 2020 budget and explained the 2021 budget. He informed us that during 2020, the total income of the church was \$206,033.52 while the total disbursements were \$203,438.25, leaving a surplus income of \$2,595.27.

A motion from the Trustees was entertained and enthusiastically passed to award Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds a \$1,000 bonus for her extra-ordinary leadership during this COVID-19 pandemic that went far above and beyond expectations. The

remaining \$1,595.27 will be transferred to the FBC Building Fund in anticipation of additional charges to complete the basement flooring upgrade. It was noteworthy that approximately 17 percent of monies disbursed went to missions.

Trustee's Proposed 2021 Budget

Then David presented the Trustees' proposed 2021 budget. Its total is \$218,840.82, up from the \$210,396 2020 budget.

The 2021 budget includes a 1.5 percent increase in staff compensation, a necessary increase in the Pastor's Health Insurance costs, and a 9.6 percent increase in ABC-USA United mission support from \$7,300.00 in 2020 to \$8,000.00 in 2021.

The Proposed 2021 budget was developed by the Finance Committee. It maintained the expenditures of a target budget developed in November before it was known how much the total 2021 pledge income would be. An increase in the Anticipated Regular Giving income line by \$1,162.06 from the

(Continued on Page 3.)

First Baptist Church in Ithaca is a nurturing and inclusive community. Guided by Jesus' Teachings, we strive for Social & Ecological Justice; and embrace the Baptist tradition of Bible, Soul, Church and Religious Freedoms.

Wisdom from John Lewis

Excerpted from Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds's January 10th sermon "Good Trouble."

I found myself thinking a lot about John Lewis this week as we celebrated the elections of two new senators in the state of Georgia ...Raphael Warnock, the first African American Senator from any former Confederate state. And not just any African-American – but a black Baptist pastor, John Lewis' pastor, and Senator Jon Ossoff who was mentored by John Lewis. Also, all those other Georgians whom Lewis knew and trained and inspired to work for voting rights for all people, and to believe in the power of every person to be part of American democracy. All those Georgians - especially black Georgians who, in the face of so many efforts at suppression, showed up and did what it took to make their voices heard and be sure their votes were counted. I am sure John Lewis was very proud this week even as he was also heartsick at what happened Wednesday in Washington and all that led up to it and which is continuing to unfold.

Lewis is remembered for his enduring faith and his persistent work for justice and equality over the entire course of his life – and for his loving, generous, hopeful spirit. ...John Lewis was open-hearted, giving – never made bitter by all his struggles. His voice offers us wisdom we need this week: Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in "good trouble, necessary trouble."

"Good Trouble"

Good Trouble was one of Lewis favorite ways to talk about activism, about non-violent resistance and putting your life on the line for freedom and justice. And, when we remember accurately the actions of John Lewis and so many others, we have to remember that Good Trouble can be disturbing. It can lead to violent reactions and arrests and suffering because Good Trouble reveals the hidden evils of the status quo. That is part of the purpose. Nonviolent direct actions – lunch counter sit-ins, marches, boycotts and other strategies are meant to reveal the often hidden ways the entire system is dependent on oppression and injustice. Good Trouble is meant to reveal the motivations and subtle oppressions of people with power. But, Good Trouble's purpose is always redemptive. It is always meant to work for the good of your enemy as well as your friend. It seeks to build the Beloved Community – the more perfect union, to turn enemies into friends, to redeem the soul of America. Good Trouble is never just a response of anger and revenge.

John Lewis said: "Rioting is not a movement. It is not an act of civil disobedience. I think it is a mistake for people to consider disorganized action, mayhem, and attacks on other people and property as an extension of any kind of movement. It is not. It is simply an explosion of emotion. That's all. There is nothing constructive about it. It is destructive."

From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Dear Friends,

As I write this, we are still waiting for the Biden-Harris Inauguration and living with the uncertainty and anxieties of these days of transition. By the time you receive this, we will have moved into era a new with a new administration. The events at the US Capitol two weeks ago were deeply disturbing to all of us. I can't remember ever feeling the fragility of our democracy as I do right now. But, we know much of what has been revealed is not new. Racism and economic injustice, deception and political manipulations, are far older and more deeply rooted in our history. Right now, we are praying together for safety and peace in this transition, but we know the real work of "doing justice and loving mercy" is the work of all of our lives. I have been grateful for the shared leadership of the Prayer Vigils that have been occurring. Seeing the faces and hearing the voices of others in our community who are committed to peace and justice brings me hope. There are so many people of good will in our community and our country. We need to support and encourage each other!

I also know some of you are getting your first COVID vaccines! That is good news, although I hear others are frustrated with trying to get an appointment. Please let us know at the church if you need help in trying to navigate the appointment system. We'll try to help you!

Let's keep on loving and supporting each other through these challenging days. We are blessed to be part of a wonderful church family. God's love and goodness shines through each and every one of you. May you know that – and feel God's love holding you and guiding you through these days!

Blessings to all,

Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds



Reverend Debbie Bennett Reynolds



Even though COVID-19 kept worshipers in their homes rather than congregating in the sanctuary, the Communion Table was still beautifully decorated by the Flower Committee for Christmas and Epiphany.

Photos: Courtesy of David Caughey and Bill Fry

Watch Night Services

Submitted by Shella Chase
(Drawn from Facebook page
Little Known Black History Facts.)

Many of you who live or grew up in Black communities in the United States have probably heard of “Watch Night Services,” the gathering of the faithful in church on New Year’s Eve. The service usually begins anywhere from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. and ends at midnight with the entrance of the New Year. Some folks come to church first, before going out to celebrate. For others, church is the only New Year’s Eve event.

Like many others, I always assumed that Watch Night was a fairly standard Christian religious service — made a bit more Afro-centric because that’s what happens when elements of Christianity become linked with the Black Church. Still, it seemed that predominately White Christian churches did not include Watch Night services on their calendars, but focus instead on Christmas Eve programs. In fact, there were instances where clergy in mainline denominations wondered aloud about the propriety of linking religious services with a secular holiday like New Year’s Eve.

However, there is a reason for the importance of these New Year’s Eve services in African American congregations. The Watch Night Services in Black communities that we also celebrate today can be traced back to gatherings that took place on December 31, 1862, also known as “Freedom’s Eve.”

On that night, Blacks came together in churches and private homes across the nation, as they anxiously awaited news that the Emancipation Proclamation actually had become law. Then, at the stroke of midnight, January 1, 1863, all slaves in the Confederate States were declared legally free. When the news was received, there were prayers, shouts and songs of joy as people fell to their knees and thanked God. Black folks have gathered in churches annually on New Year’s Eve ever since, praising God for bringing them safely through another year.

It’s been 145 years since that first Freedom’s Eve and many of us were never taught the African American origin of Watch Night, but tradition still brings us together at this time every year to celebrate “how we got over” or weathered another year.

The Sound/Audio Ministry: FBC’s Unsung Heroes



Bill Phelan



Bill Fry



Curt Ufford



David Caughey

During COVID-19 times, under the direction and tutelage of David Caughey, Bill Fry and Bill Phelan have assisted him in bringing Zoom worship into our homes. For many years Curt Ufford has been Dave’s stand-in when he was not able to record our regular Sunday worship service which are then delivered to those who can not attend the services.

First Baptist Ends 2020 with a Surplus cont.

target budget was used to balance the actual 2021 budget. This increase was suggested by Financial Secretary Marlene Sack, based on her expectation that the increase could be achieved.

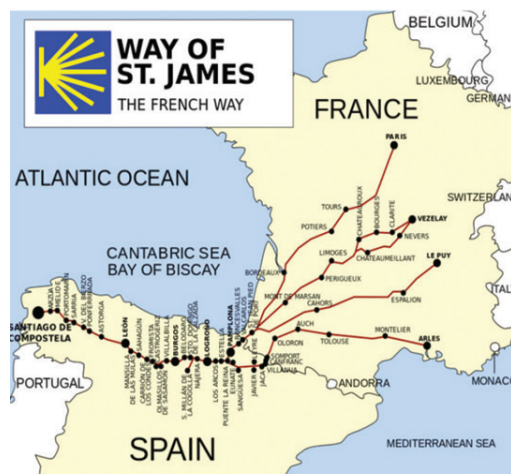
Although most members know the respective responsibilities of the Treasurer and Financial Secretary, there seems to remain enough confusion to provide this reminder.

- The Financial Secretary (currently Marlene Sack) receives and records all Pledge contributions and other donations from members and

friends. The Financial Secretary is the **only** person who knows the amounts of Pledges and contributions from individuals and families.

- The Treasurer (currently Dave Caughey) maintains the financial records for First Baptist and pays all bills. The Treasurer knows only aggregate totals of income each week from the Financial Secretary (e.g., total amounts of Pledge, Anticipated Regular Giving, Plate, and other incomes deposited), but does not know individual contributions or Pledges..

The Way of St. James — Pilgrimage *by Andrea Mooney*



Camino de Santiago

A pilgrimage is a devotional practice whereby an individual goes on a spiritual journey to a specific location. Pilgrimages are common to many faiths (think of Mecca) and very prevalent in the Christian faith. Some popular pilgrimage sites include Lourdes in France, Fatima in Portugal, Knock in Ireland and, of course, the Holy Land. Our own Debbie Allen did a pilgrimage in the British Isles several years ago.

A popular pilgrimage for many is the Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James). This pilgrimage has several routes, all winding up at the Cathedral of St. James in Campostela, Spain. The most common path, traveled by over 100,000 people a year, starts in France and travels west across the north of Spain to Campostela. The journey is approximately 500 miles and usually takes several weeks. People mostly travel on foot, although some use bicycles or horses. There are hostels along the way for the pilgrims – bare bone dormitories hosted by locals who see their hospitality as part of their own spiritual paths. The symbol of the Camino is the clamshell, and pilgrims have their “passports” stamped at various hostels. The tradition is that pilgrims hug the statue of St. James upon their arrival at the Cathedral.



Andrea Mooney

<http://withoutbaggage.com/photographs/77462/77653/>



Winter Stillness

Photo essay from
Judy Kennison



A Christmas Greeting from the Johnsons

Dear Family and Friends,

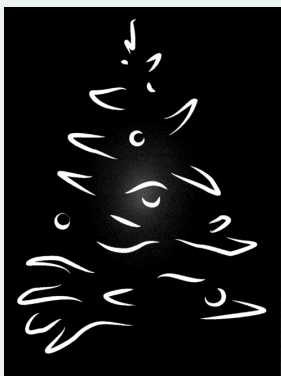
We have been living in New Eagle, PA for more than one year. We have loved it here, though it's been difficult for us to live so far from our loved ones. Kara and her kids have visited us twice which was wonderful for us. We love the people in our congregation here. Everyone is very loving and kind. David has spent a lot of his time on Zoom since the pandemic. People here appreciate all the things that he has been able to do.

The natural beauty here is incredible. We are surrounded by hills with trees that change with the seasons. The winters here are very mild! (David says wimpy.) We had a snowfall of 2 inches which lasted for almost a day. The snow reminded us of "home." As an interim pastorate, we don't know how long we'll be living here. The Search Committee has been working hard to find a settled Pastor.

Kara hopes to graduate from Hamline University with a PhD this spring. We are so proud of her! Erika and Frank and their family live in Pleasantville, NY (which is near NYC). We've visited them twice and hope to see them again soon. This year has been an assortment of in-class, hybrid, and on-line learning for the grandkids. Geri had her "Dream come true" when her book, "Closer Walk" was published! (Thanks to David who found a publisher).

Even though Christmas will be smaller this year, our hearts are Blessed!

Love,
David and Geri
Please email us at umty@comcast.net (David) and unityspirit@comcast.net (Geri)



Christmas Tree 2021
By David Johnson

In Memoriam: Nancy Hillman Sokol 1931-2020

By First Cousin Jud Kilgore



Nancy Sokol

My first cousin, Nancy Sokol, and I grew up in close contact from the mid 1930's until her recent death. Her family lived 60 miles from my hometown in rural Southwest Virginia, in Emory, a small college town. My first clear memory of our times together was walking up the railroad tracks behind her home, to the small store to get jaw breakers, bubble gum and hard candy. Then I recall climbing trees, playing with Nancy's friends. I learned to ride a bicycle on her bike, using a college tennis court. Too much to say that is important to me, but not to people who need to know about her life, so I fast forward to college. We both went to Emory and Henry College, a small Methodist school in Emory. We were both good students, and active in extra-curricular activity. She played basketball, tennis, and piano for the male chorus, directed by her future husband Tom Sokol. She made a beautiful "Miss Emory" and Henry for our college year book. She and Tom went to Vanderbilt for advanced musical degrees. Fast forwarding again, they came to Ithaca, started a family of five children. They were responsible in my coming to Ithaca in 1962, since they hosted us during two vacations during my medical residency. (I obviously liked what I saw.) Tom was on the Cornell faculty and led the Glee Club for many successful years. With five growing kids, Nancy was a stay-at-home mom, giving piano lessons, and meeting with her friends.

My fondest memories were not her long and valuable career at Cornell, serving in three different departments with distinction, and enjoying the students and faculty she met and served, or even the way she raised her loving children. I remember Monopoly games on snowy afternoons, studying together in college, talking about our favorite composers. I remember her passion and skill in college sports and her avid following of Big Red football and basketball, often taking my daughter Lisa along. She was a loyal First Baptist member until her health declined. She bore her last years bravely but not silently. We know how much she enjoyed life, and how much those near and dear were involved in her vibrant past, and mourned with her the oft quoted phrase, "Old age ain't for sissies." Nancy was never a sissy.

Pioneer in Sustainable Farming

Excerpts from the Smithsonian Jan-Feb 2021

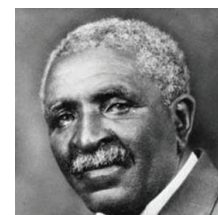
Submitted by Linda Caughey

No American is more closely associated with peanuts than George Washington Carver, who developed hundreds of uses for them, from Worcestershire sauce to shaving cream to paper...

Born enslaved in Missouri around 1864 and trained in Iowa as a botanist, Carver took over the agriculture department at the Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama, in 1896... There he found that cotton had stripped the region's soil of its nutrients, and yet landowners were prohibiting black farmers from planting food crops. So Carver began experimenting with plants like peanuts and sweet potatoes, which could replenish the nitrogen that cotton leached out, and grown discreetly, could also help farmers feed their families....

Since his death in 1943, many of the practices Carver advocated – organic fertilizer, reusing food waste, crop rotation – have become crucial to the sustainable agriculture movement. Mark Hersey, a historian at Mississippi State University, says Carver's most prescient innovation was a truly holistic approach to farming.

"Well before there was an environmental justice movement, black environmental thinkers connected land exploitation and racial exploitation," says Hersey. A true accounting of American conversations, he says, would put Carver at the forefront."



George Washington Carver
1864 - 1943



David Hopkins

Dear Friends,

I am so very grateful for my First Baptist family! I am warmly humbled by my good fortune in your presence. I miss you all with your great gatherings, your voices together in song, your wonderful kitchen productions and meals together, your radiant warm friendships with one another.

I have hope for a new year. I expect ongoing blossoms of good news. After all ... fill in the blank... Lately, I believe we humans have an ethical mandate for optimism, that we can nourish hope and it helps generate success. I work in a gratifying environment where humanity prevails. I wish such conditions were available for everyone.

Thank you all very much. I appreciate all your holiday greetings. There have been many cards, notes, good wishes and gifts.

*All my best regards and wishes,
David Hopkins*

Calling the Spirit Back from Wandering the Earth in Its Human Feet

By Joy Harjo (Submitted by Jan Butler)

Cut down that bag of potato chips, that white bread, that bottle of pop.

Turn off that cellphone, computer, and remote control.

Open the door, then close it behind you.

Take a breath offered by friendly winds. They travel the earth gathering essences of plants to clean.

Give it back with gratitude.

If you sing it will give your spirit lift to fly to the stars' ears and back.

Acknowledge this earth who has cared for you since you were a dream planting itself precisely within your parents' desire.

Let your moccasin feet take you to the encampment of the guardians who have known you before time, who will be there after time. They sit before the fire that has been there without time.

Let the earth stabilize your post-colonial insecure jitters.

Be respectful of the small insects, birds and animal people who accompany you.

Ask their forgiveness for the harm we humans have brought down upon them.

Don't worry.

The heart knows the way though there may be high-rises, interstates, checkpoints, armed soldiers, massacres, wars, and those who will despise you because they despise themselves.

The journey might take you a few hours, a day, a year, a few years, a hundred, a thousand or even more.

Watch your mind. Without training it might run away and leave your heart for the immense human feast set by the thieves of time.

Do not hold regrets.

When you find your way to the circle, to the fire kept burning by the keepers of your soul, you will be welcomed.

You must clean yourself with cedar, sage, or other healing plant.

Cut the ties you have to failure and shame.

Let go the pain you are holding in your mind, your shoulders, your heart, all the way to your feet. Let go the pain of your ancestors to make way for those who are heading in our direction.

Ask for forgiveness.

Call upon the help of those who love you. These helpers take many forms: animal, element, bird, angel, saint, stone, or ancestor.

Call your spirit back. It may be caught in corners and creases of shame, judgment, and human abuse.

You must call in a way that your spirit will want to return.

Speak to it as you would to a beloved child.

Welcome your spirit back from its wandering. It may return in pieces, in tatters. Gather them together. They will be happy to be found after being lost for so long.

Your spirit will need to sleep awhile after it is bathed and given clean clothes.

Now you can have a party. Invite everyone you know who loves and supports you. Keep room for those who have no place else to go.

Make a giveaway, and remember, keep the speeches short.

Then, you must do this: help the next person find their way through the dark.



Please keep in your prayers:

- John Gross
- Suzanne Kilgore
- Naomi Hollister
- Laurel Lawshae
- Joan Yarborough
- Pastor André Thera & family
- Ron Drummond
- Barbie Lister
- Cristian Pia-Miller
- Abraham Phelan
- Anthony Halman & family



Amaryllis in bloom

Love is labor that returns us to wonder—it is seeing another person’s humanity, even if they deny their own. We just have to choose to wonder about them.

VALARIE KAUR

The Visitor - January, 2021

Editor, publisher: Susan Eymann
 Proofers: Judy Kennison, Tony Lister
 Contributors: Debbie Bennett Reynolds, Shella Chase, Bill Abeles, Linda Caughey, Andrea Mooney, Jan Butler, Jud Kilgore, David Hopkins, David and Geri Johnson
 Photos: David Caughey, Barb Fry, Tony Lister, Bill Abeles, Judy Kennison

Contribute to the Visitor

In the Baptist tradition each of us are called to be ministers. Therefore, each of you is invited and urged to contribute to our *Visitor*. Please send announcements, articles, features, pictures to: susan.eymann@transonic.com



In early January Bill and Barb Fry, accompanied by Leslie Schultz on her bicycle, delivered homemade soup to inhabitants of the "Jungle."
Photo: Courtesy of Bill Abeles

Time and Talent Ministries

First Baptist Staff

Pastor: Rev. Debbie Bennett-Reynolds
 Secretary: Shella Chace
 Organist: Christopher Morgan Loy
 Choir Director: Belinda Adams
 Youth and Children’s Ministries Coordinator: Laura Ward
 Nursery Caregiver: Carol Fleming
 Sunday School Aide: Sarah Zipfel
 Custodian: David Hopkins

Elected Leaders

Moderator: Judy Kennison
 Vice Moderator: Mark Lawrence
 Membership Clerk: Tina Hilsdorf
 Recording Clerks: Rich Barron/Susan Eymann
 Treasurer: David Caughey
 Assistant Treasurer: Bill Fry
 Financial Secretary: Marlene Sack

Board of Trustees

Josie Zanfordino, Baruch Whitehead Bill Phelan (2023); Anne Farrell, Kris Scott, Rich Barron (2022); Hans Bump, Elizabeth Pia-Miller (2021), Bill Fry (2021); David Caughey (ex officio)

Trustees’ Subgroups Finance & Endowment

David Caughey, chair, Marlene Sack, Janet Cotraccia, Andrea Mooney, Curt Ufford

Interior Decoration: Barbara Fry, Julie Dean, Tina Hilsdorf, Bill Abeles, Anne Farrell, Andrea Staffeld, Susan Eymann

Church Archivist: Linda Caughey

Lay Delegates:

Affiliate Organizations
 Two Delegates each for **Rochester Genesee Region & ABC-USA** Rich and

Lil Barron, Co-chairs; Anne & Steve Farrell, Bill Reynolds

AWAB: Josie Zanfordino, Shella Chace
Baptist Peace Fellowship: Meg Gillard,

Cornell Campus Ministry: Julia Dean, Linda Nicholson, Anne Farrell

Kitchen Cupboard: Amanda Ufford, Sue Hemsath

Tompkins County Workers Center: Bill Abeles

Sanctuary Alliance: Leslie Schultz, Bill Abeles, Bill Fry

Pastoral Relations

Tony Lister, Regi Carpenter (2023); Barbara Fry, Bronwyn Evans (2022); Bill Abeles, Lou Carlucci 2021)

Nominating Committee

Josie Zanfordino, Adrienne McNair, Linda Caughey, Marge Hansel

Personnel Committee

Beth Wolfer, chair, Julia Dean

Constitution/By-Law Committee

Bill Fry, Alice Grow, Linda Nicholson, Susan Eymann, Anne Farrell

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Ministry Teams

Worship & Spiritual Life:

Barbara Fry, Amy Chaffee, Co-chairs; Bill Abeles, Tony Lister, Kris Scott, Edie Reagan, Alice Grow

Worship/Spiritual Life Subgroups

Flower Committee: Barbara Fry, Mariana Morse, Tina Hilsdorf, Andrea Staffeld

Myra’s Ministry: Tina Hilsdorf, Lou Carlucci, Bill Reynolds

Labyrinth: Kris Scott, Liz Wilkinson

Sound/Audio Ministry: David Caughey, Curt Ufford, Bill Fry, Bill Phelan

Education

Children’s and Youth:

Carol Fleming, Tim Dean, Leslie Schultz

Christian Ed Teachers: Baruch Whitehead, Lou Carlucci, Sarah Zipfel, Lil Barron

Christian Concern

Steve Farrell, Bill Phelan, Co-chairs;

Christian Concern Subgroups

Circle of Care: Coordinators: Amanda Ufford, Sue Hemsath, Linda Caughey

Hospitality Ministry:

Anne Farrell: chair; Shella Chace, Meg Gillard, Tina Hilsdorf, Adrienne McNair, Andrea Staffeld, Greta Cotraccia, Ella Dean, Bay Ward/Aittama, Alice Grow

Communications Ministry

Shella Chace (convener), David Caughey, Mark Lawrence, Craig Riecke, Susan Eymann, Amy Bean, Lisa Kilgore

Green Team

Louise Mudrak, Lisa Kilgore (Co-conveners), Lynn Glase, Tony Lister, and others

Ad Hoc Reopening Committee

Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds, David Caughey, Craig Reike, Amy Chaffee, Ann Farrell, Judy Kennison, Josie Zanfordino.