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Pastor: The Rev. Mary Brownlow

**AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION  
WORSHIPING ON SUNDAYS AT 10 AM**

## The Norwich Congregational Church, UCC Newsletter\* February 2016



*The Sunday School decorated the tree in the hallway for Lent*

### **Extra! Extra! Our Church Adopts the Ministries Model!**

At our annual meeting on February 7, a resolution was passed. We are moving from a Board and Committee Structure (adopted in 1998 and modified several times since) to a Ministry Model of governance. This involves suspending some of our bylaws while we evolve a new system over the next year (and perhaps beyond). We will have a smaller list of church officers and try to encourage participation by every church member and friend in one of 4 Ministries:

Spiritual Formation and Nurture

Outreach

Worship

Stewardship

We will also have a small group, which we are calling (for the moment, until a better term comes up) the Deacon Leadership.

We are fortunate that many of our experienced leadership will continue to serve so that institutional memory and essential functions are maintained.

The hope is that a very broad participation is now possible under this flexible structure. Everyone should be able to find a way to engage in mutual ministry. As Doug James said, "The congregation is creating the church."

We hope that each of you will consider how you may be enriched by participation – to find out how your gifts and rewards may grow in community.

*\*We are thinking of new name for the church newsletter. Send your suggestions to the church office.*

We have prepared the following slate, which was voted on at annual meeting. It is a work-in-progress template – a sort of foundation for inviting more people to participate. As more people volunteer, their names could be added as participants in specific tasks.

## **NCC UCC Church Ministries Slate 2016**

### ***Officers***

Moderator	John Severinghaus	Ass't Moderator	Carolyn Mertz
Treasurer	Joanne Egner	Ass't Treasurer	Mark Beliveau
Collector	Priscilla Vincent	Ass't Collector	Martin Witschi

### ***Deacon Leadership***

Laura Beliveau	Susan White
Bob Miller	George Thomas

### ***Spiritual Formation and Nurture Ministry***

Leadership:	Ann Beams	Dawn Thomas
	Brittney Calsbeek	Molly Caterini

Participants with specific tasks:

Judy Pond – Called to Care  
Mary Magavern – Young families  
Sonya Stover – intergenerational mission projects

### ***Outreach Ministry***

Leadership:	Doug Britton	Heidi Webster
	Jeff Nielsen	Deborah Berryman

Participants with specific tasks:

Carol Loveland – Listen dinners  
Rita Severinghaus – DR project  
Stan Williams – hosting community events  
Vicky Fish – mission projects

### ***Worship Ministry***

Leadership:	Priscilla Vincent	Evelynn Ellis
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Participants with specific tasks:

Carolyn and Peter Mertz – ushering  
Chipper Ashley – worship tasks

### ***Stewardship Ministry***

Leadership:	Gary Brooks	Doug James
	Dan Van Dorn	John Langhus

Participants with specific tasks:

Barbara Duncan – giving  
Carolyn Mertz – investment  
Paul Gerke – investment

### ***Transition Team***

Hillary White  
Paul Gerke

mentioned in the unsuspended By-Laws, Stewardship Ministry should be inserted. He said that three-fourths (3/4) of members present must approve the resolution for it to pass.

Questions: Barbara Duncan said that she would need more than one person to have responsibility for church giving as currently conducted by the Stewardship Committee. Mary Brownlow said that it was the intention that many people would work on church giving with that person. Hillary White explained that we would have the flexibility to have the various teams to reach comfort and functional levels. Bob Miller said that we will ask everyone to affiliate with one ministry, to get to know people in that ministry, and to find a way to contribute. We will ask the ministries to get together soon to set goals and create tasks. At the end of the year we will see what is working. Joanne Egner asked if everyone was committed to one year only, and how we would report at the end of the year. Hillary White answered that it is a one-year slate. People can go in and out. Mary Brownlow suggested that at 6 months we have a review and report on how we're doing. We will have to make decisions this fall for next year's nominating committee. Chipper Ashley suggested an October 1 date for the review and report, as many people will be out of town in 6 months. He reminded us that we will need another vote at next year's annual meeting or we will revert to the current By-Laws. Stan Williams clarified that we will need another three-fourths majority vote at next year's annual meeting to continue suspension of the By-Laws. Barbara Duncan commented on her nominating committee experience.

Dick McGaw asked how decisions will be made within each ministry. Mary Brownlow said that the leadership within each of the ministries would decide how voting would work. The Deacon Leaders will have the authority of the current Church Council for larger decisions. Bob Miller noted that we would follow current Church Council protocol for making those decisions. Chipper Ashley said that if necessary the Deacon Leaders could call a congregational meeting, as is true under the current By-Laws. Hillary White noted that the current Church Council structure is not so different from what has been proposed with respect to the Deacon Leaders.

Avery Post asked where the pastor is on the ministry slate. Mary replied that all the staff members are active parts of the various ministries, and that the pastor is a big part of all the ministries. She showed a Ministries Slate, similar to the one distributed earlier, that includes paid staff. Chipper Ashley noted that Mary's role doesn't change. The By-Laws are not going to change in reference to her role.

Rita Severinghaus asked where the Board of Trustees fits in and Mary Brownlow replied that they are part of the Stewardship Ministry.

As discussion was finished, John Severinghaus asked for two volunteers to count hands for the vote. Bob Miller and Ann Beams volunteered. Thirty four people voted in favor; zero were opposed. The motion passed unanimously!

Chuck Egner moved that the Ministries Model nomination slate be voted on as presented; Judy Pond seconded. It passed unanimously.

Other business: Mary Brownlow gave a huge "Thank You" to everyone.

Bob Miller inquired whether the Pastor's Report had been approved, and he made a motion to approve it. Chuck Egner seconded it. Ann Beams said that we should also acknowledge the great job that Danielle does (as the music staff had been mentioned earlier). The motion was passed unanimously.

At 1:10 pm, Judy Pond motioned to adjourn; Doug James seconded. It was passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, Heidi Webster

***\*If you would like a copy of the complete annual report including the nominating slate, please contact the church office\****

G: Flower Committee: No comments or questions.

H: Christian Education: No comments or questions.

I: Mission: No comments or questions.

J: Dominican Republic Project: Mary Brownlow noted that there is an upcoming work trip to the DR with some of our teenagers in cooperation with teenagers from the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College.

L: Trustees: No comments or questions.

M: Stewardship: Ann Beams said that it was wonderful to have the support of the full congregation. Barbara Duncan reminded everyone that it is easy to make donations through Electronic Funds Transfer, and that it is very easy for the church office to process.

N: Woodworth Fund: Joanne Egner noted that this fund has a substantial balance that is not earning interest. Peter Mertz has suggested that we invest this money and Joanne agrees. Mary Brownlow said that we should be aware of opportunities to use Woodworth money for worthy causes. Gary Brooks said that an alternative energy proposal could include a substantial grant proposal.

O: Music: Bob Miller noted how blessed we are with our music staff. Mary Brownlow noted that there was a substantial gift this year from the Clevie White Fund that increased support for the Young Artist performers from Opera North this past summer.

P: Ad-Hoc Sabbatical Planning Committee: Stan Williams thanked Bob Miller and the committee, noting that it was a substantial amount of work. There was a round of applause. Joanne Egner noted that there is still \$750 left in the Lilly Grant account to be used..

Q: Investment Committee: No comments or questions.

A vote on these reports passed unanimously.

Gary moved the resolution (printed in italics) printed in the 2015 Annual Meeting warning; Joan Wanner seconded.

Discussion of Resolution:

-Mary Brownlow spoke first, noting that the proposed change to a Ministries Model was several years in the making. In 2009, an ad-hoc committee recommended a change in the Board/Committee structure, 2010 cottage meetings convened by the Deacons recommended changes in the structure, and the 2014 Ad-Hoc Committee on Long Term Planning recommended a change in the structure. This year we really started to grapple with change. Church Council Chair Hillary White did a lot of work. Mary does not see the desire for change as a weakness, and the church not in crisis mode. We want to draw on our strengths. Times have changed. We are looking at what brings us energy and joy; not just filling slots.

Hillary White then made some comments. She noted that six active Church Council members met regularly to work on the changes. She thanked everyone for their input, which led us to a ministry type of organization that can enhance our energy. We can move from 12 boards and 66 committee positions to five ministries and 21 positions. She passed out a copy of a recent Parish Paper on "How Ministry Teams Get Things Done". She quoted several places in the article, noting the possibilities for flexibility between ministries. She asked the group to "Listen to your heart. Where do you see a place for yourself?" She noted that our new organization is fluid and there is room for lots of flexibility over the coming year. She passed out the nominating slate, and explained the purpose of the five ministries. Judy asked for the definition of the Stewardship Ministry. Hillary replied that it is being the steward of our resources.

Bob Miller then spoke about making the process understandable. We are changing the current structure for one year; the idea is to experiment for a year. By-Law Article 12 says that the By-Laws can be suspended for a specified amount of time. Under the proposal, Deacon Leaders would have the authority that Church Council has, and when Church Council is mentioned in the By-laws, "Deacon Leaders" should be inserted. He noted that the Woodworth and Pastoral Relations Committees would remain the same. Trustees now belong to the Stewardship Ministry, and where the Board of Trustees is

## Lent, Holy Week, and Easter

Easter is early this year, which means that all the church dates based on Easter – Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Pentecost – are also early. We hope that you will be able to join us every Sunday, but want to note the following special services:

**Palm Sunday, March 20, 10 am:** The Hallelujah Hollah Choir will sing and the service includes a processional with palms.

**Maundy Thursday, March 24, 7 pm:** A service of Tenebrae and Holy Communion.

**Good Friday, March 25, 7 pm:** The Seven Last Words of Christ by Josef Hayden will be performed by The Octet, a string quartet with vocal soloists. This free, one-hour performance is by turns tender, tragic, and triumphant — an emotional and powerful way to experience Christ's passion.

**Easter Sunday, March 27, 7 am:** an early morning outdoor service. We hope to meet again at the top of Hillside Cemetery, if weather permits.

**Easter Sunday, March 27, 10 am:** our joyous celebration of resurrection in the sanctuary.



## Flower Donations

Under the new Ministries Model of governance, some of our processes have changed. After the first of May, donations of flowers to enhance Sunday morning worship will be coordinated through the church office. If you would like to donate flowers on a particular Sunday, simply contact Amy to find out if that Sunday is available, and give her the wording you would like to appear in the bulletin. The delivery of flowers can be arranged through a florist, or you may decide to buy (or pick), arrange them and deliver them yourself.

## Dominican Republic Work Trip

This year, during the April school vacation, a team of teenagers and adults will travel to the Dominican Republic with Rita Severinghaus to work at a school near the town of Cotui. This trip is being planned in cooperation with the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College.

You will see some of the team at coffee hour for 2 Sundays in March, TBA, where they will be selling baked goods and flowers to support their trip. We look forward to hearing a report from them after their return.

## February Coffee Hour - Pot Lucks

For the month of February, we are experimenting with coffee hour. Instead of having one host, we ask that anyone who is inspired on any of these Sunday to contribute something - a plate of cookies, a bowl of fruit or nuts, a bottle of juice or your favorite snack (maybe that cake you are trying not to eat) - and bring it to church. Someone might even be moved to come 15 minutes early and make coffee. If too much food is there, we will share it out to take home. We are hoping to make this more fun and less daunting. We will collect feedback on this idea later this month.

## NCC UCC co-sponsors First Wednesday Talk

From time to time, our church co-sponsors a First Wednesday presentation with the Vermont Humanities Council, the Norwich Public Library, and the Norwich Historical Society. These are offered in our Sanctuary at 7 pm.

On March 2 Cecilia Gaposchkin will speak on "Gothic Magnificence."

Dartmouth professor Cecilia Gaposchkin will discuss the power of Gothic architecture in thirteenth century Paris, including the cathedrals of Notre-Dame and Sainte-Chapelle.



*Have you been to the Sunday School classroom upstairs?*

## March/April 2016 Mission Offering - One Great Hour of Sharing

**One Great Hour of Sharing is part of Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It works with local, national, and international partners, to provide support to health, education, refugee, agricultural and emergency relief initiatives worldwide. National Disaster, Refugee, Volunteer and Global Ministries programs are all supported by OGHS.**

The OGHS offering this year focuses on refugees and displaced persons. In a world where communities are being displaced by the catastrophes of war, famine, and natural disasters, the Church is called to reclaim the spiritual discipline of solidarity. As natural, economic, and political forces disrupt and uproot communities, we are called to stand in solidarity with those who seek to move beyond the trauma of displacement toward a promise of healing and peace.

Through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, we have opportunity and power to help those who are living in despair as refugees. If refugees had the choice to return home, many would not have a place to return because their home most likely has been destroyed; either burned, severely damaged, or is still an unsafe place to live. This year as you consider your gift to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, think of what it would be like to not have a place to call home. Let us live out the call of solidarity with all people, especially those displaced by disaster, war, and famine.

Please use the yellow "Mission Offering" envelopes in the pews to make your donation to One Great Hour of Sharing in March & April, 2016. Thank you!

**2015 Annual Meeting -- February 7, 2016**  
**Norwich Congregational Church UCC – Draft Minutes**

Mary Brownlow gave the opening prayer.

In attendance were 34 active and associate members.

John Severinghaus called the meeting to order at 11:53 AM.

Gary Brooks moved the slate of John Severinghaus as Moderator and Carolyn Mertz as Assistant Moderator; Chuck Egner seconded. John and Carolyn were elected by a unanimous vote.

Barbara Duncan moved to approve the Minutes of the 2014 Annual Meeting; Judy Pond seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Chuck Egner made a motion to adopt the 2016 budget as presented by the Board of Trustees; Doug James seconded.

Discussion of Report:

- Doug James noted that we are doing well. The Trustees are encouraged by the increase in pledges. The proposed budget includes a small amount of parsonage money, but they are hoping not to use it.
- The church applied for a solar energy grant from Green Mountain Power a year ago, but did not receive it. The Trustees continue to be interested, but there is no current proposal. Doug asked if there was opposition to pursuing solar energy. He noted that there are two options; the parish hall roof, or off site. The details for various options keep changing. There was a discussion of options. Gary Brooks asked if there was anyone in the congregation who has expertise in this area, and if the congregation would like the Trustees to continue to pursue solar energy. Judy Pond said that she feels strongly about using alternate energy sources. Mark Beams asked how renewable our current energy is. It was noted that we had been discussing electrical power. Chipper Ashley explained the current Green Mountain Power system. He noted that replacing our oil system in addition to electric means getting a heat pump and buying a bigger solar collector. Currently GMP is about 30% natural gas, 30% hydro, and 30% nuclear. Hillary White suggested that if the Trustees look at alternate energy that they should also look at a heat pump. Barbara Duncan asked if we had looked at Interfaith Power and Light, which addresses energy issues for churches in Vermont.
- Gary Brooks commended Ann Beams and Barbara Duncan for their work this year on the Stewardship Committee, bringing in pledges that allow for a balanced budget.
- Treasurer Joanne Egner noted cost savings from consolidating the Treasurer and Bookkeeper positions. She also mentioned a change due to the Lilly Grant, and that we will not be counting on a big fundraiser such as Tapas and Treasures this year, although the budget does allow for a modest amount (\$1000) for a community fundraising event. Joanne also thanked the Investment Committee as we have a strong investment income thanks to their work. She noted that the interest on parsonage sale will also continue to be a good source of income.
- Following this discussion the proposed budget passed by a unanimous vote.

Stan Williams moved to approve reports D-J and L-Q; Susan White seconded.

Discussion of Reports:

D: Church Council: Hillary White thanked the church for the opportunity to discuss changes to our governance, and for their confidence in the Council. She thanked Council members for listening to each other with open hearts.

E: Deacons: Bob Miller said that there was no further information. There were no questions.

F: Clerk's Report: Joan Wanner corrected the date of William Wanner's death. It should have been July 21, 2015.