

# Outward Ministry Reports

## ABC Missions

The ABC Missions budget was used to support the following organizations during the 2023-2024 fiscal year:

Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists	\$150.00
Catholic Charities (refugee resettlement)	400.00
Church World Service	150.00
Decisional Training	100.00
Food Bank of Western Massachusetts	200.00
Green Lake Conference Center	100.00
Grow Food Northampton	200.00
Manna Soup Kitchen	300.00
Northampton Survival Center	200.00
Partners in Health	100.00
Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity	200.00
Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering	250.00
St. John's Episcopal Church (school lunch program)	250.00
Syrian-American Medical Society	150.00
TABCOM	300.00
Treehouse Foundation	100.00
World Central Kitchen	100.00
World Central Kitchen (for Haiti)	200.00
<b>Total Amount Disbursed</b>	<b>\$3,450.00</b>

For the 15th consecutive year both ABC and UCC members generously supported the Holiday Giving Tree. This enabled us to provide approximately 50 Christmas presents and gift certificates to the children and families who live at the Treehouse Community in Easthampton. The children who live at Treehouse have all experienced foster care. Thank you to everyone who made this annual appeal so successful!

We deeply appreciate the generosity of the members of our congregation. You are the ones who make it possible for us to contribute to the organizations which serve our local, national and international communities! Thank you so much!

Respectfully Submitted,

Dana Pasquale and Sue Stone

## **UCC Missions**

As in past years, our assessment to Proportional Giving to the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ was the largest yearly distribution of UCC Missions Funds. This contribution is based on an assessed percentage of a church's total operating income during a given year. Proportional Giving replaced Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support, United Church Mission, Fellowship Dues, and Per Capita Dues. Proportional Giving provides clergy support and placement of pastors, supports retreats and camps, and works with the national UCC as well as other covenant partners who provide services in local communities and throughout the world. Our church's share of Proportional Giving for the past year was \$7500.00.

The remainder of the UCC Missions budget was divided among the worthy local and foreign missions detailed below. Many of these missions address food insecurity and housing needs, refugee support, aid to retired ministers and missionaries, support for the First Churches Family Fund, and ongoing support for the health and educational needs of a child through the UCC Wider Church's Mission.

In addition to designated UCC Mission Funds, the congregation generously donated \$873.00 of a special offering to the UCC in support of One Great Hour of Sharing.

We thank the congregation for their continued generosity and support for UCC Missions. Please feel free to contact us if you have a mission or project you would like us to consider for funding or if you are interested in joining the UCC Missions Team.

### **Fiscal 2023-2024 UCC Missions Disbursements**

Proportional Giving	\$7500.00
World Central Kitchen	300.00
Partners in Health	350.00
Wider Church's Mission	500.00
Food Bank of Western Massachusetts	300.00
Manna Soup Kitchen	300.00
Northampton Survival Center	300.00
Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity	300.00
Sojourner Truth School	200.00
Cathedral in the Night	200.00
Christmas Fund	400.00
Pastor's Family Fund	500.00
<b>Total Amount Disbursed</b>	<b>\$11,500.00</b>

Respectfully submitted,

Sandie Pirrello and Dori McCracken

## Peace and Justice Team

Peace and Justice continued joining in statements, making pledges of support, co-sponsoring events, and supporting and publicizing educational opportunities concerning peace and justice concerns of our time. \$600 of monetary support was given this fiscal year. Some of the main concerns and actions are listed below. In addition, First Churches continued to be represented by Sharon Moulton and/or Peter Kakos on the following groups/coalitions – Northampton Climate Emergency Coalition, Massachusetts Warheads to Windmills Coalition, Western Mass Nuclear Free Future Coalition and Valley Interfaith Refugee Action Group (VIRAG).

### Concerns and Action listed by Date

**7/14:** Monies, to support a Climate Incentive Forum to take place at Westfield State and also on Zoom was authorized. The check was lost in the mail and we were not notified in time to send another check. The check was canceled with no fee involved. Joining MA Warheads to Windmills Coalition was endorsed. Peter Kakos and/or Sharon Moulton volunteered to attend monthly meetings.

**July/August:** Peter Kakos was part of a group from WMass Nuclear Free Future that organized volunteers to hand out postcards about the nuclear threat we face today at showings of the movie Oppenheimer. Hampshire Mall was one of several places to give permission to do this.

**10/5:** Information about the fall Zoom presentation of Valley Interfaith Refugee Action Group (VIRAG) was provided for the church newsletter. The program was entitled: *An Alternative to Migration, Shoulder to Shoulder: Bringing Hope to Rural Honduras*.

**10/14:** Information about the Warheads to Windmills forum on Zoom called *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons and Fossil Fuel Use: What Will it Take?* was provided.

**10/14:** Peter Kakos helped organize a Peace Fair for Saturday morning and helped with a table, October 14. Sharon Moulton provided a table with information about bills in the state legislature concerning nuclear weapons.

**11/26:** was the Global Day of Action in Support of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This was the day before the meetings at the UN for nations who have Sabadosa and US Representative Jim McGovern attended the events at the UN the following week. Peter Kakos and Sharon Moulton held up the P&J banner about the prohibition of nuclear weapons that was made last fiscal year in front of the church before the church service began.

**December:** Peter Kakos was one of the local leaders for the National Leahy Fast for Palestine.

**January:** Peter Kakos was involved in rallies to Enforce the Leahy Law for Palestine.

**March:** Information was provided about the April 7th Zoom forum of VIRAG called

*Haiti: A desperate search for a safe haven.* Peter Kakos was part of a 4-day occupation of Rep. Jim McGovern's Northampton office to call for an end to US military aid to Israel that could be used in attacks on Gaza and for an immediate cease fire. The group was successful in getting a meeting to discuss their concerns with the representative.

**April:** The Team agreed to support the VIRAG Project: Gift Cards to help with the struggles of local resettlement agencies with the migrant crisis where immigrants are showing up that need support but there is no federal and very limited state funding for this support. This could not be a church-wide appeal because of the appeal for money for scholarships for children in Haiti and One Great Hour of Sharing. The Team authorized a donation which I pledged to match. Information was provided to the Team so other personal donations could be made, if desired.

VIRAG's goal was to raise \$5000, but \$6000 was raised so Jewish Family Services and Catholic Charities each received \$3000 worth of \$50 gift cards to give to immigrants to help with their resettlement needs. The Team also authorized money for VIRAG to support their expenses for their fall and spring forums and to MA Warheads to Windmills Coalition for expenses incurred in lobby days in support of Rep. Sabadosa and Sen. Comerford's bills concerning nuclear weapons. My understanding is that an in person meeting will be arranged soon, if it is not already scheduled by the time you read this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Moulton

## Circle of Care

In February, 2023, First Churches formed a Circle of Care for a family of three from Haiti – Ronaldo Loccident, Cherline Sila and their daughter Lancy. They have Temporary Protected Status, which was recently renewed, and both parents have work permits.

Lancy celebrated her third birthday in Lyman Hall on 8/3. Lancy will be attending Northampton Montessori Pre-school in the fall. Northampton Public Schools has a grant that will pay for her pre-school; the grant also paid for her attendance at the family daycare she previously attended.

Lancy's mom, Cherline, recently started a job at Baystate in Springfield. She is working in housekeeping but hopes to eventually become a nurse, which is her dream. Ronaldo works at Brosco in Hatfield and plans to take some courses at HCC to improve his job opportunities

The members of the Circle of Care from First Churches are: Judy Sherman, Patti Richmond, Mary Hoch, David Entin, and Pauline Bassett. We also have members who do not belong to First Churches. Providing love and support to people who are fleeing violence and terrible circumstances in their homes and seeking a new life in the United States is a great source of satisfaction to all of us. We are grateful to First Churches for allowing us to do this work.

Respectfully submitted,

Pauline Bassett

## Haiti Scholarship Drive

First Churches held its **10<sup>th</sup> HAITI SCHOLARSHIP FUND DRIVE** during the spring of 2024. Since 2005, First Churches has supported the work of CONASPEH, the National Council of Spiritual Churches of Haiti, an umbrella organization of over 8,000 Protestant, mostly poor, churches in Haiti, founded by and for Haitians.

Haiti is our neighbor, the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere. This nation has suffered earthquakes, hurricanes, cholera, poverty, the assassination of the last President, gang violence, and now the total collapse of its government. The people of Haiti are suffering. The problems seem overwhelming. And yet CONASPEH is keeping its schools open; it is feeding and educating children.

The cost for a student to attend primary school at CONASPEH for a year is **\$262**; the cost for secondary school is **\$412** per year. CONASPEH's gives 40% of any funds raised to churches within its umbrella organization because each church has a school. Our gifts help young people throughout Haiti.

In 2024, First Churches raised \$10,500. This is \$2640 above our goal of \$7860 and the **most** we have ever raised in the 10-year history of our scholarship drive.

In this time of violence and suffering, we have demonstrated to our friends at CONASPEH that we pray for them and support them as they struggle to provide a better future for their children. **As Francoise Villier, head of CONASPEH, wrote to us, "Once again, thank you for your love."**

Respectfully submitted,

Pauline Bassett