

**United Church of Ludlow
Annual Meeting 2025
Sunday, January 26, 2025, at 1230 PM**

United Church of Ludlow, 48 Pleasant St, Ludlow, VT 05149

MINUTES

Present: Roll call - 30 people were present in person, and 3 on Zoom.

Present on Zoom: Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, and Bob and Ginny Kottkamp.

(Ralph Pace attended the 10 AM church service via Zoom but said he was unable to attend the Annual Meeting. In the Zoom Chat, he gave his written support for the ONA proposal.)

- I. **Call Meeting to Order** – Laura Creaser called the meeting to order at 11:06 AM. She did Roll Call and counted 27 members of the United Church present, and reported to Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, the Clerk, that a quorum existed, with 27 total attendees, including 3 on Zoom. Three people arrived after that, bringing the total to 30 attendees in person and 3 attendees on Zoom.

- II. **Opening Prayer** – Pastor Michelle Fountain led an opening prayer.

- III. **Annual Meeting Date Bylaw Change Proposal** –
MOTION: Fra Devine made a motion to amend the bylaws to change the date of the Annual Meeting to between Jan. 15 and Feb. 1. Christine Boardman seconded the motion.
DISCUSSION: Bill Kneebone suggested the dates be changed to include the first Sunday in February. Michelle explained that this vote was using the same language as the current, bylaws but simply shifting the dates to coincide with the annual meeting.
VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 27-0.

- IV. **Amendment to Agenda**
MOTION: Fra Devine made a motion to add an amendment to the ONA vote so that following discussion on the ONA statement, there would be a follow-up discussion and vote on a UMC Reconciling Ministries statement. Penny Trick seconded the motion.
DISCUSSION: Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt explained that we needed the two separate votes because we are a United Church that is affiliated with both the UCC and UMC churches, which have different names and requirements for their inclusiveness certifications.
VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

- V. **Approval of 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes**
MOTION: Bob Malecki made a motion to accept the 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes. Andy Ohotnicky seconded.
DISCUSSION: Christine Boardman pointed out an error in the meeting time, saying the meeting was called to order at 1055 AM, not 1155 AM as recorded. Bob M accepted the correction.

VOTE: As amended, the motion passed unanimously.

VI. Open and Affirming/Reconciling Ministry Church Discussion

MOTION 1: Fra Devine made a motion to approve a Proposal for The United Church of Ludlow to become an Open and Affirming Church in the United Church of Christ, which was read out loud (*and added at end of minutes*). Christine Boardman seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Fra spoke on the background and history of the statement. He said after initial media dissemination (press release, website, Facebook), the next steps for promoting ONA status, including how this would be conveyed physically outside the church, would be discussed by the Building Inclusivity Team and presented to the Board, and anyone interested congregant was invited to join.

Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt remarked that when this effort started 2½ years ago, many people already thought UCL was an ONA church, since it had approved civil unions in 2009. But she said she felt going through the process had strengthened the church, deepened relationships, and that God had planned its timing for a moment in history when many of the people we are discussing welcoming are feeling increasingly marginalized and rejected by society, and needed a sign of love and acceptance.

Linda Alexander said she opposed the amendment. She was angry to have seen any rainbow-colored messaging on the Facebook page. She expressed her opinion that the church is God's house and a sacred place, and as a conservative, she doesn't believe it's appropriate to address sex and gender in church. She said, "We are all God's people and no one group is special." She said she felt that the ONA statement sets this one group apart, and that she would be looking in the pews wondering who was in them if these statements passed. She said she might not be comfortable staying here if the statement passed.

Dean Alexander added his own belief that members of the United Church of Ludlow already value and welcome a diverse congregation, and he doesn't feel the need to identify all these specific groups. He said "Everyone is Welcome" is all we need.

Carol Devine said the purpose of the ONA Statement is not to identify who is walking through the door. The purpose is that we're talking about a marginalized community that needs to hear words of welcome; it's about the welcome we are sending *out* the door. She mentioned that her gay daughter said while weeping at her wedding how hard it was to be gay, to always be outside and not feel welcome in society. Carol pointed out that Christ welcomed everyone, but he said it out loud to specific marginalized groups such as prostitutes, engaging with outsiders specifically and deliberately. "It's not for *us* that we're doing this," she explained. "We're making absolutely sure that a community that is marginalized and that is suffering feels welcome here. Not just that 'all people are welcome'—that could mean almost anything. They deserve to be told, *you* specifically are welcome in this church." Carol said she has been publicly advocating for the gay

community for 40 years, even before her two daughters told her and Fra that they were gay.

Penny Trick revealed that her father is gay and was asked to leave his church when he came out. “This is an insurance policy to stop allowing this to happen to someone else,” she said. “It doesn’t set a group apart. It makes everyone feel equal.”

VOTE: The ONA Statement Motion passed with 30 votes in favor and 3 against.

MOTION 2: Penny Trick made a motion to approve the Reconciling Congregations Ministry statement of the United Methodist Church, and Fra Devine seconded. Laura Creaser read the statement aloud. *(Added at end of minutes)*

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: The UMC Reconciling Congregations Ministry statement passed with 30 votes in favor and 3 against, giving it the more than 75% approval percentage required by the Reconciling Ministries Network.

VII. Committee Reports

MOTION: Pastor Michelle made a motion to vote on all reports—Pastor’s, Deaconate, Trustees, Communications Team, Outreach, Treasurers, and Auditors Reports—as one unit. Laura Creaser seconded.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously. Michelle thanked everyone for all their work and commitment to the church.

VIII. Proposed Budget for Fiscal 2025

MOTION: Dean Alexander made a motion to approve the 2025 Budget for the United Church of Ludlow. Bill Belcher seconded.

DISCUSSION: Bob Malecki presented the budget for 2025 on behalf of the Executive Board, which he said was based on estimates of giving.

Highlights included: There is more interest income coming in because of a change in the location of the reserve account. There are \$92,000 in revenues this year in the budget. It also includes increased benevolence, and some payroll changes to Michelle’s package to follow VT UCC guidelines. He clarified that Christian Education means children and adult education and Bible Study. There’s an off-budget section with money for fundraising activities and direct mission. He clarified that gifts and pledges to the Ring Out Love Capital Campaign are not included in this 2025 budget. Dean Alexander clarified the campaign brought in around \$60,000 over a three-year pledge period.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Proposal for the Parsonage: Bob said the church needed a policy associated with the funds from sale of the parsonage, which is essentially a rainy day fund, serving as a reserve for any large expenses for the UCL, which is invested prudently on a 25 percent equity basis.

MOTION: Dean Alexander made a motion to approve the Parsonage Sale Fund Policy

found on page 23 of the Annual Report. Christine Boardman seconded.

DISCUSSION: Christine Boardman asked for a definition of a “rainy day fund.”

Examples Bob Malecki gave were catastrophic damage, to support a budget if needed, or to fund an unanticipated big-ticket item. Any expenditure would need to be approved by 2/3 majority of the congregation in a special meeting or the Annual Meeting.

Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt thanked Bob Malecki for all his hard work on the budget since he took over for Lisha a year ago. The congregation applauded in thanks.

Christine asked about Ring Out Love, reminding the congregation that we agreed to tithe 10% of total receipts toward mission and outreach, and wondering when this would be done. Bob clarified that we would do that when we close the books. Christine suggested we consider spending some before it's done on urgent need items. Laura responded that the Executive Board would consider this when it meets.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

X. 2025 Slate of Officers

OFFICE	OCCUPANT	TERM EXPIRES
○ President	Vacant	
○ Treasurer	Bob Malecki	2025
○ Clerk	Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt	2025
○ Receiver of Offerings	Bill Kneebone	2025
○ Trustees		
Dean Alexander		2026
Laura Creaser		2028
Nancy Martel		2028
Andy Ohotnicky		2025
Loren Stolp		2028
○ Deacons		
Laura Creaser (Chair)		2028
Marge MacIntyre		2028
Nancy Martel		2027
Sandy Peplau		2027
Linda Thomson		2027
○ Auditor	Dean Alexander	2025
○ Mission Outreach Comm.		
Bill Kneebone		2025
Sandy Peplau		2025
Linda Thomson		2025
○ Communications Team		
Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt		2025
Pat Moore		2025
George Thomson		2025
Penny Trick		2025

MOTION: Christine Boardman made a motion to approve the 2025 Slate of Officers.
Nancy Martel seconded the motion.
DISCUSSION: None.
VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Adjournment –

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to adjourn the 2025 Annual Meeting, Andy seconded.
DISCUSSION: None.
VOTE: The motion passed unanimously. Laura Creaser adjourned the meeting at 1205 PM

*Minutes submitted by
Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt,
Clerk to the Board*

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ADDENDA:

United Church of Christ

Proposal for The United Church of Ludlow to become an Open and Affirming Church

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34)

We, the United Church of Ludlow, value and welcome a diverse congregation. We are an Open and Affirming (ONA) church, believing that each of us is created in God’s image. We celebrate everyone, including: people of all ages, races, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family configurations, economic circumstances, education, physical, cognitive, or emotional abilities, spiritual and religious traditions.

We welcome all to participate fully in the life, leadership, ministry, and mission of this church as we seek to grow together spiritually in an open, safe, and nurturing community of faith. We strive to live God’s message of inclusive love through Jesus Christ in our community, nation, and world. We commit ourselves to the ongoing work of being an ONA congregation, seeking peace and justice as we live out the belief that God is still speaking. With God’s grace, we journey together in Christian faith.

United Methodist Church

Reconciling Ministries Foundational Statement

“We celebrate God’s gift of diversity and value the wholeness made possible in community equally shared and shepherded by all. We welcome and affirm people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, who are also of every age, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status, and so much more. We acknowledge that we live in a world of

profound social, economic, and political inequities. As followers of Jesus, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and pledge to stand in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed.”

Reconciling Ministries are required to affirm this foundational statement by a vote of at least 75%.