

Narrative Report 2014

Our Founding Fathers needed almost thirteen years, while operating under the Articles of Confederation, to draft and ratify what we know as the United States Constitution. And so begins, *“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America”*. A constitution, described simply, serves as the system of beliefs and laws by which a country, state, or organization is governed. Our nation’s constitution has served us well over the course of our 225-year history including its twenty-seven amendments as our understanding of “life; liberty and the pursuit of happiness” has evolved over the course of our history. We continue to aspire to that more perfect union.

I suppose that we can be proud of our accomplishment of taking just three years to draft and propose our new church constitution. For these past few years, we have been operating under a provisional constitution as we’ve “tested the waters” living under a single board structure rather than a multiple board organization. The main thrust of this transition has been to downsize and simplify our church to just one board duly elected by our congregation. This single board then has the authority to appoint or dissolve committees and teams to accomplish certain tasks on a long or short-term basis. For example, our Pastoral Relations Committee serves a long term need whereas the team that participated in the purchase of the New Parsonage disbanded immediately following the closing on the house.

This past year under the provisional constitution we have been wrestling with the language to describe our membership. Recognizing that our lives and situations change that impact our level of involvement with the church; we sought to capture that reality in our description of members and their rights. We are thankful for Paul Cook, even from faraway Illinois, who helped us find that language: “voting and non-voting members”. Please read our proposed constitution and let us know what you think with your discussion and vote at our annual meeting.

There is a place for constitutions and then there is a place for covenants. Constitutions provide us a greater degree of specificity guiding our relationship with one another. Even deeper is covenantal language that captures the breadth and depth of “loving God with all of our heart, mind, body and soul and loving our neighbor.” Shortly before I arrived, your deacons adopted a church covenant:

Having given ourselves to God, by faith in Christ, and adopted the Word of God as our rule of faith and practice, we now give ourselves to one another by the will of God in this solemn Covenant. We promise by His grace to love and obey Him in all things.

We commit ourselves to the work of Christ’s Church: upholding the worship of God and the ordinances of baptism and Lord’s Supper, seeking through example and word to reveal Christ to others, contributing cheerfully to the support of the Church and its missions,

proclaiming the truths of Christ, and teaching them faithfully to our children, striving for justice, peace and love among the peoples of the world.

We commit to maintain an attitude of spiritual integrity, personal devotions, sympathy and love in all our relationships with our fellow members.

We will everywhere hold Christian principles sacred and Christian obligations supreme; counting it our chief business in life to extend the influence of Christ in society; constantly praying and telling that the Kingdom of God may come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

May the Lord bless us, guide us, and strengthen us in our endeavor to live out the spirit of his covenant.

Constitutions give us rules of order. Covenants call us to give of ourselves to God and one another in our life together. I pray that the reminder of our covenant and the adoption of our new constitution will draw us into a more perfect union as we fulfill our call to be the body of Christ in our community.

In their own words, let me share with you some thoughts from our board in regard to this past year and the year to come:

Dave writes on behalf of the Financial Committee,

Accomplishments:

- *The financials are kept under the watchful eye of two (co) – Treasurers*
- *Co-Treasurers work cooperatively sharing duties for 2 month periods*
- *Co-Treasurers review and report weekly activity to each other as well as the pastor*
- *Worked to reduce monthly minimum required balance to \$300 from \$1500*
- *Properly managed all funds in the Church General Account, Capital Expense Account and Communion Fund*
- *Built an appropriate and realistic budget for the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year*

Goals:

- *Open a Church Savings Account that will be managed online to replace the Flexible CD that will no longer be available*
- *Keep the Church apprised of its financial status with info in the church bulletins*
- *Look at ways to reduce fuel cost for 2014-2015*

Chris writes in regard to Pastoral Relations & Deacon duties: *We have worked well jointly with the representatives from the Starksboro church in*

establishing the pastor's salary, determining the pastor's annual benefits and arranging for substitute ministers during our pastor's absence. As to assisting the pastor in care for our church congregation, we have continued to provide support to the pastor each and every Sunday in the form of readers and assistants for communion Sundays. We have also been consistent in providing a coffee hour every other month on the third Sunday for the congregation. We also have made visits to some of our members when sick and provided comfort plus sent out cards to members when ill or just home recuperating from illnesses.

Ron & Roland share in regard to the maintenance of our building and grounds: *In order to better focus on preventative maintenance we created a comprehensive checklist of indoor and outdoor maintenance items which was prioritized to accomplish over the next few years, funds permitting. Past year completed items (maintenance, et al) included: a) Purchased two plastic dining tables, and 12 extra metal chairs, to replace the two large folding tables donated to Brewster Pierce school, b) Installed removable insulated panel at counter opening between kitchen and annex, c) Installed brackets on north wall of sanctuary for video screen, d) Purchased second mixer for sound system to expand capabilities, e) Arranged with Efficiency Vermont to take our ancient extra fridge for which we will receive \$50. Lord willing, this coming year we will accomplish a) painting the entry wood floors, b) touch-up paint the sanctuary pews and half-walls, c) Replace siding on north and west walls of annex.*

Holly writes about our fundraising efforts, *“our committee had a very full year and used our resources and talents to both reach out to the community and invite them to come to us for events while fundraising for the church operating expenses and Neighbor Helping Neighbor. In the fall, we produced and delivered nearly 125 community calendars (check w/ Becky re: #), held Hunters Breakfast, and hosted a community concert with performances by the HIMS as well as the Stetsons. In the spring, we held a Spaghetti dinner, a yard sale, and planned the Race 4 Sundaes. All of these events were made possible through the support of our church family who often volunteered and donated items to help defer costs. Thank you all, and praise the Lord for we do this all in his name.”*

Susie writes, *Christmas Eve was a wonderful celebration this year, including fifteen children from the community in our traditional Christmas Eve service. Three of our own; Sarah Detweiler, Emma Dubay, and Codi VanDyk, performed an original skit and the children, dressed in Nativity scene costumes, acted out the story and sang several songs. Chris Brosius joined Sue Detweiler in leading these rehearsals, which included making an ornament each week in addition to rehearsing the music and learning about the Christmas story.*

The church has acquired curriculum based on “The Jesus Storybook Bible” and we hope to be able to offer a Sunday School program soon. Currently, Sunday School is attended by Eli Detweiler, 19 months, who enjoys walks to the river and playing with the train set in the rooms downstairs as he listens to stories from the Bible! Sometimes, Celine

Cozzens joins him. Our hope and prayer is that more families with children will join us in worship.

Thank you board, committees and teams for your many hours of service to our church and community.

I would also like to add our appreciation to Kevin Martens for leading our Wednesday evening small group these past couple of years. We've enjoyed his facilitation of our discussion as we've read and studied several books of the Bible, most recently Paul's letter to the Galatians. And, this past year we've added a new adult Christian formation opportunity with the Thursday night class, "Journey of Exploration". We had on average about fifteen in attendance, each session equally comprised of folks from our church and community. Barbara Elliot, a new member of our church, was instrumental in developing and organizing this class. Thanks Barbara! We hope to offer another similar class this coming year.

I close as we always do in our circle holding hands, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."
(2 Cor 13:14, ESV)

Your pastor, on behalf of the church board –

Larry