

Little River United Church of Christ
Annual Report for 2017



January 28, 2018

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Staff, Officers, and Leaders Serving in 2017

Church Staff

Senior Pastor	Reverend Dr. David Lindsey
Associate Pastor	Reverend Alexis Kassim
Director of Music	Craig Stapert
Children's and Youth Choir Director	Ashton Streavig
Communications Coordinator	Roberta Croll
Sexton and Coordinator for Youth and Children's Ministries	John Davis
Child Care Providers	Yris Sanchez, Lia Berbichasvili

Officers

Moderator	Carolyn Yocom
Moderator Elect, part year	Brett Kassabian
Past Moderator, part year	Rob Peters
Church Clerk	Jean Wheelock
Membership Clerk	
Historian Archivist	Gwen Crepeau and Florence Deike
Treasurer	Mary Summers
Assistant Treasurer	Michelle Mitchell
Comptroller	Gary Allen

Boards

Board of Christian Education	Mike Craven, Chair
Board of Deacons	Clark Beil, Chair
Board of Outreach and Social Justice	Nancy Hall and Josh Clark, Chairs
Board of Trustees	Robin Petrusak, Chair

Committees

Arts	Kathryn Schultz, Chair
Communications	Barbara Shepherd, Chair
Endowment Fund	George Leonard, Chair
Flowers	Ruth Duncan
Music	Barbara Lowrey and Amanda Halstead, Chairs
Nominations and Appointments	Tom Ross, Chair
Personnel	Kathy McCrea, Chair
Stewardship	Rob Peters and Adam Honeysett, Chairs
Women's Ministry	Pam Binninger and Camille Brooks

Church Clerk

Meetings of the Congregation:

At the Annual Meeting on January 29, 2017, the congregation:

- Approved Church Council's approval of minutes for today's meeting;
- Received and approved reports of officers, boards, committees and staff for 2016, including addition of Amanda Halstead's name to the Music Committee;
- Unanimously elected officers and members of various boards and committees;
- Approved the establishment of a permanent Personnel Committee and approved the changes to the associated by-laws.

At the Congregational Meeting on May 7, 2017, the congregation:

- Approved a motion that the Interim Associate Pastor Search Committee be converted to a Settled Associate Pastor Search Committee to conduct a limited national search; the committee is to be augmented with additional members, including members from Greenspring Retirement Center and the youth;
- Approved a motion allowing the Associate Pastor Search Committee to conduct a search for a full-time Associate Pastor.

At the Congregational Meeting on August 27, 2017, the congregation:

- Approved a call to the Reverend Alexis Kassim as full-time Associate Pastor of Little River United Church of Christ.

Meetings of the Church Council:

The Church Council met on the following dates for regular meetings:
January 11, February 8, March 25 (retreat), April 26, and December 13.

Meetings of the Governance Board:

The Board met on June 14, and October 11, 2017.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jean Wheelock
Church Clerk

Moderator

When we started the year, we had a single minister and a consultant's report that summarized three clear thoughts: (1) we wanted a second minister, (2) we valued our building and grounds, and (3) we needed to communicate more effectively and consistently. The survey also recognized that we were divided about our governance structure. When viewed from this lens, I see some successes and some areas where we have continued needs.

Successes

- Alexis! With thanks to the interim--then permanent--search committee, we have a second minister and we accomplished this in a manner that was guided by the congregation as a whole. My thanks for Alexis, and for the faithful stewardship and guidance of this hard-working group.
- The Building. With thanks to the Trustees, John Davis, and others, repairs and fixes have occurred in our building space. More is on the way as we finished the roof and prepare for other projects. In partnership with Mary Summers (our Treasurer), our financial team, and the Trustees, under Robin Petrusak's faithful guidance, we have also worked to stabilize our financial practices, with the longer term aim of reducing our volunteer efforts in this area.
- Communications. We've instituted the following practices: (1) listening sessions where we obtain input from the congregation, (2) summarizing committee meetings in the bulletin, and (3) working to better coordinate our church calendar. The listening sessions would not have been successful without the hard work and dedication of Robin Petrusak and Mary Summers.

Continued Needs

- Volunteers. We have a real conundrum—we are a busy church with lots of need—and members with limited time! Thanks to all who volunteered and assisted the church. I would, however, raise these questions:
 - How can we make volunteering a part of our spiritual growth and keep from over-burdening those who step forward to help?
 - How can we create flexibility for those for whom getting to church in the evening is difficult? Can we use electronic media to help us?
 - How can we “right-size” our boards and committees so that the loads are shared?
- Communication. It's a truism that you can never over-communicate. We need to continue to focus on calendar planning, sharing information across committees, and obtaining congregational input.
- Governance. Harkening back to the consultant results, we don't want to go back to our old system—but we aren't comfortable with the new system. Where do we go next?

As I move into “past moderator” status, I want to thank all of you for your trust, your guidance, and your honesty. For my mistakes, I ask your forgiveness. I remember telling you at the beginning that this task is too large for a single person—it would take all of us—I am proud of what we've accomplished, and hopeful that we can continue to move forward. Above all, I am thankful for your faithful presence and support during this past year.

Carolyn Yocom

Senior Pastor

It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. It was 2017, an emotional and spiritual rollercoaster at Little River.

In some respects, it was a year of exuberant highs. In January, for example, we hosted a group of folks from First Congregational UCC in Asheville, North Carolina for the weekend of the Women's March. Noreen Bania, who had worshipped at Little River when she lived in the area, made the first contact. My profound thanks go to the many volunteers who hosted, fed, marched with, and worshipped with this group. Of particular note, I want to thank Amanda Halstead and Kathleen Styles, who spearheaded the hospitality for our friends from Asheville. It was a moving weekend for a great many of us, a time when we palpably sensed the Holy Spirit moving in our midst in a wonderful way!

In other ways, it was a year of difficult lows. Over the past twelve months, we faced the death of several of our long-time members and church friends. Consider just a few of the folks we lost in 2017: Jan Wands, Mildred Shiver, Kent Rogers, Tom Hill. Each of them was unique; each occupied a different place in Little River's life and ministry. Every one of them, however, was a longstanding pillar of our congregational life. One year ago, we had very few members left of the generation that founded and built the church up in the early days of the 1950s and 1960s. As of this writing, we have even fewer. How will we honor the legacy that they established, and how will we carry forward the good work that they undertook? These are questions that I mull in my heart as 2018 begins, and I welcome your thoughts and perspectives about them.

There's no way to discuss 2017 at Little River, though, without discussing the hate crime we experienced during Holy Week. On Tuesday of Holy Week, our church volunteers and staff arrived at church and discovered hateful language and symbols spray-painted all over our building, as well as on the sign and banners out by the turnpike. The language and symbolism was too hateful to repeat here, but suffice it to say, this work clearly expressed a neo-Nazi point of view, one filled with anti-Semitic, homophobic, and Islamophobic rage. I hugged a lot of people that day, even as some of the mentally and emotionally strongest members of our church fell crying before me. How saddened (yet not surprised) I was to learn that the Jewish Community Center had also been hit in a similar fashion the same night.

Countless people flocked to the church that day, from the police to reporters to concerned neighbors – too many to mention. For now, I just want to express my deep gratitude to the extraordinary number of people who helped out that week, from answering phones in the office to scraping paint off the building and beyond. I couldn't have gotten through it without you and without the many members of the wider community (notably the Jewish Community Center) who stepped up to help during this time. It was a challenging time, one of the most difficult of my 14-year ministry. And the impact of this hate crime continues, as we await the preliminary hearing of Dylan Mahone, the 20-year-old man from the neighboring Camelot subdivision who was arrested for these hate crimes.

Yet as with so many things this past year, the heartbreaking depths of that Tuesday were met with extraordinary heights later in the week. On Holy Saturday, we held a community vigil in our sanctuary. During that time, we welcomed a variety of speakers to the chancel to share their reflections on the experience and how it impacted them. Here is the full list in order of speaking:

- Lance Fischer, Member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Drummer and Singer
- Jeff Dannick, Executive Director, Jewish Community Center
- Sameer Hossain, a neighbor from Fairfax County, representing the Muslim Community
- Judy Jacobs Miller, member of Little River, professor at Northern Virginia Community College (Annandale Campus), which had also been the target of a similar hate crime earlier in the year (allegedly by the same person)
- Sharon Bulova, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (and the founder of Faith Communities in Action)
- Allison Kaye, part of the Jewish Community Center family
- Neil Hough, Senior Pastor, St. Matthews United Methodist Church, Annandale
- Surrender Singh, Sikh Foundation of Virginia
- Jennifer Atkinson, member of Little River, professor at George Mason University
- Eileen Filler-Corn, Representative, 41st District, House of Delegates
- David Miller, Senior Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax
- Bill Collins, representing the Baha'i Community
- Dick Saslaw, Leader, Virginia Senate Democratic Caucus
- Linda Olson Peebles, Minister of Faith in Action, Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington
- Ahn Phan, Outreach Representative, Sen. Mark Warner's office
- Jennifer Boysko, Representative, 86th District, House of Delegates

That night, over 500 people crammed into our sanctuary, spilled out into the narthex and the hall, and even sat outside the sanctuary on the grass with the door open in order to hear.

After the vigil, I invited as many people as could stay to gather around the church building, each of us holding a candle to “re-consecrate” the church after it was desecrated. It was an extraordinary night of healing for Little River and for the wider community. The next morning was Easter Sunday, and I found it to be a time of renewed hope. I pray that it was a time of healing and hope for you, as well.

In my specific ministry here at Little River, I confess that 2017 was also quite a rollercoaster. There were some deep lows, often driven by the fact that I spent most of 2017 as the only pastor on staff (an experience I hope not to repeat). During that time, I am confident that a great many things fell through the cracks: house calls I would like to have made, administrative challenges that lingered too long, sermons that did not receive as much preparation as they deserved. That stretch of 12 months of being the only pastor on staff – from September 2016 to September 2017 – was at times invigorating. Mostly, though, it was exhausting. Little River today is a church whose hopes and needs require at least two pastors, even if we're not all full-time. We haven't been a one-pastor church since the early 1960s, and if this past year was any indication, I pray that we don't become a one-pastor church again any time soon.

That said, there have been a great many highs for me this year. I relished the challenge of leading a year-long sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. I also enjoyed teaching a Process Theology class, which wrapped up in June. Further, God blessed me in countless ways through you, the members of this church. With notes of encouragement, homemade treats, and your willingness to step up to volunteer and lead, you have blessed me more than I can say.

And what a joy it has been to welcome Rev. Alexis Vaughan Kassim as our newly called Associate Pastor! Pastor Alexis first interviewed with our search committee on the fateful Tuesday night of Holy Week, when she saw the desecrated building. She was with us on the night of the community vigil, even as she had her own church responsibilities at Westmoreland UCC in Bethesda the next morning. She preached a candidating sermon on August 27, and she began work here on September 4. She has been an outstanding addition to our church staff, and she has been a gracious and supportive colleague to me. I thank God and the search committee alike for bringing Alexis here! Thanks especially to Cici Thompson for her hard work as chair of that committee.

It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. It was 2017, and frankly, I'm looking forward to 2018. As this year begins, I pray that God continues to bless and keep all of us at this extraordinary church that we have each come to call home.

In Christ's peace,

Rev. Dr. David B. Lindsey

Associate Pastor

In September 2017, I was delighted to be called as Little River's new Associate Pastor! In this role, I focus primarily on children and youth ministries, pastoral care, and social justice. In the time that I have been here, I have enjoyed getting to know the congregation and all that God is doing in this place.

Since I arrived at the beginning of the school and program year, I had to hit the ground running! One of my main goals this year was to jumpstart the Pilgrim Youth Fellowship (PYF) for our 6th-12th grade youth. PYF held three fellowship outings this fall. In October, we went to Cox Farms' Fall Festival in Centreville. In November, we went to the Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Festival in Alexandria to explore Palestinian culture. In December, we participated in a Global Shabbat dinner with Jewish youth groups in Northern Virginia. Each of these outings included 5-8 youth. We are already gearing up for 2018 by planning for our summer mission trip to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS in July!

One of the things that drew me to Little River UCC was its desire to undergo a process to become a Multiracial and Multicultural (M&M) church, much like it did to become an Open and Affirming (ONA) church. In October and November, we held "listening sessions" for the congregation to begin the discernment process of what it would mean for Little River UCC to become more multiracial and multicultural. These conversations were supported by members of the Board of Outreach and Social Justice and the Racial Justice Coalition.

In closing I just want to thank all of you for welcoming me into the Little River community with such warmth and kindness. I look forward to all that we will do together in 2018!

Rev. Alexis Vaughan Kassim

Communications Coordinator

This year, I have continued the main functions of my job -- producing the weekly Sunday bulletin, the *Current Tidings* e-newsletter, the *Currents* online newsletter, the *In the Stream* section of the website, the *Current Reflections* monthly print newsletter, and Little River's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Related to that, I have done Facebook advertising and other free advertising for the Evangelism Committee and for First Friday.

In addition, as a member of the Communications Committee, I have gotten more involved with discussions /tasks related to the re-design of the LRUCC website.

I have also taken on a few other additional tasks throughout the year such as the production of the weekly *Thanksgivings & Concerns* email, posting sermons to the website, and making other website updates, adding/removing names from the LRUCC Google email groups, and updating the church calendar.

There is much to do with communication at Little River UCC, and I look forward to continuing my role of Communications Coordinator in the church and working on ways to improve the process of "getting the word out" during the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Croll

Sexton

I offer greetings and salutations to all. As I write this, we stand at the precipice of a new year. I find myself reflecting on the joys and sadness of a building slowly returning from the brink.

Work on roof repair by NV Roofing was started during last summer and culminated with the continuation of the work from December 2017 into January 2018. This was definitely a long time in coming and will ensure some of the inside repairs on the list of to-do items will not be in vain.

We had a few more trees come down around the perimeter of the parking lot which we had to clear from the walkway with the chainsaw. There were also a couple which we had to have professionals come in to bring down safely. This continues to be an ongoing concern due to several contributing factors, including disease and weather.

We had a fire panel issue in March but it turned out to be a simple fix and we only had to replace a board which brought us back up to speed.

In October, we had an unexpected visitor to the parking lot. An injured fox was spotted under a vehicle. He seemed to have an issue with one of his back legs. I tried to get the local animal rescue out to save him, but they were not able to arrive before the fox disappeared. We do have a family of foxes living in the grove behind the church, of which he was likely a member. They are harmless and quite efficient at controlling the rodent population. Later in the year someone told me they spotted a fox which appeared to be in good health and with the description I am confident it was our little friend.

Also in October, the fridge in the kitchen gave out, but we were able to get a tech out to repair it. We lost the perishables, but at least we recovered in time for an event which required its use.

Then, of course, we had our usual brownouts which afflict us at oft-time inconvenient instances. I have taken the opportunity to bring various people into the loop, showing them what to be aware of and how to identify a power issue. I have written guidelines on what to do and who to call to remedy a situation if it should occur in my absence.

Foxes were not the only visitors. We had our chimney swifts return to roost in the exhaust ducts for the boiler again this year. Not an ideal situation, but at this time, harmless enough.

Lastly, we had an emergency service call for the downstairs boiler on 12/31. I had gone to grab a broom from the shop and opened the door to a shower of water. The expansion tank had sprung a leak and had to be temporarily bypassed. Phew!

But all things considered, I am definitely looking forward to a prosperous and healthy new year for the building and grounds. We can do this together, as always.

Once more into the breach we go!
Respectfully submitted, *John Davis*

Coordinator for Youth and Children's Ministries

The year went by in a rush of uncertainty, culminating in the extravagant welcome of a new Associate Pastor who took up the reins of leadership of the youth group with exuberance and polished enthusiasm. The youth kicked off 2017 with a session of skating at Fairfax Ice Arena with a good attendance. For 2017, we also saw General Synod, held in Baltimore, grace our doorstep. Three of our youth found the time in their busy schedules to attend several days, learning and interacting with other youth from all over the country. They came away having made friends and experiencing what it means to be part of a faith organization which celebrates inclusivity and justice for all people.

On the lighter side, the first three months of the 2017/2018 program year for First Friday began with a shout and ended 2017 with a roar! For October, November, and December we had attendance figures of 47, 55, and 65 respectively. We squeaked by on the volunteer side a couple of times but otherwise the evenings have been safe. I hear tell from the parents that the kids are excited when they are told FF is coming up. The parents themselves have expressed their gratitude for the care and guidance we provide for their children.

Thank you all for the support and sacrifices you make as volunteers as well as your continued participation going forward. I am truly humbled to be part of this fantastic community I consider to be family.

Respectfully submitted,

John Davis

Membership Report

Membership Changes	Count
Starting membership, as of January 1, 2017	493
Additions during the year	
Confirmation	0
Transfers/Reaffirmation/other	13
Losses during the year	
Deaths	4
Marjorie English	
Tom Hill	
Kent Rogers	
Mildred Shriver	
Transfers and Removals	4
Julie Arens	
Charles and Dee Cardiff	
Jason Thompson	
Membership as of December 31, 2017	498
Baptisms/Weddings/Memorial Services	
Baptisms	1
Weddings at Little River	1
Memorial Services at Little River	2
Memorial Services at Greenspring	2
Average weekly worship attendance, 2017	153

Board of Christian Education

This year brought in a new Associate Pastor to assist us in our mission of faith formation, and Alexis has had an immediate impact. Our committee is smaller than desired, but this is the committee to join if you are thinking about increasing your involvement this year because we offer the best treats, both sweet and healthy at each meeting. If you volunteer as a teacher, you will get to do crafts from some of the best craft-minds in the area and/or play with blocks. Here are some of the highlights from 2017.

Adult Education

In January and February, we finished up our “Talking White Privilege” series which was a continuation and extension from the long-term Board of Outreach and Social Justice (BOSJ) series about race. These sessions were very thought-provoking and averaged about 20 participants. During the summer, we continued our successful TED Talks series on timely and popular topics, averaging 15 people. In the fall, we hosted a “Sustaining Creation” series which will hopefully lead to some church-wide actions this spring. We averaged about 8-10 people per session.

Church School

This year continued our current model of two classes using Seasons of the Spirit curriculum, K-5 and 6-12. We continued our Godly Play class for our Pre-K children. Overall church school attendance was over 21 children with 4 more in the nursery. We are reviewing curricula to determine if Seasons of the Spirit is the most appropriate for us and welcomed many suggestions from Pastor Alexis. We plan to test some other curricula this spring before making any decisions for the 2018-2019 program year. We hope to offer Our Whole Lives (OWL) in the near future. We hope to have a Confirmation class in this next year as well.

Youth Group

John Davis stepped in to help maintain a youth group, and we welcomed Pastor Alexis’ arrival this fall when they held three outings. A kick-off was held at Cox Farms in October, and in November the youth went to the Al-Quds Festival to explore Palestinian culture in the city of Jerusalem. In December they participated in a Global Shabbat dinner hosted by BBYO, a Jewish youth organization. We look forward to building on this momentum with more regular PYF gatherings in the New Year.

First Friday

John Davis has continued his strong leadership of this special program. Attendance is strong, but First Friday’s success requires many volunteers, which is becoming a growing concern. Jane Wallace continues to provide fun crafts for children of all ages.

Women’s Ministry (please see their full report under Committee Reports)

Mike Craven

Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons was quite active in 2017. Here are some highlights of our year:

- The Board of Deacons established a policy regarding the display of flags in the building and on church property. The policy discourages the display of any flag apart from certain events (e.g. commemorations or memorial services) and at the discretion of the Senior Pastor.
- Following the hate crime at Little River, and in light of gun violence at schools and places of worship, the Board of Deacons collaborated with the Board of Trustees to explore the safety and security of the church and preschool. Enhanced security systems are being installed in the office, and volunteers have agreed to monitor the front doors during services. The Board of Deacons and Board of Trustees will continue to review best practices and practical solutions to help ensure Little River UCC remains a safe refuge while adhering to our commitment to being open and welcoming.
- The Board agreed to re-establish a Stephen Ministry, and in October, a Ministry Fair was held in support of the Stewardship Committee to promote the many activities, benevolences, and opportunities to volunteer.

The Board of Deacons wishes to thank the entire congregation for their support and encourages everyone to seek opportunities to actively participate in the life of the church.

Clark Beil, Chair

Board of Outreach and Social Justice

The year 2017 has been very eventful for BOSJ. In addition to the traditional responsibilities:

- Dispersal of the benevolences and other funds on behalf of Little River UCC totaling \$86,280.00
- Five special offerings
- Rise Against Hunger, which resulted in 20,000 meals going to El Salvador
- Coat and warm clothing drives
- Fair Trade sales (see full report under Committee Reports)
- FISH pantry food collection and distribution (see full report under Committee Reports)
- LGBT parades, events, and presentations
- TED talks and Faith in Film (with Christian Education)
- White Gift Christmas dinner and dispersion of more than 318 gifts to children in need
- Providing Shaw Community Center with Thanksgiving gift cards
- Liaison with partners Main Street Child Development Center, Shaw, Thrive DC, Second Story (Alternative House), International Justice Mission, and Alliance for Human Rights

The Board:

- Developed the Racial Justice Coalition to combine the groups exploring racial injustice
- Held workshops on how to respond to the refugee and immigrant crises, solitary confinement, and torture awareness
- Hosted a sister church's congregational representatives and organized a Little River UCC presence at the historic Women's March in Washington
- Responded to church's request to be more outward-focused by pursuing the Multicultural and Multiracial platform of the UCC
- Joined the Potomac Conservancy and participated in a river cleanup day which resulted in the removal of hundreds of bags of trash from the waterway
- Formed partnerships with the Legal Aid Justice Center, the Annandale Christian Community for Action, and the Taste of Annandale
- Responded to calls for crisis funding of a partner (Thrive DC)
- Through the wider UCC, sent funds to support their broader efforts against hate (Charlottesville and DACA legislation)
- Collected many children's books for the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center families

Little River UCC is the face of a progressive church serving all in the Northern Virginia area. The Board of Outreach and Social Justice members continue to seek input from the congregation as to how they can best reflect our beliefs and live out our values. We thank the pastors (yay, two pastors now!!!), the office staff (John, you know you're our hero!), and Mary Summers (Treasurer) especially, for their support. We look forward to continuing our mission, and maybe, with God's guidance, to find more stuff to do!

Nancy D. Hall

Josh Clark

2017 BOSJ co-chairs

Board of Trustees

2018

Mike Nagy
Robin Petrusak

2019

John Acar
Terry Downs
Ben Northrup

2019

Lynn Daft
Betsy Erickson
Nancy Hall
Andrew Hunter

The Board of Trustees is responsible for financial operations of the church, approving the use of the building and grounds by church members and outside groups, office and administrative operations of the church, and building and grounds maintenance. During 2017, Robin Petrusak served as chairperson of the Board. Ben Northrup and Robin Petrusak represented the Board of Trustees at meetings of the Church Council.

Financial Operations

During 2017, the Little River UCC financial team consisted of Mary Summers, Treasurer; Michelle Mitchell, Assistant Treasurer; and Gary Allen, Comptroller. With the departure of our Church Business Administrator in July, Little River UCC has relied upon heroic efforts by the financial team, particularly our Assistant Treasurer, Michelle Mitchell, to conduct the day-to-day financial operations of the church, which includes receiving and recording payments, cutting checks, maintaining records of vouchers and invoices paid, and managing payroll and employee benefits. Little River UCC is indebted to the faithfulness and hard work of Mary, Michelle, and Gary to see the church through a critical time during which we undertook major expenditures for building repairs and brought on a new associate pastor. The Little River UCC financial team has worked closely with our contract accountant provided by Your Part-Time Controller. Church account balances and the operating fund and designated fund balances are provided monthly to the Board of Trustees and to the Church Council. In December 2017, the Board of Trustees hired a part-time bookkeeper to assist with the financial operations of the church. The part-time bookkeeper is a temporary position until April 15, prior to which the Board of Trustees will determine whether to convert the bookkeeper position to a permanent position and, as needed, will revise the duties and responsibilities of the part-time bookkeeper to best meet the needs of the church.

The Little River UCC Budget for 2017 was approved by the congregation on January 29, 2017. In an ongoing effort to offer more opportunities for congregational input to the church budgeting process, the Board of Trustees and Treasurer participated in budget planning/ listening sessions held on June 25 and September 24. A preliminary 2017 budget was prepared for the September listening session, which included requests from church boards and committees for 2017 program, staffing, and benevolences.

During December, the Board of Trustees endorsed Mary Summers for re-election as Treasurer for 2018.

Building and Grounds

John Davis continued as Sexton in 2017. Throughout the year, John tackled many tasks, large and small, to keep the building and grounds safe and functional. John is instrumental for set-up and strike-down of chairs, tables, and audiovisual equipment for meetings and large gatherings in the church.

Building and grounds maintenance and capital repairs and replacement continued to be a major concern for the Board of Trustees in 2017. Removal of fallen or dangerous trees is an ongoing grounds maintenance concern. During 2017, Little River UCC entered into a maintenance contract with Trademasters, Inc., which provides quarterly inspection and preventive maintenance of all components of the church's HVAC system. This has been a successful effort, allowing Trustees to stay ahead of

repairs to the heating and cooling units. As a result, Little River UCC has not experienced disruptions of heating or cooling that have been troublesome in past years. During 2017, Little River UCC successfully completed repairs to the church's flat roof. Little River UCC self-financed the roof repair in part by applying carryover funds from the 2016 and 2017 operating budgets to the Major Repair Reserve and Building Fund. Most important, however, was the generosity of an anonymous donor who started a match campaign for donations to the Building Fund. Because of this vision and generosity, Little River raised more than \$41,000 to the Building Fund by November. Total cost of the roof repair work is \$90,000. Several major capital repair needs remain for which Little River UCC will need to obtain financing. We have determined that the best financing option available to us will require putting up the building and land as collateral. The Board of Trustees is currently pursuing that lending option.

Office and Administrative Operations

During 2017, Board of Trustees continued to work closely with the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor, and the church financial team to support office and administrative operations. This support includes maintaining the church computers and computer network; upgrading computer software, telecommunications, and internet capability; oversight of printer/copier maintenance contracts; oversight of church credit cards; and ordering of office supplies. With the departure in July of Donna Jones, the position of Church Office Administrator remains unfilled. Since August, the church office has been staffed with a temporary administrative assistant from Kelly Services, as well as volunteers and other staff filling in some of the gaps. The Board of Trustees is currently in the process of hiring a permanent, part-time office administrator to start during the week of February 1.

Following the hate crime that occurred at Little River in April and the recent acts of violence against churches and other public spaces, improving the security of the buildings and grounds is much on the minds of the Board of Trustees. Our goal is to make Little River a space where members of the church and community can feel welcome, but also feel that their safety and well-being are of utmost concern during Sunday worship and during weekday and evening gatherings. Towards this end, the Board of Trustees have several initiatives underway to improve safety and security. We have upgraded the office alarm system. In December, Little River received a security assessment from the Mason District Crime Prevention Office of the Fairfax County Police Department. The Board of Trustees has begun to implement the recommendations of the security assessment report. In 2018, the Board of Trustees will commence the installation of three security-monitoring cameras, two exterior cameras to survey the driveway and parking lot, and one internal security camera to monitor the front entrance doors. This is a small system to start but will be expandable, allowing the addition of other monitoring cameras in the future.

Building Use

The two largest tenants using the Little River building are the Annandale Cooperative Preschool and Virginia Music Adventures, which together account for approximately \$22,500 of building use income. Other building use is primarily by outside non-profit and charitable groups that have a community service or an educational mission, offer a fellowship opportunity to Little River UCC members, are other UCC church groups visiting the Washington DC area, or are other UCC churches in the Potomac Association needing space for off-site meetings and retreats. The Board of Trustees frequently approves building use for these groups for a significant discount off the posted building use fees, or for free, if the organization is another UCC church or is directly supported by the mission and outreach of Little River UCC. Little River UCC's current building use policy is undergoing review and update in 2018.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Petrusak, Chair

Nominations and Appointments

Barbara Allen, Class of 2018
Bob Lingo, Class of 2019
Tom Ross, Chair, Class of 2018

Resignations:

Governance Board:	John Forrest, Class of 2019
Board of Deacons:	Ginny Peters, Class of 2018
Stewardship Committee:	Rob Peters, Class of 2019

Appointments:

Board of Christian Education	Emily Mingus, Class of 2019
Board of Deacons	Chris Weakley, Class of 2020
Stewardship Committee:	Adam Honeysett, Class of 2019
	Rainy Hayes, Class of 2020
	Fala Hayes, Class of 2020
	Doreen Manchester, Class of 2019

The Nominations and Appointments Committee is responsible for appointing persons to fill midterm vacancies and securing nominations of individuals to serve as officers and on boards and committees who then are voted on at the Little River UCC annual meeting in January. The Committee works throughout the year in consultation with church officers, committee and board chairs, and the Senior Pastor.

Under the current church bylaws, the N&A committee consists of six members; three being elected at each annual meeting for a term of two years. After one full term, they are ineligible for re-election for a three-year period. Realistically, the committee has been functioning for a number of years with fewer than six members. It is the recommendation of the N&A committee that the bylaws be revised to allow members to serve two terms of three year (total of six), allowing for improved continuity and institutional knowledge of the congregation and its members.

The Committee is grateful for the work of many volunteers who devote many hours of service in a variety of ways. Assisting in carrying out the church ministry, managing the fiscal resources of the church, ensuring the building and groups are maintained, working with the Senior Pastor to carry out worship, providing pastoral care, preparing and monitoring the church budget, providing support to the Senior Pastor and Associate, supporting an ongoing youth ministry, Christian education programs, and outreach to the community and our denomination are a few of the roles carried out by volunteers. The committee is always open to ideas and suggestions from the congregation and church leaders.

Finally, the Committee would like to express special appreciation to Rob & Ginny Peters as they start a new life in Frederick, Maryland, for their dedicated service to Little River. Rob served

many years, not only as Moderator but also through his wise and thoughtful leadership on Stewardship; Ginny for her dedication and service, especially as a Deacon. Both contributed enormously to the life of Little River.

Stewardship

This year, the Stewardship Committee chose the theme “Renewing Our Commitment.” The theme refers to our commitment as a church to support two full-time pastors, with Rev. Alexis Kassim beginning her service as Associate Pastor. It also emphasizes vital programs of ministry, the importance of benevolences, and caring for our building and grounds. All of this requires significant financial support.

Planning for the campaign was coordinated with the Trustees and various boards and committees, establishing a goal of \$620,000. This represented a significant increase over the previous year’s goal but was a level the committee felt was needed and achievable given the congregation’s approved financial plan.

To prepare the congregation for the campaign, the committee supported three mailings with helpful information:

- the first introduced the campaign and included a booklet of Daily Meditations prepared by Rob Peters;
- the second detailed the campaign goal and included a Narrative Program Budget; and
- the third summarized the campaign process and included a Pledge Card and Guide for Giving.

The church’s youth, facilitated by Doreen Manchester and Ashton Streavig, were also involved, offering an inspiring presentation about giving and affirming their contributions on a Giving Tree.

The campaign kicked-off in dramatic style on Consecration Sunday, with the nailing of commitments to the “church door” (artfully prepared by Terry Downs) in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation. The service was followed by a celebratory lunch, at which the committee announced it had received pledges totaling two-thirds of the goal.

Throughout the campaign, the committee has communicated progress in the Bulletin and “Currents,” on a Progress Tree (skillfully designed by Tom Johnson) in the narthex, and through Mission Minutes by the Chair and representatives of the supported ministries. Meanwhile, the committee, led by Ellen Wertman, has continued to thoughtfully process gifts to the church. Also, Caroline Labbe has faithfully recorded the committee’s work as scribe.

At time of submission, the campaign has received more than 120 pledges totaling 88% of the goal, with additional pledges pending. Notably, more than 50 pledges have been increased from last year.

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Honeysett

Communications

2018

Hube Beckwith

2019

Judy Jacobs Miller

2020

Barbara Shepherd

Additional, unelected members: Dave Curtis, Larry Roth, Kathy Hartzler, Roberta Croll (Communications Coordinator), David Lindsey and Alexis Kassim (Pastors, ex officio), plus a member of the Evangelism Committee, Ardie Hollifield, and moderator, Carolyn Yocom.

The mission of the Communications Committee is to provide Little River UCC audiences, including members, friends, staff, and the wider community, with consistent and comprehensive information about all aspects of church life. Understanding that diverse audiences require diverse communications, the Communications Committee oversees the use of many communications channels while striving to maintain a consistent message and brand identity for the church.

The Committee met in person as needed and collaborated electronically regularly. Meeting in person for all members and staff continues to be a challenge, given work schedules.

The Committee recognizes the extraordinary contributions of Roberta as the staff person in charge of Communications. She produces the weekly “Current Tidings” and “Currents” on the website, Current Reflections, Sunday bulletins, as well as other worship bulletins, and special event publications. She also works with the many e-distribution lists of the church, the website, and social media.

The main work of this year has been toward a re-design of the Little River UCC website. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was developed and distributed in late summer. When the first round of proposals that came back to us were not all we were looking for, the RFP was sent to a new round of designers in the fall. By the time of the publication of this Annual Report, we will have identified our web designer.

As part of the website redesign and a step that is recommended by professionals in the field of website design, the Committee engaged various groups in the church to participate in a branding exercise, led by Jan Curtis. The purpose of the branding work is to collect thoughts and impressions from members and friends about how they perceive Little River UCC, so that may be reflected in design elements of the website and future print and electronic publications.

The Committee has also been working on an updated Little River UCC brochure to reflect new leadership as well as expanded opportunities for members and friends.

Those who are interested are encouraged to be part of the Little River UCC Facebook group. Ask the office to make you part of the group and you will have access to communications among the group’s members.

Fair Trade and FISH

2017 Fair Trade

Little River UCC continues to support small farmer cooperatives in developing countries by selling their organic coffee and chocolate products. Equal Exchange pays participating farmer cooperatives a fair price for the products of their labors. In 2017 Little River UCC members and friends purchased over 700 candy bars and nearly 270 packages of coffee. An additional 90 pounds of coffee was purchased by the Deacons for our coffee hours and other social events. Bob and Ann Lingo, with assistance from Caroline Labbe, facilitate the monthly sales.

Under Dave and Jan Curtis' leadership with help from others, Little River UCC held monthly sales of Palestinian olive products to benefit both farmers and a peace-building organization in the West Bank. Little River UCC is one of 18 area congregations who comprise the Olive Oil Ministry sponsored by the Middle East Committee of Westmoreland Congregational UCC in Bethesda, MD. Our congregation purchased 46 ½-ltr bottles and 27 1-ltr cans of olive oil, 42 jars of tapenade, and other products with a total value of \$2,180. Little River UCC also supported the "Voices from the Holy Land" film series screened at the Washington National Cathedral in March and April.

Fairfax FISH

Since the mid 1970s, Little River UCC has been a member of Fairfax FISH – For Immediate Sympathetic Help – an ecumenical outreach organization that serves the needy and elderly in the greater Fairfax City area. Sharing duty schedules with volunteers from 15 other churches, our volunteers collaborate with the Fairfax County Office of Coordinated Services Planning to assess requests and, when approved, fulfill needs that include food and financial assistance with housing, utilities, medicines, and gasoline. Fairfax FISH also operates a clothing closet and food pantries. Little River volunteers in 2017 were Joe Christiansen, Jan Curtis, John Davis, Susan Farris, Carolyn Johnson, Susan Kennedy, Ann Lingo, and Flora Szatkowski. Additional volunteers are welcome!

Historian/Archivists

We have continued to organize existing files and to create new ones. Donated materials this year included tapes of services and sermons given by Pastor Verne Arens.

The pastors requested assistance on three occasions regarding information from the files. We were successful in providing the needed information.

In October, the Women's Ministry committee asked us to speak about the role of the archivist including how we organize materials, decide what should be saved, and lead tours in small groups through the new rooms. This event was indeed a highlight of the year for us and we were delighted to speak to a group of about 35 people. We had several photo albums on display which included pictures from the very early days of Little River UCC then known as The Congregational Christian Church of Fairfax County.

Respectfully submitted,
Gwen Crepeau and Florence Deike

Personnel

The year started off with Jean Wheelock and Don Wallace's resignations from the Personnel Committee. We thank them for their hard work in compiling the Employee Handbook which is now in use by Little River UCC.

Kathy McCrea has continued to work on a newer version of the handbook to address a few holes discovered while using the Employee Handbook and by reorganizing some of the sections. The document is in draft form, as additional information/feedback is needed from the Board of Trustees and the Board of Deacons in some specific areas. Once the information is received, a new version will be able to be reviewed by the Governance Board.

At this time the Personnel Committee consists of one person and there are no specific terms for the members of the committee. In 2018, Little River UCC needs to determine whether the committee should continue or be disbanded. If the committee is to continue, additional members should be added.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy McCrea, Personnel Committee

Music

Committee Members: Amanda Halstead, Barbara Lowrey, Erin Taylor, Nancy Carey, Kathy Richardson, and staff members Craig Stapert and Ashton Streavig

Music Worship at Little River United Church of Christ continues to thrive and grow with the talents and dedication from our youngest to oldest members. The variety of timbres within our Music Ministry invites the Spirit of God to be among us in prayer and worship. The fellowship of our Music ensembles provides deep connections among church members. And our Music staff broadens our faith with choices in both traditional and innovative music.

Our dynamic Music Director, Craig Stapert, highlighted several special services throughout the church year with guest musicians on Reformation Sunday, Lent, and Advent. Many of his music choices feature a diversity of composers by era, gender, orientation, and race. The choir sang *Seven Last Words* by Michael John Tratta with instrumental chamber ensemble during Lent, and Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* with harp for Advent. The choir also featured a special Buxtehude cantata for Consecration Sunday. Craig frequently offers a short-term commitment to choir members who cannot make a weekly rehearsal but can attend a small number of rehearsals dedicated to a specific music selection. Our Sanctuary Choir continues to receive vocal support from several high school tenors from Justice High School this year as part of an effort to expand our choir men numbers. Their extra support is always appreciated and the choir warmly welcomes them when they come to sing.

The beautiful Sanctuary Bells continue to provide a wonderful addition to our music worship at Little River. In many cultures and relaxation methods, the timbre of a bell is often used to signal the start and end of meditation. The sounds of the bells enhance our worship experience as we hear traditional tunes and hymns arranged in a variety of ways among the peaceful sounds of the bells. The Sanctuary Bells is comprised of choir members and extra volunteers who are interested in participating in music that doesn't involve singing. Craig has even recruited some of the older youth to ring when there's an open space on the bell tables.

Our youth choirs, The Salt of the Earth and Joyful Noise, sing regularly in church services throughout the year. Ashton Streavig, our Youth Music Director, continues to grow our youth choirs as they lead music worship on a regular basis. Ashton creatively chooses music that engages the youth in their music ministry. Many times, the children play instruments in addition to their singing. The youth featured two special presentations this year, including a musical *The Three Trees* in April and *The Giving Tree* in October. The entire congregation has noticed the youth ensembles growing and flourishing as new families have joined the church over the past year.

The Music Committee also expanded music stewardship into reviving Open Mic Night in May. Hube Beckwith, Steve Wheelock, and Craig Stapert provided direction for the event by organizing the church space, coordinating the acts for the evening, and purchasing and organizing refreshments for the audience. Music Director Craig Stapert and church members Kathy Richardson, Barbara Lowrey, Steve Wheelock, Hube Beckwith, and Dave Sheppard provided invaluable aid in behind-the-scenes

coordination. The event was well-received amongst members of the church and the Committee is making steps towards planning the next Open Mic Night in April of 2018.

The musical instruments at Little River continually need maintenance and upkeep on a seasonal and annual basis. This year, the organ received a small renovation (regulation and voicing improvements) on 4-5 ranks (or sets) of pipes that enhanced the blend and timbre of the organ's stops.

There is now a noticeable improvement of the sound and organ blend on the hymns and organ preludes. The pianos also need continual tuning with each seasonal change of temperature. The grand piano in the Sanctuary requires some cosmetic repair work on one of the legs. The Music Committee hopes to find funds within the next year to make these repairs.

The Music Ministry continues throughout the summer months as the Sanctuary Choir receives some time off from regular rehearsal. Members of the church and guest musicians provide meaningful music during summer worship services. Thankfully, the church has many eager and talented people willing to share their music ministry during the summer months.

As the Music Committee moves into 2018, we would like to focus on four key ideas: (1) to expand and diversify our special music choices for the special services; (2) to make intentional music choices to highlight diversity in cultures, gender, orientation, and race; (3) to use Special Music Funds to purchase new Orff instruments for the youth choirs; and (4) to stay focused on member recruitment opportunities for all of our music ensembles. We look forward to 2018 with our wonderful music staff and music ministry at Little River UCC.

Women's Ministry

Members: Bunny Jones, Pam Binninger, Barbara Lowrey, Janet Parsons Mackey, Amy Mireku, Kathy Richardson, Karen Flynn, Sarah Wilbur, and Camille Brooks

Structure/Mission:

The Women's Ministry Team (WM) is a small group of women who gather, generally on a Thursday morning of each month, to plan activities of interest to women of all ages to foster and nurture fellowship and spirituality among Little River women and friends. Leadership of our ad hoc group is rotated among team members. Women's Ministry reports to the Board of Christian Education and sponsors such programs as Tea and Talk, women's retreats, women's book group, and ongoing covenant groups.

Programs in 2017

February 26: Tea & Talk: "Sister Friends – Strength through Relationship"

The focus of this gathering was for women to gather for fellowship and to have the opportunity to share important or significant relationships they have experienced, as well as the impact of those relationships on their lives.

The gathering was held in the Jubilee Room and was attended by 32 women.

October 1: Tea & Talk: Information and Tour of the Church Archives

This Tea and Talk focused on the church archives housed on the lower level of the church annex. Gwen Crepeau and Florence Deike, the church archivists for the past 3 years, presented an overview of the archives and led tours of small groups to see the renovated space in which they are housed.

Gwen and Florence have transformed the archives into a wonderfully organized space that is user-friendly and allows anyone to explore our church's rich history, right up to present day. This program was open to anyone in the church who wished to attend, and Women's Ministry was pleased to have 35 people attending.

December 9: Breakfast & Meditation: "Finding Peace and Joy in a Stressful Season." The purpose of this gathering was to provide a moment of respite and calm in what can be a hectic and stress-inducing time of year. Breakfast was held in the fellowship hall with attendees gathering at tables for 4, which provided an opportunity for repast and conversation. Women's Ministry members provided hot breakfast casseroles and attendees brought fruit and sweet rolls. Thirty-one people attended despite a snowy, cold morning.

Following breakfast, the group gathered in the sanctuary for a meditative time of beautiful, moving music by Amanda Halstead on piano and Jessica Niles on cello, who opened and closed our time together. Janet Parsons Mackey and Jennifer Atkinson shared their original writing, and Pam Binninger and Bunny Jones read scripture.

Sallyanne Harper led a guided meditation, Peace in our Hearts, which truly helped us leave with a feeling of calm.

Planned events (so far) for 2018:

January Book Group: Poetry discussion; recommended poems and memoir by Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith, "Ordinary Light: A Memoir." Jennifer Atkinson, leader.

Possibly a Retreat for 2018.

Book Group 2017 organized by Women's Ministry

The book group meets the second Sunday of the odd months of the year, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. usually in room 7 and is open to all who are interested. The book group rotates leadership of the book discussions among WM members and volunteers from the congregation. Rachel Smith coordinates book titles and summaries that people send to her by email. The coordinator organizes the information received and sends it out for a vote. The books receiving the highest votes get put on the list for reading and discussion. The following books/topics were read and discussed:

January–Poetry sharing and writing exercises led by Jennifer Atkinson.

March–*The Children Act* by Ian McEwan, Mary Beth Ciarcia leader.

May–*Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead, Pam Binninger facilitator.

July–*Offshore* by Penelope Fitzgerald, Janet Parsons Mackey facilitator.

September–*Flight of the Sparrow* by Amy Belding Brown, Bunny Jones facilitator.

November–*Our Souls at Night* by Kent Haruf, Barbara Lowrey facilitator

Books Chosen for 2018 are:

Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right by Arlie Russell Hochschild

Clementine: The Life of Mrs. Winston Churchill by Sonia Purnell

The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End by Atul Gawand

Endowment Fund

2018

Sandy Miller
Jerry Surbey

2019

Fran DuRocher
Brian Payne

2020

George Leonard

Growth of the Endowment Fund in 2017 reflected the strong stock market. Market value of the fund increased by 13% to a total of \$445,791. Most of this growth represents an increase in value. Contributions for the year were \$2,923. An additional \$14,310 was contributed to the Fund in the later part of the year. This amount was transferred to our investment fund after December 31. This deposit will be reflected in the first quarter of 2018.

This year was the first year of disbursements from the Fund. Based on the Endowment Fund Policy, the Committee determined that \$12,000 was available. At the annual meeting, the Congregation approved \$2,400 for operations, \$1,200 for scholarships, \$3,000 for membership in ACCA, \$1,800 for outreach, and \$3,600 for updating the church's website.

For 2018, the Endowment Fund Committee has determined that \$14,000 will be available for disbursement.

The Endowment Fund of Little River UCC provides a great opportunity for memorial gifts, for recognition of the importance of the church in your life, and for making a lasting contribution to the important ministries of the church.

Respectfully submitted,

George Leonard, Chair

Addendums: Treasurer's Report

- Little River UCC 2017 Operating Budget
- Little River UCC Proposed 2018 Budget