



Stephentown Federated Church
2024 Annual Report
Held January 12, 2025

**Stephentown Federated Church
Stephentown Federated Church Officers for 2025
2024 Annual Meeting Jan 12, 2025**

**Members of Presbyterian Session
Council**

Larry Eckhardt (Clerk of Session)
Heather Eckhardt (2027)
Paul McMillan (2027)
Marge Feathers (2028)
Larry Eckhardt (2028)
Judy Leland (2026)
Helen Wallbank (2026)

Members of Methodist Church

Janet Atwater (2027)
Georgi Bebee (2027)
Jean Bolen (2028)
vacancy (2028)
Donna Densing (2026)
vacancy complete Doug's term(2026)

Nominating Committee

Malcolm Beal, presb - Chair
Donna Densing, meth
Heather Eckhardt, presb
Mary French, meth
Kate Beach, meth

Members of the General Committee

Pastor Chris Garrison	Marianne Smith (SonShiners)
Arlene Longo, Secretary	Barbara Terpening, Treasurer,
Jean Bolen (Council)	Tom Smith (Facility Chair)
vacancy (Christian Ed	Jonathan Koepp(Community Breakfast Group)
Heather Eckhardt (Session)	Larry Eckhardt (Session)chair
Bev Westfall (Choir, worship com)	vacancy (Council)

Pastor- Parish Committee

Larry Eckhardt, Presb Chair
Malcolm Beal- Presb
Joanne Hennig – Meth
Bev Westfall - Meth

Community Breakfast Group

Larry Eckhardt, Chair
Kirk Kellogg, Scribe
Paul McMillan treasurer

Son Shiners

Kate Beach, Pres.
Barbara Terpening, Treasurer
Joanne Hennig, Secretary

Worship/Tech Committee

Joanne Hennig	Barb Terpening
Laurelyn Mayen	Bonnie Bates
Bev Westfall - Chair	Arlene Longo
Janet Atwater	

Denominational Treasurers

Paul McMillan- Presbyterian

Kate Beach- Methodist

Facility chair: Tom Smith

**Annual Meeting Agenda for Stephentown Federated Church.
January 12, 2025 for 2024 Annual Meeting**

Opening Prayer: Pastor Chris Garrison

Welcome and Introductions: Larry Eckhardt

Call to order: Larry Eckhardt

Review of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

General Treasurer's Report: Barbara Terpening

Approval of the budget 2025: Barbara Terpening

Reports of Committees: see packet for all reports

Report of Nominating Committee: Malcolm Beal

Elections:

General Treasurer: Barbara Terpening

Church Secretary: Arlene Longo

United Methodist Church Council members

Jean Bolen (2028)

vacancy (2028)

Presbyterian USA Session members...

Marge Feathers (2028)

Larry Eckhardt (2028)

Denominational Treasurers (2)

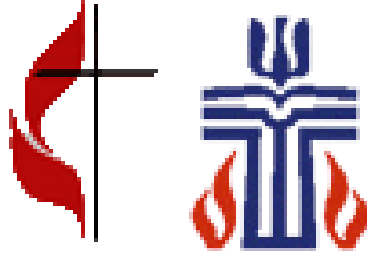
Kate Beach-Methodist Paul McMillan-Presbyterian

Facility Chair: Tom Smith

Other Business

Adjournment

Closing Prayer- Pastor Chris Garrison



STEPHENTOWN FEDERATED CHURCH
Annual Meeting Minutes
Held January 14, 2024

Session and Council Elections

Methodists met in the sanctuary. Pastor Bonnie Bates opened the meeting with a prayer. Janet Atwater and Georgi Bebee were elected as council members for the next three years (terms to end 2027). Doug Mayen was elected Chair of Methodist Council. Doug Mayen and Bonnie Bates were elected to serve as representatives to General Committee. Kate Beach was elected to be Denominational Treasurer and will stay on as SonShiners' representative to the General Committee.

Presbyterians met in Pierce Hall. Pastor Chris opened the meeting with prayer. Larry was elected as clerk of sessions. Heather and Larry Eckhardt were elected as session members for the next three years (terms to end 2027). Larry and Heather Eckhardt will remain as representatives to the General Committee. Paul McMillan will remain as Denominational Treasurer. A discussion was had about reviewing and updating the Presbyterian member list.

Opening Prayer – Pastor Chris opened the meeting with a prayer.

Barb - Welcome & Introductions – Barb welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting and then thanked Arlene for her service as secretary of General Committee for the last 6 years. She also reiterated how important the position is and asked folks to think about stepping forward to fill the vacancy.

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 10:54 am.

Review of 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes – the Minutes were approved as written with a motion by Paul, a second by Helen and approval by all, with the exception of Larry and Heather who abstained as they were away last year at the time of the meeting.

General Treasurer’s Report – Barbara Terpening (Highlights below, Full Report Attached)

Barb on the past year’s finances:

- The Church is very appreciative of the congregation’s financial support – we have been blessed to receive sufficient funds to operate whether in person, online, or through the mail.
- Barb reported that if funds for both the income and the expense of the siding/painting project were removed, we are still about \$11,600 “to the good” at the end of the year.
- Discussion – we took funds from savings to help pay for the project – we had accrued funds due to not having a pastor for so long. Not all of these funds were depleted, just a portion – about \$160,900 remains as an emergency/cushion against unforeseen emergencies.
- Discussion – Berkshire Bank is offering 5% for new accounts. Live Oak (our online bank) is at 4% and we are doing well with them.
- A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Paul to accept the Treasurer’s Report as written – the motion was approved with all in favor.

Budget 2024

- Numbers are lower partially due to the removal of the Manse \$ from the pastor’s salary (for tax reporting).
- Other savings were in the technology line and also the loss of support going to Lesotho due to, sadly, that program ending.
- The weekly “to meet the budget” number is now \$1508.00.

A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Paul to accept the Treasurer’s report and budget as written. Chris abstained, and the motion was approved by all.

Committee Reports – Attached. Nothing added. A motion was made by Arlene and seconded by Larry to accept the Committee Reports for 2023 as written. Motion approved by all.

Report of Nominating Committee – Malcolm Beal reported that Doug Mayen will split the Facility Chair duties with Tom Smith. Larry made a motion to close the nominations with that change – motion passed with all in favor.

Slate of Elections:

General Treasurer - Barbara Terpening
Secretary - Vacancy

United Methodist Church Council Members:

Janet Atwate (2027)
Georgi Bebee(2027)

Council reps to General Committee: Doug and Bonnie

Presbyterian USA Session Members:

Larry Eckhardt (2027)
Heather Eckhardt (2027)

Session reps to General Committee – Heather & Larry

Denominational Treasurers: (2)

Kate Beach – Methodist
Paul McMillan – Presbyterian

Facility Chair:

Doug Mayen and Tom Smith

A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Bev to vote one ballot for all nominations. This was voted on and approved by all.

Other Business:

Barb reported that the apportionments for 2024 are as follows:

Methodist - \$110
Presbytery - \$46

For anyone interested, there will be another Safe Sanctuary training Zoom on Saturday, February 3, 2024. See Barb or Chris for more information.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Bonnie at 11:11 am to adjourn, seconded by Helen and approved by all.

Closing Prayer: Pastor Chris closed the Annual Meeting with a prayer.

Annual Report 2024

Pastor's Report

Life is a series of endings and beginnings. Just as one thing ends, it marks the beginning of something new. My life as your pastor in 2024 has seen its fair share of beginnings and endings.

Beginnings...

- Welcoming a new member (Jessica Morris)
- Welcoming new people into the life of the church (like Rob and Katherine), who stepped right into playing music and serving dinners
- New events like the all-church picnic in July
- Officiating the outdoor wedding of a granddaughter of church members
- The formation of the Valley Faith Community with the Canaan Congregational Church and Church of our Saviour in Lebanon Springs including monthly meetings with their leaders
- Planning and hosting a Community Thanksgiving Service with the Valley Faith Community Churches

Endings to make a new beginning...

- Saying goodbye and sending Doug and Laurelyn to their new home and place of ministry
- Saying goodbye to beloved members Mary & Don French, Dorothy Zuckerman, Ed Mullet, and a funeral home service for another community member—as they pass from this life into eternal life.

September marked the *beginning* of my 4th year as your pastor. The new contract gave me the allowance to try something new with my part-time status—having one Sunday a month that I'm not preaching and having someone else lead worship. These are not a full 12 weeks of vacation, it's just another way to honor my part-time status (only 4 of those weeks are vacation, and will be communicated when they are). The other 8 weeks, I'm available. I've still been able to do meetings, calls, hospital visits, and memorial services those weeks I didn't preach. The whole idea is to avoid burnout, so I could serve effectively a 4th year. I am grateful to PPR and the General Committee for experimenting with this new arrangement.

I am also grateful for the generosity of this congregation to me (your gifts to me and my family), and your generosity to the church (weekly/monthly giving, and siding the manse last year, after the siding the church the year before).

I guess, *not everything* in life is either a beginning or ending. Most of life is a faithful continuation of what you normally do. Thank you for your faithfulness.

With Gratitude,

Chris

2024

Report from the Chairperson of the General Committee Larry Eckhardt Stephentown Federated Church

As 2024 draws to a close and the Holiday festivities murmur low and sink to rest, I reflect on the busy year behind us. And look forward to a bright future for our Church and all those we hold in our hearts as “family”. 2025 is just a promise right now, but the efforts in 2024 of the church leadership and everyone who calls this magnificent place home, make that promise very obtainable and real.

I won't even begin to try to recall each decision or action taken by the General Committee over the last 12 months. You can read about them in the reports of the groups and financial records of our treasurer and minutes of the secretary. I am thankful and will mention the monumental efforts of the members of the committee and just how much their dedication has meant to our mission of service to God, each other and our community.

I am thankful for all of Barb Terpening's efforts to handle the complex financial responsibilities of our treasury. Her reports each month let us move forward with decisions on spending with confidence that we can, with everyone's monetary commitment, remain fiscally strong. Her diligence in monitoring our fund investments gives us a bit more income through the interest gained. Barb also handles the church newsletters. Well done and Thanks, Barb.

I am thankful for the talents of our members that keep the facilities repaired and beautiful. Thank you, Doug Mayen and Tom Smith, for being there for us when things need attention. Best of luck Doug (and Laurelyn) in your new home near your family. The manse was sided and looks so nice in its new coat (of just one color). The church building inspection by our insurance company resulted in several recommendations for improvement. You guys took care of the needed upgrades. Thanks, Tom and Doug

I am thankful for our pastor. Chris brings his professionalism to the pulpit and to our committee meetings. Chris has been front and center for our church family in times of crisis and grief. He handles funeral and memorial services with such compassion and sensitivity to make people feel loved and cared about. We have seen too many “family” leave us this past year to be with Jesus. His sermons have relevance and humor making you feel good about yourself and your faith. Chris cares for the community at large. Chris keeps us connected to our denominational leaders and other local churches and their clergy. Thank you, Chris.

I am thankful for the representatives of each of the Groups that report on their activities, needs and accomplishments at our General Committee meetings. Thank you, Kate Beach, with SonShiners and work done with children during worship service, Jonathan Koepf with Community Breakfast Group, Bev Westfall with Choir and Worship Committee, I (Larry E.) keep up with the Parish, Pastor Relations Committee. Thank you, each one.

I am thankful for the external groups that use our facilities. People and groups feel welcomed by our warm building, warm hearts, friendly smiles and our willingness to help. Thank you, Stephentown Area Emergency Food Pantry. Your efforts are the embodiment of Christ's directive to "feed my people" with care, compassion and confidentiality. I truly believe that we have gained some new members to our Sunday worship thru the connection with the Food Pantry. Thank you, Food Pantry.

I am thankful for our Secretary, Arlene Longo for her commitment to the accurate and concise recording of the decisions made each time we meet to discuss and direct our churches' future. Thank you for the time you spent consolidating and organizing the annual report. Thank you, Arlene

I am thankful to Joanne Hennig. Joanne publishes our bulletin each Sunday and delivers them to the church. She also produces needed bulletins for special services and occasions outside regular services. Thank you, Joanne

I'm very thankful for the new members and attendees. Attracting youth and vitality is paramount to our continued service to God. The General Committee spends time each meeting discussing ways to attract and retain new, both old and young folks to our church.

Lastly, I am thankful for our music director and worship committee chair, Bev Westfall. This church has been blessed with Bev's talent for as long as I can remember. Whenever a new person comes to one of our services, they are just awestruck by the music, presentation and direction of the choir and all the amazing musicians we have in our small rural church. I personally have had a front row seat to Bev's dedication and talent for many, many years. The General Committee is also thankful for your computer knowledge hosting our on-line "Zoom" meetings when the need arises. Thank you, Bev.

As you can see, I am thankful for all that has been done in the past year to keep us on a path to do God's work and will in our church. I invite anyone who would like to be part of our mission to let us know what you would like this church to do in 2025 to serve our God and our community.

God bless you all.

Sincerely, in Christ

Larry Eckhardt

Stephentown Federated Church

Worship Committee Report

January 12, 3025

The worship Committee meets via zoom the second Tuesday of each month to prepare for the many aspects of our weekly church services. This includes the regular Sundays and all the special ones such as Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas , Epiphany, lent, Easter, and Pentecost. We prepare visuals where appropriate and discuss how to serve the best needs of our church. This year special visuals for Thanksgiving, World Communion, Christmas and Easter were prepared.

During this past year we have added special banners for Thanksgiving, World Communion service, Palm Sunday and Easter. We used the Advent banners last year. They add to the visual celebration of the various parts of our church year.

Again I thank the members of this committee for their dedication, ideas and follow through with the planning parts of our church.

Stephentown Federated Church

Choir/band report

January 12, 2025

Choir meets from September through June on Thursday nights from 6:40 - 7:45 p.m. they rehearse the music for each Sunday which includes hymns and responses. This year we eliminated the prayer response in order to make the service flow better. The Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow became our response.

We welcomed Rob and Laura to our group and with regret lost Laurelyn when they moved. It is nice to welcome some younger folk into our midst. This year choir prepared music for two extra services. They were the Thanksgiving Service with the newly formed ecumenical group from the Valley. They also prepared music for the longest night of the year, Dec 22, 2024.

Choir prepared anthems for the first, second, fourth and fifth Sundays when they occur. The third Sunday is a band Sunday. Choir is still the service leader but the band prepares music for the third Sunday. The Front Pew band meets the third Thursday of the month at 5:30 before choir. We have two guitars, bass guitar, piano, keyboard, drums and four extra voices.

We invite and encourage any new members for both groups. I especially thank all the members of these two groups for their dedication, support and ideas as they come to prepare to lead in worship.

Bev Westfall

2024 Report from the Community Breakfast Group

We continued to hold our monthly breakfast meetings at Pierce Hall during 2024. January thru June with the traditional summer break for July, August and September. We were back again in October, November and December. Attendance this fall has been outstanding with over 30 each breakfast Sunday. We are so thankful for all the volunteers that help with set-up, preparation and clean-up at the monthly breakfasts. A special shout-out to: Matt Eckhardt, Bryan McMillan, Malcolm Beal, Tom Smith, Doug Mayen and Ted Bears for their dedication each month to make the breakfast very satisfying for all who attend. The Mayhens have moved away to be closer to their children and will be sorely missed, as will several of our long-time members who have passed away this last year. Don French was one of our founding members, who along with his wife, Mary, rarely missed a breakfast meeting. Everett Madden was also a regular. May God hold you in the palm of his hand – until we meet again, dear friends.

We purchased and presented Braydon and Konnor McMillan their own personalized bibles. Most group members signed and/or wrote notes of life-long encouragement to both young men upon their graduation from high school. They have been dedicated workers in the group during their young lives, helping in so many ways. We wish them God's speed in their careers.

Decisions were made to provide monetary support to several community organizations and church needs. See the treasure's report for details. Next CBG meeting and breakfast will be on January 5th, 2025.

Summer maintenance of the Presbyterian cemetery continues to be well managed by Jonathan Koepp with support from the group in the spring clean-up. Again, this spring, numerous stones were re-aligned and stood straight. We will continue to do what we can to preserve this valuable piece of history for our church and town. Several volunteers worked on the church and manse grounds to tidy up after the winter damage from wind, snow and plowing. Also, thank Charlie Sears, who did a wonderful job mowing the lawns this summer. We hope to hire him again this coming summer!

The Group, along with help and support from the SonShiners, hosted the 20th Annual Turkey dinner on February 25th. Wow, what a great turn-out for a fantastic meal, enjoyed both at the church and another record of take-out meals. The community was extremely generous with donations and thanks to all the volunteers. A special thank you to Josh Cushing and the folks at Hannaford Supermarkets for their generous donation of food items.

The Community Breakfast Group joined forces with the SonShiners to sponsor the 3rd annual end-of-summer BBQ dinner. The event was successful, fun and enjoyable get-together held in Pierce Hall on September 14th. Great food, hardworking volunteers and a very supportive church and local community made for a great time. Despite having several other community events that day to compete with, we were very blessed with generous contributions. We hope to continue making this an annual event. Also planned is the Mid-winter, community Turkey Dinner to be held on February 22th, 2025. The SonShiners group will be collaborating hosts along with the CBG.

The tree in front of the church was donated by Tim and Lorrie Dormady of Stephentown. Matt and Andrew Eckhardt and crew from the farm set it up. Located along the ramp to the front door, the tree and lights add such a wonderful appearance to our church for the long winter nights. Be sure to see this tree and the lighted church this Christmas season. The manse looks marvelous in its new coat of siding and is equally as beautiful as the church.

Thanks to all who have donated time, talents and money to the various projects and community outreach. We will continue working diligently during 2025 to help facilitate upkeep projects for the church property. Bless you all for your dedication.

Election of officers was held and the following are the leaders for 2024-2025:

Officers for 2024-2025 are:

Larry Eckhardt – President

Kirk Kellogg – Secretary/Scribe

Jonathan Koepp – Representative to General Committee

Paul McMillan – Treasurer

Yours in Christ,
Sincerely,

Larry Eckhardt - President

SonShiners Report 2024

Kate Beach – President

The SonShiners, the women's Church group, holds monthly breakfast meetings on the third Sunday of the month at 8am. All women of the Church and community are welcome to join us. We each bring a dish to share at our breakfast and discuss how we would best be able to serve our Church and community.

March was our all-inclusive breakfast at Ioka Valley Farm.

In May we held our Garden(plant)/Bake sale, at the Stephentown Historical Society's Car Wash. September we held a joint BBQ dinner with the Community Breakfast Group with great success. We held our annual Italian Dinner and Election Day Luncheon with successful turnout.

With the raised proceeds we purchased more folding chairs for Church use and donated to the Manse siding fund. We were able to continue our annual donation to the mission work of the Methodist and Presbytery and purchase \$25.00 gift cards for each of the families the Church sponsored this Christmas.

We are thankful for the support from the Church members and local community.

Officers elected for 2025:

Kate Beach, President

Joanne Hennig, Secretary

Barbara Terpening, Treasurer

Marianne Smith, Representative to General Committee

Christian Ed Report

Sunday Childcare

We continued to welcome children to Pierce Hall during the service for childcare in 2024. Laurelyn put together packets of stories, materials, and crafts for each week. Laurelyn and Kate traded off time to spend with children and one of their parents. Many thanks to them for their time, service, and care for our kids.

Safe Sanctuary

We cover our children and volunteers with the best care by following the United Methodist's Safe Sanctuary requirements and training. We need more caregivers to be available on Sundays and take the training. The training is online on Saturdays and lasts just a few hours. Please consider volunteering and look for announcements for future dates.

Adult Christian Ed

Thanks to Bonnie and Bev for providing periodic Devotions on our website. The Worship Committee purchases seasonal devotionals for use during Lent and Advent. Upper Room devotionals are located near the exterior Sanctuary doors. Sunday sermons provide the opportunity to hear God's Word weekly.

Thanks,

Chris

Stephentown Food Pantry Report to the Stephentown Federated Church

2024

We are grateful for generous community support for the Food Pantry. We continue our mission of providing food resources for people in Stephentown and Hancock, and thank the Federated Church, and especially help from Ted Bears, for providing a welcoming space for this service.

We are open Saturdays from 9 to 11 am. We provide three days' worth of food for each household visit. Clients may get food weekly if needed. The Pantry provided food for 20,556 meals in 2024. This 33% increase over 2023 means that families are visiting more frequently. We served 71 households representing 197 people. We provided holiday meal groceries at Thanksgiving (58 bundles) and Christmas (59 bundles).

The pantry's 18 active volunteers take turns staffing the Pantry with three people on each Saturday, make Food Bank pickups or shop for inventory. We were saddened this year by the passing of volunteer Vicki Guilbeault and chairperson Bonnie Frank. Anita Henry now leads the group.

We are members of the Regional Food Bank of Northeast New York, which enables us to obtain free USDA surplus food and to purchase other foods at low prices. We order from the Food Bank and volunteers drive to Latham to haul the order to Stephentown, where it is unloaded and stored in the Pantry area. However, because of recent limited inventory at the Food Bank, much of our food must be purchased elsewhere.

This year we established tax-exempt status from the IRS as a 501(c)3 charitable organization, as required by the Regional Food Bank.

INCOME: Income for 2024 from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, was \$34,354.72 from generous individuals and organizations including the United Sabbathkeepers, Averill Park Septic, Hancock Volunteer Fire Department, Metzwood Insurance Co., the Valley Faith Community, Stephentown Federated Church - Souper Bowl, Stephentown Historical Society members, Stephentown Seniors, and Stephentown Pantry volunteers. We have also received donations of food and other assistance throughout the year from individuals, businesses, and groups, most notably of holiday needs from an anonymous community donor, Kinderhook Creek Farm, Hilltown Pork, Kilventon Produce, Stewart's Shops, Blue Q, Dave's Market, Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department, Stephentown Memorial Library, Stephentown Federated Church, and generous home gardeners and egg producers.

EXPENSES: Total expenses for 2024 were \$30,436.46 (nearly \$5000 more than last year): \$25,074.60 for food (almost \$7000 more), and other expenses of \$5356.86 which include postage and PO box rent, telephone, purchase of holiday gift cards for children underwritten by Stephentown Senior Citizens and a pantry volunteer, IRS fee for charitable organization status, liability insurance, and a \$2500 donation to the Federated Church.

BALANCE: The Pantry's balance on December 31, 2024, was \$34,044.54.

Meredith Rhindress, Treasurer