



**Sixth Avenue
United Church**

**Annual Report
for 2015**

**Annual Meeting
January 31, 2016**

Agenda for the Annual Meeting:

- Call to Order
- Opening Prayer
- State of the Church
- Approval of 2016 Budget
- Election of Officers:
 - Moderator: Brian LeMaire
 - Wider Church Ministry Co-Chairs: Elisabeth Pinsonneault
 - Financial Ministry: Sandy Calkins
 - Building Ministry: John Pinsonneault
- Open Discussion
- Closing Prayer
- Adjourn

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Susan Camp

Pastor Chris

**Moderator
Vickie Golobic**

Dear Friends,

As you read through the pages of this Annual Report, it will be obvious what a busy and fulfilling year 2015 was in the life of Sixth Avenue United Church. The generous outpouring of time, talent, friendship and commitment has been amazing and brought a renewed energy to our community.

I am at the end of my term as Moderator, and want to thank all of you for helping me as we worked through some major transitions in the past three years. It has been a joy to work with all of you, to get to know and work with Chris, and a special thank you to the members of the Leadership Team who have made my job as Moderator easy.

I am honored to be a part of this community and am proud of the work we do. I look forward to the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in 2016.

Respectfully submitted,
Vickie Golobic

**Wider Church Ministry
Elizabeth and John Pinsonneault**

2015 was a busy year for building and deepening our church's relationships with our wider community.

We have just finished one year of involvement with the Women's Homelessness Initiative (WHI). In the past 12 months we have provided shelter at Sixth Avenue to women who are homeless on 26 different Saturday nights. This means that volunteers from our congregation and our partners have set up over 500 cots and provided over 1000 meals for homeless women in our community. We are particularly grateful for the efforts of Lauren deMercado in coordinating the WHI program and introducing it to our congregation. We are also thankful that this program has received such wide support from our entire community. We would love to list each of the individuals who have dedicated significant time and efforts to serving our homeless neighbors, but the reality is that the list would include most of the 6th Avenue community, from some of our oldest members to some of our newest visitors. Through WHI we have also had the opportunity to deepen our ties to other congregations, as well as our tenants. Our volunteers have served alongside volunteers from Parkview UCC, First Plymouth UCC, Mountainview UCC, Wheat Ridge UCC, The Church of the Advent, Corona Presbyterian, Pax Christi, a yoga class that meets in our building, and other friends. We are glad that this mission has touched the lives of so many individuals and communities, and we look forward to continuing these relationships and this work in 2016.

During the past year, we have continued our longstanding support of the Denver Inner City Parish. We have served meals to Parish seniors on six different occasions, serving up to 70 individuals each time. The Parish staff has thanked us for returning to serve regularly, and we are grateful to all of you who have made those Saturday lunches possible. We have also contributed several baskets of donated food to the Parish food bank, and this year we supported the Parish through participation in its Christmas toy drive, and through supporting the La Academia auction. Through our relationship with the Parish we have seen how their work touches the lives of so many individuals in our community at many different stages of life, and we look forward to continuing our partnership in the years to come.

In addition to these ongoing mission projects, our members have represented Sixth Avenue UCC by marching in the Martin Luther King Jr. Parade in January, the Denver Pride Parade in June, and by standing for solidarity in vigils hosted by the Denver Interfaith Alliance. We continue to educate ourselves and each other regarding issues affecting our wider community through adult forums on topics including gun violence, circumstances in Haiti, and climate change talks in Paris. We support the greater UCC community by participating in each of the UCC's special offerings dedicated to building the church and supporting our local and global neighbors. We are an active member of Capitol Hill United Ministries, as shown through our involvement with WHI, and we are also honored that this year CHUM honored Ed Hawley at its annual Odyssey Luncheon as a leader of faith and heart in our community.

In these ways, and others which I'm sure I've forgotten to mention, our community has made positive strides to serve others, educate ourselves, and advocate on behalf of justice in our community. We are thankful for Chris' leadership and support in all of these areas, and we look forward to building upon our efforts this year and continuing to make a difference in the year to come.

Building Ministry Merlin Logan

The Building Ministry was established in January by the Leadership Team. The Ministry was allocated the sum of \$1000 in the proposed 2015 budget. At the annual meeting in January I told the congregation that I believed the building and grounds had been sadly neglected over the past decades. Some parts of the property are actually dangerous - for example the public sidewalks - while other parts are quite ugly. I urged the congregation to set aside at least \$10,000 for improvements in the coming months. The suggested amount was approved by the congregation.

Two members of the congregation, Carol Fields and Charlotte Redden, volunteered to assist me in the work of the ministry, calling ourselves the "church improvement committee."

The major project for the year was the reconstruction of about 60 feet of public sidewalk along the two streets adjoining the church. Denver municipal law requires that property owners must maintain the public sidewalks adjoining their property. Some of the concrete sections had been forced upward by tree roots to the point where they were 3 inches above adjoining sections creating a serious stumbling or tripping hazard. Other sections were badly cracked or eroded which made walking difficult. The bad sections were replaced at a cost of \$2,490.

Several years ago the church applied for designation as a historic structure to State and Federal historic preservation agencies. Gaining this designation could qualify the church for financial aid for restoring or maintaining the building. Charlotte Redden completed several long and complicated applications for the church which resulted in our being designated as listed on the National Register of Historic Sites. Subsequently, we applied for and received two grants totaling \$42,000 with which we obtained a detailed assessment of the building and construction documents for some major remodeling. During 2015 our committee took steps to obtain an official plaque identifying our church as being listed on the National Register. That plaque will be installed on the wall near the entrance doors of the church during the last week of this month, January, 2016

During the summer of 2015 it was necessary to remove three dead or dying trees on the east side of the church. This work cost \$1,750. A "Work Day" was held during the summer for the purpose of trimming shrubbery and cleaning some interior areas. About ten members of the

congregation participated. A second "Work Day" was scheduled in October to pick up autumn's leaves, however a 3 inch snow cancelled this event.

The committee spent many hours examining the appearance and function of important rooms on the 1st floor of the church. We concluded that a lot more attention should be given to improving the appearance of these rooms to create a "welcoming" experience for visitors and members.

Merlin Logan - Building Ministry chair

Christian Education
Rev. Dr. Kim Shinabery

My call to ministry has always been working with children and youth. I'm grateful for the continued opportunity to do this at Sixth Avenue UCC. In 2015, under the guidance of Chris Gilmore, I was able to renew my covenant with Sixth Ave. and the Association. This covenant includes working with the children and youth and preaching at least four times a year. In 2015, we continued to focus on welcoming the children as part of the worshipping community. The children and youth have been involved in many aspects of our community life, including helping make and serve lunch at the Denver Inner City Parish, providing decorations for the WHI on Halloween, decorating and serving the congregation for our Valentine's Day coffee hour, ringing the bell before worship each Sunday, assisting Chris in serving communion, and presenting a play during Advent. During the summer, we took several of the children on a fun and educational trip to the Wild Animal Sanctuary in Hudson.

Having the assistance of both Connor Scott and Teagan Benevidez in Sunday School has been a blessing. Both are good with the children. Connor is our regular Sunday School assistant; he helps out in several ways, including aiding the younger children with crafts, supervising their playtime, and focusing their attention on cleaning up at the end. Teagan is Connor's backup. She, too, assists the younger children with craft activities and plays with them. I'm grateful to both of them.

One of my goals for 2015 was to divide the class into two age groups: one with more challenging lessons for the older children; the other with both a craft and a time to play for younger children. Although we have not done this, I do spend time with the older children after the craft while the younger children have time to play under Connor's supervision. We are continuing to explore ways to divide the children into two groups and will be enlisting the help of parents and other adults in this endeavor.

Another goal of mine for 2015 was to form a more active youth group. We had a few activities in 2015 including a movie night and involving our youth in the city-wide underground youth group. Nurturing our youth is my continuing goal for 2016.

Thank you to everyone for your continued support of our children and youth. I love being part of a congregation where children and youth are treated as important members of the community.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Kimberly A. Shinabery

Associate Pastor of Marketplace Ministry
Rev. Kimra Perkins

And when you discover what you will be in your life, set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it. –Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967

Marketplace Ministry’s Mission and Vision

Sixth Avenue UCC recognizes that the present reality of the church is one that is ever changing. The role of the church and its ministry looks very different than it did in past generations. We also acknowledge the need for the presence of the church, especially the presence of the expression of the gospel that is unique to the United Church of Christ (and in particular Sixth Avenue UCC), is still great. To that end, Sixth Avenue UCC created a formal ministry project in 2015 called “Marketplace Ministry” to focus on and to grow the relationships and presence Sixth Avenue has in the wider community. Through this mission, Sixth Avenue continues to commit itself to serving as “salt and light” in the wider world as a voice of hospitality, inclusiveness, welcoming, and community in the consumer society. EVERYONE at Sixth Avenue is a minister in this mission as we are all created to reflect God’s image and to model the gospel of Christ in our work, relationships and everyday encounters. Let us enthusiastically live out together the hymn that proclaims, *“They will know we are Christians by our love.”*

Marketplace Ministry Highlights

- The Marketplace Ministry Team planned and led worship for residents at Elk Run Assisted Living in Evergreen, Colorado on the second and fourth Sundays of every month at 4 pm. Worship includes: a traditional liturgy, lectionary based Scripture readings, a reflection on the Scripture lesson, legacy hymns, communion and prayers of the people. This ministry entered its third year in Oct. 2015. Community members frequently attend and share readings, music and fellowship with residents during and after worship services. Worship attendance ranges from 10 to 25 assisted living residents. Sixth Avenue members on the Marketplace Ministry Team that serves at Elk Run Assisted Living include Mat Matson, Randy Sackerson and Kimra Perkins.

- The Marketplace Ministry Team offered grief support and conducted nine memorial services for Elk Run Assisted Living residents and Evergreen neighbors without a formal faith home. Family, residents and community members attended the various services with participation ranging from 15 to over 100 people for each event.

- On May 31, 2015, Sixth Avenue UCC called, ordained and installed Kimra Perkins as its Associate Pastor of Marketplace Ministry.

“Sixth Avenue UCC continues to bless and encourage me in my calling to follow God in all aspects of my life. I am honored, overwhelmed with joy and so grateful that Sixth Avenue is my spiritual home. Thank you!”

- Rev. Kimra Perkins served in various pastoral roles in 2015 as the Associate Pastor of Marketplace Ministry: led worship as guest pastor at two front-range UCC churches and spoke on marketplace ministry topics; served as guest lecturer at doctorate of divinity class at Denver Seminary on the topic *“Effectively Resolving Problems in the Workplace within an Inclusive Christ-following Worldview”*; served as leadership and spirituality speaker at Rotary Youth Leadership conference in Estes Park and at Evergreen High School; led worship and preached first person narrative sermon for Sixth Ave UCC in August; wrote and delivered several civic blessings/prayers for public community events; conducted *Prepare and Enrich* pre-marital coaching for *“spiritual but not religious”* couples and served as wedding officiant; met with numerous neighbors and colleagues in various settings about marketplace ministry topics; continued to serve as the full-time general manager of a super-regional shopping center.

Additional resources for more information on marketplace ministry:

- Visit www.patheos.com – a good website with free resources, videos and e-newsletters concerning faith at work topics.
- Visit: www.centerforfaithandwork.com – the focus of this website is connecting Sunday worship with Monday’s work.

Submitted by: Rev. Kimra Perkins, Associate Pastor of Marketplace Ministry

**Covenanted Minister
Rev. Jane E. Vennard**

In appreciation for the three-way covenant I hold with Sixth Avenue United Church I report on my ministry for the past year.

I am just completing a new book entitled *Teaching – The Sacred Art: The Joy of Opening Minds and Hearts* to be published by SkyLight Paths. It is due out in April and I am planning a launch party the end of that month at St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Centennial.

I continue to see about 24 people for spiritual direction, most of them monthly. They come from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds and are all ages. Many of them are religious professionals, others are active in their churches as lay people, and some are struggling with organized religion. It is an honor to journey with them and I often feel I learn more from those who come than they could possibly learn from me.

My teaching ministry has included a one-week summer class and a one-week interterm class at the Iliff School of Theology. In addition to my Iliff teaching I taught at Columbia Presbyterian Seminary in Atlanta in their Spiritual Formation Certificate Program. In winter I spent a weekend of teaching at Baton Rouge First United Methodist Church and a weekend in Syracuse NY leading a women’s clergy retreat for the United Methodist Church. In May I traveled to

Baltimore to lead a retreat for the spiritual directors of the Church of the Brethren. In the fall I went to San Antonio to teach for the Academy for Spiritual Formation sponsored by the Upper Room of the United Methodist Church and to Atchison, Kansas to lead a continuing education program for spiritual directors in that area.

Closer to home, I preached at Susan McKee's ordination service at Park Hill UCC, at First Plymouth UCC on Transfiguration Sunday, at Iliff Honors Chapel, and at Dignity Denver. I led study groups and retreat days on my book *Fully Awake and Truly Alive* at Montview Presbyterian Church, First Universalist Church, Jefferson Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Arvada UMC, and Benet Hill Monastery.

For professional development I continue to see my own spiritual director monthly. In January I attended a weekend event with James Finley, psychotherapist and spiritual director sponsored by Spiritual Direction Colorado. In late August I took a three day solitary silent retreat in a small house outside of Cripple Creek owned by the Dominican Sisters of Great Bend, Kansas. In September I attended a three day retreat for spiritual directors at the Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat house and then returned in December for another four days of silent retreating in one of their small hermitages I attend a monthly peer supervision group in spiritual direction and participate in quarterly meetings of Spiritual Direction Colorado.

I have enjoyed being at Sixth Avenue more regularly this year, finding comfort and encouragement in our community, and plan to be present in church in a variety of ways in the coming year. I am deeply appreciative of the 25 years that Sixth Avenue has supported my ministry of teaching, writing, and spiritual direction.

Jane E Vennard

Covenanted Minister
Rev. Jenny Morgan

Dear Friends at Sixth Avenue UCC,

Pastoral ministry at Highlands Church continues to be an exciting adventure! I feel honored to express my calling and gifts within the family of the United Church of Christ, and on behalf of Highland Church. Our work together is a beautiful expression of Jesus' prayer that we might all be one.

With each passing year, Highlands Church stabilizes more and more financially and organizationally. We keep finding new doors opening up for outreach, love, and justice in North Denver/Highlands. We are still quite young in 'church years.' This past fall we celebrated 6 years of life together as a faith community! A few highlights from 2015 include:

- **The completion of preparations for OWL training** ("Our Whole Lives") that we're doing with Sixth Avenue UCC and Berkley UCC families: The first class will begin this winter.
- **Our introduction to interfaith work:** We're partnering with other churches in a Peace Village project this summer.
- **Our Youth Group (mostly middle school students) grew from 7-20!** We're making plans to hire a part-time Youth Ministry Director this year.

- **The growth of our Neighborhood Outreach work** with Bienvenidos Food bank and Family Promise: We're serving 200 different families.
- **The expansion of a 4-year collaborative community partnership with La Florida, Honduras:** In April, eleven of us spent eleven days deepening the connections between our church and La Florida. We worked alongside local people to build hand-washing stations and clean bathrooms for three schools. We had the privilege of beginning a friendship with a local transgender hairdresser named Joanna. I even got a haircut!
- **I'm making great progress building relationships with North High School** teachers and administrators. I volunteer as a teacher/coach once a week in the music department as a way to build trust, serve the community at large, and get to know families in the neighborhood.
- **Pastor Chris Gilmore and I** continue to participate in our UCC clergy group. This group, and Chris in particular, remains an important lifeline for me spiritually and professionally.
- Under Sixth Avenue UCC's leadership, Highlands Church is sharing in the internship support of **Susan Camp, Iliff School of Theology MDiv student.**

Some of my other ministerial responsibilities are: preaching at least twice each month, leading our growing staff team, serving as the Pastor on our Leadership Council, and overseeing the church's collaborative leadership structure & leadership retreats. Part of my calling continues to be the development of new leaders for future progressive, inclusive expressions of the body of Christ as well as casting vision for the health and growth of Highlands Church.

This past fall, I celebrated my second year as an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. The 4-way Covenant between Sixth Avenue UCC, The Metro Denver Association of the UCC, and me with Highlands Church continues to be a blessing to the people of Highlands and to me.

Personally, my partner Kristy Jordan and I are in the midst of supporting her mother, Gwen Jordan, as Gwen nears the end of her life. Over the last few months, our world has been full of tender emotions, fond remember-ings, and celebrations of Gwen's 82 years of life. We've had many difficult decisions to make and we've experienced the presence of God along the way. Gwen is living in the nursing home unit of Mountain Vista in Arvada and she recently began receiving Hospice services. Pray for us during this transition.

Thank you for the partnership we share. I feel grateful to God and to Sixth Avenue!

Christ be with you all!

Peace,
Jenny

Covenanted Minister
Rev. Olive Elaine Hinnant

I serve at a 50 bed inpatient residential facility for drug and alcohol treatment. (Parker Valley Hope) As a chaplain I talk with patients about addiction as a spiritual disease and recovery as a spiritual path. In the course of our work together patients complete some of the first steps of the 12 step program. One of the main struggles people have in addiction is the guilt and shame of what they have done in their addiction and the pain they have caused others. Correctly or

incorrectly, patients point to religion or institutions of religions as being one of the sources of judgment about addiction. In reality, it's not just religious folk but many who judge addicts and alcoholics for their behavior. My work is to help them understand their spiritual nature is defined by a church or religion, but can be nurtured by these. Breaking down the walls of their attitudes toward religion or spirituality is a first step on the road to recovery.

However, witnessing the pain of shame and guilt that keeps the cycle of addiction going, I've been asking myself, "Where are the voices of faith speaking on behalf of the recovery community?" and "What does the church have to say about the heroin epidemic?" We are hearing about the epidemic more and more and even the presidential candidates are talking about it in their speeches?

Being a member and minister in covenant with Sixth Avenue I am glad to have believers who care and are willing to engage with these topics. I appreciate the community of faith that allows us to be who we are on our journey with God and seek answers to suffering and pain in our world.

Member in Discernment
Joshua North-Shea

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I feel blessed to walk this road with you all, and to serve and be a part of such a caring and vibrant community. At the beginning of the year I was working on my field education, and many of you heard me preach. Thank you for those opportunities and all of your helpful feedback as I develop ministerial skills including preaching, and my pastoral identity. Over the summer I finished my Constructive Theology paper, and successfully defended it in the fall. The defense of this paper was the final requirement for my Masters in Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary, the alma mater of many folks in our congregation. Finally, I had the honor of officiating two weddings in 2015, both of which were very beautiful.

I entered into the Discernment process in the fall which, as most of you know, is a preparation for ordination. A group of members has agreed to form my Discernment Committee. I want to express my gratitude to Gretchen Hawley, Larry Yoder, Robin Miller, and Ann Stoener for agreeing to accompany me in this process.

I am so very happy to be here in this place, serving this community, learning to love and follow the urgings of the spirit, doing our best to live into the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Peace and Love,
Joshua

Field Education Intern
Susan Camp

Over the past 7 months I have been continually amazed at the way this community has displayed to me their idea of extravagant welcome! The love and kindness that you have shown me have given me a safe space as I work through my internship. In this environment I have felt a sense of standing firm in your presence while experiencing the freedom to explore my personal theology as I continue its construction.

Chris and I have spent many hours together discussing theology, pastoral boundaries, pastoral health, and the relationship between authenticity and vulnerability. These conversations have helped me to put my beliefs into words and they have assisted me in beginning to build a

ministry that will assist others while assuring that Renee and I are able to care for our family and our needs.

Being with you on Sunday mornings has been exceptional. There are so many ways that I have felt an enormous impact, but none more than our prayer time together. The authenticity that each of you bring into that space is inspiring. Often the sacred things that are shared stir such emotion in me that I have to balance between praying and fighting back the tears. This tearful part of me is something that has never really been comfortable, but Chris has encouraged me (on many occasions) to “stick with it - allow them to see you.” It’s been one of the most amazing lessons in vulnerability that my internship has offered and although it leaves me uncomfortable I never worry that I am in an unsafe place - for that I offer you my deepest heartfelt thank you!

I look forward to the next five months. Chris and I will be facilitating an Our Whole Lives class. We have 18 - 7th and 8th grade kids registered. I’m ecstatic to be coming alongside the UCC and the Highlands Church youth in this life-giving way. I also look forward to a little time to meet up with a few of you for a cup of coffee and conversation. I feel overwhelmingly blessed to call 6th Avenue UCC my internship home. Thank you for sharing this part of your lives with me.

Much love,
Susan Camp

Lead Pastor
Rev. Chris Gilmore

As I look back on 2015 there are so many little moments of grace that I cherish. Tender moments in worship during joys and concerns, the sharing of stories over dinner tables and at fellowship, and meeting so many wonderful new people who have joined this community. I am incredibly grateful to be able to say that I look forward to coming to church each day that I make the drive from Boulder.

I am grateful to our staff who continues to dedicate so much of their time to make our community so vibrant. This past year we were blessed to be able to hire the Rev. Dr. Robin Miller as our new ministry of music. She adds many years of experience to her joyful presence and we all benefit from the gifts she brings to worship. Anni Markey continues to provide us with the comforting and heartfelt melodies during worship on the piano (as well accompanying our choir). Our newest staff member, Rev. Kimra Perkins is sharing the good news of God’s love with so many outside of our walls as our Minister in the Marketplace. In addition, she helps to create beautiful altars and engaging décor at our Welcome table. Susan Camp, our student intern whom we share with Highlands church has been a joy to work with and watch her discover her voice and call to ministry. Rev. Dr. Kim Shinabery continues to lead our Faith Formation program for children, creating lasting relationships among our youngest member, and our sexton and office manager Joshua North-Shea continues to make 6th avenue a place of hospitality in keeping the building clean, being a welcoming presence during the week, and serving as our go-between with all of our tenants.

I am grateful as well to our Leadership Team. For Vickie Golobic whose three years as our moderator have been invaluable, I shudder to think where we would be without her. Not only does she do so much behind the scenes on Sunday morning, but she has also served us so well in personnel matters, contract disputes, rental negotiations, and as our voice in the wider church, just to name a few. Merlin, Sandy, and the Pinnsonault’s have also been amazing in their

respective ministries bringing so much life to the church as we continue to make our ministry tangible and lasting.

Lastly I am grateful to each one of the members and friends of 6th avenue who continue to make each Sunday such a joy to help lead. For the spirit and openness of the church, for the vulnerability that is brought to worship and modeled, and for the willingness to try new things now and then. I love that we are able to have an intern, a student in discernment, and that we welcome new people in such an authentic way.

When I think of the highlights of the past year I would lift up both our joining the WHI program (see the Wider Church report), our calling Kimra Perkins as our associate minister, and the way in which our life together on Sunday mornings is as rich and energizing as it is.

A few other notes on last year:

I continue to serve on the Metro Denver Ministry Council, was the Vice-Chair of the Conference minister search committee, attended General Synod as one of the conference delegates, directed MADD (senior high) camp at La Foret, and was blessed to preach at the Annual meeting of the conference. I thank 6th Avenue for allowing me the time to serve the Wider church in these capacities.

I continue to stay active with CHUM (serving on the executive team) as well as a local UCC clergy support group.

With the direction of the Pastoral Relations Team (Thank you Jane, Larry, and Charlotte for your guidance), I have begun monthly meetings with a Spiritual Director and make sure I am taking the time off I need to stay grounded and rested.

While we still face many challenges as a small church, (building upkeep and budget concerns), I find that the mood and energy of 6th avenue is generally very positive and energizing. I look forward to finding time this year to creating three things which I feel will help us as we head into the future. The first is a covenant in which we will strive to live out together, the second is a five year plan that we will adopt as a church which will help give us some clarity to how we want to move forward, and the third is a process in which we can find ways to help integrate our many visitors into the life of the church. It is my hope and prayer that as we enter into another year together we will continue to find new expressions of what church can be, that we will stay open to God's wisdom on where we are to be led, and that the love and grace we experience from God and one another will strengthen each of us to being more and more the presence of that love in the world.

It is truly a blessing to be among you,

Chris