

**The First Congregational Church,  
United Church of Christ  
New Milford, Connecticut**



**Reports for the 310<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, covering the events of 2025**

**May 3, 2026**



## **Who**

We are a group of people of all different ages and backgrounds who share a common faith and purpose.

Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

## **What**

This document describes in detail our activities during the year 2025, including education, outreach, and fellowship, as well as fiscal and structural responsibility.

1 Peter 4:10: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

## **Where**

Our center is the beautiful, historic building where we gather to worship. From this focal point we seek to help others in the community and beyond.

Exodus 25:8: "And let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them."

## **Why**

We are called to care for one another, to do good works, and to share God's word.

John 15:12: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

James 2:14 and 17: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? ...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Psalms 96:3: "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples."

## **When**

Throughout our daily lives.

2 Thessalonians 3:13: "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good."

Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and ...he will make your paths straight."



**First Congregational Church of New Milford, Connecticut  
2025 Annual Report  
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Janet Wittmann, Editor



## Pastor

I am so happy to be serving as your pastor here at First Congregational Church of New Milford, UCC. Since I arrived in October, you have welcomed me so warmly. Thank you for your hospitality and friendship as we begin our mutual ministry. This congregation has so many people who go above and beyond each and every day making this congregation function. Thank you for all that you do for our church.

I have enjoyed learning about the various ministries that fill the days here at FCCNM and loved being part of the craft fair, Living Nativity, and Trans Day of Remembrance. Christmas Eve was a highlight for me as we worshipped twice that holy night ending both services singing *Silent Night* on the steps.

I am looking forward to 2026. There is a 4-member Confirmation Class and a new member class on the horizon along with Lent and Easter. We have challenges, yet we have so many opportunities for growth and new paths of ministry. With God leading, together we will bring FCCNM into the future with vitality, hope, and strength. I cannot wait to see where God leads us!

Blessings,  
Rev. Marie Bacchiocchi



## Church Council Chair

**450**      **God the Spirit, Guide and Guardian**

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It features a treble clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are written below the treble staff.

1. God the Spir - it, guide and guard - ian, wind - sped  
2. Christ our Sav - ior, sov - ereign, shep - herd, word made  
3. Great Cre - a - tor, life - be - stow - er, truth be -  
4. Tri - une God, mys - te - rious be - ing, un - di -

I am amazed at how often the singing of a hymn can stir my emotions and bring powerful insights. Take a look at the full Verse 4 of the above hymn:

“Triune God, mysterious being,  
undivided and diverse,  
deeper than our minds can fathom,  
greater than our creeds rehearse:  
**help us in our varied callings  
your full image to proclaim,  
that our ministries uniting  
may give glory to your name.”**

Words: Carl P. Daw, Jr., 1987    Music: Rowland H. Prichard, 1844

There it is! **The bolded lines** above show the key purpose of the Church Council perfectly. The five ministries of our church uniting to give God glory...by working to improve how we can “Be The Church”.

In 2025, the Church Council continued to work towards the strategic goals that came out of our 2024 strategic plan. Here are the six goals, as a reminder:

- 1) Resolve structure and process issues to reduce confusion and conflict, and to streamline effectiveness
- 2) Implement an expanded collaborative approach with the community service providers and other churches to enable better member understanding and better mission
- 3) Leverage digital tools to better communicate with the community and with members
- 4) Create more non-Sunday events, both small and large, to bring people inside our space, to generate awareness and member unity in shared projects
- 5) Explore new ways to generate funding, and to make it easier for the church to receive funds
- 6) Establish role in community for LGBTQ+ and hunger awareness and issue resolution

*(continued)*

While we have made progress, there is a lot of exciting work still ahead. Here are some highlights:

- Open and Affirming (ONA) signage approved and implemented. We discussed different options and aligned around a logo to be added to our front sign.
- Ad Hoc Steeple Repair Committee established. The committee will support near-term work planned to clean up from birds, create an assessment of required repairs, and implement a long-term capital campaign.
- Yale Whiffenpoofs Fundraiser. This was a great event, and we gained experience in selling program ads for the first time.

In 2026 we anticipate even better connection and uniting of our ministries.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dan Martin



### **Ad Hoc Pastoral Search Committee**

We had a busy year!

**January** - The Search Team continued work on the finishing touches for our Church Profile to be posted on the UCC Website.

**February** - Our completed profile was reviewed and approved by our Area Conference Minister, Margaret Hofmeister. After a year of preparation, our official Church Profile was posted to the UCC Database on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Later in the month, we received our first two candidates who formally applied for the position. The team chairman created a "Pastoral Candidate Grading Sheet" for use as we moved forward to review candidates and keep notes. This sheet would help us grade potential candidates based on how closely they fell in-line with what our congregation voted for in our internal Pastoral Survey last year.

**March** - The Search Team did a mock interview via Zoom with Rev. Becca Lockwood of the UCC, to practice the interview process before moving on to actual candidates. After a successful mock interview, we scheduled our first real interview with a candidate.

**April** - We received more pastoral candidate applications, and scheduled an interview with Rev. Marie Bacchiocchi on April 11<sup>th</sup>, which went very well.

**May** - The Search Team continued to receive and review additional pastoral candidates applying for the position. At the end of the month, we began the framework for scheduling our second interview with Rev. Marie Bacchiocchi.

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**June** - We conducted our second interview with Rev. Bacchiocchi on June 6<sup>th</sup>. The Search Team unanimously agreed that she was by far the best candidate we reviewed since the process began.

**July** - The Search Team invited Rev. Bacchiocchi to visit New Milford and our church. The purpose of this visit was for the Search Team to get to know Rev. Marie even better in a more informal, personal setting, while also giving her the opportunity to see our facilities and community to decide if it was a great fit for everyone. The Search Team provided her a room for the weekend at the Homestead Inn, and we all had dinner together at the White Horse Pub & Restaurant. During the visit, everyone on the Search Team felt that we had found our next Pastor, and Marie felt the same. After Rev. Marie left New Milford to head home, and once the Search Team all had a night to sleep and reflect on the weekend, we unanimously agreed to make her an official offer for the position of Full-Time Pastor, which she accepted the following morning!

**August** - The Search Team, with the help of the Deacons, began to plan the September Candidating Weekend for Rev. Marie. During this time, we also negotiated her Call Agreement, and in good faith, coordinated planning for her housing and moving to New Milford.

**September** - On the 7<sup>th</sup> we held our Candidating Service, where Rev. Marie Bacchiocchi preached an introductory sermon to the congregation. A congregational vote was then held, and after counting the ballots, it was unanimously decided by all participating voting members that she would be our new full-time Settled Pastor! A celebration with the congregation and Rev. Marie was held in Fellowship Hall after the successful vote, where she also signed the Call Agreement. Upon voting Marie in, the Search Team chairman notified our Area Conference Minister at the UCC that our Search was complete. Our Church Profile was put on pause until the onboarding process with Rev. Marie was complete, and the chairman also notified the other pastoral candidates who had applied for the position that it was now filled.

**October** – Rev. Marie began her first official day as full- time Settled Pastor on October 1<sup>st</sup> here at the First Congregational Church of New Milford. Our Church Profile advertisement was removed from the UCC Database, and the Search Team's two year journey came to a happy end! Many thanks for the dedication of committee members Paul Mayer, Katie McKay, Holly Meissner, Bonnie Westerberg, and Meg Wittmann.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Corey Johnson, Chair



# WORSHIP MINISTRY



## **Board of Deacons**

Throughout 2025, the congregation gathered faithfully for worship, seasonal observances, special services, and community events. Sermon series explored themes from the Parables of Jesus, discipleship, prayer, faith, leadership, and renewal. Attendance varied seasonally, with notable increases during baptisms, Easter, and special services.

### Key Worship Highlights

- Implementation of reading the UCC Statement of Faith on Communion Sundays
- Usher schedule transitioned to a calendar-year format
- Installation of a new standing pulpit box
- Introduction of themed worship series and multi-week sermon focus

### Sacraments & Special Services with Deacon participation

- Communion
- Baptism
- Funeral Service

### Seasonal Observances & Holy Days

- Lent began March 9 with the Disciples Trading Card Challenge
- Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service with scripture readings
- Good Friday Ecumenical Faith Walk with over 75 participants
- Easter Sunday service attendance exceeded 130
- Advent observances began November 30, including family candle lighting
- Christmas Season
  - Children's Christmas Pageant (140+ attendance)
  - Christmas Eve Family Service
  - Lessons and Carols Service
  - Community Christmas Concert (December 14)

### Congregational Life & Fellowship

- New "March Madness" fellowship event following worship (March 23)
- Volunteer Recognition discussions
- Ladies' Tea proposed for July 26; Fall cookbook club discussed
- Music Sunday dedicated to Barbara Ahern
- Children's Day & Scholarship Sunday with highest summer attendance (120)

*(continued)*

## Deacons & Leadership

- New Deacons Installed: Gail Peck and Debbie Poole; training began in July
- Updated Deacon contact information and electronic correspondence system
- Deacons played an active role in worship leadership, planning, and pastoral support

## Pastoral Transitions & Staffing

- Rev. Dave Buchan's final service held in September
- Congregation voted to welcome Rev. Marie A. Bacchiocchi as settled pastor
- Guest preachers throughout the year included Rev. Dr. Pat Nicholas and Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Mauro
- New Church Secretary Carole Ziegler began in August

## Education & Formation

- There were no confirmands in 2025
- New Member Classes held and new members welcomed
- Bible Study classes launched following worship in October
- Onboarding and minister welcome materials developed

## Community & Outreach

- Transgender Day of Remembrance service
- Veterans recognized in November
- Scholarship and Book of Remembrance acknowledgment services held in May and November
- JCC event participation highlighting First Amendment and due process issues

## Attendance Overview

- Average weekly attendance ranged from mid-40s in summer to over 70 during program seasons
- Peak attendance:
  - Easter Sunday: 132
  - Service of Baptism (March): 110
  - Christmas Pageant: 140+

The Deacons give thanks for a year of faithful worship, renewed leadership, deepened fellowship, and strong community engagement. We remain grateful for the dedication of clergy, staff, lay leaders, and congregation members who together continue Christ's ministry in this place.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cary Westfall



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# Christmas Concert Program

The First Congregational Church of New Milford

## Community Christmas Concert 2025



featuring  
Christmas Choir & The Village Ringers  
Cherub Choir

December 14, 2025 at 4:00 PM

We Need a Little Christmas	Jerry Herman, arr. Mac Huff
Welcome	Reverend Marie Bacchiocchi
Issay, Issay! (Hear Ye, Hear Ye!)	Traditional Ethiopian Carol, arr. Philip Kern
In the Bleak Midwinter	Gustav Holst, arr. Karen Buckwalter
Christmas Lullaby	John Rutter
Dance and Sing <i>Featuring the Cherub Choir</i>	Israeli Folk Song, arr. Nancy Gifford
Ding Dong! Merrily on High	French Carol, arr. Louis Harris
Celtic Noel	Traditional French Carol, arr. Sondra K. Tucker
The Christmas Song	Mel Torme and Robert Wells, arr. Roy Ringwald
Jingle Bells	James Pierpont, arr. Lloyd Larson
The Twelve Pains of Christmas	Traditional Melody, words by Bob Rivers, arr. Christopher Alexander
Glory (Let There Be Peace)	Maher, Popadic and Stevens, arr. David Wise
We Three Kings	John H. Hopkins, arr. Matthew Compton
Concertato on "O Come, All Ye Faithful"	Adeste Fideles, arr. Mary McDonald



## **Music Team**

Music Director Sarah Fay continued to provide strong leadership for the Senior Choir. She has helped the choir members improve their vocal technique and continues to select a wide variety of music including classical and contemporary anthems.

The Village Ringers welcomed Kristen Dorrell as director, replacing Diane Taylor. Kristen started playing handbells as a child in Brookfield; having performed for many years, she wanted to try directing. Kristen has done excellent work in her first year and has even brought several family members to our choir. The bells played at numerous services during the year, and a small group played at the mayor's community Christmas party at Town Hall in mid-December.

Toni Sullivan continued to lead the Cherub Choir, which is for grades Pre-K to Grade 1 (ages 5-7). The children performed occasionally during the year and at the Christmas Concert. Melanie Fay volunteered as assistant, which is much appreciated. The Alleluia Choir, grades 2-4, didn't have sufficient enrollment and is on hold.

The Christmas Concert on December 14 was well attended with approximately 150 people. The concert included a mix of traditional and contemporary arrangements performed by the Choir, the Village Ringers, and the Cherub Choir. The enthusiastic audience generously contributed \$1,025.

Barbara Ahern, a long-time member of the senior choir and bell choir, passed away. Barbara contributed in many ways to the music program for more than 40 years. Besides performing, she served on the Music Committee, was music librarian, and managed supplies. She was always ready to volunteer, and her dedication kept the music program running smoothly.

The Music Team had several bank accounts established by gifts to the church. These were closed, and the funds from these accounts were moved to the Investment Fund, keeping in line with the church's revised monetary policy.

Music Team members include Dave Elmore - Chair, Barbara Ahern, Paul Mayer, Jeff Gammons, Pam Cafiero, Sarah Fay and Kristen Dorrell. Reverend Marie Bacchiocchi and Alice Horrigan joined the Senior Choir this year, and Andrew Hill and Caitlyn Henderson joined the bell choir. The church benefits greatly through the hard work and dedication of the choir directors and members. Thanks to all for a wonderful year of music.

*(continued)*

Senior Choir: Sarah Fay, Director

Barbara Ahern, Marie Bacchiocchi, Jim Baird, Pam Cafiero, Susan Chapin, Kathy and Dave Elmore, Chris Fay, Melanie Fay, Jeff and Sandy Gammons, Alice Horrigan, Peggy and Jerry King, Lorna and Don MacInnis, Dan Martin, Paul Mayer, Jan McCarthy, Sharon Millard, Anne Olson, Toni Sullivan, and Bonnie Westerberg. In addition, Vincent Antezzo and Cindy Hendricks performed with the Christmas Choir. Diane Taylor and Dave Sommerville performed with the choir occasionally.

Handbell Choir: Kristen Dorrell, Director

Barbara Ahern, Jean Dorrell, Mary Eherts, Kathy Elmore, Katie Elmore, Melanie Fay, Caitlyn Henderson, Andrew Hill, Carrie Martin, Leslie Schlemmer, Cathy Setterlin, Dave Sommerville, Joan Vill, Cary Westfall, and Meg Wittmann.

Cherub Choir: Toni Sullivan, Director. Melanie Fay, Assistant Director

Harper Haddad, Ellie Henderson, Evelyn Johnson, Lilly McGee, and Arora Vogt.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Elmore, Chair



**Flower Team**

The mission of the Flower Committee is to provide flower arrangements for the sanctuary during services, and to coordinate Easter and Christmas decoration. Except for the first Sunday of the month, Communion Sunday, we coordinate floral arrangements on the Communion Table. We request that members contact a committee member if they wish to have flowers placed in memory/honor of a loved one, or in recognition of a special occasion.

The Flower Committee oversees the Parcels Flower Fund. \$3,000 has been moved to the Investment Fund to obtain a higher rate of interest. There is a \$300 account with Ives Bank, New Milford for the committee's use.

Easter Flowers were purchased to decorate the Sanctuary, then sold to members of the congregation after Easter Service. The same is scheduled for 2026. Wreaths on the outside of church are changed during the year in accordance with holidays. For the Christmas season the committee agreed to replace live poinsettias with artificial plants. In previous years the live poinsettias were not always taken by the purchaser and ended up being discarded.

Thanks to all those who assisted with the decorating and cleanup of the holiday decorations, especially Committee Members Bonnie Westerberg, Sandy Gammons, and Anne Olson.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debbie Poole, Chair



## Audio / Visual Team

The A/V Team supports the Deacons, church staff and other members with audio and video during services and events. This year Steve McCarthy and Dave Elmore were team members assisted by Deacon Cary Westfall. In addition to managing the sound in the sanctuary, the team runs the livestream audio and video. The livestream webcast continues to be an important part of the church's mission to reach as many members and friends as possible each Sunday. In addition to weekly services, the team provided services to several funerals, a wedding and the Transgender Day of Remembrance in November.

The A/V team is actively looking for additional volunteers as that would ease the workload. This will be even more urgent if additional outside events are held in the church.

### 2025 LIVESTREAM STATISTICS

Month	# of Sundays	Views	Viewers	Hours Viewed
January	4	305	110	378
February	4	362	112	277
March	5	285	126	154
April	4	309	131	163
May	4	251	124	142
June	5	284	146	124
July	4	192	94	118
August	5	275	142	88
September	4	344	104	100
October	4	380	130	58
November	5	301	149	341
December	4	547	251	174
<b>Total</b>		<b>3835</b>	<b>1619</b>	<b>2117</b>

**Views**-- number of individuals accessing the livestream or recordings. Each access of the livestream counts as a view.

**Viewers**-- each separate location from which views are made

Respectfully submitted,  
David Elmore, Chair



## **Book of Remembrance**

The Book of Remembrance was started in 1940 by Miss Marion Tenny, who thought that gifts given in memory of certain people should be remembered by transcribing their names in a special book. Since that time, gifts given to our church have been inscribed into a book so that a permanent record of these individuals will live on even after the donors are gone. Gifts are dedicated twice a year, during May and November; the names being memorialized are read aloud and the bells tolled during a special part of the service. Gifts of any amount are willingly accepted anytime of the year and are used, when approved by a congregational vote, for projects of a more lasting nature that are in keeping with the memorial spirit of the Book of Remembrance and the spiritual ministry to its people. Anyone interested in remembering a loved one can find donation envelopes at the entrances of the sanctuary. A list of donors is posted in the church two weeks prior to the dedication in May and November.

In May 2025 donations from 14 individuals and families were given in remembrance of 35 people. For the service in November 2025 donations were received from 22 individuals and families in remembrance of 49 people. Names of all memorialized and the donors were inscribed into the Book of Remembrance. Church members and families continue to generously donate. There were no request for funds this fiscal year.

In January 2025 \$2,000 was transferred from our checking account to our Vanguard Money Market investment account. Total interest from our Vanguard Money Market account for 2025 was \$959.31 and our account balance is \$25,964.09. The year-end balance in our checking account was \$3,771.40.

Many thanks to the members of the Book of Remembrance team: Janet Wittmann, Bonnie Westerberg, Susan Metcalf, and Tom Tucker.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara McGiver and Judy York, Co-chairs



## **Usher Team**

Ushering on a Sunday morning is a great way to meet and greet people, while handing out bulletins before worship. Ushers collect gifts and prayer cards during the Offertory. After the service, some general straightening up is needed.

2025 proved to be a year of moving forward. Our normal ushering duties are back in place. The first Sunday of the month, the Deacons usher and serve communion. The second Sunday has various Teams taking turns. The third Sunday showcases our youth, and they absolutely love helping out. After many years of having one Christmas Eve service, we welcomed back having two services: 4 PM and 9 PM. We were happy hearing the Cherub Choir sing for us at 4 PM and having communion at 9 PM. The Deacons ushered for both services. It was a real joy to see our Sanctuary filling up for these blessed occasions and we look forward to 2026.

Many thanks to my fellow Team member, Dave Eherts, for always being there,

Respectfully submitted,  
Gail Peck, Chair

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY



The Christian Education Committee had a joyful, active, and faith-filled year supporting our church, children, families, and the wider community. Throughout 2025, CE focused on fellowship, outreach, church school growth, and meaningful events that helped nurture faith across generations.

**January and February** - CE partnered with Hannah Albright to host a family movie night featuring Prince of Egypt. Refreshments were served, popcorn was generously donated, and families enjoyed a fun evening of fellowship. CE families delivered Valentine care packages and handmade cards to homebound members, sharing love and connection.

**March** – This month brought two exciting fellowship events. Brinner Dinner filled Fellowship Hall with a pancake breakfast-for-dinner enjoyed by many. Donations totaled \$220 and the March Madness Event featured food, games, decorations, and basketball-themed fun for all ages. This first-time event was such a success it may become an annual tradition.

**April** – It was a busy month for CE filled with lots of celebrations and events. We kicked off the month with our Spring Craft Fair. The craft fairs always bring so much joy and opportunities for everyone to work together. While Katie Johnson organized the vendors, Bill Jackson worked hard on placing them all throughout the building. Carole Schwartzman, Carol, and Katie McKay worked at the raffle table. Steve McCarthy, Debbie Poole, and Jeff Gammons worked in the kitchen and provided and sold the food. Jan McCarthy helped prepare for the big day. The Craft Fair had 33 vendors, many from our congregation. Between table sales and the raffle table the craft fair raised \$1,803. We also made a \$100 profit selling food and that was given to the Fellowship Committee.

Also in April, we celebrated Palm Sunday. It was a really fun day for the children and their families. The Jackson family provided an amazing Waffle Bar for the extremely large turnout we had that day. The children then had the best time doing an egg hunt in the sanctuary. Thank you to everyone in the congregation who contributed eggs. We celebrated Good Friday at the church with fun activities for children: egg dyeing, coloring, and a spring inspired sand pit! The kids also loved making sock bunnies with Katie McKay. There were also snacks and the movie *Hop*. Over 25 kids participated, some from our church and even some new faces.

**May** - Children honored women attending the service on Mother's Day by distributing carnations with scripture verses. Later, they made special crafts during church school.

**June** - Children's Sunday was followed by a church picnic and BBQ. Members enjoyed food, lawn games, and fellowship. CE organized children's activities and helped create a fun, welcoming environment. On Father's Day, children distributed scripture-themed treats to men attending the service, and participated in Music Sunday.

Vacation Bible School was a tremendous success, welcoming 50 children and 50 volunteers. The theme was *Under the Sea* – “When you go through deep waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:2). The week was filled with Bible stories, music, crafts, games, and creative meals. It included themed decorations throughout the church, community partnerships, a closing performance for families and a \$250 Silver

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Lake camp scholarship awarded to Katie Simmons. VBS continues to be a vital outreach to the community and a cornerstone of the CE ministry.

As summer ended, CE prepared for a new church school year. Classrooms were refreshed, registration materials updated, a new 52-week Christian Education curriculum was introduced, and older students began separate lessons with Dave Eherts and Mike Curley. The church year began with a potluck and scavenger hunt for children. CE helped organize activities and prizes, creating excitement for the year ahead.

**September and October** - As cooler weather approached, CE participated in several community events to connect with local families. During the town Apple Festival, Katie Johnson provided free children's crafts and program information. At Halloween on the Green, Katie collected 200 pumpkins from local farms to hand out to children for pumpkin decorating. Bill and Kellie Jackson created amazing photo cutouts that children and parents enjoyed. We participated again in Halloween's Trunk or Treat on the Green, with the theme of our trunk being Lilo and Stitch, "Ohana means Family". The Johnson family, Carol and Katie McKay and Reverend Marie handed out candy to over 5,000 kids. These events welcomed new families and increased awareness of church programs.

**November** - CE had their annual Holiday Craft Fair which was a major success, with 30+ vendors and \$1,826 raised. Proceeds supported five children through the town Santa Fund (\$500), Church school supplies, and VBS kit. The CE Committee also presented a Live Nativity for the town, following the tree lighting ceremony on the Green, complete with music, lights, and warm hospitality. This beloved tradition continues to share the story of Christ's birth with the wider community.

**December** – This was a fun and busy month for CE. We kicked off December with our Advent Chili Luncheon. Bill and Christine Jackson worked in the kitchen and made sure everything ran smoothly. Many members of the congregation made chili and corn bread, or brought other fixings and desserts. Katie Johnson got ornaments for the children to decorate and put on the Christmas tree in Fellowship Hall. Reverend Marie gave beautiful paper chains for the kids to color for the tree. It was a great turn out and fun was had by all.

The fun continued later in December when church school performed the Christmas Pageant. Katie Simmons did an excellent job narrating and all the kids were absolutely adorable in their costumes. The choir so nicely accompanied them in the hymns throughout the pageant. Bill Jackson did a great job at refurbishing the manger in plywood so it will be strong and sturdy for years to come. Mary Eherts and her team put together a wonderful brunch for the congregation.

The CE team has done a wonderful job this year in raising money for the church. They have been able to cover all of their expenses for the year and were able to contribute \$525 towards the General Fund. Throughout the year, church school and youth group attendance fluctuated but remained vibrant. Splitting classes by age allowed the older students to explore scripture more deeply and younger children to enjoy hands-on Bible stories and crafts. Kindness projects, service activities, and faith-centered learning remained at the heart of CE programming.

As 2025 closes, CE looks forward to continuing its mission of nurturing children's faith, supporting families, serving the church, and reaching the wider community. We are grateful for the many volunteers, teachers, donors, and families who make this ministry possible. God's work is clearly alive in our church through the laughter, learning, and love shared this year.

Respectfully submitted,  
The CE Ministry Team

# OUTREACH MINISTRY



## **Baby Bundles Team**

The Baby Bundles outreach program has been very busy this past year. There have been many new families referred into our program, and many of those referrals came to our monthly distribution. We almost doubled the number of families that have taken advantage of our gently used clothing and baby item exchange. We distributed over 200 packages of diapers to 25 Baby Bundles families.

This year we have been very fortunate to have received many donations of diapers and wipes and additional funds to purchase those items. We thank the Schenzer family for suggesting that donations in Gary's memory be given to help Baby Bundles. We are grateful to our friends at the Congregational Church of Brookfield for a large delivery of diapers and wipes. We were also blessed to receive a large monetary donation from the New Milford Lions Club. These gifts and the many donations from our congregation and friends from this town, have made it possible to provide more diapers to each family. We hope that the extra diapers will help ease the financial difficulties that have increased this year.

In the rush to get our room organized by size, gender and season, we sometimes forget that there is another part to our mission. We are able to talk to the families, and even more important – to listen to them. They all have stories of their child's progress, but like all new moms, they have lots of questions and concerns. We may not be able to answer all of their questions, but other moms are eager to help. We hope they all go home feeling a little less stressed and a little more comforted.

Many of the moms arrive at the distribution with a bag of baby clothes that their child/children have outgrown. They are glad to hear that we can use what they bring and grateful that they are part of a group that shares what they have with others in need. That has been a guiding principle of the Baby Bundles program since it was started. It still works now, and we are pleased that this program is still sharing and caring over 30 years after it was founded.

We appreciate all the assistance we get from this congregation and this town. Our team consists of a dedicated group of volunteers including Gail Peck, Katie Elmore, Carol McKay, Katie McKay, Susan Sennello, Nicole Henderson, Sharon Schuster, Katie Johnson, Kathy Elmore, Carole Schwartzman and Jan McCarthy.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jan McCarthy, Chair



## Social Concerns and Missions Team

"So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up."  
Galatians 6:9

In 2025, Social Concerns and Missions had another busy year. We are blessed with a caring and responsive congregation! Here are the highlights of a year of caring:

**January** - Working with New Milford Refugee Resettlement, we found employment for the father and the oldest daughter of our latest family from Afghanistan. We also found employment for both the mother and the father of our family from Venezuela, and got their 5-year-old enrolled in school.

**February** - We had to delay, and then eventually cancel, our annual "Souper Bowl of Caring" due to two weeks of icy weather. However, with the giving nature of this congregation, we still received a nice collection of food items and cash donations for the town Food Pantry. Several changes were implemented in February by the U.S. Government regarding immigration, and we sent out an overview of terms and definitions to help people filter out the noise of misused words in the media. We also hosted the homeless during the month, as part of the coalition that provides a safe, warm space during the coldest weather.

**March** - Dan Martin attended and presented at the SNEUCC Super Saturday conference. This is a conference for the Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island UCC churches. The focus of the workshop was to enable churches to "get on the same page" in their approach to handling all of the many immigration issues that had arisen in the last 60 days. The key message was that we are commanded in scripture to welcome the stranger, and even though there may be different opinions and different politics, we can do our work as a "united" church, without requiring us to be a "uniform" church.

**April** - We had a successful One Great Hour of Sharing collection, and raised \$665. Well done FCCNM! Our refugee work expanded, and we began helping our 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> family at the same time.

**May** - We had another remarkable Mother's Day program. Our generous congregation raised \$2,187 for our Steeple Repair project, while recognizing loved ones in honor or in memory.

**June** - Our Father's Day program raised \$1,085 for our new Security System, while recognizing loved ones in honor or in memory. The five ministries generously agreed in a Church Council meeting to cover the balance of the system cost by reducing their budgets.

**July and August** - We focused on assisting our refugee families. The key work was helping the father of our newest family to find second shift work that would enable him to help with the childcare once the family's twins arrived in September. We brought the mother to our Baby Bundles room, thanks to Jan McCarthy, and we were able to supply her with needed baby items, including two bassinets. It is interesting/exciting/fulfilling to see the ministry that Baby Bundles provides!

*(continued)*

**September** - We had another very successful "Walk a Mile", with a great group of volunteers, and we also raised \$877 in cash donations for the town Food Bank. New Milford Social Services was very appreciative of our work, and said they know they can always count on us. The refugee family twin boys were born on September 8<sup>th</sup>.

**October** - Our wonderfully responsive and caring congregation donated several months' worth of formula and other baby items for our refugee family twins.

**November** - Our church donated and volunteered for the St. John's Coat Drive. Our partnership with them is a blessing to both churches.

First Congregational Church is filled with members with many passions. Our hope in 2026 is to gain new members to share our work in Social Concerns, and through the strategic plan, help our church focus on a few core passions that will produce the most fruit for harvest.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dan Martin, Chair



### **The A.Russell Ayre Scholarship Team**

Team members are Joan Vill, Steve Hendricks, Carol McKay, Sandy Gammons, and Katie McKay.

Fourteen amazing high school seniors were selected as the 2025 recipients of A. Russell Ayre scholarships. They were: Ahmed Afifi, Emilia Alvarez, Saverio Amelio, Kyra Brown, Chelsea Davis, Marinello Grasso, Elisabeth Joudy, Taylor Lachance, David Matos, Madison McKelvey, Ryan Strait, and Connor Wandeloski. In honor of Reverend Michael Moran, Dylan Henderson and Daphne Metz received special recognition for their service to the church and community. This group of students demonstrated academic excellence, hard work and determination, and concern for others through their community service. The recipients were recognized on Baccalaureate Sunday held on June 8<sup>th</sup> this year.

The annual tag sale to raise funds was held on Saturday, July 19<sup>th</sup> during the Artisan Festival held on the Green. We raised \$1500 for the scholarship fund thanks to the generous donations from our church family and friends. Each year we are blessed with many helping hands and we are truly thankful for all the help we receive!

2025 Financials:      Opening Balance (1/1/2025): \$2,948.51  
                                 Deposits: \$13,948.00  
                                 Checks issued to students: \$13,900.00  
                                 Ending Balance (12/31/2025): \$2,996.51

Respectfully submitted,  
Joan Vill, Chair  
Steve Hendricks, Treasurer



# GROWTH AND CONGREGATIONAL CARE MINISTRY



## Called to Care Team

So many people pledge their time through our Gifts of Caring. It does indeed take a village. This year announcements asking for people to join the Called to Care ministry were made on Sundays from Nov. 9 – Nov. 23. On Sunday, Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>, our volunteers were recognized during worship. Thankfully, whenever a need arises there is always someone willing to step up and help.

- **Intensive Prayer Unit (IPU)** - Jan McCarthy coordinates the IPU team. This year, Rev. Marie, Jan, and I are planning to make some needed changes to make the process of requesting prayers more comprehensive, allowing for more follow up by the pastor. Jan keeps the prayer list current and also sends out the prayer requests on Sunday afternoons.
- **Meal Chain** – There were no requests this year for meals. Just having a list and knowing there are people ready and willing to provide a meal is a blessing and continue to be an important part of Called to Care.
- **Condolence Reception Team** – This year we remembered one of our longtime members, Barb Ahern, with a special reception following the worship service on Sunday, June 22. On Tuesday, June 24, we hosted a reception for Gary Schenzer in the Taylor Room, following his memorial service. Once again, a number of bakers provided delicious goodies for the Transgender Day of Remembrance Service. This is a very meaningful service for members of the LGBTQ community and their guests. They are very appreciative of the service, the support, and the time of fellowship after the service.
- **Parish Drivers** – This year there were a couple of requests for rides to special events.
- **Parish Visitors** – Working in coordination with Rev. Marie has been made a huge difference in keeping updated on those who may need a phone call, visit, meal, or ride. I have been in contact with people who can't get to church with visits, or by phone, or email. Our church once again put together Christmas bags for nursing home residents, which included four of our members at Candlewood Valley. I visited five nursing home residents with small Christmas gifts. Katie Johnson and her children made visits to two longtime homebound members.
- **Correspondents** – Easter and Christmas cards were sent to about 25 homebound members and those we haven't seen in church for a while. Several requests went out to the group for get well cards, sympathy cards and special birthday cards.

I am blessed to be able to work with this group of compassionate and caring people. Please know that if anyone is in need of a meal, a ride, a cheery note, a visit, or a phone call there are people in our congregation who are more than willing to meet the need with kindness, generosity, and love.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Rev. Dr. Pat Nicholas



## Lunch and Learn

Lunch and Learn happens the first Wednesday of every month, with a break during the summer months. Attendance is open, not only to any church member, but to anyone in the community. Past presentations have ranged from a brief history of the church and our past building issues, to a talk about the Pratt Center, to a representative from the police department talking about "elder scams". The only requirement is that attendees give up their "regular" lunch and come to the Taylor Room around noon to listen to the speaker, followed by a potluck luncheon. Bringing a dish to share is optional – just come. You will be welcomed!

Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Millard and Jeff Gammons



## Chapel Stitchers

In 2025 the Chapel Stitchers continued to donate prayer shawls to those in need for healing -and for joys as well. A long time church member requested a baby sweater set for a new grandchild; the stitchers met this need.

**January** - we mapped out plans for the spring. Including making knitted bunnies to give to the children at Easter time.

**April** - we participated in the CE sponsored Craft Fair.

**September** - we were on the Green with two booths during the town's Annual Apple Festival. We shared a booth with the quilting group, and the second booth was manned by the "Pie Peeps". This was a very successful day for community outreach - our church shone brightly! All proceeds (\$400+) were again donated to the general fundraising line of the budget.

**October** - we welcomed Rev. Marie to our meeting. Her encouragement and kind words were a boost to our small group.

**November** – we again participated in the CE Team sponsored craft fair. All proceeds from that went to the general fundraising line of the budget. A member of the Chapel Stitchers attended the annual prayer shawl ministry gathering in Hartford on November 2nd. The focus of the day was a collaboration of ideas. She was able to share what our ministry brings to the congregation.

Although our membership has been declining, the ladies that are stitching meet the needs for shawls and baby blankets. As we look forward to the coming year, we hope to find ways our ministry can serve our church and community. We thank all who make this ministry possible.

Respectfully submitted,  
Leslie Schlemmer



## **Bible Study**

The Women of the Bible study group meets on Mondays at 1pm in the Chapel. In 2025 the group consistently had between 8-12 attendees. Our focus has been different women and their stories in the bible, interspersed with Christian based literature as well. Leslie Schlemmer facilitates the group with Jan McCarthy opening and closing the meeting space. Peggy King has been a source of theological leadership guiding us in the historical text behind the stories. Our group has come together in faith and found value in our fellowship.

Respectfully submitted,  
Leslie Schlemmer



## **Fellowship Team**

We are pleased to say that attendance at Fellowship time after church has significantly increased this past year. Several tables have been filled with church members eager to catch up with friends and enjoy a cup of coffee and sweet treat. Thanks go to consistent coffee makers Sandy and Jeff Gammons, Anne Olson and Jan McCarthy, Joan and Jeff Vill and newer members, Fran and Steve Kozusko. Many guest bakers have shared their culinary skills on most Sundays. Thank you to all! The signup board is always available and everyone is invited to volunteer to make coffee or provide baked goods. We can always use your help!

Coffee making instructions are posted inside the supply door and help will be provided if requested. The team keeps track and purchases coffee and tea supplies as well as paper goods and miscellaneous supplies for church functions. We greatly appreciate those who support our efforts with monetary donations.

The Fellowship Team supports several church functions throughout the year. This includes the annual All-Church Picnic held on the Green in June, the Chili Advent Luncheon, the Christmas Pageant Brunch, and the Souper Bowl Sunday in February. We are pleased to take part in these events with help from many committed members of the congregation and will continue to do our part in encouraging fellowship and helping the church to grow.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandra Gammons and Mary Eherts, Co-Chairs



## **Pie Peeps**

2025 was a great year for the church pie makers. Our group grew to 24 volunteers. We had a group of Daytime Peeps as well as a group of Nighttime Peeps so our church kitchen was a busy place to be. We started peeling apples in late July and were still peeling apples in October. All together, we made 68 apple pies.

Most of the pies we made were baked and sold at the Fall Apple Festival on the Green on September 27th. The pies were baked on the Friday, and sliced and packaged on Saturday morning. The church's booth on the Green was busy selling pies and slices until we ran out around 1:30 in the afternoon. Many people came looking for our pies and some put in orders for more pies to pick up in October. We were so blessed with all the help we had before and at the Apple Festival. We shared our booth on the Green with the Chapel Stitchers, Chapel Quilters, and the CE Team. What a great way to share our talents with all the visitors!

We started making more pies in early October and selling them frozen so that they could be baked and enjoyed at the upcoming holiday feasts. It was a very fun and successful pie season. The \$700 profit from our pie sales goes to various church needs. We look forward to another fun year of gathering together and making pies in 2026.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jan McCarthy



## **Men's Breakfast**

Our breakfast group did not meet as often in 2025 as past years. It was just one of those years where the scheduling proved to be difficult. However, the six times we did get together, it was great! We all really enjoy the fellowship, and cooking for each other. We had a wide variety of themes this year, for example:

- Picasso's favorite breakfast
- Irish breakfast
- Colonial Connecticut breakfast
- Elvis Christmas breakfast (featuring Elvis Christmas music and his favorite breakfast foods)

This year we had a few new regular attendees join us, which was fantastic! This is a great way to get to know each other, and if you have not attended - we hope you join us on the third Saturday of each month in Fellowship Hall and give it a try!

Respectfully submitted,  
Dan Martin



## **Women's Book Club**

The Women's Ministry has continued to meet most months for our book club discussions. We have great participation and involvement. Thanks to all who continue to attend and support our meetings. In the coming year, we plan to continue meeting monthly for book club, but will move our meetings to the New Milford Public Library. We hope to also add in some fellowship and service events.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nicole Henderson



## **Chapel Quilters**

This was another busy year for those who love to sew and create beautiful things from our large supply of fabric. We started the year off by designing and making a table runner with a musical theme as a thank you gift for Diane Taylor. Our next project was a joint effort to make pillowcases for the local nursing homes. This was a community service project the Garden Club started and asked us to help out with our many talented sewers and our beautiful sewing room. We had so much fun picking the bright colors and stitching these up. Together we made 58 colorful pillowcases to help bring cheer to the residents.

Celebrating our country's 250th birthday was the theme for the "Airing of the Quilts" in May. Our sanctuary was used to display many beautiful quilts and hand sewn decorations – both old and new. We assisted in hosting the event in our church and some of our quilters had their beautiful work displayed.

We participated in four craft events this year – the two Church Craft Fairs in our Parish House and two events on the Town Green. We had a wonderful time sharing our many stitched items and meeting with friends and neighbors. This was a great way to showcase our church and to share our talents. The funds we took in will go towards helping the church in various ways and in replenishing the craft items we use. We plan to continue learning new techniques and making new items to share and sell. We welcome those who would like to learn to sew or quilt.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jan McCarthy



# CHURCH MANAGEMENT MINISTRY



## Note from the Finance Team Chair

### **Current Openings in Church Management Ministry**

We have three positions we are interested in filling:

- **Stewardship Team:** Responsibilities include planning and conducting the stewardship campaign of the church, and coordinatin overall fundraising throughout the year.
- **Personnel Team:** Responsibilities include ensuring that the staff is well matched to changing needs, adherence to job descriptions and church policies, and performance management of certain staff positions.
- **Audit Team:** Responsibilities include oversight of the accounting records of the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary.

If you are able to help in any of these important positions, please contact me.

Susan Chapin, Chair



## Stewardship and Fundraising Team

Our 2026 pledge campaign carried the theme **Imagine Together**, which was the same theme as our successful 2025 campaign. The campaign ran from October through November. Mailing information to our members, bulletin announcements, Constant Contact messages, and incorporation into several Sunday services once again resonated with the congregation.

Our 2026 **Imagine Together** campaign resulted in pledges of \$147,255, which was 5.1% higher than in 2025.

On behalf of the Stewardship Team, thank you to our generous congregation and donors. First Congregational Church of New Milford enjoys incredible loyalty and support from so many.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dan Martin

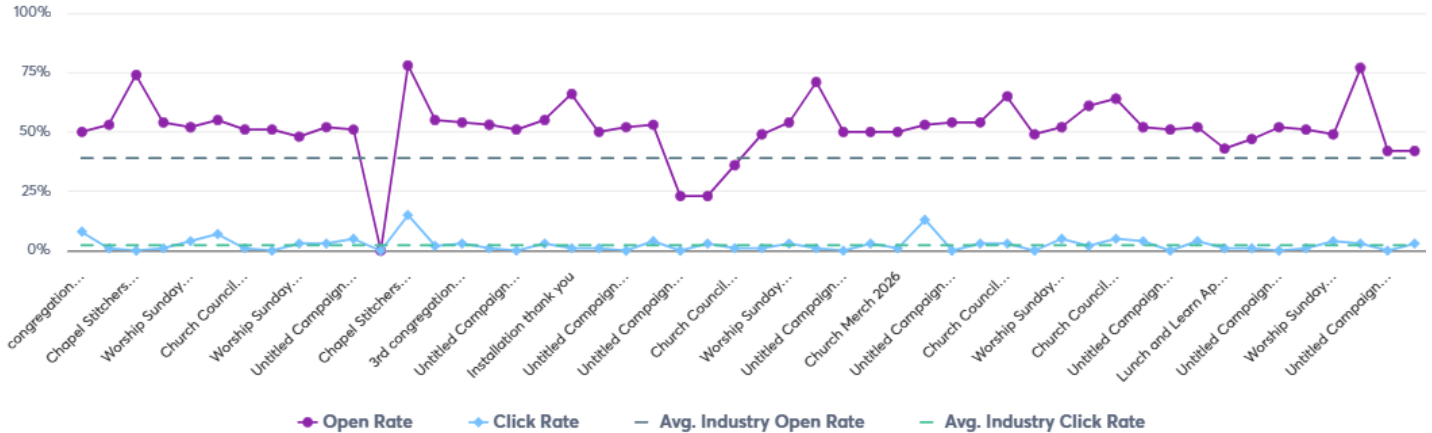


**Communications Team**

Throughout 2025, our team diligently worked to keep the congregation and the public informed about our church and its activities. Our primary means of communication are Facebook, the Sunday Bulletin, and Constant Contact. In 2026 we plan to begin using Instagram as well.

**Constant Contact:**

A total of 53,322 emails were sent, representing an increase of 3,834 compared to the previous 12 months. Of these, 43,840 emails were successfully delivered, which is an increase of 2,436 from the previous year. We achieved a 52% open rate, which is a decrease of 2% from last year. Among the opened emails, 36% were accessed via mobile devices, while 64% were opened on desktop computers. This graph illustrates the performance of our campaigns during this time period:



**Facebook:**

Our post reach was 124,703. We started the year with 654 followers and ended with 711 followers. The best performing post was a Constant Contact update featuring a picture of the church covered in snow.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sheri Gunn, Chair



**Information Technology Team**

Members are Dave Elmore and Pam Cafiero. The purpose of the team is to support the church staff and volunteers with information technology advice and equipment.

The team assisted with support of PowerChurch software which was updated to the latest version. We also helped with the new office copier and Instant Church Directory online service, assisted with the transfer of data to QuickBooks online, and set up of a new computer. The IT team manages the church website, Microsoft 365 and supports the telephone system. Team members provided support to Carole Zeigler and Reverend Marie Bacchiocchi when they joined the church staff.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Elmore, Chair



## **Buildings and Grounds Team**

During 2025 there were multiple maintenance and repair (M&R) projects, along with several capital and infrastructure accomplishments. Those activities were listed and briefly explained in the monthly reports of the committee. Following are several noteworthy activities.

- Eagle Electric installed two 20-amp circuits from the Parish House boiler room to the Youth Room kitchen. During the 2024 fall craft fair the existing single 15-amp circuit failed several times to handle the load, and further investigation found that on other occupancy dates and times the same thing had happened. The new circuits alleviated all existing problems.
- Eagle Electric also replaced the old breaker box in the Parish House boiler room which brings us very close to completing recommendations from our insurance company. The last recommended change will be the breaker box at the top of the stairs to the Parish House basement.
- A new exterior door to the Taylor Room was installed to replace the rusted out existing one that could no longer hold a coat of paint. Only the door was replaced to minimize cost, as the frame and surrounding woodwork were in adequate shape. The replacement project took the majority of one work day due to the complexity of installing a heavy, 4-hinge, fireproof door.
- The cleaning and partial remediation of the church steeple began on Tuesday, May 13, 2025 and continued on Wednesday with a substantial amount of pigeon droppings being removed and discarded in an on-site project dumpster. An 86 foot aerial lift was used to screen off some of the openings in the steeple that were allowing the pigeons to freely enter and leave at will. The remainder of the screening was scheduled for a later date due to the lift's inability to stabilize on the pitch of our north and south driveways.
- Our cellular renter in the steeple, T- Mobile, graciously reimbursed us for the entire amount of the steeple cleaning.
- The perplexing leak of rain water in the southwest corner of Fellowship Hall was not coming from a plugged drain in the church's south moat or from any external drainage or foundation problems. It was migrating its way in from runoff through the steel double doors and then through a crack in the cement wall where it meets the floor. That was sealed and should take care of a problem that was misdiagnosed for several years.
- Church Administrator Carole Zeigler was very successful in booking new events in our Parish House and Taylor Room, as well as with negotiating annual lease extensions with existing renters.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Wittmann, Chair



## Finance Team

### 2025 Operating Budget

<b>Income &amp; Expense</b>	<b>2025 Approved</b>	<b>2025 Actual</b>
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
Pledge & Collection Income	\$164,800	\$175,887
Use of Building	\$56,600	\$62,087
Miscellaneous Income	\$100	\$0
Fundraisers	\$3,585	\$1,705
CE Fundraisers	\$2,500	\$4,532
Vacation Bible School	\$1,400	\$1,950
Investment Fund	\$4,605	\$4,605
Endowment Fund	\$40,474	\$40,474
S. J. Johnson Fund	\$5,236	\$5,236
Parsonage Fund	\$17,510	\$17,510
Bostwick Fund	\$7,309	\$7,309
Benevolence Fund	\$650	\$0
Platt Music Fund	\$1,750	\$0
Scholarship Fund	\$0	\$12,000
Outreach Donations	\$3,000	\$4,412
Scholarship Donations	\$0	\$1,968
Steeple Donations	\$0	\$34,004
Emergency Alert System Donations	\$0	\$1,085
Book of Remembrance Donations	\$0	\$2,066
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$309,519</b>	<b>\$376,831</b>

(continued)

<b>Income &amp; Expense</b>	<b>2025 Approved</b>	<b>2025 Actual</b>
<b><u>Expense</u></b>		
<b>Worship Ministry</b>		
Christian Ministry/Pastor	\$121,220	\$92,492
Music Ministry	\$29,341	\$28,791
Audio/Visual	\$2,640	\$1,140
<b>Christian Education Ministry</b>		
Christian Education	\$19,252	\$19,847
Vacation Bible School	\$2,100	\$2,725
<b>Growth &amp; Care Ministry</b>	\$1,090	\$752
<b>Outreach Ministry</b>		
Food Bank	\$2,000	\$1,522
OGHS	\$0	\$690
Baby Bundles	\$0	\$1,591
Scholarships	\$0	\$13,900
Miscellaneous	\$617	\$28
<b>Church Management Ministry</b>		
Office Expense & Salaries	\$43,515	\$46,083
Insurance	\$32,800	\$37,268
Maintenance & Repairs	\$43,589	\$55,219
Utilities	\$49,150	\$53,758
Communications	\$613	\$507
Information Technology	\$3,378	\$999
Steeple Expenses	\$0	\$20,218
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$352,306</b>	<b>\$377,530</b>
<b>Net Income Deficit/Surplus</b>	<b>-\$42,787</b>	<b>-\$699</b>

## 2025 and 2026 Budget Comparison

Income & Expense	2025 Actual	2026 Approved
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
Pledge & Collection Income	\$175,887	\$167,300
Use of Building	\$62,087	\$56,500
Miscellaneous Income	\$0	\$100
Fundraisers	\$1,705	\$2,500
CE Fundraisers	\$4,532	\$3,000
Vacation Bible School	\$1,950	\$1,940
Investment Fund	\$4,605	\$5,364
Endowment Fund	\$40,474	\$43,043
S. J. Johnson Fund	\$5,236	\$5,621
Parsonage Fund	\$17,510	\$20,010
Bostwick Fund	\$7,309	\$9,234
Benevolence Fund	\$0	\$650
Platt Music Fund	\$0	\$0
Scholarship Fund	\$12,000	\$0
Outreach Donations	\$4,412	\$3,000
Scholarship Donations	\$1,968	\$0
Steeple Donations	\$34,004	\$0
Emergency Alert System Donations	\$1,085	\$0
Book of Remembrance Donations	\$2,066	\$0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$376,831</b>	<b>\$318,262</b>

(continued)

<b>Income &amp; Expense</b>	<b>2025 Actual</b>	<b>2026 Approved</b>
<b><u>Expense</u></b>		
<b>Worship Ministry</b>		
Christian Ministry/Pastor	\$92,492	\$110,766
Music Ministry	\$28,791	\$29,441
Audio/Visual	\$1,140	\$1,640
<b>Christian Education Ministry</b>		
Christian Education	\$19,847	\$20,233
Vacation Bible School	\$2,725	\$2,100
<b>Growth &amp; Care Ministry</b>	\$752	\$1,000
<b>Outreach Ministry</b>		
Food Bank	\$1,522	\$3,000
OGHS	\$690	\$0
Baby Bundles	\$1,591	\$0
Scholarships	\$13,900	\$0
Miscellaneous	\$28	\$650
<b>Church Management Ministry</b>		
Office Expense & Salaries	\$46,083	\$49,639
Insurance	\$37,268	\$39,860
Maintenance & Repairs	\$55,219	\$33,912
Utilities	\$53,758	\$59,191
Communications	\$507	\$620
Information Technology	\$999	\$1,080
Steeple Expenses	\$20,218	\$0
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$377,530</b>	<b>\$353,132</b>
<b>Net Income Deficit/Surplus</b>	<b>-\$699</b>	<b>-\$34,870</b>

For the first time, the Finance Team tracked all income and expenses this year, including money for the Book of Remembrance and Scholarships. We ended the year with a \$699 deficit, which was significantly smaller than anticipated.

Thank you very much to everyone who supported our church this year. The important work that we accomplish here would not be possible without your generosity.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Chapin, Chair



## **Investment Team**

Team Membership: Dave Elmore, Susan Chapin, Jon Case, Ken Papp.

The team is charged with managing the invested funds of the church. The funds under management are Endowment, Investment, SJ Johnson, Maintenance, and Scholarship. All funds except the Investment Fund are restricted to specific purposes. All income and principal in the Investment and Maintenance Funds can be used by the church by a vote of the church body. In addition, the Investment Team manages investments for the Book of Remembrance, Parsonage Fund, the Charlotte Bostwick bequest, and Scholarship.

We use Vanguard funds to moderate risk while also enabling the funds to grow. "Total return spending", which factors in growth and income over time, is used to determine how much is available to the church each year to support the General Fund. The church can take a percentage of the return annually to finance operations. The 2025 contribution was 4.5% of the average return over the prior 20 quarters. The remaining growth and income is added to principal to offset the effects of inflation and help the fund grow.

The funds grew slowly in the first quarter but declined in April in line with the stock market. The remainder of the year brought steady increases.

Our monetary policies were changed in 2024, which led to the consolidation of bank accounts held by church teams into one of the primary church accounts, in order to simplify fiscal management. In January and February funds held by the Music and the Flower Teams were transferred to Vanguard accounts. \$4,879 from Music was transferred to the Investment Fund. The Flower Fund balance of \$3,128 was transferred to the Endowment Fund.

The church made withdrawals from the Endowment, Investment and SJ Johnson Funds to support the General Fund, staying within the budgeted amounts for 2025 which are shown below. In April, \$2,700 was withdrawn from the Maintenance Fund for a new Taylor Room door. In October, the church received \$10,000 from T-Mobile to help cover the cost of steeple cleanup.

### **2025 WITHDRAWALS**

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Budgeted Amounts</b>
Endowment	\$40,474
Investment Fund	\$44,605
Parsonage Fund	\$17,510
SJ Johnson Fund	\$5,236
Bostwick Bequest	\$7,309

*(continued)*

## 2025 Balances of Invested Funds

Account	Fund	2024 Year End	2025 Year End	Budgeted Withdrawals	2025 Returns (growth + income)
Endowment Group					\$159,811
Endowment	VWENX	\$979,567	\$1,090,666	\$40,474	
Endowment	VPCCX	Transfer from VWENX	\$6,139		
Endowment	VPMCX	Transfer from VWENX	\$6,154		
Investment Group					\$59,017
Investment	VWENX	\$113,383	\$125,481	\$44,605	
Parsonage	VDIGX	\$450,432	\$469,383	\$17,510	
Clark Benevolence	VWINX	\$10,254	N/A		
Clark Benevolence	VPCCX	Transfer from VWINX	\$6,527		
Clark Benevolence	VPCMXX	Transfer from VWINX	\$6,543		
Book of Remembrance	VMRXX	\$22,927	\$25,964		
SJ Johnson Group					\$37,333
SJ Johnson Fund	VWENX	\$127,147	\$142,441	\$5,236	
Bostwick Bequest	VDIGX	\$207,105	\$216,598	\$7,309	
Maintenance Fund	VDIGX	\$14,914	\$22,577		\$557
Flower Team		\$3,126	\$0		
Scholarship	VWENX	\$159,774	\$172,411		\$24,638
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$2,085,502</b>	<b>\$2,290,886</b>	<b>\$115,134</b>	<b>\$281,356</b>

Respectfully submitted,  
David Elmore, Chair



## Treasurer

### Account Balances as of December 31, 2025

#### ASSETS

##### Current Assets

###### Bank Accounts

Scholarship	\$ 2,996.51
Christian Education	\$ 2,025.63
Book of Remembrance	\$ 3,771.40
Building Fund	\$ 228.15
General Fund	\$16,093.00
Clark Fund	\$ 6,486.25
PayPal	\$ 242.56
Venmo	\$ 975.00

**Total Bank Accounts** **\$32,818.50**

##### Other Assets

###### Vanguard Accounts

Bequests Account	
Bostwick Fund	\$216,598.38
S.J.Johnson Fund	\$142,441.41

**Total for Bequests Account** **\$359,039.79**

Endowment Fund \$1,102,959.63

Investment Account	
Benevolence Fund	\$13,070.21
Book of Rememb. Fund	\$25,964.09
Investment Fund	\$125,481.07
Parsonage Fund	\$469,382.78

**Total for Investment Account** **\$633,898.15**

Maintenance Account	
Maintenance Fund	\$8,336.34
Steeple Fund	\$14,240.81

**Total for Maintenance Account** **\$22,577.15**

Scholarship Fund \$172,411.20

**Total Vanguard Accounts** **\$2,290,885.92**

**Total Other Assets** **\$2,290,885.92**

**Total Assets** **\$2,323,704.42**

#### Outstanding Liabilities as of December 31, 2025

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Past Due</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Aquarion Water Company	67.27	0.00	67.27
Aquarion Water Company	61.53	0.00	61.53
W.B. Mason Co., Inc.	0.00	25.48	25.48
Marandola Fuel Service	1,867.56	3,492.98	5,360.54
J&D Maintenance, LLC	4,970.00	0.00	4,970.00
<b>_TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 6,966.36</b>	<b>\$3,518.46</b>	<b>\$10,484.82</b>

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Chapin, Finance Chair

## Recording Secretary

### **2025 Annual Meeting Minutes Sunday, March 9, 2025**

**Welcome** – Dan Martin, Council Chair, welcomed everyone to the 2025 Annual Meeting at 11:08 am.

**Opening Prayer** – Reverend Dave Buchan offered an uplifting prayer for the meeting.

**Summary of 2024 Fall Meeting Minutes** – Recording Secretary Joan Vill summarized the 2024 Fall Meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was presented.

**Investment Update** – Dave Elmore thanked his fellow committee members Susan Chapin, Ken Papp, and Jon Case, before presenting a summary of the Investment funds for 2024. The 2024 contribution towards operating expenses was 4.5% or ~\$71k. Since investing with Vanguard, the funds have had ~9.2% return.

Dave noted a correction to the Annual Report – No money was drawn from the Parsonage fund. Money was drawn from the Investment fund.

Dan Martin noted the church's money is well-managed and thanked the Investment team.

**Stewardship Update** – Mike Curley reported there are 51 pledges received for 2024 representing \$141,000, as compared to 2023 pledges of \$130,000. As of March, the church had received \$34,000 in non-pledge collections.

**Ad Hoc Pastoral Search Team Update** – Corey Johnson provided an update on all the great work the team has been doing.

- Church Profile up on UCC site on February 7th.
- Four candidates received in the past month.
- The team is working on mock interviews with the UCC to prepare.
- Corey has created a rating sheet aligned with the criteria the congregation deemed as important in the Pastoral Survey to eliminate personal opinion and quantify interview results.
- The team will still vote on candidates.

Corey was thanked for his leadership.

**Presentation of the 2024 Annual Report** – Dan Martin thanked Janet Wittmann for compiling the report that is a “work of art”. Susan Chapin detailed corrections from the Investment team that need to be made to pages 35 – 38. A motion was raised by Ruth Almond and seconded by Peggy King to approve the Annual Report with the noted correction.

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** – An Ad Hoc Steeple Committee has been formed consisting of Dan Martin, John Wittmann, Susan Chapin, Pam Cafiero, and Jeff Gammons. They are planning their first meeting next week. John Wittmann used the mini-church steeple to illustrate the issues with the steeple. The tower

*(continued)*

roof and belfry section are in bad shape and gaps in the woodwork are allowing birds to enter through the lantern. \$30,000 is needed to remediate the bird access/damage prior to being able to assess full lantern and spire wood condition. Remediation will be scheduled with T-Mobie to avoid total tower shutdown and negative impact to revenue.

**Adjourn** – Motion to adjourn by Barbara McGiver, seconded by Barbara Shimmel at 11:45 am.

## **2025 Spring Meeting Minutes Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Welcome** – Leslie Schlemmer, on behalf of Council Chair Dan Martin, welcomed everyone to the 2025 Spring Meeting at 10:55 am.

**Opening Prayer** – Reverend Dave Buchan offered a prayer thanking all the people who have served and will serve the church.

**Summary of 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes** – Recording Secretary Joan Vill summarized the 2025 Annual Meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was presented by Dave Elmore, seconded by John Wittmann and passed by a majority vote.

**Presentation and Approval Vote of 2025-26 Ministry and Committee Members** Leslie noted that our church is able to exist because of our terrific volunteers. There are still many opportunities to help. The motion to approve the slate of volunteers was raised by Sheri Gunn, seconded by Barbara Shimmel, and was approved.

### **Ad Hoc Update – Steeple Repair**

John Wittmann described the issue with the steeple.

- Lower box - wood falling off which will require repair. Pigeon droppings have been cleaned up. Engineering firm to enter area to better assess repair needs.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> box - roof and wood look to be in poor condition; need bucket truck with 150 ft reach to assess. Planned for mid-June.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> box – appears to be in good shape
- Spire – requires bucket for painting and to remove pigeon droppings

### **Ad Hoc Update – Pastoral Search**

Bonnie Westerberg noted the Committee is meeting regularly after church. Seven resumes have been received to date. Backgrounds of candidates seem similar. The interview process has begun (3 to date).

Question raised whether candidates are currently working and whether Committee will be able to attend services. Answer: Committee is using Facebook to watch live services.

**Adjourn** – Motion to adjourn by Ruth Almond, seconded by Carol Staib, at 11:09 am.

*(continued)*

**2025 Fall Meeting Minutes**  
**Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025**

**Welcome** – Dan Martin, Council Chair, welcomed everyone to the 2025 Fall Meeting at 10:57 am thanking everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting.

**Opening Prayer** – Reverend Marie Bacchiocchi asked God to be with us as we do his work.

**Summary of 2025 Spring Meeting Minutes** – Recording Secretary Joan Vill summarized the 2025 Spring Meeting minutes noting a correction would be made to remove content inadvertently left in from using the annual meeting minutes as a template. A motion to approve the minutes with the planned edits was raised by Caitlin Henderson, seconded by Debbie Poole, and passed by a majority vote.

**Financial Update**

**-Budget as of November 1 (Susan Chapin)** Currently the expenses are within \$500 of the planned budget with the overage in Church Management offset by the underage in the Worship Ministry. Ross Detwiler asked for clarification and Susan noted that we do not expect to take more money from Investments than planned.

**-Investments (Dave Elmore)** He noted that over time our investments have yielded approximately 10% growth, with the last 12 months yielding 13.2% growth. The 2026 stock market outlook is uncertain; the Investment Committee is using Total Return Spending approach to manage the risk. The Parsonage Fund is also managed by Investments; initially it looked like this fund would last for about ten years. The current outlook is beyond that.

**-Stewardship Update (Susan Chapin)** 2025 to Date – majority of income from planned 2025 pledges has been collected. Hopefully unplanned giving remains healthy for the remainder of 2025 and keeps pace with expenses. 2026 Planned Giving – Pledges to date are behind 2025 in both quantity (31) and dollars pledged (\$99,000).

**-Presentation of 2026 Budget (Susan Chapin)** Dan Martin reminded the congregation that the money in our budget not only goes to the things we see like our physical space and staff, but our money also goes to things we may not see, but God sees. Susan noted that there is a detailed line-item budget that is available to anyone who is interested in seeing it. She explained that the budget vote reflects approving the top-level ministry expenses; this allows each ministry to move money within the line items in their budget without requiring a congregation vote to do so.

The motion to approve the 2026 budget was raised by Barbara Shimmel, seconded by Leslie Schlemmer, and passed by a majority vote.

**Ad Hoc Steeple Committee Update** - No change to status; progress has been slow as many New England churches are utilizing the same resources required for us to move forward.

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** – None

**Adjourn** – Motion to adjourn by Ruth Almond, seconded by Jeff Gammons, at 11:45 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joan Vill



## Clerk

### Baptisms

Ellis Powers Zeluski, son of Danielle Gosselin Zeluski & Peter Michael Zeluski  
March 23, 2025 by Rev. Dave Buchan

Theodore James Henderson, son of Caitlyn Sarah Henderson & Eric Anthony Henderson  
March 30, 2025 by Rev. Dave Buchan

### Confirmands

None in 2025

### New Members

Fran and Steve Kozusko  
Caitlyn Sarah Henderson  
Rev. Marie Bacchiocchi

### Deceased Members:

Glenys Stack February 25, 2025  
Barbara Ahern June 6, 2025  
Gary Schenzer June 14, 2025  
Bette Lou Emmons December 30, 2025

### Members on the Roll as of December 31, 2025

Active: 191      Associate: 105      Total: 296

Respectfully submitted,  
Janet Wittmann



## PHOTO GALLERY



Pie Peeps at the Apple Festival on the Green



Crocheted items by the Chapel Stitches at the Apple Festival



Pie Peeps at work



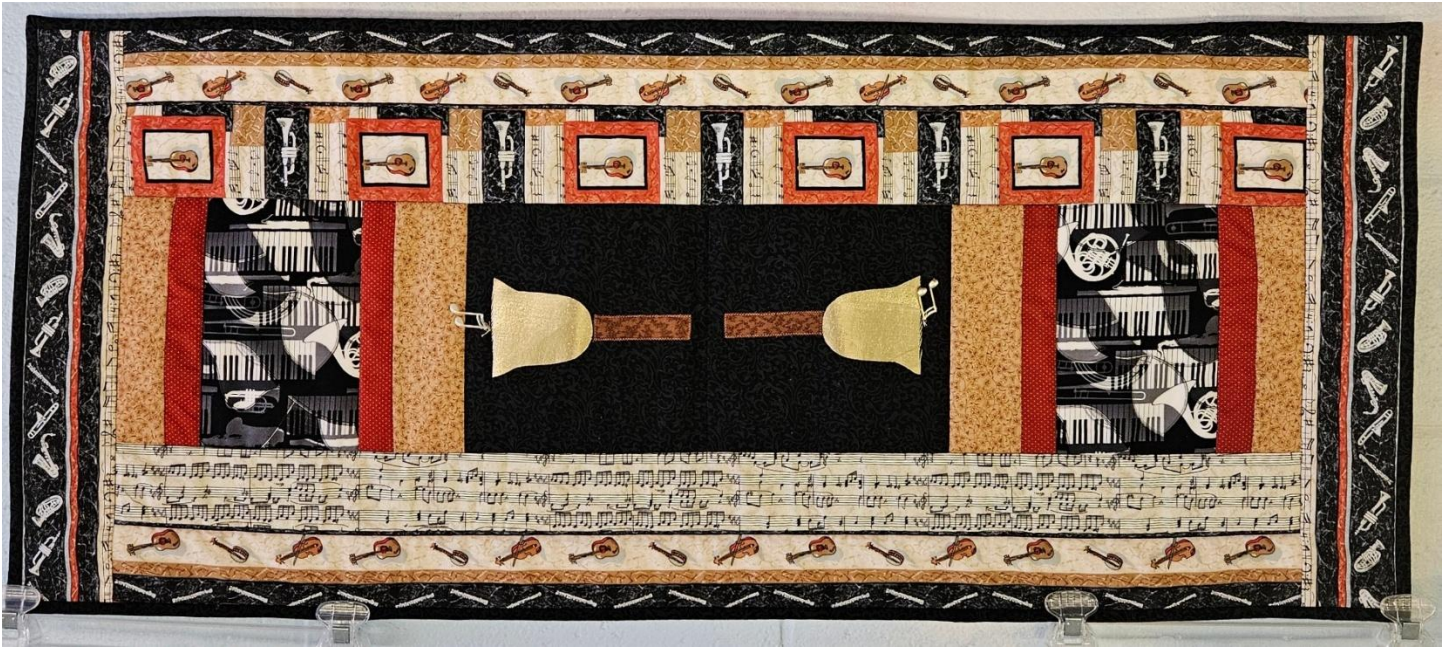
Baby Bundles



Airing of the Quilts



Chapel Quilters sewing project with the Garden Club



Gift to Diane Taylor made by the Chapel Quilters



Electrical Repair



Steeple Repair



Christmas Pageant



Vacation Bible School



Live Nativity



**Members' Covenant:** *"We confess our faith in God, our heavenly Creator, and our reverent love for Jesus Christ, our Savior, and our willingness to be guided by the Holy Spirit. We promise, as members of this Church, to walk together as Christians, obedient to the teachings of the Holy Scripture, and to participate in the government, worship, stewardship or mission of this church. This we do for the glory of God, for the good of our neighbors and for the mutual growth in Christian grace, seeking to do all in faith, fellowship and service, in the spirit of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."*

