

ANNUAL REPORT
For the year 2020



First Congregational Church of Woodstock,
UCC

A Member of the United Church of Christ

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ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order – Moderator, Bob Kirk
2. Reading of the Call – Clerk, Alexandra Lyman
3. Roll Call
4. Convening Prayer – Rev. Kevin Downer
5. Minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting
6. Reports of the Pastor, Director of Family Ministries, Church Council, Boards, Committees, and Church Historian
7. Treasurer’s Report – Carl Davis
8. Report of the Nominating Committee – Debby Kirk
9. Stewardship Report – Carl Wisnosky
10. Proposed Budget for 2021 – John Cimochoowski and Lisa Nowak
11. Correspondence
12. Appreciation of Leaders
13. Other Business
14. Moderator’s Comments
15. Adjournment
16. Closing Prayer – Rev. Kevin

REPORT OF THE PASTOR

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, so that you, being rooted and grounded in love, will be able to grasp fully the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love and, with all God's holy ones, experience this love that surpasses all understanding, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. - Ephesians 3:17-19

My friends,

It is with great joy and hope that we reflect on the past year and look forward toward the future of our ministry. I joined First Church only a few months ago and am grateful to the Pastoral Search Team, Council, Trustees, Deacons, Rev. Debbie and so many in the congregation who have welcomed Toby and tried to help me get acclimated despite the need to remain physically distanced.

Among the many things that attracted me to First Church are the creative, hopeful energy of the congregation; the many gifted and talented musicians; spiritually grounded leaders; and intellectually curious congregants. The vision and mission that God has for us is found as we reimagine how to meet this moment and be the church in relevant ways, clarify our shared values, learn from our missteps, and connect our passions to address hurts, bring healing and resurrect hope in our lives, relationships, congregation and community, and God's world.

To say the pandemic upended the plans for ministry over the past year is an understatement. Nevertheless, First Church adjusted, adapted, and found creative ways to minister, connect and "be the church" despite these challenges. We learned and experimented and stepped up to the task of rethinking how we connect, gather, worship, and serve. Along the way, challenging decisions were made amid the ever-changing cloud of uncertainty. Although the intent of these decisions was good, unclear decision process, differing expectations and unvalidated assumptions among leaders, staff and congregants proved difficult and hurtful. We can use these moments as moments to express grace, seek forgiveness and learn to be more intentional.

Beyond the pandemic's many challenges; we also saw violent reactions to long standing and ever growing racial tensions, economic inequities, polarization, fear, and fragmentation in our communities, cities, and nation. If ever there were a time to be reminded that we are called to be the church, the embodiment of God's love, Christ's compassion, the Justice of Jesus and the Spirit of healing and hope resurrected – this is the time and now is the season.

In the coming year, we will engage in intentional, focused conversations to listen deeply and reflect intentionally on who we are and who God is calling us to be in the now of our action. This is exciting and scary in a good sort of way. It means exploring what we know and don't about the needs of our congregants, children, friends, neighbors, and strangers. It means rethinking how we do church to free us to more fully be the church today as we honor and learn from our past and dare to imagine a bright and bold future.

In early December we modeled this process with the conversations we facilitated around worship, mission, spirituality, etc. In the coming weeks, we will form a team of five or so people who will work closely with me to facilitate the process and an ongoing conversation to clarify our core values, name our competing priorities, confirm our bedrock beliefs, and listen ever more deeply for God's vision and mission for us today.

To God—whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine—to God be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, world without end! Amen. - Ephesians 3:20

With much gratitude and hope as we embrace the opportunities this moment provides,

Kevin

YEARLY STATISTICS

Number of members joining during 2020	2
Number of active members lost during 2020:	
By death	4
By request to withdraw	10
To inactive	0
Total active membership	159

Average weekly attendance: N/A: online services only, from 3/22 onward, due to pandemic

Baptisms: 0

Weddings: 0

New Membership:

Kevin Downer and Toby Bishop

Deaths:

2/9/20 Gladys Westerberg (inactive)
2/18/20 Lois Siegmund (inactive)
4/9/20 Linda Wilmot
4/26/20 Elizabeth Putnam
5/20/20 John Miller
11/22/20 Eleanor Adams
12/17/20 Edna Hanson (friend)

Compiled by Ellen Bradley

MINUTES OF THE 95TH ANNUAL MEETING
of The First Congregational Church of Woodstock
26 January 2020

Not yet approved by vote of the Congregation

Moderator Bruce Lyman convened the meeting at 11:10 a.m. following worship. A quorum (35 required) was established by count, and later 49 persons signed the register of attendance (40 members and nine friends).

Clerk Alexandra Lyman read the call to the meeting.

Reverend Debra Pallatto-Fontaine, our transitional minister, led the meeting in prayer, naming those in the membership who died within the past year: members Richard Horsfield and Mary Woodcock. Debbie asked the meeting to join in singing “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God.”

1. Clerk’s report: Bruce requested a motion to accept the minutes of the 2019 annual meeting. MOTION to accept: Tom Singleton/ 2nd John Cimochofski, unanimously approved with no abstentions.

2. Reports: At the moderator’s request, MOTION to receive with appreciation the reports of the Pastor, Director of Family Ministries, Church Council, Boards, Committees, and Church Historian: Nancy Horsfield/2nd John Cimochofski, unanimously approved, no abstentions.

3. Treasurer’s report: Treasurer Suzanne Cimochofski noted that an additional sheet was appended to the proposed budget for 2020, showing budgeted figures and actual expenditures for each line item. Having begun the year 2019 with a \$13K deficit, we ended with a \$39K surplus, largely a result of not having had a settled minister for the second six months of the year and having received \$10K more in income than predicted. In addition, all accounts were under budget in terms of expenditure. Suzanne urged members to consider using EFT (electronic fund transfer) for ease of cash flow, and she noted also that the pre-payment of pledges allows us to enter the new year on firm footing. MOTION to accept report: Dana Swenson/2nd John Cimochofski, passed unanimously, no abstentions.

4. Nominating committee slate: Alexandra Lyman presented the roster of church positions, and board and committee members for the year 2020, noting that a few openings remain unfilled. Bruce Lyman has added himself to the list as archivist. MOTION to accept report: Charlene Swanson/ 2nd Glenn Boies, passed unanimously with no abstentions.

5. Report of pastoral search committee: Charlene Swanson, co-chairman, reported that the committee of nine members is working steadily to update our church profile, preparing to send it for approval to our regional conference minister, Chuck Ericson. Alicja Wisnosky recently hosted a meeting in her home. “Keep us in your prayers,” Charlene asked.

6. Stewardship report: Bob Kirk referred to his page in the annual report, noting that we received 59 pledges for a total pledged income of \$139,371, an amount \$8K less than last year. Within those numbers were seven new pledges. Bob gave thanks to the members of his committee – Carl Davis, Paula Wilmot, and John Cimochofski. MOTION to receive report with appreciation: Tom Singleton/2nd Glenn Boies, passed unanimously with no abstentions.

7. Proposed budget for 2020: Cheri Swenson, senior trustee, responded to a question asked by Tom Duggan at the Lunch & Crunch gathering on January 5th, noting that we have a balance of \$217,603 in the New Century

Fund investment account. The sabbatical fund for a new minister is almost fully funded. The trustees made decisions about apportioning the surplus funds at the end of 2019:

\$17K to repay the remainder of the \$34K loan from restricted funds some years ago (\$2K is in the 2020 budget for this purpose as well), line item 504.117;
\$10K for maintenance of the church building (repair of rot, regrading to the east behind the building, replacement of north roof over Harrison Hall, revision of gutter pans);
\$5K for maintenance of the parsonage;.
\$3K added to off-budget capital improvement fund;
\$846 added to family leave fund for new minister.

Another \$2K in income has not been figured into the budget proposal, as it was received after the numbers had been refined several times. The pledged income line item 400.100 is \$100 greater than depicted in proposal, because of late receipt of a gift.

Other details outlined were these:

400.160 NCF withdrawal is predicated on a 3-yr average of fund balance;
500.101 Optimistic prediction for ¾-time minister for eight months of 2020.
502.108 Messiah Sing slated for December 2020
504.111 \$7K allotted to cover audit (\$1500), part-time bookkeeper (new),
MinistryWorks for payroll, and EFT accounting with Vanco.
505.105 Grounds maintenance, lawn mowing & plowing will be covered by church members
506.102 Line items combined with change in dues payment to the new UCC
& 505.100 conference

Moderator Bruce offered profound thanks to Cheri and the trustees, and to the deacons, for hard work on the budget proposal. MOTION to accept the budget as presented: John Cimochoowski/ 2nd Glenn Boies. Discussion ensued, including Debby Kirk's recommendation that we allocate funds to upgrade our profile on social media. Charlene echoed that impulse for the search committee. MOTION to amend the budget proposal to allow the trustees to have purview over the \$2k of non-allocated funds, to use as they see fit: Dana/2nd Tom, passed unanimously with no abstentions. The original budget motion was passed, as amended, unanimously with no abstentions.

Cheri concluded by giving special thanks to Glenn Boies, John Cimochoowski, G. Leslie Sweetnam, and Bruce Lyman for the hours of labor they devoted over the past year to repairs, improvements, and maintenance of buildings and grounds.

8. Correspondence: Following our tradition, the clerk will send greetings from the annual meeting to the these persons – Eleanor Adams, Linda Chase, Doris Coster, Ellen Holley, Marian (Debbie) Macgregor, Ann Moran, Marilyn Pomeroy, Lib Putnam, Mary Seney and husband Ed, Paul Stanton, Tod and Ruth Stevenson, Rob and Mary Stuckey, Rev. Dr. Doe West and Bruce Gale, and Susan Zilke.

9. Appreciation of leaders: Moderator Bruce Lyman gave thanks for the work of those retiring from positions of leadership within the church – Dana Swenson as member of catering committee and member-at large, Laura Bond as member of the counting team, Alexandra Lyman as member of hospitality and nominating committees, Peggy Murphy as part of the investment committee, Susan Zilke as member-at-large, Holly Ware as chairman of music support committee, Gretchen D'Andrea and Donna Dufresne as members of music support, Bob Kirk

as chairman of stewardship committee, and Carl Davis as trustee. Bob presented a gift to Bruce in gratitude for his service as moderator. Gifts were presented in thanks to Suzanne Cimchowski, retiring treasurer; to Susan McKechnie and Jim Nowak, retiring senior deacons; to Cheri Swenson and Tom Singleton, retiring senior trustees; and to Lynn Singleton and Linda Chase, retiring members of the board of outreach.

10. Moderator's comments: Bruce delivered his prepared comments, noting that our life over the past year has been characterized by high activity and great loss. During our CAT scan survey, we were described as a body that is "energetic and adaptable." Those qualities were surely tested, "and we passed," responding flexibly to the departure of our minister and our family ministries director within a few weeks of one another, to the theft of our rainbow flag eight times over, to filling the pulpit with lay speakers and tellers of faith stories, to maintaining the chicken barbeque, the October craft festival, rummage sale, and Italian dinner, the Christmas on the Hill fair, Pick-a-parties, and many other events; safe church training and messy church experience; and hosting meetings of the Southern New England conference. We are now in our fifth consecutive year of hosting the Monday Community Kitchens meal, with chefs from our church providing service once a month. Bruce made reference to the writings of Richard Rohr, who speaks of "getting the job of love done." Three suggestions for continuing that work are to practice and value silence, to worship together, to remember who we are, grounded as "members of a beloved community of friends in Christ," to borrow from one of Bob Kirk's recent sermons.

11. Other business: Jim Nowak, head deacon, offered sincere thanks to Rev. Debbie Pallatto- Fontaine for her incredible work as transitional minister. Her devotion to all parts of the job is unfailing, and her beautiful spirit prevails over all.

12. The meeting adjourned to a luncheon of honey-maple chicken, macaroni casseroles, salad, and pie in the fellowship hall, all prepared by super-chef Ashley Alderman. MOTION to adjourn at 12:05 p.m. Glenn Boies/2nd John Cimochoowski.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexandra Lyman, clerk

compiled 29 January 2020

REPORT OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

For the year 2020

The church council met on the evenings of the second Tuesdays in February and March 2020; then that cycle was upended by the arrival of the novel coronavirus pandemic. The agenda for the March meeting was full of events set blithely in the expectation that life would proceed as it had for decades. A mere week later, on March 15th, the council met in socially distanced seats in the sanctuary to close the church to all activity “indefinitely.”

The terrain was bumpy at first, leveled over the next month through the able leadership of Rev. Debra Pallatto-Fontaine, who continued in her role as transitional minister, and by Bob Kirk, who took over in February as moderator. The deacons worked hard to establish worship experience. We learned the necessary lessons of keeping the body safe through social distancing, mask wearing, and sanitizing measures.

With heavier dependence on virtual operation, a task force was named to deal with IT issues. Members Ashley Alderman, Rick Singh, Charles Bottieri, and Debby Kirk met several times to create a pathway for worship, to enhance publicity, and to find a way through the snarl of disruption brought by the pandemic. As epidemiological factors changed over the ensuing weeks, the church leadership developed plans for signing in when entering the building, protocols for sanitizing spaces after infrequent use, and measures for safety of staff. Rev. Debbie continued to provide pastoral care through email and phone calls, a role in which she spent many hours tending to church members, and she devised sustaining weekly devotionals by email and through her letters in SHARE. Debbie and Lisa Haupt created an outdoor message center near the office door, where parishioners could pick up hard copies of materials for worship and study.

Community Kitchen meals became drive-by, pickup affairs, with small crews carrying on in the church kitchen with safe protocol. The trustees, under the leadership of John Cimochoowski and Lisa Nowak, obtained a federal PPP loan of \$19,000 to cover 2.5 months of payroll for staff. Staff members were asked to keep logs of their activity to satisfy the requirements of the loan and to prepare for the upcoming audit of church books. The church switched to Spectrum as its internet and phone provider.

In May the council decided to cancel the art show on the Roseland Festival weekend, along with the luncheon and B & B program of previous Octobers. Treasurer Carl Davis reported that our operation was secure on a fine line financially, with ministerial costs at 15% of the budgeted amount for this time in the year. Unexpected pledging helped the cash flow as well. Bruce Staehle noted that we needed to broaden our approach to fundraising with out-of-the-box thinking. Chicken pot pies came up often as other ideas floated. A fresh ways & means sub-committee was appointed to brainstorm ways to replace traditional fundraising. Members who volunteered were Lisa Haupt, Jim Nowak, Bruce Staehle, and Carl Wisnosky.

Moderator Bob Kirk wrote a letter to lift us up, ending with this sentiment:

[W]hat is essential hasn't changed really. Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God, Micah tells us (Micah 6;8). ... We know *what*, it seems to me; we just need to be a little more creative these days about the *how*... We will come through this because of our commitment and competence and creativity, and because of our love for one another.

Bob wrote again later in May to commend Rev. Debbie for her valiant efforts in maintaining the health of the body, to offer gratitude to the tech support team and to those who filmed services for online presentation, and to the musicians who offered recorded and live selections for worship. Music Appreciation Sunday carried on in May, on the 24, with many church musicians taking part in the virtual service.

Through Charles Bottieri's efforts, sound production was improved for worship, and Rick Lamarre stepped forward to do much of the recording for services online and to manage setup with Bruce Staehle of sound equipment for outdoor worship.

In June the council engaged in deeper discussion of the issues surrounding re-opening for in-person worship, using the SNEUCC conference's publication of *Guidance for Phasing Forward* as a platform. Council reached consensus to continue the shuttering of the church building, given the average age of our congregation and the advice from health professionals of national stature. The ways & means sub-committee reported on its deliberations, listing many ideas for fundraising possibilities during the pandemic – a car wash, chicken bbq on church grounds, an outdoor concert, drive-in movie with projection on the front of the church, collections of loose coins in homes of church members, Pick-a-Parties with pandemic restrictions in place.

The council also agreed to meet in July, a month that usually sees no meeting. The stewardship committee continued to report on its good progress, and the search committee noted the receipt of only seven ministerial profiles since its inception. Bob Kirk noted that issues with recording for worship continued to plague the effort, with no consistent hand in the mix. We needed to improve outcomes in order not to drive away interest in our church.

At the August meeting of church council, Rev. Debbie reported the continuation of Wednesday evening lawn gatherings at the front of the church. Debbie's contract was extended through the end of 2020 with the stipulation of a 30-day notice to her, should we engage a new settled pastor before the end of that agreement. At the end of the August 18 council meeting, the group adjourned to executive session to hear comment from the trustees about funds for the remaining months of the year, including implications for staffing.

In September head trustee John Cimochowski announced the start of the \$14K re-roofing over the last portion of the church building, a project supported by matching grant funds from the state of Connecticut for restoration of ecclesiastical structures. Stewardship mailed pledge packets to all members. A plan to stage a pandemic-safe version of the Christmas on the Hill (COTH) fair began under the sage leadership of Debby Kirk. The welcome idea to promote one large fundraiser, rather than several small ones, was met with enthusiastic approval. A wireless Ring doorbell with camera was installed at the office entrance to allow staff to predict arrival of visitors.

In September, 38 parishioners responded to a survey conducted by the task force on re-opening, with the consensus that it is still not safe to open the building for worship, but small group meetings of church committees and boards could be accommodated. A special council was set for September 1 to consider in depth a tabled motion to open the sanctuary. At that meeting, the decision was made firmly after full discussion to worship outdoors and online only. Shortly after, the UCC conference released guidelines for congregational voting in the time of pandemic, with presence at Zoom meetings required and no voting by email.

In assessing realities of the pandemic period, the trustees made the decision to reduce music director Ted Bradley's stipend for the last three months of 2020 and to remove the funding for the handbell choir function. Ted resigned in late September.

The welcome news of Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer's willingness to become our settled pastor came from the search committee at the council meeting on September 8th. Rev. Kevin began his ministry after his candidating weekend on October 11 & 12. Kevin's intelligence, inclusive thinking, generous manner, talents in ministry, along with his experience in marketing and computer science make him the man of the hour. The council tendered profound thanks to Rev. Debbie for her invaluable service during the search. The congregation gathered on the back lawn of the parsonage for worship on October 18th to bid a passionate farewell to Debbie as transitional minister. She remains an active member of the board of deacons and participated fully in the transition to Rev. Kevin's assumption of the pastorate.

The trustees began investigation into the higher insurance premium applied to the church policy. Lisa Haupt, director of family ministries, announced her second job as director of faith formation for the Storrs Congregational Church, with the blessing and congratulations from our council.

At Rev. Kevin's first council meeting in November, he listed his immediate priorities:

- To improve the quality and visibility of online worship;
- To engage in conversations about ways to proceed during the pandemic;
- To enhance the quality and impact of communications;
- To clarify our vision and mission through four Zoom meetings for specific purposes.

Kevin's impact on the IT problems of long standing was immediate. Pre-recording of elements of the services, once weather precluded outdoor worship, revolutionized the product. The format also opened possibilities for music and visual imagery, with the ability to gather musical tracks from afar and assemble them into a cohesive whole. That process is not simple, but it was aided by professional help from Ellen Chase and her wife, Jesse; by Lisa and Bob Haupt's daughter, Emma, a teacher and church organist in Buffalo, N.Y.; and by Thatcher Lyman, music director of the Church of the Incarnate Word in Rochester. Our in-house musicians also offered recordings made at home and in the sanctuary with proper protection. Our faithful organist, Leilani Nixon, took a leading role in music planning and execution.

Meanwhile, boards and committees of the church carried on innovatively to preserve function and mission. Outreach members found ways to gather Thanksgiving and Christmas donations for TEEG. The Christmas on the Hill fair realized \$9000, an incredible outcome that involved more than 100 volunteer positions and lots of effort, along with the skillful leadership of Debby Kirk. Worthy of note is Lynn Davis's sewing of over 500 masks in various sizes, many given to TEEG for families in need, and many sold at the fair. Budget development for 2021 proceeded in earnest. The policy for building and property use during the pandemic was updated under Charles Bottieri's leadership.

By December Rev. Kevin accomplished Zoom meetings with interested church members on the topics of fundraising, spirituality, faith formation, and worship and music, with much energy and creativity applied by all participants. His report on these conversations was comprehensive and exceedingly useful, and new programs have already begun as a result.

The stewardship campaign under Carl Wisnosky's able leadership, with heavy assistance from Paula Wilmot and Glenn Boies, drew to a close with 46 pledges totaling \$140,500 for 2021. The council approved the pastor's salary and benefits package for the new year, to satisfy an accounting requirement that the housing allowance needed to be in place before the end of the year 2020. A new employee handbook that was started under Rev. Jocelyn Gardner Spencer's term is under completion. The date for the annual meeting of the church was set for January 31, 2021, later than usual to allow the trustees to have ample time to prepare the budget. The office in the northwest corner of the main floor was cleaned and repainted by Carl Wisnosky and Charles Bottieri and will serve as secure space for records of the trustees, treasurer, and deacons, as well as work space for the treasurer.

In a discussion over the theft of the rainbow flag from the standard on the front lawn sign, an act committed over a dozen times in the past two years, several measures were agreed upon. Debby Kirk wrote an eloquent letter to the editor of the *Villager* newspaper, explaining the stance of the church and noting that 328 UCC congregations in the SNEUCC conference "provide safe space for LGBTQ siblings to worship." Leslie Sweetnam replaces the flag "in our witness and message of love for all persons."

This report will be my last as clerk of the church for the past four years, as Laura Bond will assume the role in February 2021. Thanks to all council members of those years for their support, immense effort, and continuing devotion to our church.

Respectfully submitted,
Alexandra Lyman
Clerk of the church

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The 2020 Board of Trustees began the year with five members: Lisa Nowak, John Cimochoowski, Carl Wisnosky, Karen Olah and Charles Bottieri. In mid-summer, Karen Olah resigned to spend time caring for her mother leaving the Board with four remaining members. Going into 2021, there will be four Trustee vacancies to fill.

Budget

The 2020 budget adopted at the annual meeting of the congregation included sufficient funds carried forward from 2019 to repay the balance of debt incurred to Restricted Off-Budget accounts which essentially provided loans to the church to balance deficit budgets over the previous years. The Congregation had also made the decision to hire a part-time settled minister to be the pastor of what has become a small church. This move allowed the church to adopt a balanced budget with no debt to any of our special accounts.

With the departure of Reverend Jocelyn Gardner-Spencer in the summer of 2019, the FCCW sought the services of an interim minister to guide us spiritually while a Search Committee was formed to find a new settled pastor. We were fortunate and blessed to have an ordained minister in our fold in Reverend Debbie Pallatto-Fontaine. Reverend Debbie served as our interim pastor requesting modest compensation while more than fulfilling that role and saving the Church significantly. We cannot thank Reverend Debbie enough for her service to the FCCW.

COVID-19

As 2020 progressed, we did not expect a pandemic to overtake the US including the Quiet Corner. In addition to the Church Council closing the Church to worship services beginning in March, the COVID-19 pandemic carried through the year effectively cancelling all of our proposed fundraising activities involving people being in close proximity (Church Rummage sale, Pick-a-Parties, the Woodstock Fair, FCCW involvement in the Roseland Craft Fair including Bed & Breakfast, crafters meals etc., and any Christmas on the Hill [COTH] indoor efforts). Fortunately, we were able to hold the Italian Dinner (\$) in February and a modified outdoor COTH (\$) yielded substantial revenue but nowhere near the projected \$33,200 in fundraising income budgeted for 2020.

To make up the anticipated revenue shortfall the FCCW was eligible to apply for a \$19,000 Payroll Protection Grant/Loan from the Federal Government which was able to pay for three months of payroll costs from the end of April through the end of July. As of this date we should be able to retain most of these funds as a grant which largely made up the difference of funds not gained from our proposed fund-raising events.

Per the church by-laws, an additional responsibility that the Board of Trustees takes on in the absence of a settled pastor is that of supervising church staff (not including the interim pastor). As the church was closed due to COVID-19, the Trustees had to address personnel areas impacted by the closing of church to in-person worship services. In addition to our minister, the church needed our Administrative Assistant to maintain office operations and communicate with both church members and the general public on church matters. In concert with Rev Debbie, our Director of Family Ministry had to become creative in dealing with both children, families and individuals on matters involving spiritual development. While traditional cleaning of the church was somewhat reduced, Sexton functions took on new duties including an emphasis on sanitation and disinfection. Church services transitioned from indoor worship to outdoor worship outside of the church in

favorable weather. While we had the need for music performances in an outdoor worship setting, we could not have a choir and as a result the Trustees reduced the salary of the Choir Director/Director of Music position through the remainder of the budget year or until the church was able to return to in-person worship. COVID also affected the bell choir's ability to perform, so the Bell Choir Director position funding was eliminated beginning September 1st. The pandemic has continued through the remainder of 2020 and appears to be continuing through most of 2021.

Property Maintenance

In 2019, the sanctuary roof was replaced. An evaluation of the remaining roof structures revealed that with the exception of the roof section replaced under the new solar panels on the south side of the Harrison Hall roof, five other shed roof sections (over the office, library and north side of Harrison Hall) as well as the two entrance porch overhangs were in dire need of replacement. Set aside funds for capital improvements left us about \$12,000 short of a needed cost estimate of nearly \$27,000 to do all of the work. Thanks to an anonymous donor who offered a \$6,000 challenge donation to the congregation, we were able to raise an additional \$8,000 allowing us to replace the remaining roofing at the church with upgraded shingles that will protect the church roofs for the next 35 years.

When the roofing work was being evaluated as early as 2019, a drainage problem (gutters and downspouts etc.) at the rear of the Harrison Hall was causing water to get into the building at the base of the roof near the gutters. This work was undertaken before the new roofing was installed using remaining grant funds from the 2019 sanctuary roof project.

In September Stan Swanson volunteered to replace the worn and out of code porch railings at the church parsonage dwelling next door to the church. The church was more than willing to pay for the cost of materials and was thankful for Stan's expertise. Stan's assistant on the job was John Cimochofski.

As a result of COVID-19, the Trustees found it necessary to update its Facility Use & Fees Policy to address fees associated with services provided outside of the church building in the absence of in-facility services/use etc.

In the fall of 2020, we've welcomed our new settled pastor Reverend Dr. Kevin Downer. The Trustees have been working with Reverend Kevin on finalizing an Employee Handbook for all staff (including the minister). That handbook is expected to be completed in early 2021 for immediate use by all staff.

While 2019 was considered a year of significant changes and a transitional time 2020 became a daunting challenge for the Board of Trustees. We certainly appreciate the efforts of our remaining two Trustees Carl Wisnosky and Charles Bottieri who worked tirelessly addressing issues required of the Trustees for our church.

For the Board of Trustees

Lisa Nowak & John Cimochofski, Senior Trustees

REPORT OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Comfort – Community – Resilience

In response to our fall stewardship campaign we received 47 pledges for 2021. The total pledged amount was \$140,500. We thank all who pledged and whose generosity allowed us to consider this year's pledge campaign a success in spite of initial concerns that we might achieve much less given the negative impacts of the pandemic.

Each pledge, regardless of the amount, is valued as a conscious choice to join in the life of our congregation and to financially support the work of our church. We are especially pleased and grateful to note that about 50% of those who pledged increased their pledge over last year and many of these increases were significant. And also positive was that we received three "new" pledges! These increased and new pledges were the real driver of our success and resulted in a median pledge of \$1,800 vs. \$1,200 last year. This made up for the fact that while the number of pledges decreased significantly from 59 last year to 47 this year we were still able to match last year's total amount pledged!

Given that our pledges represent almost 70% of church income and that we were unsure of the amount to be raised we decided to start our pledge campaign one month earlier than past years so that we could get earlier input into the 2021 budget process. This worked out well and, along with a projected surplus carryover from 2020, this increased confidence that a balanced budget for 2021 could be achieved in spite of continued negative impact on special fundraising. We recommend that this earlier start be continued in future pledge campaigns.

In sum, we have much to be thankful for and are hopeful that with the end of the pandemic and its negative financial effects that next year will see an increase in pledges and the continued generosity of our congregation.

Pledges, donations or gifts to our church may be made at any time. If you have any questions regarding stewardship, please feel free to contact a member of the Stewardship Committee (Paula Wilmot, Glenn Boies and Carl Wisnosky).

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Wisnosky

REPORT OF FAMILY MINISTRIES 2020

With deep joy and delight, I continue to serve in the role of Director of Family Ministries, building relationships with members of the congregation.

The highlights of the of the Family Ministry year pre-COVID-19 Pandemic:

- **Church School**—pre-school age through middle school age lessons, with the prevailing theme: Growing in and with Christ: including, music, arts, crafts, sign language, and Godly Play stories, Centering Prayer for Children, and prayers for our community, average weekly attendance: 5
- **Children’s Message**—using the revised common lectionary as the primary guide for preparing weekly message for children to participate with during worship service, including Godly Play story-telling, relevant children’s books & visual aids
- **Church School in the Kitchen**—once per month, with the theme: Bread for the Journey, offering an engaging way to extend the Bible story lessons and themes, while also learning critical life lessons.
- **Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper**— with the assistance of many church members, we hosted a pancake supper of pancakes, sausage, fruit and toppings, including music, cupcake decorating, Mardi Gras decorations and beads, trivia game, & photo booth with props, proceeds for the event went to The Neighbor Fund for immigrant children legal fees.
- **Intergenerational Worship**— with children participating with Holy Communion as valued members of the church family, each month, for the children to be enculturated with the values and traditions as the Body of Christ and within this congregation
- **Support for other church committee events**—facilitated participation with St. Olaf College Choir Concert in Worcester, supported Scout Sunday in February, facilitated Prayer Pocket Pillow Sewing project for children in Haiti through-out the Lenten season (halted due to pandemic).

The highlights of the of the Family Ministry year post-COVID-19 Pandemic:

- Church School—pre-school age through middle school provided weekly on Zoom format from March
 - Created Playlists for Faith Formation at Home, with lesson plans & activities for families asynchronously to use at home, changed format and name to Faith Seeds in November
 - Provided Summer & Back-to-School Blessings Bundles for each child-delivered to their homes.
- **Children’s Message**—using the revised common lectionary as the primary guide for preparing weekly message for children & families for online worship service, using Godly Play story-telling, now pre-recorded & called The Early Word.
- **Family Movie Ministry**- purchased license for movie viewing, hosted outdoor movie,
- **Support for other church committee events**—Family Ministries participated in end of school year Gratitude Parade for Woodstock students/teachers, hosted a Family Kayaking Event and Walk-tober Labyrinth Walk for the Last Green Valley in September, supported the CROP Walk in October, & Baking for Christmas on the Hill in November
- **Advent**—Wreath making supplies, traditional and non-traditional candles and wreaths, Illustrated Ministry Advent Devotional and Coloring Pages purchased and sent via email for all members during the Advent season, promoting them to participants of Christmas on the Hill.
 - Advent Weekly Offerings:
 - Images of Christmas visio divina meditation on Zoom
 - Creating Christmas coloring meditation on Zoom
- First Church Woodstock Lights the Way to Christmas- A route of Christmas lights around Woodstock for all church members to participate, stops along the route at several congregant’s homes provided treats for children to seek- 10 children participated (+unknown number of adults).

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Haupt

REPORT OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

Just thirteen months ago on December 10, 2019 the church Council selected and voted in nine participants to become the church's search committee for a three-quarter time settled pastor.

During the following ten months the committee reviewed eight submitted profiles and interviewed (through Zoom and four "in person, socially distanced" interviews) four selected candidates. In October the committee believed we had found the candidate that best exemplified the qualities we were looking for and the person that would lead our congregation to discover our church's unique calling in our community. That person was Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer.

Needless to say on December 10, 2019 our group of nine had no idea the search would be made more difficult by a crisis that encompassed the world – the Covid 19 Pandemic. However, with the faith and commitment of each of the members and the wise guidance and encouragement of Rev. Chuck Ericson from the UCC conference, we persevered. We were surprised that we only had 8 profiles submitted during the 10 months, but, that too, was affected by the Pandemic. In spite of the lower number, we still had some amazing Profiles to consider. Rev. Downer's Profile was the last one we received and the entire committee could not wait to interview him. His Profile was received on August 6 and on September 4 after two interviews with him; the group was so certain that he was the right candidate for our congregation that Jim Nowak and Charlene Swanson, as co-chairs of the group, extended an offer to him. He accepted the offer that very evening.

Throughout the entire ten months, we were confident that God was leading us and would direct us to the person of his choosing for our congregation. The dedication of this small group of nine was indeed heartwarming. Each person participated in developing our church's Profile and each participated in the review of every Profile and in the interview process. We are so grateful for the wisdom and many talents that were freely given by Charles Bottieri, Debby Kirk, Jan Lamarre, Christina Manuilow, Jim Nowak, Bruce Staehle, Charlene Swanson, Paula Wilmot and Alicja Wisnosky. We thank Chuck Ericson for his dedication to us and we especially thank Rev Kev for saying "Yes".

Respectfully Submitted,

Charlene Swanson
Jim Nowak

REPORT OF COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Since mid-March of this past year, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Community Kitchen became a drive-thru-only free meal and food distribution site. We made this change out of necessity and under the direction of Community Kitchens of Northeastern Connecticut and the Northeast District Department of Health.

Before the pandemic, we had been serving a free hot lunch to eighty-some guests each Monday in our downstairs dining area. Guests would begin arriving early in the morning and visit with one another as they enjoyed a breakfast of donated baked goods and coffee, tea, or juice. They would play bingo and socialize until shortly before noon when we would sing songs, make announcements, celebrate birthdays, and mourn losses. Then we would share a meal together. Our guests would depart with a bag of donated baked goods and fresh produce, having eaten a hot nutritious meal and participated in a supportive community of friends.

Now our guests line up in their cars along Cemetery Road, forty or fifty deep, all the way up to the Academy. From 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. our volunteers distribute meals served in Styrofoam containers kept hot in large coolers. Each household gets a bag of assorted groceries procured from the Connecticut Food Bank and a bag of produce from Big Y in Danielson along with donated baked goods from Soleil & Suns Bakery, Stop & Shop in Putnam, and Price Chopper. Our volunteers assemble these bags earlier in the morning.

We are now serving approximately 130 guests each Monday.

WE HAVE THE BEST VOLUNTEERS IN THE WORLD! They set up our blue pop-up tent in all weathers, and hand out the bags of groceries and produce and baked goods from the backs of covered pick-up trucks. They are joyful and hard-working and committed to this important ministry. It is a privilege to work beside them each week.

We would also like to give a shout out to the volunteer chefs from our church, who plan, prepare, and pack up a hot meal on the second Monday of each month. It takes courage—as well as know-how—to sign up and then prepare a meal for 130. Bless you!

We are so very grateful to our partner churches: East Woodstock Congregational Church, South Woodstock Baptist Church, Christ Church of Pomfret, and the First Congregational Church of Pomfret. This collaborative and ecumenical arrangement is our hallmark.

COVID-19 has caused so much suffering. If there is a silver lining to this scourge, it is the empathy and generosity it has provoked. Many people in the wider community have taken note of what we are doing at our Community Kitchen each Monday and have sent donations. Shauna Weaver, for example, solicited support for her “Woodstock Marathon” back in April and then donated more than \$1,000 from the proceeds to Community Kitchens of Northeastern Connecticut. Sally Rogers, who started her “Song-a-Day” to cheer us up during the pandemic, named us as recipient of her “virtual tip jar” and raised more than \$2,500 for our nonprofit. Each week some of our guests themselves hand us small bills—ones, fives, and tens—which we deposit in our church Community Kitchen account. Out of these accumulated funds, we were able to send an additional \$1,000 to Community Kitchens of Northeastern Connecticut as well as donate \$1,000 to our own church’s general fund.

We look forward to the day when this pandemic has passed, when the economy stabilizes and the need is not so great, and we can return to our dining hall to share a meal together.

Respectfully,

Bob Kirk and Bruce Lyman, Site Coordinators

REPORT OF THE MUSIC COMMITTEE

(FROM JAN. 2020 – SEPT. 2020)

The Music Committee got off to a normal start in 2020. Following a festive Christmas season of 2019, January brought with it the Choir's well-deserved annual hiatus while Leilani took her usual time away to fulfil another endeavor for the month. Ted Bradley, our Music Director at the time, stepped in as Substitute Organist during all worship services for the month of January. The Anthems for the month were provided by Donna Dufresne, Michael Geigert, Ellen Chase, Jeff Perkins and Holly Ware, and also the Hill Church Hillbillies, who, on January 19th (which was Baptism Sunday and an adult baptism), performed a very appropriate and rousing rendition of Hank Williams' "Let the Spirit Descend":

*"Let the Spirit descend, like a beautiful dove
As it did on Jesus that day
He was baptized by John, in the river of Jordan
And God's voice, like thunder said, "This is my Son"*

In February, Leilani returned, and the Senior Choir resumed, with rehearsals every other Thursday evening, alternating with Bell Choir rehearsals on the other Thursday evenings. The Senior Choir has traditionally provided an anthem each Sunday at service. The Bell Choir was expecting to ring on Maundy Thursday, Easter Sunday, and Music Appreciation Sunday, and had also been requested to perform at Sesame Street Puppeteer Carrol Spinney's Memorial service which was scheduled in April. Three initial Bell Choir rehearsals were held in February and March in preparation for these events. In addition, the church bluegrass group, the Hill Church Hillbillies, was still around to perform occasionally throughout the year, and our In-House band, the Skillet Lickers, continued to provide near-weekly entertainment for Community Kitchen meals on Mondays.

In February, both Leilani and Ted were honored for the 25 years of service each of them have given to the church. Also in February, Family Ministries Director Lisa Haupt made arrangements for a church field trip to hear the St. Olaf's Choir perform at Mechanic's Hall in Worcester. Coincidentally, it turned out that among the attendees, practically the entire choir signed up to go, and Tom Chase, recovering from surgery, needed to sit in a handicapped area all the way across the massive Hall from the rest of the group but still saw us and waved to us all, across a sea of people! Little did we know it would be the last time we were all able to gather in a social setting in what has turned into a very long time. Right after that, the pandemic hit and the church was closed and still remains so almost a year later.

Music programs everywhere were hit especially hard because all singing and wind instruments are deemed to be dangerous as the COVID virus is spread by droplets, with more droplets being emitted with the deeper breaths of singing and wind instrument playing.

When it became apparent that this was going to be an enduring situation, services began to be held on Zoom and on Facebook Live. Our church did not have the expertise or the equipment for this at first so it was a rocky start on all fronts but there was certainly no lack of effort by all. Our church musicians would perform from home, or record performances alone in the sanctuary to be used for service recordings. In April, our church family experienced the sadness of losing one of our beloved members, Elizabeth Putnam, and the church was the grateful recipient of a last act of love and support from her as she requested her memorial donations be made to the Music Program of this church.

Music Appreciation Day (on Zoom) was planned out by Ted and included testimonials of "What Music Means to Me" given by several church members, performances by church musicians performing from home, and, with some bittersweet irony, a special montage of popular song snippets with words revised to reflect the pandemic. The service concluded with Ted playing a piece on the pipe organ he built in his garage. As we got further into spring, services were held outside and Ted worked in collaboration with our Transitional Pastor to arrange for music, and schedule the performances for the summer months. He also built, underwritten by the Deacons, a special music booth in the sanctuary for safe singing, which made page one of the Woodstock Villager!

In September, word was received from Council that based on the results of an all church survey, small groups could once again gather in the sanctuary with proper precautions. Ted and the Music Committee began making plans for the bell choir to resume in preparation for Christmas services. Ringers were consulted, music purchased, and a schedule of rehearsals was placed on the church calendar.

Unfortunately, in early September the Board of Trustees made the decision and informed Ted as the Bell Choir Director, that the remaining 2020 budgeted funds for the bell choir were being discontinued. In late August, Ted was informed as the Music Director, the budgeted funding for his salary would be reduced by 50% for the remainder of the year or until services could be resumed in person. This was due to the constraints placed upon the Music Ministry during the COVID Pandemic. Regretfully, these events led to Ted's resignation as Bell Choir Director and Music Director on September 9th, 2020.

This report only covers the time that I was a member of the Music Committee, as I also resigned from that post in September, but for the sake of completing this written history I will also comment that the music program continued after our Music Director's departure with church musicians stepping up to provide weekly music and the quick formation of a new bell choir with a volunteer. In addition, updated equipment was purchased and our new pastor, who began in October, brought with him the technical expertise that we lacked earlier, to vastly improve the quality of the recordings of the services. It is still unknown at the time of this writing, as vaccination programs are just beginning, when services will be able to be held in person, indoors, and when it will be safe to sing again.

Ellen Bradley

Music Committee Chair, Jan. – Sept. 2020

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF OUTREACH

Purpose

The Board of Outreach seeks to follow the FCCW vision to build relationships, engage with the community, and provide members with opportunities to put faith in action. The focus is to nurture connections with local partners, exercise prudent disbursements of the budgeted funds, and honor our covenants with the wider church. This past year, the Covid pandemic created intense economic hardship and made racial inequities more apparent. The Board of Outreach demonstrated love of neighbor by addressing these needs, both in the Quiet Corner and beyond.

Collections for Community Partners

Outreach coordinated several collections for Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group (TEEG) and the Daily Bread food Pantry in Putnam. Covid-19 restricted our in-person worship and cut down on visits to the church building so we experimented with *Stuff the Trunk* events on the front lawn, first for back-to-school items for TEEG in July, and then again in September with a food drive for Daily Bread. Both were opportunities to make the local needs and the work of these non-profits more visible. The congregation remains extremely generous in supporting drives throughout the year for items such as school backpacks, Thanksgiving food baskets, and Christmas gift tags.

Community Kitchens

FCCW continues to serve as the site for the Monday meal. Church members cook on the second Monday and other partner churches provide meals on the remaining weeks. Covid-19 forced a shift to drive-thru service beginning in mid-March and numbers of guests increased to 140 on many weeks. Our program is coordinated by Bruce Lyman and Bob Kirk and supported by numerous partners and a team of dedicated volunteers. (see separate report for more details)

Benevolences and Disbursements

2020 disbursements addressed economic insecurity, health concerns, educational empowerment, and disaster relief.

RIP Medical Debt	\$500.00	
Church World Service	\$500.00	Crop Walk
WA Fresh	\$500.00	Weekend food program
Quiet Corner Cares	\$500.00	Sober house in Putnam
TEEG	\$500.00	Mentoring
Heifer International	\$500.00	Economic Empowerment
TEEG	\$52.21	Christmas tags
Church World Service	\$750.00	Disaster Relief
Woodstock Seniors	\$200.00	Gift Cards for holiday bags

TOTAL	\$4,002.21	
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ONA Witness

In January we marked the 17th anniversary of becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation. One way we give public witness to this inclusivity is to display a rainbow flag on our front lawn. While this has prompted much affirmation from community members, the flag has also been stolen and our policy is to replace it each time. In December, after a rash of thefts, Debby Kirk sent a letter to the editor of the Villager Newspaper on behalf of the Board as a way to restate our commitment of hospitality to people of all gender expressions.

Special Offerings and Events

The Board of Outreach hosted and participated in several programs and encouraged initiatives by members to put faith in action in 2020. Again, Covid-19 curtailed gathered events, but we posted appeals for disaster and wildfire relief, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Strengthen the Church Offering for SNEUCC faith formation initiatives.

Early in the year we attended the annual MLK Breakfast hosted by the Windham area NAACP and Greater Putnam Interfaith Council. Donna Dufresne visited worship as Prudence Crandell and then facilitated a second hour with NAACP leaders on the teacher– activist from Canterbury educator and the intersection with current racial issues. On February 25th, one of our last in-person events before the pandemic hit, FamilyMinistries and Outreach teamed up to host a Fat Tuesday Pancake supper. The free-will offering for the Neighbor Fund netted over \$350 to provide asylum-seekers with skilled legal representation and translation services.

In March Lynn Davis and a team of dedicated sewers responded quickly to the pandemic and began an impressive mask ministry to promote health and safety. Hundreds of washable facemasks were made available to members, given away at Community Kitchen, delivered to TEEG and Day Kimball Hospital. These were also sold to the public as part of Christmas on the Hill.

In the fall, Debby Kirk and Christina Manuilow hosted a community Zoom series for Sacred Conversations on Race to discuss the books *White Fragility* and *My Grandmother's Hands*. Lisa Haupt organized an open house at the church Labyrinth as part of the Last Green Valley Walktober program. Several members joined with area congregations for a socially distanced Crop Walk for hunger at the Putnam River Walk.

Wider Church

We continue to be in covenant with the Windham Association, the Southern New England Conference, UCC, and the national offices of the United Church of Christ. Per capita giving was replaced by proportional giving model and we support SNEUCC at a rate of 6% of our pledge amount (see line 510.100). We participated in the conference wide RIP Medical Debt program that resulted in retirement of \$26.2 million of debt. Two separate buys benefited families in seven states and first responders around the country. FCCW was represented at the Windham Association Ecclesiastical Council (Zoom) for Kate Alexander in June as well as the SNEUCC Annual Meeting in September. Rev. Darrell Goodwin was elected as the new Executive Conference Minister and he began his ministry in January 2021. Members have taken advantage of a variety of SNEUCC training webinars as well as the Super Saturday workshops in the fall.

Respectfully submitted,
 Debby Kirk for the Board of Outreach
 Lynn Davis, Donna Dufresne, Jen Duggan, and Paula Wilmot

REPORT OF THE DIACONATE

The 2020 members of the diaconate include Laura Bond, Noah Gourlie, Debbie Pallatto-Fontaine, Bruce Staehle, Charlene Swanson, Jacob Vicente, Kathy Packard and Rick Singh.

At the start of 2020 the deacons were focused on updating the Parish Care teams and assisting the transitional minister with regular Sunday services. A prayer request box placed in the “blue room” off the library seemed to be a helpful addition. Rev. Debbie was arranging guest speakers and second hours. The life of the church seemed to be growing and blooming despite being in a transitional period between settled pastors.

In February we began plans for Lenten activities which included organizing the flower and palm orders.

Deacons gathered for dinner on Feb. 29th at the home of Charlene Swanson for a lovely and memorable farewell for Susan and Jim, our outgoing senior deacons, and to welcome our new deacons: Bruce Staehle, Rick Singh and Kathy Packard.

Rev. Debbie and the deacons worked together to apply some of the accumulated Deacons’ Fund to charitable causes through a “Reverse Offering.” At the March 1st Sunday service, families of the church were provided with an offering to use in charitable giving, which would be reported back to the church. The Deacons’ Fund is intended to help people in need, and our congregants were given instructions to do just that, and to be as creative as they wished. As with many plans made before the COVID-19 precautions became necessary, we had to indefinitely suspend our sharing about the joys of giving, as all in-person meetings of the church were put on hold.

Once the public health precautions were enacted, the Deacons sent a letter via email to all our church family, reminding them that we were still available to them to help with hardships. With many people unable to go into work due to the virus, we reminded everyone that the Deacons’ Fund was there for anyone who was in financial need. We also encouraged everyone to check the online church directory and make sure their contact information was up to date. The deacons used the directory to contact all church members and friends to be sure everyone was supported during this unprecedented time. We found that most people were doing well and appreciated the thoughtfulness.

We decided to go ahead with our Easter flower distribution, feeling that now more than ever, we all needed something bright and positive in our lives. The palms were set outside the church building with a sign, as well as an email announcement, that they were available for anyone who wanted to take some for Palm Sunday. Our special Easter cross was set out on the front lawn with flowers available to decorate it.

The deacons held their first Zoom meeting on Mar 31, 2020, and we started live-streaming Sunday services via Facebook on Palm Sunday, April 5th. The Maundy Thursday service was recorded for broadcast on Facebook, and the all-night vigil became an “at home” vigil.

In May we tried Zoom church services which felt like a healing balm as we could actually “see” more of our church family. We embraced the “virtual coffee hour”.

Throughout this period we struggled with new technology. There was a fair amount of trial and error as we learned more about on-line platforms and how our sound system could and couldn't adapt.

In June we made an update to our sound system and then installed a wi-fi booster in July. We even experimented with a short-range FM radio transmitter. During joint services with East Woodstock we further refined our live-streaming techniques so we could stream live on both church Facebook pages from a single video feed. We also implemented the practice of transferring online prayer requests from the Facebook feed to Pastor Debbie live, to be offered during the service.

Deacons continued to handle Parish Care and keep in touch with as many church members as possible during the summer with phone calls, cards, emails and some hands-on assistance to members in need. We endured a fierce tropical storm which caused massive power outages but we managed to make contact with many church members.

When our church decided to hold services on the lawn in good (and sometimes not so good) weather, the deacons adapted their duties accordingly.

The Senior Deacons responded to four outside requests for assistance this year. This seemed to bring to light how the pandemic was affecting people in our state who live on the edge of financial security. Having no defined process for handling such outside requests, the Senior Deacons implemented a brief set of guidelines and collected a reference list of resources for Deacons to use in the future. A Google account was established for the deacons in order to keep this and other information available to the Board of Deacons in a Google Drive.

As the pandemic continued its indefinite course, the deacons again sent out an email to the congregation reminding everyone about the availability of the Deacons' Fund for those in financial need.

In September our church rejoiced when the Search Committee found Rev. Kevin Downer. This also meant that we would bid farewell to Rev. Debbie Pallatto-Fontaine as our transitional interim minister. The deacons and Rev. Debbie planned a Farewell Service for Oct. 18th which was filled with gratitude.

As Rev. Kevin ramped up our Sunday service videos, we took on a new schedule of recording the separate pieces of the service in advance. The members of this board are very grateful to Rev. Kevin for bringing his expertise in recorded/online worship services and relieving the deacons of much trial and error. Although we had worried about what Christmas Eve would look like in this *socially distanced* pandemic, everyone was moved by the beautiful video that we were able to view from our living rooms for Christmas. We have been blessed to have Rev. Kevin's guidance as we found our way forward in worship towards the end of the year.

The 2020 Diaconate is grateful for the congregation's patience during a period of adaptation and for the wonderful support of our church community in making all of the seasons' celebrations joyful and our shared spiritual lives meaningful throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Bond and Noah Gourlie, Senior Deacons

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

*new to the position in 2021
() denotes first year of service

POSITIONS

Moderator Robert Kirk (2020)
Asst. Moderator *Jim Nowak (2021)
Clerk *Laura Bond (2021)
Treasurer Carl Davis (2020)
Asst. Treasurer Tom Duggan (2020)
Historian Alexandra Lyman (2015)
Archivist Bruce Lyman (2020)
Boy Scout Coord. Noah Gourlie (2017)

BOARD OF DEACONS

2022 Charlene Swanson
2022 Bruce Staehle
2023 _____
2023 Jacob Vicente
2024 Kathy Packard
2024 Rick Ramdathsingh
2025 *Christina Manuilow
2025 *Bruce Lyman

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2022 *Alexandra Lyman
2022 Carl Wisnosky
2023 *Suzanne Cimochofski
2023 Charles Bottieri
2024 *Noah Gourlie
2024 _____

BOARD OF OUTREACH

2022 Donna Dufresne
2022 Lynn Davis
2023 Jen Duggan
2023 *Ginny Moylan
2024 *Susan McKechnie
2024 _____

COUNCIL MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Tom Singleton (2020)

COVID ADMINISTRATORS

(Oversee plans to resume in-person worship)
Carl Davis (2021)
Alicja Wisnosky (2021)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Bob Kirk (2020)
Debby Kirk (2020)

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Paula Wilmot (2019)
Jim Nowak (2021) Asst. Moderator
_____ (2021) Trustee Rep.

Nominations continue to be received for the Committees listed below. Updates will be shared at Annual Meeting.

CATERING COMMITTEE

COUNTING TEAM

FAMILY MINISTRIES

GROUNDS COMMITTEE

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

MUSIC SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Updated on January 19, 2021

REPORT OF THE HISTORIAN

It used to be that the phrase “twenty-twenty” meant a good report after a visit to the ophthalmologist – perfect vision. In the year 2020, an “annus horribilis” in Queen Elizabeth II’s words, our vision was troubled and far below perfection.

The year began innocently enough with the Festival of Light and Understanding, also called Women’s Christmas, January 5th. We held the Lunch & Crunch budget discussion after worship with a delicious lunch prepared by Cheri and Dana Swenson. Later events of the first month included Bruce Staehle’s gift of church mugs in honor of Bob Kirk’s devotion to Community Kitchens (“no budgets were harmed” in this generous purchase). Funds were gathered for disaster relief for the Australian wildfires, and Christina Hirt was baptized. Rev. Debbie reminded us that the path not yet imagined can take us to unexpected and inconvenient places. On January 26th, the church bid farewell to the Swensons, beloved members who moved to Andover, N.H., to complete work on their new home. Jeff Perkins sang his original song, *Temple of the Trees*.

In February Donna Dufresne reprised her role as Prudence Crandall of Canterbury, abolitionist and educator of young Black women. Her interview with Debbie during worship segued to a 2nd hour discussion. The senior choir sang the Mozart *Ave verum*, one in a series Ted planned on that text. The month included Scout Sunday, organized by Noah Gourlie, and a Sunday dedicated to learning of Debbie’s devoted ministry in Haiti for the Be like Brit mission and school. Ted Bradley, music director, and Leilani Nixon, organist, were honored for 25 years of service in their posts, with chocolate on chocolate cake and tributes given by Bruce Lyman and Holly Ware. Rev. Debbie began Wednesday morning Lenten study based on Marcus Borg’s *Beyond Belief*.

Lisa Haupt orchestrated a Fat Tuesday pancake supper, where members and friends met for a meal in the fellowship hall and engaged in lively games and conversation. February 26th was Ash Wednesday, when our church combined with East Woodstock and Church of the Good Shepherd in an evening service with combined choir. Just after this beginning of Lent, the ground of our being changed dramatically, when the ill wind of COVID-19 blew in. By March 15th, we were in the midst of a pandemic, hearts heavy with our newly constrained life. By year’s end, over 360,000 Americans would die of the viral illness, as vaccines began to roll out in a choppy manner.

The search committee, named in December of 2019, continued its work by Zoom, interviewing the few presenting candidates on computer screens. The deacons suggested that we hire Rev. Debbie P-F as our transitional minister, a title that Tom Singleton coined at a council meeting. Debbie’s time as our spiritual leader proved to be vital and life-giving, as we flailed a while to accustom ourselves to meeting online and to adopting the distancing, masking, and sanitizing required of us. Assurance came from moderator Bob Kirk that we would, indeed, live through the time of uncertainty and that protecting the health of our congregation and community was the highest priority.

On April 10th Governor Lamont lowered flags to half-mast in recognition of suffering during the pandemic. Easter came, and the deacons kept the celebration as normal as possible. The flower cross was laid on the front steps of the church. With organist Leilani’s help and leadership, ways to provide music for online services were explored. Kathy Packard, Glenn Boies, and Leslie Sweetnam and Eva Hulme provided music in Holy Week.

Lisa Haupt communicated with each child in the church and made Easter bags of treats and resources for home-based activity. Parishioners dropped by to place flowers in the cross on the front steps of the church, and the large wooden cross was laid by a tree. The deacons continued to make phone calls to all members to maintain connection and to minister to need.

Tech troubles continued to plague worship efforts. With no clear point person and inadequate understanding and equipment, sound production and video renderings were distractingly imperfect. Nonetheless, Donna Dufresne managed an inspiring Earth Day celebration on April 19th, reading her own poem and delivering the sermon.

The month of May began with song from Jen Beck and Jan Lamarre, a partnership that endured for more Sundays later on. May 24th marked Music Appreciation Sunday with many participants and Ted's inaugural concert on his "garage organ," an instrument that he assembled over a period of years on his property in Union.

On May 25th George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis by a police officer, with the whole world watching. In the aftermath, the Black Lives Matter movement took hold, and demonstrations were organized in many places around the globe. Former church member David Brush wrote in a letter to friends, "I weep for my country... This nation, once the light and hope of the world, a beacon of freedom for all, a society messy and always conflicted, but growing by tackling the deep flaws of discrimination at all levels... now lies at a crossroads." Here in Woodstock, a small demonstration along Route 169 was marred by the arrival of threatening drivers of trucks who trolled slowly by the assembled crowd.

Against this backdrop and the appearance of Black Lives Matter signs on lawn, including one at church, worship and activity continued. Rev. Debbie held church for about 40 masked and distanced people each week on the front lawn, adjourning to the back lawn of the parsonage to isolate worship from traffic noise on Route 169. Glitches in sound production persisted, but musicians provided joyful glue for the sections of each service – Abby and Rick Lamarre on guitar, Kathy Packard, Donna Dufresne, Holly Ware, Jeff Perkins, and later Ellen Chase, Glenn Boies, and Laura Bond. On June 14th, Rev. Debbie arranged for the online appearances of Dr. Sem Abebe and Raquel Knight, both articulate spokespersons on issues of racial inequality and justice.

In July union services began with East Woodstock, continuing through the month of August. On July 17th civil rights activist and senator John Lewis died, giving rise to resounding tributes to his life and legacy. He was the master of starting "good trouble," and he spoke clearly about the work before us as a nation.

Also in July a Hallmark movie cast and crew inserted a weird interlude into church life with the spraying of fake snow for the filming of *The Royal Holiday*, fashioning sets at our church, Woodstock Academy, and the Inn. We are still finding bits of "snow" in the shrubbery.

In the fall, outdoor worship continued with the unforeseen dividends of birdsong, fresh breezes, and outdoor conversations over coffee. On the 12th of September, Lisa Haupt organized the showing of the film *A Wrinkle in Time* on a backdrop hung on the front of the church, with assistance from Ted Bradley. Ruth Bader Ginsburg died on September 18th, bringing another outpouring of grief and vigil on the steps of the Supreme Court.

On September 25th a late afternoon service was followed by an outdoor concert and picnic. This occasion proved to be Ted Bradley's last appearance as our music director, as he resigned following cuts to the music budget under pandemic constraints. Holly Ware gave a fine tribute to Ted on his departure, and he remains as sexton for the church.

October brought Charlene Swanson's grand news from the search committee that Rev. Kevin Downer had agreed to become our settled minister. His candidating weekend allowed church members to meet Kevin and his husband, Toby Bishop, in outdoor settings that gave opportunity for greeting and masked fellowship. From his first Sunday on October 25th through the middle of November, weather allowed for outdoor worship. Rev.

Kevin urged us on the first Sunday of November to “rise up and get out of the boat!” We are called to bridge the gap, to put love ahead of fear, and to use obstacles as stepping stones to progress. By November 22nd, we had achieved a seamless virtual service format, thanks to the tremendous effort and expertise of Rev. Kevin and to the labor of those who assisted, notably deacons Rick Singh and Bruce Staehle, and Rick Lamarre. A joyful outcome of the reliance on virtual recording was that members of other churches, family members, and musicians separated by long distance were able to “perform” together in innovative combinations for worship. Ellen Chase was instrumental in starting the chain of communication and IT manipulation that allowed for this modality. In addition, the deacons read scripture from their homes and back yards, and families recorded themselves for the traditional lighting of Advent candles in their homes, all warm and welcome parts of Advent worship. Organist Leilani Nixon provided leadership in organizing and underpinning song with organ, piano, and outdoors on keyboard..

In the first week of December, Rev. Kevin began a series of Zoom meetings to plot strategy for 2021 and beyond. Members assigned themselves to one of four sessions – worship and music, personal growth and spiritual exploration, communication and technology, and fundraising. Kevin then compiled the resulting ideas and “aha” revelations as a platform for future planning and progress. He urged us to believe in the long arc of history described by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to trust the assurance of God’s faithfulness. We continue to follow the light, to become more the selves that God wants us to be, to learn from one another and from our histories.

We have learned more indelibly than before that “Life needs Truth,” as a *New York Times* news retrospective displays. One of the last lines on that platform reads, “How we spend our days is how we spend our lives.” May God keep us as we go.

Alexandra Lyman
Historian

REPORT OF THE TREASURER
2020 Financial Overview

Summary

During the operating year 2020, revenues (\$202,409) fell short of budget expectations, but this was offset by lower than budgeted actual expenses (\$180,947). A positive beginning cash balance in the operating fund carried over from 2019 aided in meeting expenses and pursuing some major facility maintenance projects.

The most significant impact on revenues was the necessary cancellation of our major fundraising events due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges, creativity and a lot of people working in new ways brought off a modified Christmas on the Hill that raised over \$9,000!

The awarding of a Federal Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan/grant (\$19,000) was a great help in enabling the church to maintain all staff on payroll through June, despite not being able to conduct worship services “in person” or count on planned fundraising revenues.

With funds carried over from 2019, we were able to complete the restoration of Off-Budget Restricted funds that had been borrowed from in prior years. Those funds have been fully restored to their original balances.

Operations through the year were enhanced through off-budget funding which allowed for a variety of facility improvements, most notably major roof replacement work. This was funded through very generous “Angel” donations and CT Historical Commission grant funds.

The year ended with a positive operating fund cash balance moving into 2021. This will allow a continuity of operations as well as designating reserve funds for continuing capital projects and necessary technological upgrades to meet the challenges of “remote worship.”

Respectfully,

Carl Davis, Treasurer

BUDGET VS. ACTUALS: FCCW OPERATING BUDGET 2020 - FY20 P&L CLASSES

January - December 2020

	TOTAL			
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	OVER BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
Income				
400.000 Local Income				
400.100 Pledges	139,035.10	140,471.00	-1,435.90	98.98 %
400.101 Other Local Income	30,867.92	18,500.00	12,167.92	165.77 %
400.104 Community Kitchen Local	3,718.00	1,500.00	2,218.00	247.87 %
400.107 Room & Equip. Use Income	750.00	1,500.00	-750.00	50.00 %
400.108 Special Fundraising				
400.301 Chicken Barbeque Income		9,000.00	-9,000.00	
400.304 Christmas on the Hill Income	9,999.42	12,000.00	-2,000.58	83.33 %
400.305 Rummage Sale Income		700.00	-700.00	
400.307 Bed & Breakfast Income		3,500.00	-3,500.00	
400.308 Arts Festival Income		3,000.00	-3,000.00	
400.309 Pick a Party		3,500.00	-3,500.00	
400.310 Other	2,111.50	1,500.00	611.50	140.77 %
Total 400.108 Special Fundraising	12,110.92	33,200.00	-21,089.08	36.48 %
400.120 Parsonage Rental	15,600.00	15,600.00	0.00	100.00 %
400.160 New Century Fund Withdrawal		10,300.00	-10,300.00	
Total 400.000 Local Income	201,881.94	221,071.00	-19,189.06	91.32 %
410.000 Wider Income				
410.102 One Great Hour	99.47		99.47	
410.105 Other Special Offerings	427.94		427.94	
Total 410.000 Wider Income	527.41		527.41	
Total Income	\$202,409.35	\$221,071.00	\$ -18,661.65	91.56 %
GROSS PROFIT	\$202,409.35	\$221,071.00	\$ -18,661.65	91.56 %
Expenses				
500.000 Minister Expenses				
500.101 Minister Salary	33,281.60	37,255.00	-3,973.40	89.33 %
500.102 Minister Annuity (14% Sal+Hous)	10,495.08	4,381.00	6,114.08	239.56 %
500.103 Minister Housing Allowance	1,750.00	7,370.00	-5,620.00	23.74 %
500.104 Minister Mileage Reimbursement	199.50	1,500.00	-1,300.50	13.30 %
500.105 Minister Continuing Ed	990.00	500.00	490.00	198.00 %
500.106 Minister Professional Expenses	198.70	500.00	-301.30	39.74 %
500.107 Substitute Ministers		1,500.00	-1,500.00	
500.108 Minister Health Insurance		6,938.00	-6,938.00	
500.109 Minister Life/Dis (1.5% S+H)		559.00	-559.00	
500.110 Minister Dental Insur		564.00	-564.00	
500.111 Minister Vision Insurance		92.00	-92.00	
500.112 Minister SS Offset	2,044.23	3,522.20	-1,477.97	58.04 %
500.113 Minister Sabbatical Fund		500.00	-500.00	
500.114 Minister Experience Supplement	0.00	2,080.00	-2,080.00	0.00 %
Total 500.000 Minister Expenses	48,959.11	67,261.20	-18,302.09	72.79 %
502.000 Music Program				

BUDGET VS. ACTUALS: FCCW OPERATING BUDGET 2020 - FY20 P&L CLASSES

January - December 2020

	TOTAL			
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	OVER BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
502.101 Sr. Choir Dir salary	4,493.85	6,454.00	-1,960.15	69.63 %
502.102 Organist salary	7,750.46	7,762.00	-11.54	99.85 %
502.103 Organist substitutes	500.00	500.00	0.00	100.00 %
502.104 Music Misc. Expenses	183.75	300.00	-116.25	61.25 %
502.105 Handbell Director salary	1,139.74	1,714.00	-574.26	66.50 %
502.107 Instrument Repair		400.00	-400.00	
502.108 Musical Gift to Community		2,800.00	-2,800.00	
Total 502.000 Music Program	14,067.80	19,930.00	-5,862.20	70.59 %
503.000 Family Ministry				
503.101 Family Ministry Director salary	17,789.40	17,816.00	-26.60	99.85 %
503.103 Family Ministry materials/ministry	794.33	1,000.00	-205.67	79.43 %
Total 503.000 Family Ministry	18,583.73	18,816.00	-232.27	98.77 %
504.000 Operations				
504.101 Clerk stipend	300.00	300.00	0.00	100.00 %
504.104 Administrative Asst. salary	18,812.96	18,843.00	-30.04	99.84 %
504.106 Sexton salary	11,200.34	11,219.00	-18.66	99.83 %
504.107 Payroll taxes	4,680.68	5,000.00	-319.32	93.61 %
504.108 Workers' Comp Insurance	1,515.25	2,100.00	-584.75	72.15 %
504.109 Office Supplies	1,990.88	3,000.00	-1,009.12	66.36 %
504.110 Telephone	1,586.40	1,800.00	-213.60	88.13 %
504.111 Professional services	1,314.96	7,000.00	-5,685.04	18.79 %
504.112 Staff Professional Development	110.00		110.00	
504.113 Search Committee	251.61	1,500.00	-1,248.39	16.77 %
504.114 Outreach Program Expenses	93.51	200.00	-106.49	46.76 %
504.115 Publicity	125.00	814.40	-689.40	15.35 %
504.116 Mileage Reimbursement	168.20	200.00	-31.80	84.10 %
504.117 Restore Off-Budget Restr Funds	1,977.35	2,000.00	-22.65	98.87 %
Total 504.000 Operations	44,127.14	53,976.40	-9,849.26	81.75 %
505.000 Property Expenses				
505.101 Property Insurance	12,141.25	10,700.00	1,441.25	113.47 %
505.102 Fuel Expense	4,878.29	7,298.40	-2,420.11	66.84 %
505.103 Electricity Expense	2,906.57	3,200.00	-293.43	90.83 %
505.104 Maintenance	6,984.37	7,500.00	-515.63	93.12 %
505.105 Grounds maint.	102.05	1,000.00	-897.95	10.21 %
505.107 Copier Lease	2,902.20	3,100.00	-197.80	93.62 %
505.108 Parsonage Maint.	32.98	2,000.00	-1,967.02	1.65 %
505.109 Parsonage Property Tax	6,611.34	4,500.00	2,111.34	146.92 %
505.111 Water System Maint.	1,088.07	1,000.00	88.07	108.81 %
Total 505.000 Property Expenses	37,647.12	40,298.40	-2,651.28	93.42 %
506.000 Other Expenses				
506.100 Hospitality/Catering	185.47	1,000.00	-814.53	18.55 %
506.101 Diaconate expenses	634.05	1,000.00	-365.95	63.41 %

BUDGET VS. ACTUALS: FCCW OPERATING BUDGET 2020 - FY20 P&L CLASSES

January - December 2020

	TOTAL			
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	OVER BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
506.103 Windham dues	289.00	428.00	-139.00	67.52 %
506.104 Community Kitchen	2,100.62	1,500.00	600.62	140.04 %
506.106 Outreach Missions	3,502.21	4,000.00	-497.79	87.56 %
Total 506.000 Other Expenses	6,711.35	7,928.00	-1,216.65	84.65 %
510.000 Wider Expenses				
510.100 CT UCC Contribution	8,660.00	8,660.00	0.00	100.00 %
510.105 Other Special Offering expenses	1,269.44		1,269.44	
Total 510.000 Wider Expenses	9,929.44	8,660.00	1,269.44	114.66 %
520.000 Capital Expenses				
520.100 Plant, Property & Equip. Exp.	921.09	1,000.00	-78.91	92.11 %
Total 520.000 Capital Expenses	921.09	1,000.00	-78.91	92.11 %
Total Expenses	\$180,946.78	\$217,870.00	\$ -36,923.22	83.05 %
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$21,462.57	\$3,201.00	\$18,261.57	670.50 %
NET INCOME	\$21,462.57	\$3,201.00	\$18,261.57	670.50 %