

A. Upcoming Activities and Dates

Dec 24	10a	Christmas Pageant
Dec 24	7:30p	Christmas Eve
Dec 25	Jan 1	Last week of Vacation
Dec 31	10a	New Year's Brunch
Jan 2	7p	Annual Report Content Due
Jan 21	7p	Feb-Mar Newsletter content Due
Feb 14		Ash Wednesday

I will take my last week of vacation beginning Dec 25 and I will be taking a course and unavailable Saturdays January 9 – April 20.

B. Webinars and Training

Jan 15	2-3:30p	FCCW	SNEUCC Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Service featuring the Donald A. Wells Preaching Prize winner
Jan 24	7:30p	Finance	SNEUCC Orientation for Financial Leaders
Jan 25	7-8p	FIA	PRC Out of the Pew and Into the Community
Jan 30	2-3p	FF	PRC Practical Practices for Faith in Families
Feb 1	2-3p	FIA Care	PRC The Crisis of Loneliness and What the Church Can Do
Feb 19	7:30p	Stewardship, GB	SNEUCC Cultivating Generous Congregations
Feb 28	7:30p	Vision, GB, FCCW	SNEUCC Rebirth and Renewal - reimagine ministry and engage new people
Feb 29	2-3p	Vision, GB, FCCW	PRC Does your church's culture impede creativity and change?

C. Ministry Update

A great deal of effort over the last month has gone into distilling the comments and ideas gathered through the Ministry Planning process. Please see the Draft 2024 Integrated Ministry Plan document.

My focus in the coming year will be facilitating and/or encouraging the important conversations that need to happen to clarify the direction, solidify our structure, and begin exploring the potential path(s) for our future. Many of these conversations are listed in the Ministry Plan. Additional conversations include working with the deacons to clarify and transition historic tasks.

The Vision and Values team will be launching the Vision phase early in the New Year and will encourage congregants to gather in House Church/small groups for a meal, prayer, and conversation during lent.

D. Communications

We will not publish a newsletter in January. We will continue to send out weekly emails. The next newsletter will be sent out the Monday following the Annual Meeting. It will be for the period February-March (Lent – Easter). With the exception of a brief update regarding the results of the annual meeting, the deadline for all other content is January 21.

E. Summary Keeping Our Sacred Spaces Open & Safe

The afternoon of Nov 18, SNEUCC hosted a presentation by Homeland Security and the Insurance Board regarding church safety.

The meeting was divided into two parts: a) Keeping the Building and Occupants Safe (led by John Warren from CISA, i.e., Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, part of Department of Homeland Security) and b) Keeping children and vulnerable persons safe (led by Elizabeth Vance from UCC Insurance Board). Part a included conversation about active shooters, evacuation plans, and other safety issues such as fire hazards, etc. For example, the presenter observed that the Shrewsbury church's natural gas connection rises out of the ground unprotected two feet into the paved parking area. The presenter shared that Active Shooter events are rare, and rare still in houses of worship, and though we should be prepared and have a plan there are other more obvious threats that we should pay attention to.

Homeland Security has a self-assessment on their website specifically focused on Houses of Worship. They also provide (for free) an onsite assessment. The Insurance Board and Homeland Security also have training for the "Power of Welcome," i.e., training greeters and ushers to observe and address people entering in who seem out of place or distraught.

Resources from CISA

[CISA House of Worship Self-Assessment Tool](#)

Protecting Houses of Worship [Resources](#)

[Bleeding Control](#) for the Injured

*IS-907: [Active Shooter](#): What You Can Do

CISA [De-Escalation](#)

CISA Tabletop Exercise Program ([CTEP](#))

The second part of the afternoon focused on Safe Church. Led by the Insurance Board, they too have free training and self-assessments available to all, whether clients of the Insurance Board or not. The major takeaways from this conversation include moving the culture of the church from complacency and compliance to commitment; and ensuring that ALL building users are aware of and adhere to policies that meet or exceed our safe church policies. (An annual review of the policies and sign off by church ministry leaders and building users is advised).

The slide presentation by Elizabeth Vance from UCC Insurance Board can be found [here](#).

Valerie Law from East Woodstock also attended (we were the only two from all of Connecticut). We spoke during the break and after the meeting about working together in this regard. Having our respective congregations do the self-assessments, schedule a day when Homeland Security to assess our two congregations, and having a leader training session about the Power of Welcome and other safety related topics. She is bringing this back to East to pursue.

F. Annual Meeting Preparation

The following is a summary of the preparations necessary for the Annual Meeting. As a Governing Board, it will be helpful to review and refine this list in advance of each Annual and Special Congregational Meeting, establishing accountabilities and dates for activity completion.

	What	Who	
1	Member List Review	Stewardship / Clerk	At least two months prior to meeting; Review by Pastor, Deacons, GB, others
2	Newcomer brunch/Membership class	Pastor	Optional; at least one week prior to meeting
3	Materials preparation		
a	Governing Board Nominations	GB	
b	Annual Report	Leaders	Edit support from Communications Coordinator (C.C.)
c	Budget	Finance	
d	Agenda	Moderator	
e	Bylaw Proposals	GB	
4	Meeting Announcement and Call created/published	Clerk	At least two weeks prior to meeting; Assistance from C.C. and Webmaster
a	Video Link/Call In information for ACM created		
b	Call created and posted at least two weeks prior		
5	Briefings/Second Hour Conversations Budget, Bylaws, etc.	GB, Finance	
6	Presentations materials finalized	GB, Finance	
7	Documents posted to webpage and distributed via email	C.C. & Webmaster	
8	Meeting Preparation		
a	Current Active Member List created for sign in and online check in	Clerk	Support from Communications Coordinator (C.C.)
b	Materials prepared for meeting, e.g., Agenda, Presentations, Proposals, Reports, etc.	GB, Finance	
c	Technology set up for virtual meeting		
9	Meeting Execution		
a	Copies of current Bylaws and meeting materials easily accessible for clerk, moderator, presenters; and at one copy for in-person participants		* readily accessible for online host and/or online participants.
b	Microphones strategically places to amplify sound of presenters and congregants		
c	Presentation projection		
10	Post Meeting Summary and Follow up		
a	Governing Board special meeting to elect officers and assign responsibilities (optional or wait until	GB	

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	next regular Governing Board Meeting)		
b	Summary of meeting actions and highlights (with Pictures) for the newsletter and to communicate meeting results to the congregation via newsletter, bulletin, and share	GB member	
c	Bylaw changes incorporated into official bylaws, reviewed, and posted soon after meeting	Clerk	
d	Governing Board post meeting review and reflection: What worked, what can we do better?	GB	

Recommendations based on recent meetings:

- a. Meeting presenters and moderators meet sometime prior to the day of the meeting to work through logistics, talking points, and ensure they have the materials needed.
- b. All who will speak during the meeting, whether from the board or congregation be required to speak into a microphone to help those who are hard of hearing and those who are online.
- c. A microphone be placed on the floor in the front of the congregation, and speakers be asked to come forward and speak into the microphone
- d. Technology be tested in advance of the meeting to ensure people online can hear, positioning of laptop is conducive to online participation, and presentations/documents can be shared as needed.
- e. Consider projecting the Google Meets Session on a screen to make online participants more visible and remind in-person participants that they are not alone
- f. Governing Board Members, including the clerk and treasurer, sit together in the front of the congregation.
- g. Assign a member of the Governing Board responsibility to address bylaw questions and look up/quote existing bylaws as needed.

G. Next Steps regarding our Future

As the Vision and values team prepares the congregation to explore the vision god has for our ministry, we also need to work on two other interrelated sets of activities, i.e., Describing the alternative paths we may pursue and Working with Rev. Steinbrecher to organize a workshop in the late winter/early spring regarding collaboration and creative models for ministry.

Broadly speaking there are five paths: Regeneration, Collaboration, Yoking, Merging, Closing. These are generalizations and it is likely that our future will be found through a blend of these activities and may even lead to using our assets to give birth to new ministry forms. In a follow-up email conversation with Rev. Steinbrecher, she suggest that a great place for us to start is to explore Module 1 of the ADAPT program, as this will guide us through various questions and conversations that will help us regarding where we are and our energy is as well. <https://www.sneucc.org/adapt>

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