

Ministry Update Report September 2024

A. Upcoming Activities and Dates

Sept 10	7p	Creative Worship Team
Sept 15	1p	John Eliot Commemoration
Sept 19	1:30p	Wisdom and Spirituality of Aging
Sept 29	11a	2 nd Hour Vision
Sept 29	1p	Crop Walk
Oct 1		Before Snow Falls mailing
Oct 5	10a	Blessing of the Animals
Oct 13		Pledge Campaign Launch
Oct 17	1:30p	Fall Prevention presentation
Oct 20	10a	Copeland Baptism
Oct 24	tbd	Fall Prevention Clinic
Nov 3		Pledge Sunday

B. Upcoming Training and Workshops

When		Who	
Sept 23 & 30	8-9p	Facilities Care	Community Safety Training Series Online Registration link or go to UCC.org Sep 23, 2024 08:00 PM Sep 30, 2024 08:00 PM
Sept 14	8a-5p	FIA	2024 Justice Summit: Politics as an Act of Faith; Middletown and Online Registration link or go to SNEUCC.org
Sept 17	12-1p	Facilities FIA/Green	Saving Energy at Your House of Worship IREJN Small Business and Micro Business Energy Advantage programs Register: https://savingenergyatyourhouseofworship.eventbrite.com
Sept 19	2p	Worship Faith Formation FIA	Hope is here! Spiritual practices for pursuing justice and beloved community Online Registration link or go to PRC.org
Sept 26	2-3p	FIA	Wait, is this racist? Online Registration link or go to PRC.org
Sept 28	10a-2p	FIA Care	Intro to Gender & Trans/Nonbinary Affirmation Online Registration link or go to SNEUCC.org Same Content as Aug 9
Oct 3	2-3p	Care Faith Formation	Managing Stress Before it Manages You Online Registration link or go to PRC.org
Oct 10	2-3p	Worship Faith Formation	Intergenerational Ministry Interest Session with GenOn Online Registration link or go to PRC.org
Oct 24	2-3p	Various	Truly Welcoming Environments for Today's Unchurched

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			Online Registration link or go to PRC.org
Oct 29	2-3p	Care	Healing Fractured Communities Online Registration link or go to PRC.org
Oct 30	12-1p	Finance	IREJN Direct Pay Federal Tax Credits: Funding for your learn about the 30% Direct Pay Federal Rebate program and how you can apply it to a variety of projects, including solar, geothermal heat pumps, and electric vehicles. Register: https://directpayfundingforyourcongregation.eventbrite.com
Nov 13	12-1p	Finance	IREJN This Historic House of Worship: Funding through Preservation CT learn about historic designation and funding possibilities available for restoration. Register: https://thisoldhouseofworshippreservationfunding.eventbrite.com
Nov 21	2-3p	Worship Communica tions	The Art of Hospitality Online Registration link or go to PRC.org

The above are all free, unless otherwise noted. Signup for SNEUCC and PRC newsletters and/or review the events calendar on SNEUCC.ORG and webinars page on PRC.ORG for more items of interest.

C. Ministry Update

1. Faith Formation

Confirm Not Conform

No Update.

Weekly Prayer Meetings

Weekly meetings have begun. The format is flexible, open to all and focused on being present with one another and to God as we pray for our world, country, congregation, and community.

Wednesday at 6:30p.

Houses of Hope

Four individuals have committed to be part of the discernment team. We have room for up to three more people. I will make an announcement Sunday, so we can finalize the team.

I also have heard from two people who offered (if we need them). In addition, I received positive responses from four other people affirming the value of participating, but that they are unable to be part of the Discernment Team. And I received one email from a congregant who is not too keen on discernment, visioning, etc.

Next steps:

- We are arranging a preliminary “Get to Know You” conversation in the next two weeks. The conversation is a way for the Program Director and potential coaches to learn more

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about us to help them connect us with a coach. I am trying to find a time when most, if not all, of the team can participate.

Wisdom and Spirituality of Aging

Thursday Sept 19, I will facilitate a conversation regarding Spirituality and Aging as part of the Senior Social program.

2. Faith In Action

Doing Justice

Interfaith Conversations and working toward Justice

The community conversations continue as we broaden the circle to include more congregations and conversations. As the next meeting is on the second Tuesday of the month, I will not be able to attend.

Loving Our Neighbors

John Eliot Commemoration

Sunday at 1pm on the South Common we will commemorate the arrival of John Eliot to the area. We have worked with Covenant Church, Faith Community Church, and South Baptist Church to plan the event. The Nipmuc people withdrew from the event as the short format (45 minutes) would not allow them to adequately share their story and history.

John Eliot's arrival is a challenging part of the Nipmuc people's history. We have committed to work with the Nipmuc people to find a way to create the kinds of events that would allow them the time and space to share their stories and culture.

Crop Walk

Debby Kirk is leading our team. this year's Crop Walk is September 29 at 1pm at the Fox Hill Farms Corn Maze. <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/cropwalks/event/danielsonct>

You can join or sponsor our team, which is listed as FCC Woodstock Walkers.

3. Care Ministry and the Deacons

The deacon's fund currently has an \$10,000 balance. We have been approach by Covenant Church to share the cost of a benevolence request across multiple Woodstock congregations. We are unclear whether we will support the request, however this is a unique situation, and a positive sign in the growing collaboration among our congregations.

4. Worship

Summer Worship

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The second half of the Summer worship included a joyful exploration of trips and travels as a spiritual metaphor for life. Feedback from congregants from both congregations confirmed that this series connected with people, was affirming and joyful, and explored the power and potential of intentional ritual, e.g., the pouring of the water each Sunday, and music that supported the messages each week.

Noah's leadership was appreciated and it is obvious how far he has come in his craft and confidence. A special version of the video from the Sunday he preached has been created to support him as he progresses in his ordination.

The videos from all of the Summer services have been edited and uploaded to our YouTube channel.

Autumn Worship Planning August 10

Fourteen people attended the Worship Planning mini retreat August 10.

We had a brief service of worship, reviewed the Autumn Themes and Resources (including the Worship Team's group study), explored ideas, and shared hopes and prayers. The notes from the meeting have been posted in the Worship Planning Google drive and sent to the participants, Creative Worship Team, and Deacons.

As part of our opening worship, we asked participants to share their prayer for our congregation and worship in the coming year. They shared the following,

I pray ...

- for joyful enthusiasm for the church's purpose,
- that all our members continue to thrive and grow in our faith,
- that we always endeavor to look past the divisions of the wider world to those things which bind us together,
- that we meet one another in openness and joy as empty vessels to be filled with the spirit and need of another,
- that we look for the work at hand and do our best to cooperate in accomplishing it,
- for more parishioners,
- for the continuation of outreach within the whole community, e.g., Community Kitchen or a secular discussion group where social, financial, and political actions are assessed,
- that we look for the face of God in our community and acknowledge the gifts each person brings,
- that we find kindness, siphon away anger, ground in earth-harmony before looking the other in the eye,
- that, with thanksgiving and contemplation, we love one another more deeply, as Jesus first loved us,
- for love, in unity and peace,
- that we continue to be a loving community as we discern where we are headed as a congregation,

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- that God help us to list to God and one another as we “Imagine Together” the goodness that we can share,
- that we are able to share the joy of hope of God’s love with each other and beyond our congregation into the world,
- that the congregation experience the joyful, playful presence of God in Christ,
- that we grow beyond what we think and feel possible – to be open to positive possibility.

Autumn Worship

The themes and readings have been identified through the end of November. Orders of Worship have been completed through the end of September, and the plan is to complete the Orders of Worship through November 3 by the end of this week.

Autumn themes include:

- Sept 8 – Sept 29 Sacred Earth, Sacred Work
- Oct 5 Blessing of Animals and their Care takers
- Oct 6 – Nov 3 Love One Another
- Nov 10 - 24 Imagine Together (Connect to the stewardship theme)

Sept 29	2 nd Hour Vision
Oct 13	Pledge Campaign Launch (featuring Stone Soup)
Oct 20	Copeland Baptism
Oct 27	All Saints Sunday
Nov 3	Pledge Sunday
Nov 10	Community Kitchen celebration

As part of the Stewardship Campaign, Rick Lamarre, Bob Kirk and Bruce Lyman, and one other (yet to be named person) will offer morning reflections. We will seek to connect the messages with the Sunday themes, especially if the message is more than a 3 minute story.

Worship Design Studio Reboot Your Worship

In the late spring, at my request, the Creative Worship Team agreed to explore the six-part group study from *Worship Design Studio* called *Reboot Your Worship*.

This month’s session is Session 1, Intentional Spiritual Journeys.

Key points include:

Why Create Worship in Series? Songs have verses. Books have chapters. Movies have sequels. The logic is that we move from one verse, chapter or sequel to the next because we want to deepen our experience of a story or idea. So it is with the spiritual journey called worship series.

1. Worship series help us be on a communal spiritual journey.
2. Worship series help us remember and reinforce messages over time.
3. Worship series are a container for the familiar and the new.
4. Worship series helps the worship team not get burned out doing sensory-rich and creative worship.
5. Worship series act as an “on-ramp” for new sojourners. T

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Marcia Mcfee then walked us through her process for creating a series, beginning with the Visionary Retreat, which explores questions about where the congregation is and what some of the messages that we need to here might be. All of this is framed with the context of the church year as a spiritual journey that can be thematically explored whether we are using the lectionary always, sometimes, or never.

In addition to the videos, PDFs and support material cover how to create a series theme and logo, royalty free images and more.

Based on our license, anyone who is identified as part of our team can access the materials. So anyone who wishes to access the materials is welcomed to do so.

D. Communications

Church Trac Migration

Following an evaluation of the capabilities of ChurchTrac. We agreed to migrate from Church Windows to ChurchTrac. <https://www.churchtrac.com/> This process will begin as soon as we can get our data extracted, formatted and then uploaded by ChurchTrac. (Our test data only included a subset of our information).

Our annual subscription is based on the number of active names in our database, inactive/archived names do not count. There are many overview and training videos available on their [YouTube Channel](#) including Short Getting Started videos, e.g., [GettingStarted](#), [Events and Registration](#), the [ChurchConnect App](#). As well as longer (45 min) MaterClass videos on various topics.

In addition to names and member management, giving and pledging, ChurchTrac brings a number of capabilities not currently available in Church Windows (or available at a considerably more costly subscription). This includes the following:

- an app so families and individuals can update their own information,
- online access to an updated directory of names (people do not need to be named users to access this, and access can be determined based on groups, e.g., Deacons, Board, etc)
- We also have the ability to add up to 10 named users, a Named user will be able to add and change member information, add and change pledge and giving information, receive registration signup information, and/or modify events (access to functionality can be based on user authority level, and done at the user level as well).
- event registration with QR code generation (and the ability to sell tickets through the giving app)
- a potential replacement option for our website
- A more intuitive names management and entry
- The ability to group people by roles, interests, activities, etc. both manually and through rules – and the ability to create reports and perform other actions based on the groupings
- The ability to send SMS, text, and voice messages (for pennies per recipient)
- Integration with MailChimp so email addresses and mailing lists can be maintained in only one place

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We have a meeting Monday at 2pm with Churchtrac to get us started. In the meantime I am investigating how to migrate and replace the test data with our full set of data.

Canva account

We now have a Teams Subscription to Canva's graphic design software. Canva offers the collaborative Teams version free to Nonprofits. You can watch a three minute video overview here:

[Welcome to Canva Teams](#)

If linked video does not work copy the following into a browser <https://youtu.be/Bktg3QkM77A> ChurchTrac also has a 45 minute Master Class regarding [Canva Templates for Churches](#).

Canva has a number of tools and templates that can quickly help us design high quality, professional looking communications. We can share and collaborate in the creation and review of posters, images, etc. And we can (and will) establish design standards regarding the size, look, and feel for our communication, including graphics for email, posters, and tiles for the website.

We can have up to 50 named users for the account. Anyone who will be creating graphics, posters, etc. for the congregation should consider using Canva and can get a free account by contacting Pastor Kevin.

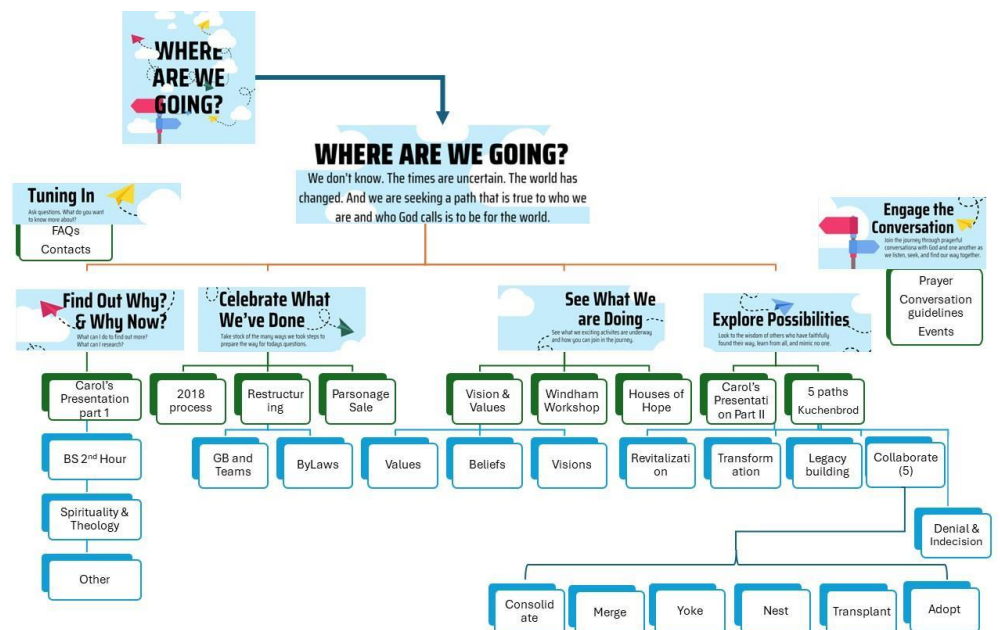
Debby Kirk is very familiar with using Canva and has offered to hold a training session.

Embracing the Next Portal

The first functional draft of the information hub/portal has been created.

The purpose of the site is to organize and make available various documents, presentations, and articles that inform our thinking as we explore our future. And to do so in a way that is accessible to congregants.

To make it easier to maintain, I built the site using Google Sites and located in the Governing Board's Google Drive in a new subfolder called "Embracing the Next."



Related case studies linked/listed

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This means that any of the Governing Board Members can modify content.

I also created folders related to the various pages, Why, Done, Doing, Possibilities, Other. I moved the next steps write ups to the Possibilities subfolder. This is to help us maintain the content as we move forward and give access to the content in the “Embracing the Next” folder and subfolders to non-GoverningBoard members.

I am happy to walk this through and show you how to update the site (if you want to) or drop content into the appropriate subfolder and let me know that it is there.

This portal will be linked to our website through a page called “Where Are We Going”. To see how this will work, you can following this link, which is live
<http://firstchurchwoodstock.org/where-are-we-going/>

The direct link to the site is
<https://sites.google.com/firstchurchwoodstock.org/wherearewegoing>

For now, I could use your eyes to help clean up typo’s, think about the navigation/presentation, and identify additional content.

E. Other Updates

Stewardship

The Stewardship Team (Kathy P, Ruth T., Marylou) met August 21. We reviewed the member list, and sent names to the deacons. We will review them with the Governing Board Wednesday evening.

The Campaign, Imagine Together, will kick off October 10 and Conclude November 10. We are following the model from previous years.

We have inserts from the UCC for the Worship Bulletins for the Sunday’s October 20th through November 10.

Noah was Unanimously Approved to be an MID August 20.

Time Away/Time Off

Because of Ellen Holley’s death and a few other things that needed to be addressed, I did not take the last week of August off as intended. I did have the day of Toby and my anniversary off (August 25) because Noah agreed to preach and we are grateful.

I will take time in the coming month, though it will likely be partial weeks. I let you know more as plans settle in.