

Ministry Update Report September 2024

A. Upcoming Activities and Dates

Oct 13	Worship	Pledge Campaign Launch
Oct 17	1:30p	Fall Prevention presentation
Oct 19/20	Worship	Craft Fair
Oct 20	10a	Copeland Baptism
Oct 24	tbd	Fall Prevention Clinic
Oct 27	Worship	All Saints Day
Nov 3	Worship	Pledge Sunday
Nov 10	Worship	Community Kitchen Celebration
Nov 10	After worship	Welcome and Information Session visitors and prospective members
Nov 17-22		Silent Auction
Nov 23	10a – 1p	Christmas on the Hill

B. Upcoming Training and Workshops

When		Who	
Oct 8	2:30- 4p	Worship	Intergenerational Music Online Registration Link or go to EngageWorship.org/events
Oct 10	2-3p	Worship Faith Formation	Intergenerational Ministry Interest Session with GenOn Online Registration link or go to PRC.org
Oct 15	12- 1:30p	Various	Countercultural: The Important Work that Begins When Church Doesn't Easily Fit into the Culture (presented by Yale Divinity) Online Registration Link or go to SNEUCC.org
Oct 16	7- 8:30p	Various	Organizing for Small town Churches SNEUCC Individual Rate: \$10 SNEUCC Watch Party (5 or more) Rate: \$45 Online Registration Link or go to SNEUCC.org
Oct 17	12-1p	Facilities, Worship	What does accessibility mean for churches? Online Registration Link or go to SNEUCC.org
Oct 23	6- 8:30p	Worship, FIA	Hospitality and Extravagant Welcome: A Find Hope Now Event Online Registration Link or go to SNEUCC.org October 23 6 - 8:30 pm (a duplicate session will be offered on Nov. 19)
Oct 24	2-3p	Various	Truly Welcoming Environments for Today's Unchurched 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

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Nov 6	12-1:30p	Families	Social Media Smarts: Helping Youth Use New Media in Positive Ways for Good Mental & Spiritual Health with the Rev. Dr. Angela Williams Gorrell, Virtual (Yale Divinity) Online Registration Link or go to SNEUCC.org
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

Continue. They are small gatherings. We sent out a reminder email last week and a few more people attended.

Houses of Hope

On Monday Sept 23rd we held a preliminary meeting with the staff, designers, and coaches from Austin Seminary's Houses of Hope initiative.

We learned that the first phase, discernment includes 4, 90-minutes sessions that are facilitated by a coach and community gathering/meal (the third session) that our team will host and facilitate. They recommend moving through the phase through a period that is 5 to 10 weeks long.

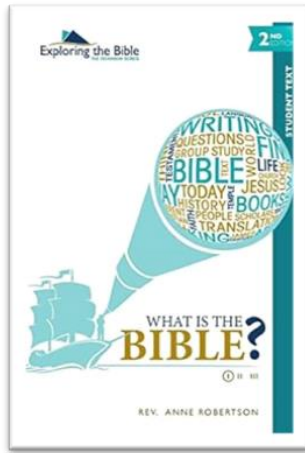
It is our intent to begin in mid to late November and complete Phase I by mid to late January. Based on the team's preferences, we plan to meet Sunday or Mondays in the late afternoon or evening. And we plan to hold the congregational potluck during advent. We are currently working to coordinate calendars.

We will assign one or two people from the team to assess each session as a way of helping the designers improve the program.

Wisdom and Spirituality of Aging

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Thursday Sept 19, 8 people attended the Spirituality and Aging conversation, which was part of the Senior Social program. During the meeting we collected ideas for subsequent sessions, Tai chi seemed to hit a note with several participants.



What is the Bible?

Starting this week, I am gathering the names of people who will be interested in participating in a six part series called, “What is the Bible?” the study is geared toward people who are unfamiliar with and even intimidated by the Bible.

We will use the Dickinson Series’ “What is the Bible?” student text to guide our conversation.

Find out more about the series at <https://www.sneucc.org/exploring-the-bible>

Although dates and times will be determined by those who wish to participate, it is intended to be a Saturday morning conversation.

2. Faith In Action

Faith In Action will be meeting this month to discuss the grant monies and late Fall/Winter activities, including monthly donations for the TEEG food pantry (Soup for October), TEEG Giving Tree, etc.

Updates on recent activities include:

Interfaith Conversations and working toward Justice

Given the priorities of the congregation and that the meetings occur on the fourth Tuesdays, I have paused my involvement with the group.

John Eliot Commemoration

Nearly 50 people from the community attended the 350th event held on the South Common. Overall, the event was well received, including comments that I made to acknowledge the need to listen to the stories of the Nipmuc as the history we have is only part of the story.

I was approached by an individual attending the event who is an organizer for the Native Peoples event being held later this year near Newburyport MA. She is willing to work with us as we work with the Nipmuc peoples to create a forum to listen to their stories.

I have approached Faith In Action about possibly using some of the grant monies to provide seed money to assist the Nipmuc people in creating a program and sharing their stories in the Woodstock School system and greater community.

Crop Walk

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A small contingent of folk walked this year's Crop Walk. Our congregation raised around \$1200, including \$50 Jack raised by soliciting donations from people at the Academy.

3. Care Ministry and the Deacons

The deacons are working on a bylaw change to replace the transitional language about the role of deacons that was put into the bylaws during restructuring. The language will include a brief description of their role and how new deacons are appointed in the future, which will follow the practice adopted by other teams and ministries in the restructuring.

We held a meeting to clarify the interests and commitments among various people helping with several aspects of worship set up. We agreed that we need to make these opportunities more visible and invite newer people into exploring these roles.

4. Worship

Autumn Worship

The themes and readings have been identified through the end of November. Orders of Worship have been completed through the end of November.

Autumn themes include:

Oct 6 – Nov 3 Love One Another

Nov 10 - 24 Imagine Together (Connect to the stewardship theme)

Oct 13	Pledge Campaign Launch (featuring Stone Soup)
Oct 20	Copeland Baptism
Oct 27	All Saints Sunday, Rick Lamarre shares a story
Nov 3	Pledge Sunday
Nov 10	Community Kitchen celebration Bruce and Bob sharing a story about CK Brunch Church
Nov 17	Charles sharing a story about his and Sawyer's ministry to the children and staff at the Sommers Elementary School
Nov 24	Piano Dedication (tbc)

Pet Blessing

Our Pet Blessing on October 5 was a small, and meaningful gathering. We blessed six dogs and one cat, as well as several in virtually.

Certain Worship

The Creative Worship Team has not been able to meet since mid-August due to schedule challenges. Based on the current schedule it appears that Monday evenings will be better than Tuesdays. For the fall. For the coming year I am contemplating 4 quarterly mini-retreats similar to the one held in August, rather than monthly gatherings.

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*.

D. Communications

Church Trac Migration

The Church Trac Migration is now complete. Duplicate names have been resolved, errant data from the migration cleaned up, and mis assigned families fixed.

The next steps include:

1. Rationalize and simplify the predefined groups, many of which are based on a gifts and abilities model called SHAPE.
2. Review and eliminate unnecessary “User Defined Fields” that were carried over in the migration.
3. Describe how we are using various fields and filed values to ensure people are categorized and grouped correctly.
4. Describe the event registration capabilities and expand use for fundraisers, etc.
5. Link the calendar to our google/webcalendar
6. Determine if we will be getting a stripe account, and if so configure the account to accept giving.
7. Investigate access to the directory by groups such as the Governing Board and Deacons.
8. Configure Church Connect
9. Explore what and how members can view directory information
10. Launch the App

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.

Information Hub / Embracing the Next Portal

Due to security concerns the Google Site content for the information portal was moved to our website.

Specifically, just before our launch I read several posts regarding how hackers could use such a site to get to content in the rest of our workspace.



Related case studies linked/listed

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There are ways to secure against this, however it would require configuration and an additional app or two. Lacking the time to investigate and implement, the easier answer was to use the GoogleSite as a prototype and port the content to WordPress.

The portal is still accessed through the About Us Tab or going to <http://firstchurchwoodstock.org/where-are-we-going/>

The upside. With eth content on our website I was able to add submenu items for each page.

E. Other Updates



Stewardship

The Stewardship campaign launches Sunday October 13. Team (Kathy P, Ruth T., Marylou) prepared materials October 6, updated the kiosk in Harrison Hall, and will be featured during the Call for

Offering.

The campaign is called Imagine Together. Inserts from the UCC will appear in Worship Bulletins the Sunday's October 20 through November 10.



New to the Community / Membership calls November 10 following worship.

We have several new people and a few people who have been in the community for a while who are or maybe interested in membership. We will share our stories, get to know one another a little bit better, explore their questions about the congregation, and share some helpful information about our ministries, organization, and how our community works.

Time Away/Time Off

I will the end of October off.

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