



The First Church of Monson
Congregational, United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Church

Two Hundred Sixty-Third Annual Meeting
February 2, 2025

THE FIRST CHURCH OF MONSON
Congregational/United Church of Christ
Established 1762~Incorporated 1946
5 High Street, Monson, MA 01057
413.267.3312 office@firstchurchmonson.org

Warrant for the 263rd Annual Meeting of the First Church of Monson, Inc.

The covenant members of the First Church of Monson, Inc. are hereby warned of the Annual Meeting to be held in the sanctuary on Sunday, February 2, 2025, immediately following the worship service. The covenant members will hear and act upon the following business:

1. Motion to postpone this meeting until Sunday, February 9, 2025, in the sanctuary immediately following the worship service. The covenant members will hear and act upon the following business:
2. A motion to accept the 2024 Annual Reports of the officers, boards, and committees, except the Treasurer's Report, the Stewardship Committee's Report, and the Nominating Slate for 2025.
3. A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for 2024.
4. A motion to accept the 2025 Proposed Budget as recommended by the Stewardship Committee and approved by Church Council.
5. A motion to accept the 2025 slate of officers and members of boards and committees as presented by Church Council.
6. Any other business to be properly presented at this meeting.
7. Motion to adjourn

Respectfully submitted,

Carol E. Mullen, Church Clerk
January 9, 2025

The First Church of Monson
Congregational, United Church of Christ
5 High Street, Monson, MA 01057

Two Hundred Sixty-Third Annual Meeting
February 2, 2025
Agenda

1. Call to Order – 11:00 a.m. Cynthia DeSellier, Moderator
2. Opening Worship and Reading of the Covenant of Respect
3. Reading of Warrant Carol Mullen
4. Reading of Necrology/Moment of Silence
5. Annual Reports of Officers, Delegates, Boards and Committees, except Treasurer and Stewardship, and Slate of Officers, Boards, and Committees
6. Annual Report of Treasurer Suzanne Kelley
7. Budget for 2025 Stewardship Committee
8. Motion to Suspend Article VI, Committees, Section A, Standing Committees, to allow certain persons to serve a third term.
9. Recognition of Outgoing Members of Boards and Committees
10. Slate of Officers, Boards, and Committees
11. Other Business
12. Closing Prayer
13. Adjournment

Table of Contents

<i>Church Clerk's Statistical Report for 2024</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Covenant of Respect</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Annual Meeting Minutes – February 4, 2024</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Special Meeting Minutes – May 5, 2024</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Pastor's Annual Report</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Board of Deacons' Annual Report</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Board of Trustees' Annual Report</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Investment Committee Annual Report</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Stewardship Committee Annual Report</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Music Committee Annual Report</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Christian Education Annual Report</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Sunday School Superintendent's Annual Report</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Outreach Committee Annual Report</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Pastoral Search Committee Annual Report</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Pastor Parish Relations Committee Annual Report</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Hearts Willing Annual Report</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Treasurer's Annual Report</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Consolidated Funds Annual Report</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Proposed Budget for 2025</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Slate of Officers, Boards, and Committees for 2025</i>	<i>29</i>

Church Clerk's Statistical Report for 2024

Baptisms:

April 21, 2024 – Rosalie A. Fox (infant)
June 30, 2024 – Kevin Lindahl (adult)
June 30, 2024 – Levi Lindahl (infant)

Marriages: None

New members received by Letter of Transfer: None

New members received by Confession of Faith:

May 12, 2024 - Alexander Fox
May 12, 2024 - Lauren Fox

Deaths: *denotes a Covenant Member

January 19, 2024 – *Priscilla Martin (joined April 8, 1945)
October 6, 2024 – *Joel Wheeler (joined June 24, 1990)

Removed from covenant membership by vote of Church Council: None

Removed from covenant membership by personal request:

May 22, 2024 – Elizabeth O'Connor
October 29, 2024 – Linda Hatch
October 29, 2024 – Paul Hatch

2024 Membership Summary:

Covenant membership as of December 31, 2023	167
Total received into covenant membership in 2024	2
Total removed from covenant membership in 2024	
Deaths	2
Personal Requests	3
Church Council vote	0
Total covenant membership on December 31, 2024	164

Covenant of Respect

We as members of the First Church of Monson aspire to promote the Kingdom of God by helping to bring persons into a closer relationship with God and into a better relationship with each other. We recognize that conflict and disagreement are normal and natural. We must work toward a safe environment where differing viewpoints are welcomed, sought, heard, and accepted. As followers of Jesus Christ, we promise to respect each other at all times in the following ways:

- R** We will choose to forgive and **respect** one another as we are always forgiven by God. (Luke 11:4)
- E** We will speak face-to-face, honestly with **empathy** when there is disagreement. (Ephesians 4:15)
- S** We will **support** the final outcome when we as a group arrive at a decision. (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- P** We will approach all things **prayerfully**. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- E** We will speak from our own personal **experience**, using “I” statements. (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- C** We will ask an intermediary to be present to help us if we are unable to **communicate** with one another. (Matthew 18:16)
- T** We will listen with an open and non-judgmental mind and **try** as hard to understand as to be understood. (Proverbs 4:7)

Adopted by Church Council, January 9, 2022, and the First Church Monson, February 6, 2022.

Based on the *Covenant of Respect* of Memorial Congregational Church, Sudbury, Massachusetts, and used with permission.

Annual Meeting Minutes – February 4, 2024

262nd Annual Meeting of the First Church of Monson, Inc.

I. Call to Order: Moderator Cynthia DeSellier called the meeting to order at 11:44 a.m. A quorum was present.

II. Opening Worship: The opening paragraph of the Covenant of Respect was read aloud. Pastor Jack Kraaz offered the opening prayer.

III. Reading of the Warrant: Church Clerk Carol Mullen read the warrant.

IV: Reading of the Necrology: Three covenant members passed away in 2023, Helen Klisiewicz, Robert Dix, and Candace Young. They were remembered with a prayer and a moment of silence.

V. A motion to accept the 2023 Annual Reports of the officers, boards, and committees, except the Treasurer’s Report, the Stewardship Committee’s Report, and the Nominating Slate for 2024. Motion was seconded. No discussion followed. **Motion passed unanimously.**

VI. A motion to accept the Treasurer’s Report for 2023. Motion was seconded. Discussion followed. Treasurer Suzanne Kelley thanked Lee Brahen, our bookkeeper, Jeanne Dill, our Financial Secretary, Doug Kelley, Chair of the Investment Committee, and Michelle McGuigan, our payroll clerk, for all they do to make the job of the Church Treasurer go smoothly.

The finances of First Church are in good shape. We ended 2023 with a deficit just under \$5,000. This figure is slightly misleading because there was an extra pay period in 2023, so salaries are nearly \$5,000 over the budgeted amount. (Employees were not overpaid.) With the extra pay period taken into consideration, we actually ended 2023 with approximately \$1,000 in the black.

Report of Income in 2023: Stewardship receipts were at 100%, which is excellent. Thank you all for your generosity to First Church. Fundraising receipts were at 115%, thanks to the hard work of many people who volunteered at the Summerfest booth, Main Street Tavern Nights, the Town Wide Tag Sale, and the Textile Drive. We were not able to withdraw anything from Investment Funds due to the poor stock market, but we did repay the last third of the \$12,600 loan borrowed from those funds in 2020. Rental of the church building was very successful, largely due to the Monson Open Pantry’s contribution of \$3,600. Two major contributions to income were \$26,000 from trustees’ Acquisition and Maintenance (A&M) account and \$40,000 from the sale of #1 Green Street.

Report of Expenses in 2023: All the reported salaries and wages are higher than budgeted because there was an extra pay period in 2023, not because we overpaid our employees. Our employees deserve more for the work they do. The extra pay period expense shows up in the summary box. This \$6,000 is the difference between the \$200,000 in the budget column and the \$206,000 in the Year-to-Date column. Pest control expenses for both the church building and parsonage were high in 2023; those expenses will be much reduced in 2024. Suzanne negotiated a new contract with American Pest Control for half the number of times they monitor in 2024 because the population of mice appears to be under control in both buildings, at least for now.

Report of Consolidated Funds for 2023: Consolidated Funds refer to funds designated for specific purposes. The money in these funds is generated from testamentary gifts, cell tower rental, sales of things such as holiday flowers and bricks, and off-budget donations.

- Carol Darnley, a former member, left more than \$20,000 in her will to be divided between Christian Education (See Line item 3.01.056.) and Outreach (See Line item 3.01.041.)
- All the Consolidated Funds are in the black except line item 3.02.305, Parsonage Acquisition and Maintenance (A&M) which has a -\$2,952.33 end balance. Parsonage A&M started 2023 with a \$15,000 deficit. Our former tenants moved out in September. Since we allocated \$6,900 from Parsonage A&M to help fund the 2023 budget, this prevented us from getting out of the hole. We now have new tenants, but we will need to pay the Town of Monson \$6,000 in property taxes because the property is not being used as a parsonage.
- The proceeds from the sale of #1 Green Street have been invested in Treasury Bonds through Charles Schwab. This investment earned \$7,000, so when we take \$40,000 from this account for the 2024 budget, only \$33,000 is from the actual principal; the rest is interest income.
- There are some accounts listed under Consolidated Funds over which the church has no control. These include the Silver Street Chapel Fund, Hearts Willing Club, Boy Scouts, and Farmers' Market.

There was no further discussion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

VII. A motion to accept the 2024 Proposed Budget as recommended by the Stewardship Committee and approved by Church Council. No second is needed. Laurie Clarke presented the Proposed Budget for 2024. It is a balanced budget. Most boards and committees received pretty much what they requested. Special mention was made of the following line items:

- Faith Commitments for 2024 are budgeted at \$81,129, close to the 2023 actual amount.
- A \$15,000 amount is budgeted on Line item 4.00.100, Investment Fund Receipts – 5 % Draw, because our investments are currently over Historic Dollar Value.
- Total receipts from fundraising are budgeted close to the 2023 Actual Amount.
- Parsonage Rental Contribution to the GOF is expected to be \$6,600; this amount is equal to three months' rent.
- Total projected income is \$210,377.00.
- Employees received a 3.2% Cost of Living increase from their budgeted 2023 salaries.
- There are some changes under Administrative Expenses. \$1,000 is budgeted for network maintenance because we now have a contract with Post Road Computer. Payroll Clerk's expenses doubled in 2024 because Quickbooks doubled its cost.
- A new line item, Custodial Services, has been added. This is to cover expenses beyond the scope of our regular Custodian's responsibilities. This may be an additional person to do this extra work of about eight hours per month.

Additional discussion followed. Karen Frickenhaus reminded us that at last year's Annual Meeting, the thought was to take \$40,000 from the sale of #1 Green Street to balance a budget would be a one-time occurrence. Our proposed budget for 2024 shows another \$40,000 (\$33,000 actual because of \$7,000 interest earned) coming from the sale of #1 Green Street. Jeanne Dill spoke on behalf of Church Council where this matter was discussed. Church Council realizes it is

not sustainable over many years. Church Council decided to keep the amount included in the budget but not use it unless absolutely necessary. It was suggested that we aspire to grow our spirit in the community.

There was no further discussion. **Motion passed unanimously.** Members of the Stewardship Committee and Church Treasurer were thanked for all their hard work putting this budget together.

VIII. A motion from the Music Committee and the Stewardship Committee to suspend Article VI, Committees, Section A, Standing Committees, to allow certain people to serve a third term. No second is needed. Donna Okscin on the Music Committee and both Laurie Clarke and Carolyn Horacek on the Stewardship Committee are willing to serve a third term on their respective committees.

Dan Newberry asked a question. Did committees try to reach out beyond the core currently serving to fill the vacancies or do the “lazy route” and just keep existing members on those committees? Many people were asked to serve on some committees and boards; most declined to serve.

Motion to allow a third term passed.

IX. Recognition of Outgoing Members of Boards, Committees, and Church Council members: Moderator Cynthia DeSellier thanked Laurie Clarke for her service as a member-at-large. Laurie was given a pen set. Joe Farr-Wholley, who was not present, was thanked for his service on the Music Committee; his term ended in 2023. Cindy will see that he receives a pen.

X. A motion to accept the 2024 slate of officers and members of boards and committees as presented by Church Council. Discussion followed. Moderator Cynthia DeSellier mentioned several vacancies on the proposed Nominating Slate. Sarah Brown has agreed to serve on the Outreach Committee, Elaine Harris volunteered to serve as a member-at-large, Dan Newberry volunteered to serve on the Stewardship Committee, and Dylan Mann volunteered to be Church Historian. **Motion to accept the 2024 Nominating Slate with the additional names passed.**

XI. A motion, submitted by David W. Sanborn, to amend the bylaws of the First Church of Monson as follows:

Article I. Add Subsection I. The Church may serve and sell alcoholic beverages as part of any dinner. (A two-thirds majority of the covenant members present and voting is required to pass an amendment to the bylaws.)

David spoke to his motion, stressing that beer and wine would only be sold and served at church dinners. David feels there would be a maximum of two drinks per person; the group hosting the dinner would need to appoint someone to monitor this. At this time, he does not know the cost of insurance to permit the sale and serving of alcohol

Several questions and comments followed.

- Is special licensing required? The answer to that question may be on the town’s website.

- What is our liability if something happens?
- It has been a long-standing policy at First Church not to serve alcohol.
- In Massachusetts, the sale of alcohol is prohibited within 500 feet of a school or church. What special conditions would need to be met to permit this to happen?
- How many drinks would be served to one individual? David replied a maximum of two.
- Right now, church dinners are a safe place for people who might have issues with alcohol.
- We have no idea if a diner has consumed alcohol prior to coming to dinner where one more drink might put that person over his or her limit.
- At this time, we don't know all the answers to pursue this matter.

A motion was made by Jeanne Dill to postpone a vote on this motion to amend the bylaws to permit the sale of alcohol until we have more information to make an informed and responsible decision. Motion to postpone was seconded.

David Sanborn, author of the original motion, was asked how he felt about postponing the vote. His response was “we can vote this amendment to the bylaws and never use it if the cost of insurance is too high. That way, if we want to sell alcohol in the future, we would be able to go ahead and do that.” We would not be able to sell alcohol for a profit if the cost of insurance is prohibitive. The response was that changing the bylaws is a big thing. We must follow them.

It was suggested that the members of the congregation be provided with a questionnaire; covenant members were informed of this issue because they were mailed the warrant with the proposed amendment included.

Moderator Cynthia DeSellier explained how we will be voting. We will vote on the new motion first. If we vote in favor of postponing, the original motion would be up for a future vote. If our vote is not to postpone, then the original motion comes up for an immediate vote. Jeanne Dill called the motion. There is no further discussion. **The motion to postpone was defeated.**

A vote was taken on the original motion to amend the bylaws allowing the church to serve and sell alcoholic beverages at church dinners. A two-thirds majority is needed to pass this motion. Five votes were cast in favor; thirty votes were opposed. **Motion to serve and sell alcoholic beverages at church dinners was defeated.**

A motion was made by Dylan Mann and seconded to create a three-person task force to investigate all the issues associated with the sale and serving of alcohol within First Church. Motion was seconded. Motion passed. David will contact our insurance company for information about the cost of required insurance. The task force will be charged with acquiring information so an informed decision can be made about this issue.

XI. A motion, submitted by Keith Obert, that First Church hold quarterly all-church meetings at which any member in attendance can raise an issue for a vote by the congregation.

Motion was seconded. Keith spoke to his motion. “The environment around the church is changing and we must adapt to these changes. To thrive and survive, we must adapt. Humans are not hard-wired to embrace change; humans prefer the status quo. Humans fear change. Humans need to take reasonable risks which humans do after discussions. Our present structure for

bringing information up is functional but cumbersome.” Keith is suggesting quarterly meetings where all attendees are empowered to participate and vote. These meetings would better share influence and power within the congregation.

Jeanne suggested intentionally inviting all members of the congregation to Church Council meetings, perhaps one open invitation per quarter. (Meetings are open, meeting dates are announced, and anyone can attend, anytime.) Also, anyone can call an informal meeting at any time to discuss something of interest to them. The Pastoral Search Committee is doing this now. Members-at-large can bring issues from the congregation to Church Council.

Several people spoke in favor of the motion. Lisa noted that communication is important. These meetings could provide a chance to check in with what’s happening. Karen spoke of her experience at Pulpit Rock; quarterly meetings with “juicy topics” create more interest and bring people out; she also suggested perhaps having meetings in the evening or attached to a meal. Suzanne spoke in favor of opportunities to meet informally, with no warrant and no formal agenda.

Several comments were made against the motion. Doug noted poor attendance at Annual Meetings. Suzanne noted that many people already have many meetings to attend. Having more meetings where everyone is supposed to attend in order to have a quorum, with a warrant that has to be mailed in a timely fashion, may not draw more people. Dan said people don’t come to Annual Meeting because they don’t want to hear the Treasurer’s Report or they don’t like what’s on the agenda.

Andy Nolen-Parkhouse **proposed a friendly amendment to the original motion, to remove the words “or a vote by the congregation”** from the motion. These meetings would then be informal, with no warrant and no quorum required. There will be no board or committee reports at these meetings; no formal business will be presented. Suzanne noted that if a matter arises during one of these meetings that requires a vote, there are several ways to call a follow-up Special Congregational Meeting. The Church Clerk, the Church Council, the Board of Deacons, and twenty-five covenant members can call a Special Congregational Meeting. Keith noted that some people don’t attend Annual Meeting because it is “boring” and people don’t feel they have the power to bring about change. Keith also noted that having meetings just to talk about something won’t draw people; people need to feel they can make motions for changes to happen. Just talking about change isn’t good enough.

The friendly amendment was seconded and passed.

A vote on the motion as amended, that First Church hold quarterly all-church meetings at which any member in attendance can raise an issue was taken. The amended motion passed.

Lisa suggested putting the dates of these meetings on the calendar. Cindy suggested publicizing the dates in the *Messenger*, Sunday bulletin, and the website. Carol said she would like to have a person identified who would coordinate, organize, publicize, and facilitate these informal meetings; if a person is not responsible, the meetings may not happen. Dan Newberry volunteered to be responsible for three meetings this year. Let Dan know if there are any issues you wish to have discussed.

XI. Any other business to be properly presented at this meeting.

Charlotte asked about whether the church has ever investigated alternative forms of energy to heat and cool the building. Trustees have investigated some forms of alternative energy in the past. A bid for mini splits for the church library was \$26,000. It is a large space to heat and cool. Solar panels cannot be installed on the church roof; the roof cannot support the weight.

Pastor Jack closed the meeting prayer.

Motion to adjourn was made at 1:30 p.m. Motion was seconded and passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Mullen, Church Clerk

Special Meeting Minutes – May 5, 2024

Special Congregational Meeting
May 5, 2024

Moderator Cynthia DeSellier called the meeting to order at 10:50 a.m. A quorum was present.

The following motion was read to the covenant members present.

1. A motion from the Board of Deacons recommending the following individuals for covenant membership: Alexander and Lauren Fox. No second was needed. Vote in favor was unanimous.

2. No other business was presented.

Motion to adjourn was made at 11:00. Motion was seconded and passed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carol Mullen, Church Clerk

Pastor's Annual Report

By the time you are reading this, I believe that you will be in the process of calling your new settled Pastor.

The groundwork I attempted to lay in preparation for the new pastor was to show you that conflict can often be resolved through deep listening and sharing with integrity.

Too often in the life of any system – family, church, or business – people get stuck in parts they play without realizing that it is possible to change roles and try something new or different. My time in Monson is finished. However, how you continue, grow, or revert to the past is up to you. The congregation has choices. Choose well, my friends.

I believe the church is doing well and will continue to do well as you focus on mission, outreach, and continued youth and music programming. Party on, my friends.

Jack

Board of Deacons' Annual Report

The deacons are responsible for taking care of the sanctuary in preparation for worship services and caring for our members. We are present to set up every Sunday, as well as for special services. I am grateful for each deacon who served during 2024.

We began our year with six deacons on our slate. During the year, we lost one member to resignation, but the remaining five deacons stepped up to compensate. Deb Shepard, Keith Obert, and I all stepped in to cover when Pastor Jack was away. Deb conducted a very moving Sunrise Service on the south lawn on Easter morning and stepped in to cover a funeral while Pastor Jack was away.

We coordinated with Pastor Jack throughout the year, especially during Lent, Advent, and Christmas. We particularly enjoy Pastor Jack's time with children and his reflective sermons during Sunday worship, as well as his thought-provoking weekly musings.

We were able to hold two special services at the Silver Street Chapel in 2024. Our Good Friday vigil offered a time for somber reflection and the Christmas music program was a joyous event for all who attended. The All-Souls service had to be canceled due to renovations taking place at the Chapel in October and November.

“Greetings” letters were sent to members and associates whom we see regularly, thanking them for their participation, and “miss you” letters were sent to members and associates whom we seldom see inviting them to join us for in-person worship or to view services online.

We have completed usher training to greet parishioners on Sunday mornings, distribute bulletins, and collect offertory. In April, we discontinued using long-handled baskets and returned to using offertory plates. We are so thankful for the following ushers who served faithfully throughout the year: Elaine Carlin, Jeff Lord, Ed Maia, Janice Muldrew, Donna Okscin, Mike Taylor, Nick Vinciguerra, and

Roseanne Vinciguerra. We currently have openings for first Sunday ushers and invite anyone who might be interested in ushering to contact any deacon.

We are forever grateful for the skill and commitment of Cindy DeSellier who livestreams and records each Sunday's service, as well as special services, for publication on Facebook and YouTube. The view count on Facebook each week is around 50-70. The services are also shown the following week on the MPACT public access channel 15 at 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays and 9:00 a.m. on Sundays.

Our worship services would not be complete without the talent and dedication of our music director, Kiel Krommer. Kiel's outstanding musicianship is evident each time he plays, and his skillful direction and leadership of the choir is most appreciated. We also thank Mary Newland and Janice Muldrew who bake the Communion bread each month, Erin and Dave Wallace, and Alison Weber who put together a delightful Christmas Pageant, Lee Brahen who, in addition to making sure the whole church office runs properly, publishes our weekly worship bulletins and slides for online services, and Linda Whippie who is tasked with keeping the building clean and tidy. We thank all the boards and committees who do a fabulous job in making this all come together. First Church is truly blessed.

Respectfully submitted, the Board of Deacons

Jeanne Dill, chair; Karen Frickenhaus, Keith Obert, Debra Shepard, and Judith White

Board of Trustees' Annual Report

The Board of Trustees has seen with some dismay the continued need to withdraw funds from the D.J. St. Germain accounts, Blomfield Fund, Sprague Chapel Fund, and One Green Street sale proceeds to supplement the Operating Budget, which is not fully funded by pledges, plate offerings, fundraisers, and steeple rentals. (Steeple rentals are supposed to be devoted to property acquisition and maintenance).

The Main Street Tavern nights have been a significant source of funds, with ten per cent of the Tavern's gross receipts being donated to the Church by the Tavern. We need more people on all committees to commit their time, talents, and treasure to the monthly raffles (even if only a 50-50 raffle), which raise even more money from Tavern nights. The same goes for the other fundraising activities, including the Corned Beef Dinner, Summerfest (parking lot rental, strawberry shortcake sales), fireworks detail (popcorn, soda and water sales), and the Town Wide Tag Sale.

Cleaning of the Church has been a bigger task than previously budgeted for, and as a result, Trustees have hired additional cleaning services from Clean Room 413, an added but reasonable expense.

After the Trustees spent years trying to replace the sanctuary fans, Trustee Christ Young finally succeeded in getting new ceiling fans installed.. Thanks to Steve Greany of Granite Valley Electric of Monson for donating his services for the installation, making the project affordable.

A water leak was discovered in the steeple. Trustee Tony Siciliano was able to fill the void with caulk, thus saving the Church a \$6000 repair bill. We still need to fix the damage to the drywall

in the steeple and the ceiling in the southwest corner of the Sanctuary. The two new trustees may be able to handle this repair with no cost to the Church.

Questions were presented to the Trustees about the operation of the Open Pantry. The Trustees heard from several people and after consideration of the comments, the Trustees decided not to make any change in the current rental arrangement with Open Pantry (\$300.00/month).

Trustee Gary Harris is working on a replacement for the aging First Church sign on the lawn south of the Memorial Garden. A more modern look is being considered. Gary also manages the exterior of the church and the parsonage and does many needed repairs throughout the year.

Trustees are also trying to find thermostats that can be remotely controlled without having to add a third wire, which would be very expensive. Currently Trustee Chris Young must come to the Church and manually re-program each thermostat as each weekly schedule requires.

Rental of the parsonage has not produced a positive stream of income because the boiler had to be replaced, real estate taxes paid, and because the tenant moved out due to alleged insufficient hot water. New tenants are moving in on a yearlong lease so the new pastor will be housed in a rented home on Lake Paradise (\$2,000/month). Once the new pastor moves in, the church will no longer be liable for real estate taxes.

The current Trustees are delighted to have Dylan Mann and David Wallace seeking seats on the Board. They both bring a wealth of talent and experience that will be very useful on the Board.

The Board would like to explore long range planning for new boilers (\$80,000 – all three must be replaced simultaneously), a playground to attract families, and repaving the parking lot.

Respectfully submitted,
David Sanborn, Chair
Gary Harris, Suzanne Kelley, Tony Siciliano, Chris Young

Investment Committee Annual Report

The year 2024 represented the thirteenth year in which the First Church investment portfolio was managed by St. Germain Investment Management Company. The investment portfolio made some solid gains during 2024 which permitted the Investment Funds to complete the full contribution in the fourth quarter.

During the year, under the guidance of St. Germain, the portfolio continued to recover. On 12/31/2023, the Investment Committee funds sat at \$492,426 and Trustees Fund sat at \$194,045. The Investment Committee calculated a standard draw for 2024 of \$24,893, reflecting 5% of the three-year average portfolio balance. Based upon the year-end numbers, we could only withdraw \$15,000 for transfer to the Operating Fund. That amount was transferred in February. Then in November, the remainder of the 5% could be transferred when the fund balance was comfortably above the “Historical Dollar Value.” The full \$24,893 was moved to the Operating Fund during 2024. This was a huge improvement over the prior year when no Investment Funds were available.

The comparative Investment Portfolios are as follows:

	<u>12/31/23</u>	<u>12/31/24</u>
Bonds	\$180,045	\$183,953
Equities	<u>312,381</u>	<u>329,463</u>
Total Investment Committee Portfolio	\$492,426	\$513,416
Trustees Fund	\$194,045	\$213,244

The 2024 calculated draw from the investment portfolio to support the church’s general operating budget is \$24,176, reflecting the draw of 5% of the three-year average portfolio balance. Based upon the year-end numbers, we will be able to withdraw the full amount in February.

We urge all friends and members of First Church to consider gifts to the endowment fund as part of their estate planning.

Respectfully submitted,
Investment Committee
Doug Kelley, Chair
Bill Galica
Chris Young
Suzanne Kelley, Treasurer

FIRST CHURCH OF MONSON UCC
INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO MARKET VALUES AND ACTIVITY
2024

	December 31, 2023		Purchases	Sales	Withdrawals	Int/Div Reinvest	Gain(Loss)	Change		December 31, 2024	
	\$	%						\$	%	\$	%
CASH											
DUE FROM OPERATING FUND	\$ -									\$ -	
DUE TO OPERATING FUND	\$ -									\$ -	
TOTAL CASH	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	0.0%	\$ -	0.0%
FIXED INCOME											
DISIGERMAIN BOND ACCOUNT	\$ 180,045			\$ 2,500	\$ 6,408	\$ 6,408	\$ 183,953			\$ 183,953	
TOTAL FIXED INCOME	\$ 180,045	36.6%	\$ -	\$ 2,500	\$ 6,408	\$ 6,408	\$ 183,953	3.6%	3.6%	\$ 183,953	35.8%
% Beginning Balance											
STOCKS											
DISIGERMAIN EQUITY ACCOUNT - Investment Comm.	\$ 312,381			\$ 22,393	\$ 39,475	\$ 39,475	\$ 329,463	12.6%	12.6%	\$ 329,463	64.2%
DISIGERMAIN EQUITY ACCOUNT - Trustees	\$ 194,045	63.4%		\$ 5,988	\$ 25,187	\$ 25,187	\$ 213,244	13.0%	13.0%	\$ 213,244	
TOTAL STOCKS	\$ 506,426		\$ -	\$ 28,381	\$ 64,662	\$ 64,662	\$ 542,707	12.8%	12.8%	\$ 542,707	
% Beginning Balance											
COMMUNITY PROJECT LOANS	\$ -						\$ -			\$ -	
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED ENDOWMENT FUNDS	\$ 492,426	100.0%	\$ -	\$ 24,893	\$ 47,678	\$ 47,678	\$ 513,416	9.7%	9.7%	\$ 513,416	100.0%
% Beginning Balance											
HISTORICAL DOLLAR VALUE	\$ 477,399		\$ -				\$ 477,399			\$ 477,399	
UNREALIZED GAIN(LOSS)	\$ 15,027						\$ 36,017			\$ 36,017	

2025
@ 5%

\$ 513,416
\$ 492,426
\$ 444,748
\$ 483,530
\$ 24,176
\$ 24,176

2024
@ 5%

\$ 492,426
\$ 444,748
\$ 556,435
\$ 497,870
\$ 24,893
\$ 24,893

BUDGET YEAR ENDING - January 1

INVESTMENT BALANCES AT DECEMBER 31,

2024
2023
2022
2021
2020

AVERAGE
5.0% OPERATING FUND SUPPORT

NET CONTRIBUTION

FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR 3 YR. DRAW

LESS DRAW - THIS YEAR (2025)

LESS VOTED RESERVES

BALANCE REMAINING AFTER DRAW

HISTORICAL DOLLAR VALUE

EXCESS (DEFICIT)

\$ 513,416
\$ (24,176)
\$ 489,239
\$ 477,399
\$ 11,840

Stewardship Committee Annual Report

As in previous years, the primary duties of the Stewardship Committee are conducting the annual pledge campaign and working with the Treasurer and Church Council to prepare and propose the annual budget.

The theme for the 2025 Stewardship campaign was “Love,” which Pastor Jack talks about frequently.

Thank you to our office administrator, Lee Brahen, for all her assistance in creating graphics, printing letters and address labels, maintaining our mailing list, and countless other things she does to make our work run smoothly.

Special thanks to Jeanne Dill, our financial secretary, who enters all the pledges into Church Windows and keeps track of pledges throughout the year and to Suzanne Kelley, our treasurer, who puts in countless hours preparing the budget. You make our job so much easier!!

Our Stewardship Moment speakers for 2024 were Dan Newberry, Erin Greene Wallace, Gay Paluch, and Sarah Brown. Thank you all for your inspirational and heartfelt words.

As of this writing, our expected pledge income for 2025 is \$86,304, coming from 56 pledges. This includes 2 new pledges and 24 increased pledges. Thank you to all who have pledged and an extra thank you to those who were able to increase their pledge.

Fundraising continues to be beneficial. Summerfest, Town Wide Tag Sale and monthly Main Street Tavern nights with raffles have raised over \$15,000 for the 2024 budget. Thank you to all church members and friends who help make these fundraisers successful and fun.

Finally, we are grateful to everyone in our church community, who not only provide financial assistance by pledging and plate offerings, but who also give of their time and talents to all our various church and community related activities.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Brown, Laurie Clarke, Carolyn Horacek, and Dan Newberry

Music Committee Annual Report

The Music Committee is guided by our mission to provide and support spiritual enrichment of the worship service through music. We are indeed blessed to have Kiel Krommer as our Director of Music Ministry. Kiel worked closely with Pastor Jack to select hymns, anthems, preludes, and postludes that embrace the weekly Scripture. On February 11th, Kiel planned a special service to honor composer Charles Callahan who in his illustrious career composed organ solos, choral numbers, and instrumental arrangements. The public was invited to participate in celebrating Callahan’s contributions to our musical heritage. Kiel researched and planned a service of Taizé music held on Sunday, April 28th at 7 p.m. and dedicated to longtime church member and musician Priscilla Martin. The choir consisted of singers from Palmer, Brimfield, and the Worcester area. Kiel held extra rehearsals on Wednesday evenings for a month prior to the service. He also helped to organize the annual Silver Street Chapel Christmas Carol Sing-A-Long on December 15th. He definitely goes above and beyond his contractual responsibilities and continues to lead us with his talent, faith, and genuine love for all genres of music.

One goal of the Music Committee in 2024 was to recruit members for our adult choir. Invitations were placed in local papers, our *Messenger*, the Sunday bulletin, and given in person. In January, Natalie Peeler joined the

choir as a soprano and her mother Alison Draper joined as an alto. Thank you to both of them and to the rest of our faithful adult choir members: Gail Pelletier, Suzanne Kelley, Carolyn Horachek, Jeanne Dill, Mary Newland, Joseph Farr-Wholley, and Doug Kelley. Keith Obert and Sarah Brown sang with the choir for the Christmas season. Cindy DeSellier inspired us with her lovely solos and guitar accompaniment. Natalie Peeler, Jolie Wallace, and Lili Ames formed a trio to sing a “Christmas Canon of Peace” on Christmas Eve and at the Silver Street Chapel. Trumpeter Karen Lafayette joined us on Easter and Joe Farr-Wholley brought much joy to worship by playing his flute as solo or accompaniment.

The Music Committee welcomes the new Youth Choir under the direction of Alison Weber. The choir rehearses after church on Sundays in the Sunday School area. They debuted on December 15th at the Sunday School pageant and will be singing periodically during the coming year. The Sunday School under the guidance of Erin Wallace has been leading congregational singing prior to worship. Thank you to these young voices for joining us in worship.

There were two concerts during 2024. The first was Wings of Song: Rough Seas, Safe Harbor presented in May under the direction of Nym Cooke. The second concert was funded by the Monson Cultural Council and presented in December. Millennium Magic Chorus, a Sweet Adelines group, performed their Winter Wonderland Concert. Both concerts were attended by over 150 people. Hearts Willing, the First Church Choir, and Music Committee prepared a cookies and punch reception after each concert.

EsteyFest’24 came to First Church in September for a luncheon and organ recital. About one hundred organ enthusiasts enjoyed a meal prepared by the Music Committee, followed by a concert on the Johnson Organ. Kiel played five pieces highlighting the various sounds of the organ. After the concert, members were treated to a tour of the organ pipework led by Bob Meacham and Bill Czelusniak.

The CPC approved a grant for Renovation and Restoration of the Swell Division of the Johnson Organ, Opus 781, 1892. At the Monson Town Meeting in September, the townspeople voted to award the grant of \$52,000. Work will begin in early January, 2025. A Monson Cultural Council Grant was awarded to First Church to support a celebratory concert to be held in September, 2025. The recitalist will be Robert Greene.

Through its fundraising dinners, receptions, and raffles, the Music Committee was able to contribute \$1,000 to the Eva Farr Organ Fund.

Many thanks to all who support the music program at First Church. A special thanks to our secretary Lee Brahen for creating our posters, tickets, and helping with publicity for our special events.

In the words of the Choristers Guild, “Make your life a song to God.” Let us continue to glorify God in our music and in our lives every opportunity we are given.

Respectfully submitted,
Gay Paluch, Chair; Mary Newland, Treasurer; Donna Okscin, Secretary; and Gail Pelletier, Special Events.

Christian Education Annual Report

The Sunday School started the school year on September 15th with Welcome Back Sunday.

The CE Committee welcomed Youth Music Director Alison Weber on November 3rd. The youth choir, called The TrebleMakers, is composed of youth from the church and community. The group meets on Sundays from 11:45 am to 12:45 pm.

On December 7th, CE, Outreach, and Friends of Monson (now Monson Together) joined once to host a Breakfast with Santa. Twenty-five children from the community attended with their families. A continental breakfast was

served with beverages. Children were able to write letters to Santa, hear stories told by Santa, Mrs. Claus, and the Grinch, and make ornaments. Attendees brought new unwrapped toys to be donated to the Monson Together Toy Drive, supporting over 70 children in town.

The Sunday School and youth choir contributed to the Advent season with a pageant on December 15th. The Treble Makers performed “The Brightest and the Best” by Shawn Kirchner. The Sunday School children then performed “An Interactive Christmas Story.” The story of the birth of Jesus was brought to life through imagery, sounds, smells, and an original movie titled “The Bethlehem Blessing.”

The CE Committee, Outreach Committee, and Monson Together hosted our Sixth Annual Easter Egg Hunt for the community on March 23rd. Sixty-one children from the community attended the hunt with their families. Twenty youths from Girl Scout Troop 64948, the Pioneer Valley Chapter of DeMolay, and the MHS Cheerleaders, National Honors Society, and Community Service Club volunteered their time to help on the day of the hunt. Donations of toys and money were collected to benefit the Shriners Children’s Hospital. Thank you to all the volunteers from the church who donated their time, talents, food, and items for the eggs.

The Sunday school children sang “Jesus Loves Me” on April 14 with a special rap addition led by Will Lord.

On April 18th, the CE Committee hosted the monthly Main Street Tavern fundraiser. The theme was “baseball,” and we raised money from raffle sales and the Tavern food sales.

The Sunday School finished the school year on June 16th with Children’s Sunday. The children began the service with “Sing for Joy” by Seeds of Worship. They led the congregation in Passing the Lord’s Peace, Call to Worship, an encore performance of “Jesus Loves Me,” the Morning Prayer, Call to Offering, and Prayer of Dedication. The older children led Joys and Concerns with The Five Finger Prayer, followed by the Lord’s Prayer and a scripture reading. The children then performed a fun skit about the Prodigal Son. They ended the service by singing the first verse of “Amazing Grace” and then transitioning to “Life Is Better with You” by Michael Franti, followed by a benediction.

The CE Committee would like to thank Erin and Dave Wallace for all that they contribute, as well as everyone who helps them in Sunday School. We also thank the continuing support of the Outreach Committee and Monson Together.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia DeSellier, Chair
Sarah Brown and Bethany Mann

Sunday School Superintendent’s Annual Report

Sunday School Superintendent: Erin Wallace
Sunday School Long Term Volunteers: David Wallace (Teen & Elementary), Jessica Klisciewicz (Elementary), Sarah Brown (Baby/Toddler), Sarah Slozak (Baby/Toddler)

Number of Students Enrolled: 16

In January we focused on the 12 Apostles. We learned how they were “Called to Follow,” how Jesus, “Sent Them Away” to gather his flock, and about the “Great Commission.” Each week focused on one of the different topics listed above in quotations.

February consisted mostly of learning about Lent and teachings from James. What is Lent meant for? What are you supposed to be doing during Lent? Why is it meaningful? They brainstormed different ways to participate

and received their Lent timeline charts. We also used this time to read about HolyWeek so the students would have a greater understanding of what was coming up.

March was a continuation of lessons from “Daily Living From James” along with the “Easter Series.” The kids learned about “Death on a Cross,” and the “The Resurrection.” On Palm Sunday, the Sunday School students participated in the Time Travel Immersive Holy Week Experience that Dave and I created.

We did not have Sunday school class on Easter Sunday so as not to put undue pressure on families. However, April was a big month anyway. The kids learned about the parable of “The Prodigal Son,” which would be their future lesson for Children’s Sunday. The older kids created hygiene bags to be handed out at the homeless shelter. We also focused on the idea of helping others without judgement. We had an early Mother’s Day lesson so the kids could create seedlings that would be ready for Mother’s Day. That project wasn’t the best ever, but the kids still had a good time putting it together.

In May and June, the kids gave their Mother’s Day projects to the special ladies in their lives. They also learned about some important mothers in the bible. A lot of May was spent creating the content for the June Children’s Sunday sermon take-over and practicing what they were going to do. The Sunday School classes headed up Children’s Sunday on June 16th with a full morning of reading, music, and a guided mini show featuring the Prodigal Son Parable. Some of the kids made it evident that they were excited and very comfortable getting in front of the congregation, while others were not willing to do it. We decided ultimately that next year we would try to make moments like these different, so everyone feels more comfortable.

September’s Sunday School sign-ups were limited. We had a couple families move away and/or switch to different churches for various reasons. This affected our attendance numbers greatly as they were families with lots of kids. This being said, the group of kids that did sign-up have been very consistent and have really enjoyed Sunday School so far. The 2024 fall theme is “God’s Rescue Plan,” learning the Bible in chronological order. The only exception in September was Welcome Back Sunday, where we played field games and celebrated being back together after a long summer. We are using a new curriculum called “The Biggest Story.” September through December focused on the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This curriculum takes the main events of those books and boils them down so that kids can start to make sense of the storyline of the Bible. In the first five books of the Bible, we discover not only how the universe came into being, how we came into being, and how sin entered the world, but we also learn about God’s plan to set his people free and set them on a path of obedience and blessing. The Biggest Story curriculum includes 104 lessons, but we will only accomplish 20 of these lessons by the end of the year. The completion of these 20 lessons will conclude the first set of lessons within the complete curriculum set. We aren’t getting further because we took time out to do our extensive Christmas (and 2025 soon-to-be Easter) program.

This December we opted to create an original Christmas Immersive Experience for the congregation instead of doing a typical pageant. The kids brainstormed ideas and talked about symbolism. We wrapped these conversations into a 20 minute program for the church. Afterwards, we watched a 12-minute movie that we made, highlighting the events of the nativity. The mini-movie had 11 child actors, 2 adult parent actors, and 3 adult production crew helpers. Participants consisted of people from within and outside The First Church. We were going to do an official post releasing just the movie for Christmas time, but didn’t end up putting it out there. The silver lining is that in December 2025, we can reuse the mini-movie we made and still have it be fresh for our community; more bang for our buck.

We haven’t focused on a lot of singing during Sunday school classes this year, mainly because a lot of the kids communicated that they were not too interested in doing that. In lieu of lots of Sunday school singing and practicing for performance opportunities in church, we have created a separate group, “The Treble Makers.” This youth choir is led by Alison Weber, a local music professional. They performed during church in December, singing “The Brightest and the Best.” It was beautiful. There are 6 kids participating, with 4 Sunday

school kids, and 2 kids from outside of the church. We identified that we need to find some extra out-of-church performance ops for them, so we can try and recruit more kids, and build awareness about the group and our church in general.

Overall, I think despite our lumps and bumps, we've had a very successful year. The biggest win to me is when a parent tells me that their child is "excited to come to Sunday school" or "can't wait for Sunday school." Our mission this year has been to get the kids excited about learning about God and building a relationship with him. I think we've had a very good beginning. I also think that listening to feedback from the kids about their comfort levels, and trying to adapt to their needs, however tiring it may be, has been validating for them as human beings. I see them developing, and trying to grasp the teachings of God, and that's a very beautiful thing.

Respectfully submitted,
Erin Wallace, Sunday School Superintendent

Outreach Committee Annual Report

Southern New England Conference Dues	\$3,710
Hampden Association Dues	\$290

5 for 5 UCC - Basic Giving + 4 special collections during the year

- ❖ **One Great Hour of Sharing** - Lent - supports disaster, refugee and development ministries - **\$526**
- ❖ **Strengthen the Church** - Pentecost Sunday - supports youth ministries and full-time leaders for new churches - **\$264**
- ❖ **Neighbors in Need**- Oct. 1st - World Communion Sunday - Justice and compassion ministries including the Council for American Indian Ministries, which supports a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Mental Health is a universal human right - Mental Health Justice **\$915**
- ❖ **The Christmas Fund** -Dec. - financial support for those who serve the church and are having financial difficulties or those that are retired. **\$242**
- ❖ **OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) \$100**

This year, the Outreach Committee had \$0 budgeted for Sponsored Projects. We relied on our consolidated funds in Outreach General to fund our activities, as well as the funds in the Carol Darnley Estate.

At the end of the year, the Outreach Committee received a donation of \$10,000 for emergency food and fuel assistance from Richard Anderson of Bondsville. We are grateful for his generous donation, and the committee will make sure that it helps those that need it the most.

Let's Eat 2024

The Let's Eat program provides a hot breakfast buffet on the third Sunday of the month. Volunteers arrive by 7 a.m., and breakfast is served from 8:30 to just before worship at 10 a.m. Thank you to all of our breakfast volunteers: Lisa Borlen, Laurie Clarke, Ed Maia, Mary Newland, Trish Nolen-Parkhouse, Dave Sanborn (aka the Bacon Man), and Bob Ainsworth (our emergency sub). National Honor Society students, Kayla Murphy and Adam Laverty, were a welcome addition to the team for October and November.

	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Receipts</u>	
1/21	\$174.10	\$125.00	
2/17	\$247.98	\$150.50	(incl. Supplies Rest. Depot)
3/19	\$155.91	\$60.00	
4/20	\$148.32	\$82.00	
5/18	\$69.48	\$50.00	
6/18		\$87.00	
9/15	\$207.79	\$120.00	Welcome Sunday
10/20	\$199.71*	\$69.00	
11/16	\$ 89.10	\$84.00	
12/15	<u>\$177.00</u>	<u>\$156.00</u>	
	\$1,469.39	\$983.50	

*Includes cost of Handi wipes for Emergency Cleanup buckets

January

We delivered hats, mittens, gloves, socks, and scarves collected on our Mitten Tree to the Springfield Rescue Mission during the Christmas Season.

February

We made cookies for Valentine’s Day for the Springfield Rescue Mission: 6 dozen each of chocolate chip and oatmeal with raisins and white chocolate chips. We delivered them with coats, hats, and sweatshirts that we collected.

March

In collaboration with the Christian Ed. Committee and the community group, Monson Together, we hosted an Easter Egg Hunt. The event was free, but we accepted donations for Shriners Children’s Hospital. We collected \$105. Funds from the Carol Darnley Estate were used to sponsor the event. Cost \$170.89.

We purchased three \$25 gift cards to Walgreens for refugees from Haiti. We received \$60 in donations + \$15 from Outreach General.

May

Outreach hosted a tag sale in the parking lot. We earned \$200 in booth space rental and \$19 for sales of refreshments to be added to the Outreach General account. The cost for refreshments was \$97. All of the drinks and chips that were left over were used at the Church Picnic in June.

June

Outreach hosted a continental breakfast and a potluck Church Picnic on Children’s Sunday. Cost \$100.

We mulched and planted annuals in the Garden of Gratitude on Children’s Sunday. Bob Ainsworth donated time and materials to install an automatic sprinkler system to keep our garden well-watered through the hot summer. Cost \$215.

Lisa Borlen donned a rabbit costume to support Wreaths Across America in Monson Together’s Jail and Bail event. Money raised helped fund the 1000 Christmas wreaths placed on the graves of our military in Monson. She was “arrested” for stealing the bunny suit and parading around in it; bail was set at \$500. Much to her relief, the congregation quickly came to her rescue, and she raised \$550 in a matter of 2 weeks. Outreach hosted Tavern Night in June. Among the raffle prizes offered was a donation from the Quaboag Riders Club for 2 tickets to the Monson Hill Climbs 2024/2025 seasons, which included a meal for 2.

September

Outreach hosted an Ice Cream Social for Welcome Sunday. The Carol Darnley Estate sponsored the event. Cost \$142.

Outreach made tie-dyed T-shirts with over thirty-five children at The Lights of Hope event in Veterans Field. Since the event rained out last year, we already had most of our supplies. Cost \$14.

October

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, we challenged the congregation to fill 10 Emergency Cleanup Buckets for Church World Service. We contacted the local churches and invited the community to contribute. The Methodist and Unitarian churches sent contributions, and several people dropped off donations in response to our Facebook post. We were able to fill 13 buckets worth almost \$1,000. Jeff Lord and his sons Will & Blake delivered the buckets on Veterans Day. The Carol Darnley Estate fund was used to purchase the buckets and lids and additional items needed to complete the buckets. Cost \$259.

November

Outreach purchased travel packs of Wet Ones hand wipes, Jergens hand moisturizer and beef jerky for the Monson Military Care Package drive. Cost, \$160.

December

Outreach collaborated with Christian Ed and Karen Davies of Monson Together to host Breakfast with Santa. The event was free with a donation to the Monson Toy Drive. Cost to the Carol Darnley Estate, \$272.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Borlen, Chair of Outreach

Pastoral Search Committee Annual Report

Since its commission on April 30, 2023, the Settled Pastor Committee has diligently worked with our church family and friends, the Southern Conference, United Church of Christ, and our Conference Minister, Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa to research and complete our Local Church Profile.

To help us learn of the settled pastor our church family desires, the Committee worked to provide opportunities for every individual to express his or her thoughts. Through the end of 2023 and into this year, the Committee posted questions in the Fellowship Room where everyone had the opportunity to respond. Later in the year, seven families opened their homes to host Home Meetings where members and friends could share their ideas.

Incorporating everyone's ideas into our Local Church Profile, the Committee was able to complete our document and send it onto the Conference for referral to pastors looking to come to Monson. Searching for the best settled pastor for our church has been a long process and the Committee appreciates the patience and interest of our church family. We are thankful for the help and guidance provided throughout this process and are anxious to be able to introduce, in the near future, our new candidate for settled pastor.

I thank my God every time I remember you... (Philippians 1:3)

Lisa Borlen
Elaine Carlin
Laurie Clarke

Roy Miller
Keith Obert
Deb Shepard

David Wallace
Judith White
Christian Young

Pastor Parish Relations Committee Annual Report

The PPRC has genuinely enjoyed working with Pastor Jack these past three years. Our discussions were insightful, informative, and productive. Thank you, Pastor Jack, for your continued optimistic guidance, your love for each member of our congregation and beyond, and your dedication to teach and spread love! Blessings to you and Sarah! May your retirement be an adventure!

In fellowship,
Elaine Carlin, Elaine Harris, Edward Maia, and Judy White

Hearts Willing Annual Report

Hearts Willing met from February through May and September through December in 2024.

February: The club hosted a special afternoon tea to which members and guests were asked to bring a favorite cup and saucer. Delicate finger sandwiches and cookies were served.

March: Bill Dominick of the Monson Historical Society spoke on the history of the First Church parsonages.

April: David Curry presented a drum circle.

May: At the May banquet was the election of officers, the minutes, and the treasurer's report as well as member recognition.

September: The program committee hosted the welcoming dinner, at which time the members reviewed the 2024/2025 calendar and programs and discussed a handout of bylaw suggestions.

October: Sister Dorothy Pilkington, SSJ, discussed the lives and needs of Native American children in Winnebago, Nebraska.

November: This meeting was CWS Outreach Night with a service project and cards. The members assembled period packs.

December: At the Christmas Social, the bylaws were reviewed and voted on. The following changes were made

1. The word "Club" was dropped from the name of the organization. It is now Hearts Willing.
2. All members and nonmembers are invited to attend all meetings.

3. For the first time in Hearts Willing's history, men are invited to join.

Hearts Willing doesn't meet during the summer but stays active doing funeral collations and having a bake sale as a major fundraiser during the Town Wide Tag Sale.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana M. Nothe-Taylor, Secretary



The First Church of Monson
Congregational, United Church of Christ
5 High Street,
Monson, Massachusetts 01057
32 413-267-3312
www.firstchurchmonson.org