



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

Two Hundred Sixty-Second Annual Meeting  
February 4, 2024

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](mailto:office@firstchurchmonson.org)

**Warrant for the 262<sup>nd</sup> 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 on Sunday, February 4, 2024, promptly at 11:30 a.m. in the sanctuary. The covenant members will hear and act upon the following business:

1. 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.
2. A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for 2023.
3. A motion to accept the 2024 Proposed Budget as recommended by the Stewardship Committee and approved by Church Council.
4. A motion from the Music Committee and the Stewardship Committee to suspend Article VI, Committees, Section A, Standing Committees, to allow certain persons to serve a third term.
5. A motion to accept the 2024 slate of officers and members of boards and committees as presented by Church Council.
6. 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.)
7. 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.
8. Any other business to be properly presented at this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol E. Mullen, Church Clerk  
January 8, 2024

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

*Two Hundred Sixty-Second Annual Meeting*  
*February 4, 2024*  
*Agenda*

1. Call to Order – 11:30 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 2024 ..... 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. Motion to Amend the Bylaws of the First Church of Monson ..... David Sanborn  
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).
12. Motion that First Church hold quarterly all-church meetings at which any member in attendance can raise an issue for a vote by the congregation.
13. Other Business
14. Closing Prayer
15. Adjournment

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## *Church Clerk's Statistical Report for 2023*

### **Baptisms:**

April 16, 2023 - Christopher Michael Mann  
April 16, 2023 – Dylan John Mann

### **Marriages:** none

### **New members received by Letter of Transfer:**

### **New members received by Confession of Faith:**

April 16, 2023 - Karen Frickenhaus

### **Deaths: \*denotes a Covenant Member**

January 7, 2023 – Amy Meacham  
June 14, 2023 – \*Helen Klisiewicz (joined 03/26/1964)  
September 20, 2023 – \*Robert Dix (joined 10/17/1982)  
October 25, 2023 – \*Candace Young (joined 12/4/1977)

### **Removed from covenant membership by vote of Church Council, August 13, 2023:**

Robert Berns	Rose Donnell
Reese Connors	Andrew Linkenhoker
Cynthia (Skowyra) Demers	Karen Maggi
Lorie Desmaris	Carolann Smart
Robert DeSteph	Nicholas Smart
Richard Donnell	Thomas Smart

### **Removed from covenant membership by personal request:**

November 6, 2023 - (Letter of transfer to Ludlow First) - Brian Fioravanti  
November 6, 2023 - (Letter of transfer to Ludlow First) - Lyn Fioravanti

### **2022 Membership Summary:**

<b>Covenant membership as of December 31, 2022</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Total received into covenant membership in 2023</b>	<b>+1</b>
<b>Total removed from covenant membership in 2023</b>	<b>-17</b>
<b>Deaths (3)</b>	
<b>Personal Request by Letter of Transfer (2)</b>	
<b>Church Council vote (12)</b>	
<b>Total covenant membership on December 31, 2023</b>	<b>167</b>

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Mullen, Church Clerk

## *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 5, 2023*

261<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the First Church of Monson, Inc.  
February 5, 2023

**I. Call to Order:** Moderator Cynthia DeSellier called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m. A quorum was declared present.

**II: Opening Worship:** The Covenant of Respect, adopted at last year's Annual Meeting, was read aloud. It was suggested that the covenant be applied to all aspects of our lives, both within the church setting and outside.

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

**IV. Reading of the Necrology:** Seven covenant members went to their eternal home in 2022; they were Arlene Gerliep, Stella Marx, Yolanda (Yolie) Grieve, Priscilla Stacy, Laurie Milne, Deborah Wheeler, and Edith Leveille. A moment of silence followed.

**V: A motion to accept the 2022 Annual Reports of officers, boards, and committees except the Treasurer's Report, Stewardship Committee's Report, and the Nominating Slate for 2023.** A friendly amendment to the motion was made to include Janice Muldrew's name in the Annual Report of the Deacons as one of the Communion bread bakers. **Motion with the friendly amendment passed.**

**V. Treasurer's Report:** Suzanne Kelley, Treasurer, expressed her thanks to Lee Brahen, our bookkeeper, Jeanne Dill, our Financial Secretary, and Michelle McGuigan, the payroll clerk, for their help with church finances.

Some of the significant income items in the 2022 Treasurer's Report are as follows:

- **Line item 4.00.000, Faith Commitments:** Pledges in 2022 were almost \$3,000.00 below expectations. This was unfortunate because there was already a projected shortfall of \$4,708.00 in the 2022 Operating Budget.
- **Line item 4.00.010, Plate Offerings:** Plate offerings were \$1,000 below expectations. Church attendance remained low; people viewing online are not contributing much.
- **Line item 4.00.100, Investment Funds Receipts (5% Draw):** In 2022, contributions from the investments 5% draw totaled \$23,537.00. This amount included our regular 5% draw minus \$4,200.00 for the second payment on a loan taken from Investment Funds taken in 2020.
- **Line items 4.00.101 Investment Fund Receipts (Additional):** An additional \$20,000.00 was taken from investments because the stock market was doing very well at the time.
- **Line item 4.00.300: Fundraising Receipts:** Fundraising receipts were \$2,500.00 over budget, primarily due to the return of Summerfest in 2022. The wonderful response to Main Street Tavern nights helped fundraising as well.
- **Line item 4.00.230, Other Contributions to the Operating Budget:** This donation of \$2,020.00 was given to offset the purchase of paint and other supplies for refurbishing the Sunday School area.

Some of the significant expense items in the 2022 Treasurer's Report are as follows:

- **Line items 5.00.010, Pastor's Base Salary:** The pastor's salary was budgeted at \$62,330.00 because we knew at last year's Annual Meeting we would not have a settled pastor for the full year. Since Pastor Jack wasn't hired until April, we saved \$13,000.00, despite paying \$3,350.00 for pulpit substitutes.
- **Line item 5.00.829: Employers' FICA/Medicare Expense:** This amount was misestimated in the 2022 budget. A correct amount will appear in the 2023 budget.

- **Line item 5.00.906, Church Yard/Gardens:** The actual amount spent exceeded the budgeted amount, largely because we have to sand and salt whenever it is slippery.
- The trustees moved almost all costs associated with the alarm system (\$5,000.00), the heating plant (\$13,000.00), and the elevator (\$3,000.00) out of the Operating Budget and into **Consolidated Fund line item 3.02.3000, Acquisition and Maintenance (A&M)**. The Operating Budget cannot maintain these items. Only alarm monitoring will remain in the Operating budget.
- The parsonage was rented out in April, 2022. **Line item 5.00.840, Parsonage Property Insurance**, was really not as high as \$4,483.00. We have one policy for both the church building and the parsonage; some of that amount belonged under church property insurance which totaled \$26,370.00.
- **Line item 5.00.860, Parsonage Pest Control:** The parsonage had an infestation of mice, spiders, and ants. Pest control expenses in 2022 were \$2,301.00.

With the removal of the church building heating plant maintenance from the Operating Budget, we ended 2022 with an excess of \$859.00. Expenses for church building heating plant maintenance came from Acquisition and Maintenance (A&M).

Consolidated Funds, page 25 of the Annual Report, are available for specific purposes. The money in these funds comes from testamentary gifts, cell tower rental, the sale of things like bricks and flowers, and off-budget donations.

All these funds are in the black except line item 3.02.305, Parsonage Acquisition and Maintenance Fund. This fund was created to separate major expenses for the parsonage from those of the church. In 2021, the trustees spent over \$30,000.00 replacing the water treatment system and putting in new floors and carpeting to ready the parsonage for tenants. It now generates about \$2,000.00 a month in income, which is currently going toward repaying the expenses incurred. By September, the expenses should be paid off. At that time, parsonage rental can be used to augment the Operating Budget for the rest of 2023.

A question was asked about the difference in amounts shown in the Investment Committee's Report for the Trustees Fund (\$170,586.00) and the total of \$105,575.00 from line item 3.05.152, Blomfield Estate Fund and line item 3.05.481, H.C. Sanderson Family Scholarship Fund together. Suzanne explained that in 2021, the trustees took \$75,000.00 from Consolidated Funds and moved it from Monson Savings Bank to D.J. St. Germain. The \$75,000.00 came from a variety of accounts, such as Cyrus Holmes Trust Fund, Sprague Chapel Fund, and Blomfield Estate Fund. We cannot tell which Trustees Funds are exactly the ones now at D.J. St. Germain. If money is needed, it takes about three days to get money from D. J. St. Germain.

David Sanborn, Chair of the Board of Trustees, announced some good news for the church. "The good Lord has looked down on us as we faced a major shortfall in the 2023 Operating Budget." Hattie M. Noble owned property at 1 Green Street, Monson. She died on December 30, 1995. She left the property to the Monson Historical Society. When the Historical Society ceased to use the property, it was to go to First Church. That has happened.

Karen King did a market analysis of the property; she valued it at \$300,000.00. There is a large apartment on the second floor, a small apartment on the first floor, and an office space. There are also four garages. The trustees voted to sell the property; there are no restrictions on the use of any proceeds from the sale. Karen King will be our realtor. Proceeds will be used wisely.

**VI. Motion to accept the 2023 Proposed Operating Budget as recommended by the Stewardship Committee and approved by Church Council:** Suzanne Kelley reported for the Stewardship Committee. There are two columns shown for the Proposed Budget for 2023, one gives the 2022 Actual Amounts and the other shows the 2023 Proposed Budget Amounts.

On the income side of the budget, please note the following:



- **Line item 4.000.000, Faith Commitments:** The proposed amount is \$80,596.00
- **Line item 4.00.010, Plate Offerings:** The proposed amount is \$7,000.00.
- **Line item 4.000.100, Investment Fund Receipts (5% Draw):** The budgeted amount is zero because we are currently below Historic Dollar Value so nothing can be taken from investments at the present time.
- **Line item 4.00.102, 2023 Repayment of 2020 Investment Loan:** The \$4,200.00 will be repaid when there are funds over Historic Dollar Value in investments.
- **Line item 4.00.220, Trustees A&M Contribution to the General Operating Budget:** The trustees will move \$26,000 out of A&M and into the Operating Budget.
- **Line item 4.00.230.00, Music Committee Contribution to the General Operating Budget:** The Music Committee will give \$2,000.00 from Consolidated Fund line item 3.01.030, Music General Fund, to the Operating Budget.
- **Line item 4.00.235, Parsonage Rental Contribution to the General Operating Budget:** It is expected that previously incurred parsonage expenses will be paid off by September. After that, the rental income will go into the Operating Budget.
- **Line item 4.00.237, Sprague Chapel 5% Contribution to the General Operating Budget:** Doug Kelley calculated the total area of the church building and the area of the Sprague Chapel. The chapel occupies 5% of the total space. Five percent of the total cost for heating and electricity will come out the Sprague Chapel Fund.
- **Line item 3.05.152, Blomfield Estate Fund:** The Blomfield space in the basement occupies 14% of the total area of the church. Fourteen percent of the total cost for heating and electricity will come out of the Blomfield Estate Fund.
- **Line items 4.00.300, Fundraising Receipts:** The amount budgeted for fundraising was increased to \$8,000.00.
- **The total projected income is \$156,779.00.**

On the expense side of the budget, please note the following:

- **Line item 5.00.010, Pastor's Base Salary:** The amount budgeted is \$68,000.00. Pastor Jack can apportion it as he wants.
- Staff salaries for 2023 were increased by an 8% cost-of-living amount.
- **Line item 5.00.829, Employers' FICA/Medicare Expense:** This expense was increased to \$8,725.00 as it was under budgeted in 2022.
- **Line items 5.00.440, Sunday School Curriculum, and 5.00.450, Sunday School Supplies:** Both line items show zero amounts. These expenses will come from the CE Consolidated General Fund.
- **Line item 5.00.510, Southern New England Conference Dues:** This was reduced by \$500.00 from the 2022 contribution.
- **Line item 5.00.520, Outreach Sponsored Projects:** This shows a zero amount. Expenses for sponsored projects will come out of the Outreach Consolidated General Fund.

Former member Carol Darnley died in 2021. Her will left \$20,000.00 to the First Church for Outreach and Christian Education projects. Outreach will receive 50% of that amount; Christian Education will receive the other 50%.

- **Line item 5.00.902, Church Electricity:** The expectation is that this amount will increase for 2023. Rates are going higher.
- **Line item 5.00.905, Church Building Maintenance:** \$2,000.00 was left in this account for small expenses. Large expenses will come from Consolidated Fund Acquisition and Maintenance (A&M).
- **Line item 5.00.906, Church Yard/Garden:** The budgeted amount for 2023 was reduced by \$1,000.00 from 2022. A lot of sand and salt is used whenever there are icy conditions.
- **Line item 5.00.912, Church Pest Control:** The amount was increased from 2022 due to ongoing issues with mice.

- **Line item 5.00.913, Church Trash Pick-up:** This is a new line item for \$2760.00 as we now have to pay for trash removal.
- **Line item 5.00.840, Parsonage Property Insurance:** First Church is still responsible for this expense. It is not something paid by the tenants.
- **Line item 5.00.860, Parsonage Pest Control:** This cost may be reduced in 2023 as it is now on a maintenance level of control.
- **Line item 5.00.800, Fundraising Expenses:** First Church pays a 5% raffle tax to the state of Massachusetts. Costs for things like tag sale signs also come from this line item.
- **Line item 5.00.907, Church Organ/Piano Maintenance:** These costs have been moved to line item 5.00.905, Church Building Maintenance.

**Total expenses are projected to be \$202,011.00. Total income is projected to be \$156,779.00.**

**A motion was made from the Stewardship Committee to transfer \$40,000.00 from the proceeds of the sale of the property at 1 Green Street to the Operating Budget for 2023.**

Roy Miller expressed a comment about the potential sale of the property at 1 Green Street. Sometimes it's a good idea to "think outside the box" about possible uses of a gifted property; there may be other possibilities beyond just selling it. Roy mentioned things like housing a family or maintaining a mission there.

A question was asked about cell tower income. In 2022, the yearly income from AT&T was \$20,000.00, from Verizon \$29,900.00, and from DISH \$24,180.00. These amounts go into line item 3.02.305, Acquisition and Maintenance (A&M) in Consolidated Funds. The parsonage rental yielded \$18,750.00 in 2022.

A question was asked about the expense for organ tuning now that it has moved to line item 5.00.905, Church Building maintenance, which shows \$2,000.00 for 2023. It was noted that one organ tuning costs \$1,200.00. The \$2,000.00 is only a budgeted amount. Any bills related to organ tuning or piano tuning will be paid even if they exceed \$2,000.00. A budget is only a "guesstimate."

Line item 5.00.900, Custodian Salary: The budgeted amount for 2023 is lower than the actual amount for 2022. Why? The amount for 2022 includes money for extra gifts for work done over and beyond the usual duties.

**A vote was taken on the motion from the Stewardship Committee to transfer \$40,000.00 from the proceeds of the sale of the property at 1 Green Street into the 2023 Operating Budget. Motion passed with one opposed.**

**A vote was taken on the motion to accept the 2023 Proposed Operating Budget as recommended by the Stewardship Committee and approved by Church Council; motion passed.**

**VII. Recognition of outgoing members of boards and committees:** Cynthia DeSellier thanked the following people for their service on boards and committees:

- Lyn Fioravanti, Pastor Parish Relations Committee
- Roger Tirrell, Board of Trustees
- Judy Tirrell, Outreach Committee
- Kristy Kania, Christian Education Committee
- Grace McIntyre, Christian Education Committee,
- Joe Farr-Wholley, Music Committee
- Carol Mullen, Member-at-large
- Mary Newland, Delegate

**VIII. A motion to accept the 2023 slate of officers, boards, and committees as presented by Church Council:** A friendly amendment to the motion was made by Bill Palmer to nominate Keith Obert for a position on the Board of Deacons. A friendly amendment to the motion was made by Lisa Borlen to

nominate Janice Muldrew for a position on the Outreach Committee. **The motion with the two friendly amendments passed.**

**IX. A motion from the Open and Affirming Task Force to adopt the following as our Welcoming Covenant:** Keith Obert, a member of the task force, read the proposed Welcoming Covenant. As shown below.

“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:11)

We, the congregation of the First Church of Monson, are called to be a welcoming community, instructed by Jesus to love God and our neighbors as we love ourselves. We declare that we are an Open and Affirming Church, welcoming people of all races; ethnicities; ages; sexual orientations; gender identities and expressions; physical, cognitive, or emotional abilities; faith backgrounds; economic circumstances; and family structures. All are invited to share and to participate in the leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our church family. We will provide a safe haven—physically, emotionally, and spiritually – for all those whom God sends to us.

**Keith made a motion for First Church to become an Open and Affirming Church officially. Motion was seconded.** There are steps beyond adopting the Welcoming Covenant to become an official ONA church. The ONA Task Force will see to these.

What will change for us if we do become an official ONA church? Not much for us within the church as we have been welcoming people of diverse backgrounds for years. Jeff Lord noted that “this will put in place what we are already doing.” People outside the church, like those church shopping or a potential settled pastor, will know we are ONA officially. The designation will be listed on the Conference website.

**A vote was taken on the motion for First Church to become an Open and Affirming Church officially; motion passed.**

**A vote was taken on the motion from the Open and Affirming Task Force to adopt the Welcoming Covenant as included on the warrant; motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Mullen, Church Clerk

## *Pastor's Annual Report*

“Every New Beginning Comes from Some Other Beginning’s End.”  
... Seneca

This New Year 2024 has begun. As the Roman philosopher Seneca so aptly said in the quote above, a new beginning comes from some other beginning’s end. I began last year’s Annual Report with this same quote. I repeat the quote because it remained true again in 2023. It has been my pleasure serving as your Transitional Interim Pastor in 2023. I believe the healing of past hurt and wounds continues. The church itself has functioned well. The boards and committees have acquitted themselves well and have shown a great measure of maturity as expected of a congregation organized in 1762.

Attendance remained good in 2023. The search committee began its work of preparing the congregation to call a new settled pastor. Additionally, the congregation became an Open and Affirming Church. To my knowledge, this congregation through the years has ministered to all people without judgment as to their race or sexual orientation. It has cared for people no matter what their life situation. This was a big step and important for the future of the congregation.

I believe in the strong leadership of our boards and committees. So many of you step up when called on. The staff continues to do amazing work, anchored by Lee, Kiel, and Erin. I see the sum of the parts making the whole a thing of beauty.

2024 is going to be an important year for the church. You are being invited to give important input to the search committee in listening sessions, which will be evaluated soon.

Thank you for helping make my time among you a joy. Being part of your history for this brief blip in time has been grand. Seeing you make transformative changes, small and large, is gratification enough.

Grace and peace,

Jack

## *Board of Deacons Annual Report*

As deacons, we are responsible for taking care of the sanctuary in preparation for worship services and caring for our members. We are there every Sunday to set up for service. I am grateful for each deacon who served during 2023.

We began our year with eight deacons on our slate. Over the course of 2023, we lost three members 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 also conducted a very touching sunrise service on the south lawn on Easter morning. Rev. Susan Tarantino stepped in to cover a funeral in September while Pastor Jack was in Europe, and Rev. Thomas Hawkins covered to celebrate Holy Communion in October.

We continue to coordinate with Pastor Jack, especially during the Lenten, Advent, and Christmas Seasons. We particularly enjoy his time with children and his reflective sermons during Sunday worship, as well as his thought-provoking weekly musings. In May, we collaborated with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) to provide Pastor Jack with a comprehensive evaluation of his first year with us.

At the Church Clerk's recommendation, deacons reviewed names of active members who have moved away and for whom we have no current addresses. These members were removed from active membership by vote of Church Council. We deferred the removal of members for whom we have addresses but who are no longer involved in the life of the church. We will revisit this list in 2024.

We have reinstated ushers to assist in greeting parishioners on Sunday mornings, distributing bulletins, and collecting the offering. Thank you to the following ushers and substitutes: Elaine Carlin, Jeff Lord, Ed Maia, Janice Muldrew, Donna Okscin, John Plaster, Christine Sterritt, Mike Taylor, Judy Tirrell, Roger Tirrell, Nick Vinciguerra, and Roseann Vinciguerra.

I cannot emphasize enough the tremendous job Judy White did in organizing and overseeing the textile drive. What an extraordinary achievement! Judy and Elaine Harris also facilitated a wonderful six-week program highlighting women of the Old Testament.

We are grateful for the skill and commitment of Cindy DeSellier who livestreams and records each Sunday's service 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 MPACT public access channel 15 at 6 p.m. on Saturdays and 9 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 who put together a wonderful 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,  
Jeanne Dill, chair  
Diana Nothe-Taylor  
Keith Obert  
Debra Shepard  
Judith White

## *Board of Trustees Annual Report*

The Church faced another year of declining pledges and plate offerings, which necessitated a \$26,000 contribution from the Trustees' A&M fund (formerly L-1 account), representing income from rentals (cell tower, parsonage, kitchen, etc.). Because the investment account was below historical base line, no money could be taken from it in 2023.

On the income side, we sold the pile of granite left over from the demolition of the old foundation of the steeple to Stone Farm, LLC, of Monroe, Connecticut, for \$3,000.00. The Church also inherited No. 1 Green Street, and, with the assistance of Karen King, we sold it for \$300,500.00 to an LLC formed by Jeff Lord and Nick Boucher. This money has been invested in treasury bonds but can be accessed as needed.

Two trustee fundraisers helped the budget: A March corned beef dinner with Sarah the Fiddler (a whole church effort) and a Main Street Tavern night in August with a back-to-school theme.

Kudos to David Wallace and Jeff Lord (and numerous helpers) for refurbishing and brightening the Sunday School area, all without expense to the church.

Numerous repairs had to be made to the church and parsonage including:

- Roof leak near the steeple (started in 2022, fixed in 2023)
- Replacement of most of the condensate return pipes for the heating system \$25,000
- Elevator repairs, numerous stuck door issues at \$475 and up each time
- Retaining wall reconstruction by Ervin & Harris \$6500
- Rodent and insect extermination by American Pest Solutions

Post Road Computers has been hired to service our computers since the departure of Brian Fioravanti. The trustees were sad that Brian and Lyn, our kitchen manager, left this fall.

Our good tenants vacated the parsonage at the end of September and our rental agent, Sheryl Chase, was able to find new tenants to rent on a short-term basis (in case we hire a pastor). The tenants are responsible for utilities, yard maintenance, snow removal, and rubbish pick-up.

Once again special thanks to Steve Scannell who continued to monitor the heating system and set our manual thermostats every week. Trustees are trying to replace the thermostats with remotely programmable units. We are also trying to find a lift so the electrician can reach the ceiling of the sanctuary to replace the fans.

We also want to thank Lee Brahen, indispensable office manager, Jeanne Dill, financial secretary, and Linda Whippie, custodian, for keeping things moving along as they should.

Respectfully submitted,  
David W. Sanborn, Chair  
Brian Fioravanti  
Gary Harris  
Suzanne Kelley  
Tony Siciliano  
Christian Young

## *Investment Committee Annual Report*

The year 2023 represented the twelfth year in which the First Church investment portfolio was managed by St. Germain Investment Management Company. The investment portfolio “treaded water” during 2023 and only in December rose above the “Historic Dollar Value.”

During the year, under the guidance of St. Germain, the portfolio continued to struggle. On 12/31/2022, the Investment Committee funds sat at \$444,748 and Trustees Fund sat at \$170,586. The Investment Committee calculated a standard draw for 2023 of \$25,987, reflecting 5% of the three-year average portfolio balance. From that amount, we deducted the “payback” figure of \$4,200, which was the third “third” of the loan from the Investment Fund needed to balance the 2020 budget. The net distribution calculated by the committee for 2023 budget year was \$21,787. However, by year-end the funds were \$32,651 below the “Historical Dollar Value,” with no expectation of rising above that level in 2023.

At the Annual Meeting on 2/5/2023, the congregation was informed that a contribution to the Operating Budget was unlikely in 2023.

During the 2023 calendar year, month-end totals for the Investment Committee funds fluctuated between \$444,748 (on 12/31/2022) and \$474,625 (on 11/30/2023). Never over the “Historic Dollar Value” of \$477,399. It was only at year-end, on 12/31/2023, that Investment Committee funds were in excess of that figure, at \$492,426.

The comparative Investment Portfolios are as follows:

	<u>12/31/22</u>	<u>12/31/23</u>
Bonds	\$173,725	\$180,045
Equities	<u>271,023</u>	<u>312,381</u>
Total Investment Committee Portfolio	\$444,748	\$492,426
Trustees Fund	\$170,586	\$194,045

The 2023 calculated draw from the investment portfolio to support the church’s general operating budget is \$24,893, reflecting the draw of 5% of the three-year average portfolio balance. However, based upon the year-end numbers, we are limited in the amount we can withdraw. We may be able to withdraw \$15,000 if we can maintain the year-end excess balance above the \$477,399 “Historical Dollar Value.”

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Doug Kelley, chair  
Bill Galica  
Chris Young

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

		2023					
	December 31, 2022	Purchases	Sales	Withdrawals	Inv/Div Reinvest	Gain(Loss)	Change
	\$						\$
	%						%
<b>CASH</b>							
DUE FROM OPERATING FUND	\$ -						\$ -
DUE TO OPERATING FUND	\$ -						\$ -
<b>TOTAL CASH</b>	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%
							0.0%
<b>FIXED INCOME</b>							
DISIGERMAIN BOND ACCOUNT	\$ 173,725				\$ 6,320		\$ 180,045
<b>TOTAL FIXED INCOME</b>	\$ 173,725	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,320		\$ 180,045
% Beginning Balance	39.1%						3.6%
<b>STOCKS</b>							
DISIGERMAIN EQUITY ACCOUNT - Investment Comm.	\$ 271,023					\$ 41,358	\$ 312,381
DISIGERMAIN EQUITY ACCOUNT - Trustees	\$ 170,386		\$ 2,345			\$ 21,114	\$ 194,045
<b>TOTAL STOCKS</b>	\$ 441,609	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,345	\$ -	\$ 62,472	\$ 506,426
% Beginning Balance	60.9%						15.3%
<b>COMMUNITY PROJECT LOANS</b>	\$ -						\$ -
<b>TOTAL UNRESTRICTED ENDOWMENT FUNDS</b>	\$ 444,748	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 47,678	\$ 492,426
% Beginning Balance	100.0%						10.7%
<b>HISTORICAL DOLLAR VALUE</b>	\$ 477,399						\$ 477,399
<b>UNREALIZED GAIN(LOSS)</b>	\$ (32,651)						\$ 15,027

2024  
@ 5%

\$ 492,426  
\$ 444,748  
\$ 556,435

\$ 497,870  
\$ 24,893  
\$ (9,893)  
\$ 15,000

\$ 492,426  
\$ (15,000)  
\$ 477,426  
\$ 477,399  
\$ 27

REDUCTION FOR 2024 BUDGET

2023  
@ 5%

\$ 444,748  
\$ 556,435  
\$ 558,065

\$ 519,749  
\$ 25,987  
\$ (4,200)  
\$ (21,787)  
\$ 0

\$ 444,748  
\$ -  
\$ 444,748  
\$ 477,399  
\$ (32,651)

**BUDGET YEAR ENDING January 1**

INVESTMENT BALANCES AT DECEMBER 31,

2023  
2022  
2021  
2020

AVERAGE  
5.0% OPERATING FUND SUPPORT  
"PAYBACK" 1/3 OF 2020 LOAN  
REDUCTION FOR 2023 BUDGET  
NET CONTRIBUTION

FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR 3 YR. DRAW  
LESS DRAW - THIS YEAR (2023)  
LESS DRAW - THIS YEAR (2024)  
LESS VOTED RESERVES  
BALANCE REMAINING AFTER DRAW  
HISTORICAL DOLLAR VALUE  
EXCESS (DEFICIT)



## *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 2024 was “We Gather Together,” based on the popular hymn. We think this is appropriate since, for all intents and purposes, we are together again after the pandemic.

Thank you to our administrative assistant, Lee Brahen, for all her assistance with graphics, mailings, and countless other things she does to make our church run smoothly.

Special thanks to Jeanne Dill, our financial secretary, and Suzanne Kelley, our treasurer. You make our job so much easier!!

Our Stewardship Moment speakers for 2023 were Roseann Vinciguerra, Jeanne Dill, Diana Nothe-Taylor, Ed Maia, and Mike Kurasinski. Thank you all for your inspirational and heartfelt words.

As of this writing, our expected pledge income for 2024 is \$81,129, coming from 55 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 tavern nights have raised over \$17,000 for the 2023 budget. Please continue to support the monthly tavern nights and raffles! Thank you to all the members of committees and boards who make this possible.

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

## *Music Committee Annual Report*

The Music Committee continues to be guided by our mission to provide and support spiritual enrichment of the worship service through music. We feel blessed to have Kiel Krommer as our Director of Music Ministry. This past year, Kiel has gone above and beyond his contractual responsibilities. He has worked closely with Pastor Jack to select music which embraces our understanding of each Sunday’s scriptural text. Kiel’s commitment, expertise, enthusiasm, and talent are true blessings. Furthermore, Kiel has helped to organize and accompany two concerts at the Silver Street Chapel: one was an anniversary celebration and the other was a Community Christmas Carol Sing for the second year. Both were well attended and appreciated by the Monson community.

The Music Committee set three goals this past year. The first was to examine the music files and select music that fit our needs. This task took several days to accomplish. Music was evaluated for its usefulness both for relevance to our choir and to our worship needs. Some music was discarded and other pieces were given to the Springfield AGO members for use in their worship services. The second goal was to work with Erin Wallace to make the stage area usable, including a decision regarding the grand piano. After evaluation and learning that

the grand piano was not capable of holding a tune, the Music Committee and the Trustees decided to dispose of the piano. It was a major undertaking completed by members of both committees. The third goal was to redo the Director of Music Ministry contract and job description. The committee created a rubric to accompany the contract; the rubric sets forth the goals which guide the evaluation document of the Director.

In response to the demise of the grand piano downstairs, the Music Committee decided to purchase a digital keyboard. The Christian Education and Music Committee shared the cost (\$825) of purchasing a Yamaha P-125 Digital Piano which will be used for concerts at the Silver Street Chapel and for other events outside the church. When Erin forms a youth choir, the keyboard can be used for rehearsals.

The Music Committee hosted three concerts and dinners during 2023. Western Mass Brass performed on May 20<sup>th</sup>; Kiel Krommer and his friend Wesley Hall gave an organ recital in September; David Neill and the Fanfare Brass led a Christmas concert in early December. Profits from the events were added to the Music and Eva Farr Funds and for reimbursing the performers. All were well attended and appreciated. Thank you to Lee Brahen and Chris Sterritt for creating posters and tickets, preparing programs, and for helping us publicize these events. Many thanks to those who helped prepare and serve the dinners.

We are grateful to all of our musicians who delight in singing and sharing their love for music in worship. Our adult choir members are faithful and included this past year the following members: Suzanne and Doug Kelley, Jeanne Dill, Mary Newland, Gay Paluch, Sarah Brown, Carolyn Horacek, Gail Pelletier, and Joe Wholley. Cindy DeSellier and Erin and David Wallace also shared their talents. The Sunday School choir enhanced our worship during special times of year and at Christmas presented a terrific pageant.

During 2023, the Music Committee made plans to host at least two concerts in 2024. Nym Cooke and his chorus Wings of Song will perform on Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>. On Sunday evening, December 8<sup>th</sup>, Millennium Magic, the Sweet Adelines group from Sturbridge, will present their Holiday Show, thanks to a grant from the Monson Cultural Council written in October of 2023. Please save these dates on your calendar! The Reed Organ Historical Society asked if First Church would host an event next fall. This will be a dinner and concert fundraiser for the church budget.

In the words of the Choristers Guild, "Make Your Life a Song to God." Please think about joining our choir! Hopefully, we can continue in our tradition of music in glorifying God each and every time we have an opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gay Paluch, chair  
Donna Okscin, secretary  
Mary Newland, treasurer

Gail Pelletier, special events coordinator

## *Christian Education Annual Report*

Communion classes began on February 12<sup>th</sup> for 4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Classes were led by Elaine Harris. With the help of Elaine, Mary Newland, and Janice Muldrew, the class made bread to take home on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The children led a procession waving palms to start the service, received bibles, and took communion on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Pastor Jack hosted a Lenten book study on Tuesday mornings during Lent starting on February 28<sup>th</sup> and concluding on March 28<sup>th</sup>. The study focused on *Love Is the Way* by Bishop Michael Curry.

The CE Committee and Outreach together hosted our Fifth Annual Easter Egg Hunt for the community on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to all the volunteers who donated their time, talents, food, and items for the eggs.

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, the CE Committee hosted the monthly Main Street Tavern fundraiser. The theme was *Star Wars* and raised \$327 in raffle sales and \$425 from the Tavern from food sales.

The Sunday School finished the school year on June 18<sup>th</sup> with Children's Sunday. The children began the service with "Don't Give Up on Me" by Andy Grammer. They led the congregation in the morning prayer, singing hymns, the Lord's Prayer, scripture reading, and benediction. The children performed a fun skit about two very unlikely characters who learn a big lesson.

Elaine Harris and Judy White hosted discussions about women in the Old Testament on Mondays starting October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The women discussed were Eve, Miriam, Ruth, Naomi, Hannah, Abigail, and Gomer.

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, CE and Outreach joined once again to host a Breakfast with Santa. A continental breakfast was served with beverages. Stories were told with Santa, Mrs. Clause, and the Grinch. The Sunday School contributed to the Advent season with a pageant on December 18<sup>th</sup> entitled An Interactive Christmas Story. The story of the birth of Jesus was brought to life with the active (and costumed) participation of several members from the church congregation as well as Christmas songs led by the children.

The CE Committee would like to thank Erin and Dave 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. Finally, thank you to Elaine Harris for her dedication the children of First Church. We have some amazing people here!

Respectfully submitted,  
Cynthia DeSellier, chair  
Heather Brouillette, 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 Slozak (Baby/Toddler), Sarah Brown (Baby/Toddler)

Number of Students Enrolled: 26

In January we focused on the Bible. We learned that the Bible is "the inspired word of God," "our guide," a "source of new life," and the "sword of truth." We talked about how to use the Bible and classes practiced looking up weekly verses. Each week focused on one of the different topics listed above in quotations.

February and March focused on the teachings from James about daily living. To be good followers of Jesus we

must strive to “become perseverant,” “become doers,” “become tongue-tamers,” “become wise,” “become submissive,” and “become Glory Givers.” Valentine's Day was celebrated by making and distributing valentines to the congregation and to the important people in the children’s lives. We focused on how love should be celebrated. Elaine Harris organized and ran a wonderful communion class for grades 4 and up. It was a 9-week program that delved deep into the importance of communion. The program culminated with a seder dinner experience for participants and families, as well as the children receiving their bibles in front of the congregation. The program was very well received.

The children sang in the church service for Easter as well as a couple other times throughout the year. They sang songs that were uplifting, meaningful, and could be spun in a religious manner, but were not necessarily church songs. They learned and performed, “Don’t Give Up on Me” (Andy Grammar), “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough” (Marvin Gaye), “My Sweet Lord” (George Harrison), “Breathed Out by God” (Seeds of Worship), and “Down to the River to Pray” (Alison Krauss). They worked on voices and percussion and were able to sing using simple harmonies. Most importantly they used the music as a worship practice.

May and June were spent talking about mothers, fathers, and the role that they play in our lives, with our ultimate father being God. “Honor thy father and mother” was a theme talked about often. We spent a lot of time creating and practicing the Children’s Sunday sermon, which took the form of a small play about apples, becoming or being a part of something bigger than yourself, and spreading God’s word. Sunday School classes ended June 18th (Children’s Sunday).

“Welcome Sunday” was September 10th. We kicked off Sunday School with a field day event. It was well attended, and all the kids signed up for Sunday School classes. Because we had a broader range in ages this fall, it was time to break the classes up. We currently have grades 7-12 in the “Teen Room,” grades 1-6 in the elementary room, and baby through kindergarten in the playroom. David and Erin take turns switching between classrooms. Jessica stays as a teaching assistant with the elementary ages, and Sarah S. and Sarah B. take the playroom.

Sarah B. has been working on implementing short bits of an age-appropriate curriculum for the toddlers. Both Sarahs have been doing a great job keeping the toys disinfected on a regular basis.

September – November we worked on a smattering of classes about not only talking to God, but also, listening for God’s answers. The conversation is a two-way street, and we need to engage ourselves to listen carefully for God’s messages. We carved pumpkins in October with the messages “Let your light shine” and “God washes away our sins” in the forefront. We worked on teaching the Lord’s prayer, which is still a work in progress, as well as tithes/offerings, and different ways to worship God. We are using a teen curriculum called Freedom Ride from the online printable resource by Mary Kate Warner, “TeachSundaySchool.com”, and lessons for the elementary levels at [www.kidssundayschoolplace.com](http://www.kidssundayschoolplace.com).

In December we focused on (re)learning the Christmas pageant songs, fluent readings, and basic preparations for the pageant. We talked about the Christmas story and made sure that everyone knew what was happening. We also created craft projects and centerpieces after church with some of the Sunday school kids for our Breakfast with Santa and toy drive event. Toys collected by the kids were donated to Jess Miller’s 10th Annual Toy Drive for Foster Children in Western Massachusetts. Some of the older kids volunteered to dress up like elves and help out the day of the event as well. December was a difficult month for everyone’s overall health. Again, we felt lucky that we chose to have a paper bag pageant, as everyone was getting sick, and we never knew for sure who we were going to have at Sunday School.

Other than Sunday School, a small committee of people, Erin and David Wallace (First Church), Sarah Brown (First Church), Tony Esposito (St. Patrick’s Church), and Keith and Avery Richardson (St. Patrick’s Church) created a town-wide, faith-based youth group called, Youth United. The group meets the first and third Friday

of each month, swapping locations. It has been relatively successful with typical attendances between 15-20 kids each night. The goal of the group is to get like-minded people together for companionship, fun, and some teaching moments. Ultimately, we'd love for them to eventually come to Sunday School and give it a try.

Overall, our Sunday School is a place of happiness. The kids love coming, being with each other, singing, dancing, and having snacks at fellowship afterwards. They cheer for "Let's Eat" breakfasts on the third Sunday of the month. It is an immense pleasure to lead the Sunday school classes and represent the First Church Youth; a wonderful closing to 2023. Let's hope the new year brings us exciting ventures and meaningful experiences to share with everyone.

Respectfully submitted,  
Erin Wallace, Sunday School Superintendent

### *Outreach Committee Annual Report*

#### **Dues to UCC**

Southern New England Conference (SNEC) - **\$3,710**  
Hampden Association - **\$290**

#### **5 for 5 UCC - Basic Giving + 4 Special Collections**

- **One Great Hour of Sharing** - Lent - supports disaster, refugee and development ministries - **\$561**
- **Strengthen the Church** - Pentecost Sunday - supports youth ministries and full-time leaders for new churches - **\$300**
- **Neighbors in Need** - Oct. 1st - justice and compassion ministries including the Council for American Indian Ministries - **\$100**
- **The Christmas Fund** - Dec. - financial support for those who serve the church and are having financial difficulties or those that are retired

In 2023, the Outreach Committee had \$0 budgeted for sponsored projects, so we relied solely on our funds in Outreach General for our activities and to provide support globally, nationally, and locally on behalf of the congregation. In April, the Outreach Committee was gifted **\$10,405.33** from the Carol Darnley Estate.

**January:** We purchased food & agricultural resources for Haiti through Church World Service (CWS). We purchased 65 cans of corn and 400 mango seeds for planting, 11 shovels, and a goat. We also purchased 72 school kits with pens, pencils, and notebooks for students in Haiti. Outreach General, **\$488.**

**February:** A 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck Turkey. The damage covered over 140,000 sq. miles and nearly 60,000 people were killed. Samaritan's Purse responded by mobilizing a field hospital and over 100 emergency response personnel to provide life-saving care. We raised an overwhelming **\$1325** from the congregation, combined it with the **\$500** from Outreach General, and then added another **\$175** from the Carol Darnley Estate. In April, we sent a check for **\$2000** to Samaritan's Purse.

#### **April:**

- On April 8th, the Outreach and Christian Education Committees collaborated to host an Easter Egg Hunt for over 60 people. We bought candy for the plastic eggs, cupcakes, juice, eggs for coloring, the tablecloths and paper goods. Outreach General, **\$169.**

- Attendees were asked to make a donation to Save the Children, which was providing disaster relief in Kentucky and Mississippi after devastating tornadoes. We raised **\$105** and added **\$145** from the Carol Darnley Estate to make a total donation of **\$250**.

#### **June:**

- On June 3rd, the 160-year-old First Congregational United Church in Spencer, Massachusetts, was destroyed in a fire. The congregation donated **\$305** in a collection jar the following Sunday.
- On June 18th, on Father's Day, Outreach hosted a church potluck picnic. Outreach made meatballs and provided hot dogs & rolls, ice, and paper goods. Outreach General, **\$50.96**.

**July:** We hosted the raffle basket with a camping theme for Tavern Night. The basket included a \$50 gift certificate donated by Sunsetview Campground.

#### **September:**

- Welcome Sunday was held on September 10th. Outreach sponsored a continental breakfast in the morning and an ice cream social after church. Outreach General, **\$258.29**
- Outreach planned to make tie-dye t-shirts for the Lights of Hope event on Sunday, Sept. 10. Due to a severe rainstorm, we did not participate. We have the supplies ready to attend the event in 2024, perhaps at an indoor venue. Outreach General, **\$103.86**.
- On Sept. 17th, members of Monson Fire & Police Dept. gave a talk and answered questions about the use of NARCAN, a nasal spray (Naloxone) used for the emergency treatment of a known or suspected opioid overdose in adults and children. Over 20 people attended. Attendees were able to leave with a can of NARCAN. An Emergency Kit was installed at the church. We are grateful for Elaine Harris who organized the event.

**October:** On October 1st we celebrated World Communion Sunday with a potluck luncheon; its cost was combined with Let's Eat in October expenses. \*

#### **November:**

- Outreach participated in Undie Sunday/Undie Monday for three weeks by collecting new items of underclothing for the Springfield Rescue Mission for distribution to the homeless. Outreach purchased items for men, women, and children to add to the drive. Outreach General, **\$93.83**.
- Outreach purchased 80 travel packs of sensitive skin wipes for the Monson Military Care Package Drive. Lisa participated in the packing event held on November 19<sup>th</sup> to send Christmas packages to service people associated with Monson. Outreach General, **\$92.76**.

#### **December:**

- On December 9th, Outreach collaborated with CE to host a "Breakfast with Santa" event. The event was free to the public and was attended by over 50 people. People were invited to donate a toy for foster children in Western Massachusetts. Carol Darnley Estate, **\$248.21**.
- The Outreach Committee had planned to make cookies to add to 60 gift bags made by the Friends of Monson group. Due to bad weather and power outages, we weren't able to make cookies. We will use the supplies to make cookies for the Meals on Wheels delivery on Valentine's Day in 2024. Outreach General, **\$140.15**.
- Inspired by the power outage, we decided to put flashlights along with lip balm in the gift bags, instead. They were delivered to seniors that receive Meals on Wheels on Wed. before Christmas. We packaged them with a message of love from The First Church. Outreach General, **\$118.98**.
- We donated 45 hats, 36 gloves, and 18 mittens collected on our mitten tree in the Narthex during Advent to the Springfield Rescue Mission.

On October 25, we sadly said good-bye to our dear friend and committee member, Candy Young. Here she is pictured on the right with Janice Muldrew at our Tavern Night raffle in July. Heaven has gained another angel. We will miss you, Candy.



### Let's Eat 2023

The Let's Eat program provides a hot breakfast buffet once a month, 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, Dave Sanborn (aka the Bacon Man), and Judy Tirrell!

	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Receipts</u>	
1/15	\$209.74	\$ 96.00	
2/17	169.30	110.00	
3/19	109.41	101.00	
4/16	94.86	86.00	
5/21	87.17	60.00	
Welcome Sunday			
9/17	239.52	664.00 (includes \$500 donation)	
10/15	227.73*	69.00	
11/18	71.80	58.00	
12/17	118.53	105.00	
	<u>\$ 1,328.06</u>	<u>\$ 1,349.00</u>	

Respectfully submitted,  
 Lisa Borlen, chair  
 Janice Muldrew  
 Candace Young

\* Includes cost of items for potluck luncheon on World Communion Sunday.

### *Open and Affirming Task Force Annual Report*

The ONA task force continues to meet and have discussions about how to make our congregation more welcoming and inclusive. We recently met to talk about how to incorporate people with mental health issues, such as dementia, as well as their caregivers who would need our support. We have been talking about doing some workshops in the months to come to educate people about these issues. We also plan to apply for official certification to be listed as ONA on the ONA Coalition and national UCC websites.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Keith Obert, chair

## *Pastoral Search Committee Annual Report*

On March 19, 2023, the congregation of First Church of Monson voted to form a Pastoral Search Committee. The Committee was commissioned on April 30, 2023, with the following church members serving on the committee: Lisa Borlen, Elaine Carlin, Laurie Clarke, Roy Miller, Keith Obert, Deb Shepard, David Wallace, Judith White, and Christian Young. On the day of commission, the Committee met with Interim Pastor, Rev. Jack Kraaz. Keith Obert and David Wallace were chosen as co-chairpersons, Deb Shepard as chaplain and Elaine Carlin and Laurie Clarke as scribes.

In our search for a new pastor, the Committee is working with the Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ and our Conference Minister, Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa. The Conference has a set of procedures for Pastoral Search Committees to follow, including an extensive Local Church Profile. To complete our Profile, it is very important that the Committee know how our church members want First Church to progress in the future and the type of individual desired as our settled pastor.

Consequently, the Committee is working to provide opportunities for every individual to express his or her thoughts. To help in this process, the Committee posted questions in the Fellowship Room where church members had the opportunity to respond. Currently, the Committee is planning “In-Home Small Group Meetings” where church members will gather to have personal conversations about our church and the type of settled pastor to lead us. Two Committee members will serve as facilitators at each meeting.

Searching for the best settled pastor for our church is a long process. The Pastoral Search Committee works hard to keep everyone informed and up to date with the search. The Committee will continue to include articles in *The Messenger* and church bulletins, so everyone knows the status of the pastoral search. Members of the Committee are open to having church members and friends speak with them personally.

The Committee is thankful for the help and guidance the congregation has provided thus far and looks forward to continuing the search for First Church’s next settled pastor.

*“O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give success to your servant today...”*  
*Nehemiah 1:11*

Respectfully submitted,  
The Pastoral Search Committee

## *Pastor Parish Relations Committee Annual Report*

*The responsibility of the PPRC is to build and maintain a healthy relationship between the Minister and the congregation by providing a way to share concerns, seek feedback, and support the Minister.*

Throughout 2023, this Committee has met quarterly, to keep communication between our interim minister, Rev. Jack Kraaz, and our church family current and open. Our committee has had a very good relationship with Rev. Kraaz, and our church family has expressed positive feedback regarding interaction between the minister and the congregation. We have been able to have honest and positive conversations as our church continues to move forward.

The PPRC will prayerfully continue to work together to maintain a healthy and open environment in our church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elaine Carlin, Elaine Harris, Edward Maia, Judith White  
Rev. Jack Kraaz



## *Hearts Willing Club Annual Report*

In 1957, a small group of First Church women met and decided to form a group called Hearts Willing Club. Some 65 years later, Hearts Willing continues its service mission to the First Church community. Hearts Willing Club is open to all women interested in promoting closer fellowship by gathering together for activities and inspirational and educational programs. Members do not need to be covenant members of the church. We usually meet in Fellowship Hall on the fourth Wednesday of the month, from September to June (except January through March).

**April:** Bill Dominick presented an excellent presentation about the history of the Fuller House at One Green Street followed by Bob Horacek's interesting presentation featuring Civil War memorabilia. Jeff Lord, the new owner of One Green Street, spoke about his plans to renovate the building for rental use, assuring the club that he would keep as true to the original house as possible.

**May:** The May banquet was held at the Mug 'n' Muffin where the secretary cast one vote for the incoming slate of officers as per Hearts Willing's bylaws.

Hearts Willing doesn't meet for the summer; however, it was available for a funeral collation and held a bake sale fundraiser during the Town Wide Tag Sale held in early September.

**September:** Hearts Willing began its 67<sup>th</sup> year with a welcome dinner – Italian style – which was hosted by the Program Committee with the assistance of our trusty clean-up crew Joe Farr-Wholley and Roy Miller. There was a new slate of officers and the program books for the 2023-2024 year were distributed and reviewed.

**October:** Laughter Yoga with Robert Rivest was followed by a short business meeting.

**November:** A business meeting was held followed by a presentation by Deb Shepard called "A Thankful Heart." Our service project was assembling gift bags for homebound members in our church. Another Thanksgiving bake sale fundraiser was held after church on Sunday, November 19.

**December:** A Christmas Social was held in the Fellowship Hall. Members signed up to bring appetizers and desserts.

New members and friends are always welcome to attend meetings and the old saying is, "There are no strangers here, just friends we haven't met."

Respectfully submitted,  
Diana Nothe-Taylor, secretary