



The Congregational Church of Salisbury

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Meeting in Grace • Transformed by Love • Serving with Joy



The 281st Annual Meeting, Part II • Sunday, 26 April 2026

Reports to the Congregation

Mission of the Church

The purpose of this Church shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ in the love of God and of neighbor through the worship of God in Christ, the development of Christian character and fellowship and the extension of the principles of the Christian faith.

(Church Bylaws, Article II)

Covenant Prayer

Dear God,

As we gather to discern your will,
Let our church be a place where we learn about love
and practice it, in keeping with our Covenant;

Where we envision peace,
and work through open
and honest communication to build it;

Where we strive to find harmony
and uphold the dignity of all,
while benefiting from our differences.

May we listen without judgment,
use words with care,
and exercise patience as we deliberate.

May your Spirit grant us
the courage, power and grace we need
to make decisions for the good of all.

It is in Christ's name that we pray:
Amen.

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Call to the Annual Meeting

The 281st Annual Meeting, Part II, of the Congregational Church of Salisbury, United Church of Christ will be held following the worship service on Sunday, 26 April 2026 for the purpose of:

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the 281st Annual Meeting, Part I, of 26 October 2025
2. Presentation of Reports from Boards and Committees
3. The Election of Officers, Boards, and Committees
4. Other business that may appropriately come before the Congregational Meeting.

Agenda

1. Prayer
2. Call to Order
3. Minutes of the 281st Annual Meeting, Part I
4. Moderator's remarks
5. Acceptance and Discussion of Reports
6. Election of Officers and Committees
7. Other Business
8. Pastor's remarks
9. Prayer
10. Adjournment

Minutes of the 281st Annual Meeting, Part I

The 281st Annual Meeting, Part I of the Congregational Church of Salisbury, UCC was held following the worship service on Sunday, 26 October 2025.

Time Called to Order: 11:21am

Time Adjourned: 12:00pm

Location: Meeting House

Chair: Charlie Noyes

Recorder: Liz Wing

Quorum met.

Motion for the Acceptance of Minutes from 04/2024 - 280th Annual Meeting Part 2 by: Emily Elliot. Motion was seconded by: Betsy Back and accepted by voice vote.

Moderator's Remarks (Charlie Noyes)

- Gratitude:
 - Pastor John for his mix of wit, wisdom, and humor in his guidance.
 - David Baranowski for his patience and humility in how he leads the choir.
 - Emily Elliot for her leadership.
 - Janet Offensend who is our treasurer and does extraordinary work and works with our accountant and comes up with a budget.
 - Liz Wing & Steven for leading the Fall Festival this year.
 - Sarah Lesch, Dan Baker & Holly Tierney for their leadership with the youth.
- Action Plan:
 - Of the 83 discrete objectives, 69 are completed or being actively worked on - this is 83% up from 64% last April. The work is being shepherded by the Church Council. We are just 1 year into a 5 year plan.
- Exercising Our Vision - audience participated by a raise of hands to the following questions:
 - In the past 6 months how many of you have experienced: Meeting in Grace; Being Transformed by Love; Serving with Joy
 - This reflects being a living, breathing, congregational community that is bringing our Statement of Purpose to life.

Presentation of 2026 Budget (Janet Offensend)

- Gratitude: this budget and the realization of last year's budget is the culmination of many participants' work.
- Summary:
 - Revenue: overall revenues will be increasing this year to \$582,250.
 - Goal for pledging: \$227,500 which is a 7% increase from last year. We each have a role to play in this effort.
- Special focus
 - Draw from the Endowment: We are fortunate to have this amazing financial resource. We benefit from it and must steward it. We have a great investment and we hold our draw from the endowment at no more than 4% to ensure it is there in perpetuity. The endowment is a legacy from the past and ensures this congregation's future. We are able to increase the draw this year by \$7,000. We have achieved savings from the Green Team's Project via payments from Eversource and the EV charger.
 - This year's budget has been more difficult to balance because we are pushing to do more this year because the Action Plan calls for new ways for our Congregation to participate in the community.
 - Trustees agreed to a 4% increase as an appropriate, stable, worthwhile place to be for compensation for our staff. Staff compensation makes up the largest portion of our budget.
 - The Benevolences are the next biggest portion of our budget.

- Ministry Support, Maintenance & Repair, and Utilities are on par, though last Winter was colder, which made utilities trickier.
- Program Expenses are where we're providing funds to support the activities of the Church that are run by staff and volunteers (music, education, Trail Magic, etc.). The Music budget has been increased by \$2400 this year especially to support First Friday Music.
- Insurance will increase by about 12% this year.
- \$40,000 will be set aside for the Capital Budget which sits at about \$150,000. This year we bought a \$3,300 freezer. We are looking to use more of these funds this year on projects such as the steeple.
- Questions:
 - Peggy: Why has there been a drop in the education budget (education compensation) since 2024? Answer: The education personnel budget is now in four categories and totals \$16,255.
 - Emily: Do we see the value of the Special Music Fund in this budget? Answer: No, we see here what we're supposed to pull out of the Special Music Fund. \$42,297 was the Special Music Fund under the Vanguard Account as of 2 weeks ago.
- Motion to accept the Budget: Emily Elliot, accepted by voice vote.

Presentation of the Nominating Committee Slate:

- Barbara Collins, Deacons; Karin Noyes, Christian Action; Betsy Beck, Member at Large
- We are looking for 2 more volunteers for the Nominating Committee and someone to lead the committee.
- Motion to accept the Nominating Committee Slate by Anne Williams. Seconded; approved by a Raise of Hands.

Pastor's Report

- This weekend gives us a snapshot of what this Church is – our mission and vision, and the Action Plan that comes out of them. This weekend has included a wedding, Kids' Night In/Parents' Night Out, efforts to bring the Joyas out of Afghanistan, efforts to support the Holly's, visible testimony to the faithful effort to weaving together prayer in a tangible form of a shawl, Light of Service to support neighboring churches feeding neighbors, a community preparing for this afternoon's memorial after the murder of a child of one of this Church's members. All of this is what is meant to "be Church."

Motion to adjourn made by Gordon Johnson, seconded by Pastor John, passed by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Wing, *Clerk*

Reports to Annual Meeting

Pastor's Report

Grace and greetings to you in the name of Christ Jesus, the Risen One, Love's Own Self! Before all else I give thanks for the wonder of God at work in you, the beloved community that gathers to sing praise to God and to build compassionate community in and around Salisbury. By the power of God's Spirit, we keep on sharing the vision of *shalom* — wholeness, harmony, justice, joy — that is transforming the world.

In January I sat in my study and called our moderator. "Charlie, I have a bit of a curveball for you. After a lot of prayer, I have decided to retire."

I regularly receive accusations that I take understatement to absurd extremes. Just ask Charlie. "A bit of a curveball?" he repeated, incredulously. "A lot larger than that!"

Then, in a way that will be familiar to each of you fortunate enough to spend time with Charlie Noyes, he took my ~~curveball~~ bombshell in typically good grace, sharing openly his grief at the coming end of our shared ministry, his support for my decision, and his heartfelt good wishes for the new phase of life that Angela and I will soon be entering.

As the news of my planned retirement spread, through a series of phone calls, my letter to the congregation, announcements in church, and community conversations, you have blessed me with your messages in reply: "We are so sad for ourselves, and so happy for you." I treasure both sentiments. Worth repeating: I treasure both of those sentiments. I share them, too: a deep sense of tearing apart, as I prepare to leave this congregation that has been such a rich and rewarding place for ministry — and as I prepare to leave the vocation of pastoral ministry itself —, combined with excitement for the adventure of my life's "third half," giving myself more fully to family and avocations.

And I thank you, dear friends, for your faithful, enthusiastic, generous, creative, thoughtful, and heartfelt commitment to this beloved community. In our last full year together, we have seen the Church's mission and vision take deeper root: meeting in grace, being transformed by love, serving with joy. Let me count (some of) the ways! From:

- weekly worship that praises our Creator and recharges us for ministry, to
- memorial services that have thank God for the gift of life, for the beauty of lives shared, and for the wonder of life everlasting, to
- meetings of boards and committees who do the hard and sometimes messy work of translating "serving with joy" into concrete action, to
- gracious and tasty hospitality, created for feeding bodies and spirits, to
- imaginative, spirit-filled, and fun faith formation for young children, youth, and learners of all ages, to
- care-filled stewardship of the buildings entrusted to us, including stretching our ingenuity and leveraging our resources to walk ever more lightly on God's earth, to

- honoring the service of a beloved staff member, Jenn Oberto, and successfully finding and welcoming her worthy successor, Catherine Chatham, to
- coat drives, food pantry collections, collaboration with nOURish BRIDGEPORT, Inc., a record-busting CROP Hunger Walk, presence at community celebrations and community vigils and community protests, to
- First Fridays, seasonal concerts, anthems, and the planning and rehearsing that makes them possible, to
- offering prayer and practical care for members of our community who are troubled in body, heart, mind, or spirit, to
- the uncounted actions of lived faith known only to their practitioners, and those who receive those signs of God's love.

Your faithfulness to the Way of Jesus (Love's Own Self!) has made me a better servant of God than I was on arriving here: thank you for that immeasurable gift. God's *shalom*, in you, is transforming the world. Alleluia!

Christlove,



Moderator's Report

One year ago I began my Moderator's report by observing that my primary job was to serve as a go-between that helps to build community, engaging thoughtfully with Pastor John, our committees, volunteers and members of the congregation to ensure that we all are routinely informed, collaborating effectively and working sustainably to breathe life into our *Statement of Purpose*: Meeting in Grace, Transformed by Love, Serving with Joy.

And all of these verbs – *engaging, informing and collaborating* – still guide my efforts week to week, month to month. My work as Moderator has been a joyful challenge. But now a new verb has recently emerged that, frankly, feels a bit overwhelming at times: transitioning. Let me elaborate.

Complex organizations, both large and small, are typically a functioning collection of component parts – departments, committees, managers, board members and administrative leaders. Successful organizations evolve and grow when these varied components are guided by commitment to a shared vision, self-awareness and positivity. Even when leadership is flawed or misdirected, the collective of component parts can often weather that storm and still move forward. But when leadership is fully engaged, human-centric, and committed to collaboration, complex organizations absolutely thrive.

The Salisbury Congregational Church is that kind of complex and thriving organization. Our church community is guided by a commitment to a shared vision, self-awareness and positivity. The list of individuals and initiatives that drive our forward momentum, that make our congregation so inspiring and successful, would require several

pages of elaboration. So here is just a small sampling. We are **engaging** mightily with our five-year strategic plan. Just two years in, we are actively addressing or have resolved 85% of our objectives. Representatives of the Church Council are practicing inspiring meeting protocols and effectively **informing** their council peers and their respective committees as together we make forward progress. The Nominating Committee – or the Community Building Team – is superbly **collaborating** with dozens of church members to address the personnel needs of our committees and boards. And, of course, the leadership of Pastor John inspires and motivates us all. In addition to feeding our souls and expanding our spiritual awareness each Sunday, he guides our committee work and other church initiatives with a wise and steady hand. As a congregational community we are truly in a good place, and in large measure, Pastor John is the soulful tie that binds us.

And now we find ourselves in a time of transition. The news of John’s looming retirement on June 14th, 2026, was a jolt none of us was expecting. But we’ve had several weeks now to adjust and figure out next steps. Our hearts may be heavy but given that we are in the “good place” I’ve described above, the path forward is relatively clear and smooth. We are financially secure, the Holy Cow survey and our strategic plan work have given us a solid sense of who we are and where we want to go, and consequently, we share an exciting vision for the future and the means to get there. Pastor John has had no small hand in all of this good work. He has graciously set us up for success as we navigate this time of transition.

Over the next month or two our Transition Team (Roger Crain, Emily Elliot, Dave Heck, Charlie Noyes & Janet Offensend), working closely with the regional conference, will engage in interviews with potential Intentional Interim candidates. Our interim position is now posted nationwide on the UCC Ministry Opportunities website, and our newly revised church profile document is available to all interested candidates. After Pastor John departs in June, we will likely work with different “Pulpit Supply” ministers through mid-summer until we are ready to welcome our new interim pastor. So, while things remain fluid, our ducks are in a row. Know that we will keep you informed about new developments as these next steps evolve. And please let’s keep practicing gratitude for both Pastor John & Angela. When you feel something, say something!!!

Respectfully Submitted,
Charles D. Noyes

Clerk’s Report

Total Membership as of 1 April 2025: 163

Covenant Partners added: 0

Transferred or withdrawn: 0

In Memoriam: Peg Heck

Robert Weber

Alice Gustafson

Total Membership as of 1 April 2026: 160

Treasurer's Report

Last year was a good one for the church from a budget perspective, and our financial operations have run smoothly as a result of the special help provided by Jenn Oberto and through the transition to Catherine Chatham. I am deeply grateful for their support through 2025 as we refine our approach to recordkeeping and financial planning.

Operating Budget Report

Operating Revenue

Contributions: We started out 2025 with a very strong base of Pledges of \$212,000, well above the budgeted goal of \$192,000—a strong sign of vigor and support for the church, its ministry and programs. Based on previous years, the budget for Other Donations (i.e. funds donated outside of Pledges and Light of Service) was \$48,000. This proved harder to achieve, in large measure because of the strong focus placed on raising extra donated funds through the Benevolence Fund to support the Joya Family, the other young women from Afghanistan and local families in need. Our community of donors raised a total of nearly \$150,000 toward this effort in 2025! The church leadership is particularly grateful for our ability to meet these kinds of special needs at a time when our world feels so fractured. In summation, while operating budget revenues were below budget, the generosity of our church was overwhelming. We thank **everyone** who makes an annual commitment—at any level—to support the ongoing programs and benevolences of the church, and those who stretched to make extra giving possible.

Although not a part of the Operating Budget, the Light of Service program again contributed powerfully to the church's benevolences, bringing in \$27,813 over the course of 2025. Similarly, Fall Festival raised in excess of \$8,000 for distribution to worthy local causes.

In total, the church raised more than \$400,000 for church operations and benevolences throughout the world. We are grateful to all for this accomplishment.



Draw from the Endowment: In 2025 withdrawals from the endowment provided \$310,000, as budgeted. This represented a draw of 4% of the three-year moving average of the endowment's total value. **The endowment totaled \$8,707,834 at the close of 2025.** With the guidance of the Investment Committee the church draws upon the endowment in a manner that ensures it will be available to future generations of the Congregation. As we see many other congregations in the US struggling financially today, we are exceptionally fortunate to have our endowment, the legacy of generosity and prudence throughout our long history.

Z-Rec and Flow Income: The church has started to see a steady flow of revenue from several elements of our Green Initiative, including a total of nearly \$5,000 from the Z-Rec payments from Eversource and the revenue from our Flow EV Charger.

Operating Revenue came in at \$542,900 versus the budget of \$558,500.

Operating Expenses

The church continues to run a lean and careful operation financially, with most areas of spending underbudget for the year. Several areas did come in overbudget, including most significantly Utilities and Ministry Support. Utilities were a challenge due to very cold temperatures in January 2025, as well as adaptations in systems management required on our end for the new heat pump technology. In Ministry Support, we needed new components for our streaming services and Zoom meetings, completed the redesign of our website and ran a search to fill the Church Administrator position using Indeed. Timing differences contributed to the recorded underspending in Compensation, Insurance and Music. But we also spent less than expected on our Repairs and Maintenance and Religious Education. Modest overspending in budgeted Benevolences and Hospitality were comfortably accommodated.

Total Operating Expenses were \$537,783.22.

As a result of the above, the church ran a modest surplus of just over \$5,000.

Operating Checking Account	Balance as of 12/31/2025	\$106,707
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Capital Spending Reserve	Balance as of 12/31/2025	\$151,182
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Our historic building is in good shape with sound, refreshed major systems and an outer envelope that is secure. However, historic buildings demand continuous attention, so the Trustees have agreed to continue to gradually increase the amount we contribute from the Operating Budget to the Capital Reserve each year, to ensure we can meet whatever expenses arise. In 2026 we are adding another \$40,000.

Benevolence Fund	Balance as of 12/31/2025	\$47,487.80
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Annual Financial Report for 2025

Revenue & Expenses Versus Budget January 1-December 31, 2025

	Actual	Budget	Over/Under budget	Extra- Budgetary Expenses
Income				
4000 Contributions Income				
4001 Plate -Light of Service				27,813.64
4002 Pledges	211,245.88	192,000.00	19,245.88	
4007 Donations - Other	10,057.68	48,000.00	-37,942.32	
4007 Benevolence Fund Donations				147,582.34
Total for 4000 Contributions Income	\$221,303.56	\$240,000.00	-\$18,696.44	
4040 Rental Income	4,650.00	2,500.00	1,900.00	
4053 Z-Rec & Flow Income	4,947.16	4,000.00	947.16	
4060 Fall Festival Income				8,075.50
4062 Other Event Income				300.00
4999 Draw from Endowment	310,000.00	310,000.00	0.00	
4997 Draw from Special Music Fund	2,000	2,000.00	0.00	
Total Operating Budget Income	\$542,900.72	\$558,500.00	-\$15,849.28	
Expenses				
5000 Compensation				
5011 Minister	81,753.36	85,023.00	-3,269.64	
5012 Minister of Music	44,772.00	46,563.00	-1,791.00	
5013 Sexton	14,124.91	16,122.00	-1,997.09	
5014 Education	15,556.00	15,145.00	411.00	
5015 Bell Choir	6,010.16	6,250.00	-239.84	
5016 Guest Ministers	1,000.00	1,500.00	-500.00	
5021 Administrative Assistant	53,986.46	51,408.00	2,578.46	
5029 Cantor	1,350.00	7,000.00	-5,650.00	
Total for 5000 Compensation	\$218,552.89	\$229,011.00	-\$10,458.11	
5024 Sexton Fee	100.00			
5030 Other Personnel expenses	227.00	500.00	-273.00	
5031 Minister Health Ins	22,684.67	24,000.00	-1,315.33	
5032 Minister Pension	18,099.51	17,920.00	179.51	
5033 Minister Travel	8.00	3,000.00	-2,992.00	
5034 Minister Housing	40,154.92	42,163.00	-2,008.08	
5035 Minister Tax Reim	9,326.20	9,793.00	-466.80	
5037 Social Security	10,613.98	8,741.00	1,872.98	
5038 Workman's Comp	248.00	1,600.00	-1,352.00	

	Actual	Budget	Over/Under budget	Extra- Budgetary Expenses
5055 Minister Continuing Educ	3,155.68	3,000.00	155.68	
5039 MusicMini/Staff Pension/Benefits	0.00	1,164.00	-1,164.00	
5056 In-service staff training	0.00	1,500.00	-1,500.00	
Total for 5030 Other Personnel Exp	\$104,517.96	\$113,381.00	-\$8,863.04	
6100 Ministry Support	1,165.41	0	1,165.41	
6105 Equip Rental - Copier	5,602.66	6,000.00	-397.34	
6106 Bank and Credit Card Fees	1,730.95	1,000.00	730.95	
6111 Computer & Technology	8,652.07	6,000.00	2,652.07	
6112 Publicity & Marketing	5,850.23	5,000.00	850.23	
6115 Telephone	3,656.83	3,000.00	656.83	
6120 Other, incl website design	4,990.80	1,000.00	3,990.80	
6125 Supplies	1,304.79	2,000.00	-695.21	
6130 Postage	506.00	400.00	106.00	
6140 Payroll Costs	947.50	2,000.00	-1,052.50	
Total for 6100 MinistrySupport	\$34,407.24	\$26,400.00	\$8,007.24	
6200 Maintenance & Repairs				
6201 Church Maintenance	8,390.38	10,000.00	-1,609.62	
6202 Custodian Supplies	2,073.16	1,000.00	1,073.16	
6205 Church Repairs & Capital	1,069.27	6,000.00	-4,930.73	
Total for 6200 Maint. & Repairs	\$11,532.81	\$17,000.00	-\$5,467.19	
6250 Utilities				
6251 Electricity - Church	10,158.88	0	10,158.88	
6252 Electricity - Lot	599.30	600.00	-0.70	
6253 Fuel - Church	5,410.62	400.00	5,010.62	
6257 Water & Sewer	656.93	700.00	-43.07	
6259 Propane - Church		100.00	-100.00	
Total for Utilities	\$16,825.73	\$1,800.00	\$15,025.73	
6300 Program Expense				
6303 Deacons	843.21	2,900.00	-2,056.79	
6304 Music	1,871.46	3,500.00	-1,628.54	
6018 Guest Musicians (Sundays)	1,000.00	5,125.00	-4,125.00	
6302 Bell Choir	75.00	500.00	-425.00	
6305 Organ and Piano	1,424.00	1,000.00	424.00	
6312 Concerts/Events	2,815.00	6,600.00	-3,785.00	
Total for 6304 Music	\$7,185.46	\$16,725.00	-\$9,539.54	
6306 Religious Education	1,195.15	5,375.00	-4,179.85	

	Actual	Budget	Over/Under budget	Extra- Budgetary Expenses
6330 Hospitality	10,566.03	6,500.00	4,066.03	
Total for Program Expense	\$18,946.64	\$28,600.00	-\$11,710.15	
6700 Insurance - Fire, Liability...	21,925.50	29,670.00	-7,744.50	
6701 Professional Fees	8,028.03	8,000.00	28.03	
7000 Benevolences				
6901 Pastor's Benevolence Fund				196,726.49
7001 OCWM/UCC	25,407.50	24,000.00	1,407.50	
7010 Fall Festival Benevolences				8,203.44
7011 Christian Action	20,351.30	21,250.00	-898.70	
7012 Bridgeport	4,000.00	4,000.00	0.00	
7013 Deacons Discretionary	2,287.42	1,000.00	1,287.42	
7014 Silver Lake	10,000.00	10,000.00	0.00	
7024 Light of Service Benevolence				22,485.05
7050 Epiphany Fund Benevolences				45,000.00
Total for 7000 Benevolences	\$62,046.22	\$60,250.00	\$1,796.22	
6800 Reserves				
6803 Capital	40,000.00	40,000.00	0.00	
6805 Sab-Ed Res - Minister	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	
Total for 6800 Reserves	41,000.00	\$41,000.00	\$0.00	
Total Operating Budget Expenses	\$537,783.22	\$558,012.00	\$20,228.78	
Net Operating Income	\$5,117.50	\$488.00	\$4,629.50	
Other Income				
4003 Special Music Fund Income	305.00			
4014 Special Music Fund Contribution	1,581.00			
Total Special Music Fund Income	\$1,886.00			
4010 Investment Income				
4012 Interest Income - Capital Reser	49,998.35			
4023.02 Dividends - Vanguard	9,192.50			
4023.03 Dividend Income - Fidelity	101,030.69			
4025.01 Realized Gains/Losses				
Fidelity Investments	311,641.12			
4030 Interest Income-SBT	44.41			
Total for 4010 Investment Income	\$471,907.07			
Total for 4016 Endowment-YTD				
Change in Value	\$144,851.31			
Total for Other Income	\$618,644.38			
Other Expenses				

	Actual	Budget	Over/Under budget	Extra-Budgetary Expenses
4080 Capital Expenses	3,451.00			
6500 Investment Expenses				
6501 Foreign Tax Paid	330.30			
6502 Investment Advisory Fees	8,338.92			
6503 Investment Fees	16,984.87			
Total for 6500 Investment Expenses	\$25,654.09			
Total for Other Expenses	\$29,105.09			
Net Other Income	\$589,539.29			

Music Director's Report

This report comes after my fourth full year as Music Director here at the Salisbury Congregational Church. It has been a fun and musical year for us: we have continued to increase the scope and attendance of our First Friday concerts, and our choir has rebounded in size after a number of folks moved last year.

First Fridays have seen great performers from around the area: contralto Allison Gish, soprano Jennifer Baranowski and mezzo Emily Levin, a piano trio with Jakob Norlinger and Suzanne Wagor, a full concert of Mozart's Requiem featuring members of the Hudson Chorale, Irish singer and songwriter Julie Feeney, a four-hand piano concert with Jesse Goldberg and me, and coming up, a fun madrigal program with our own choir. There will be costumes. The attendance of our events has increased gradually, and we're drawing between thirty and fifty attendees every month I do thank our church for financially supporting this program, as it is growing and bringing new faces into our meeting house.

Our choir has a new couple this year, and also a new bass 'ringer.' Our group is now up to a solid 13 singers. I do hope we continue to attract musicians from the area, as we have a fun



and talented group. We sometimes have entirely too much fun: it is Charlie's fault. We like to sing varied repertoire, both classical and contemporary, with a little 'world' music thrown in. Our Christmas concert featured Durante's Magnificat, as well as beautiful arrangements of O Holy Night and other modern classics. We continue to have a full house for this event!

Our bell program has had a minor hiccup this year, as our stalwart director Mary Davidson has been temporarily sidelined with an injury. I have been helping along with Betsy Beck to keep the bell torch burning, and we have successfully navigated Christmas and Easter with a nearly group, augmented by a few of Mary's daughters. There are many talented bell ringers in the Davidson family!

And finally, I do wish our beloved Pastor John well in his retirement come June, and although I will miss him greatly, we will carry on in his absence. I have never worked with a better clergyman, despite his poor sense of humor.

In Christ,
David Baranowski, *Music Director*

Sunday School Coordinator's Report

Sunday School has been filled with meaningful experiences for the children. We explored the lives of Faith Heroes of the Bible before following the stories of Jesus, incorporating hands-on activities and crafts. Highlights included painting a mural of sheep out in the pasture, planting peas to share on Easter, and assembling care kits for our local food pantry.

Our youngest church members have continued to receive consistent, loving care during services in the nursery, ably provided by Stephanie Tierney, whose dedication ensures that families can fully participate in worship.

Our youth group, under the thoughtful leadership of Dan Baker, has been an active and generous presence in our church community. They have contributed their time and energy in many meaningful ways. They ran the hot dog tent for the Fall Festival, hosted the summer picnic, and regularly provide fellowship hour refreshments (which have been truly delectable). Their efforts reflect a growing spirit of service, community, and pride in being an integral part of our church.

The Religious Ed Committee joined forces to host a Halloween-themed Kids' Night In! Children enjoyed pizza, games, activities, and a movie while parents had a chance to relax or join in the fun.

Our children also brought joy to the wider congregation through music and performance. They joined the choir for the Christmas concert, sang *The Friendly Beasts* on Christmas Eve, and performed a wonderful Christmas pageant complete with updated costumes, and even a live goat!

It has been a year of growth and active participation of our vibrant children. I am deeply grateful to the children, parents, committee and volunteers for all their support. I look forward to continuing this journey of faith and learning.

Respectfully submitted,
Holly Tierney, *Sunday School Coordinator*

Board of Deacons Report

The church bylaws state that “the primary responsibility of the Board of Deacons is to provide spiritual oversight, guidance, health, and care of the congregation, working closely with the Pastor.” Those responsibilities have been met in a variety of ways in the past year. Either individually or collectively, Deacons have:

- Prepared and served Communion on the first Sunday of each month;
- Provided readers for worship services;
- Represented the church at weddings and memorial services;
- Sent cards of sympathy, get well wishes, congratulations, or just because;
- Called and visited in-care friends;
- Reinstated the Prayer Shawl Ministry;
- Prepared an Extravagant Welcome reception after worship to begin the new program year in September;
- Sent cards of thanksgiving to our in-care friends, marvelous staff, community leaders, and the recipients of our charitable giving;
- Sent Christmas cards and delivered poinsettias to in-care friends;
- Created and led worship on the Sunday between Christmas and the New Year, giving our extraordinary pastor and music director a well-deserved day of rest;
- Sent Valentines to in-care friends;
- Provided Lenten daily devotional booklets and created Lenten calendars;
- Helped lead the Ash Wednesday service and the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service of Shadows;
- Provided special cupcakes and gifts to those at Geer Nursing Home with birthdays in the month of March;
- Made annual calls to active covenant partners and friends as well as those we haven’t seen in a while;
- Sent Easter cards and delivered Easter flowers to in-care friends.

It is our honor to serve as Deacons and we are always seeking new ways to care for those among us. We welcome information about those in need of a friendly call or a helping hand.

Serving with Joy,
Barbara Collins for the Board of Deacons

Board of Trustees Report

From May of 2025 to April of 2026, the Trustees have continued to work on accomplishing aspects of the church's Vision Plan. The focus of the Trustees is concentrating on the maintenance and improvement of our wonderful, historic church building and facilities.

As part of the church's efforts to reduce our carbon footprint have continued by exploring our response to power outages. A battery backup system as well as a standby generator have been explored. At this writing the standby generator have been designated as the most cost-effective option. In addition, the accessibility ramp appears ready to be implemented.

An inspection of the church's steeple has been conducted. Currently, the steeple is considered to be safe and stable. However, restoration options are being investigated.

Janet Offensend, the Church Treasurer and the Investment Committee chaired by Roger Crain continue to professionally manage the church's finances. Our budget allows the church to support the many programs and outreach to charitable organizations and individuals in need. We sincerely thank everyone for helping us meet our financial goals with your generous contributions. With the terms for Lee Collins, Roger Crain, and Carr Ferguson coming to an end, three new Trustees will be elected.

Respectfully submitted,
John Merwin, *Chairperson*



Board of Christian Action Report

Distribution of funds for 2025 (distributed in March 2026)

Chore	1,000.00
The Corner Food Pantry	2,000.00
Extras	500.00
FISH Shelter (Friends in Service to Humanity)	3,500.00
Greenwoods Counseling	500.00
Hispaniola Health Partners	3,000.00
Housatonic Child Care Center	1,000.00
Housatonic Youth Services	1,500.00

Jane Lloyd Fund	500.00
Northeast Community Center	1,000.00
Project SAGE (formerly WSS)	750.00
Salisbury After School (SOAR)	500.00
Salisbury Family Services	500.00
Salisbury Housing Committee (Sarum Village)	1,000.00
Salisbury Summer Youth Employment	2,000.00
Salisbury Visiting Nursing Association	500.00
Salisbury Volunteer Ambulance	500.00
Simply Smiles	1,000.00
	TOTAL 21,250.00
UCC Bridgeport (Budget line 7012)	\$4,000.00

Our yearly donation to UCC Bridgeport, our sister church by covenant, goes directly to their nOURish Bridgeport program. Janet Kaufman organized several trips to Bridgeport to aid in the Feel the Warmth dinners. Sarah Lesch took the youth group in early May for one of these dinners. The meals are now packaged and distributed for folks to take home as space for seated dining is limited. We contributed to the large Christmas dinner distribution monetarily through Light of Service.

Other Christian Action Activities:

1. **FISH (Friends in Service to Humanity)** in Torrington – We gathered coats, hats and mittens to deliver to FISH in Torrington for their yearly winter wear distribution in early November. At Christmas the Youth Group, led by Sarah and Dan, baked cookies and made care packages to take to the Children’s Party put on by FISH. Members of the congregation also contributed cookies.
2. The 2025 **CROP Walk** raised a total of \$49,371.12, the most ever raised by the Northwest CT Walk. Salisbury Congregational Church raised \$5,599.07. 25% of these funds is returned to the Northwest CT Food Bank, a fund that distributes money to the area food banks and to an emergency food voucher program. This year the walk took place in Salisbury/Lakeville beginning and ending at our Congregational Church. The Hospitality Committee assisted by students from area schools provided a bit of refreshment to walkers. Kudos to Pastor John, Joanne Taber and Pat Palmer, who were the Northwest CT CROP Walk Planning Team in 2025.
3. **Food Pantry** – Besides our monetary donation in March, Joanne Taber and Joanne Hayhurst organized a food drive in February last year. The congregation contributed bags and bags of groceries needed to restock the pantry shelves.

4. **Light of Service** –This weekly program raised funds for nonprofits across the world as well as in our local area. Once a month the funds go to The Housing Trust and The Housing Committee.
5. **Trail Angels** –Emily Elliot organized this and was joined by about a half dozen others. The group volunteered for two Saturdays in July and August and spent the day greeting and feeding hikers along the Appalachian Trail in Sheffield. Organized by the Sheffield UCC.
6. **Socktober** happened in November for us. Janet Kaufman spearheaded this initiative to collect socks from parishioners. The collection was taken to Bridgeport for the December Feel the Warmth dinner. Folks were able to choose a new pair of socks, and all were distributed.
7. **Christmas giving** – We worked with NECC and their family outreach program to give requested gifts to families in the Millerton area. Our congregation chose gifts to purchase from the Giving Tree. 100% of the gifts were purchased and ready for delivery in one week! The congregation and the Youth Group baked and donated Christmas cookies to be distributed by FISH in Torrington.
8. **Fall Festival** monies (\$5,500) were distributed: To local food pantries:
 - \$1,100 - NorthEast Community Center
 - \$1,100 - Sheffield Food Pantry
 - \$1,100 - Loaves and Fishes in Canaan
 - \$1,100 - FISH in Torrington
 - \$1,100 - The Corner Food Pantry in Lakeville

We are grateful for the many unsung angels among us.

Thank you to Jane Capacelatro, Kathy Mera, Karin Noyes, and Jeanette Weber for their official work on this committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Karin Noyes

Board of Religious Education Report

The board's work this year was shaped by meaningful ministry alongside scheduling challenges, travel, and illness, which limited our opportunities to meet. At our first quarter meeting, we focused on identifying ways to strengthen community engagement and more intentionally promote our Religious Education offerings. The Fall Festival served as an important step in this effort, providing a welcoming community presence and allowing the Youth Group to contribute through staffing the Hot Dog tent.

We were unable to meet during the winter quarter but are scheduled to reconvene on May 24 to discuss summer Sunday School offerings.

Despite fewer formal meetings, several key programs remained active. In October, we hosted a Halloween themed Kids Night In and Parents Night Out, featuring crafts, a group dance led by Peggy, pizza, treats, and a movie. The event provided a meaningful opportunity for fellowship among children and families.

Sunday School programming continued to engage students through lessons on faith figures and the life of Jesus, supported by hands on activities. Highlights included a mural project, planting peas for Easter, and assembling care kits for a local food pantry. Students also participated in the life of the church through music and performance, including the Christmas concert, Christmas Eve singing, and the annual pageant, which featured updated costumes and a live goat.

Nursery care remained a consistent and valued part of Sunday services, thanks to Stephanie Tierney, whose dedication supports families' full participation in worship.

The Youth Group experienced a positive shift during the year. Early meetings centered on discussion saw limited engagement, but a transition to cooking based service projects, particularly preparing fellowship hour, led to increased participation and enthusiasm. This format has fostered collaboration, conversation, and a strong sense of contribution among the youth.

It has been encouraging to see the continued growth and participation of the children and youth in our church community. We are grateful to the volunteers, families, and committee members who support this work.



Looking ahead, the committee will continue to support Sunday School programming while exploring additional opportunities for community engagement and growth in Religious Education.

At the conclusion of this cycle, I will be stepping down as chair. It has been an honor to serve, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such a dedicated group. Due to increasing professional and personal commitments, I believe it is the right time to transition leadership to someone who can give the role the attention it deserves.

Respectfully submitted,
Julia Barbato

Hospitality Committee Report

Serving food and flowers with joy throughout the church year as part of Sunday fellowship, the Hospitality Committee also collaborated with The Crop Walk and area students to feed the walkers who raised money to feed the hungry, nourished family and friends during memorial receptions, helped feed the brains enjoying the Trivia game co-hosted with St John's Episcopal church to raise money for Hispaniola Health Partners, coordinated with the Deacons to share the beauty of poinsettias and lilies at Christmas and Easter, and looks forward to a summer of feeding Appalachian Trail hikers on Wednesdays, and supporting the food trucks for the July 24 Sam Lardner Barcelona concert to raise money for Vecinos Seguros 2.

Respectfully submitted,
Emily Elliot

Ushers Committee Report

Seven dedicated people have covered every Sunday plus special services for the past year. Each person works approximately two times a month. Their responsibilities include opening up the front doors, putting out safety cones, filling the two water glasses and putting up the hymnal page numbers. They also record the weather and number of people in attendance in a folder in the cabinet in the vestibule. They play an important role in welcoming everyone to church, being sure to offer crayons and a pad of paper to the children.

In bad weather the ushers are there to help people up the steps. In all weather we watch out for people crossing the street as the traffic can be hazardous. The ushers hand out bulletins as they greet people. An usher rings the bell at 9:45 and 9:57 signaling the beginning of the service. During the service the ushers take the collection. At the end of the service, they turn off the lights and lock the front doors.

We had a meeting in February to review our responsibilities. There was discussion of a more efficient way to sign up for Sundays. We decided not to make any changes for now. We discussed emergency procedures and decided to follow the standard procedure of calling 911 and let the EMT decide how to proceed. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for all ushers and all deacons to learn how to use the lift. Pastor John offered to arrange for a first aid kit and a small shovel in the vestibule. The group also decided to have permanent name tags for each usher to be available in the cabinet in the vestibule. A blue folder in this cabinet has the responsibilities of the ushers as well as a record of the weather and attendance at each service.

I feel very fortunate to work with these ushers all of whom are enthusiastic and welcoming of people coming to the service.

Respectfully submitted,
Joanne Taber

Music Committee Report

Music continues to be central to worship and to the broader outreach of our congregation. With a weekly rehearsal, the choir sings an anthem from a broad variety of musical genres at most Sunday services as well as Christmas Eve and Maundy Thursday. Music Director David Baranowski's guidance keeps the choir learning and improving. Sadly, we have lost some members this year, but happily, gained some new ones including a lower voice cantor. It's a group that thoroughly enjoys each other's company with much laughter and conviviality. Quoting a choir member: "I feel so wonderfully fortunate to be singing – not just "in" a choir, but in "this" choir!" We invite you to join us at a rehearsal and see!

The Christmas concert for 2025 featured Pergolesi's Magnificat and a magnificent Bach Brandenburg Concerto #5. For Palm Sunday 2025, we collaborated with the Norfolk Congregational church with appropriate readings and anthems.

The monthly First Friday Music continues to draw a larger audience to listen to a half hour or so of an ever-increasing variety of genres and performers. We have added a line item to the budget for First Friday Music, allowing David to plan for varied offerings. In April, First Friday Music went "on the road" and presented a four-hand piano program at Geer Lodge which was enthusiastically received by an even larger audience than had been in the Meeting House.

The 44th annual student recital had to be postponed due to weather, but has been rescheduled for May 17th . The church's role is to provide the venue and publicity, with all musical arrangements made by Judith Dansker.

David Baranowski has filled in for Mary Davidson as needed to allow the Bell Choir to continue its schedule of playing on celebratory Sundays as well as at the Christmas concert.

David's superb musicianship and good humor have led music to flourish at our church. We are very fortunate to have him as Music Director.

Respectfully submitted,
Louise Brown, *Chair*

Slate of Officers, Boards, & Committees, 2026-2027

Our team of community builders received an overwhelmingly positive response from our church family. People are eager to help in ways both large and small. To all of those who engaged in conversation with us, regardless of whether you felt able to commit to serving on a board or committee: we thank you!

To those who could not commit at this time and to those who may be thinking that they meant to reach out to us, know this: it's never too late to join in the efforts of building our community. Please continue to consider ways that you might like to connect and help, and get in touch with one of us.

I am immensely grateful to the team of people who worked for two months to put together what is undoubtedly a robust slate of volunteers. Theresa Carroll, Susan Hassler, Dean Haubrich, Karin Noyes and I met weekly on Zoom to brainstorm, share our knowledge and understanding of different community members, manage the outreach, and consider people's various talents and gifts. The meetings themselves became a wonderful connection to each other as much as they helped invigorate our efforts.

With gratitude for the joys and support our church community brings us, and on behalf of the Community Building Team,

Gratefully,
Betsy Beck

Nominations are in bold type. Underscore indicates first term of service, where applicable.

CHURCH OFFICERS

*Moderator: **Charlie Noyes '28** Treasurer: Janet Offensend '27 Clerk: Liz Wing '27
Pastor and Teacher: The Rev. Dr. John A. Nelson*

CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Betsy Beck '27 Theresa Carroll '28 **Barbara Wiggins '29**

BOARD OF DEACONS (MODERATOR, PASTOR, AND ELECTED MEMBERS)

David Heck '27 Betsy Beck '28 **Don Mayland '29**
Patricia Palmer '27 Myra Brandt '28 **Lisa Naumann '29**
Joanne Hayhurst '27 Barbara Collins '28 **Trevor Rees '29**
Dean Haubrich '28

BOARD OF TRUSTEES (MODERATOR, TREASURER, PASTOR AND ELECTED MEMBERS)

Malcolm Brown '27 Dan Edmundson '28 **Mark Capecelatro '29**
Susan Hassler '27 Lorna Edmundson '28 **Roger Crain '29**
Kerry Noble '27 John Merwin '28 **Joshua Fisher '29**
Joe Lesch '29
Mike Naumann '29

BOARD OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (MODERATOR, SUNDAY SCHOOL COORD., PASTOR, AND ELECTED MEMBERS)

Wei Liu '27 Peggy Hayes '28 **Eileen Epperson '29**

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN ACTION (MODERATOR, PASTOR, AND ELECTED MEMBERS)

Jane Capecelatro '27 Jeanette Weber '28 **Theresa Carroll '29**
Karin Noyes '27 **Robert Kuhn '29**
Sarah Lesch '29

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE (MODERATOR, PASTOR, AND ELECTED MEMBERS)

Ron Collins '27

Gretchen Mol '28

Wendy Anderson '29

Emily Elliot '27

Winter Williams '28

Avery Clark '29

Toni Ramcharran '27

Special Event Helpers: Roseanne Lamson, Sara Wardell, Nancy Baker

MUSIC COMMITTEE (MODERATOR, MUSIC DIRECTOR, PASTOR, AND ELECTED MEMBERS)

Mary Davidson '27

Louise Brown '28

John Estabrook '29

George Faison '28

Steven Geyer '29

Kevin Wolgemuth '29

USHERS COMMITTEE (MODERATOR, PASTOR, AND ELECTED MEMBERS)

Janet Kaufman '27

Sarah Morrison '28

Allison Gray '29

Anne Williams '27

Sharon Tingley '28

Susan Hassler '29

Kip Williams '28

Peggy Hayes '29

Ptolemy Williams '28

Deborah Moore '29

Karin Noyes '29

Pat Thompson '29

**DELEGATE TO THE LITCHFIELD NORTH ASSOCIATION AND SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE,
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

(To be filled)

"ANGELS": READY TO PITCH IN, AS NEEDS ARISE!

Julia Barbato

Peggy Hayes

Sue Morrill

Allison Gray

Joanne Hayhurst

Leo Nadeau

Jenn Kronholm-Clark





The Congregational Church of Salisbury
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey: you are welcome here.
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