



The Congregational Church of Salisbury
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



The 279th Annual Meeting, Part II • Sunday, 28 April 2024
Reports to the Congregation

Mission

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.

Contents

Call to the Annual Meeting	1
Agenda.....	1
Minutes of the 279 th Annual Meeting, Part I.....	1
Reports to Annual Meeting	3
Pastor's Report.....	3
Moderator's Report	4
Clerk's Report	6
Treasurer's Report.....	7
Music Director's Report.....	12
Sunday School Coordinator's Report	13
Board of Deacons Report	14
Board of Trustees Report.....	15
Green Task Force Report.....	16
Board of Christian Action Report.....	18
Ushers Committee Report.....	20
Music Committee Report.....	21
Slate of Officers, Boards, & Committees, 2024-2025	22



Call to the Annual Meeting

The 279th Annual Meeting, Part II, of the Congregational Church of Salisbury, UCC will be held following the worship service on Sunday, 28 April 2024 for the purpose of:

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the 279th Annual Meeting, Part I, of 29 October 2023
2. Presentation of Reports from Boards and Committees
3. Presentation from the Strategic Visioning Team
4. The Election of Officers, Boards, and Committees
5. Other Business

Agenda

1. Prayer
2. Call to Order
3. Minutes of the 279th Annual Meeting, Part I
4. Acceptance and Discussion of Reports
5. Election of Officers and Committees
6. Other Business
7. Pastor's remarks
8. Prayer
9. Adjournment

Minutes of the 279th Annual Meeting, Part I

The 279th Annual Meeting, Part I, of the Congregational Church of Salisbury, UCC was held following the worship service on Sunday, 29 October, 2023.

I. Call to Order (J. Oberto, Clerk)

Bylaws stipulate that 20% of membership constitutes a quorum, which means 35 members. It was determined that we had a definitive quorum of well over 35 members present.

II. Opening Prayer

Covenant Prayer, and verses 1 and 3 of Hymn 315, *In the Midst of New Dimensions*, read in unison by all present.

III. Moderator's remarks (B. Beck)

Gratitude was expressed to all who made an effort to be in attendance, and for the Meeting House as a place we can meet in grace, be transformed by love, and serve in joy.

In this meeting:

- The 2024 Budget will be presented for approval
- Nominating committee will be formed to invite and welcome volunteers to work on the many boards and committees in the life of the church.
 - Emily Elliot has graciously offered to lead the nominating committee.
- Updates were given about progress made by the Strategic Visioning Committee and the action plan they have developed for our congregation, which was made available to the congregations on September 17 during our Extravagant Welcome Sunday.
- Gratitude expressed for the Visioning Team (Emily Elliot, Bob Maxwell, Charlie Noyes, and Janet Offensend). We will thank them more officially in the future (hopefully with cake!)
- Deep gratitude was expressed to Janet Offensend who took over as Treasurer when Jennifer Weigel ended her term.
- It is an honor to serve as Moderator for this church. Our church is a joyful place!
- Gratitude expressed to the many boards and committees who make our church what it is, to the church staff and the work they do, and to Pastor John for the partnership he has provided along the way.

IV. Presentation of 2024 budget (J. Offensend)

An explanation of the budget was provided.

- Compared to last year's budget, we are keeping the 2024 budget close to flat.
- Our greatest source of income continues to be a draw from the endowment.
 - We are immensely fortunate to have this resource which is the result of centuries of giving and thoughtful stewardship by the church.
 - Donations and pledges are an important part of our revenue. Please consider how you can financially support the work of our church!
 - In 2024 we will see the full benefit of our net-zero church greening project.

The floor was opened for discussion and questions.

Motion to accept the 2024 budget as presented by A. Williams; seconded; approved by voice vote.

V. Presentation of the minutes from the previous meeting (B.Beck)

Motion to accept the minutes of 278th Annual Meeting Part II (April 30, 2023) by A. Williams; seconded; approved by voice vote.

VI. Presentation of Nominating Committee slate

Emily Elliot, chair; Peggy Heck; Pat Palmer. The bylaws (2013) stipulate that the nominating committee should be made up of 6 people, one from each of the boards and committees, and one at-large member. We will continue to seek additional members to fill the slate.

- Emily Elliot addressed the meeting to discuss the work of the nominating committee.

Motion to accept partial nominating committee slate: K. Mera; seconded; approved by voice vote.

VII. Pastor's report

The Green Team has done tremendous work, thank you!

The people who follow the Word of God, are subjected to change all the time, and faith communities are places where change comes the hardest. Our church has found so many ways to embrace change and “do church” differently. Thank you to everyone who is leading us in faithful change!

- Gratitude expressed to the church officers and leaders of boards and committees, and to the staff.
- Thank you to David Baranowski- such a joy to work with over the past year.
- The work we do together makes all of us ministers of the Gospel. “Minister” means “servant,” and everyone in this organization is dedicated to bringing God’s *shalom* (wholeness, harmony, justice and joy) to the congregation and the community.
- It is an honor to serve alongside all of you as partners in the work we do.
- It will be fun to journey and change together as we work to realize the action plan the Vision Team has created.

VIII. Closing Prayer (Pastor John)

Meeting was adjourned 12:23 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Oberto, Clerk

Reports to Annual Meeting

Pastor's Report

Greetings to you in the name of Christ Jesus, Love’s Own Self! Before all else, I give thanks for the grace of God at work in you, the church that gathers for praise and service in this place. By the power of the Spirit, we keep on sharing God’s *shalom* — wholeness, harmony, justice, joy — that is truly transforming the world. I thank God, and I thank you for your faithful, creative, steadfast commitment to this beloved community.

Reflecting on your commitment brings to mind a story. Three stonecutters are hard at work, arms taut with effort, skin sheened with perspiration and matted with dust as they wield saw and mallet and chisel. A passer-by pauses to ask: “What are you doing?” The first stonecutter says, “I am cutting stone.” The second says, “I am earning a living to provide for my family.” The third says, “I am building a cathedral.”

The activity is the same for each. The vision changes.

Once upon a time, in my callow years, I shared that story thinking that there was a hierarchy of service: that “simply” cutting stone mattered less than having the “big picture” in mind. I’ve learned better. Each of the stonecutters’ visions is beautiful and worthy. Our church — and our own life journeys — gain richness when we devote ourselves to the task at hand, and when we serve the well-being of others, and when we pour ourselves into a great work that prophets and artists teach us to see.

We have been “doing church” in similar ways. Sometimes we are “cutting stone”: focused on the tasks that make church, church: welcoming members and friends and newcomers; looking after the equipment that we rely on for worship and hospitality and service; seeing to it that light bulbs are giving light (all LED, for efficiency!) and windows are clean and the kitchen is meeting requirements and assets are managed with care. And so on, and so on: the tasks are multitudinous. *Thank God for your devotion to “cutting stone”!*

We have also been “providing for family”: seeking support for our mission through pledging, serving, and other forms of generosity; sharing our resources with neighbors in need and friends doing good work; converting the church buildings to be virtually free from the use of fossil fuels; making calls and sending cards and visiting, both for special needs and just because those are good ways to nurture relationships. *Thank God for your providing!*

And we have been “building a cathedral”: a vision for a church that is not only a building but a hub of teaching and learning; a church community that works to cast an ever-wider welcome; a public witness for openness and affirmation as a way of life. *Thank God for your visioning!*

We have been Meeting in Grace; we have been Transformed by Love; we have been Serving with Joy. In all these things, we are discovering, and re-discovering, how the presence of Christ, Love’s Own Self, has extraordinary power to reconstitute us and the world. Love’s Own Self is gathering us, renewing us, and sending us to be ambassadors of *shalom*.

I am grateful to be a part of this good and glorious work, and beyond grateful for your support and companionship and spirit.

Christlove,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor John". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the name.

Moderator’s Report

Dear Friends,

As is my custom when the Church Council meets, we look at where we’ve been, where we are, and where we are going. It often surprises me to see where we were and how far we’ve come, and continues to remind me of the power of the Spirit to move us forward.

A year ago, our agenda included many things that have continued to gain momentum and to build on what we had:

We were fresh off of our spring concert, full of the joy that enlivens our music program under David's spirited and creative talent and direction. In addition to all that he does with the choir, he has continued the First Friday Programs (fka Midday Music Meditation), often with guest musicians, showcasing his skills and musicality on both organ and piano with a steady audience of genuine appreciators.

We were just saying farewell to our long-term Treasurer and faithful partner in faith and music, Jennifer Weigel. Saying goodbye and filling her shoes seemed at the time to be a formidable challenge. And then, our long-time member Janet Offensend stepped up to take over the reins - and what an amazing job she has done overseeing our finances and supporting our efforts and dreams. Part of this vision has included hiring a full-time church administrator to help the team in charge of the church. Welcome to Jenn Oberto, whose experience, talents, and skills are already making a big difference in all we do.

Our longing for connection with youth was just taking root as we considered a newly envisioned youth group led by volunteer Sarah Lesch. With Religious Education Director Holly Tierney at her side, they have nurtured this fledgling program. We now have a committed partner for her, Dan Baker, and together, they have met, offered community dinners, organized receptions after events such as our choir concert, helped with Holly's Kids' Night Out programs that bring large numbers of local children to the church, and most recently served a large group with homemade dumplings that they made with Wei Liu and Jane Deng.

Our Green Team was reveling in the functioning of our solar panels for the ways that they are minimizing our carbon footprint and caring for the environment as well as for the cost savings they provide. Last May we were looking forward to meeting with the Historic District Commission to request approval for the EV-charging stations that will soon be outside of our Meeting House. The oil-burning furnaces have been removed, the chargers are on our horizon, and we are well on our way to our goal of becoming Net Zero.

A year ago, we were re-invigorating our post-worship Fellowship Hours and Hospitality efforts that had by necessity fallen away during the lock-down of Covid. Heartfelt thanks go to the efforts of many volunteers and people who appreciate the value of a time to gather after worship who stepped in to fill the space and who continue to help us offer an extravagant welcome to all.

Meanwhile, we were considering our time-honored traditions of helping the local CROP Walk and Fall Festival efforts, including the quilts, the treasures, and the hot dogs! Not on that agenda, but very much at the heart of all we do, are the other ways we serve the wider community by hosting the Souper Suppers, collecting food items for the Food Pantry, and the contributions to a wide range of organizations through our Light of Service offerings.

The Council met twice in the winter with the Strategic Visioning Team to wrap our minds and hearts around the Action Plan as they presented it. The first time (November) was a brief overview of the Plan, the second was a 2-hour lunch for a deeper dive into how we will implement the goals and aspirations. The Vision Team carefully identified a 2-3 year timeline

with some steps ready to be taken now. We also realized just how many of our goals were already in progress because of all of the momentum we have been gathering in the past few years. The Council will be overseeing the implementation of the Plan and, with the help of the committees and the congregation, will be guiding us to an even fuller spiritual life in our church and in our community. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Vision Team, and abundant thanks go to Emily Elliot, Bob Maxwell, Charlie Noyes, and Janet Offensend for their dedication to our future.

It has been an extremely exciting year that leaves me with an enormous sense of gratitude for where our church is today. As I come to the end of my third and final term as Moderator, I think back to six years ago, where we were, and how far we have come through some turbulent years of change, transition, and global pandemics. It has been an honor to serve as your Moderator and to partner with Pastor John, whose steady, faithful, and joy-filled leadership has guided us and sustained us in ways both large and small.

As we look to the coming weeks, months, and years, we have much to celebrate. The Vision Team has provided a roadmap for us, with mile markers along the way to help us navigate. Thanks to the joyful willingness of people to volunteer to serve on boards and committees, to help as readers during worship, to host our post-worship Fellowship Hour, or to just show up to do all the little things that always need doing, there seems to be little we do that does not embody our mission:

Meeting in Grace, Transformed by Love, and Serving with Joy.

Thanks be to God.

Gratefully,
Betsy Beck

Clerk's Report

Total Membership as of 1 April 2023: 166

Covenant Partners transferred or withdrawn: Jeff May, Colin May, Olivia May,
Caleb May, Mary O'Neill
Cristin Gallup Rich

In Memoriam: Shirley Decker
Karen Parsons
Edith Blodgett
Lester Hoysradt

Total Membership as of 1 April 2024: 156

Treasurer's Report

Operating Budget

Operating Revenue

Despite the departure of the amazing Jennifer Weigel as Treasurer after many years of careful stewardship of the church's finances, the budget performance for 2023 was very solid. She left us in a great position, financially and operationally, so it has been a pretty smooth transition! In addition, significant unanticipated savings in several key areas led to net operating income of \$48,413 for the year.

Contributions: The combination of Pledges and Other Donations just hit the 2023 total goal at \$220,242.94, a crucial financial accomplishment. In 2024 we have established a new method of recording the receipt of gifts that separate Pledge Payments from Other Donations to highlight the importance of Pledges as the source of long-run financial stability and strength. Our ability to grow our vigorous program of support for our congregation, our community and our world is predicated on the ability to plan ahead, knowing we will have the funds to follow through on our plans.

In addition to the Pledges and Other Donations, the Light of Service program brought in a total of \$21,417.03, all of which was dedicated to specific organizations presented during weekly worship! It is reflected at the bottom of the report because, as a restricted income source it is not in the Operating Budget. Similarly, the net proceeds of another very successful Fall Festival, expenditure of which is restricted to support of community groups, is listed below.

In total, in 2023 the church raised nearly a quarter million dollars to fund the ongoing operations of the church and its generous program of benevolences at home and faraway.

Pledges and Other Donations	\$220,242
Light of Service	21,417
Fall Festival	3,985
Pastor's Benevolence Fund	<u>3,414</u>
Total	\$249,058

Draw from the Endowment: In 2023 withdrawals from the endowment provided operating revenue of \$306,000, as budgeted. This was 4.09% of a three-year rolling average of the endowment's total value. The endowment totaled \$7,485,483 at the end of 2023. 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. Many other churches in the US struggle to survive today, but we are exceptionally fortunate to have our endowment, the legacy of generosity and prudence throughout our long history.

Finally, as the Green Church project progressed, we started to receive the financial benefits that had been anticipated, further boosting revenues! Z-rec payments from Eversource were \$3,929 and expected to rise in 2024 and beyond.

Bottom line: Operating Revenue came in at \$533,276 versus the original budget of \$530,750.

[Please note that the document included and referenced here is the report against the attached 2023 Operating Budget. There is a copy of the overall P&L, including endowment investment performance as well as a balance sheet on file in the office.]

Specific Expense lines of note in 2023:

Compensation & Other Personnel Expenses: Over the course of 2023 we underspent a total of \$38,000 in these two categories in large part due to changes in personnel that reduced payroll from the amount budgeted back in August 2022, and having open positions for portions of the year.

Accountant & Professional Fees: This is the other area that came in significantly underbudget because our use of new outside accounting service proved to be initially less expensive than anticipated, with a resulting savings of nearly \$13,000 in this category.

Otherwise, all other expense categories came in close to budget.

As a result of the above, Net Operating Income totaled \$48,413 for the year. The Trustees are still considering how to allocate these funds for the future.

Operating Checking Account

Balance as of 12/31/23: \$153,930

Non-Budgeted Funds and Transactions

Capital Spending Reserve

Balance at 12/31/23: \$217,320

We continue to invest in important ways in the church's historic infrastructure. The operating budget contributed \$32,000 to the Capital Reserve, but both planned and unanticipated capital spending totaled \$212,320, leaving the reserve at \$217,320 by yearend. The two really big projects were the completion of the exterior repainting of the church and the conversion of our old heating system to a new HVAC system. The latter is the final big piece of the Green Church project!! In addition, we completed the exterior painting of the church (a major project requiring scaffolding) and did restorative work on the steeple in the process. The old refrigerator in the kitchen died, and a new one was quickly purchased to replace it, along with other smaller expenditures. The Trustees are reviewing our policy for capital planning to ensure that we are making appropriate provision for the church's capital needs going forward, though we have every expectation that the very significant capital spending of the last several years is coming to an end with the completion of the Green Project and repainting of the façade.

Benevolence Fund

Balance at 12/31/23: \$61,316

The Benevolence Fund was opened in 2018 specifically to support families and members of our community who are in need. It has been funded since its inception from the Deacon's Discretionary Budget line, the 2017, 2020 and 2021 Epiphany Funds, and individual donations

including an extraordinarily generous anonymous donation of \$100,000 received in 2019. The Benevolence Fund continues to be a tremendous resource for Pastor John as he works to meet the needs of members of community impacted by life’s challenges.

Souper Supper Fund

Balance at 12/31/23: \$3,000

Local volunteers started a project of providing healthy free meals to any members of the community on a regular basis. Church members have been involved from the beginning, and the project gets support from the church through use of our facilities and bookkeeping resources to prepare and serve meals, record donations, track and pay bills—yet another dimension of our community service.

Special Music Fund

Balance at 12/31/23: \$39,131

Special funds available to provide additional support to the Music Program as needed for special projects and programs.

Endowment Investment Account

Balance at 12/31/23: \$7,498,954

The Investment Account, held at Fidelity and managed by F.L. Putnam, returned 15.2% gross and 14.7% net after fees in 2023, a substantial improvement over the loss of 14.9% in 2022 when the markets tumbled considerably. This net performance was below the custom benchmark of 18.6%, and the Investment Committee, while content with the manager historically, is keeping a close eye on performance.

During 2023, \$306,000 was withdrawn from the endowment to support current church operations. This represented a reduction in the size of the draw from 4.5% (in 2022) to 4.09% (in 2023) of the three-year moving average of the endowment balance at the end of August each year. The draw has been further reduced for 2024 to \$305,000 or 4% of the moving average, which is the target identified in current policy. As stated above, the endowment—earnings from which supplied more than 57% of this year’s Operating Revenue—is critical to our ability to deliver on our mission to the congregation, our community and the wider world. However, it is only prudent to realize that an expanded program of activities and budget should not be solely dependent on growth in the endowment. Expansion of other revenue sources—i.e. contributions, etc.—must also be part of the mix.

BUDGET REPORT, as of December 31, 2023

	2023 Actual	2023 Budget
INCOME		
Contributions		
Pledges	206,384	220,000

Donations--Other	13,859	
Total Contributions	220,243	220,000
Draw from Endowment	306,000	306,000
Z-rec Income	3,929	-
Rental Income	3,105	4,750
TOTAL INCOME	533,277	530,750
EXPENSES		
Compensation	178,778	196,079
Other Personnel Expense	107,314	128,177
Other Ministry Support	33,813	26,500
Maintenance & Repairs	12,075	16,500
Utilities	10,374	7,700
Deacons	515	2,750
Music--net of contributions	13,664	14,000
Religious Education	1,831	1,000
Hospitality	3,869	4,000
Insurance	23,154	21,500
Accountant & Prof Fees	5,076	18,000
Capital Reserve Contrib	32,000	32,000
Minister Sab-Ed Reserve	1,000	1,000
Benevolences		
OCWM	24,415	24,000
Christian Action	22,400	21,000
Bridgeport	4,000	4,000
Deacons Discretionary	576	2,000
Silver Lake	10,010	10,000
Total Benevolences	61,401	61,108
TOTAL EXPENSES	484,864	530,314
NET INCOME	48,413	436

LIGHT OF SERVICE (not included above)

Revenue	21,417
Benevolences	19,039

FALL FESTIVAL (not included above)

Total Revenue	6,398	
Festival expenses	2,413	
Fall Festival Net Income	3,985	
Fall Festival Benevolences	3,985	paid out in '23 & '24

SPECIAL MUSIC FUND

as of 12/31/23	39,175
----------------	--------

ENDOWMENT FUND

as of 12/31/23	7,485,483
----------------	-----------

CAPITAL SPENDING

Opening Reserve-1/1/23	397,842
Capital Reserve Allocation	32,000
Total Available in Reserve	429,842

Green Project	105,639
Exterior painting	94,376
New Refrigerator	3,760
Other	8,545
Total Spending 2023	212,320

Closing Reserve-12/31/23	217,522
--------------------------	---------

PASTOR'S BENEVOLENCE FUND

Opening Balance	64,671
Donations received	3,414
Benevolences	6,769
Closing Balance	61,316

Music Director's Report

This report comes after my second full year as Music Director here at the Salisbury Congregational Church. It has been another great year, with many great events and services, and a vibrant church community to work with.

We continue to have good numbers in both our choir and bell programs, and although we have had a few folks move out of the area, and a few have dealt with health issues, our core groups remain strong. We are fortunate to still have Jennifer Oberto as a vocal leader for the group, and although we haven't had any luck thus far at finding a bass ringer to help our *profundos* out week to week, I'm still looking, and who knows what unknowing male vocalist might wander through the Northwest corner in the future. Steve Hoagland, our sometimes tenor, had a busy year with his son applying for and visiting colleges, but should be more available come the fall.



The music ministry has offered several large-scale community concerts this year, which seemed to be very well received and appreciated. In December of 2023 we offered the *Charlie Brown* film with live music. Alongside the cartoon was a *Lessons and Carols* type choir program, which proved to be a little long, but was also a home run.

We are just finishing up preparations for our spring concert as I write this report, featuring Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Ola Gjeilo's *Dark Night of the Soul*, and a special treat, a Marimba Concerto by Eric Ewazen, with local percussion soloist Andrew Thomson of Norfolk. The concert will be accompanied by a 10-piece orchestra, along with several additional singers and soloists. It should be a great afternoon, and I hope we fill the church.

The Hand Bell choir has contributed their regular musical offering this year: Christmas Eve, the Christmas concert, Easter and Mother's Day. Mary Davidson and her ringers have been very steady with rehearsals, and rock solid. Mary has also seen a few members come and go this year, but she always has a full group at the holidays. She seems to somehow have an unlimited number of daughters who can substitute!

This year saw changes in leadership of the student recital, which has been organized by Jo Loi for many years. Jo needed to step back this year, and the event will now be spearheaded by local musician and friend Judy Dansker, along with Kris Jensen, band teacher at the Salisbury School. We saw the results of our persistence in February, with a delightful afternoon filled with young musicians from the community as well as local school organizations performing together in our Meeting House.

The First Friday musical offering has become very steady in its attendance this year. We are averaging 25-30 people each month, and many of these folks are not our regular congregants. We have had some nice collaborations, with flautist Cecilia



Burns, tenor and pianist Igor Ferreira (along with Christine Gevert), and our own Jennifer Oberto. I'd love to continue to invite musicians to perform with me in the future, or to have groups offer their own programs for us. I do enjoy performing solo as well, and these mini recitals keep me practicing difficult repertoire!

Upcoming changes to our program include the removal of some carpeting from the Meeting House this summer, which should improve the piano's mobility, and the acoustics of the pulpit area. Hopefully we will manage an addition of a somewhat regular male 'ringer', as I had mentioned. I don't have plans for Christmas 2024 yet, but Pastor John and I have discussed the possibly of other musical multimedia presentations, as they have such a wide appeal, and intergenerational possibilities. We shall see! I do look forward to another fulfilling year with the wonderful folks in Salisbury.

In Christ,
David Baranowski, *Music Director*

Sunday School Coordinator's Report

We've made great strides in religious education this year to best serve families in our community. Sunday school started with lessons that connect us to our church family from the time of Abraham to the present. In January we shifted to moral lessons taught with the framework of the Fruits of the Spirit.

After quite a few years, we've restarted a youth group! They meet twice a month and engage in a range of activities such as service projects, group discussions, and leisure activities. Their monthly Sunday suppers have brought our church members of all ages closer together. Some youth will be joining the Norfolk UCC youth group on their mission trip to Camden, NY.

I'd like to extend heartfelt thanks to Sarah Lesch and Dan Baker for making this program a success.

I hear children and adults have enjoyed the multigenerational services! Because we don't have Sunday School on these Sundays, I look forward to extending Sunday School into the summer. I hope this new change invites families who might be too busy to attend church during the school year, or who might only live here during the summer months.

We've been involved in a number of events welcoming the community at large. Sharon Audubon visited with a variety of animals for our Kids' Night Out. The children put on a spectacular Christmas Pageant and danced and sang in the Christmas concert. We even had a visit from the Easter bunny! We look forward to hosting our annual Un-Birthday party on May 19th.



We've also made big changes to our classrooms! We have a new Sunday School room for storytelling and singing that brings a feeling of warmth and peace. We also have a nice large youth group room, so teens have their own space for projects, discussions, or to just kick back and relax!

Respectfully submitted,
Holly Tierney, *Sunday School Coordinator*

Board of Deacons Report

It is the responsibility of the Board of Deacons to promote and maintain the spiritual health of our Congregation by assisting Pastor John in many of his duties. We do that by participating in Church council, assisting with service planning, and providing additional Pastoral care. We also prepare the Meetinghouse for Communion, provide the elements, and serve the bread and grape juice.

We are committed to nurturing good communication. We also look to include as many voices as possible and so have been inviting Congregants to read during service. We thank all those who participated.



We do our best to make ourselves available at Hospitality, ready to hear comments, and ideas for improving the Life of the Church. We are also ready to greet new people and respond to their questions.

In January the Deacons planned and celebrated the Annual Deacons' Service and appointed a member to serve on the Nominating Committee.

In February/March the Deacons worked with Pastor, the Music Director and each other in planning Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Sunrise Easter Service and Easter Sunday. There were no Lenten dinners in 2023.

During April, we participated in Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Sunrise Easter Service, (Lakeville Lake) and Easter Sunday Service. The Palm Sunday Service was a dramatic reading from the gospel of Christ's passion. Maundy Thursday was an intimate service with a reenactment of the Last Supper. The Deacons delivered Easter lilies in person to those Congregants on the Pastoral Care list. We attended the Annual meeting and voted new members to the Board.

For our May Board meeting, Lorna Edmundson hosted a dinner for incoming and outgoing Deacons. We prayed together, ate together, swapped stories, and even got some business done. In May 2023, Deacons and enthusiastic volunteers reached out to all our members and friends by phone and/or email. The (strictly confidential) conversations were touching, informative, funny, and for the callers, incredibly rewarding. The calls were summarized and filed with Pastor John.

June is the first month of the new Board, and traditionally we come together in a “retreat” this year hosted by Barbara Collins. We shared our “faith journeys” looked into the coming year, set our spiritual goals as a Board and personally. We committed to expanding communication, exploring ways to share the Good News, and to continue to stay connectd to the Congregation, especially those in need of Pastoral Care.

July was a quiet month, with Pastoral care, Sunday service participation, and working with the Visioning Team to begin outlining ideas for Welcome Sunday.

In August we began to review, organize, and accept our budget to present to the Council for approval. The Deacon budget of \$2800 includes communion supplies, greeting cards, some postage, Geer March birthday gifts, and Special Events.

September was the first Special Event WELCOME SUNDAY for the new Board. Together with the Visioning Team and Hospitality the Deacons hosted an event which outlined the results and recommendations of the Visioning Team. October is Fall Festival; we Deacons took part in the Church’s annual event as volunteers.

November Pastor John planned an Ecumenical Thanksgiving service and most Deacons attended. We as a Board began talking about Christmas events and focusing our attention on Advent, both the tasks and our individual spiritual preparation for the coming season.

December is a very busy for all. As part of the Deacon commitment to include as many voices as possible, Pastor John invited people to read the lighting of the Advent Candle. We assisted Pastor John as needed in Christmas Eve service. We reviewed the Pastoral Care list and volunteered to deliver Poinsettias and handwritten greetings to those we knew would be unable to attend service in person. We wrote and assigned readings for the Deacon Annual Service.

The Deacons wish to thank all those who let us know who is in need (members or not) and those who volunteered to read. Our heartfelt appreciation is extended to Pastor John for his faith and ability to inspire hope, for his example of Serving with Joy.

In Gratitude and Service,
Theresa Carroll, *Head Deacon 2023*

Board of Trustees Report

Much of the activity of the Trustees this past year was overseeing and approving the work and payment to contractors who painted and accomplished the energy efficiency of our church. In July Fox Company painted the front (Main Street side) of the church. The steeple painting required scaffolding to be erected. That represented half of the cost. But the scaffolding enabled Scooter Tedder to repair two rotted columns at the top of the steeple so it was an unforeseen benefit. The church should not have to be painted again for at least 5 years from now.

The “Greening” of the church is in its third or final stage with the solar panels installed and yielding savings in electricity. The focus now is on the completion of the HVAC project. The

Green Team and Mark Robbins are overseeing this process. The old boilers have been removed from the building. We are now seeking approval from the Town of Salisbury for the EV chargers.

The Trustees approve major expenditures. In addition to the above, we okayed the purchasing of a new commercial refrigerator for the kitchen. The old one “died.” The Trustees have been very responsive in looking out for our building needs, doing the minutes, working on the Green Team, counting the Collection each Sunday, and doing a variety of other tasks that arise. There are some other projects that we have identified when the budget allows. They are repair and removal of carpet at the front of the church so the piano can be moved for choir rehearsals and the construction of a handicap access from Library Street to the front of the church. After Lee Collins identified that the church signs coming into town need replacing, the expenditure was approved, the new design approved, signs were ordered, and are now ready to be placed by Richard Tietjen. Our work is ongoing and thankfully we have a good team of Trustees to do what is needed.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Accardo, *Chairperson*

Green Task Force Report

We’ve been working to be “green” since well before our latest project began in 2020. The Green Team and the Trustees wanted to set an example and show leadership in our efforts to address climate change and reduce our carbon footprint. Members of the congregation have long considered care for the environment as a core faith practice. Our Board of Christian Action had taken many steps toward becoming a “Green Church,” following guidelines of the Environmental Ministries of the United Church of Christ. We were already using recycled paper products, purchasing sustainably grown coffee, shifting landscape care to organic methods, composting when possible, and recycling materials.

The first step toward becoming “green” was replacing every light bulb with LED bulbs to reduce our electric needs.

We needed to figure out how to upgrade the lighting, including cove lighting in the very high sanctuary ceiling (requiring several tiers of scaffolding). Some of the lighting fixtures and dimmers were no longer code compliant. We did not have motion-sensitive lighting in spaces that lent themselves to these items like restrooms, hallways, and basement. We were able to model the cost savings in electrical use based on replacing every incandescent, inefficient bulb with LED bulbs and we were able to apply for incentives. The payback for the lighting alone was less than seven years and so our Trustees agreed to proceed.

The second step was installing a solar array and converting from oil burners to electric heat pumps.

Our Green Task Force was able to show our Trustees that, if we converted our existing lighting to all LED bulbs and the HVAC systems to electric heat pumps, our solar array would power all the electric needs of the building and we would be a “Net Zero” building.

Our church's Meetinghouse, built in 1800, is in a historic district where any change to the outside of a building must go through an approval process. Prior to our project, there had never been a request for solar panels submitted to the Historic District Commission which is always the first step before securing a building permit. Since the church building has very little land, there was no opportunity to install ground-mounted panels that wouldn't be seen, so rooftop panels were our only choice.



The existing roof, asphalt shingles, needed replacing before solar panels could be installed. The challenge was to present materials for a new roof and unobtrusive solar panels that would be approved. The process took months and involved gathering information from the National Trust for Historic Preservation as well as State of Connecticut resources about solar panels in a historic district or on a historic building. Thanks in large part to the thorough research done by our consultant Mark Robbins and his colleague Rachel Fossum, and their diligent presentations to Salisbury's Historic District Commission — and after multiple presentations to that group — the church won approval for the roof and solar panels.

We were also able to model the cost savings of converting to electric heat pumps and eliminating the use of oil. Much of this was incentivized by our utility company. Including the incentives, the payback for this project was substantially less than 25 years. When we looked at the yearly costs of electricity, oil, maintenance of two oil burning furnaces, maintenance of a chimney, and the huge cost of emitting carbon, our finance committee found that the return on an investment in solar, plus the yearly ZREC Zero-Emission Renewable Energy Credits (ZREC) payments would be more beneficial than keeping funds in an investment account. We get one REC every time the sun produces one kilowatt-hour (kWh) of energy. Our yearly cost for electricity was budgeted at \$6,000 and oil, \$7,000 and now that expense is eliminated. We expect to receive close to \$4,500 per year in ZRECs for the next 15 years.



The solar panels were installed and went live in March 2022. Until the heat pumps were operational and using electricity, any excess electricity generated by the new panels was "banked" to be used with a year.

The last step, an Electric Vehicle Charger

The last step of the project is installing an Electric Vehicle Charger. We plan to install a two-port EV charger, powered by our solar array. Our congregation will pay for the installation less incentives that are already committed to our project.

Our EV charger will be the first one in the Salisbury's historic district. (There are also plans to install EV charging at the Town Grove, in Lakeville).

With input and research done by our consultants, MHR Development, the Town has approved a regulation language change through the Planning and Zoning Department to accommodate for EV chargers throughout the Town.

By completing this project and becoming “green”, the Congregational Church of Salisbury is removing a whopping **87 TONS** of carbon emissions each year. We’ve also been recognized as one of 16 National Runners Up in Interfaith Power and Light’s Cool Congregations Annual Award for Leadership and Sustainability.

Respectfully submitted,
 The Green Task Force (Theresa Carroll,
 Angela Lomanto, Kerry Noble, Karin Noyes)

Board of Christian Action Report

Distribution of funds for 2023

Astor Services	
Chore	1,000.00
The Corner Food Pantry	2,000.00
Extras	500.00
FISH Shelter (Friends in Service to Humanity)	3,000.00
Greenwoods Counseling	500.00
Habitat for Humanity	1,000.00
Hispanola Health Partners (HPP)	2,000.00
Housatonic Child Care Center	1,000.00
Housatonic Youth Services	1,500.00
Northeast Community Center	1,000.00
Project SAGE (formerly WSS)	750.00
Salisbury Family Services	500.00
Salisbury Housing Comm (Sarum Village)	1,000.00
Salisbury Summer Youth Employment	2,000.00
Salisbury Visiting Nursing Ass.	500.00
Salisbury Volunteer Ambulance	500.00
Salisbury After School SOAR	500.00
Simply Smiles	2,500.00
Souper Suppers	500.00
TOTAL	<u>21,250.00</u>
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. There are four aspects of this program.

- A. The Food Pantry which distributes groceries to over 650 families
- B. The Baby Center which distributes diapers and wipes to 400 babies/month
- C. Feel the Warmth Hot Meal Program. This is the program that we participate in with five volunteers traveling to Bridgeport three to four times a year. The volunteers work with the kitchen staff to prep hot meals that serve the community right next to their former church. 100 meals get served on location and another 100 meals are packed up and delivered to the local homeless shelter. The numbers needing to be fed keep growing. The Thanksgiving meal was given to more than 500.
- D. English as a second language.



We would like to thank all who volunteer and support this worthy program.

Other Christian Action Activities:

1. Souper Suppers have continued to thrive this year. This community-organized program ran from November through April, making use of our Parish Hall and kitchen. The program offers soup-based meals to 120-140 people on the last Friday of each month (Nov., Dec. and March we delivered a week earlier). This is open to any local residents no matter their need. We have supported the Souper Suppers two times this year – in April (\$1000 raised through Light of Service) and again in October (\$1000 from our budget). The expenses have been lowered by the fact that we are now making our own soup. We still depend on Freund’s Farm for the ingredients and all the “extras” (cheese, fruit and baked goods). Generally we serve about 50 folks from Noble Horizons; cottagers and staff, and 70-90 people from the community including deliveries we make to shut-ins and working folks. Other donations are solicited from local businesses.

2. FISH (Friends in Service to Humanity) in Torrington – In the past we have done a Winter Coat Drive, spearheaded by Joanne Hayhurst. We took a break this year so that closets can once again fill with unused coats that we will aim to collect next fall.

3. The 2023 Northwest CT CROP Walk raised a total of \$36,914.57. Salisbury Congregational Church raised \$5,649.05. \$9,417.14 was returned to the Northwest CT Food Bank, which distributes the funds to local food banks and food programs. Pastor John, Joanne Taber and Pat Palmer were the Northwest CT CROP Walk Planning Team in 2023 and will be continuing in their roles in 2024, though they hope to involve others to help with this program.

4. Food Pantry – Besides our monetary donation in March, Joanne Taber and Joanne Hayhurst organized at least one food drive last year. The congregation contributed bags and bags of groceries needed to restock the pantry shelves.

5. Light of Service –Each Sunday the cash donations and designated checks in the offering will go to an organization that anyone from our congregation is invited to represent. Many varied organizations have been supported through this program and the morning offering has increased (from a normal Sunday) for each specific plea.

6. Trail Angels –Emily Elliot organized this and was joined by about a half dozen others. The group volunteered for a Saturday in July and spent the day greeting and feeding hikers along the Appalachian Trail in Sheffield. Organized by the Sheffield UCC.

7. Christmas giving – This year the Giving Tree was back. 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 and had only one week to get the gifts back for delivery. 100% of the gifts were purchased and ready for delivery despite the quick turnaround.

8. Fall Festival monies were distributed: \$1000 to nOURish Bridgeport to purchase kitchen supplies, \$1100 gift cards to the NECC to distribute as needed, \$1500 to The Sheltering Place in Torrington (the only homeless shelter in the Northwest Corner), \$385 to Salisbury Central 8 th grade trip to Washington DC.

9. We are grateful for the many unsung angels among us. Thank you to Peg Heck, Leanne Larson, Kathy Mera, Karin Noyes, and Barbara Wiggins for their official work on this board.

Respectfully submitted,
Karin Noyes

Ushers Committee Report

Eight dedicated people plus three substitutes 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 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. 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 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. It's a group that thoroughly enjoys each other's company with much laughter and conviviality. New members would be most welcome.

The Christmas concert for 2023 featured a showing of the 1965 TV special "A Charlie Brown Christmas" with the soundtrack provided by David Baranowski's live jazz ensemble. It was a treat for young and old.

By the April 2024 Annual Meeting, the spring concert performance of Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Gjielo's *Dark Night of the Soul* and a marimba concerto by Ewazen performed by percussionist Andrew Thompson and a small instrumental ensemble will have taken place.

The monthly First Friday Music continues to draw a larger audience to listen to a half hour of organ and/or piano music provided by David Baranowski with an occasional guest performer. Handsome new donation boxes provide an opportunity for the audience to show its appreciation. We are improving publicity and outreach, in part with the excellent posters designed by James Clark.

The 42nd annual student recital took place with its administration reorganized thanks to the efforts of Peggy Hayes and the music teachers Judith Dansker and Kerstan Jensen. The churches' role will be to provide the venue and publicity, but all musical organization will be undertaken by the outside group. Special thanks go to the youth group which hosted a reception after the recital.

The Bell Choir, led by Mary Davidson, has been active as usual on celebratory Sundays as well as the Christmas concert. Its final ringing for the year will be on Mother's Day. They welcomed several new members to the team this year.

Respectfully submitted,
Louise Brown, *Chair*

Slate of Officers, Boards, & Committees, 2024-2025

The 2024 Nominating Committee (Louise Brown, Peg Heck, Pat Palmer, and I) has collaborated with Moderator Betsy Beck and Pastor John Nelson to invite people to serve the congregation and the community on Boards and Committees. In conversations we have enjoyed with people excited about helping others, the church has grown in understanding — regardless of whether those people have accepted this year’s opportunity to engage in committee work. The four of us have been grateful to meet in grace together, to be transformed by the love we found with all of you, and to serve this church and its greater community with joy.

In Christ’s love,
Emily Elliot

Nominations for the June 2024 to May 2025 term are in bold type.

Underscore indicates first term of service, where applicable.

CHURCH OFFICERS

Moderator: **Charlie Noyes** *Treasurer:* Janet Offensend '25 *Clerk:* TBA
Pastor and Teacher: The Rev. Dr. John A. Nelson

CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:

Kathy Mera '25 **Bob Maxwell '26** **Betsy Beck '27**

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

Sue Morrill '25	Theresa Carroll '26	Patricia Palmer '27
<u>Barbara Collins '25</u>	<u>Tony Good '26</u>	<u>David Heck '27</u>
	<u>Don Mayland '26</u>	

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

Janet Accardo '25	<u>Lee Collins '26</u>	Kerry Noble '27
<u>Gordon Johnson '25</u>	Roger Crain '26	<u>Susan Hassler '27</u>
	<u>Carr Ferguson '26</u>	<u>Malcolm Brown '27</u>

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

<u>Beverly Kimmel '25</u>	<u>Julia Barbato '26</u>	<u>Wei Liu '27</u>
	<u>Jano Fairservis '26</u>	

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

Barbara Wiggins '25	<u>Kathy Mera '26</u>	Karin Noyes '27
	Peggy Heck '26	Leanne Larson '27
Jano Fairservis, <i>emerita</i>		<u>Jane Capecelatro '27 *</u>

**(beginning January 2025)*

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE (MODERATOR, PASTOR, AND ELECTED MEMBERS):

Emily Elliot '27

Ron Collins '27

Toni Ramcharran '27

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

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

Louise Brown '25 - chair

Peggy Hayes '26

Mary Davidson '27

George Faison '25

Emily Elliot '26

Peg Heck '25

USHERS COMMITTEE (MODERATOR, PASTOR, AND ELECTED MEMBERS):

Deborah Moore '25

Becky Belcher '26

Janet Kaufman '27

Sharon Tingley '25

Gordon Johnson '26

Anne Williams '27

Kevin Wolgemuth '25

Allison Gray '26

Joanne Taber '26



The Congregational Church of Salisbury

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

30 Main Street | P.O. Box 392 | Salisbury, CT 06068 • 860-435-2442

email: welcome@salisburyucc.org • *web:* salisburyucc.org

Office Hours: 8:30am – 1:30pm, Monday-Thursday