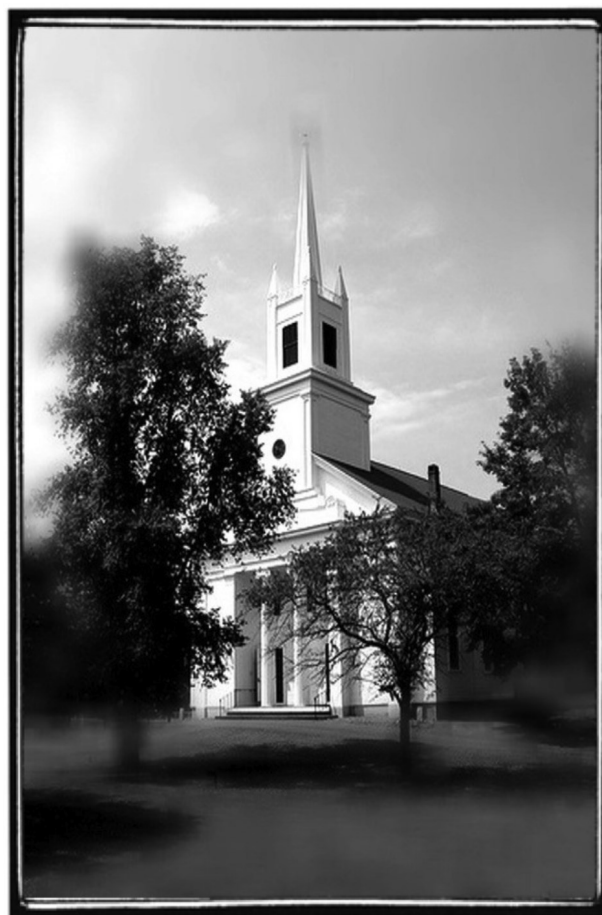


The Congregational Church *of* Topsfield

*An Open and Affirming Congregation of
the United Church of Christ*



Annual Meeting
Sunday, February 2, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Warrant	4
Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting	7
Minutes of the 2024 Business Meeting	11
Membership Activity	12
Moderator	13
Sr. Minister	15
Board of Children and Youth	17
Music Director	19
Board of Deacons	20
Board of Community and Communications	22
Board of Trustees.....	24
Board of Mission and Outreach	27
Nominating Committee.....	28
Treasurer.....	32

**WARRANT FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF TOPSFIELD**

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF TOPSFIELD, MA:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED AND WARNED THAT A BUSINESS MEETING OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS WILL BE HELD IN THE MEETINGHOUSE ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND 2025 AFTER WORSHIP AT 10:45 AM TO ACT ON THE FOLLOWING:

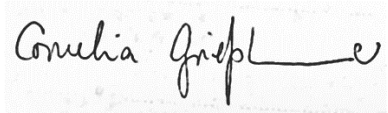
Article I. To hear all reports that may legally come before the meeting and to act thereon.

Article II. To see if the Church will approve the following Bylaws change:
Under **Article VI section B** ‘Duties of the Moderator’ add the following:
The Moderator shall have the power to appoint ad hoc committees.

Article III. To see if the Church will approve the following Bylaws change:
Under **Article VI section G** ‘Committees of Council’ add:
The Church shall have the following standing committees: Personnel and Nominating.

Article IV. To see if the Church will approve the following Bylaws change:
The last sentence of **Article VII section A** ‘Business Meetings’ shall be amended by replacing ‘Fifty voting members’ with ‘Twenty percent (20%) of the current membership as stated in the latest annual report’
The last sentence will then read:
‘Twenty percent (20%) of the current membership as stated in the latest annual report shall constitute a quorum for all Church business meetings.’

- Article V.** To see if the Church will approve the following Bylaws change:
The last sentence of **Article VIII section C** ‘Terms of Office’ shall be deleted.
- Article VI.** To see if the Church will approve the following Bylaws change:
Under **Article VIII section D** ‘Election of Board Chairs’ add the following sentence:
‘It is the responsibility of any Board chair to maintain and update a manual of responsibilities and tasks of said Board and share such information with the incoming Board chair.’
- Article VII.** To see if the members of the Congregational Church of Topsfield will renew the
‘Memorandum of Understanding’ between the Church and the Topsfield Meetinghouse
Foundation, Inc.
- Article VIII.** To see if the Church will vote to raise, appropriate and transfer \$609,947 needed to fund the
general church operating expenses for the fiscal year 2025, beginning January 1, 2025 and
ending December 31, 2025, as presented by the Board of Trustees.
- Article IX.** To see if the Church shall elect Officers, Board and Committee members, who will serve until
the next annual meeting in January 2026 or until the expiration of their term as provided in the
Bylaws.
- Article X.** To act upon any other business that may legally come before the meeting.



Given under my hand this 23rd day of January 2025
Cornelia Griesshammer, Clerk

WARRANT ARTICLES ADDENDUM A ANNUAL MEETING

ADDENDUM A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter “MOU”) is intended to facilitate a harmonious working relationship between the Board of Trustees of the Congregational Church of Topsfield (hereinafter “CCoT”) and the Board of Directors of the Topsfield Meetinghouse Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) organization. This MOU is not intended to supplant or diminish the standing or authority of either organization, but is intended rather to clearly delineate the responsibilities and interactions between them, as the missions of each organization are actualized.

1. The purpose of the Topsfield Meetinghouse Foundation is to serve as a primary fundraising source for the preservation of the Meetinghouse.
2. Decisions concerning projects to be undertaken for upkeep, repair, maintenance, and preservation of the Meetinghouse shall be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees of the CCoT.
Decisions concerning the funding by the Foundation of projects as described in 2 (above) shall be at the discretion of and the responsibility of the Board of Directors of the said Foundation.

Use of the Meetinghouse:

1. The CCoT worship schedule, in all liturgical seasons, shall always take precedence relative to the scheduling of the use of the Meetinghouse;
2. Customary and ongoing use of the Meetinghouse for events including, but not limited to, weddings, funerals, and church organizational activities, shall not be infringed.
3. The Meetinghouse shall be available, at the discretion of the Church Council of CCOT or its designee, for use relative to events of community interest, including, but not limited to, musical, educational, cultural, and/or non-partisan politics.
4. The Board of Trustees of the CCoT shall determine the rental rates or use fees of these events, and any profit, after proper deduction for costs and/or expenses, shall be remitted to the said Foundation.

Board of Directors of the said Foundation:

The personnel under consideration for serving on the Board of Directors of the said Foundation shall be selected irrespective and independent of membership or non-membership in the CCoT, with the sole exception being that at least one Director shall be a member of CCoT.

MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

The Congregational Church of Topsfield

Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting

January 28th, 2024

Moderator Steve Whelan opened the Annual Meeting at 10:45 am in the meetinghouse with some remarks about the conduct in which the meeting will be held. A quorum was present with 47 members present in the meetinghouse and 10 member present on Zoom.

Article I. To hear all reports that may legally come before the meeting and to act thereon.

David Read reported about the progress with the Emerson Fields project. The Town of Topsfield was officially asked by the State to apply for this housing project. The deadline for this letter is February 15th. The Board of Selectmen already sent their letter of approval. The project should go in 2025 into the construction phase. He presented the second check for \$53,000 to the church. There will be two more check in this amount before the final payment.

Steve Whelan presented a number of people with certificates of recognition.

Cathy Imboden – RIM

Charlotte Melling – organizing group for collations

Polly Croteau and Carolyn Detato – altar guild

Duane Melling – reconstruction of desk for technical equipment

Tom Luo, Guido Voss, Mike Ierardi and Werner Griesshammer – technical team

Mark Warner and David Larson – repairs to buildings

Sandy Whelan – weekly flower delivery and prayer shawl ministry

Conny Griesshammer – overseeing the Community Garden

Bob Knutsen – applying for the Employee Retention Credit (and receiving the funds)

Cathy Szymanski and Sally Bowling – Lifebridge outreach

Article II. To see if the Church will approve the following statement of purpose based on input that was received during the Visioning Process that occurred throughout the year 2023:

The Congregational Church of Topsfield, an open and affirming member of the United Church of Christ, seeks to demonstrate the Great Commandment and Christ's teachings of love to others. Our core values of compassion, faith, love and inclusion determine that we use our resources singularly or in partnership with others to minimize the causes of hate and oppression.

MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

Steve Whelan reminded the congregation about the meeting last summer with a facilitator about our core values. As next step members had the opportunity to answer a survey about the church and what our church should be in the future. The result of these steps came together in the Mission Statement.

The Mission Statement was adopted with a unanimous vote.

Article III. To see if the Church will enter into an agreement with the Topsfield Meetinghouse Foundation, Inc., based on the “Addendum A – Memorandum of Understanding” (attached).

Duane Melling as chair of the Meetinghouse Foundation spoke to the article. After a discussion at a church chat the following change to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was proposed. Paragraph 3 under ‘Use of the Meetinghouse’ should read:

3. The Meetinghouse shall be available, at the discretion of the church council of the Congregational Church of Topsfield or its designee for use relative to events of community interest, including, but not limited to, musical, educational, cultural, and/or non-partisan politics.

The Meetinghouse Foundation is a separate entity outside of the church. It was started out of a concern with the expenses for the upkeep of the meetinghouse. It should support and secure funding.

Steve Whelan was reading the MOU with the above mentioned substitution.

Jon Palace asked what would happen if the foundation wouldn’t fund a certain project. The church can always fund these projects. The vote to accept the substituted MOU was unanimous.

There were some more questions regarding the Meetinghouse Foundation. Jim Barnes was asking who the current members of the foundation are. The names are Duane Melling (Chair), Bruce Jones, Joe Gibbons, John Kinhan, and Jody Clineff.

David Read was asking how far the process for the founding of the Meetinghouse Foundation has progressed. The 501(c)3 is prepared and needs to be sent together with a check. The foundation was only waiting for today’s vote.

Ruth Bortzfield asked whether the board of the foundation could be made up with people who are not members of the church. Yes, this would be possible.

Susan Warner was concerned who would decide who would be a board member. The board of directors will screen at their discretion, new board members. The whole process of starting this foundation was a significant interest in the upkeep of the Meetinghouse.

MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

Jim Mitchell wanted to know about the connection of the church and the foundation. Could the foundation have a secular purpose? No, the goal of the foundation is the upkeep of the Meetinghouse.

David Read asked if we want a certain percentage of the board members being church members. Bruce Jones said that this is an issue for the Bylaws of the Meetinghouse Foundation.

Dolly McIlvaine wanted to know if the bylaws are available and can be viewed. Bruce Jones told her that the bylaws had to be written before the application of the 501(c)3. Steve Whelan made the meeting aware that the church has no control to change the bylaws of the foundation.

Article III with the substituted MOU passed with one no-vote.

**Article IV. To see if the Church will vote Article VIII section B to read:
Boards shall consist of a minimum of 7 and maximum of 12 elected members. Each board shall determine its desired number of members for the following year and shall so inform the Nominating Committee. Board members do not need to be a member of the Church, however, to serve on Council as a Board chair membership is required.**

There was a friendly amendment of the article by Sheryl Knutsen. The first line needs to read: 'To see if the Church will vote Article VIII section B of the Bylaws to read:'

Another amendment was suggested. Line two should read: 'Boards shall consist of a minimum of 3 and maximum of 12 elected members.'

The amendment to article IV was accepted with one no-vote.

There was another friendly amendment. The last sentence should read: 'Board members do not need to be a member of the Church. However, to serve on Council as a Board chair, membership is required.'

The article with the amendments passed with a unanimous vote.

Article V. To see if the Church will vote to raise, appropriate and transfer the sum of \$545,229 money needed to fund the general church operating expenses for the fiscal year 2024, beginning January 1, 2024 and ending December 31, 2024.

Treasurer Michael Miller spoke to this article. The budget for 2024 is less than the budget for 2023 by \$12k. We had a number of good fortunes in 2023. The grant for the steeple repair was higher than first expected. We received the first check from Caleb in the fall of 2023. We received money through the Employee Retention Credit (ERC). There was a large gift from a member of the congregation. We had significant savings in staffing. The income from the Watson Fund was higher than expected. So, overall we were able to put money back into the Watson Income Fund which currently has a balance of \$277k.

MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

For the budget year 2024 we are anticipating a 10% reduction in pledge income. Pledges account for less and less income over the past years. But aside from this we are in a really strong financial position. This year's budget includes pay increases for the staff, higher funding for the Christmas concert, maintenance of the buildings and updates to our audio/visual system.

Jim Barnes asked for a handout of the budget. Michael said that they are available.

The article passed with one abstention.

Article VI. To see if the Church shall elect Officers, Board and Committee members, who will serve until the next annual meeting in January 2025 or until the expiration of their term as provided in the By-Laws.

Sheryl Knutsen as chair of the Nominating Committee talked about the slate of officers and board members. She also thanked Barbara Barnes as the other member of the committee for her work. Martin and board chairs gave some input during the process.

The article passed unanimously.

Article VII. To act upon any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

There was no other business.

Moderator Steve Whelan entertained a motion to adjourn. The motion was accepted unanimously.

Reverend Martin Riekert thanked Steve Whelan for the preparation of the meeting. The work of many people came now to fruition with the forming of the Meetinghouse Foundation and the Emerson Fields Housing Project. Martin is very appreciative of how serious people are about the business of the church.

He closed the meeting with a prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53am.

Respectfully submitted by Cornelia Griesshammer, Clerk.

ATTACHED Addendum A

MINUTES OF THE 2024 BUSINESS MEETING

The Congregational Church of Topsfield

Minutes of the Business Meeting

June 16th, 2024

Moderator Steve Whelan opened the Business Meeting at 10:45 am in the Emerson Center Fellowship Hall. A quorum was present with 48 members present in the Fellowship Hall and 7 members present on Zoom.

To the members of the Congregational Church of Topsfield, MA:

You are hereby notified and warned that a business meeting of the Congregational Church of Topsfield, Massachusetts will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the Emerson Center on Sunday, June 16th 2024 immediately after worship at approximately 10:45am to act on the following:

Article I. To see if the Church will vote to confirm and affirm the Pastoral Search Committee as presented.

Moderator Steve Whelan offered the following names for the search committee:

Werner Griesshammer	Alison Miller
Cathy Imboden	Susie Read
Peter Lindholm	Tony Rogers
Charlotte Melling	Katie Townes

There was no discussion about these nominations. The article was accepted unanimously.

Article II. To act upon any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

There was no other business.

Moderator Steve Whelan entertained a motion to adjourn. The motion was accepted unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:52am.

Respectfully submitted by Cornelia Griesshammer, Clerk.

MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY REPORT

Membership Figures

January 1– December 31, 2024

MEMBERSHIP JANUARY 1, 2024

**TOTAL: 233 (199 regular Members plus
34 Associate Members)**

MEMBERS RECEIVED

RE-AFFIRMATION: 0
CONFIRMATION: 0
AFFIRMATION: 5

TOTAL: 5

MEMBERS REMOVED

WITHDRAWN/INACTIVE: 24
TRANSFER: 1
DECEASED: 3

TOTAL: 28

MEMBERSHIP JANUARY 1, 2025

**TOTAL: 210 (186 regular Members plus
24 Associate Members)**

Sanctuary Activity

BAPTISMS: 3
WEDDINGS: 0
FUNERALS: 2

Membership Details

NEW MEMBERS:

Ashley Gaucher
Trenton Gaucher
Debra Parker
Fred Parker
Julie Quinlivan

CONFIRMATION:

TOTAL NEW MEMBERS: 5
TOTAL REMOVED: 28

DEATHS:

Clayton Elliot
Royce Johnston
Ralph Titus

WITHDRAWN:

Lynda Fairbanks Atkins

INACTIVE MEMBERS:

Christopher Blanchard
Susan Blanchard
Anne and Jack Bridge
Jackson Bridge
Randy and Tara Grajal
Sigita Hartung
Brianna and Jacob Itz
Callie and Ken Ierardi
Elizabeth and Mark Mudgett
Haley Pappas
Abby and Daniel Reblin
David and Jen Symmes
Alex and Marcia Tatum
Madelyn and Sam Warner
Pam Wilder

Respectfully submitted,

Cornelia Griesshammer, Clerk



During 2024 we continued to plan for the church's future. Martin Riekert, who was called to be our Senior Pastor in 2013, announced his desire to retire this year and we now need to prepare for a new minister to accept the call of a small progressive church with its challenges and joys. Today while we are better situated than most "village" churches, we also find ourselves trying to support an institution whose purposes and activity are finding competition within the nature of our secular society. Our membership is aging, we find it challenging to attract new young families to our roles and our pledge dollars are decreasing as a portion of the budget. Financially we are steady by developing other streams of revenue to help pay for maintenance and upkeep. These are the challenges.

They are balanced by a smaller more active membership which shows great faith, pride and effort to keep the programs of the church going.

The council has met regularly and tried to address the ongoing needs of a church in transition. In addition to managing ongoing activities, we have formed a search committee to review and update our profile, posting it through the UCC website for notification that we are in search of a Senior Pastor. The committee will vet and interview candidates interested in ministering to our congregation. Our plan is to have a candidate by September 2025. We have reviewed the current Bylaws of the church with proposed modifications necessary to fill the seats of the various Boards in the Church.

Ongoing activities include:

- The Board of Children and Youth, in conjunction with our new Director of Children and Youth Ministries, have provided an active Sunday School program; an additional regular Intergenerational Family Service, which has attracted younger families to explore the value of church.
- Our choir and musical programs have flourished with community concerts and Sunday worship music.
- Outreach via the Board of Missions has given over \$30K to local charities and UCC programs.
- Our Board of Community and Communication has thrived with a new Women's ministry, cooking classes, and Potluck Sunday breakfasts once a month.
- The Deacons have managed the worship itself as well as held special courses on faith and stewardship of the environment and Bible reading with a modern interpretation of the text.
- Our Board of Trustees has actively maintained the facilities we own, repairing and replacing as needed. This continues to be a large portion of our expenses but necessary to the health of our church.

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Many have contributed to the activities in our church. It is through the efforts of those church members that we believe the Congregational Church of Topsfield will be an enviable selection for any minister looking for change.

I want to thank all of the Council members who have faithfully served on Council this year. Especially I want to thank Bruce Jones who has served as President of Trustees for the past six years and now must step down. He has done an excellent job in managing the facilities and property of our church. Thank you, Bruce.

Also, I would be remiss if I did not thank the Reverend Martin Riekert for the last ten plus years as the minister of our church. Martin has provided steady and faithful leadership since he was called to our church. I thank him profoundly for that ten years of service and while he will continue to serve until June of 2025, this is the last annual report which we have the opportunity to thank him for shepherding our flock of sometimes excited and wandering sheep.

In faith,
Steve Whelan, Moderator

My role in CCoT over the past year has been characterized by my decision to retire at the end of 2024. Church leadership opted to pursue the transition to a new minister without the service of an interim minister and I agreed to stay on until the end of June 2025.

My goals were set to prepare the church in the following ways:

- **Sermons:** I tried to present a realistic situation analysis of Christianity and religion in the current socio economic era and, on the basis of that analysis, identified priorities required for a sustainable and even thriving local church. In the second place I tried to provide an outline of what I perceive the identity of CCoT to be and to position that identity within the broader church environment.
- **Strengthening relationships with the Southern New England Conference** of the UCC to ensure support for the search committee from that level while also personally supporting the search committee when requested to do so.
- **Worship:** Shepherding the inter-generational worship service through the initiating phase to a sustainable part of the life of CCoT.
- **Ensuring a stable staffing and core leadership** situation for the transition.

As an overarching goal, I was hoping to help create a forward-looking spirit, embracing the mission of the church and stepping into the future with anticipation. CCoT is well positioned to engage the future with confidence. The most crucial assets enabling this are:

- An experienced and dedicated leadership team
- A well-established culture among the membership to respect the covenant between each other and with God
- A willingness for members to accept differences of opinion and to work together in spite of a dominant societal culture of conflict and animosity
- A firm understanding that the future of the church needs to be centered in collaboration and partnerships with the community in which it exists

All religions and civil associations are experiencing a complex operating environment. There will be significant challenges going forward but I am confident and hopeful that CCoT is well prepared to continue to embody God's love in the world.

I am grateful that I could have contributed to the adult education program with a Zoom-based study early in 2024 and book study in the fall. I am also grateful that we could host the speakers from "Roots" to inform us and the broader community on their peace work in the West Bank area.

SENIOR MINISTER'S REPORT

I want to express gratitude towards the leadership team of the church, including the various boards, committees, and teams. I spent much time with the Board of Deacons, whom I worked with very closely over the past year due to a number of new initiatives. I want to express a special word of appreciation to Steve Whelan for his leadership and the privilege to work with him.

CCoT is fortunate to have a dedicated and very competent staff contingent. It was a privilege to serve and work with each of you.

Christa and MJ, thank you once more for your love, support and the wisdom you shared.

This will most probably be my last annual report as senior minister. It is appropriate to focus on what is essential. I want to conclude my report by offering the command of Jesus, urging us to love one another, and from book of Micah to love kindness, to do justice, and to walk humbly with our God.

Shalom

Martin

BOARD OF CHILDREN & YOUTH REPORT

Cor Unum Soup Kitchen- Mission Trip



Valentine's Day COA Tea Party



Christmas Pageant 2024



2024 was a successful year for our children and families led by our new Director of Children and Youth Ministries, Kim Love. This year, BCY continued to offer **Sunday School** led by much-loved “Miss Julie” Quinlivan and assisted by Joyce Talbot, and **Faithworks** led by Kim Love and Christy Redding, volunteer opportunities, fun social events and a new initiative to bring the entire church together through Intergenerational Family Services, planned and led by Kim Love.

Four **Intergenerational Family Services** were held in 2024, featuring engaging sermons and activities like Jack Soper’s interactive retelling of Jonah and the whale and Mike Lyons’ tales of his time in the Peace Corps in Peru, along with homemade Peruvian specialties from Netty Lyons. Soulful live music performed by James Love, Sr., Peter Lindholm, and others helped children and adults alike connect with messages of faith and community. These services were an overwhelming success and more are already scheduled for 2025.

Attendee numbers for 2024 Intergenerational Services:

- 4/28: 70 people
- 6/16: 80 people
- 9/29: 72 people
- 11/10: 84 people

In early September, Kim Love, James Love, Sr., and Christy Redding led our Faithworks group on the learning and serving **mission trip** in collaboration with the Second Congregational Church in Boxford. Seven students joined the weekend-long trip focusing on the Boston-North Backyard Mission where they served food-insecure persons at the restaurant-style soup kitchen Cor Unum in Lawrence, helped plant and weed at The Giving Garden, and sorted and packaged clothing, diapers, and baby equipment at Community Giving Tree, an organization that provides local low income families with basic necessities. The Faithworks kids bonded at a deep level through their shared volunteer experiences and late night fun during the trip sleepovers. Their weekend concluded with helping set up for that Sunday’s Homecoming Service in Boxford.

BOARD OF CHILDREN & YOUTH REPORT

The **Blessing of the Backpacks** took place on Sunday, August 25th. We prayed for our children and youth and gave a little gift to place in each backpack. Also, Charlie McIlvaine was given a special sendoff from the youth program as he was heading off to UMASS Lowell. The **Haiti Packathon** took place on October 19th, we had 9 volunteers and presented a \$2,000 check on behalf of BOMO, towards the organization. Church youth also volunteered time at the annual Topsfield Fair booth fundraiser. We also had a February 14th **Valentine's Day Tea Party event at the Topsfield Council on Aging** with 11 of our children and youth serving tea and treats, singing a few songs together, and giving out homemade cards to our local seniors. On March 3rd, we had our 3rd year of putting together an **Icy Cold Dip Fundraiser** at Crane's beach to benefit Future Forward for Haiti and 11 brave swimmers attended. We raised a total of \$1,255, which was over our \$1,000 goal.

Kim Love has worked tirelessly to build connections with the church youth and support their spiritual and emotional wellbeing and growth. In the fall, she collaborated with Meredith Shaw from Tri-Town Council to hold a **Teen Stress Survival** workshop in the Fellowship Hall. (Rev. Jen Vath from Trinity Church, is also interested in partnering with us on similar events.) Seven church youth attended the event, which included pizza and in-depth discussion and support for managing teen anxiety. She also organized and led fun youth outings like field trips to Skyzone, an escape room, and group dinners.

In December, 25 church children and youth participated in an extremely well-received new **Christmas Pageant**, written and led by Ken Proctor with musical accompaniment by Laura Proctor Cutler and Jackson Carruthers. Many audience members commented it was "the best one yet!" Church youth also participated in readings and musical performances in the well-attended Christmas Eve service. Kim and Miss Julie continued with the **birthday card program** for church youth which includes a card and a small gift certificate to Gil's or Zumi's in downtown Topsfield, which not only supports local businesses but deepens kids' connection to the church.

Our goals in the upcoming year include continuing to nurture community through regularly held Intergenerational Family Services, service events, elementary Sunday School classes and monthly Faithworks classes, and answering the youths' call for more connection and community such as the upcoming February 7th grade dance held in the Fellowship Hall and co-sponsored by Tri-Town Council. Another major goal is reviving the children & youth's involvement in the music program again, and we have many young people that can share their love of music and talent with our church community. We will also continue with our annual Faithworks mission trip and looking into various locations.

Sincerely,

Amanda Rogers, Chair of the Board of Children and Youth

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Musical activities at CCoT in 2024 have built on a successful 2023. On top of an excellent year of music during services, the church has presented and hosted multiple musical events through the year. The profile of CCoT's music program within the community has remained high and continued to bring new faces to the Meetinghouse. The music component of regular weekly services is consistently well-received by regular members as well as visitors. During the 2024 calendar year, music during the new Intergenerational Service presented the congregation with more diverse and fresh styles and was generally successful.

December saw the third Christmas Concert presented at CCoT under my direction. This year's concert represented a departure from previous years, being generally more compact, offering a variety of short pieces, and having more audience participation than previous years. This new concert format seemed to be very successful. Many thanks to all who participated in this event, both musically and behind the scenes. The concert was well-attended, both by church members and those from the community.

The feedback I have received in regards to the music performed during normal weekly services has continued to be very positive. While some longtime members have stepped back because of illness or other concerns, the morale in the choir and bell choir is good, and the overall level of engagement has been good. Once again, the level of commitment and dedication shown by everyone in both choirs is outstanding and inspiring. Continuing a trend from last year, the bell choir in has performed frequently in a significant number of services, providing many wonderful preludes and anthems.

We have also seen an increase in overall musical participation by the church's children and youth, as well as members outside of the choir and bell choir in general. This has brought a wonderful, unique element to the music and is to be commended.

For myself and on behalf of all the musicians of CCoT, I want to express our sincere gratitude for your support throughout the year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jackson Carruthers

BOARD OF DEACONS REPORT

Calendar year 2024 was the second full year post-COVID, and we were blessed to worship in our beautiful Meetinghouse again for the entire year without interruption.

A highlight for our year was working with the Board of Children and Youth and Pastor Martin in facilitating an intergenerational family worship in the Emerson Center Fellowship Hall. Four such worships were undertaken, led by Kim Love and her board, each one unique and inspirational. Special thanks go to the audio-visual team for purchase of new equipment, intensive Saturday set-up, and installation of additional wiring in the Fellowship Hall to provide for a meaningful Sunday morning experience. And thank you to the church family for supporting the one-time audio-visual budget allocation for the necessary equipment.

A second significant highlight was the inauguration of a guest speaker program supported by a designated donation from a church member. Our first speakers were two residents from the West Bank, one a Palestinian and the other an Israeli, who are dedicating their lives working together for an organization called “ROOTS,” leading an initiative for understanding, non-violence, and transformation in this broken part of the world. The event in March nearly filled our meeting house and helped us understand more about the history of the conflict, and the bravery and insights of those seeking solutions. Special thanks to Jackie Cassiday for assisting Martin in facilitating the planning for the event, including critical communication with the participants, and Jon Palace for supporting the transportation needs of our guests.

Part of the role of BOD is to support the pastor and worship participants to assure worship is a positive spiritual experience for all in attendance. The chair of BOD frequently joins the Pastor’s Monday morning staff meetings to review the past Sunday worship and discuss the next worship, plus plan several weeks in advance for special dates such as Holy Week, Easter, Christmas, Homecoming, and Sundays with guest preachers or speakers. The BOD coordinates ushers for worship, with each board member responsible for a few months, and this year we continued to broaden the number of church members who usher, and we continually reviewed and revised, as necessary, usher instructions which are provided to ushers each week to assure a safe and pleasant experience for worshipers.

During 2024, the Music Program of the Congregational Church of Topsfield was enhanced by the offerings of music of various genres by our Music Director/Organist, Jackson Carruthers for the preludes, postludes, and offertories during worship. In 2024 Jackson completed his second full year having begun his tenure as our music director in August of 2022. The Chancel Choir and Bell Choir continued to sing and play music of sacred significance enhancing the worship experience.

(continued on next page)

BOARD OF DEACONS REPORT

The Christmas Concert for 2024 filled our Meetinghouse with song and instrumental offerings engaging church members and residents of the area. We are pleased that the Board's goal of increasing participation of youth in the Christmas Eve service was met with young members taking on speaking assignments and performing excellent musical presentations.

During the year there were two Adult Christian Education small group offerings: in early winter a Zoom-based discussion group based on a video series by Rev. Michael Dowd, noted speaker on the intersect of ecology and theology, and this fall, an in-person, after worship discussion of *Reading the Bible AGAIN for the First Time* by Marcus Borg, led by Martin.

Much of the work of the small Board of Deacons is undertaken by volunteers in the church. Each Sunday our altar guild of Carolyn Detato and Polly Croteau, made sure the Meetinghouse was properly set up for our pastors. The Parish Care Team chaired by Larry Atkins and including Cathy Szymanski, Kim Itz, Sandy Whelan, and Deb Baker continued its ministry to friends and members in need of our support and love. The Prayer Shawl Ministry continues with 9 church members meeting weekly. Thank you to Board member Ruth Bortzfield for attending to ordering fresh flowers for each service, and an array of potted flowers for Easter services. A special thank you to Sandy Whelan who stepped in to coordinate donations for the poinsettias and their placement while Ruth was on a tour in Sicily. John Szymanski again headed up a committee that decorated the Meetinghouse for Advent and Christmas. The Board of Deacons organized the installation of our annual poinsettia tree with volunteer elves Mike Ierardi, Steve Hall, John Szymanski, Kristin and Jon Palace, Sandy and Steve Whelan, and Barb and Jim Barnes.

The Audio-Visual team of Werner Griesshammer, Mike Ierardi, Guido Voss, and Tom Luo have performed admirably in providing continuous hybrid worship since our return to the Meetinghouse. During the year we saw numbers at in-person worship steadily increase and zoom participation by those for whom it is difficult to travel remained steady – thank you to Judi Gosbee for coordinating the “fellowship” on Zoom before and after worship. Our church's virtual presence via Zoom and Community Cable TV will continue to be an important option for Sunday worship. Of note, our church is the only area church that broadcasts weekly worship on Boxford Community Cable TV (which is under contract with the Town of Topsfield to provide its community cable service).

Thank you for her service to Jackie Cassiday who is leaving the board. And thank you to returning board members Sandy Whelan, Ruth Bortzfield, and John Szymanski.

James Barnes, Chair
On behalf of the Board of Deacons

BOARD OF COMMUNITY & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

We are responsible for implementing and promoting all fellowship activities of the Church and for outreach to the broader community. Specifically, that means we are responsible for Coffee Hour and other social activities including but not limited to Homecoming Sunday and Potluck Sundays. We are here to support and encourage any fellowship or interest groups which members may wish to form such as facilitating the Coffee Fellowships at the Intergenerational Services. An example of a recently formed group is the reprisal of the Women's Ministry under the leadership of Dolly McIlvaine. Dolly has set up numerous events including The Women's Tea, A Breakfast event complete with learning to arrange flowers in pumpkins and has lot of fun ideas for next year. The BCC has also recently sponsored a Thanksgiving Cooking Class hosted by Sallie Bowling.

The Women's Ministry, under the direction of the BCC, was revived in 2024 and has offered a variety of events to foster friendships, fellowship and faith amongst the women of the church. The initial offering was a multi-week faith-based book study on the book entitled: *The Cup of Our Lives* by Joyce Rupp and was well attended with 11 participants. Other activities included craft projects such as a tea cup flower arrangement and or pumpkin flower centerpieces; informal socials; a Christmas gathering and service projects including working a shift at the CCoT Fair Booth and an upcoming shift at The Community Giving Tree which is one of our church's Mission Partners. These events, which were often intergenerational, served to create a greater sense of community and connections. The Women's Ministry hopes to continue to foster community amongst the women of our faith community and beyond in the year ahead.

We participated in the Topsfield Holiday Walk which was a great success. People were delighted to see the church and try to ring the bell. We'd like to promote participation in other town events on which we can piggy back to offer a similar "open house" experience - the Strawberry Festival or after a Lemonade on the Lawn perhaps and open the church to anyone to stop in and see the church or ring the bell. Another possibility is to communicate with 3rd or 4th grade teachers re offering a trip to the Meetinghouse for their students studying Colonial America. Our goal in hosting such events is not only to build community among our current Church family but also to invite the greater community to join in. One of our initiatives for this coming year is to more vigorously promote not only BCC sponsored events but all church events via social media. We believe that building strong bonds within the greater Topsfield community will strengthen the overall health of our church and ideally lead to increased attendance and membership.

(continued on next page)

BOARD OF COMMUNITY & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

The Congregational Church of Topsfield's Instagram account (@congregationaltopsfild) is growing steadily, boasting 177 followers. Over the past 90 days, we've reached an impressive 2.5K accounts, with 96% of them being non-followers, showcasing our ability to connect with new audiences. During this time, we've also had 173 profile visits and 22 website redirects, demonstrating that our content is engaging and driving meaningful interactions. To continue this growth, we must occasionally boost posts into ads to extend our reach further and invite more people into our vibrant community. Together, we can share our mission, values, and events with an even broader audience!

We boosted our Facebook presence in a few ways. We continue to promote the correct, current Facebook profile: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091469855540> .

As a reminder there are at least 2 other CCoT profiles that have no admin and cannot be deleted.

All pertinent community-oriented events (concerts, the pageant, etc.) are listed on the page. Most usefully, we post on the various Topsfield and Boxford community pages as the CCoT, as there is a lot more traffic on those pages, and users can easily follow the link back to the church page if they are curious.

We are reaching 500+ users per month between the CCoT Facebook page and posts by CCoT on other pages.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy B. Nelson, Chairman

Ellen Losee

Peter Lindholm

Annie Wyatt

Dolly McIlvaine

Sallie Bowling

Overview

In 2024 the Church continued to evolve and define its “new normal”. On an operating basis, we experienced some significant maintenance challenges in 2024 and expect to continue to play “catch up” on deferred maintenance for at least through 2025.

Finances

The finances of the Church present a mixed story. On the one hand, our financial reserves have never been stronger and we can reasonably expect them to improve significantly once the Emerson Homes project gets underway at which time they will likely be around \$3million.

On the other hand, as our congregation ages and we begin to lose some large pledges and see others reduced, the income from pledges has become stagnant while our budget, slipping below 50% of income for 2025.

The 2025 Budget is the highest we have proposed in five years. It anticipates withdrawing an amount from our reserves of over \$200,000. Aside from the usual cost increases we experience every year we have materially increased the Maintenance budget to cover anticipated projects, primarily for repairs to the Emerson Center complex, and increased routine maintenance costs. It is anticipated that the extraordinary maintenance expense will moderate in a year or two, but the routine expense increase will continue.

In response to increased use, particularly of the Fellowship Hall, we have budgeted for increased cleaning expense. We decided to have all future landscape maintenance done by our landscape contractor as depending on volunteer work to do significant portions of the job has not proven successful. And lastly, we have budgeted expenses for the Pastoral search process.

A detailed description of the budget may be found in the Treasurer’s Report.

Fairbooth

While the 2024 Fairbooth effort was financially successful, this year highlighted a growing problem which may cause us to discontinue the project.

On the positive side, net revenue slightly exceeded that of 2023, giving us three good financial years in a row. More importantly, by moderating prices and focusing heavily on turkey meals we reversed a multi-year slide in the numbers of dinners served which indicates a more robust business model going forward.

On the less positive side, we experienced significant difficulties in staffing the booth which, if we cannot solve, will mean that we must discontinue the Fairbooth. The Fairbooth contributes about \$25,000 to the Church operating funds annually. If we are unable to continue it we will have to find other sources for that amount.

As well, the Fairbooth has been a community project for CCoT for over 65 years. There is a strong feeling that the community aspect is more important to the Church than the funds and is, by itself, a sufficient reason for continuing the project. However, emotional support for the Fairbooth is not sufficient. The only real support is when people sign up to fill the 350 work shifts that make the Fairbooth happen.

Facilities Rental

Facilities Rental for CCoT consists primarily of rent paid contractually by Joyful Noises preschool which account for around \$47,000 of income and rental of the parking lot to The Commons, which amount is variable depending on how much business they do. We intend to change the agreement with The Commons to a single contractual amount for the year which will make this number more predictable.

Stewardship

At this writing 2024 Pledge Income is \$270,000 or 93% of Pledge commitments. Typically we receive some pledge income after the end of the calendar year so we anticipate that we will receive the full amount of pledges for 2024. The pledge request for 2025 was for a 3% increase totaling \$299,000 – one half of the proposed budget.

Building and Grounds

In 2024 we encountered significant unbudgeted repair projects at the Emerson Center including:

- Repair of the front sill plate and adjacent wall framing
- Repair of the north (office) entryway and significant framing repair adjacent to the doorway
- Replacement of the flooring in the basement utility area
- Clearing of the drain line from the JN kitchen (this was a much bigger project than you think it was)

Among the repair projects anticipated going forward are:

- New emergency lighting for the pre-school area
- Replacement of the concrete apron at the north entrance to the Fellowship hall
- Possible replacement of the dishwasher in the FH kitchen if we cannot get it properly repaired
- Engineering analysis of the entire Emerson complex to identify any unknown issues and areas for potential future problems.
- Eventual refinishing of the parking lot.

(continued on next page)

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

As noted before, Emerson Center is 30 years older than the Meetinghouse and, in fact, is the second oldest building on the Common. It is heavily used and can be expected to show the effects of that use. It will benefit us to practice more preventive maintenance in the future. The Meetinghouse remains in good repair and we do not expect any extraordinary expenses for at least the next few years.

Acknowledgements

Again, I want to acknowledge the great service we receive from John Arathuzik. John's experience in facilities management has been invaluable both in identifying problems both existing and potential, and in sourcing and managing contractors to address these problems quickly and at reasonable cost.

And, again, my thanks go out to the continued great work of the 2024 Trustees, Ray Hodil and Mike Miller who do a great job in managing our financial resources, Susie Read who, working with John A. has really risen to the task of facilities maintenance, Kristin Palace's for her legal insights and sound advice, and Rob Hardy for his long service on the Fairbooth project. Also want to welcome Guido Voss back to Trustees returning to his role as Chair. His experience will be invaluable as the Church moves forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Jones

Chair, Board of Trustees

BOARD OF MISSION & OUTREACH REPORT

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” - 2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV)

We members of the Board of Mission and Outreach continually look for opportunities to give to worthwhile “mission partners” that care for the poor, the outcast, and those who are having difficult life experiences. Our church membership has been supportive in our efforts, and our goal is to continue to locate and work with those organizations.

We are fortunate to have Cathy Imboden, Mary Jelinek, and Carolyn Nenart on “BOMO”, all of whom have years of experience working with our mission partners.

Highlights of 2024

We continue to support some twenty mission partners which we review continually, evaluating their relevance and capability to make the most of the funds and other efforts we supply. We are closest to some local organizations where our church members may be involved in their activities. Lifebridge and Haven from Hunger are two of these where we work closely and have seen great improvements and growth in their organizations over the years. We support Refugee Immigration Ministries which successfully turns refugees from abroad into contributing members of society. More recently, we have seen Straight Ahead Ministries blossom from a grassroots effort into a regional one, turning incarcerated youth away from crime. In all, our church participates in dozens of activities outside of monetary support, and we appreciate the support from our church members and their families.

Events of 2024

BOMO’s charge is much more than writing checks to our mission partners, and a number of our church members support these efforts. Here are some specific events from 2024:

Our young people assembled Easter bags to be distributed to incarcerated youth.

Several members walked in the fundraising walk for Refugee Immigration Ministry.

We hosted a cooling station on the common for Emmaus bike ride fundraiser.

Our young people did a youth mission trip with Second Congregational Church of Boxford.

We delivered hundreds of pounds of produce from the Community Garden to Haven from Hunger.

We collected clothing and gift cards for Community Giving Tree’s Christmas distribution.

We attended galas held by five of our mission partners.

Our church members volunteered many hours at the Topsfield Fair.

Funding

The BOMO budget is about six percent of the total annual church budget. About 70% of the BOMO budget comes from the revenue earned by the church at the booth at the Topsfield Fair. The church’s continued participation at the fair is questionable due to a lack of volunteers in recent years, and the ability to maintain our Mission and Outreach efforts will require more funding from church member offerings in the coming years.

Joe Gibbons - Chair

NOMINATING COMMITTEE
Sheryl Knutsen, Chair; Barbara Barnes

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE SUBMITS THE FOLLOWING LIST OF CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2025

An * beside the number of 'years remaining' indicates nomination for election for 2025

(MEMBERS OF CHURCH COUNCIL)

(OFFICERS)

TITLE	NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/E-Mail	TERM	YEARS REMAINING
MODERATOR	Stephen Whelan	37 Kinsman Ln Topsfield	978-821-3233 swhelan37@verizon.net	2025	1*
VICE-MODERATOR	Mike Ierardi	133 Ipswich Rd Topsfield	978-887-8813 mdierardi@comcast.net	2025	1*
CLERK	Cornelia Griesshammer	78 Washington St Topsfield	978-887-7493 conny@griesshammer.org	2025	1*
TREASURER	Michael Miller	152 Fenno Dr Rowley 01969	617-645-1496 mwvmiller1219@gmail.com	2024	1*

BOARD CHAIRPERSONS

TRUSTEES	Guido Voss	74 Washington St Topsfield	617-501-5379 gvoss@itgboston.com	2025	1*
DEACONS	Jim Barnes	239 Ipswich Rd Boxford 01921	978-764-1583 Jhbarnes1@mac.com	2025	1*
COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATIONS	Nancy Nelson	21 Normandy Row Topsfield	978-887-6201 Nbnelson21@gmail.com	2025	1*
CHILDREN AND YOUTH	Amanda Rogers	34 Ipswich Rd Topsfield	339-224-8426 acollins79@gmail.com	2025	1*
MISSION AND OUTREACH	Joe Gibbons	545 Newburyport Tnpk, Unit 21 Rowley 01969	978-887-3478 Joe.gibbons@verizon.net	2025	1*

FINANCIAL POSITIONS

ASSISTANT TREASURER	NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/E-Mail	TERM	YEARS REMAINING
	Robert Knutsen	18 Brookside Rd Topsfield	978-887-6593 Robert.knutsen@comcast.net	2024	1
RECORDING SECRETARY	Charlie Wilkinson	One Nichols Way #3407 Groveland MA 01834	404-304-4683 ckwskw@hotmail.com	2024	1
FINANCIAL SECRETARIES	Stephen Whelan	37 Kinsman Ln Topsfield	978-887-9382 swhelan37@verizon.net	2024-2026	2
	Gary Gosbee	One Nichols Way #2113 Groveland 01834	978-764-9035 garygosbee@msn.com	2023-2025	1
	David Larson	109 North St Topsfield	978-887-2627 c.david.larson@gmail.com	2025-2027	3*

BOARD MEMBERS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES	NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/EMAIL	TERM	YEARS REMAINING
	Guido Voss	74 Washington St Topsfield	617-501-5379 gvoss@itgboston.com	2025-2027	3*
	Fred Parker	245 Rowley Bridge Rd Topsfield	978-815-3260 hmmmb@aol.com	2025-2027	3*
	Susie Read	51 Averill St Topsfield	978-873-6310 Susie@readfamilyhome.com	2024-2026 2 nd Term	2
	Ray Hodil	16B Laurel Hollow Rd Boxford 01921	978-887-2024 grhodil@outlook.com	2025-2027 2 nd Term	3*
	Kristin Palace	21 Winsor Ln Topsfield	978-500-7463 kmpalace@gmail.com	2024-2026	2
	Rob Hardy	86 Howlett St Topsfield	978-561-3719 Rhardy2721@gmail.com	2024-2026 3 rd Term	3*
	Michael Miller	152 Fenno Dr Rowley 01969	617-645-1496 mwmiller1219@gmail.com	Ex Officio	Ex Officio

BOARD OF DEACONS		NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/EMAIL	TERM	YEARS REMAINING
	John Szymanski	40 Garden St Topsfield	978-335-8043 jszymanski8@gmail.com	2025-2027 3 rd Term	3*	
	Ruth Bortzfield	22 Great Hill Dr Topsfield	978-887-2756 ruthbortzfield@gmail.com	2025-2027 2 nd Term	3*	
	Jim Barnes	239 Ipswich Rd Boxford 01921	978-764-1583 Jhbarnes1@mac.com	2025-2027 2 nd Term	3*	
	Jane Jones	10 Caldwell Farm Rd Byfield MA	617-257-9777 Janecrane1@verizon.net	2025-2027	3*	
	Sandy Whelan	37 Kinsman Ln Topsfield	978-887-9382 sandyw7@verizon.net	2023-2025	1	

BOARD OF COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATIONS		NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/EMAIL	TERM	YEARS REMAINING
	Meg Moran	107 Jackman St Georgetown 01833-1206	978-337-2345 mh.moran@comcast.net	2025-2027	3*	
	Nancy Nelson	21 Normandy Row Topsfield	978-887-6201 nbnelson21@gmail.com	2025-2027 3 rd Term	3*	
	Peter Lindholm	20 Topsfield Rd Boxford 01921	617-821-5379 peter.d.lindholm@gmail.com	2023-2025 2 nd Term	1	
	Ellie Losee	4 Birch Lane Topsfield	978-887-8089 Ellie.losee@gmail.com	2025-2027 2 nd Term	3*	
	Annie Wyatt	825 Beauhaven Lane Waxhaw, North Carolina 28173	917-972-5322 anniemwyatt@gmail.com	2023-2025	1	
	Dolly Mellvaine	6 Pheasant Ln Topsfield	978-790-2635 mciltopsfield@comcast.net	2024-2026	2	
	Sallie Bowling	9 Blueberry Ln Topsfield	508-932-4079 salliebowling@verizon.net	2024-2026	2	

		NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/EMAIL	TERM	YEARS REMAINING
BOARD OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH		Amanda Rogers	34 Ipswich Rd Topsfield	339-224-8426 acollins79@gmail.com	2025-2027	3*
		Priscilla Renda	18 Timber La Topsfield	978-887-3520 priscillafhenry@yahoo.com	2023-2025	1
		Julie Quinlivan	69 Washington St, Unit 6B Topsfield	508-843-3178 Quinlivanjulie79@gmail.com	2024-2026	2
		Joyce Talbot	67 Mill St Middleton MA 01949	508-527-1889 Joy48pluck@verizon.net	2024-2026	2
		Kim Love	55 Howlett St Topsfield	617-817-2000 kimlove@topsfildchurch.org	Ex Officio	Ex Officio

		NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/EMAIL	TERM	YEARS REMAINING
BOARD OF MISSION AND OUTREACH		Joe Gibbons	545 Newburyport Turnpike Unit 21, Rowley 01969	978-887-3478 joe.gibbons@verizon.net	2023-2025 2 nd Term	1
		Carolyn Nenart	13 Sawyer Ave Atkinson NH 03811	603-512-3980 Calsedu34@gmail.com	2024-2026	2
		Cathy Imboden	54 Kinsman Circle Topsfield	978-887-3613 cbimboden@gmail.com	2025-2027 2 nd Term	3*
		Mary Jelinek	216 Sage Lane Portsmouth NH 03801	978-376-6829 mary@jelinekwarren.net	2025	1

Overview

As we close 2024, the string of fortunate events that helped our financial results so much in 2023 did not re-occur in 2024 as we had noted. While there were no material items to list as we did in the annual report last year, we continue to be in a relatively good position going forward. However, the trends will continue to put pressure on our financials and how we can operate going forward. The anticipation of closing the deal on the Emerson Fields project will add a welcome cushion to our endowment as we become ever more reliant upon those funds year over year.

Income and Expense – 2024

We began 2024 with a budget of \$545,229 and ended at \$558,399. Our pledged income did not reach our budgeted level coming in at only 94% of our budget, which equated to \$17,608 shortfall in that category. Both total amounts pledged in 2024 and the number of total pledge units are down materially over the prior three year average (2021-2023) by over 23% and the percentage of pledge income to the overall budget continues its slide to the point where pledges for 2025 are projected to be less than half of the church's income for the first time.

Our other income category, which includes Joyful Noises (who continue to do well) rent, facilities rentals, and fairbooth also were below projections by \$3,989.

Property expenses are once again the major cause of concern as the costs associated with all facets of maintaining and utilizing our buildings continue to put pressure on our financial results. In fact, property expenses in 2024, which totaled over \$154,000 are up more than 34% over the prior three-year average (2021-2023). The board of trustees has made a conscious effort to address repairs that had been put on hold too long and to preemptively address issues before repair costs become prohibitive.

Staffing expenses, while still overwhelmingly being our largest expense item, continue to be in line relatively speaking as our staffing costs, while large, have been consistent and not grown materially over the prior three-year period.

While we should strive to do and share more both within and outside our community through our Missions and Outreach, we have not been able to add to the amounts that are shared in the community and beyond. In fact, all our boards continue to do their work with limited and generally flat budgets year over year, a pattern that has continued over the recent past.

Balance Sheet – 2023

Despite the pressures that we have noted, our balance sheet remains strong with above average returns to our portfolio to allow us to supplement our budget as needed.

	YE2024 (000s)	YE2023 (000s)
Fidelity Holdings	\$1,358.5	\$1,083.7
Watson Fund	\$220.1	\$277.9
Caleb Fields Account	\$167.5	\$53.5
Speakers Fund	\$108.1	\$102.7
Total Assets	\$1,729.4	\$1,544.2

Stewardship – 2025

Pledge units and budgeted pledge income continue to decrease on the trend line, but we are planning for an increase of 3.0% for 2025. Year over year pledges received so far are 2.1% higher than that of 2024. This would anticipate total pledges of approximately \$300,000 for 2025 when the stewardship program is completed.

Finance Committee Updates

The finance committee meets regularly with our advisor, Dave Bunker of Windsor Wealth Management. We review not only our performance but also the mix of investments along with our approach to maximize returns. We have put our advisor on notice of the need for more support from our endowment and other funds to balance our budget for 2025 so that he can plan accordingly regarding timing of trades and sales to raise the needed funds.

We are comfortable with the guidance we are receiving from David and the performance speaks for itself, so there are no changes planned to our investment approach.

When the fields project closes, the money that is currently in the fields account, which was walled off intentionally to ensure that we were not using those funds for day to day operations and invested conservatively with rolling six month T-bills, can move into our endowment to boost our overall endowment returns in 2025.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Many thanks go to those who make the financial aspects of the church work. While the treasurer gets to report, it is the work of our assistant treasurer, financial secretaries, recording secretaries, stewardship committee and the finance committee. One other item that does not technically make its way into the numbers is the amount of volunteer labor and the sweat equity that is provided all throughout the year for repairs and different projects that save the church significant amounts of money each year. I thank all of those involved!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Miller, Treasurer

NOTES