

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

First Congregational Church of Natick (UCC)



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WARRANT

WARRANT FOR THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NATICK

NATICK, MASSACHUSETTS 01760

FEBRUARY 2, 2025

GREETINGS. YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NATICK ARE TO MEET AND ASSEMBLE IN THE VESTRY OF THE MEETINGHOUSE ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2025, AT NOON. THEN AND THERE TO ACT ON THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES:

ARTICLE I To act on the report of the Coordinating Council and to elect such coordinators and officers of the Church as required, who shall serve until their successors are duly qualified and approved, or to otherwise act thereon.

ARTICLE II To grant money for the support of the ministry of this Church, for Benevolences and all other Church expenses, or otherwise act thereon.

ARTICLE III To authorize the Church Treasurer, under the direction of the Finance Team and Trustees, to use additional unrestricted endowment funds, not to exceed \$26,000, to meet any 2025 budget shortfall.

ARTICLE IV To authorize the Church Treasurer under the direction of the Church Finance Team to borrow up to \$10,000 to meet necessary expenses in anticipation of receipts or otherwise act thereon.

ARTICLE V To receive the reports of the Pastors, all Church Officers, Ministries, and Organizations, or otherwise act thereon.

ARTICLE VI To act on any business which may properly be presented for consideration by the Church at the Annual Meeting.

DULY POSTED IN SAID MEETINGHOUSE, JANUARY 26, 2025.

Catherine Mattera, Clerk

NOMINATING SLATE

The Coordinating Council recommends the following slate of candidates for elected office in the First Congregational Church of Natick in 2025. A list of the membership of Ministry Area Teams, including individuals not up for election this year, is included on the following pages for reference purposes.

Italicized names are new candidates for the position.

ANNUALLY ELECTED POSITIONS (Positions followed by an asterisk (*) have a seat on the Coordinating Council)	NOMINEE	TERM
Moderator*	<i>Sara Hanna</i>	2025
Vice Moderator*	<i>Wayne Szretter</i>	2025
Church Clerk*	<i>Catherine Utley-Mattera</i>	2025
Executive Financial Officer*	<i>Bill Ramage</i>	2025
Treasurer	<i>Heather Seiche</i>	2025
Assistant Treasurer	<i>Pam Weagraff</i>	2025
Board of Trustees Treasurer	<i>Heather Seiche</i>	2025
Curator	<i>Sara Hanna</i>	2025
UCC Delegate	<i>Kirsten McDonough</i>	2025
UCC Delegate	<i>David Coulter</i>	2025
Coordinating Council At-Large Member	<i>Jeanette Szretter</i>	

MINISTRY AREA LEADERS		
Each Ministry Area Team has one seat on the Coordinating Council and decides which Leader will attend Council meetings. More than one leader may attend but each Ministry Area has only one vote.		
TEAM	NOMINEE	TERM
Building & Grounds Team	<i>Doug Hanna</i>	2025
Board of Trustees Treasurer	<i>Heather Seiche</i>	2027
Board of Trustees	<i>Doug Hanna</i>	2027
Faith Formation	<i>Amy Corbin</i>	2027
Outreach Team	<i>Robin Clausen</i>	2025
Outreach Team	<i>Kirsten McDonough</i>	2026
Outreach Team	<i>Lane McDonough</i>	2026
Worship Team	<i>David Coulter</i>	2027

MINISTRY TEAM LEADERS AND MEMBERS

MINISTRY AREA TEAMS WITH A SEAT ON THE COORDINATING COUNCIL

The Coordinating Council recommends the names in boldface type for election at the 2025 Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Natick.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS	
Members	Role
Hank Szretter	Leader
Doug Hanna	Leader
Amy Foley	Leader
Randy Brewer	Member
Snow Brigade	Members
Worship AV Teams	Members
Keepers of the Clock	Members

FAITH FORMATION	
Members	Role
Rick Dubois	Leader
Amy Corbin	Leader
Michelle Brewer	Leader
Owl Instructors	Members
Godly Play Teachers	Members
Connect Teachers	Members
Youth Group Instructors	Members

OUTREACH	
Members	Role
Lane McDonough	Leader
Kirsten McDonough	Leader
Robin Clausen	Leader
Beth Garreau	Member
Jeff Clausen	Member
Jeanette Szretter	Member
Marge Roberson	Member
Mini Pantry Team	Members
Open Door Team	Members

WORSHIP	
Members	Role
David Coulter	Leader
Ric Ripley	Leader
Jeannine Keedy	Leader

CONGREGATIONAL CARE	
Members	Role
Sarabeth Guptill	Leader
Grace Seiche	Leader
Linda Champion	Leader

FINANCE TEAM	
Members	Role
Bill Ramage	Executive Financial Officer
Heather Seiche	Treasurer
Pam Weagraff	Member/Asst. Treasurer
John Gentry	Trustees Coordinator
Hank Szretter	Member/Building and Grounds Coordinator
Sara Hanna	Member
Wayne Szretter	Member

WELCOME TEAM	
Members	Role
Sharon Kirby	Leader
Jeannine Keedy	Leader
David Richardson	Leader
Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry	Member

BOARD OF TRUSTEES	
Members	Role
John Gentry	Coordinator
Heather Seiche	Treasurer
Doug Hanna	Member

MINISTRY TEAM LEADERS AND MEMBERS

ADDITIONAL MINISTRY TEAMS

STAFF RELATIONS	
Members	Role
Lisa Fusaro	Member
Janet Levesque	Member
Sara Hanna	Member (Moderator)

PASOTRAL RELATIONS TEAM	
Members	Role
Lisa Fusaro	Member
TBD	Member
Sara Hanna	Member (Moderator)

ONA TEAM	
Members	Role
Carolyn Williams	Leader
David Coulter	Member
Deede Bergeron	Member
Kirsten McDonough	Member
Gail Martin	Member
Sarallyn Keller	Member
Char Hannon	Member
Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry	Member

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM	
Members	Role
Randal Divinski	Leader
Deede Bergeron	Member
Robin Clausen	Member
Jeff Clausen	Member
Judy Dixon	Member
Sarallyn Keller	Member
Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry	Member

MUSIC TEAM	
Members	Role
Beth Canterbury	Member
Mark Dixon	Member
Sarabeth Guptill	Member
Sara Hanna	Member
Sarallyn Keller	Member

SCHOLARSHIP TEAM	
Members	Role
David Coulter	Member
Deede Bergeron	Member
Laura Gobron	Member
Sarallyn Keller	Member

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE

I want to thank the congregation for allowing me to serve as Moderator these past two years and for putting up with my sometimes erratic musings. I was Moderator another time, 20 years ago, and the highlight of that term was voting to become an Open and Affirming Congregation. Our ONA Covenant will likely remain one of the most significant events for FCC Natick (FCCN), although the past two have had their share of highlights.

To begin with, we called a new, settled pastor. We also completed renovations to the sanctuary and kitchen, updated and revised the Personnel Handbook, began revisions to our bylaws, hosted four concerts in our sanctuary – and several dinosaurs – and much more. Oh, and let's not forget "AC in the Vestry," which is either a great title for a folk-rock album or a children's book.

The most significant highlight, though, is something that can't be quantified or photographed. In fact, it might be better captured as a rock album, children's book, or epic poem. I'm talking about the renewed vibrancy at FCCN. There is a refreshing change in the air. Yes, it's notable that worship attendance is up, and the average sustainer pledge amount has increased. However, those metrics could just reflect a new sanctuary, pastor, or the economy's strength. A better indicator of this vibrancy is our greater engagement with the community (dinosaurs in the sanctuary, Natick Nights, Sound & Spirit), more joyful noise in the Prayground, and increased interest in the ministries and programs of FCCN.

This emerging energy is a testament to the efforts of FCCN's staff and ministry team members. FCCN operates essentially as a small non-profit organization. This vibrancy is all the more amazing because we don't rely on a large diocese or a worldwide church organization to provide financial or administrative support. We are grassroots. As such, we face the usual challenges of all small non-profits, like funding instability, volunteer recruitment, operating with minimal staff, regulatory requirements, and finding sustaining donors.

We are also responsible for maintaining a historic building in the center of town, celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2025.

It's a lot to balance. We are fortunate to have an experienced, skilled, and dedicated staff adept at running a small non-profit and lay leaders who bring skill and passion. We worship together and care for each other as a congregation, but we also have an important function within the Natick and Metrowest communities.

I am not downplaying FCCN's primary role, which is to connect us with the presence of God. For all of us committed to the mission of FCCN, this means providing faith-based education, inspiring worship, social activities, opportunities for service projects, challenging our assumptions about what is ethical and just, and advocating for the rights and dignity of all people. These are extremely important and are why I have been a member for 33 years and financially support this church. But to keep this going, we all have to recognize that, as members, we are committing to operating a small, vibrant, non-profit organization and all that entails.

I'm not going to list all of the great things that our staff and Ministry Teams accomplished this year. You can read all of that in the reports that follow. However, like last year, I want to thank Sarallyn Keller for keeping the flame of who we are as a congregation bright over these past years. Yes, it was a team effort, and that team is more robust now with Rev. Cindy on board. Together with the rest of our dedicated staff, they will continue to sustain the connections that make FCCN who we are, and we can expect the vitality of this church to continue.

I want to thank Randal Divinski for his years of service as church administrator and project manager for our website development. He helped us navigate a challenging interim period with confidence and grace.

I also want to thank Tom Foster for sharing his many talents. This past year, I had the opportunity to work with Tom on our Festive-All Concert. Tom was instrumental (some pun intended) in helping us organize the event. He also went above and beyond what is usually expected of a Music Director by offering Tai Chi classes after coffee hour this past year. Tom is a talented musician and composer, a caring teacher, and a most competent music director. Hopefully, we will have an opportunity for him to return to perform some of his original music in the future.

I will conclude, as I did last year, by stating the obvious: We are blessed to have Rev. Cindy leading us. With Cindy in the proverbial and literal corner office and Sara Hanna coming on board as Moderator, I am confident that she and our Ministry Teams are more than ready to take on the many opportunities and challenges that 2025 will present.

Peace, and see you in church,

Lane

REPORT OF THE CHURCH CLERK

Membership Information from 2024

Active members as of December 31, 2023	166
Adding to Active members during 2024	
New members	8
Reactivated	0
Confirmands	0
Total Additions	8
Deleted from Active membership during 2024	
Adults (moved to inactive)	0
Youth	0
Transferred Out	0
Deceased	0
Total Deletions	0
Total Active Members at the end of 2024	166
Total Deceased members (Active + Inactive) in 2024	0
Baptisms in 2024	4

Respectfully submitted,



Catherine Mattera, Church Clerk

PASTOR'S REPORT

For almost thirty years of ministry, my mantra has been “just stay out of the news.” The way our news media works these days, if you’re in the news it most likely means you’ve screwed up, dramatically. And when pastors / churches screw up, it’s not only bad for us, it’s bad for God. Too often the failings of religious communities have been seen as a God problem, rather than a human one.

Last July, we made the decision to disregard my mantra. Our commitment as an Open and Affirming congregation made us a target for vandals who took down our rainbow flags and banners. The vandals left behind their own flags and banners, and letters that condemned us for our declaration of God’s love for all people.

When the press found out, we contemplated saying “No comment,” worried about what the media would do with our words and actions. But we decided we needed to continue our commitment to being public, to make sure our queer neighbors know we will not be quiet about our affirmation and witness.

The result was more powerful than we could have imagined. Support poured in via letters, calls and emails. Local leaders promised to stand with us publicly, and helped us pull together a gathering at that week’s Natick Night. As a result, hundreds of people came to the Front Porch of FCC Natick to make art, don stickers, and join the declaration that Love is Louder.

This was just one of many key moments from the last year, including the public celebration of the sanctuary renovation, joyful baptisms and the welcoming of new members, the launch of our new website, worship services filled with laughter and tears.

But the vandalism and our response feels like a touchstone moment. We will answer God’s call to compassion and justice, even when there are voices trying to dissuade us. We will ground ourselves in God’s presence, knowing we are never alone. We will start from a place of connection and inspiration, rather than separation and criticism.

I don’t know what waits for us in the year ahead. I still don’t particularly want us to be in the news. But whatever 2025 might bring, God’s love holds us, and we will make meaning together. And any news we are part of will be Good News indeed.

SPIRITUAL VITALITY & CONGREGATIONAL CARE DIRECTOR REPORT

It is always a daunting task to capture the flavor of ‘a year in the life’... as the musical RENT reminds us, there are 525,600 minutes in a year – so many of those moments, we spend together in the life of this church community. When people comment on my job title, I am reminded that we are fortunate here at FCC Natick to have a certain energy and vitality in our gatherings – these small flickers of spirit that are coaxed and fanned into brighter flames when we gather together. We never forget that we are a covenant people, and we expect the Holy Spirit to show up when we are gathered. I recently read a piece by a colleague that struck a chord – it pointed to a foundational tenet of my faith – that “if abundance is attainable for some, it must be possible for all”. Our Spiritual Vitality programs have something in common; whether they are geared for children or youth or adults, these programs provide the opportunity to practice the radical idea of extravagant welcome and love – the possibility of abundance for all. In the coming year I will be looking for ways to imagine with you all a world, not only as it is, but as it could be—rooted in justice, love, and grace. We will continue to provide programs that give us opportunities to practice seeing the possibilities that radical love brings in our lives and how we can take part in spreading that abundance to all. Stay tuned as we face the challenges that are ahead of us.

Since I have the memory of our New Year Brunch fresh in my memory I’m going to start at the end and move backwards through the year in my reminiscences.

The New Year Brunch is one of my favorite traditions at FCC Natick – when we gather around intimate tables to share communion that morphs into a fuller, delicious meal. Not only does our brunch combine some of my favorite foods of bread, cheese and eggs but there is always lively chatter of friends catching up and sharing the details of our lives (including the recipes for that morning’s breakfast!). It is a full communion from the camaraderie of the set-up and clean-up crews to the way so many people pitch in to contribute to the brunch table. It reminds me of our monthly Lunch Bunch gatherings, where we enjoy the easy pleasure of conversation over a simple meal, and our monthly Pub Theology get-togethers, where we enjoy snacks and a drink around the table while sharing our faith and life experiences. All are welcome to pull up a seat at the table – come join us on the third Thursday of the month if you’re free at lunchtime or the first Wednesday of the month in the evening.

Advent 2024 was shaped around the artwork of quilts – The familiar stories and the sense of expectation and waiting that is always a part of Advent was here as well as an enfolding promise that we are all Beloved by God. Our children presented another fabulous, funny Christmas Pageant, *Bed, Bethlehem and Beyond* that reminded us that even the smallest acts of kindness can make significant differences in the world. An innkeeper finding a small corner of the barn for a young couple to rest was an enormous gift to the world. Once again, we packed the sanctuary to provide a wonderful audience for our amazing young cast.

This fall and early winter had us gathering for many special events in the sanctuary, fully enjoying the renovated space with the wider Natick community. There were concerts and giant dinosaurs and vigils – moments of joyful sound as well as shared grief – all the things for which the space is designed. We are learning how to share our building in a fuller way and looking for more opportunities to support the needs of Natick at the crossroads. The outside of the church continues to be a witness to our values – from rainbow flags and bunting proclaiming our wide welcome to all, to the almost 2500 purple flags planted on our front lawn to remember those people who died as a result of Opioid overdose last year.

I am honored to continue to serve on the board of Natick 180 as the representative from the Natick Interfaith Leaders. Natick 180 is Natick's Substance Use Prevention Coalition that works to support the town's residents with education on prevention as well as resources to find access to services related to substance use and mental health issues. This coalition is a testament to our town's commitment to the public health and well-being of people living and working in Natick. It is an honor to work with members of the health department, public safety and the schools to ensure that people in our town are aware of available resources to them. I encourage everyone to learn more about the work of this important coalition.

Our youth group joined forces this fall with St Paul's Episcopal Church to form 'The Crosswalk Youth Group'. We are trying this new model to gain the critical mass that we hope will encourage participation of our middle and high school teens. We are optimistic that the change will have a positive impact on our young people. Our Creation Care unit this fall got us off to a good start.

We have seen growth in our Godly Play and Connect groups each Sunday. The hottest real estate in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings is in the Prayground – filled with families and young children – providing children a comfortable space to engage before they head off to their Sunday morning programs.

We continue to encourage multigenerational activities like game days when folks can share their favorite board games with each other; movie nights when we share the magic of a good story on a giant screen while munching on popcorn; hiking local woods together; and spending an afternoon skating at the local rink. Although the food may be incidental at these events, there are usually delicious snacks to be shared and lots of laughter and conversation with one another. We filled the tent for both a Rally Day BBQ and a Celebration Sunday Picnic – food continuing to be a way of offering intergenerational fellowship.

An intrepid group of 18 adults attended a fall retreat at Craigeville Retreat Center on the Cape in November for some time away from our regular responsibilities and an opportunity to rest and relax together. As expected, the Cape Cod air restored us, and the fellowship gave us a renewed connection to one another. The impromptu conversations on the walks to and from meals as important as the planned activities and discussions. I'm always grateful for time spent on retreat!

I give thanks for the gifts of all the adults who gave of their time and talents this year in our programs for children and youth, for their creativity, spirit, faith, commitment and so much more! We couldn't do it without you!

Matt Basiliere	Chris Gentry	Ric Ripley
Deede Bergeron	Sarabeth Guptill	Mikal Rosendahl
Michelle Brewer	Sara Hanna	Rachel Schmitt
Beth Canterbury	Justin Kear	Heather Seiche
Robin Clausen	Janet Levesque	Alyssa Springer
Amy Corbin	Kirsten McDonough	Maura Shaughnessy
Mark Dixon	Lane McDonough	Jessica Treadwell
Gretchen Dubois	Rhonda Mulloy	Pam Weagraff
Rick Dubois	Bill Ramage	Kristine Wedde
Amy Foley	Gwyn Ramage	

I feel incredibly blessed to travel this road with all of you at First Congregational Church of Natick!

Peace and blessings to you,



Sarallyn Keller
Director of Spiritual Vitality and Congregational Care

FINANCE TEAM REPORT

TEAM: Bill Ramage (Executive Financial Officer), Heather Seiche (Treasurer), Pam Weagraff (Assistant Treasurer), Sara Hanna (at large), Greg Magarie (at large), Hank Szretter (Building & Grounds rep.), Wayne Szretter (at large), Doug Hanna (Building & Grounds rep.); and John Gentry, (ex officio - Trustee representative)

This is my eighth report to the congregation as your Executive Financial Officer. It has been an honor to witness the way FCC uses its resources to express the love and welcome of Christ, both within and beyond the congregation. As was the case with many churches, 2024 was a difficult year for the Finance Team. Fortunately, the church and the Finance Team continue to be blessed with many talented members who have invested their time and energy to serve the church on the Finance Team.

It seems every year there are new challenges facing the church, and 2024 was no exception. The 2024 budget approved at last year's Annual Meeting included a \$33,000 budget deficit. Fortunately, we were able to end the year with a smaller deficit of just over \$16,000. This nearly \$17,000 reduction in our deficit was due primarily to \$10,000 income from our after-school program with the YMCA that was not budgeted. We also benefited from nearly \$7,000 reimbursed to the operating fund from the Trustees for expenses related to the Capital Campaign. You can see all the details in the attached Treasurer's Report on the pages that follow this report.

The 2025 budget presents another challenge to the church. As you may have experienced at home, income usually grows slowly while expenses grow more rapidly. This is surely the case for FCC. While some of our income lines increased slightly, we also experienced the loss of \$11,000 from parking lot rent as the lease covering the parking lot we share with Middlesex Savings Bank was renegotiated downward beginning in January of 2025.

Expenses continue to increase at a faster rate than income. To continue to keep all our programs in place in 2025 we have had to increase our expenses to keep up with inflation and build in higher costs related to our newly renovated sanctuary and kitchen.

Another big change in the 2025 budget is the addition of an income line labeled "Virginia Clark Robinson Foundation". This foundation, established by Virginia Clark Robinson in the 1980's, has made payments to FCC ever since. In the recent past the income was directed to the Trustees, who have invested the funds for the benefit of the church. The Trustees and the Finance Team are recommending that these funds, in the amount of \$30,000, each year be included as income in the operating budget. This change enabled the Finance Team to recommend a budget for 2025 with a deficit of \$25,600. The Coordinating Council reviewed the approved budget and is asking the Congregation to approve it. The Finance Team will review our progress in 2025 on a quarterly basis and may recommend further action by Council or the Congregation to mitigate the projected deficit if we believe it's necessary.

In closing, I'd like to thank everyone in the church for their continued support of time, talents, and treasure. With your help and support the church is well positioned to continue to carry on God's work in the Natick community and beyond.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Ramage, Executive Financial Officer

***NOTE:**

**PLEASE SEE SEPARATE ATTACHED
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2024.**

BUILDING AND GROUNDS TEAM

The Building & Grounds Team is small and hard-working. In 2024 there was a lot of individual and group time spent working on projects. We simultaneously wrapped up the capital Kitchen and Sanctuary projects while addressing regular maintenance and management of this glorious church building and the land that has been gifted from generations before us.

We try to maintain our humor as the lists grow long and the issues come across our inboxes frequently. So please take part in the fun using this crossword puzzle as you learn about/are reminded of some of the many activities our team has been working on during 2024!

Capital & Other Related - ACROSS

- 2 _____ were cut and adjusted, for final arrangement for your tushy.
- 4 Final _____ were completed formalizing approvals from the Town (for specific building uses.)
- 8 These seminars were attended: 'Greening your House of Worship' and 'Faith-Based Organizations _____ & Security'.
- 11 Repairs were made to this type of stained glass window in sanctuary (rhymes with rent)
- 12 _____ tweaks and installation was witnessed using your ears
- 13 Reference interviews were held with other churches for these type of _____ projects
- 14 General _____ (ka-pow) list items were completed.
- 17 Musical Instrument that received pipe repair
- 19 Top of dais _____ was rebuilt (hint: used for storage & display)
- 20 Installations were completed for pendant and other _____ fixtures
- 23 Adjustable stainless-steel item set up in Kitchen
- 25 A map was created for the _____ and it was organized (more to come in 2025!)
- 26 Lighting _____ installation is being finalized and uses digital pad.
- 29 The flat _____ in the sanctuary was replaced.
- 30 Under warrantee, flashing was repaired in the _____.
- 34 Storage in the _____ was assigned and labeled.
- 37 Seating _____ were updated on plans for sanctuary use (hint: think Dracula).
- 40 Maintenance work for the _____ (located in the steeple) was coordinated.

General Building & Grounds - DOWN

- 1 Pest Control Plans were executed for both _____ and YMCA. (Despite all best attempts, a church mouse and a spider were also reported to be in attendance!)
- 2 Lease was negotiated and renewed for the _____ lot.
- 3 Assembled a mighty team called the "_____ Brigade" to help during storms.
(Thanks to Felix Alvarez, Matt Basilere, Jeff Clausen, Randy Divinski, Mark Dixon, and Bob Seiche!)
- 5 Vertical transporting cab AKA _____ was maintained and inspected.
- 6 We investigated into community _____ participation for church (think sun and energy).
- 7 New _____ lines and associated _____ s were added in Vestry and Sanctuary (ring ring!)
- 9 _____ lease was created and negotiated (hint: The Village People favorite)
- 10 Drain was cleaned out on the _____ roof. (Hint: Not angled, but 30 feet up there and difficult to get to!)
- 12 AV and other support was provided for public use of the Vestry (Whale!) and the _____ for multiple events.
- 13 We investigated and switched from staff-performed to contracting with a _____ service
- 15 This _____ unit (also on the above roof on #10 down) failed and is temporarily replaced with portable _____ units.
- 16 The ventilation _____ over the new stove was inspected/maintained.

General Building & Grounds - DOWN (continued)

- 18 These ____ battery units were replaced/repared: Basement, Lower Narthex, Elevator Lobby, Vestry, Toddler/ Crib Room)
- 21 Grounds were kept alive and moist by managing this ____ vendor.
- 22 Energy was saved by adding __ lights behind the King Window.
- 24 __wreath was repaired and managed on Natick's front porch.
- 25 A tent was constructed indoors and placed in the ____ until the above repairs were completed.
- 27 Additional _engineering investigations of basement and attic.
- 28 Repairs were completed multiple times in at least 6 locations on the steep _____.
- 29 Energy was also saved by adding ____ to the exterior doors (hint: also aquatic animals!)
- 31 Randy ____ illuminated the outside of the church for the holidays! (Will be planning for a *permanent* solution in the future!)
- 32 We investigated into uneven _in 1st and 3rd floor Classrooms. (Hint: opposite of chilling)
- 33 Tap Van Geel and son Sam took time (hint) to adjust the four ____ in the steeple.
- 35 Energy savings was explored by investigating insulating the _____.
- 36 The filter was replaced on the bottle ____.
- 38 Wayfinding _were added to exterior of building to help find accessible entrance (more permanent versions to come!)
- 39 Achieve ____ was renewed. (hint: Rhymes with Peace)
- 41 Broken ____ were replaced in Vestry (more power to ya!)

Thank you for playing our game!

Our 1875-constructed building will continue to require maintenance and capital to stay healthy and functional for the many exciting uses planned.

We do not expect that 2025 will be any less active than 2024, and we welcome anyone who would like to become part of our team!

With warmest wishes to all for a productive and FUN 2025!

The FCC Building & Grounds Team,

Randy Brewer

Amy Foley (Lead)

Doug Hanna (Lead)

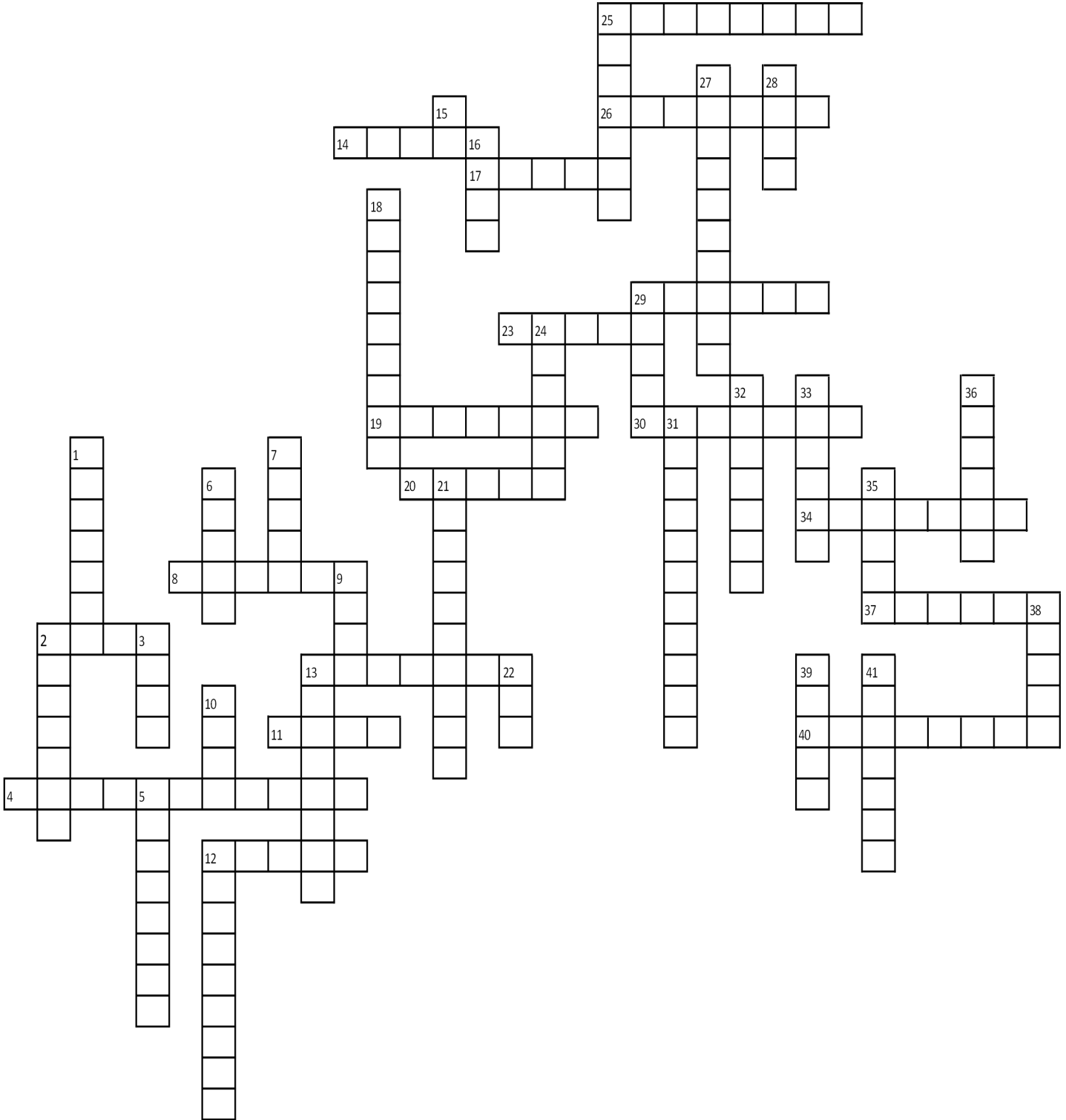
Alyssa Springer

Hank Szretter (Lead)

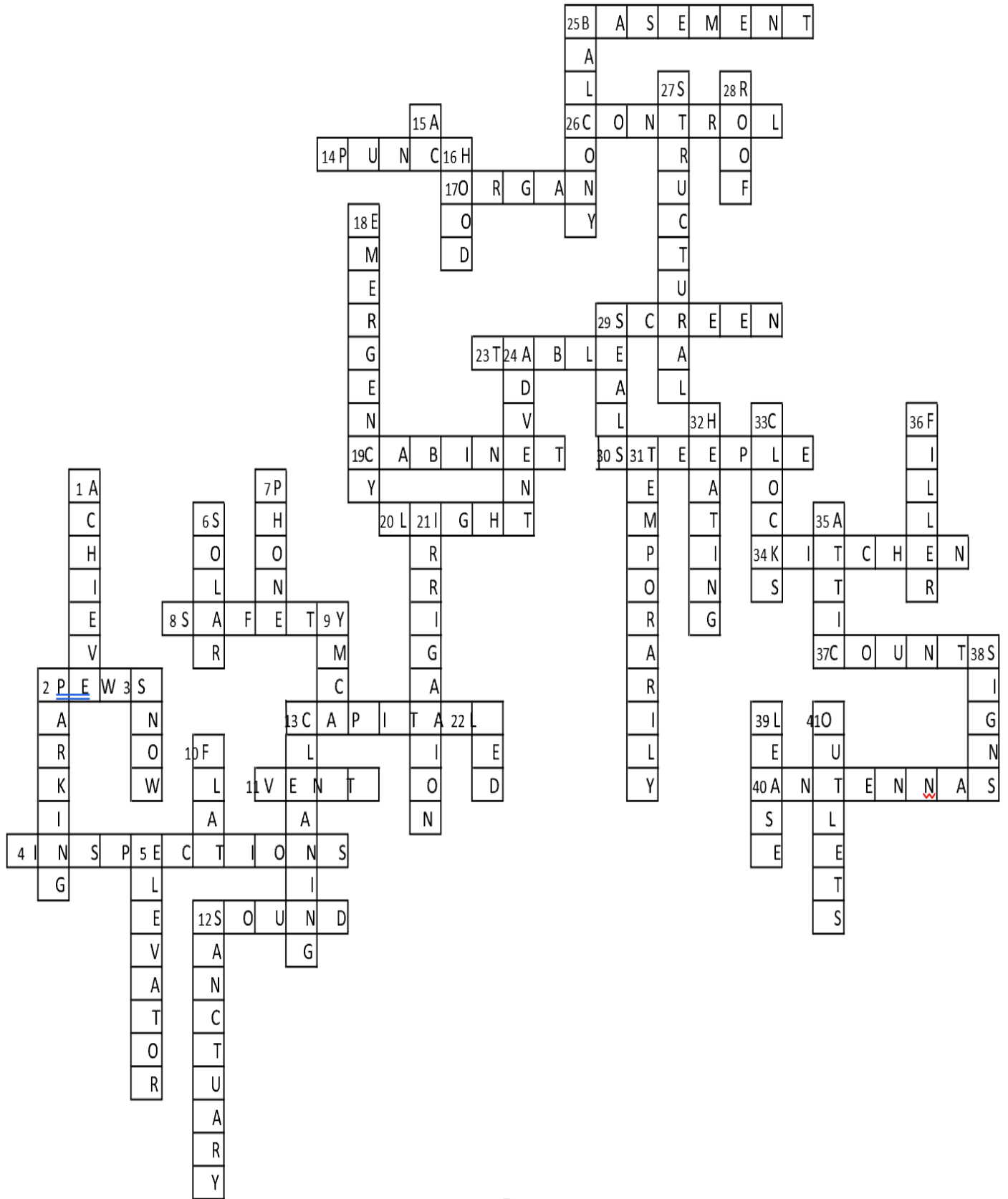
Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry (ad-hoc)

Special Mention: Wayne Szretter (capital finance)

Annual Report 2024, Building & Grounds



Annual Report 2024, Building & Grounds Team



BYLAWS

The Bylaws Review Task Force has been working on a review of FCCN bylaws since 2023. The team has reflected at length on church structure, communication, authority, and transparency. They've thought about not only what the church is like today, but what it might need in the future. The conversations have been rich and far-reaching!

The team is close to having a draft proposal to share. They will bring it to Council, Ministry Teams, and the whole congregation to discuss. Input will be incorporated, and a final version will be brought forward for a congregational vote. The timeline isn't clear, but the goal is late spring.

Please stay tuned to provide your input into this important process. Many thanks!

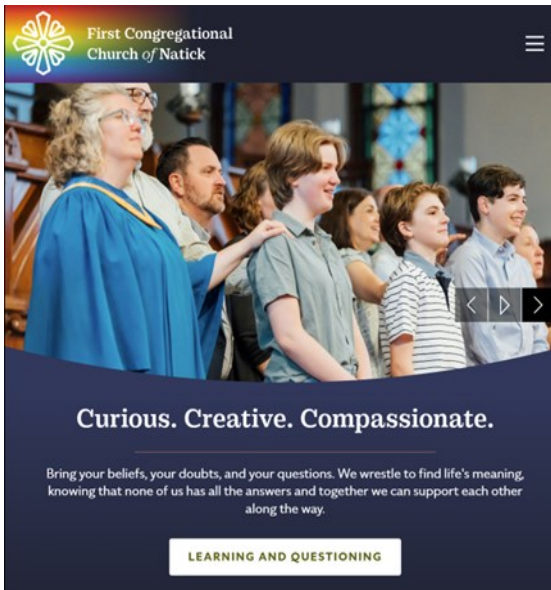
Bylaws Review Task Force:

David Coulter (chair), Robin Clausen, Sara Hanna, Janet Levesque, Lane McDonough, Jeanette Szretter, Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Task Force

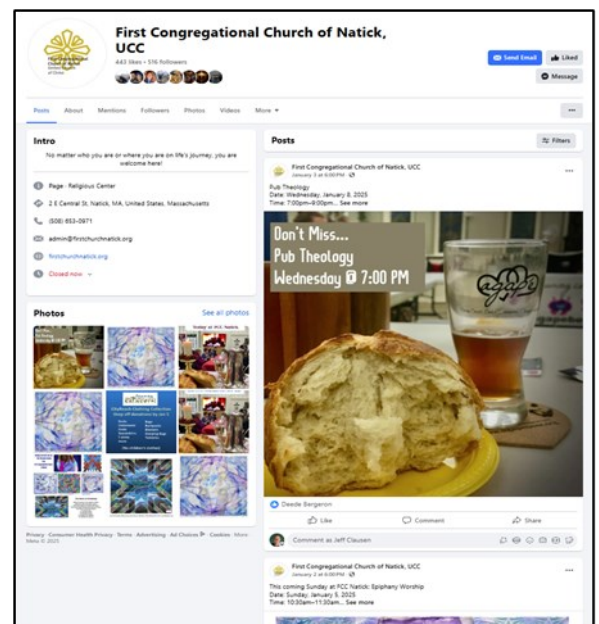
Deede Bergeron, Jeff Clausen, Robin Clausen, Randal Divinski, Judy Dixon, Saralyn Keller, Gail Martin, Cindy Worthington-Berry



The greatest achievement of 2024 for the Communications Task Force was the launch of the new church website in July. The site creates at once a resource for members and friends of our congregation *and* an introduction to all that we are for newcomers to view. Church members are familiarizing themselves with useful aspects of the site, like the Latest News, Calendar, and the Member Dashboard. Metadata allows us to track external visits to the site and shows that traffic increases in response to community news related to the church as well as external publicity about our vibrant calendar of community events.

In addition to the website launch, the group set out to create systematized procedures for promoting church events and programs. Deede Bergeron took on planning a robust schedule of weekly social media posts on Facebook and Instagram. Linking posts to the events page on our website simplified the process by instantly providing imagery and a destination for the curious and interested to learn more.

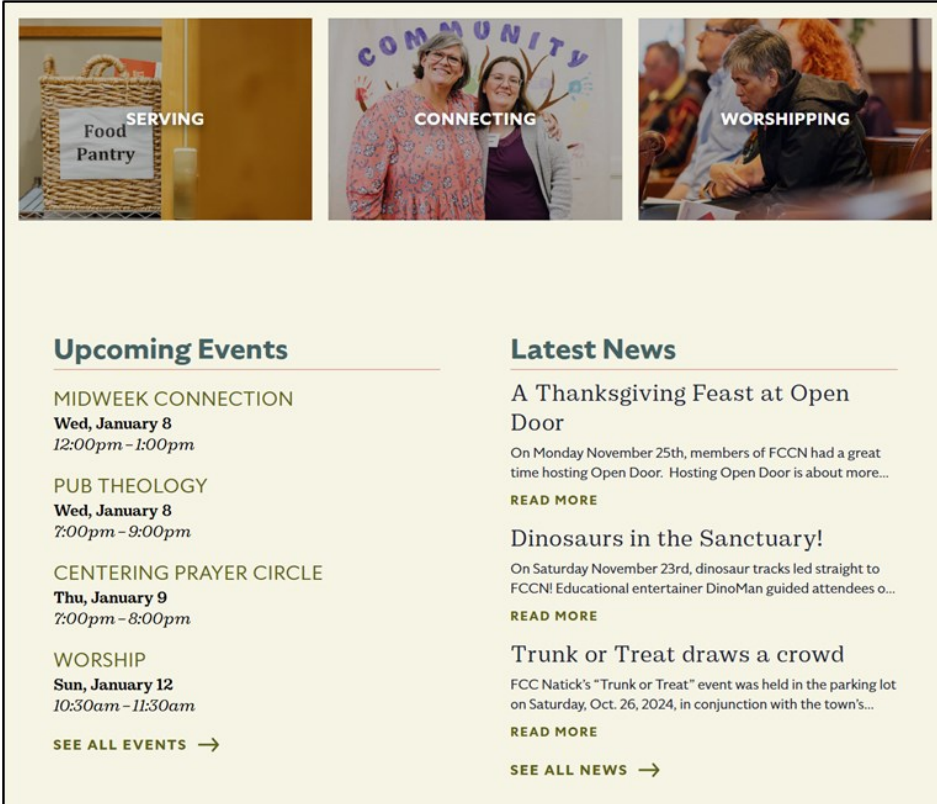
The group has also created a process for members to submit information on upcoming events in order to engage the church office staff and communications task force members in promoting activities via the church website, the Link emails, the worship bulletin and slides, and social media posts on the church accounts. In addition to collecting event details, the online materials also provide information to support event sponsors in promoting their programs via other avenues, like local media and flyers. The team looks forward to familiarizing church members with these communications tools in 2025



The task force also took on ad hoc projects to support communications and public relations as needed and feasible throughout the year. These efforts included:

- Promotional postcard featuring member photos to promote FCC ahead of the Festive -All music event
- December card promoting the church's Advent season
- Invitations and messaging to support the Bring-a-Friend Breakfast on Pageant Sunday
- Promotion of community events of the Welcome Team, Outreach, and other groups on social media

The Communications Task Force also experimented with drafting post-event stories to highlight program successes on our website, where pictures and words partner to convey a little more about our faith community.



SERVING
Food Pantry

CONNECTING

WORSHIPPING

Upcoming Events

MIDWEEK CONNECTION
Wed, January 8
12:00pm - 1:00pm

PUB THEOLOGY
Wed, January 8
7:00pm - 9:00pm

CENTERING PRAYER CIRCLE
Thu, January 9
7:00pm - 8:00pm

WORSHIP
Sun, January 12
10:30am - 11:30am

[SEE ALL EVENTS →](#)

Latest News

A Thanksgiving Feast at Open Door
On Monday November 25th, members of FCCN had a great time hosting Open Door. Hosting Open Door is about more...
[READ MORE](#)

Dinosaurs in the Sanctuary!
On Saturday November 23rd, dinosaur tracks led straight to FCCN! Educational entertainer DinoMan guided attendees o...
[READ MORE](#)

Trunk or Treat draws a crowd
FCC Natick's "Trunk or Treat" event was held in the parking lot on Saturday, Oct. 26, 2024, in conjunction with the town's...
[READ MORE](#)

[SEE ALL NEWS →](#)

The third quarter of the year found the communications group navigating transitions. First, they sought to celebrate and redefine the work of Randal Divinski. Randal spearheaded the collaborative effort to develop the new church website with Theory One Design while simultaneously serving as the temporary church office administrator. With the completion of the website rollout and the onboarding of a new, permanent office admin, the team was grateful that Randal opted to remain in the group as a volunteer member. His deep knowledge of the website continues to support the work of the task force and the church staff.

Additionally, the fall brought turnover in members of the task force itself, as Gail Martin departed to focus her energies on other ministry areas, and Robin Clausen joined the team. Deede Bergeron, who had previously served adjacent to the group, opted in as a full member of the task force, which optimizes coordinated communications across platforms.

Looking ahead, the communications task force has identified volunteer opportunities that would support their work and increase capacity to stay on top of emerging needs. These include:

- A social media partner to work with Deede in coordinating posts to the church website.
- Adjunct photographers interested in taking and sharing (mainly candid) shots of church events.
- An archivist to support the organization of a photo library, including photos that were captured as part of the website design.

The task force is poised to oversee the management of outdoor sign posting requests by community friends and partners. This will entail developing policies and procedures to facilitate and track the use of our strategically located corner lawn to promote missionally aligned and compatible activities in the wider community.

Finally, the Communication Task Force looks forward to its acceptance as an official and ongoing FCC Ministry Team when updates to the church bylaws later in 2025 make that possible. As a group whose mission is to share information and promote community within and outside the church, they know that their listening, input, and collaboration are integral to FCC's growth and future.

In service,
Judy Dixon

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Team Members

Sarabeth Guptill, Coordinator; Linda Champion, Sarallyn Keller, Grace Seiche

As we reflect on the past year, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Congregational Care Ministry Team. Our team has had the privilege of providing care to individuals and families in various ways.

- We provided comfort food to individuals, both in our church family and the greater community.
- We delivered Christmas Poinsettias.

As we move into the coming year, we remain committed to growing and strengthening this ministry.

Thank you so much to the team members who served with me this year! I truly appreciate your willingness to always lend a helping hand.

Warmly,
Sarabeth

CURATOR

In my first year as Curator, I have focused on learning about the historic documents and artifacts in the Church's possession. I thank our previous Curator, Steve Evers, for his generosity in sharing his extensive knowledge with me.

In the upcoming year, as part of our ongoing efforts to keep the Church basement organized, I hope to go through various documents and other materials that have accumulated over the years, to assess what should be saved and what can be discarded. In addition, 2025 is the 150th anniversary of the completion of our current Church building, and I am looking forward to celebrating our long presence in the center of Natick.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Hanna, Curator

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Mission & Outreach Team: Beth Garreau (Co-Coordinator), Jeff Clausen (Co-Coordinator), Robin Clausen (Co-Coordinator), Gail Martin, Kirsten McDonough, Lane McDonough, Marge Roberson, Jeanette Szretter

In 2024, the Mission and Outreach Team continued to identify ways to express our congregation's commitment to an active faith through opportunities for engagement and connection both within and beyond the walls of our church.

Outreach Activities

Members of FCCN hosted Natick's **Open Door** four times in 2024. Hosting Open Door is about more than just serving food. It's about coming together as a community to share in the joy of a good meal and meaningful connections. FCCN hosted in February, April, September, and November this year. Next year's dates for the first half of the year are January 20th, March 17th, and May 19th. If you are interested in working with the crew, please email kirstenmcd26a@gmail.com.



The Outreach Team began coordinating with the mini-pantry team at Common Street Spiritual Center in April 2022 to support the **Common Street Mini Pantry**. This year, we ran several food drives and allocated more than \$500 towards purchasing non-perishable food, toiletries, diapers, and feminine hygiene products for the pantry. Members are encouraged to bring food items and toiletries to the church anytime, especially during food drives.

We also supported **A Place to Turn** and **Natick Service Council** this past year. A Place to Turn sponsors the **Diaper Project**. The Diaper Project helps to support MetroWest families to keep their babies clean, dry, and healthy. The Outreach Team sponsored three diaper drives in 2024 and donated \$110 towards the purchase of diapers.

For more than thirty years, the **West Virginia Workcamp** has provided generations of church members with a hands-on mission opportunity to directly assist those whose homes need repairs. In June, a crew of 15, ranging from high school students to adults, attended the **Cabell/Lincoln County Workcamp** in West Virginia for seven days. This rewarding and life-changing mission trip helps make Appalachian homes "warm, dry, and safe." In 2024, the Outreach Team donated \$900 to the West Virginia Workcamp to support this decades-long mission.

The Outreach Team also supported **Angels of Hope (AoH)** with a donation of \$900 in 2024. Fay DeAvignon founded AoH to provide medical, psychological, and social care to orphans in Uganda. It support clinics staffed by nurses with skills and experience who work not just to care for the immediate needs of the patients but also to understand their psychological needs, watch for signs of physical abuse and/or long-term illnesses, and to maintain accurate files for each patient. For more information, contact: Fay DeAvignon at faydea@aol.com.



Our 2024 **Souper Bowl** food drive raised \$3,458.35 to purchase food, clothing, and personal care items for the **Natick Service Council**. For the second year, the Penguins from south of Route 135 won the coveted **Progresso-Campbell Trophy**.

As we have in the past several years, the Outreach Team invited all members to become a part of our Outreach efforts through a **Reverse Offering**. In February, the Outreach Team distributed eighty \$5 bills to congregation members. Members receiving the Reverse Offering were asked to use it in service of others. This could include buying someone's coffee, supporting local organizations such as the Natick Service Council, and even worldwide efforts to address poverty. Members were asked to post on social media how they used their Reverse Offering as a way to encourage others to be more giving.

The Outreach Team elected to split the annual **Easter Offering** between the UCC's **One Great Hour of Sharing** and **Southborough Safe Spaces**. One Great Hour of Sharing is a worldwide effort to combat injustice through funding and hands-on projects. Southborough Safe Spaces is a local non-profit that provides spiritually inclusive support and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ youth and their families. Our **Christmas Offering** supported the **MetroWest Free Medical Program**, which provides healthcare access for the uninsured or insufficiently insured.

Coffee Hour Chats

Outreach hosted several inspiring and informative **Coffee Hour Chats** this year. In February, we hosted **Southboro Safe Spaces**, who provide spiritually inclusive support and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ youth. Marge Roberson spoke to us about immigration and the effort by **Natick is United** to get the town of Natick's Immigrant Policy passed this past year. In March, Jill Rabideau spoke about her involvement with the **National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls**, which advocated for the \$50 million the state allocated for a new women's prison to be used instead to free currently incarcerated women, creating transition programs for them to live responsibly in the community.

In April, Lino Covarrubias, with **Jewish Family Services**, provided a summary of the history of JFS and the programs they now support. JFS welcomes refugee families from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Ukraine, Haiti, Syria, and Algeria. They need help from the local

community with transportation, employment networking, ESL tutoring, and housing support. In June, Nick Jennings spoke about **SMOC (South Middlesex Opportunity Council)**. SMOC provides advocacy, education, and more to build a community of support and inclusion to combat poverty. He also discussed the **Metrowest Free Medical Program** and the **Metrowest Care Connection**. In October, we heard from the Stewardship/Generosity Team. In November, Jeff Clausen shared updates about the **Guatemala Partnership** and the February delegation.



One of the Outreach Team's goals this year was to recognize the work of organizations that participated in the Coffee Hour Chats with a donation. This year, we contributed to Natick is United, JFS Metrowest, the Metrowest Free Medical Program, and the Guatemala Partnership. In addition, 50% of the Easter Offering in 2024 was donated to Southboro Safe Spaces, and 100% of the Christmas offering went to the Metrowest Freed Medical Program.

The Outreach team plans to continue hosting Coffee Hour Chats in 2025 and invites congregation members to identify organizations or interests to spotlight.

Guatemala Partnership

In 2024, our congregation continued to deepen its connections with the indigenous community of Santa María Tzejá, Guatemala. In February, members of our congregation joined the Guatemala Partnership's delegation to Santa María Tzejá, along with members of the Needham Congregational Church and the Ainsworth UCC church in Portland, Oregon.



Through the Guatemala Partnership, our congregation is working in solidarity with Santa María Tzejá to support education and development in the community. As part of this effort, we also seek to unlearn stereotypes held by the global north toward the global south and to bring home the impact that US history and policy have had on other parts of the world. During the February delegation, over meals in family homes and meetings with community leaders, members of our congregation discussed and explored many complex societal issues ranging from environmental and social justice to education, health, and welfare, as well as immigration.

For several years, the Outreach Team has provided financial support for a church member to join the delegation to Santa María Tzejá. In 2025, we are supporting Sam van Geel, who will join the delegation next February. For more information, contact clausenj@gmail.com.

Community building through the Guatemala Partnership extends beyond in-person delegations. In June, our church participated in the 3rd Annual **Farm-a-thon Fundraiser** at the **Natick Organic Farm** in South Natick. The event was a success with 13 volunteers (six from FCC Natick and seven from Needham Congregational Church). All funds raised supported education and development in Santa María Tzejá, while all physical work benefited the farm. It was a great way to support our friends both globally and locally.



Immigration

For several years, the plight of immigrants and refugees moving to Metrowest Boston has been a top priority of our Outreach activities. Immigration impacts many areas, including housing, food insecurity, health care, employment opportunities, and efforts to integrate immigrants into our communities. Our Federal immigration policies make it difficult for refugees, who are often escaping violence and poverty, to find the legal and humanitarian assistance they need.

In November 2023, the Outreach Team hosted the first meeting of the **Caring Coalition of Metrowest**. This initial meeting included six local area churches, and the membership and scope of our activities continue to expand. That first gathering highlighted the plight of refugees in our area. In 2024, our involvement with the Hartford Street Presbyterian Church, Christ Lutheran Church, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), and other faith communities in our area has grown significantly in support of immigrants housed locally.

The work of the Caring Coalition of Metrowest and the FCCN Outreach Team includes food and clothing donations to newly arrived Haitian immigrants and financial contributions for those arranging and providing housing for immigrant families. It includes providing rides to doctors' appointments, shopping, or work. It also includes assisting with applications for Temporary Protective Status (TPS), efforts that the Outreach Team has worked with the **Worcester Area Mission Society (WAMS)** by providing snacks for families during day-long application sessions.

In September, FCCN hosted Judy Jackson and her film "Where Can We Live in Peace?" The screening, in association with the Guatemala Partnership, was one of the first community-wide events held in our newly renovated sanctuary and brought together a diverse group of individuals and groups active in immigration policy and refugee support. In addition to a Q&A with the filmmaker, community members for the Caring Coalition of Metrowest who



are involved in housing newly arrived immigrants spoke about what they have been doing and the opportunities available for others to assist.

The post-film discussion focused on three key areas of response to the humanitarian crisis and highlighted locally led efforts:

1. **Local Assistance:** Efforts within our local community to help migrants who have already arrived in the U.S. with a focus on providing resources and support for their integration.
2. **Border Support:** Programs aimed at assisting migrants during their journey, with a focus on making the process less dangerous, will also be highlighted.
3. **Cross Border Development Support:** Initiatives that seek to address the root causes of migration by supporting education and development in countries such as Guatemala.

The event also included a photo exhibit by local photographer **Rolf Larson**, a Natick resident who traveled to El Paso, Texas, to document the complexities of the border crisis.

One of the offshoots of the Caring Coalition of Metrowest has been the creation of **HomeBridge of Natick: Opening Doors for Immigrant Families**. The goal of HomeBridge is to provide support to Immigrant families in Natick. Community members of HomeBridge supported five families in 2024, assisting them with TPS applications, setting up Mass Health, doctor's appointments, fun activities, finding apartments, learning English, getting furniture, getting jobs, transportation to and from work, applying for asylum, and educating the community. For more information, contact: kirstenmcd26a@gmail.com.

Our congregation also expressed support for the recently adopted Natick Immigrant Welcoming Policy. A committee of Natick residents, including Myriam Hernandez Jennings and Marge Roberson, developed this policy over the course of over three years.

2025 Mission & Outreach Initiatives

In 2025, the Mission & Outreach team will continue to find ways to connect our congregation with the needs of our community. Outreach will host additional Coffee Hours Chats, with Angels of Hope kicking off the series in January. In addition to addressing ad-hoc needs and requests, we will continue to support the Common Street Mini Pantry, our friends and partner families in Guatemala, and we will focus on the important work of building and sustaining caring relationships between organizations, religious communities, neighborhoods, towns, and the people we hope to serve through the Caring Coalition of Metrowest and other means. We also hope to bring back the Reverse Offering during Lent and will spearhead again the community yard sale in the Spring.

2024 Contributions

As is our custom, the Outreach team made meaningful contributions to organizations that are important to our members and our community. Below is the list of all contributions made in 2024:

ALLOCATIONS	
Amount	Organization
\$900	Angels of Hope
\$110	A Place to Turn (Diaper drive)
\$50	Natick Center Associates (annual dues)
\$1,000	Family Promise of Metrowest
\$100	Christ Lutheran Church (bus to GBIO rally in Boston)
\$2,000	Partners for Guatemala
\$900	Hartford Street Presbyterian Church (HomeBridge)
\$200	JFS of Metrowest
\$600	Needham Congregational Church (Judy Jackson stipend)
\$300	Last Hope K9
\$100	Congregational Library and Archives
\$550	Mini-Pantry Items
\$300	Metrowest Free Medical Program
\$150	Natick 180
\$300	Natick Community Organic Farm
\$150	Natick Is United
\$277	Open Door Reimbursements
\$1,200	Guatemala Delegation Scholarship
\$400	Reverse Offering
\$262	Hoops for Homework (School Supplies)
\$300	Tijuana Shelter
\$200	World Central Kitchen
\$900	West Virginia Workcamp
\$251	Yard sale expenses
\$11,500	TOTAL

Respectfully submitted,

The Members of the Outreach Team

MUSIC MINISTRY

The Music Program consists of all those who make music happen here at FCC, which goes far beyond just playing or singing it. It includes making sure our instruments are maintained and remain in good working order. Importantly, it also includes the work of volunteer individuals who help out in various ways, like coordinating events and concerts. Here are some highlights from 2024:

- In October, we held the 'Festive-All' Community Celebration Concert to celebrate our newly renovated sanctuary. We saw and heard an eclectic mix of styles from varied ensembles and soloists, and dancers: The Robinwood Ensemble, Unfinished Cabaret, the Greater Boston School of Dance, Beth Canterbury, the Senior Choir, among others. We also heard the world premiere of a piano solo, "Boring Waltz." An event on such a scale took some serious planning and coordinating from multiple parties—thanks to Cindy, Lane, and Beth! Thanks to Randy Brewer as well, who is ever-ready to step in and handle the tech needs for events like this.
- In late October, we kept up our annual *Silent Movie Night* tradition, where the always impressive Rob Humphreville performed live, improvised piano accompaniment to the 1928 comedy, *The Cameraman*. Again, thanks to Randy for tech setup!
- In November, we hosted a concert of the MetroWest Chamber Players, who performed some classical and contemporary chamber music in various combinations of voice, violin, clarinet, French horn, and piano. The lighting operator (myself) took note of the truly professional, concert-hall-like ability to set and adjust the lighting.
- For the first time since before the pandemic, we were able to host a full brass quartet—two trumpets and two trombones—for the Christmas Eve worship service, lead by the illustrious Daryl Robbins. Besides rendering a rather rousing rendition of a range carols, they maximized holiday joy by joining together with the organ and congregation on hymns.
- In addition to her official role as soprano section soloist, Beth Canterbury, in a volunteer capacity, helped reinvigorate the Children's Choir by coordinating, rehearsing, and directing performances in worship.

FCC has a number of instruments. Most used are the organ and the three pianos in the sanctuary, vestry and choir room. The pianos need regular tuning, and occasional repair. Our longtime piano tuner/technician retired in 2024, and we've located a new one. The organ, being a more complex instrument, tends to need more maintenance. This year, under the category of normal maintenance, we had several pedal notes that stopped working fixed. Under the category of uncommon maintenance, three things arose:

- In recent years, I had noticed the reed stops (there are three: the oboe, the cornepean, and the trumpet) failing to stay in tune. On the recommendation of Spencer Organ we had them cleaned. A deep cleaning like this is necessary every 20 to 30 years.
- Several keys on the Great manual swelled up badly for reasons unknown and were taken to the shop to be redone.
- The 'Great to Great 4' coupler stopped working earlier in the year. Spencer determined that a circuit board needed to be replaced and a new one was installed in January, 2024.

As of this writing, the organ is in complete working order. A note of thanks to Doug Hanna, who helped coordinate with Spencer during some of the more involved repair periods.

The choir is holding steady at 12 members: 4 sopranos, 2 altos, 3 tenors and 3 basses. As always, I put out a call to **join the choir!** Our choristers really deserve not just thanks, but a round of applause for all they do: not just learning their music, but also being flexible, being available for important Sundays, and sometimes, for a brave few, even singing their part solo when the rest of the their section is out of town! Also, a special thanks to those non-choristers who've stepped in when needed: Mark for this energetic percussion accompaniment on special anthems, and Jeannine for when we were short on sopranos Christmas Eve and other times.

2025 will be a time of transition for the music program. At the start of February, I'll be leaving my post as director of music to move on to other musical endeavors. I'm deeply grateful for all the support and friendship I've received over the years and wish you all the best in the future. You already know this, but the positivity and warmth at FCC is truly special. Thank you for a wonderful 10 years!

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Foster
Director of Music

OPEN & AFFIRMING (ONA) TASK FORCE

ONA Team Members:

Carolyn Williams, Charlotte Hannon, David Coulter, Beth Canterbury, Deede Bergeron, Kirsten McDonough, Sarallyn Keller, Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry

2024 brought far more than usual the extremes of joy and pain. We continued our 20th anniversary celebration, created rainbow bags from upcycled flags and had an incidence of vandalism that targeted our ONA welcome.

Over two Saturdays, we created market totes and small zippered bags from the cache of “experienced” PRIDE, trans and mental health awareness flags which had flown at FCCN. These bags have been sold during coffee hours and various events, raising funds for ONA, with a small amount left for 2025. Working on this project were: Gretchen and Kathryn DuBois, Sarallyn Keller, Pam Lathwood, Kirsten McDonough, Sara Hanna, Beth Canterbury, Isla van Geel, Lynn Carriker, Heather Seiche, Jeannine Keedy, Char Hannon, Gail Martin and Carolyn Williams. We were led by Natick fabric artist Helen Bellomo.

Our church was vandalized overnight July 28; our flags on Main St and the banner on East Central Street were taken down and pamphlets strewn about that made it clear that our wide welcome was what made us a target. We are leaning into our welcome, believing Love is louder than hate. Please see Rev. Cindy’s report for more details.

ONA Sunday was celebrated on October 13 with a focus on the indigenous population and their history in Natick which is entwined with FCCN history. Keith Larsen, musician and singer/song-writer brought his music from Ohio and the WVWC. The work of Rolf Larson, Natick photographer, was displayed. Rolf’s focus was the conditions and the people arriving on our southern border.

FCCN was represented at OUTMetrowest’s trivia night by our team: Lane McDonough, Alycia McDonough, Jake Cardinal, Deede Bergeron, Stephen Williams and Carolyn Williams. Marching in the Boston Pride Parade with the Plymouth Church of Framingham were Sarallyn Keller, Deede Bergeron, Randal Divinski and Carolyn Williams. The ONA team has accepted the challenge of managing the outdoor messaging through the flags, banners and front door wreaths.

FCCN was represented at OUTMetrowest’s trivia night by our team: Lane McDonough, Alycia McDonough, Jake Cardinal, Deede Bergeron, Stephen Williams and Carolyn Williams. Marching in the Boston Pride Parade with the Plymouth Church of Framingham were Saralyn Keller, Deede Bergeron, Randal Divinski and Carolyn Williams. The ONA team has accepted the challenge of managing the outdoor messaging through the flags, banners and front door wreaths.

Our budget of \$1500 was used for the following:

\$479	Bags from Flags: labels, donation to SOAR Natick in honor of Helen’s contributions to the bag project
\$413	New flags: PRIDE, trans & Mental Health Awareness
\$207	Donation: OUTMetrowest
<u>\$325</u>	Banners, signage, wreaths
\$1,424	Total

By agreement with the Finance Committee funds raised through the bag sales will be used to supplement the ONA budget. Current gross proceeds are \$865.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous blessing to our ONA work made by our former Associate Pastor, John Lilly. He will be remembered with love for his personification of Christ’s extravagant welcome, creation of movie nights, discussion groups and his steadfast support of ONA as a vital mission of FCCN. Thank you, John.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn M Williams
ONA Task Force Chair

GENEROSITY TEAM

Generosity Team (2025 Campaign)

In 2024 we selected *Imagine Together* for our 2025 campaign theme and immediately imagined together a new name for our team ...the GENEROSITY team was born, retiring the legacy Stewardship moniker. We are indeed a generous community as the facts and figures below will attest. Building our generosity is now a full year effort as we remind ourselves in weekly worship that all our ministries and initiatives are made possible because of the time, talent and treasure we provide to support those efforts.

In October the team did a skit during worship in which we introduced the new Generosity Team name to the congregation and explained how we would be asking for “Sustainer Pledges” rather than Stewardship pledges. People who make a commitment for the year ahead are sustaining our ministry together. Sustaining Faith Formation, Worship, Outreach and our presence in downtown Natick.

In mid-October the Generosity Team sent a letter, including information on the various ways to give (EFT electronic fund transfers, weekly or monthly checks, cash, donations of appreciated stocks) to FCC’s members and friends. To date (mid-January) your generous support has resulted in 57 sustaining pledges totaling \$236,421. This represents a nearly \$34K increase over last year’s pledged dollars as reported in January 2024. We are grateful to all who have already committed to a sustainer pledge and invite others to prayerfully consider pledging. As encouraging as this year’s campaign has been with 10 new pledges from new-comers and past faithful givers who have converted to pledging, the need to grow our membership contributions and return to our pre-pandemic levels of giving is vitally needed.

The efforts of the Generosity Team would not have been possible without the diligent support of our Office Coordinator, Randal Divinski, for his methodical work on our mailings and communications; our Finance team, particularly Wayne Szretter, who gives countless hours to ensure our gifts are well-spent and recorded; and Rev Cindy for her leadership and inspiration in this vital aspect of our church life. Most importantly, we thank our caring FCC faith community for their financial support and their energy as we imagine together.

	Sustainers	%
\$1 to \$500	8	14.0%
\$501 to \$1,000	4	7.0%
\$1,001 to \$1,500	6	10.5%
\$1,501 to \$2,000	4	7.0%
\$2,001 to \$3,000	9	15.8%
\$3,001 to \$5,000	9	15.8%
\$5,001 +	17	29.8%
	57	

Respectfully submitted,
Your Generosity Team,
Lane McDonough, Gail Martin, Bill Ramage, Jeanette Szretter, Cindy Worthington-Berry

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

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Unrestricted Fund Accounts

Description of the Trust Fund Accounts and Restrictions/Designations

Respectfully submitted,

John D. Gentry
Coordinator

Wayne T. Szretter
Treasurer

Doug Hanna
Trustee

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

2024 was a very active year for our endowment. We began the year with \$2,036,562 including the commingled funds for the sanctuary and kitchen capital improvement projects. Total investment gains (including interest and dividends earned) were \$195,987. Total Contributions were \$91,732 (largely from the Virginia Clark Robinson Foundation and contributions to the Capital Campaign), and distributions were \$207,000 (largely due to support of the 2024 church operating budget and capital project expenditures) leaving us with an ending balance of \$2,117,280.

The endowment, including designated and restricted funds invested with the endowment, supported \$201,700.83 for the following special initiatives and financial activities this year:

- Capital Campaign expenses for sanctuary renovation totaled \$18,910.00.
- Expenses related to the renovation of the kitchen totaled \$31,797.26
 - ◊ Includes allocation of \$22,423.41 to support planned Capital Campaign project expenses in 2025
- Building & Grounds funded slate roof repairs of \$25,775 plus a structural building assessment of \$2,860.07.
- Endowment funds to support the 2024 Church operating budget totaled \$80,000 (including \$5,000 for scholarships).
 - ◊ \$2,400 from Helen A. H. Rogers fund (Benevolence)
 - ◊ \$2,900 from Rev Alvin C. Bacon fund (Christian Education)
 - ◊ \$608 from the Benevolence Scholarship fund
 - ◊ \$3,741 from the Gladys & Haig Markarian Scholarship fund
 - ◊ \$651 from the William Townsend Scholarship fund
 - ◊ \$69,700 from “unrestricted” Virginia Clark Robinson (VCR)
- Search Team expenses in 2023 from the unrestricted endowment funds totaled \$2,069.50.
- Pastor’s moving expenses from the unrestricted endowment funds totaled \$4,787.
- Pastor’s Discretionary Fund transfer totaled \$360 (from the R. B. Dennett fund)
- Organ reed renovation project totaled \$15,592 (\$4,332.51 from the Music Fund + \$11,259.49 support from the Memorial Fund).
 - ◊ Additional funds (\$9,923) from ZVI Construction (the major sanctuary contractor) were also contributed towards the renovation of the organ reed project.
- West Virginia Workcamp support of \$2,500 from the Reverend Alvin C. Memorial Youth Mission endowment
- Website development expenses totaled \$17,050 (from unrestricted funds designated in 2023)

On December 12, 2024, the J2A Pilgrimage account managed by the Trustees (\$1,877.50) was transferred to the FCCN operating account to support the Pilgrimage mission.

In 2025, the budgeted support of the Church’s operating budget from the endowment funds is \$80,000 which includes \$5,000 for scholarships.

Beginning January 1, 2025, receipts from the VCR Foundation will be deposited directly to the Church’s operating account for 2025 instead of the “unrestricted” invested endowment account.

The trustees have been working to develop a formal Spending Policy Statement that will help us strategize how to best use the endowment assets to support our mission in the present, while preserving the permanent purchasing power of the assets so we can support our mission indefinitely into the future. Goals for the upcoming year include the development/coordination/scheduling of educational programs (for all generations) for financial management and planning; planned giving; and educating the congregation about the endowment (including how and why to donate). A review of our Endowment Policy, governing how funds are invested, is also planned.

This year Wayne Szretter, who has served the church in many capacities over 32 years is stepping aside as treasurer of the Trustees having served as Trustee Treasurer since 2001 (23 years). We will continue to count on Wayne for background and history, and his good-natured dedication to our congregation,

On behalf of the Trustees, John D. Gentry

TRUSTEE BALANCE SHEET

Assets

Charles Schwab One Account Managed by F. L. Putnam	\$1,989,891.43	
Middlesex Savings Bank Trustee Checking Account	\$127,388.78	
Middlesex Savings Bank J2A Pilgrimage Account	<u>\$0.00</u>	
Total Assets		\$2,117,280.21

Liability & Fund Balances

Trustee Accounts		
Restricted/Designated	\$737,027.33	
Unrestricted	\$1,380,252.87	
J2A Pilgrimage Account	<u>\$0.00</u>	
Total Liability & Fund Balances		\$2,117,280.21

RECONCILEMENT-TRUSTEE CHECKING ACCOUNT

Beginning Balance: Middlesex Savings Bank as of 12/31/2023 **\$ 62,649.21**

Investment Income

Interest from checking account	\$8.30	
Requested withdrawals from F L Putnam	\$180,000.00	
		\$180,008.30

Other Miscellaneous Income

Donations (F.L. Putnam)	\$250.00	
Virginia Clark Robinson Foundation	\$28,768.50	
Pastor's Sabbatical Fund	\$5,000	
Capital Campaign Pledge Receipts	\$29,990.18	
		\$64,008.68

Total Income **\$306,666.19**

Expenditures

Transfer to 2024 Operating Budget	\$ 75,000.00	
Scholarships	\$5,000.00	
Pastor's Moving Expenses	\$4,787.00	
Search Team Expenses from 2023	\$2,069.50	
Website Development	\$17,050.00	
West Virginia Work Camp	\$2,500.00	
Organ Reed Repair	\$15,592.00	
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$360.00	
Roof Repairs & Structural Assessment	\$28,635.07	
<u>Sanctuary Construction (\$18,910.00)</u>		
Construction (ZVI)	\$17,557.00	
Miscellaneous Supplies & Equipment	\$1,353.00	
<u>Kitchen Renovation (\$9,373.85)</u>		
Equipment and Supplies	\$9,373.85	

Total Expenditures **\$179,277.42**

Ending Balance: Middlesex Savings Bank as of 12/31/2024 **\$ 127,388.78**

RECONCILEMENT-PILGRIMAGE CHECKING ACCOUNT

Beginning Balance: Middlesex Savings Bank as of 12/31/2023 **\$1,877.29**

Income

Interest Income \$.21

Total Income **\$.21**

Expenditures

Pilgrimage expenses in 2024 \$ 200.00

Move to FCCN Operating Account \$1,677.50

Total Expenditures **\$1,877.50**

Ending Balance: Middlesex Savings Bank as of 12/31/2024 **\$0.00**

F L PUTNAM-SCHWAB RECONCILEMENT

Portfolio Value on 12/31/23 with accrued interest

\$1,973,912.72

Net Contributions / Withdrawals

Contributions*

\$13,043.08

Withdrawals

-\$193,023.71

Sub Total

- \$179,980.63

Income From

Interest

\$20,804.30

Dividends

\$27,707.20

Sub Total

\$48,511.50

Change in Market Value During Period (+ or -)

\$158,531.05

Advisory Fees and Other Expenses

-\$11,083.21

Portfolio Value on 12/31/24 with accrued interest

\$1,989,891.43

* Includes stock donated (less transaction fees) to the Church's Capital Campaign and Stewardship to fulfill member's pledges.

PERFORMANCE OF TRUST FUND INVESTMENTS

Performance of Trust Fund Investments for 2024

Investment Return = Investment gains from F. L. Putnam investments

Interest Income = Interest income from Middlesex Savings Bank

Restricted / Designated Accounts

	Balances 12/31/2023	Principal Receipts	Payments/ Distributions	Investment Return	Interest Income	Balances 12/31/2024
Benevolence						
Fisk Fund	\$ 16,377.45			\$ 1,576.01	\$0.07	\$ 17,953.52
Helen A. H. Rogers	\$ 29,462.32		\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,835.16	\$0.12	\$ 29,897.60
Henry Wilson	\$ 26,110.47			\$ 2,512.62	\$0.11	\$ 28,623.19
Keziah F. Babcock	\$ 29,145.12			\$ 2,804.64	\$0.12	\$ 31,949.88
R. B. Dennett – Pastor's Discretionary	\$ 4,585.00		\$ 360.00	\$ 441.22	\$0.02	\$ 4,666.24
Walter S. Peterson	\$ 3,206.97			\$ 308.61	\$0.01	\$ 3,515.59
Subtotal	\$ 108,887.33	\$ -	\$ 2,760.00	\$ 10,478.25	\$0.44	\$ 116,606.03
Christian Formation (formerly Christian Education)						
Mary S. Hayes (Sunday School)	\$ 406.76			\$ 39.14	\$0.00	\$ 445.91
Rev Alvin C. Bacon (Christian Ed)	\$ 36,374.07		\$ 2,900.00	\$ 3,500.28	\$0.15	\$ 36,974.50
Subtotal	\$ 36,780.83	\$ -	\$ 2,900.00	\$ 3,539.43	\$0.15	\$ 37,420.41
Church Administration						
Ministers Sabbatical Fund	\$ 17,483.52	\$ 5,000.00		\$ 1,682.44	\$0.07	\$ 24,166.03
Memorial Fund (formerly Deaconate)						
Memorial Fund	\$ 129,270.11		\$ 11,259.49	\$ 12,439.69	\$0.53	\$ 130,450.83
Missions						
General Mission and Outreach	\$ 58,360.22	\$ -		\$ 5,616.01	\$0.24	\$ 63,976.48
Music						
Music Program (incl. organ maintenance)	\$ 4,332.51		\$ 4,332.51	\$ -	\$0.00	\$ (0.00)
Scholarships						
Benevolence Scholarship	\$ 7,218.57		\$ 608.00	\$ 694.64	\$0.03	\$ 7,305.24
General Scholarship Fund	\$ 31,990.89			\$ 3,078.49	\$0.13	\$ 35,069.51
Gladys and Haig Markarian Scholarship	\$ 79,047.40		\$ 3,741.00	\$ 7,606.74	\$0.32	\$ 82,913.47
William Townsend Scholarship	\$ 7,765.34		\$ 651.00	\$ 747.26	\$0.03	\$ 7,861.64
Subtotal	\$ 126,022.20	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 12,127.14	\$0.51	\$ 133,149.85
Youth Ministry						
Donald W. & John G. Armstrong Jr. Fund	\$ 4,575.07			\$ 440.26	\$0.02	\$ 5,015.35
Rev Alvin C. Bacon (Youth Mission)	\$ 20,053.74		\$ 2,500.00	\$ 1,929.78	\$0.08	\$ 19,483.60
Subtotal	\$ 24,628.82	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,370.04	\$0.10	\$ 24,498.95
Building and Grounds						
Maintenance & Repair Fund	\$161,061.53		\$ 28,635.07	\$ 15,498.98	\$0.66	\$147,926.09
Capital Projects (Excl Kitchen)						
	\$25,328.64	\$ 52,413.59	\$ 18,910.00	\$ -	\$0.10	\$ 58,832.33
Kitchen Renovation Project	\$31,797.26		\$ 31,797.26	\$ -	\$0.00	\$ (0.00)
Website Design	\$17,050.00		\$ 17,050.00	\$ -	\$0.00	\$ -
Total Restricted/Designated	\$ 741,002.97	\$ 57,413.59	\$ 125,144.33	\$ 63,751.97	\$2.80	\$ 737,027.00
Unrestricted Accounts						
	Balances 12/31/2023	Principal Receipts	Payments/ Distributions	Investment Return	Interest Income	Balances 12/31/2023
General Endowment Fund	\$ 1,090,930.94	\$ 5,550.00		\$ 112,535.36	\$4.67	\$ 1,209,020.97
VCR Memorial Fund	\$ 204,628.01	\$ 28,768.50	\$ 81,856.50	\$ 19,691.39	\$0.83	\$ 171,232.23
Total Unrestricted	\$ 1,295,558.95	\$ 34,318.50	\$ 81,856.50	132,226.75	\$5.50	\$ 1,380,253.20
Fund Account Assets						
Restricted / Designated Funds	\$ 741,002.97	\$ 57,413.59	\$ 125,144.33	\$ 63,751.97	\$2.80	\$ 737,027.00
Unrestricted Funds	\$ 1,295,558.95	\$ 34,318.50	\$ 81,856.50	\$ 132,226.75	\$5.50	\$ 1,380,253.20
TOTAL	\$ 2,036,561.92	\$ 91,732.09	\$ 207,000.83	\$ 195,978.72	\$8.30	\$ 2,117,280.21
J2A Pilgrimage Account (ckg. account)	\$ 1,877.29		\$ 1,877.50	N/A	\$0.21	\$ (0.00)
TOTAL Liability & Fund Balances						\$ 2,117,280.21

DESCRIPTION OF TRUST FUND ACCOUNTS

RESTRICTED/DESIGNATED ACCOUNTS

BENEVOLENCE

Fisk Fund can be used to help any person in Natick in need of financial assistance.

Helen A. H. Rogers Fund specifies that “fifteen dollars shall be used on the first Sabbath of September of each year for flowers for the altar in memory of my father Harrison Harwood, and my mother Adeline G. Harwood. The remainder to be used to cheer and comfort the needy, sick, and shut-ins of the Church.

Henry Wilson Charity Fund was set up for the benefit of poor parents/guardians and children belonging to the Church.

Keziah F. Babcock Fund was set up “for the support or comfort of widows or unmarried parents/guardians who are ill or recovering from illness and who shall be in want of such assistance or comfort, or of any widows with young children left without sufficient means of support . . . may be applied to aid in the education of some young adult. . . either a college or at some institution of learning higher than high school.”

Robert B. Dennett Pastor’s Discretionary Fund was the gift of Circle #13 of the Women’s Union to establish an endowment fund to be held by the Trustees in perpetuity, the income of which is to be used solely at the Pastor’s discretion in the performance of his/her pastoral duties.

Walter S. Peterson Fund was established until this Fund becomes more substantial and a purpose can be identified which is acceptable to the Church, the income of this fund is to be used to purchase flowers for the altar in memory of Bruce Peterson’s father and mother in February annually for the next year or two.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION (FORMERLY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION)

Mary S. Hayes Sunday School Fund was established in 1902 up “with the income to be used by the Superintendent of the Sabbath School for lesson books for children connected with the school.

Rev. Alvin C. Bacon Memorial Fund – (Christian Education) The income from this fund is to be turned over to the Treasurer of the Church to be applied to help pay the salary of the Director of Spiritual Vitality & Congregational Care and for other expenses of the Faith Formation program.

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

Ministers Sabbatical Fund was established for use by the Pastor of the Church in defraying the costs of sabbatical Missions. Replenishment of these funds may be by individual subscription.

MEMORIAL FUND

Memorial Fund is a holding fund for gifts made in memory of loved ones. The money is distributed at the discretion of the Worship and Congregational Care Ministry Area Leaders (formerly the Deaconate).

MISSIONS AND OUTREACH

General Mission and Outreach Fund: The expenditure of Mission and Outreach funds shall be under the purview of the Outreach Ministry Area Leaders.

RESTRICTED/DESIGNATED ACCOUNTS

MUSIC

Organ Maintenance Fund was created to help maintain the bellows and pipes of the church organ and was administered by the Organist and the Building and Grounds Ministry Area Leaders and Coordinating Council in collaboration with the organist. This fund was depleted to repair the organ reeds in 2024.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Benevolence Scholarship Fund. Until 1966, this fund was supported by annual transfers from the Church Benevolence Fund. After 1966, the sole contributor of this Fund was the Women's Union. In May 1991, the balance of the Fund of \$6,753.13 was transferred by the Church Treasurer to the Board of Trustees, and the amount transferred was designated as the principal of the Fund. Scholarships may be awarded to active members of this Church from the annual income of the Fund, and any income not disbursed during the year will be added to the principal of the Fund. Scholarship recipients will be chosen on the basis of demonstrated financial need, for study at a level greater than high school. Any interest not so distributed as scholarship shall become principal of the Fund.

General Scholarship Fund was established in 2003 for the purpose of consolidating unspent interest derived from all other restricted and unrestricted scholarship accounts. Any undesignated donations for scholarships will also be accumulated in this fund.

Gladys and Haig Markarian Scholarship Fund was set up in memory of Gladys Markarian and in honor of Haig Markarian from memorial and family contributions. Undistributed income may be added to principal.

William Townsend Memorial Scholarship Fund. This fund was established in 1987 with a contribution of \$5,000. Income only to be used for scholarships for members of this Church who are active in church life, with a need for financial assistance, and are pursuing studies at an institution of learning beyond high school level. Unused funds are to be deemed principal of the Fund. Recipients are to be selected by the Pastor.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Donald W. and John G. Jr. Armstrong Campership and Youth Conference Fund: This fund was established with a principle of \$1,071.31. The income is to be made available to the Pastor to assist the youth of this Church and/or Parish to attend summer camps or conferences.

Rev. Alvin C. Bacon Memorial Fund (Youth Mission): Up to \$5,000 of the balance in this Fund as of January 1, 1988, may be expended to assist youth from the Church to attend and participate in certain mission projects, both foreign and domestic. It is to be disbursed by the Worship and Congregational Care Ministry Area Leaders (formerly Deaconate).

BUILDING & GROUNDS

Maintenance & Repair Fund: The use of these funds will primarily focus on major capital projects that fall outside the normal budget and are consistent with the purposes for which the funds were originally given. The Building and Grounds Ministry Area Leaders and Coordinating Council will jointly recommend, authorize, and oversee use of these funds.

OTHER DESIGNATED ACCOUNTS

Capital Campaign Projects (2019-2024): A “Faith in Our Future” capital campaign was formally launched in 2021. The primary scope of the project was to address outside work on the steeple, HVAC, windows and doors, and improvements to the sanctuary including lighting, flooring, audio/visual (A/V) capabilities, acoustics of the space, and redesign of the front of the sanctuary (the chancel) to maximize the flexibility of the space as well as make it fully accessible to all. The funding for this initiative included existing endowment funds, mortgage re-financing, and funds collected through the Capital Campaign.

Kitchen Renovation Project: Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, \$650,000 was granted to fully renovate and modernize the kitchen on the first floor. This project was completed in 2024 at a cost of \$627,581.52. The residual balance was utilized as a donation against the sanctuary renovation (Capital Campaign Project).

Website Development: In 2022, a sum of \$40,000 was transferred from the 2021 Church operating budget for the development and redesign of the Church’s website and to enhanced communication.

UNRESTRICTED ACCOUNTS

General Endowment Fund: This fund was established for unrestricted gifts received by the Church from its members to support the needs of the Church. On January 1, 2010, the “Endowment Bequest Fund” (established in 2007 with a gift from the estate of Barbara Cochrane); the “Millennium Fund” (established in 1999 as a repository account for the remainder of the Bacon Street Property assets); and the Parsonage Fund (proceeds of the sale of the Church Parsonage located at 39 Florence Street in Natick to provide income to help pay a housing allowance for the Pastor of the Church) were consolidated to the “General Endowment Fund”. Due to the closure of the FCC Preschool in June 2020, the Coordinating Council authorized the transfer of funds from the “Pre-School Short Term Operation Fund” to the “General Endowment Fund” based on the recommendations of the Pre-School Board, Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees, the Coordinating Council on December 16, 2021.

VCR Memorial Fund is the on-going gift of Virginia Clark Robinson who died in 1986. The Church started to receive income distributions in 1990 from the Estate of Virginia Clark Robinson for the Virginia Clark Robinson (VCR) Memorial Fund. Since 1992, the Church continues to receive funds on a quarterly basis from the Bank of America who invests funds and makes distributions on behalf of the Clark Foundation. Given the recurring need for supplemental funds to support the Church’s operating budget for 2025, the Coordinating Council recommended (at its December 2025 meeting) that the quarterly distribution from the Clark Foundation be deposited to the Church’s operating budget account for 2025 effective January 1, 2025.

WELCOME TEAM

Welcome Team FCC 2024 End of Year Recap

Members - Sharon Kirby, Jeannine Keedy, Dave Richardson, Cindy Worthington-Berry

Overall mission is to support FCC in welcoming new folks who come to our church, provide opportunity for current church attendees to socialize and deepen our faith and relationships with each other, and to invite new folks who have never been to our church. We also are engaging in Natick's public community events. The following events and activities throughout the year show that we have done that with an eye towards increasing our membership and having new families come to our church. Many others helped make all this happen- thank you!

Whew - is the year over? We have been busy. Here's a snapshot of our highlights.

- ◆ Agape New Year's Breakfast hosts
- ◆ Welcome New Member Brunch at FCC- Sunday, June 2 after worship
- ◆ Whalemobile - Saturday, June 8, 1:00-3:00 pm - for all ages, 85 attendees, Eventbrite tickets \$4
- ◆ Natick Nights - Thursday, June 6, 5-8 pm - Big Bubbles on the side lawn
- ◆ Book Group - in parlor after worship - *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Van Pelt - July 21, lunch
- ◆ Natick Days - Saturday, September 7, 10am-3pm - Leaf Scratch Art, Leaf Rubbings on the front steps; Bell Ringing
- ◆ Welcomed New Members to FCC September 22 - worship and special coffee hour with the Szretters
- ◆ Book group - Sunday, October 13, *The Women* by Hanna
- ◆ LGBTQ Movie Night - Tuesday, October 22, 6:30-9:00pm, free in the vestry, *Will & Harper* with discussion moderator, Julie Nowak (she/any), LGBTQIA+ Initiative Coordinator, Springwell, Inc.
- ◆ DinoMan/Bookfair Advent Calendar and Bake Sale fundraiser - Saturday, November 23, 2:00 pm and Sunday, November 24 after worship, with Wellesley Books and donation of paper goods from Roche Wellesley, about 150 attendees, Eventbrite tickets \$4
- ◆ Holiday Stroll/Caroling - Sunday, December 1, 3-5 pm
- ◆ Christmas Pageant Breakfast - Sunday, December 8, 9:30 am, donation of \$50 from Roche Wellesley

Helped support/participate

Festive All Concert- October 5, 7-8pm concert

Trunk or Treat- Saturday, October 26, Noon-2pm

Attended NCC Grantee presentations, June

Coming Up in 2025

We received a Local Natick Cultural Council Grant for \$500 which we received notification of in December. This will be applied to our upcoming spring events - see below.

Book Group - Sunday, January 19 after worship at Amy's house, *The Serviceberry* by Kimmerer

Welcome New Member Brunch in planning stage

Terrific Turtles - Live animal program

DATE: Saturday, March 22, 1:00-2:00 pm, \$4.00 per person advance ticket sales only

What is the difference between a turtle and a tortoise? How big can a sea turtle grow? Are all turtle shells the same? Learn more about our shelled friends and meet some real turtles! For ages 6+ Presented by Joy Marzolf, The Joys of Nature. Joy Marzolf - one hour \$275, all ages, audience size 40, vestry

Professor Bugman presents the Arthropod Petting Zoo - a live animal show

2 one-hour shows for 25 people at each, ages 6+, vestry

DATE: Saturday, April 5, 1:00-2:00 and 2:15 - 3:15 pm shows, \$4.00 per person advance ticket sales only

This is a show-and-tell-and-touch featuring live exotic arthropods from all 4 major groups including Crustaceans, like crabs; Insects; Myriapods, like centipedes; and Arachnids aka spiders. Children see, feel, hear, and even smell these arthropods as they learn about the incredible adaptations that help them survive their world and how they benefit us!

WEST VIRGINIA WORK CAMP

The 2024 West Virginia Work Camp was a very successful event. Our “Natick” group was able to adopt some of the remnants of the “Chelmsford” and “Pembroke” groups to reform as a larger “Massachusetts” group. We even managed to help a Perrysburg, Ohio camper who was going to graduate school in Connecticut to get back to Camp Asbury Woods in Salt Rock, WV. Our group was blessed with MANY new faces (I think we had 5 first timers in our group alone).



Our 21 eager volunteers were joined by friends from West Virginia, Ohio, North Carolina, Illinois, Minnesota, Kentucky and Tennessee. In all, there were about 80 campers (a vast improvement over the 40 campers we had in 2023, our first post-COVID camp), and that meant we were able to attend to the needs of more homeowners.

Even though we were blessed with no rain (other than running from event to event in camp), we could have lived with less heat (daytime temps were in the upper 90's and high humidity). Folks working outside building decks and ramps had to take lots of water/shade breaks, and many cut the workday short in order to keep their crews healthy -> that's part of why I volunteer to work on kitchens and bathrooms (dry, shaded, inside and usually with at least a fan if not a bit of air conditioning!).

Our journey was not without a few unplanned adventures including drivers who got separated by following their GPS instead of the caravan, youth having tummy troubles from eating too much/too fast on the ride home, a bloody stumble at a rest area in our excitement to reconnect with old friends, etc. But those gave us stories to share!

While most of our transportation needs were provided by campers driving their personal vehicles, your financial support allowed us to rent a 15-passenger van for the trip so that all of the youth in our group could travel together. This allowed the youth to connect to one another and the church leaders who volunteered to drive the van, and I guarantee they had a lot more fun riding in the van than they would have being separated and squished into our caravan of SUVs that carried the adults.

I'd like to thank the members of First Congregational Church for your support of the West Virginia Work Camp mission. The projects that we complete while in camp give the folks in West Virginia hope for a better tomorrow and reassurance that God Loves Them! For me though, the real joy is in working with the youth of our congregation and seeing them mature and gain confidence in themselves. We have a fine batch of young adults who are making a difference in our world!

	YTD Balance
Income	
WVWC adj	\$ 447
WVWC Donations	\$ 6,325
WVWC from Bacon Mem/Endowment	\$ 2,500
WVWC Fundraiser Receipts (Annual Meeting Kebabs, March & Nov Chicken/Eggplant Parm dinners, May Lasagna, Benefit Concert in Chelmsford in October)	\$ 4,002
Total Income	\$ 13,274
Expense	
WVWC Fundraiser Expenses (groceries for meals served)	\$ 1,434
WVWC Mission and Travel costs (van \$2109, Hotel \$696, Gas/tolls \$1469)	\$ 4,274
Total Expense	\$ 5,709
Difference	\$7, 565



**Bob/Jeff Project #1 => wiring fixes (fridge was originally on a switched outlet!)
and new kitchen sink, cabinets and countertops for a young family**



**Bob/Jeff Project #2 => half-bath redo for little old lady
(and her 96 year old mother!)**



Even adults gotta have their Teddy Bear and their Frozen sheets



Frostop Root Beer Stand (a main destination while in Huntington!)



View from Sideling Hill, MD rest area off I-68

WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Team Members:

David Coulter, Coordinator; Jeannine Keedy, Ric Ripley and Rev. Dr. John Weagraff

The goal of the Worship Ministry is to provide a welcoming, safe and supportive presence for the members of the congregation who come to worship in person. During the second half of the year, we combined certain roles to have one person greeting and handing out bulletins at each ground-level entrance and then helping to collect the offering. We also revised the offering procedure to encourage people to hold the plates and to offer a silent prayer, in addition to placing a physical offering in the plate if they chose to do so. This often necessitated recruiting one or two more people to help with the offering. The procedures for communion varied and sometimes required recruiting additional servers as well.

On Sunday the worship team helps open the doors, puts up the hymn numbers, light the various candles, sets up for Communion and assists with Communion, closes the Sanctuary after worship and closes the doors. The team counts the number of people in attendance for each service, counts the offering and delivers it to the church office. Members of the congregation, including Worship team members, ring the church bell on Sunday morning to invite people for worship.

See the table below, which shows the average weekly in person attendance by month. Compared to last year, the data show a consistent increase in attendance.

The Worship Team helped organize the planning, ordering and arranging of flowers for Easter and Christmas this year.

The team's activities during 2024 particularly focused on supporting the congregation during the seasons of Lent, Holy Week and Easter, and again during Advent, Christmas and the holidays. The team also assisted with pulpit supply during the year by helping to recruit and to support the guest preachers

Recruitment of lay leaders has been a major success, with 21 readers now sharing the rotating duties. Recruitment of ushers and greeters is ongoing. A weekly email is sent on most Thursdays to communicate with congregation members who are willing to serve and to review the coverage for the coming Sunday. The team recruits others as needed. People can sign up by using the online "signup genius" link, which is provided on the weekly LINK email and on the FCC website, or by contacting members of the Worship Team.

AVERAGE WEEKLY IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE AT FCC

Month	2023	2024
January	55	67
February	56	75
March	57	71
April	58	67
May	47	67
June	64	66
July	39	53
August	41	46
September	58	63
October	61	62
November	62	73
December	84	89
Easter	142	190
Christmas	200 +	248



DINOMAN!

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23,

2024





**We support
Students and Teachers
Staff and Administration
in creating a
welcoming and respectful
school environment
for ALL!**

Image by Imprint First Congregational Church of Natick, UCC

**Show your support
with a lawn sign**

Contact Kirsten

**Donations welcome ~
\$5 covers cost**

Celebrating 20 years of ONA!



**Car Magnets available
for a free will offering (cost was \$5)
Let's blanket the town with our rainbows!**

Add a pronoun Pin to your nametag!
Another way to show our LGBTQIA Siblings our support
Ask us for more information if you are curious....

