

2024 Book of Reports
As Presented at the
2025 Annual Meeting of the Monroe Congregational Church

Held Sunday, January 26, 2025



34 Church Street
Monroe, Connecticut 06468

The Reverend Jennifer Gingras
Senior Pastor

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Monroe Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

Annual Meeting Agenda
Sunday, January 26, 2025

Opening

- Establishment of a quorum
- Call to Order
- Reading of the Call
- Opening Prayer
- Adoption of Agenda

Adoption of Minutes and Reports

- 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes
- Reports of the Boards, Committees & the Pastor
- 2025 Proposed Operating Budget
- Election of Officers, Board Members & Delegates

New Business

Adjournment and Benediction

**2024 Annual Meeting Minutes
Monroe Congregational Church
Annual Meeting, January 28, 2024**

The meeting was called to order by the Moderator, Arlene Redmond, at 11:15 A.M. Arlene reminded everyone that this was the 262nd meeting even though Monroe Congregational Church is only 260 years old and the Meeting House 167 years.

Arlene thanked everyone for attending and especially thanked Scott Young and Larry Wissink for technical work, Pastor Jenn for everything, Peggy Villani for being the substitute secretary and Vaughan Askue for being the remote.

Peggy read the Call to Meeting.
Pastor Jenn gave an Opening Prayer.
A Quorum was declared plus several people on ZOOM.
The rules of the meeting were explained.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

Motion to Accept - Mark Barnhart 2nd - Dave Walker Vote - Unanimous

ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

Motion to Accept - Mark Barnhart 2nd - Gary Thompson Vote - Unanimous

ADOPTION OF REPORTS:

Motion to Accept - Dave Walker 2nd - Leanne McEnvoy Vote - Unanimous

BUDGET:

Presentation was by Mark Barnhart. He explained the details are in the Annual Meeting Book. However, he noted a few unexpected expenses in the 2023 budget. They were a resolution of a tax claim, parking lot repairs, property appraisal for insurance purposes and safety improvements (lock upgrades). For the 2024 Budget Income will mainly come from Pledges (\$210,000 goal), Strawberry Festival (\$30,000) and Rentals (Gingerbread School, Parsonage, Summer Camp and Misc.). Expenses are mainly Staff and Facility upkeep. As outgoing Treasurer, Bill Stadler was thanked for all his work.

Motion to Accept Budget - Dave Walker 2nd - June Winger Vote - Unanimous

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

Frank Wittenauer gave the report and thanked Leanne McEvoy for all her work.. Committees and members can be found in the Annual Meeting book. There are still a few vacancies. Kate Briggs and Ann-Marie Campbell have agreed to be on Fellowship. There are still vacancies on Christian Education and Trustees.

Bill Brett has agreed to be a Trustee but he is a member of the Safe Conduct Committee. The Church Constitution says that those members can't be on a major board at the same time. After much discussion it was decided to make a motion to allow Bill to serve on Trustees and Church Council should look into the rule.

Motion to allow Bill Brett to serve on both Trustees and Safe Conduct (without prejudice)-

Motion- [inaudible]
2nd - Gary Thompson
Vote - Unanimous

Acceptance of Slate for Boards:

Motion -Dave Walker 2nd - Gary Thompson Vote - Unanimous

PASTOR JENN:

With a slide show Pastor Jenn talked about being grateful for our new members and their willingness to work for the good of the church.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (11:50 A.M.)

Motion - Mark Cardentey 2nd - June Wininger Vote - Unanimous

Pastor Jenn gave the Benediction

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Villani

2024 Annual Report of the Senior Pastor, Rev. Jennifer Gingras

Dear Beloved MCC Community,

As the calendar year draws to a close and we pause to reflect on the months behind us, I am filled with gratitude and hope. Our theme for this year, “**Better Together**,” has proven to be not just a guiding phrase but a lived reality within our congregation. Through joys and challenges, we have discovered anew the power of shared faith, collective action, and the bonds of Christian love.

Ecclesiastes remind us: “*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up*” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). Together, we have been lifelines for one another, offering support, encouragement, and a listening ear when it was most needed. Some of the highlights of 2024 include:

Inspiring weekly and special day **worship**, baptisms, weddings and memorial services with leadership from compassionate volunteers and an expansion of our music program through the addition of part-time Assistant Music Director Heather Hisey. Our continued investment in **online ministry** has ensured that no one is left behind. We remain better together when we embrace both tradition and innovation, weaving a tapestry of worship that honors the diverse ways we encounter the Divine.

A record breaking 53rd annual **Strawberry Festival**, with over 100 volunteers each day helping raise funds for the church budget and maintenance, and 10k overage that went to mission initiatives like CWS Hurricane Relief, Bridgeport feeding programs and Project Warmth. Also noteworthy was an incredible effort behind Outreach’s third **Spaghetti & BINGO** night, and fall **Wine Tasting** raising money for Project Warmth and Church World Service. You have shown what it means to live out Christ’s call to love our neighbors as ourselves.

We also worked on getting to know each other better, deepening our relationships through Fellowship events like the **Women's Retreat, Homecoming Picnic, Contra Dance and Blessing of the Animals**. We embarked on a wonderful **Victorian Christmas Fair** in which we opened our doors to the community and raised a modest amount of money for capital improvements. Through all of these moments of connection, we have built bridges with one another, reminding the world that we are stronger when we stand together.

We have been blessed with a **church campus** that is well-used throughout the year. Due to early spring windstorms we had to immediately address damage to the Meetinghouse Roof. The congregation was very responsive, and along with an insurance settlement **Trustees** addressed it promptly. After being inspired by Morning Circle, a small team took on the project of renovating **Dineson Parlor**. It is now a renewed center for church hospitality that makes us all proud.

Our children and youth have continued to be a vibrant part of our journey. From their participation in worship at **Youth Sunday, Children's Moments** and the **Almost Instant Christmas Pageant**, to their engagement in mission and service projects, they have reminded us of the boundless energy and hope that comes with seeing the world through younger eyes. I am always grateful for the small number of volunteers who keep Sunday School, Jr and Sr PF's not only running but relevant! Let us continue to nurture young people's gifts and encourage their faith, knowing that they are not just the church of tomorrow but an integral part of the church today.

This year has not been without its challenges. The struggles of our world have weighed heavily on our hearts. Yet, we have found strength in each other. Our discussions around difficult topics have been marked by grace and a commitment to understanding, modeling what it means to disagree in love, always seeking the common good. As Paul writes to the Corinthians: *"The body is not made up of one part but of many. ... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it"* (1 Corinthians 12:14, 26). Your willingness to bear one another's burdens has been a testament to the transformative power of a faith community.

Looking ahead, we face a new year filled with possibilities. As we continue to live into our theme of **"Better Together,"** let's dream boldly. What new ministries might we create? What barriers might we dismantle? How might we deepen our discipleship and extend our reach? May we remain rooted in prayer, open to the Spirit's leading, and committed to walking this path together.

Finally, let me say thank you. Thank you for your faithfulness, generosity, and willingness to show up—for God, for one another, and for the world. Thank you for being a congregation that believes in the power of love and lives it out in tangible ways. You are the hands and feet of Christ, and it is a joy and privilege to serve alongside you these past eighteen (!) years.

May the coming year be one of growth, hope, and renewed commitment to our shared mission. As we continue to discover the beauty of being **"Better Together,"** may we do so with hearts full of gratitude and faith.

With much love and blessings, Rev. Jennifer Gingras, Senior Pastor

Historian’s Annual Report 2024

The earliest membership records from all of the historical records found in our archives were uploaded into an accessible computer data file in January. These files of Excel Work Sheets have a security access code capability issued by the church secretary. Most of the records recorded have comments and additional information relative to the entry. Currently, the file contains the following:

	<u>Number of Records</u>	<u>From Yr.</u>	<u>To Yr.</u>
Members	469	1813	1907
Baptisms	273	1776	1902
Marriages	102	1823	1914
Deaths	215	1817	1912

As more information, post 1902, may be found or acquired, the file is organized to have them added.

Site maps of our campus were accessed from our archives to provide a basis for a computer model for the Strawberry Festival grounds plan. These site maps were also used by the Trustees (Frank Wittenuer) in addressing the need to have the storm drains from Rte. 111 cleaned by the State to alleviate a water runoff problem in the east parking lot. Two site maps were found that neither the State nor the Town of Monroe had on file and copies of these maps were provided to them. The maps were refilled in needed archive acid-free boxes.

The only milestone anniversary this year was that of The Mustard Seed Shoppe celebrating its 50th year. Archives files were provided to the Shoppe’s committee to assist in their celebration planning.

It is worth noting that the uncelebrated milestone anniversary for this year was the 75th anniversary of our first Parish Newspaper, *the Parish Pipe*.

A search for the “Beardsley Hall” sign that was replaced with the “Mustard Seed Shoppe” sign, came up empty. As did a search for the 1847 scale model of the Meeting House.

The initiative by the ladies of the Morning Circle to replace the couches in Dineson Parlor, paint the Parlor, and enhance the wall hangings led to finding misplaced and long-forgotten archival treasures of our history. Two cherry wood communion cup serving trays (from 1898) and tithing boxes (from 1886 – 1890) were found first, then the old baptismal bowl, a commemorative plate with the Victorian image of the church, and the original pen and ink drawing of the image by William Feeney. The drawing will be suitably framed and hung in an appropriate place to be determined. The other treasures are now on display in Rexford House, under Rexford’s portrait, in a display case gifted by Mike and Barbara Pellegrino.

This year’s activities ended with our 1st Annual Victorian Christmas Fair. The idea of the Fair was formatted for the Trustees in April as an annual fundraiser specifically to finance future capital projects required to care for the internal and external structural needs of our campus buildings. The annual revenue generated would be invested in a growth investment account which will provide the future revenue needed for such projects. A kickoff meeting was held in September with approximately 20 of our members who embraced the idea and made it a successful reality on December 1st, the 1st Sunday of Advent. It featured local crafters, tour of the Meeting House, and passports to a Victorian model train

display, Victorian Treasures provided by the Monroe Historical Society, children’s activities (gingerbread cookie decorations and the making of tree decorations), a visit with Father Christmas, and collection of gifts for Covenant to Care.

There are no anniversaries scheduled for 2025, other than recognizing that it will be 25 years since Rev. Caroline Meyer became our first female minister as Associate Pastor.

Historically Faithful, Gary Thompson, Historian

Usher Report 2024

	2020 *	2021	2022 **	2023	2024
Sunday Attendance (worship services and church school)	M 1993 S 4717 + 446 ^ 13	M 3147 S 6902	M 3940 S 4715	M 4009 S 3977	M 4437 S 13,192
Average Attendance Per Sunday (worship services & church school)	ALL 134	M 61 S 133	M 75 S 91	M 71 S 76	M 85 S 253
Worship Service Attendance only (not including church school)	ALL 1868	M 2907 S 6902	M 3587 S 4715	M 3723 S 3977	M 4042 S 12,797
Summer Average Attendance Per Sunday (not including church school)	ALL 146	***M 51 S 2344	M 52 S 75	M 53 S 84	M 62 S 166
Ash Wednesday	M 62	M 24 S N/A	M 52 S 55	Snow	M 27 S 54
Ashes to Go	46	51	22		
Palm Sunday	M N/A S 10	M 70 S 127	M 105 S 123	M 92 S 79	M 110 S 128
Maundy Thursday	M N/A S 5	M N/A S 128	M 33 S 63	M 86 S 74	M 88 S 159
Easter Sunrise Service	N/A	M 21	M 18 S 42	M 11	M 14 S no data
Easter Sunday	M N/A S 25	M 96 S 473	M 127 S 125	M 154 S 172	M 176 S 192
Advent Season Average Per Sunday (including worship services & children)	M 184 S 330	M 78 S 77	M 97 S 63	M 89 S 76	M 102 S 859
Christmas Eve	M 86 S 425	M 177 S 413	M 203 S 181	M 175 S 194	M 426 S 477
2023 Christmas Eve (Sunday Morning)				M 111 S 68	

M (Meeting House) S (Streaming: FaceBook & YouTube)
* First Year of Pandemic + Summer Chapel ^ Wilton Hall
** Pastor Jenn on Sabbatical
*** 2021 Hurricane
2022 had 2 large Sunday snow storms (1/30 & 2/13)

This year, Pastor Jenn introduced a new service, the “Blessing of the Animals” which proved to be a great success drawing 84 people (& their pets) into Wilton Hall and 545 online worshippers! Which reminds me to thank Pastor Jenn and Scott Young who continued to keep us all connected with quality “virtual” worship services right in our homes.

**Due to the nature of sharing worship videos, YouTube and Facebook views are an evolving statistic and should only be used to understand general trends. Counts were tallied and recorded near the end of the year.

Board of Deacons Annual Report 2024

The Board of Deacons works with the Senior Pastor to assist with the worship services and as appropriate, to assist with the pastoral cares of the church community. Worship service assistance is provided through the Deacons' welcoming of all individuals to worship. Every Sunday a Deacon provides an opening prayer at the commencement of service. Communion in the traditional format has continued (with the continued use of the plastic cups) and with the exception of several services being by intinction at the discretion of the Senior Pastor. Deacons also participate in special services such as Confirmation dinner and service, new member meeting and welcoming services, memorial services, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve. Deacons also host coffee hour during the month of January.

Activities undertaken this year include:

- The Deacon of the Day picks up fresh flower arrangements from Big Y when ordered
- Deacons have enacted the use of a second cup for *Communion by Intinction* services for dipping the host for those needing a gluten-free option
- Deacons agreed to fund the gluten-free bread option for communion from their budget
- Each Deacon sent out flock letters during the Lenten and Advent seasons. A Deacon volunteers to write the letter with the Senior Pastor and the letters are then prepared by the church administrator and each Deacon mails out the letters with a personal signature
- Deacons assisted with welcoming new church members
- Deacons assisted Senior Pastor with Memorial Services
- Deacons agreed to donate funds from their memorial fund to help purchase new couches for Dineson Parlor
- Deacons contributed a basket to the Spaghetti and Bingo night to assist in the fundraising event

Challenges continue keeping the candles lit during services; and a search continues for an adequate replacement which will be purchased from the Deacon Budget.

The Deacon Team is honored to serve our faith community.

Respectfully submitted, Jessica Pfalzgraf, Chair of Board of Deacons

Annual Memorial Fund Report 2024

In 2024, \$5,960.00 was donated in memory of loved ones. Activity in the Memorial Fund account was as follows:

Beginning Balance on January 1, 2024	\$10,218.43
Deposits to Memorial Fund	
In Memory of Susan Walker	\$100.00
In Memory of George Massar	\$5,025.00
In Memory of Bill Irwin	\$785.00
In Memory of Dave Coffey	\$50.00
Total Deposits in Memorial Fund 2024	+\$5,960.00
Total Withdrawals from Memorial Funds in 2024 (biscuit mixer, delivery & U-Line dolly)	- \$3,040.09
Balance as of December 31, 2024 in Memorial Fund	\$13,138.34

Respectfully submitted, Diane Prall

2024 CLERK REPORT

Birth (1)

Colby Jay Kaminski 9/16/24

Baptism (4)

Blakely Pearl Stock 2/18/24

Jude Ryan Blaiotta 8/11/24

Nora Madelyn Blaiotta 8/11/24

Juliet James Aravena 10/20/24

Confirmation (2)

Ryan Andrejczyk 5/19/24

Griffin Allen 5/19/24

Marriage (2)

Marc & Paul Cardentey (Vow Renewal) 6/1/24

Linda Mejia and Brian Hare 12/14/24

New Member (4)

Dylan Alvarez 9/8/24

Sara Alvarez 9/8/24

Gloria Ganino 9/8/24

Margery Danis 9/15/24

Mary Erdmann 1/26/2025

Rick Erdmann 1/26/2025

Amy Matejek 1/26/2025

Matt Matejek 1/26/2025

Meghan Cooper 1/26/2025

Jeffrey Cooper 1/26/2025

Molly Kinahan 1/26/2025

Reinstated Membership (0)

Removed from Membership After Inactive (8)

Bob & Janice Martin (Moved)

John & Susan Quinlavin

John & Barbara Yeager (Moved)

Jacob Parker-Burgard (Moved)

Eli Parker-Burgard (Moved)

Request for Removal/Transfer (1)

Trees Whitbeck 10/21/24

Death of Loved Ones (2)

David Coffey 9/30/24

Robert Peter Schultz 11/8/24

Death of Loved Ones, Non-members

Ed Patrillo 2/17/24

Bill Irwin 4/11/24

George Edward Slatcher, Jr 7/12/24

Briana Swain 11/30/24

Summary

Active Members as of January 2024 445

New Members 11

Confirmands 2

Reactivation, Confirmands & New Members 13

Removal/Transferred 1

Removed after Inactive 8

Death of Loved Ones 2

Transferred/Removed/Deaths 2024 11

*Death of Loved Ones not included in *Summary* for 2022 2

*Death of Loved Ones not included in *Summary* for 2023 4

Active Members as of January 2025 441

Respectfully Submitted, Diane Prall

Board of Christian Education Report 2024

This year has been a vibrant one for our youth programs, reflecting growth, engagement, and the joy of community. Our Sunday School program continues to thrive, with young learners actively participating in lessons and shining brightly as stars of the annual Christmas pageant.

Our Junior Pilgrim Fellowship (Jr. PF) has been a source of energy and connection, with five active members spreading holiday cheer during a heartwarming caroling event. Meanwhile, our Senior Pilgrim Fellowship (Sr. PF) has shown tremendous leadership and purpose, raising funds through their successful Spaghetti Bingo Night to support their upcoming mission trip.

We are truly blessed by the commitment of our youth, their families, and the dedicated leaders who make these programs possible. Together, we are nurturing faith, fellowship, and a strong foundation for the next generation. -Jeanette Cardentey Morales, Chair Board of Christian Education

Senior Pilgrim Fellowship Report 2024

MCC is very blessed to have such an amazing group of young people in Senior PF! We meet nearly every Sunday night with 4 adult advisors and about 25 high school youth. As of now, about $\frac{2}{3}$ are from families that are not (yet?) MCC members. At each of our meetings we share highs and lows of the week, discuss relevant issues and topics, explore and expand our faith, sing, and pray. We live by our covenant: learning to love, keeping an open mind, and welcoming all people who come our way. We are so grateful to call MCC our home.

Our adult advisors give a great deal of time and energy to the program. The adult advisors currently include Amanda Cohen, Michelle Correll, Lucas Cuseo, and Kate Goyette. Although we recently said goodbye to Josh Post, we are thankful for his time with us.

During the PF year, we worked towards reaching our community service goal of completing one service project each month. This includes, leaf raking, a coat drive to benefit Bridgeport Rescue Mission, cleaning up at Great Hollow Lake, our annual mission trip, and more. This year's mission trip was to the Appalachian South Folklife Center in Pipestem, West Virginia. We spent this trip helping to convert an old, dilapidated school into a church for the community. Additionally, we assisted with the building of a handicap ramp for a woman that was homebound without it. We are currently planning our 2025 mission trip. To assist with the costs of the trip, we will be fundraising throughout the next few months. This includes our upcoming annual Chili Cook-off in February.

Although it was sad to say goodbye to our graduating seniors at the end of the trip, we were excited about welcoming our new members and the new program year with open arms and hearts. Our 2024-2025 PF high school leadership team is President Jocelyn Allen, Vice President Emily Andrade, Treasurer Molly Kinahan, Secretary Abby Yeager, and Minister of Outreach Olivia Malewicki. They are doing a wonderful job leading the group.

We are always grateful that MCC supports Senior PF and we love that this group brings so many youth together in a loving and safe environment. We can't thank you enough for the love, support and care! We are looking forward to a great year in 2025 with more exciting opportunities to grow and love with Christ.

Respectfully submitted, Kate Goyette

Outreach Board Annual Report 2024

Spaghetti Dinner/BINGO Night: The third annual event, held on Saturday November 23 was absolutely amazing. Thanks to the commitment and dedication of Outreach, Deacons and Fellowship, we made \$2,020.98 which will be split between Project Warmth and Church World Service.

St. George's Supper: During 2024, with the help of Outreach and other members of the congregation, packed 360 bagged lunches and delivered them to St George's Church in Bridgeport to help feed the homeless and those facing food insecurity.

Wine Tasting: Such a great evening at the home of Jack and Linda Fracassini, who gratefully hosted the annual Outreach wine tasting event and for Roy Nealon sharing local wines. A total of \$665 was raised and donated to Project Warmth.

Crop Walk: Sunday May 5, 2024, was the 50th anniversary of the Crop Walk in Bridgeport. Julie McClenathan led the team and fundraising efforts hit a new record at \$4,103.59 to help fight hunger locally and globally. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped fundraise and donated to this amazing cause.

Tag Sale: After a hiatus from Covid, The Board of Outreach held it's annual Tag Sale on March 23. Thank you to everyone that helped with tagging, sorting, selling, cleaning, and transporting left over goods to Goodwill. We raised a total of \$2,150 which was dispersed as follows:

Family Life - \$350.

Adam's House - \$500.

Bridge House Bridgeport, CT - \$500.

Operation Hope Fairfield CT - \$500.

MCC - \$100 to the general operating fund.

\$200 PANS group (Bill Stadler)

Leanne McEvoy, Christian Outreach Board Chair

Covenant to Care Annual Report 2024

MCC members and friends provided 38 Connecticut Alliance of Foster & Adoptive Families, facing difficult times, with food for Thanksgiving. In addition, 5 \$25 Big Y gift cards were delivered to our town social worker, Mary Ann Kalm for families in need in Monroe. In total 43 families were served! A new record –up 13 families from last year's record!

MCC donated an extraordinary amount of unwrapped Christmas gifts this year -over 130! These were picked up by Samantha Heltke, our CAFAF Advocacy and Support Services Regional Liaison, and brought to her office where the children were able to choose their own gift during a special Christmas party complete with treats, and Mr. and Mrs. Clause! Together we also donated several gifts to a local family in need.

Values

Thanksgiving Food Donations: \$1,075.00

Christmas Gifts: \$3,250.00 (Estimate Value)

Total 2024 Giving: \$4,325.00

Another fantastic year! I feel so blessed to be a part of this church, this outreach program, and everything MCC members make possible for children and families in our surrounding community –thank you for your loyal and outstanding support of Covenant to Care.

Diane Prall, Monroe Congregational Church Liaison Covenant to Care for Children

Monroe Green Committee
Treasurer’s Report
Covering December 31, 2023 to December 31, 2024

<u>Balance on December 31, 2023</u>	\$ 24.33
<u>Receipts</u>	
Monroe Congregational Church (Feb. 2024)	\$275.00
St. Peter’s Grace Church (Feb. 2024)	\$275.00
Monroe Congregational Church (Sept. 2024)	\$250.00
St. Peter’s Grace Church (Sept 2024)	\$250.00
<u>Total Receipts</u>	\$1,050.00
<u>Subtotal</u>	\$1,486.26
<u>Disbursements</u>	
Monarch Landscaping (new tree)	\$550.00
Eversource (electric utility bills)	\$601.65
<u>Total Disbursements</u>	\$1,151.65
<u>Balance on December 31, 2024</u>	\$334.61

Respectfully Submitted by, Nancy Johnson, Treasurer

Trustees Annual Report 2024

The Trustees are responsible for overseeing the upkeep of the MCC campus as well as the finances of the church. We welcomed several new faces to the Board this past year including Bill Brett, Glenn Brigham and Andrew Logan as well as Treasurer Mike Ganino. We thank all who have contributed with their time and gifts to help us achieve our mission and make MCC such a vibrant place.

This past year, the Board launched an emergency capital campaign to raise funds to replace the Meeting House roof, which had sustained damage in a windstorm and was leaking. The final cost of the project was \$33,876, including additional work to replace rotted sheathing. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to raise over \$25,000 toward the project costs, which coupled with insurance payments of \$7,107, enabled us to complete this work prior to Strawberry Festival without having to further deplete our reserves. We are grateful to John O’Rourke for his leadership of this campaign and to all who contributed. A special thank you to Diane Prall for her diligence in pursuing and securing a payment from our insurance carrier.

Unfortunately, the Meeting House roof wasn’t the only unexpected cost that the Board had to confront, as the sump pump in the parsonage failed, resulting in a flooded basement and furnace and over \$4,000 in

emergency repairs. The Board has resolved to install an alarm and back-up sump pump so that this situation does not recur. To address drainage issues within the rear parking lot, the Board committed funds to install a 6" overflow line to connect a dry well to a nearby catch basin and storm drain. The Board is looking to re-pave the back parking lot and re-stripe both lots in 2025.

On a happier note, MCC received reimbursement of \$15,150 from the homeland security grant awarded by the State of Connecticut. The \$39,600 grant will cover costs associated with the purchase and installation of pull alarms, security cameras, computer hardware, wi-fi boosters, exterior lighting, keypads, locks and door closers. Additional work to replace the front doors to Beardsley/Mustard Seed and lock hardware to the Meeting House as well as to install security cameras is planned for this coming year.

In response to a request from the Music Committee, and with savings realized through a re-structuring of our Christian Education program, the Board authorized funding for an Associate Music/Choral Director position. Music is an important and much-valued part of worship at MCC, and the Board was extremely supportive of this investment. I'm sure that you will agree that the choir has never sounded better.

As we do each year, the Trustees organized and conducted work days in both the spring and fall. Volunteers trimmed bushes, weeded and mulched planting beds, cleaned windows, cleaned and changed light fixtures and made other improvements to the buildings and grounds. We thank all those who helped beautify our church facilities and grounds, especially our long-time property manager, Dave Allen.

We also wish to thank all those who contributed to this year's stewardship campaign. Pledges account for the majority of our income to support our ministry. We are eternally grateful for your continued support.

Respectfully submitted, Mark Barnhart, Chair

Board of Christian Fellowship Annual Report 2024

The 2024 Fellowship Committee included: Jenn Gingras, Barbara Pellegrino, Jane Allen, Ann-Marie Campbell, Lisa Bauerle, Kate Briggs, Juliana Defeo, Judy Davis, and Melissa Coleman (Chair)

This year, we enjoyed fellowship with our church community through several events. Easter Sunday and Mother's Day both saw extended coffee hours which included delicious food that was contributed by the congregation. They were both well attended and enjoyed by all.

Over the summer, we invited members of the congregation to partake in informal fellowship by meeting up for the Monroe Concert Series in Wolfe Park, and recommended people wear red.

On Sept 15th, we hosted the Homecoming picnic at Wolfe Park. We grilled burgers and dogs, enjoyed sides and desserts brought by the attendees, got to know each other with a game of "would you rather", played lawn games, and bounced in a bounce house. We had approximately 50 participants, with a mix of young and old!

We encouraged the idea of the Blessing of the Pets, which was held on September 29th.

October 26th we hosted a new event which included Contra Dancing, Pumpkin Decorating and a Potluck Dinner. We had a mix of young and old attend, with about 50 attendees. Fun was had by all. This cost approximately \$400 for the caller. We collected about \$220 in donations at the door to help with the cost.

In November, we supported the Outreach committee with the Spaghetti Dinner and Bingo night for the third year. It was a wonderful evening, raising money for a great cause, and enjoyed by everyone who attended.

On December 22nd, we host our Christmas Coffee Hour which will include a great number of delicious goodies for the congregation to enjoy while celebrating together. We will also get to celebrate the success of our Children's Pageant that day in church.

Respectfully submitted by: Melissa Coleman, Board of Christian Fellowship Chair

Morning Circle Annual Report 2024

Officers: Chair – Shari Carrano , Secretary – Susie Cuseo, Treasurer – Cheri Irwin

Activities for 2024:

Morning Circle members meet the second Wednesday each month at 11:00AM in Wilton Hall with the exceptions of January, February, July and August.

March – Eleven members put together 34 birthday bags. Fundraiser will start for new couches for Dineson Parlor.

April – Ten members made 40 hygiene kits for Church World Service.

May – Eight members collected over 30 women's hygiene products for the Food Pantry.

June – Annual June picnic with 11 members at Sal's Pizza in Newtown. Panera Bread fundraiser was held on June 22 from 4-8. We raised \$98.01. A revised Morning Circle directory was updated by Diane.

September – Ray Giovanni from Union Savings Bank spoke to ten members about scams affecting the local area. Panera Bread fundraiser was held on September 21 and we raised \$94.87.

October – Nine members put together 53 Halloween bags for the Food Pantry. \$100 was sent to Heifer.

November – Fifteen gift tags for the Giving Tree were given out. Twelve members made 24 bean soup jars for the Food Pantry.

December – Meeting cancelled due to weather.

Treasurer's Report: \$1,296.24

March 2024

Sunshine Fund Collection:	+\$66.00	Heifer International	-\$100.00
Dues:	+\$130.00	Church World Service Postage:	-\$80.00
Interest:	+ 2.91	Couch Project	-\$500.00
Heifer International	+\$117.50	Heather's CWS Purchases	-\$76.76
Donation from June (couch)	+\$500.00		
Total (as of 11/24)	\$902.39		

The Morning Circle directory contains 15 members. We have an average of 10 members attending each meeting. Respectfully submitted, Susie Cuseo, Morning Circle Secretary

Mustard Seed Shoppe Report 2024

This year the Mustard Seed Shoppe celebrated its 50th Anniversary. Under the leadership of Mary Lou Brigham our doors opened March 1, 1974. Originally it was a consignment/donation shop. Now we just sell donations. The first donation to the church was \$1,400 and we have made a pledge every year since then. Currently our pledge is \$6,000.

Additionally, with funds raised, we were able to donate to the Monroe Food Bank (\$1,000), St. George's Supper (\$500), Project Warmth (\$1,000), Monroe Social Services (\$500), MCC SR PF Mission Trip Scholarship Fund (\$1,000), MCC SR PF Wreaths for church buildings (\$338), Sunshine Fund (\$250), and Pastor's Purse (\$1,000).

Once again we thank Jan Pearson for not only her work organizing the shop but also for being Treasurer. Many thanks go to Susie Cuseo for all her work scheduling store clerks and her messages to the church. We are definitely going to miss all her hard work and friendship. All the people who work as store clerks and all those who work (under the leadership of Joyce Rousseau and Lois Spence) behind the scenes keeping the store stocked deserve a round of applause and gratitude.

We end our year thanking all who donate clothing and wishing more people would clerk in the shop or sort clothes.

The Mustard Seed Committee

**Monroe Congregational Church
2025 Officers, Boards and Committees**

Officers		Term	Ends
Moderator	Melissa Coleman	First	January 2027
Treasurer	Mike Ganino	First	January 2026
Asst. Treasurer	Open	First	January 2027
Receiver	John O'Rourke	Fourth	January 2026
Clerk	Barb Pellegrino	Second	January 2027
Historian	Gary Thompson	Indefinite	

Diaconate (12)	Term	Ends
1. Michelle Correll (Secretary)	Third	January 2026
2. Larry Wissink (Chair)	Second	January 2026
3. Jennifer Wissink	Second	January 2026
4. Rebecca Cicarelli	Second	January 2026
5. Marc Cardentey	Second	January 2026
6. James Hisey	First	January 2026
7. Jocelyn Allen	First	June 2026
8. Michelle Cardentey	First	January 2026
9. Vinay Sampson	First	January 2027
10. Arlene Redmond	First	January 2027
11. OpenFirst	January 2027	
12. OpenFirst	January 2027	

Friend of the Board: Leanne McEvoy

Music Committee (appointed by Deacons)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Will Duchon | 4. Heather Hisey |
| 2. Michael Pfalzgraf (chair) | 5. Michael Pellegrino |
| 3. Rev. Jennifer Gingras | 6. David Walker |

Trustees (7-12)	Term	Ends
1. Mark Barnhart (Chair)	Second	January 2026
2. Caleb Nealon	Second	January 2026
3. Bill Brett	First	January 2026
4. Glenn Bringham	First	January 2026
5. Andrew Logan	First	January 2026
6. OpenFirst	January 2027	
7. David Allen (Property Manager)	Indefinite	

Friends of the Board: Tom Briggs, Bob Hammond (property), Frank Wittenauer, Scott Young (IT/Tech)

Nominating Committee (one 2-year term)

	<u>Ends</u>
1. Janie Allen	January 2026
2. Jessica Pfalzgraf	January 2027
3. Open	January 2007

SNEUCC Delegates

	<u>Term</u>	<u>Ends</u>
1. Arlene Redmond	First	January 2027
2. Vaughan Askue	First	January 2027

Fairfield East Association Delegates

	<u>Term</u>	<u>Ends</u>
1. Vaughan Askue	First	January 2027
2. Arlene Redmond	First	January 2027

Mustard Seed Committee (self-appointed, no term)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Peggy Villani (chair) | 3. Lois Spence |
| 2. Jan Pearson (treasurer) | 4. Jackie Bleakney |

Morning Circle (self-appointed, no term)

1. Susie Cuseo (secretary)
2. Shari Carrano (chair)
3. Cheri Irwin (treasurer)

Safe Conduct (2 + 2 appointed by Council)

	<u>Term</u>	<u>Ends</u>
1. Bill Brett		January 2027 – 2 nd
2. David Walker		January 2027 – 2 nd
3. Kyla Allen		January 2027 – 2 nd

Monroe Green Committee (appointed by Council)

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Christine Wittenauer | 2. Frank Wittenauer |
|-------------------------|---------------------|

Senior Pastor PRC (appointed by Council)

1. Barbara Pellegrino
2. Mark Malia
3. Wendy Colegrove
4. Cheri Irwin

Strawberry Festival Co-Chairs

1. Clark Gingras
2. Frank Wittenauer
3. Susie Cuseo (final season)

**Monroe Congregational Church
Investment Account Activity
January 1 – November 30, 2024**

Beginning Balance 1/1/24	\$612,203.13
Withdrawals	(\$60,000.00)
Dividends Reinvested	\$1,571.64
Unrealized Gain/Loss	<u>\$89,373.16</u>
Ending Balance 11/30/24	\$643,147.93

Investment Fund Detail

Helen Sherman Trust*	\$334,150.35
Clara Johnson Trust**	\$140,508.53
Wilton Estate Fund***	\$132,076.64
General Investment Fund	<u>\$36,412.41</u>
Total	\$643,147.93

*Helen G. Sherman Trust – this was initially established in 1995, in the amount of \$154,798 and was restricted as follows: principal is restricted, but income may be used consistent with MCC’s tax-exempt purposes as governing body shall designate. In 2002, 500 units of the Helen G. Sherman trust were sold and \$31,475.77 was distributed to the church.

**Clara Johnson Trust – this was initially established in 1998, in the amount of \$67,621.40 and was restricted as follows: principal is restricted, but income used for care, maintenance and upkeep of church building and pastor’s salary.

***Wilton Estate Fund – this was received in March of 2014 in the amount of \$403,000. There are no restrictions or specified use attached to these funds. \$200,000 of this fund was added to the investment account in June of 2014, with the remainder going into MCC’s Money Market account, with the expectation that some of these funds would be used to support the renovation of Rexford House, as well as replacement of the organ in the Meeting House.

General Investment Fund – represents income accrued from the other investment funds and is what we pull from to fund MCC operations each year.

John O’Rourke –Board of Trustees Receiver



MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST PROPOSED 2025 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

The Proposed 2025 Operating Budget as recommended by the Board of Trustees is presented on the reverse side. MCC is projected to conclude the current year with a modest operating surplus attributable to our having drawn down investments to front costs associated with the Meeting House roof replacement project and to maintain cash flow. Ideally, these funds would be returned to our investment fund following conclusion of our capital campaign.

Below is a summary of the significant changes and key assumptions underlying the Proposed 2025 General Fund Budget to be presented at Annual Meeting.

Revenues:

- Pledge income is projected at \$210K, which includes prior year collections, which is unchanged from the current year.
- Rental income is projected at \$68,000, which includes income from renting the parsonage as well as our continuing to host the Monroe Summer Day Camp on campus during the summer months.
- Income from investments is projected at \$40K which is above the recommended withdrawal amount to maintain principal in our investment accounts, but unfortunately necessary to cover anticipated costs.
- Strawberry Festival net income is budgeted @ \$35K which is an increase over the current year, but in line with our recent experiences.
- The Mustard Seed contribution is estimated at \$6K, which is the same amount as the current year. This contribution is subject to the approval by the Mustard Seed Board.

Expenses:

- Compensation & Benefits is expected to rise to \$250K, which includes an allowance for a modest (3%) cost-of-living adjustment for staff plus funds for a part-time Associate Music Director (\$1000/month) in lieu of a part-time CE Coordinator position.
- Facility costs are budgeted at \$103K, which includes an allowance to pay property taxes on the parsonage estimated at \$8K/year as well as a budgeted 8% increase in our insurance premium rates.
- We are proposing a slight reduction in the outreach budget to \$25K, reflecting elimination of dues to the now defunct Greater Bridgeport Council of Churches, but including funds to meet MCC's obligations to OCWM and dues to the Fairfield East Association.

