

First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ
837 Main Street, East Hartford, CT 06108

Organized in 1699



Annual Report 2019

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ
East Hartford, Connecticut

Organized 1699

2019

ANNUAL REPORT

of

CHURCH OFFICERS * BOARDS * COMMITTEES * ORGANIZATIONS

Cover: Food Bank Volunteers - Past and Present

Row 1: Joy Gaston, Beth Harlow, Jackie LeBrun, Nancy Tomlinson, Gerry Rozie, Jessie Slade, Mary Mourey Row 2: Jayne Apel, Joyce Emerson, Joyce Wolk, Carol Callahan, Joanne Powell Row 3: Dave Gaston, Lorraine Trinkins, Brenda Murdzek, Rich Beebe, Dawn Clancy, Abbie Beebe, Beth Roberts...and many more, not pictured.

Cover Photo by Erin Cattanach

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PASTOR

What a fun year of experimentation and exploration! As your pastor I have the joy of teaching, leading worship, visioning for our future, and strengthening the wider East Hartford community. Nearly everything I do is in collaboration with talented staff and dedicated volunteers, far too many to name.

Teaching

With *Aileen Casey* in full effect as the communications specialist, I had space in my schedule to experiment with some new programs, many of which invited members of the wider community and visitors of the church to tap into the rich faith community here at First Church, not to mention the great fun had by long-time church members. Much gratitude for *Louise Holmes*, Ministry Program Assistant, and the Board of Deacons for their support of many of these.

Programs included:

- ❖ Spiritual Goals January Workshop – drawing a visitor all the way from Springfield, MA!
- ❖ Friendship Tea in February received an encore response.
- ❖ February couples' dinner enriched connections and relationships.
- ❖ Book study on "Anxious to Talk About It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism" by Carolyn Helsel challenged and transformed a faithful group of disciples.
- ❖ Transgendering Faith Study, based on two books, "The Bible and the Transgender Experience: How Scripture Supports Gender Variance" by Linda Tatro Herzer and "Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality & Spirituality Stories and Worship Resources" edited by Leanne McCall Tigert & Maren Tirabassi, was thought-provoking and moving.
- ❖ Movie Nights faced technical difficulties
- ❖ Disciples' Dinner on "How to be a Christian in these political times?" included a passionate conversation and delicious meal.
- ❖ Food for Thought - young adult group (see page 15 for more details)
- ❖ Pottery Night with guest potter Jamie
- ❖ Confirmation Class, co-led with *Louise Holmes*
- ❖ Centering Prayer on Wednesdays in Lent provided space for peace and prayer for a small group.
- ❖ Advent Spiritual Exploration featured creative stations and small group discussion of the advent themes each Sunday afternoon in December

Worship Leadership

Worship was filled with rich blessings as well. This year featured a Lenten sermon series on "Friendship" and a summer sermon series of "Games with God". Our first GLBT Pride Communion featured rainbow colored challah bread. The Ash Wednesday labyrinth walk introduced an ancient spiritual practice to the congregation, with some loving it and others not so much. Much gratitude to the talents of the Board of Deacons, *Jerry Scheinfeldt*, Music Director, and *Chris Basler*, summer piano player.

Visioning Our Future I've worked extensively with the insightful *Chuck Holmes*, Moderator, and the Standing Committee on "big picture" questions for the congregation. We have examined cultural changes, reading Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer's "Beyond Resistance", named losses, charted ministry priorities and elicited input from the wider congregation on their hopes and desires for the congregation.

The ability to look at the big picture is due in large part to a change in meeting times. Beginning last April, All Boards began meeting on the same Sunday. Following worship and coffee hour each board meets for an hour and then representatives (or the entire board) reconvene in the dining room to report back. This time of sharing has allowed for quick calendar adjustments and more direct communication between boards and members at large. It was an experiment that has worked out well!

Strengthening the Wider Community

Reforming our world to be more just and loving for all people is core to discipleship and an important part of ministry. My engagement with the wider East Hartford community was focused this year on:

- Shepherding the Woodward House Education Program, including recruiting residents, regular mentor meetings, and convening the WHEP Board. Much gratitude to *Candy Guastamachio* for her passion and compassion and the WHEP Board for their faithful and adaptive leadership.
- Graduating from the Citizens Police Academy, a 6-week course with the East Hartford Police Department where I learned more about community policing and safety. My attendance arose out of informative quarterly police-clergy meetings. I was honored to offer a blessing at the Believe 5K Run for families of officers who have committed suicide.
- Attendance at some activities of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, an alliance of faith communities in the greater Hartford region working for justice in our communities through community organizing.
- As Executive Officer of Troop 1, I encouraged the creation of a new annual check-in with guardians and coordinated a special program for scouts on mutual respect by East Hartford Youth Services. Gratitude for the guidance of *Joe Murdzek*, *Brenda Murdzek*, and *Chris Basler*.

My professional development this year included two inspiring retreats, both resulting in the formation of clergy groups for ongoing support and reflection.

- In July I attended a week-long training on community organizing for faith leaders. My participation in this ecumenical training was fully funded by the CT Conference of the UCC. I deepened my understanding of the call upon churches to work for structural changes to the injustices which plague our communities and practical skills for doing the work within our congregation.
- In October I attended a week-long retreat for discerning clergy across the country, sponsored by the UCC Pension Boards. This CREDO seminar featured workshops on every dimension of health: spiritual health, vocational health, physical health, mental health, and financial health. I left with a deeper sense of call and a rich set of resources for better health all around.

I have been spiritually nourished by ongoing monthly spiritual direction, weekly yoga and tai chi classes, and daily devotionals. I've enjoyed sharing some of my spiritual insights in "Embodied Faith", a new article for our monthly Columns newsletter.

I'm looking forward to many more joyous years with this faithful congregation.

Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar

DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION **MINISTRY PROGRAM ASSISTANT**

For two years, I have been in the role of Ministry Program Assistant, which merged the Director of Christian Education with the Office Administrator. In this position, I am in the church office during the week to answer the telephone, answer the door and answer questions. I keep the calendar and do my best to keep things running smoothly. In addition, I provide administrative support as needed for the various events and activities in our church. It is a work in progress but, as always, this church is very supportive and helpful whenever an extra hand is needed.

Our Sunday School is made up of three different age groups. Our youngest are under the age of four and are in the Nursery and Preschool class. These little ones are taught by *Maggie Sanzo* and *Louise Holmes*. The Elementary Sunday School class is for children in Kindergarten through Grade 5 which is taught by *Kathy Cattanach* and *Patricia Andrulot*. Our year-long Confirmation class, along with their mentors, is led by *Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar* and *Louise Holmes*. Thank you all for your continued dedication.

Twice each year, we have a weekend of fun, faith and fellowship in a different setting. Silver Lake is a camp in the northwest hills of Sharon, Connecticut, owned by the United Church of Christ. Silver Lake is a special get-away where we have a Spiritual program, some Bible study, free time for conversation, recreation and great food. The setting is relaxing and the company beyond compare! On our February Family Retreat, our group of twenty, young and not-so-young, delved into the theme of "Friendship". We learned about Biblical friendships as well as our own friendships. In October, twenty-three women journeyed to Silver Lake where we relaxed and learned techniques to help us with our "Women's Spirituality and Mindfulness".

During the summer, Silver Lake offers weeklong conferences. This year, *Xena Roser* attended a week of summer camp. *Logan Satalino* served as a Camp Counselor.

As part of the East Hartford Holiday Fest Weekend, First Church sponsored a Pancake Breakfast and visit with Santa. With the money raised and with the support from WEB, EHIM, the Missions Board and several individuals, our church was able to enhance Christmas for two East Hartford families. Toys, games, books and clothing were purchased, wrapped and given to four children. The families also received a gift basket and a grocery store gift card.

The Board of Christian Education and I work together to have children and family focused activities throughout the year. My thanks go out to all who have helped by volunteering, supporting and donating. You are positive role models for the youth of our church, and I appreciate your support!

Louise Holmes

COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST

Aileen Casey worked energetically as our Communication Specialist this year. She successfully organized our various communication channels, including:

- Designing our monthly Columns newsletter
- Setting up templates for our weekly emails
- Maintaining our website
- Creating Events on Social Media (Facebook, Craigslist, and MeetUp)
- Setting Pastor Kelly Jane up on Instagram
- Designing print flyers and updating the church bulletin boards

Aileen was instrumental in creating a system for effective and efficient communications throughout the congregation, as well as working diligently to get the word out to local news sources. The East Hartford Gazette regularly published our events and the Hartford Courant Community featured the Woodward House Education Program Celebration on their front page in July.

In September she stepped down from her position, as her artistic design business was taking off. She continues to beautify our monthly columns as a volunteer. *Louise Holmes* has skillfully taken over the weekly communication emails, the bulletin boards, compiling the information for Columns, and distributing the Columns newsletter. *Pastor Kelly Jane* updates the website and social media. *Robin Clark* has graciously assisted in advertising the Church Fair on Facebook.

Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Board of Christian Education supports children and family-focused activities throughout the year. Many thanks to our wonderful teachers who have served our Sunday School children year after year. They are *Kathy Cattanach, Patricia Andrulot, Maggie Sanzo* and *Louise Holmes*.

The children enjoyed an Easter Egg Hunt on Easter morning. Children of all ages decorated bags and collected Easter eggs. They, then, turned them in for their choice of an assortment of toys, candy and goodies.

Each year, in June, the Sunday School is responsible for the worship service on Children's Sunday. Our classes prepare and look forward to doing their part. This year's theme was "Pentecost - The Birthday of the Church". We invited the congregation to wear red, yellow and orange, the colors of Pentecost. Presents were wrapped representing the many ways our children are an asset to our church. It was a festive day!

Our Rally Day luncheon was a wonderful time of fellowship as we gathered back after the summer and began the school year with our new Sunday School classes. There were different crafts and activities surrounding our theme of "Who We Are in God's Garden." We also recognized the "retirement" of *Joe Murdzek* who has been a faithful teacher of our High School Sunday School class for over 20 years.

The Board of Christian Education sponsors the Wish Tree where toys, books, backpacks, hats, sweatshirts, scarves, mittens and many other practical items are generously donated by our congregation to the Homeless Shelter here in East Hartford.

It is wonderful to have such support from our congregation for the children, who are the future of our church.

Louise Holmes

BOARD OF DEACONESSES

The Board of Deaconesses continued its service to the church and its members by making visits, phone calls, sending greeting cards and by attending funerals. This past year there were ten Deaconesses and two Life Deaconesses.

On Sundays, the Deaconesses greet visitors and members at the guest book table near the library. We deliver Easter plants and Christmas poinsettias to members who are homebound, ill or who have lost a loved one during the year. We purchase The Upper Room, which is available to all members and located on the tables at the entrance to the Sanctuary.

We also help with the Thanksgiving Bags which are given to our homebound members. The Deaconesses compiled a list of the homebound members and worked with the Missions Boards to find volunteers for delivery. We provided a card in each bag identifying that the Thanksgiving treats were from the church.

The Deaconesses take our turn providing light refreshments and serving at coffee hour following Sunday worship. The Deaconesses, along with *Rich Beebe*, hosted the annual Christmas Wassail Bowl.

We look forward to continuing our ministry to the church.

Joyce Wolk
Gerry Rozie

BOARD OF DEACONS

The Board of Deacons has again taken care of the Spiritual needs of the First Congregational Church of East Hartford. The 2019 Board was comprised of *Dave Gaston*; Chairperson, *Kathy Cattanach*; Vice Chairperson, *Pat Sirois*; Secretary, *Gail Saunders*; Treasurer, *Darline Balch*, *Elizabeth Harlow* and *Nancy Tomlinson*.

April started the first year for this Board of Deacons by cutting and distributing palms for Palm Sunday. Maundy Thursday Service encompassing Communion and Tenebrae Service – making sure the shrouds on the Wooden Cross in front of the Church were correct. Easter Sunrise Service and also Easter Sunday Service. All this was followed up by an Easter Labyrinth Walk and reception of new members to round our first month.

The Deacon Board was involved in many of the activities and programs of this Church during the year and a short list follows.

- Pulpit Supply when required
- Thinking Theologically - A mini presentation by Rev. Don Vincent
- New Deacon Ordination
- New Member Service
- Jubilee Sunday
- Square Dancing Night
- Pottery Making Class
- All Saints Sunday
- White Gift Service
- Soup For The Soul Gatherings
- Autumn Luncheon

The Board of Deacons would like to thank the Congregation for their help and participation of the many programs of our Church. The Deacons have several vacant positions available for members of the Congregation. Please join us.

Dave Gaston

BOARD OF MISSIONS

The Missions Board uses money given each year to support many worthy causes. The largest portion of our giving goes to Basic Support of our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM).

We participated in special mission collections in addition to our Basic Support of the United Church of Christ (UCC). They are One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church and The Christmas Fund. We are a "5 for 5!" UCC church. Also, a special collection was made for the Heifer International project and in June, we received donations for the Blanket Fund to assist those in need in times of disaster.

We also support other causes with contributions to:

- Friendship Center
- East Hartford Interfaith Ministries
- Woodward House
- YMCA
- Silver Lake Conference Center
- Garden Club
- Emergency Local Mission Support

And, who can't resist a Lenten program with a fabulous potluck luncheon? (Yum!) The "Souper" Bowl Sunday was such a success that we ran out of soup early. The money raised was donated to the East Hartford Soup Kitchen.

As an Open and Affirming Church, in June, several church members and friends attended a special movie day at Trinity College held as part of the LGBTQ festivities held in Hartford.

The Community Garden on our front lawn continues to be a beacon for the community's needs. Many of our neighbors have taken advantage of the delicious vegetables available for them. With help from many church members throughout the season, the garden is a big success with donations to church members, town Food Banks and area residents.

Each year the East Hartford Social Service Department depends on local businesses and churches to help in the collection of toys for the town's less fortunate. Our church members do not disappoint as many toys are collected. And, they do not stop there. Ongoing support of the Food Bank is seen almost weekly with donations of food and money.

The Missions Board would like to thank the entire congregation for the many ways you have supported our programs and greater world missions.

Darrell R. Basler

BOARD OF MUSIC

The choirs and special soloists continued to enhance the worship and special services throughout 2019. Your Music Director is especially thankful for the contributions of the many individuals who gave of their time and talents.

The Senior Choir performs nearly every Sunday, requiring rehearsals twice a week, with additional rehearsals for special services. We work closely with *Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar* and other worship leaders so that the music becomes an integral and coordinated part of the Sunday worship service.

We continue to present a wide variety of music genres and selections and we have tried to involve the congregation more in singing during the services. As always, we welcome your feedback, comments and suggestions.

One highlight of the musical year is worthy of note. The Senior Choir presented the “Christmas Cantata” on December 15th entitled “The Winter Rose”. Many members of the congregation commented, once again, that this might have been the best Cantata ever! Our professional orchestra certainly complemented an outstanding Senior Choir. Once again, we thank *Erin Cattanach, Chris Basler* and *Candy Guastamachio* for providing wonderful additions of percussion, keyboard and flute.

During the summer months, we welcomed various musicians, including different vocalists and musical groups who shared their talents during our worship services. A special thanks to *Chris Basler* and *Connie Holmeen* who filled in at the organ and piano benches very ably throughout the year, including the summer Sundays.

Once again, a special “call-out” to Senior Choir members whose dedication and enthusiasm add greatly to our worship services.

Jerry Scheinfeldt

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

The Board of Stewardship continues to be proud of the wonderful people in our congregation who have invested so much time and effort into our church.

The church's mission is primarily the spiritual growth of our congregation, and with everyone's help, to keep the church fiscally balanced. We have met both of these goals this past year in excellent fashion!

We are proud to say we celebrated one full year of residents in the Woodward House, with three residents living in the house and working in schools within the community in the spring. We welcomed a new intern, *Megan Gaul*, who is presently living in the house and working at Pitkin School. Thank you to everyone who has welcomed our residents.

Our Golf Tournament and Holiday Village Fair also contributed to our spiritual growth and well-being, as we worked together to make them both successful. Your energy with these two fundraisers have made these events memorable. Thank you.

We also had two other successful fundraisers, two Savers Drives. Thanks to everyone who donated items and their time helping.

Special thank you to *Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar* for her help and support with Stewardship and a big thank you to our congregation for their help and support this year.

Jackie LeBrun

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

As usual, 2019 was a busy year for the Board of Trustees. While the previous 2 years required much of the Trustees' attention on getting the Woodward House ready for the new Education Program, the board was able to spend more time this year focusing on our meeting house.

Building Use

The biggest news was bringing in 2 dance groups who lost their space at the Community Cultural Center when the Circle of Life closed its doors. West Coast Jamn (adult swing dancing) and DLL (children's dance lessons) now use our dining room for their dance sessions.

One result of our new guests was one of our biggest projects of the year. The church purchased a new "dance-friendly" floor for the dining room. In return, members of West Coast Jamn supplied the labor and installed the floor. The financial contributions from the 2 dance groups should pay for the cost of the floor before the end of 2020.

The dining room was also booked on Christmas night for a dinner and dance, which was well attended, with some people driving up to an hour and a half to attend.

Along with the Food Bank, EHIM, YMCA Day Care, Boy Scout Troop 1, and various church functions and meetings, our building remains a very busy place.

Meeting House and Grounds Projects

In addition to the dining room floor, the following projects were completed this year:

- Trimmed trees near the Woodward House
- Fixed light fixtures in the YMCA Daycare and in hall by the men's restroom
- Filled potholes in the parking lot
- Painted the new emergency door behind the sanctuary
- Purchased mulch for the Garden Team
- Removed old, unused phone line; updated features on existing phone lines
- Sanded, cleaned, and painted heater covers and baseboards in YMCA Daycare
- Painted areas in library and chapel that hadn't been painted recently
- Replaced the toolshed roof
- Fixed accordion doors for the Food Bank
- Had floors in Scout Room, Youth Lounge, Hallway, and Narthex stripped and waxed
- Fixed the leak, cleaned the carpet and removed mold in the Choir Room
- Improved lighting by the ramp door
- Fixed 5 toilets (cost of plumber reimbursed by MDC since issues were caused by work being done on pipes outside the building)
- Purchased new chair dollies

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

(continued)

Woodward House Projects

While several major projects have been completed over the past 2 years, there is always more to do at the Woodward House. In addition to responding to maintenance calls (usually *Dick Stevens*), the following work was done at the Woodward House in 2019:

- Installed motion lights on the outside of the house
- Repaired or replaced handrail and spindles and painted front porch

I would like to thank the Board of Trustees members, *Connie Holmeen, Carol Joly, Erin Cattanach, and Pam Scheinfeldt* for all of their efforts this year. Also, thank you to the many members of the church who have pitched in to help clean and maintain our property over the course of the year. I can't name everyone, but would like to specifically mention *Dick Stevens, Allen Apel, Kathy Cattanach, Brenda, Shawn, and Evan Murdzek, Rich Beebe, and Gail Saunders* for their efforts.

Howard Satalino

FLOWER COMMITTEE

Thank you to all of you who donated flowers each Sunday to beautify our chancel. The donations of the Easter and Christmas plants are a special addition and greatly appreciated.

A portion of each Easter donation was given to the First Congregational Church Scholarship Fund. We had 12 lily and 8 tulip plants as requested by the Deaconesses for distribution to our homebound members. We received 30 donations: 21 “in memory of” and 9 “in celebration of”. After the cost of the plants, \$135 was donated to the Scholarship Fund. In addition, Newkirk & Whitney/Callahan Funeral Home donated 14 plants. We thank them for their generosity.

A portion of each Christmas donation was given to EHIM (East Hartford Interfaith Ministries). We ordered 12 poinsettia plants as requested by the Deaconesses for distribution to our homebound members. We received 29 donations: 19 “in memory of”, 8 “in celebration of”, and 2 “in honor of”. After the cost of the plants, \$162 was donated to EHIM. This year we ordered the poinsettia plants from the East Hartford Lion’s Club to support their fundraising efforts. In addition, Newkirk & Whitney/Callahan Funeral Home donated 14 poinsettias. We thank them for their generosity.

Because of ongoing problems with the last two florists with which we worked, we are no longer ordering altar flowers each Sunday. There will be seasonal (winter, spring, summer, fall) artificial arrangements adorning the altar. Anyone wishing to donate flowers on a specific date “in honor of” or “in memory of” friends or family is still welcome to do so. It would be your responsibility to purchase the arrangement at a place of your choosing and bring it to church. To have the donation acknowledged in the Sunday bulletin, the church office would have to be notified by the Wednesday of the week of the donation. The arrangement would be placed on a stand in the chancel for all to see during worship. Christmas (poinsettias) and Easter flower (lilies and tulips) donations will continue as usual.

This year, after over 40 years, *Jessie Slade* is retiring as Chair of the Flower Committee. We thank her for her dedicated service ensuring that our chancel looked beautiful.

The Flower Committee
Jessie Slade, Chair (retired)
Connie Holmeen
Jayne Apel

FOOD BANK

The First Congregational Church Food Bank was created by the Christian Social Action Committee in December 1981, under *Beth Harlow* and *Gerry Rozie*. In 1982, our Food Bank partnered with Foodshare, which had just opened in Bloomfield to serve the hungry in our area. Our model of operation was as an “emergency food bank”, providing clients referred by East Hartford Social Services with approximately 9 meals (3 days x 3 meals). First Congregational Church decided to provide space in the Scout Room, and *Ralph Bragg* built closets and an area for freezers and refrigerators in 1984. The Food Bank was moved to the Board of Missions in the fall of 1989 under *Allan* and *Joan Corcoran*, later *Jean Hamilton*, *Nancy Van Horn* and *Cyndy Fields*, *Janet Fournier*, *Bonnie Lemire* and *Jayne Apel* and others, whose records were not found. *Roy* and *Peg Spiller* took over in 1999, later *Abbie* and *Rich Beebe* in 2007. Throughout the 39 years so far, the one constant has been *Gerry Rozie*. She was instrumental in its founding and remains the major catalyst today, acquiring and coordinating the volunteers who perform the task of providing the clients with needed food, as well as being one of those volunteer servers herself.

Records are only available since 1992, but between January of 1992 and the end of 2019, over 216,000 meals have been provided to more than 24,000 persons. It has been said that actions speak louder than words, and *Gerry Rozie's* actions have shown God's love to an enormous amount of people throughout the past 39 years. *Gerry's* current team includes *Joy* and *Dave Gaston*, *Joyce Wolk*, *Joyce Emerson*, *Joanne Powell*, *Carol Callahan* and *Elizabeth Roberts*. In 2019, we provided 6,858 meals for 762 persons.

The Community Thanksgiving Dinner served more than 200 dinners, including eat-ins and take-outs. Pam and Clarence Douglas again brought their dedicated team of volunteers to prepare and serve this magnificent meal. Mike Bernardi's kitchen team at Riverside Health Care, led by Food Services Director Collette Sykes and Chef Ashton Elliott, once again cooked the turkeys to perfection, while Stop and Shop of East Hartford donated pies and desserts.

Various groups provided food and money during the year. Thanks go out to Boy Scout Troop 1, the U.S. Postal Service, LEHY Swim Club, Riverside Health Care Center and Stop & Shop for their help. The Matching Grant Program at Foodshare enabled us to double our money spent there. Shop-Rite once again gave us a grant at Foodshare, and we received product at greatly reduced prices through FEMA and CT-NAP. Monetary donations came from members of First Congregational Church, the Town of East Hartford and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. The caring assistance from these “Angels” humbles us and makes us forever grateful. Stop & Shop provided us with Holiday boxes of meal components, donated by shoppers.

Changes in federal regulations and Foodshare's desired model of operation will make us unable to partner with Foodshare after June of 2020. It remains to be seen how we can function and for how long after that date. Larger Food Banks with more diverse hours and open shopping will be the new norm, and I think that will better serve those in need. I hope that we can continue to host the open Community Thanksgiving Dinner, at the least.

I offer a heartfelt thanks and a “Well done, good and faithful servants” to all who have helped.

Abbie and *Rich Beebe*, Co-coordinators

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: YOUNG ADULT GROUP

Once a month for over a year now this congregation has provided space, food, and pastoral leadership to a budding group of young adults under 40 years old to explore spiritual matters. The group averages around 12 people every month, with a total of 27 adults participating at some point in the last year. When so inspired, regular participants will take the lead in purchasing food or leading the spiritual discussion, otherwise *Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar* takes the lead. We have called this group “Food for Thought” because we have thoughtful conversations around a meal. It’s a model Jesus started with the 12 disciples at the Last Supper.

This program of the church has been incredibly meaningful.

We had a year-end written reflection and I asked, “Has food for thought run its course for now and is ready to take a break?” All 12 respondents enthusiastically said, “NO!” Those who participate regularly obviously wanted to continue, but so did those who can only come occasionally, and one respondent who moved away wrote, “even though I cannot participate from afar, I love seeing the photos and seeing people enjoy the church space! It makes me smile.”

Why such an enthusiastic response? Participants love cooking together, the summer campfires at Camp Neipsic were a great hit, and the special paint night especially fun – but those are all means to a deeper spiritual need for community, friendship, and spiritual discussion.

When asked “How has Food for Thought helped you grow in your spiritual life?” Respondents shared the deep value in discussing ideas in a small group of similar age people and the new friendships that are forming. One wrote, “it has been impactful for me to spend time with other young adults who share my faith. Most of my friends are not Christian and so it made a difference to not feel alone.”

To many millennials and people under 40, church is seen, at worst, as unsafe and harmful and, at best, boring and out of date. However, one Food for Thought participant wrote about finding healing through this church group. Food for Thought has provided a safe space for young adults to bond and grow deeper in their faith. As one wrote, “Food for Thought day is something to look forward to and have meaningful conversations. We learn a little something from one another each time.”

Indeed, I have personally enjoyed this group – they are authentic, honest, vulnerable and incredibly insightful...as well as a ball to hang out with.

Themes for this year included: Stupid Goals, Love Languages, Dirty Earth Day, Campfire Confessions, Forgiveness in the Forest, Games with God, Painting with God, Tradition, and Bread of Life Christmas Cookies.

Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar

GARDEN CLUB

The Community Garden here at First Church has completed its fifth year of operation. We are a committed group of volunteers that grow vegetables that are distributed through our Food Bank. In the spring, we clean up the garden beds to get them ready for planting. We gather to decide what to plant and where to plant it. Seeds and seedlings are planted throughout the spring months. During the summer, our volunteers water the garden and pick vegetables that are ready for eating. We clean the produce, package it in plastic bags or baskets and place in the Food Bank refrigerator. We weed the garden beds and keep them looking nice and neat. In the fall, we clean out all the garden beds, store all our equipment for the winter, and place tarps on the garden beds to keep out snow, salt and sand from the street and sidewalk.

This year we grew tomatoes, scallions, bell peppers, Cubanelle peppers, spinach, lettuce, pole green beans, yellow beans, broccoli, radishes, onions, carrots, potatoes and peas.

A big thank you to the East Hartford High School National Honor Society for helping in the spring by planting some vegetables in the garden and cleaning out the flower beds around the Woodward House.

I would like to thank the dedicated volunteers of the garden club for maintaining this important Mission of the church. We take care of our neighbors. If you would like to join our club, please find me after church on Sunday.

Brenda Murdzek

HOLIDAY VILLAGE FAIR COMMITTEE

Our Holiday Village Fair continues to attract many area shoppers. We are proud that we have not resorted to outside vendors, as many fairs have done. Items are donated and the booths are run by our church members!

Gift baskets and the cemetery/holiday boxes continue to be popular. The Angel Booth enticingly displayed previously owned treasures.

The Christmas Boutique again offered mostly hand-made wreaths, ornaments, snowmen, hymnal angels, decorated Hershey bars, etc., for decorating and gift-giving. We keep the Boutique area open for after church shopping, as well as during the East Hartford Holiday Fest. This has added \$1,432.31 to the fair proceeds this year!

Many shoppers looked for a rare find in Grandma's Attic as well as the "New to You" Jewelry Booth. The Handicraft Corner was filled with many hats, mittens, blankets and beautiful hand decorated wall hangings.

The smell of popcorn drew people to the Scout Room, where the Country Store was filled with cheese, cheese balls, jelly and other irresistible food items. The Cookie Walk was very busy during the day as customers chose their favorite cookies. Other food items in the Scout Room were in the Candy Booth and Bake Table, where enticing assortments of candy, pies and cake were offered.

This year we did not have the Victorian Tea Room. Instead, the First Church Diner sold breakfast sandwiches and muffins when the fair opened. The lunch choices were an assortment of sandwiches, salads, chowder, chili and grilled items prepared by the busy kitchen crew. Fair goers seemed to enjoy this change of offerings.

Chris Basler's piano music added a festive atmosphere to the day.

Thank you to all who worked so hard to make the fair a success once more!

Our final profit was \$8,736.03!!!

Lorraine Trinks

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

In 2019 the Human Resources Committee reluctantly accepted *Aileen Casey's* resignation as Communication Specialist. Her contributions over her short stay were remarkable, and she left on good terms. She prepared the remaining staff for her departure, such that we have not sought to fill the position.

We are also working with the Senior Pastor to create an annual process of goal setting and performance review which we anticipate implementing fully in 2021.

Joe Murdzek, Assistant Moderator

Allen Apel

Mary Mourey

Rev. Kelly Jane Ceasar

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

2019 was an excellent year for almost all asset classes. After the meltdown of the S & P 500 during the fourth quarter of 2018, there were many reasons to worry, such as rising interest rates, and a potential trade war with China. However, the markets turned around quickly in the new year, the Fed cut rates 3 times, and there was some agreement in the trade war negotiations. Also, unemployment hit near-historic lows. Large Cap stocks, represented by the S & P 500, were up 31.49%. The Russell 2000, a measure of smallcap stocks, was up 25.52%, and the MSCI EAFE index of International stocks, was up 22.01%. The Barclays Capital Aggregate bond index was up 8.72%.

Going into 2020, Morgan Stanley Wealth Management believes that the S & P 500 will go to 3000 from 3322 as of this writing, that the MSCI Europe index will be down about 4%, and the Japanese TOPIX index will be up about 7% from December 31st 2019 to December 31st 2020.*

As of December 31, 2019, the total value of the First Congregational Church portfolio was \$1,613,869. That amount is up from the December 31, 2018 value of \$1,401,972. The Church withdrew \$73,313.35 from the portfolio this year. Total return was up 20.65% in 2019. Currently, the portfolio asset allocation is 68.2% in stocks, 20.1% in bonds, 7.2% in alternatives, and 4.5% in cash.

The Investment Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of Trustee's and its members include *Jerry Scheinfeldt*, *Randy Holmeen*, *Rev. Kelly Jane Caesar* and *Allen Apel*. The advisor to the Investment Committee is *Brett Cavalieri*. For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact *Randy Holmeen* at 860-275-0771 and thank you for the trust you have placed in the FCC investment committee.

*Morgan Stanley Global Macro Forecast 2020

Brett Cavalieri, Financial Advisor

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The goal of the Library is to provide religious and inspirational books as well as other materials for the use of the Congregation, Sunday School and Staff of the church.

The Library is a rich resource for inspirational and devotional reading, open to the entire congregation. The Children's Library, across the hall, also has many books for a variety of ages. Take time to stop in before or after worship on Sundays. A Librarian will be on hand to help you find what you are looking for.

To direct attention to themes we feel are relevant, we have monthly displays on the circular table in the Library. The themes for 2019 were:

Black History

Story of Lent

Focus on Family

Honoring our Sunday School Teachers

Fall into Reading

Give Thanks for Thanksgiving

Christmas

The Library Committee meets the second Sunday of the month except July and August.

Nancy Tomlinson

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

The Scholarship Committee awarded these worthy applicants:

Evan Murdzek

Logan Satalino

Tobias Jones

Frantz Innocent, Jr.

Ryswick Innocent

Shari Pike

Stuart Pike

Hailee Guglielmi

Raymond Clark

Allison Gunter

Angela Gunter

The awards were presented on Children's Sunday. We should remember to continue contributing to the Scholarship Fund as the opportunities arise.

SUNDAY BULLETIN COMMITTEE

Each month, members of our congregation and various groups within the congregation donate the weekly bulletin for our church services. This year the sponsorship was at a cost of \$20.00. The bulletin is given in memory of someone special and some are given in celebration of family members or special events. The choice is up to the person(s) who is donating the bulletin for that particular week. Also, Newkirk and Whitney and the Benjamin J. Callahan Funeral Home generously donate the weekly bulletin for the months of July and August as they have done for many years.

The following groups have provided the bulletin this past year: the Deacons, the Deaconesses, the Trustees, W.E.B. (Women Empowered and Blessed), JYF and PYF.

As with everything, we lost some donors due to a death in the family or families moving away. This is a good way to celebrate special occasions (i.e. birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, births, etc.) We are always looking for new donors, so if you are so inclined, we would very much appreciate hearing from you at any time. A BIG thank you to all of you who continue to provide our weekly bulletin. With your help the work of our church continues to grow.

Pam Scheinfeldt

USHERS REPORT

The ushers are a dedicated group of men and women who serve our church in many ways. They escort persons to their seats and lend a helping hand to anyone in need. They serve at all church services including holidays and Christmas Eve. The ushers collect the offering and record attendance at all services. At the completion of events, they are responsible for the tidying up of the sanctuary. At all times they keep a watchful eye for the security and safety of our membership and guests.

During the year of January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019 the attendance was as follows:

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
Regular Sunday Service	2892	3050	3068	3112
Ash Wednesday	23	16	21	15
Maundy Thursday	35	SCC	54	66
Easter Sunday				
7:00 AM	16	21	15	19
10:00 AM	118	112	142	141
Children`s Sunday	80	91	95	86
Carol Sing	20	24	19	38
Christmas Eve	59	64	68	65
<hr/>				
Total:	3243	3378	3482	3542

SCC – Worship at South Congregational Church

Chuck Holmes

W.E.B. – WOMEN EMPOWERED AND BLESSED

Women Empowered and Blessed are members and friends of the church who join together on the third Thursday of the month from September through June, for socialization, dinner or dessert and a program. We are active in supporting the church where we can help.

In 2019 our programs included guest speakers Dr. Steve Judson, Chiropractor, Liz from Cat Rescue, DLL Dance Studio, Eden's Florist demonstrating the art of flower arranging, *Howard Satalino* who spoke on East Hartford women who served in WWI, and a recap of the Woman's Retreat (thank you to all who planned this enjoyable weekend!)

The Game Day and Teacup Auction was again held at church after worship in April, starting with a tasteful potato buffet. We had a lot of fun talking, eating, playing games and raised \$700 which supported the church in a variety of ways.

In June, the W.E.B. Ladies Lunch was held at Savvi's Restaurant. This event is open to all of the ladies of the church as well as their friends.

Members of W.E.B. help at the Pancake Breakfast with Santa during the East Hartford Holiday Fest. The proceeds buy Christmas presents for families in East Hartford.

We would like to extend a special thank you to *Mark Otis* for his years of cooking our dinners. He will be missed now that he and *Marci* have moved.

Anyone wishing to join our group, attend one or two meetings or all of our meetings, is welcome to come.

Sharon Walters

WOODWARD HOUSE EDUCATION PROGRAM

We are in our second year of the Woodward House Education Program! The church provides housing and utilities to young adults beginning careers in urban education, in exchange for residents serving 8 hours each month in the church and wider community. The program aims to nurture connections between the church, community and schools, while strengthening and supporting new professionals in urban education.

We continue to overflow with love and contribute to the Capitol Campaign aimed at recovering the costs of repairing the Woodward House. To expand our original area, we opened the program to tutors and entry-level education positions in both East Hartford and Manchester.

Candy Guastamachio, House Mentor, and *Rev. Kelly Jane* met frequently with the residents. In the fall, the mentoring group expanded to add *Brenda Murdzek* and *Kathy Cattanch*. The Woodward House Education Program Board oversees the program and supports the house mentors in regular meetings.

Shannon Dobney and *Marisa Ozark* joined *Brittany LaFleur* to live in the house in December of 2018. During the year, the three residents gave us many more volunteer hours than we required.

Among the many things they did, they hosted an International Women's Day Celebration entitled "Gals, Games and Goodies" for the women of the church. They also sponsored a Trivia Night to benefit the Backpack Program at Pitkin School, sending home nonperishable food to children in need.

We had a year-end celebration where a Time Capsule was put together and is now kept in the Woodward House library. In ten years, it will be opened for us to see the pictures, letters and memorabilia from our first year.

In June, all three residents moved on to full-time positions in education. *Brittany* became a member of First Congregational Church and continues to volunteer her time and help with the Sunday School children.

Megan Gaul moved into the Woodward House in August as a member of AmeriCorps FoodCorp. She is presently working at Pitkin School teaching elementary school children about healthy eating.

We look forward to continuing to grow with this exciting new ministry!

Louise Holmes

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA, TROOP 1

Boy Scout Troop 1 would like to thank the Church for their continued sponsorship of our troop by helping us continue to achieve our mission of preparing young men to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Troop 1 now meets most Monday nights in the Church Dining Room and in 2019 is open to boys ages 11 to 17. Currently, Troop 1 has 11 registered scouts and 21 registered adult leaders. Tim Lynch is Scoutmaster of the Troop. *Chris Basler* is the Troop's Chartered Organization Representative and Gary Allen, Jr. is the Troop's Committee Chairperson.

Some of the major highlights for the year were:

- In February, we participated in an outdoor winter event called the Klondike at Camp Webster in Ashford. Scouts used dogsleds and hiked during the day to different stations. Learning and Applying outdoor living. Great weather. Saw HAM radio tower in use for the event as well.
- In March we stayed in the 49'ers cabin at Camp Mattatuck in Plymouth, CT.
- We also had our first fundraiser at the famous Augie Ray's on Main Street.
- In April and May, we camped in Camp Neipsic in Glastonbury. Some camp clean up, some rain drops. A lot of advancement opportunities. But this year Marc Bassos with East Hartford Youth services ran a bullying workshop. April was for scouts, May was for parents.
- In June, the troop prepared for summer camp, weekly meetings changed to Mondays starting August
- In July, 8 Scouts and 3 leaders spent a week of Summer Camp at Camp Webster in Ashford. Triple E virus being researched of reported cases.
- In August, September and October all BSA outdoor camping was halted due to Triple E Virus.
- Troop had its first Columbus Day weekend truck stop. Worked out ok. Will do again.
- In November, Triple E virus ban had been lifted. The Scouts had their annual feast and campout at Camp Johnson in Bolton. The menu included turkey and ham cooked over coals in garbage cans, and pies cooked in Dutch ovens. Also, WEBELOS from pack 61 came out for a day to visit our Troop. Along with the feast, midmonth, the troop started with collections of the Scouting for Food bags and St. Mary's Cemetery Flags disbursement. What a month of community activities and Scout Fellowship.
- With weekly Monday storms, the Troop did not participate in the First Aid-oree
- December concluded the calendar year with our annual Spaghetti Supper as part of the Town's Holiday Fest. The \$568 profits of the dinner were donated to the East Hartford Interfaith Ministries (EHIM) Soup Kitchen. We noticed a drop in attendance. After review with committee, dinner will have expanded hours for dinner. Moving forward, Troop 1 is looking forward to working with Church in various capacities along with having a Scout Sunday Service for those scouts that would like to participate with the Reverend.

Gary Allen, Jr., Troop 1 Committee Chair

EAST HARTFORD INTERFAITH MINISTRIES

HUMAN NEEDS FUND

East Hartford Interfaith Ministries (EHIM) continues to serve as the primary non-profit charity in East Hartford. EHIM has three divisions: Friendship Center (soup kitchen), New Beginnings (new and used furniture distribution), and Human Needs Fund (cash grants to help meet the costs of rent, utilities, fuel, and other imperative life supporting needs). EHIM serves only low-income residents of East Hartford.

First Church provides free office space for the Human Needs Fund volunteer intake coordinator. Here, I interview clients to determine need and eligibility, often offering, as well, emotional and spiritual support. Sometimes I can also make referrals and suggest networking possibilities, advocate with utilities, fuel providers, and landlords for payment schedules and occasionally even matching gifts and partial debt forgiveness. The Human Needs Fund office is open on Thursdays from 9:00am to 4:00pm.

Joyce Wolk assists me in returning phone calls requesting assistance and in scheduling appointments. Hers is a weekly effort requiring friendliness, patience and organizing skills. For all you do, *Joyce*, thank you so much!

During the past year, the Human Needs Fund served 298 households. Total distributions were:

Rent - \$11,700

Fuel - \$12,044

Utilities/Others - \$2,200

Total gifts were \$25,944

Four organizations made especially generous donations to the Human Needs over the past year. These include:

Masonicare - \$10,000

Archbishop's Annual Appeal - \$5,000 (new)

East Hartford Women's Club - \$1,500

John Larson Bocci Tournament - \$800

This is the first year Human Needs Fund has been honored with a gift from the Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford and welcomes their support.

Other financial support is received each year from religious congregations, industry, and caring individuals. Donations to the Human Needs Fund can be given through the church by simply marking your gift Human Needs Fund.

It is a privilege to reach out to some of those most in need in East Hartford as a servant of Christ and on behalf of people of true religion of all traditions.

Beth Harlow, Human Needs Coordinator, Counselor

THE MINISTRY OF THE CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE, UCC

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REPORT OF THE CLERK

BAPTISMS

Mackenzie Rae Basler	January 6, 2019
Hailey Alexis Basler	January 6, 2019

RECEIVED BY CONFIRMATION

NONE

RECEIVED BY LETTER OF TRANSFER

NONE

NEW MEMBERS:

Brittany LaFleur	April 25, 2019
Christopher James Caesar	April 25, 2019
Debra Crockett	August 2, 2019

DEATHS

Florence Schroeter	March 19, 2019
Margaret G. Spiller	May 2, 2019
Elaine Stepanek	August 2, 2019

PLACED ON INACTIVE ROLLS BY STANDING COMMITTEE

NONE

REMOVED FROM ROLLS BY VOTE OF STANDING COMMITTEE

NONE

REMOVED FROM ROLLS BY REQUEST

Mark Otis	August 28, 2019
Marcia Otis	August 28, 2019

TRANSFERS TO OTHER CHURCHES

Timothy Holmes	March 5, 2019
Pamma Leigh Williams	September 24, 2019

<u>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH – January 1, 2018</u>		163
Removed from Rolls	4	
Losses by Death	<u>3</u>	
Total:	7	<u>-7</u>
		156
Received by letter of transfer	0	
New Members	3	
Received by Confirmation	<u>0</u>	
Total:	3	<u>+3</u>
<u>TOTAL ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP – December 31, 2019</u>		159

Jayne L. Apel, Clerk

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Recommendation of the Nominating Committee for Church Officers, Boards and Committees as required by the by-laws of the Church for presentation at the Annual Meeting to be held on March 22, 2020, as well as recognition of the members serving as representatives to councils and conferences and members serving in other ways.

OFFICERS

Moderator	Chuck Holmes	(1) 2021
Assistant Moderator	Joe Murdzek	(1) 2021
Clerk	Jayne Apel	
Assistant Clerk	Elizabeth Harlow	
Treasurer	Allen Apel	
Assistant Treasurer	Brenda Murdzek	

BOARDS OF THE CHURCH

Board of Christian Education (8)

Suzanne Randall	(2) 2021	Elizabeth Roberts	(1) 2021
Christopher Basler	(2) 2021	Joy Gaston	(1) 2021
Lauren Basler	(2) 2022	Rosemarie Jones	(1) 2021
Donna Basler	(1) 2021		

Board of Deaconesses (24)

Marilyn La Fontaine	(9) 2021	Nancy Tomlinson	(6) 2022
Shirley Foster	(9) 2022	Joy Gaston	(3) 2021
Ruby Passon	(9) 2022	Jessie Slade	(3) 2021
Jackie LeBrun	(7) 2022	Erin LaFontaine	(3) 2021
Joyce Wolk	(7) 2022		

Life Deaconesses: Thank you for your many years of devoted service!

Josephine Sale	Gerry Rozie
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Board of Deacons (16)

Dave Gaston	(2) 2021	Elizabeth Harlow	(1) 2021
Pat Sirois	(1) 2021	Nancy Tomlinson	(1) 2021
Kathy Cattanaach	(1) 2021	Darline Balch	(1) 2021

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

(Continued)

Board of Missions (8)

Carol Callahan	(2) 2021	Delilah Ortiz	(1) 2022
Darrell Basler	(2) 2022	Debra Crockett	(1) 2022
Sharon Walters	(1) 2021	Al Harris	(1) 2022

Board of Music (2)

Christopher Basler	(2) 2021	Delilah Ortiz	(1) 2022
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Board of Stewardship (8)

Robin Clark	(2) 2021	Brittany LaFleur	(1) 2022
Jackie LeBrun	(1) 2021	Patricia Andrulot	(1) 2022
Alan Embleton	(2) 2021		

Board of Trustees (8)

Carol Joly	(2) 2021	Pam Scheinfeldt	(1) 2021
Connie Holmeen	(2) 2021	Gail Saunders	(1) 2022
Howard Satalino	(1) 2021	Dick Stevens	(1) 2022
Erin Cattanach	(1) 2021		

Human Resources Committee

Joe Murdzek - Asst. Moderator	Allen Apel	Mary Mourey
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Finance Committee

Chuck Holmes	Jack Ranney
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Investment Committee

Jerry Scheinfeldt	Randy Holmeen
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Flower Committee

Connie Holmeen	Jayne Apel
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Historical Committee

Howard Satalino – Archivist	Margaret Sanzo
Erin Cattanach	Barbara Stevens
David Gaston	Joy Gaston

Library Committee

Josephine Sale	Joan Peters
Gerry Rozie	Toni Fish
Nancy Tomlinson	Jackie LeBrun

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

(Continued)

Nominating Committee

Kathy Cattanach (2) 2022 Gail Saunders (1) 2021 Pat Sirois (1) 2022

Committees of the Church Required by the Bylaws:

Archivist

Howard Satalino

Auditors

Mary Mourey Joyce Emerson

Budget Committee

Jayne Apel (Member at Large)

Historian

Dave Gaston

Librarian

Nancy Tomlinson

Positions Required for Mission and Ministry:

Book of Remembrances and Scholarship Fund

Beth Roberts – acknowledgements and inscriptions

Sunday Bulletin Committee

Pam Scheinfeldt

East Hartford Interfaith Ministry

Kathy Cattanach

Hartford East Association

Beth Harlow David Gaston Joy Gaston

UCC Southern New England Conference

Chuck Holmes (moderator) Kathy Cattanach Brittany LaFleur
Erin Cattanach (alternate)

Ushers

Chuck Holmes

Audit page to be added