

First Congregational Church United Church of Christ Wilmot, NH



Ash Wednesday Service, Wilmot Senior Lunch, Crop Walk, Hanging of the Greens

2024 Annual Report

Annual Meeting
January 26, 2025

WARRANT of the ANNUAL MEETING
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of WILMOT, NH, UCC

You are hereby notified to meet on Sunday, January 26, 2025, immediately following worship to act on the following:

1. To adopt the budget for 2025
2. To elect the following officers
 - a. Three Year Term
 - i. Moderator
 - ii. Clerk
3. To elect the members to the following committees:
 - a. Three Year Term
 - i. Deacons
 - ii. Trustees
 - iii. Justice & Witness
 - iv. Growth & Outreach
 - v. Stewardship
 - vi. Nominating
 - vii. Music
 - viii. Religious Education
 - b. Two Year Term
 - i. Growth & Outreach
 - ii. Music
 - iii. Religious Education
4. Transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

Given under my hand, a true attest of warrant.

Robert Evans
Clerk

January 11, 2025

First Congregational Church of Wilmot, UCC
Annual Meeting – January 26, 2025

AGENDA

Call to order and opening prayer

Review minutes of Annual Meeting of January 28, 2024

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NEW BUSINESS

Search Committee for Settled Pastor

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Thank-you to those leaving positions and “Big Shoes to Fill” award

Any other business

PRAYER OF DISMISSAL AND ADJOURNMENT

First Congregational Church of Wilmot, UCC

Summary of the Annual Meeting Minutes - January 28, 2024

(The file containing the original minutes became corrupt and cannot be opened. This is a summary of the meeting. Transcript available upon request.)

General Information

- **Date and Time:** January 28, 2024, at 11:00 a.m.
- **Moderator:** Charlie Foss
- **Attendance:** 33 in person, 2 via Zoom
- **Quorum Declared:** Yes
- **Opening Prayer:** Paul Fenton

Meeting Highlights

1. **Approval of Previous Minutes:**
 - Approved with a correction to the misspelling of a name.
2. **Staff and Committee Reports:**
 - **Co-Pastors:** Reflected on positive experiences since joining and highlighted community outreach and special services.
 - **Music Director:** The report was accepted as written, and budget changes for piano maintenance and copyright licenses were noted.
 - **Moderator:** Acknowledged challenges faced and contributions by members.
 - **Clerk:** Highlighted transitions from Zoom to in-person attendance post-COVID.
 - **Deacons:** Appreciated for their hard work, with additional deacons contributing significantly.
 - **Trustees:** Discussed special projects, including shutter replacements and painting needs.
 - **Finance Committee:** Reported 40% growth in investments since renovations, with budget adjustments discussed.
 - **Budget 2024:** Approved with an additional \$500 allocation to basic support, increasing it to \$5,500.
 - **Justice and Witness:** Focused on local, national, and international charitable giving, with increased transparency.
 - **Growth and Outreach:** Highlighted committee achievements and involvement.
 - **Religious Education:** Report accepted without significant discussion.
3. **New Business:**
 - Formation of a **Search Committee** to find a settled minister:
 - The original slate of members was questioned for gender imbalance and lack of congregation involvement.
 - Motion passed to expand the committee for better gender representation, with an open call for additional members.

- Final slate to be presented for congregational approval in a subsequent meeting.
- **Future Consideration:** Discuss bylaws for forming search committees.
- 4. **Nominations and Appointments:**
 - New committee members and leadership positions approved unanimously.
 - Open positions filled, including one new member for Religious Education.
- 5. **Acknowledgments:**
 - Appreciation extended to departing members of various committees.
 - Special recognition was given to Paul Fenton and Janet Howe for their exceptional contributions.
- 6. **Closing:**
 - Prayer of dismissal by one of the ministers.

Decisions Made

1. **Approval of 2023 Minutes:** Accepted with minor corrections.
2. **Approval of Reports:** All committee and officer reports were accepted individually.
3. **2024 Budget:** Approved with a \$500 increase for basic support.
4. **Search Committee Formation:**
 - Current slate is accepted with provisions to address gender balance.
 - Expanded committee to be finalized and approved in a future meeting.
5. **Nominations:** New nominees for committees and leadership roles confirmed.

This summary highlights key discussions, decisions, and actions taken during the annual meeting. Let me know if you need further details or clarification!

Bob Evans
Clerk

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT



funerals during their summer hiatus.

We are so blessed to have had the choir present us with 20 Anthems over the course of the past year, including spirituals, hymns, folk songs, and even some blended music (contemporary along with an old standard). With each song, the group displayed measurable growth, especially in how they listened and reacted to each other. It's been a wonder to experience. And, the choir also displayed a strong unity of purpose, in agreeing to the request to sing at two congregants'

Paul Currier also gifted us with 10 wonderful instrumental Anthems on his violin or euphonium; with Paul reprising Deep River for both funerals. We also experienced a joyous reprise, where Paul played his guitar with the choir and the congregation on *Gather the Family*.



Music outreach, although occurring throughout the year, culminated in the Christmas Season with the participation of choir members and congregants in 7 separate events throughout Sutton, Newport, New London, and Andover. Included was the FCCW Adult Sunday School caroling event at Woodcrest.

Administratively, we have now have completed a year of obedience to our social justice initiative relating to music copyright law and our contractual obligations with our blanket licensor, One-License. Guidance was developed for lay leaders and visiting ministers, as well as substitute pianists. When given enough lead time, in many cases we have been able to obtain permission from copyright owners when songs have not been part of our blanket license. For example, permission was obtained:

- from the singer/song-writer for the previously mentioned *Gather the Family*.
- from the late author's family (via his last pastoral posting) for Rev Dr. Nan Devries' preferred Doxology.
- from a trust, www.multitudeofvoices.co.uk (which supports underrepresented and marginalized groups through the creative use of music and words) for the arrangement of *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree* that Fred Ögmundson used during his sermon.
- from the firm holding the copyright for Harry Belafonte's *Turn the World Around* which Tivvi Paré taught to us all.

In support of FCCW's Racial Justice initiative, the Music Committee, in conjunction with Justice and Witness, sponsored the first special collection for the Royalties for Spirituals Fund. A total of \$1957.00 has been disbursed to the UCC Music Association to aid with various scholarship programs.

Based on recommendations from our new piano tuner, Mark Dierauf, we have purchased and installed a string cover, and with the help from Doug McDonald and Bill Clark are now shading the piano from the sun.

It has been my privilege to serve you this past year. If anyone has music suggestions/requests, please do bring them to my attention. And we always welcome those who wish to lift their voices in song or share other musical gifts.

Donna Mae Reade
Music Director

MODERATOR'S REPORT

This past year was an extremely difficult and challenging one for the First Congregational Church of Wilmot, UCC. In August, The Reverend Kathleen Alger and The Reverend Deborah Ellen Brown (our co-transitional ministers) submitted their resignations effective September 15th 2024 due to a series of unresolved conflicts with a few committees. This situation caused a rift within the congregation with those who felt we should have spent more effort trying to convince the ministers to rescind their resignations.

The Deacons stepped in and arranged pulpit supply through January 2025. They did an outstanding job, so please thank them for their efforts, and for the wonderful people they found to lead us each week. The Search Committee, which was diligently working to finish the church profile for a settled pastor, assumed the task of finding another interim pastor (Designated Term Pastor). The search committee is made up of Paul Fenton, Susan Bruce, Jane Norman (Chairperson), Joyce Kellogg, Paul Currier, Bob Evans and Charlie Foss. The Reverend Gordon Rankin again came to Wilmot to work with the committee and guide us through the process. The required applications were completed, approved, and posted on the UCC website.

To start the healing process, the Reverend Paul Nickerson of Nickerson Coaching was hired. Paul entered into an agreement with us with the purpose of working with the congregation and leadership to resolve and heal the current conflict and to point the church toward a more vital future. He started by spending a Saturday at the church interviewing small groups of people to hear all sides of the current conflict. Over 35 people participated. Paul then came to the church to first preach, and then in the second hour share reflections from the small groups and then suggested next steps to resolve the conflict. The process was well received, and we all learned a lot about avoiding triangles, listening well, and adopting a behavioral/covenant. We are a long way from finishing the task, but Paul will guide us over the next six months with monthly Zoom coaching calls and with a weekly vitality newsletter.

In January we hired a new designated term pastor, The Reverend Rachelle Eaton. She will be introduced to the congregation on January 19, 2025, followed by a potluck luncheon. She will start preaching on Sunday, January 26, 2025. Please welcome her warmly.

As I finish my term and my third year as your moderator, I ask all of you to carefully read the Annual Report, including all committee reports, financial reports, and the clerk's report. Overall, we have had a great year and owe a lot of thanks to everyone who participated in making this church a wonderful place to come and worship and mix with others. I especially like the coffee hours. Please thank all our committee leaders, committee members, council members for all their contributions over the past year.

Thanks for your continued support of our terrific church.

Charles L. Foss,
Moderator

CLERK'S REPORT

Beginning active membership	69	
New members	0	
Deaths of active members	-2	Judy Hargis died May 18, 2024 Arthur Urie died May 29, 2024
Inactive members	-10	
Members transferred out	-3	In the interest of privacy these names are not listed
Total active members	54	

Although we have seen a general decline in attendance the rate has improved in the last quarter of 2024. While we lost a few friends and did not add a single member during the first three quarters, this trend has slowed. Both in sanctuary and on ZOOM, at the end of the last quarter we gained a few that had stopped attending. We have seen returns in sanctuary as well as in ZOOM and have high hopes for a few more. In fact, three of the ten individuals categorized as inactive are now actively participating. As an open and affirming Church we welcome and consider our members part of our community no matter how or how often they choose to attend.

Our ZOOM initiative continues to help keep homebound and at-risk congregants stay connected to the church. The quality and consistency of our ZOOM offering can help us build and maintain a strong contingent of ZOOM worshipers. Special thanks to all those who dutifully moderate our many ZOOM sessions.

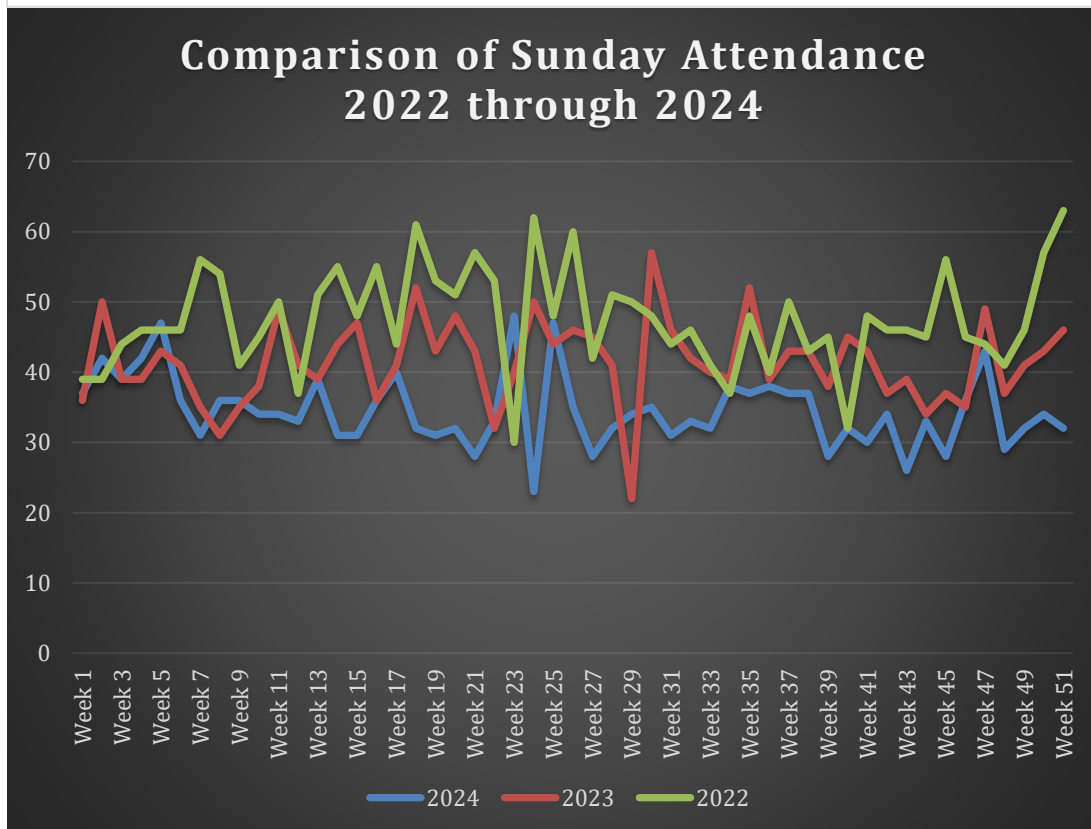
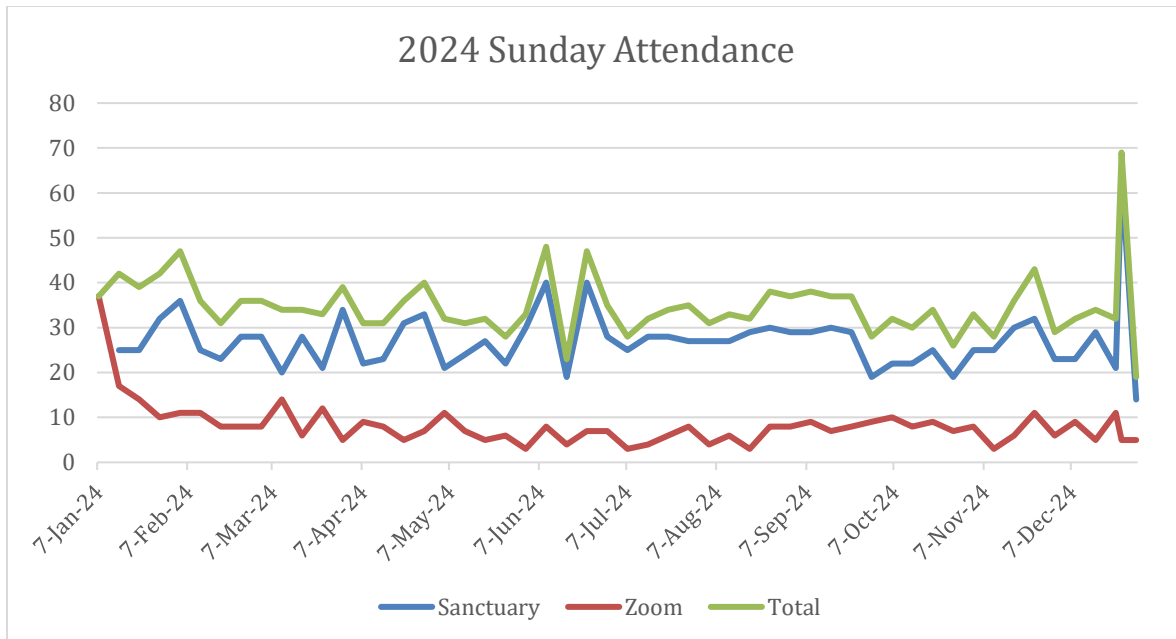
Type	Total 2022	Total 2023	Total 2024
Sanctuary	32.6	29.7	27.3
Zoom	32.6	12.9	8.3
Average	48.6	42.6	35.7

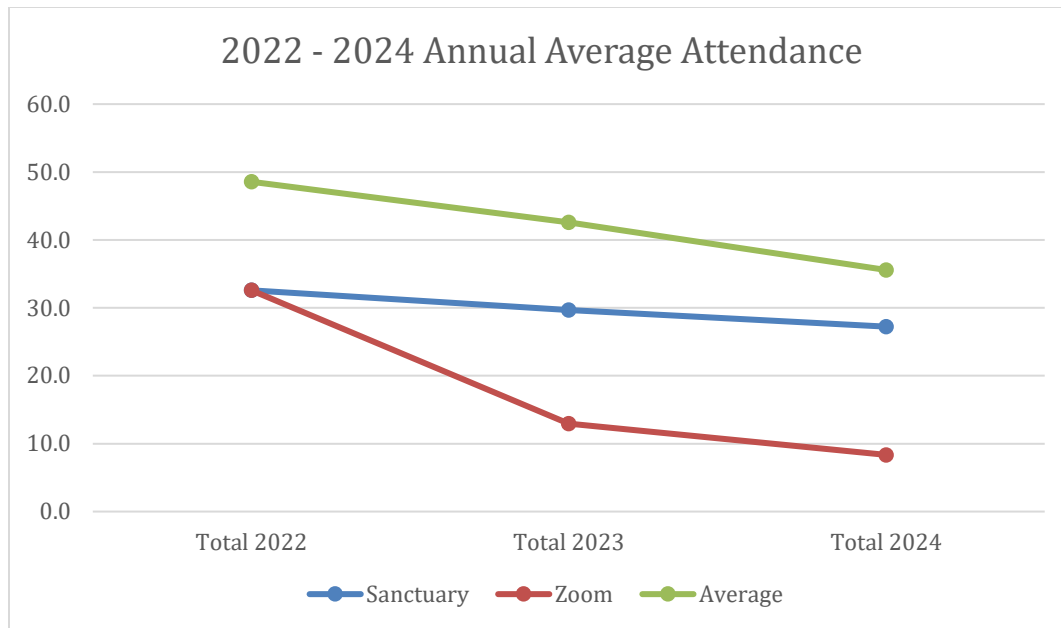
Average worship attendance – 35 (down from last year's reported 43)

Average worship breakout is – 27 for in-sanctuary (excluding staff) and 8 for ZOOM.

This year's data is an analysis of all regular Sunday services. We did, however, have several exceptions that were calculated separately. For example, the 2024 Easter sunrise service with 16 in attendance (down from 26 the previous year) shows a downward trend. April's Maundy Thursday service with 24 in attendance (down from 31 the previous year) again shows the downward trend prior to the fourth quarter of 2024. However, the downward trend did not continue through the fourth quarter as anticipated but rather saw attendance stabilize. The data from earlier in the year also demonstrates that dynamic speakers such as conference leaders, Gordon Rankin and Renee Rouse drew greater attendance as seen in the 2024 spikes. The Excel spreadsheet detailed analysis is available upon request. Special thanks

to all those who diligently tracked attendance and made sure the numbers did not include staff.





This graph shows how, as we came out of COVID, some that considered themselves at risk have moved from ZOOM attendance to in person. While this has eroded ZOOM attendance it has bolstered the losses in sanctuary attendance. ZOOM attendees' migration to in-person attendance lowered the impact of diminishing in-sanctuary numbers. In addition, our well attended Christmas Eve service also serves to demonstrate that we are stemming the tide. You can also see how the technical challenges the ZOOM team faced in 2023 were overcome and stabilized.

We lost several members and valued friends of the church.



Judith Hargis
Died April 27, 2024, age 81



Rev Arthur C Urie
Died May 29, 2024, age 81



Friend Karin Joyce Forsberg
Died June 25, 2024, age 83

Bob Evans
Clerk

DEACONS' REPORT

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1: 2-4 (NRSV)

The deacon's work this past year was filled with joys, concerns, loss, resolution and "trials of many kinds". Yet along with the support and fellowship of our KIN groups and faith family we have persevered and matured.

We along with our KIN group volunteers supported the worship plans of Pastors Debb- Ellen and Kathleen during church services, Lenten studies including the practice of reading scripture in the "Lectio Divina" method and the "Cup of Life" book study and exchange of coffee cups at Ash Wednesday service to choose prayer partners for Lenten season. Maundy Thursday was observed with a Bread & Soup supper followed by communion and a Tenebrae service. Easter Sunrise service was moved to the front of the church as the beach at Pleasant Lake was snowed in and too difficult for attendees to navigate.



Easter Service was well attended and the traditional Flower Cross decorated. Mother's and Father's Day were recognized with the giving of flowers and Juneteenth was celebrated with Rev. Renee Rouse leading worship, her children attending and a wonderful "red foods" coffee hour. Summer services remained at 10:00AM and deacons participated in the annual Bandstand Dinner in Wilmot. We appreciated that Nancy Allenby coordinated with deacons several Christian Education activities that involved both children and adults over the year.

Deacons visited and prayed with those who experienced health challenges, rejoiced with them as they recovered and stayed vigilant and present with our dear Karin Forsberg and Art Urie and their families as they passed away. We assisted with three funerals this past year including helping with collations in Fellowship Hall following the services. This year the deacons made a special effort to stay in touch with congregants, some who drifted away from church or left entirely. During the summer the co-pastors submitted their resignation and Council accepted it with an end date of October 31st, but the pastors decided to leave on September 15th and delivered a controversial statement to those in attendance which

resulted in confused and distressed attendees and the resignation of two deacons. This left a reduced deacon team with the responsibility of finding supply pastors until the search committee could find another interim or transitional pastor. We were so fortunate and appreciative of Rev. Dr. Nan DeVries, Paul Fenton and Robin Albing stepping up to preach, which filled many of the Sundays and we were able to find additional supply pastors through the end of January 2025.

Despite the ups and downs of this past year we have continued to receive spiritual sustenance and uplifting, hopeful messages from the pulpit this fall and Christmastide and look forward to Rev. Rachelle Eaton joining us as designated term pastor in January.

In His service,
Lucy Mueller, Marie MacDonald, Michiko Yamaguchi, Bethany Balford

TRUSTEES REPORT

The trustees continue to monitor the church facilities with respect to repair and maintenance to ensure that they are as safe and inviting to use as possible.

A. General Maintenance

1. We purchased 4 sets of shutters and painted them. When installed that will complete the replacement of all shutters.
2. A local painter was hired to repaint most of the trim in the meeting room and new trim work in the Sanctuary.
3. The furnace and the elevator both had issues with operation that had to be dealt with.
4. A blind was installed on the window by the piano to protect the piano from intense sunlight.
5. A neighbor (Earl Schoeler) who has been doing snow removal for over 30 years could no longer do the job and had to be replaced.

B. Planned Projects for 2025

1. The roof on the horse shed will be stripped and replaced with new cedar shakes as a special project. We have hired the same contractor that did such a nice job replacing the siding on the back of the church.
2. The front of the church will be cleaned and we hope to have some painting done on the back of the steeple.

C. Use of Facilities

We are pleased that community groups continue to enjoy the use of our meeting room and horse shed. The use increased last year as a result of the restoration project at the Library and Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Mac Donald and Bill Clark

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

2024 was a year of many changes and challenges. Our church secretary Rebecka Standerfer resigned in March, our Treasurer John Heiden moved away, our Co-pastors resigned in September.

Mary Heath assumed the duties of church secretary and Tom Hargis became our new treasurer. Both individuals needed training since neither one has ever done the work of their position before. Since October 1, 2024 we have been operating with supply ministers. All of this has resulted in numerous changes in the financial outlay as each change occurred.

Financially the church is in a good position, and we have not needed to draw from any of our investments. The Congregation has been very supportive financially and we have been able to meet our needs every month. Because of construction repairs of the Wilmot Town Hall and the loss of the parking lot this summer we were unable to have a yard sale this year. This meant a reduction in our usual outside income.

Our investments with the United Church Fund ended the year with a value of \$342,169. The gain in value for the year was \$136,252.

Your present committee is composed of Carol Foss, Collector, Tom Hargis, Treasurer, and Paul Fenton Jr., Finance Chairman.

Paul Fenton Jr.
Chairman

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Church Accounts as of 12-31-24

Bar Harbor Checking Account	\$45,577.72
Money Market Account	\$56,354.01
Wilmot Church Fund	\$247,206.96
Carl Fiske Fund	\$93,435.37
Total Funds	\$442,574.06

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01/06/25
Cash Basis

First Congregational Church of Wilmot **Profit & Loss Budget Performance** January through December 2024

	Jan - Dec 24	Annual Budget
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
Other Income		
Miscellaneous Income		
Designated Donations	383.76	0.00
Church On The Rise Books	0.00	0.00
Miscellaneous Income - Other	20.00	0.00
Total Miscellaneous Income	403.76	0.00
Interest Income	11.52	0.00
Total Other Income	415.28	0.00
Wedding/Funerals etc.	200.00	0.00
Rental fees	622.00	1,500.00
Refund	0.00	0.00
Scholarship Camp	0.00	
Consolidated Investment Fund Di		
Dividend - Fiske	1,199.60	525.00
Dividend - Wilmot Church	3,122.62	3,975.00
Total Consolidated Investment Fund Di	4,322.22	4,500.00
Fund Raiser - Operating		
Wilmot Palooza	0.00	0.00
Yard sale	75.00	0.00
Fund Raiser - Supper		
Bandstand	536.00	
Fund Raiser - Supper - Other	1,895.00	0.00
Total Fund Raiser - Supper	2,431.00	0.00
Fund Raiser - Operating - Other	0.00	6,000.00
Total Fund Raiser - Operating	2,506.00	6,000.00
NH Charitable Trust	3,494.34	3,500.00
Plate Offerings & Pledges	101,704.25	105,000.00
Total Income	113,264.09	120,500.00
Gross Profit	113,264.09	120,500.00
Expense		
Religious Education	190.07	500.00
Growth and Outreach		
Advertising	5,252.54	6,000.00
Total Growth and Outreach	5,252.54	6,000.00
Justice & Witness Expenses		
Spiritual Royalties Fund	1,957.00	
Charitable Giving	8,475.00	10,300.00
Merrimack Assoc/Dues/Annl Mtg	1,055.70	1,800.00
UCC Basic support	1,875.00	5,500.00
Justice Ministries	0.00	0.00
Strengthen the Church	0.00	500.00
Total Justice & Witness Expenses	13,362.70	18,100.00

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Cash Basis

First Congregational Church of Wilmot **Profit & Loss Budget Performance** January through December 2024

	<u>Jan - Dec 24</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>
Ukama	-50.00	
Reconciliation Discrepancies	-0.02	
Horton Center		
Camperships	-150.00	
Total Horton Center	-150.00	
Administrative Expenses		
Other	2,858.53	
Technology & Tech Support	1,993.76	3,500.00
Music supplies	663.00	1,500.00
Deacon Funds	212.86	1,500.00
Office supplies/postage	339.15	2,000.00
Pastor Discretionary Fund	38.97	1,500.00
Printing and Reproduction	18.00	
Administrative Expenses - Other	0.00	0.00
Total Administrative Expenses	6,124.27	10,000.00
Building Expense		
Church Insurance	7,306.00	5,000.00
Special Projects	3,444.49	15,000.00
Electric	1,159.60	1,200.00
Equipment	383.98	
Heat	2,897.55	2,500.00
Repair & Maintenance	3,969.74	4,000.00
Telephone/Internet	1,481.93	1,800.00
Total Building Expense	20,643.29	29,500.00
Other Expense		
Other Expense - Other	0.00	0.00
Total Other Expense	0.00	0.00
Personnel Expense		
HR Expenses	10.00	0.00
Payroll Expense	892.62	500.00
Secretary	3,479.14	9,000.00
Music Director	10,098.00	12,000.00
Employer Payroll Taxes	1,087.41	1,600.00
Ind. Contractor - Comm. & BKPR	17,645.30	15,000.00
Sub Organist, Minister & Other		
Substitute Minister	500.00	
Sub Organist, Minister & Other - Other	4,100.00	3,000.00
Total Sub Organist, Minister & Other	4,600.00	3,000.00
Compensation - Musical Director	0.00	0.00
Salary - Minister		
Minister Expense/Education	0.00	2,000.00
Minister Housing	0.00	15,000.00
Minister - Pension	4,144.14	6,000.00
Minister Salary	31,870.44	25,000.00

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01/06/25
Cash Basis

First Congregational Church of Wilmot
Profit & Loss Budget Performance
January through December 2024

	<u>Jan - Dec 24</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>
SS-Medicare Minister	0.00	3,000.00
Total Salary - Minister	36,014.58	51,000.00
Workmens Comp Insurance	394.00	
Year End Gifts	250.00	
Total Personnel Expense	74,471.05	92,100.00
Total Expense	119,843.90	156,200.00
Net Ordinary Income	-6,579.81	-35,700.00
Other Income/Expense		
Other Expense		
Unrealized G/L on Investments		0.00
Total Other Expense	0.00	0.00
Net Other Income	0.00	0.00
Net Income	<u>-6,579.81</u>	<u>-35,700.00</u>

PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2025

<u>Income</u>	<u>2024 Budget</u>	<u>YTD</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>
From Investment Funds	\$4,500	\$4,322	\$4,500
Fund withdrawals	0	0	0
Transfer from Checking/MM Act.	35,700	0	44,550
Rental & other Income	1,500	1,237	1,500
Fund Raisers	6,000	2,506	6,000
NH Charitable Trust	3,500	3,494	3,500
Plate Offerings/Pledges	105,000	101,704	115,000
Total Income	156,200	113,264	175,050

Expenses

Administrative Expenses			
Technology and Tech Support	3,500	1,994	2,500
Music Supplies	1,500	663	1,400
Deacon Funds	1,500	213	1,000
Office Supplies	2,000	339	500
Pastor Disc. Fund	1,500	39	1,000
Admin -Other	500	2,876	500
Total Administrative Expenses	10,500	6,124	6,900
Building Expense			
Church Insurance	5,000	7,306	6,500

Special Projects	15,000	3,828	15,500*
Electric	1,200	1,160	1,200
Heat	2,500	2,898	2,500
Repair and Maintenance	4,000	4,249	5,450
Telephone/ Internet	1,800	1,482	1,800
Total Building Expense	29,500	20,643	32,950
* Replacement roof for horse shed			
Justice and Witness Expense			
Charitable Giving	10,300	8,475	10,300
Justice Ministries	0		0
UCC Basic Support	5,500	1,875	5,500
Merrimack Assoc/Dues	1,800	1,056	1,200
Strengthen the Church	500	0	500
Total Justice and Witness Exp	17,000	11,406	17,500
Growth and Outreach Exp.	1,000	0	0
Advertising	5,000	5,253	6,000
Total Growth & Outreach	6,000	5,253	6,000
Religious Education Expense	500	190	500
Personnel Expense			
HR/Payroll Expenses	500	903	500
Employee: Music Director	12,000	10,098	12,000
Employee: Secretary	9,000	3,479	9,000
Employer SS and FICA	1,600	998	1,600
Ind. Contractor -Comm &BKPR	15,000	17,645	15,000
Sub Minister & Organist	3,000	4,600	3,000
Salary - Minister			
Minister - Expense/Ed	2,000	644	2,000
Minister - Housing	15,000	0	14,000
Minister – Pension	6,000	4,144	7,100
Minister – Insurance			6,000
Minister - Salary	25,000	31,870	37,000
Minister -SS Medicare	3,000	0	4,000
Total Salary – Minister	51,000	36,658	70,100
Total Personnel Expenses	92,100	74,381	111,200
Other Expenses		927	600
Total Expense	156,200	117,997	175,050
Net Income		-4,733	

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

This year has been a time of transition and change for us, but as usual in November our thoughts turned to Stewardship. For First Congregational Church UCC, Wilmot this means careful consideration of our Time, Talents & Treasure in order to provide the means to meet our responsibilities to our church family and to the community of which we are a part. Stewardship is also a time to reflect on the year to come and join together to share what we love about this church. This year 28 pledges of just over \$91,000 have been received. We know that “God is Still Speaking”!

Susan Bruce

JUSTICE AND WITNESS REPORT

Justice & Witness is responsible for coordinating activities, supporting outside organizations and participating in community events as outlined in the Church’s Racial Justice and Open and Affirming Covenants and consistent with the UCC goals, nationally and conference wide.

The Justice & Witness Committee consists of a minimum of 3 people who serve 3-year terms, a Deacon representative who serves a 1-year term and a finance representative who also serves a 1-year term.

This year, the J&W Committee members were as follows:

- Carlyse Evans, Chair – term ending January 2025
- Charlie Foss – term ending January 2025
- Jane Norman – term ending January 2027
- Bonnie Betters-Reed – Bonnie agreed to continue as a member of the committee when Marty Hopkins resigned
- Bethany Balford – Deacon Representative
- Paul Fenton – Finance Representative

In 2024, J&W coordinated and participated in the following community activities demonstrating our Church’s Open & Affirming as well as Racial Justice Commitment:

- Reading of Frederick Douglas's July 4th speech at the Andover Market Day sponsored by the New Hampshire Black Heritage Trail and Andover Historical Society – coordinated by Bonnie Betters
- The Kearsarge Regional Crop Walk, which raises funds for Church World Services to end hunger – coordinated by Bethany Balford with support from Bonnie Betters-Reed
- New London Pride Parade and Celebration – coordinated by Jane Norman and Bethany Balford

The Committee oversaw various collections in support of the UCC and ministries such as the Five for Five program. The Five for Five program recognizes UCC Churches that contribute to the UCC Basic Support in the amount of \$5,500 and Strengthen the Church in the amount of \$500, Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, and the Christmas Fund. The J&W includes funds for the Basic Support and Strengthen the Church in its budget. Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing and the Christmas Fund consist of donations from our congregation. In addition, J&W contributed to the UCC's spiritual fund this year, supplemented by generous contributions from our congregation.

As in the past, the Wilmot Congregation Church also raised funds for various Church World Service Programs such as School Kits, Tools & Blankets, and the Crop Walk mentioned above. J&W coordinated these collections during the year.

J&W also oversees our congregation's contributions to organizations, locally, nationally, and globally, which are consistent with our church's mission. In 2024, on behalf of the congregation, donations were given to:

- ACLU of NH (American Civil Liberties Union of NH, which was very active in 2024 in protecting the rights of our LGBTQ+ community, immigration, reproductive rights and racial justice).
- BCNH (Building Community in New Hampshire supports refugees and asylum seekers settling in NH. They are the only organization in NH recognized by the Department of State to work with asylum seekers.)
- Free High School in Nicaragua (The Free High School serves over 500 people from the rural communities and the poor barrios of San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua.)
- Horton Camp & Center (The Horton Center is a venue available to all UCC churches for meetings retreats. In addition, we support the Campers program, which funds scholarships for students who would not be able, financially, to attend without our support).
- Kairos - (Kairos Prison Ministry's mission is to share the transforming love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to impact the hearts and lives of incarcerated men, women and youth, as well as their families, to become loving and productive citizens of their communities.)
- KREM (Kearsarge Regional Ecumenical Ministry, which provides emergency financial support and resource assistance to those in need in our Kearsarge community.)
- LGBTQ+ Asylum
- NH Black Heritage Trail (The Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire promotes awareness and appreciation of African American history and life in order to build more inclusive communities today.)
- NH UCC IRSG (The NH UCC IRSG supports immigrants and refugees in NH. They also maintain a bond fund.)

- Osotuwa Foundation (Osotuwa Foundation provides funding for Massai girls to continue their education rather than being married off at 12, 13 or 14 in exchange for cows.)
- Turning Points Network (TPN provides crisis and support to all survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking.)
- Winter Center for Indigenous Traditions (The Winter Center is dedicated to preserving and promoting Indigenous traditions, fostering understanding and fostering an appreciation of Indigenous cultures, with a particular focus on the Penacook and Abenaki who once inhabited the land we currently call Wilmot NH).
- World Central Kitchen (Feeding first responders and people impacted by the floods in the US and Europe.)

Building on last year, the committee continued contributing articles in our weekly newsletter on all the organizations we support directly and through fundraising. We were blessed with in-person presentations from the Horton Center and Turning Point Network on what they do for our community.

I want to thank all the committee members for all they have done for our community and in support of our racial justice mission, as well as Bonnie Betters-Reed for agreeing to continue her involvement as we transitioned J&W to new leadership and Bethany, who took our minutes and ensured donations were made.

Carlyse Evans
Chair

CHURCH GROWTH AND OUTREACH

The Growth and Outreach Committee has had a highly productive year, marked by significant achievements in expanding our organization's reach, enhancing community engagement, and fostering partnerships that align with our mission. This is in no small part due to congregants "stepping up" when attrition took two (Joyce assigned other responsibilities as a Deacon and the passing of Art) of the three committee members. The committee helps the congregation engage in practical acts of service to improve the well-being of individuals and families, attract new members and let the community know that we are a progressive and affirming church.

This committee took on multiple projects and organized multiple events to reach these goals. The Chicken Barbecue Dinner, the Bandstand Pulled Pork Dinner, and the Yard Sale were planned. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the Yard Sale because construction work all but eliminated the parking and extra building space needed for the event, one of our most successful projects. In addition, because last year's Pulled Pork Bandstand Dinner did not take place due to very heavy rainfall, we adopted a new strategy. Rather than offer a pulled pork dinner or luncheon, we opted to keep the menu simpler for the bandstand and avoid food that can't be stored for a later event.

The entire church participated in our annual chicken barbeque dinner. Various groups worked closely and in concert to make this a big success. Many prepared menu items and delivered these to the church, Paul Fenton provided fryer halves, reservations were taken, advertising produced, the inside crew prepared the packages/meals, the grilling crew worked several days, and the parking lot crew gathered cash and distributed the meals. In addition, we were able to donate 27 surplus meals to the Kearsarge Valley Food Pantry. In years past extra meals were given to volunteers, but these people generously allowed us to donate the additional meals. A special thanks to Joyce Kellog for co-managing the project.



While the closing of the parking lot, library and town hall could have been seen as a detractor, we saw this as an opportunity to offer the use of our church building and better serve the community. Several events were planned, including the Wilmot Library's Wesley McNair Poetry Reading, the Wilmot Historical Society's meeting, the city Planning Commission's annual meeting, and the continued hosting of senior luncheons in collaboration with the Wilmot Ladies Auxiliary.

In addition to partnering with the Ladies Auxiliary. We also partnered with the Wilmot Community Association (WCA) in support of their holiday fair (thanks to Sally and Carlyse), the Kearsarge Neighborhood Partners (KNP) providing cookies for their holiday baskets and (thanks to Beth, Susan, Jane), the New London Rotary Club in collecting books for the CLIFF program (thanks to Carlyse and Nancy) and seven of our congregants read at the NH Black Heritage Trail's Frederick Douglass reading (thanks to Bonnie, Gary, Paul C., Nancy, Steve, Carlyse and I). The music director also developed and implemented several outreach activities, and these can be seen in her report.

The technical team is also an important element of our outreach activities, providing church service coverage via ZOOM to those unable to attend.

Respectfully submitted Bob Evans, Chair, Lucy Mueller Deacons Representative

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REPORT

In JANUARY we celebrated MLK Day, talking about the tools for standing up for what is right, and speaking out against injustice. Taking action behind the scenes can be powerful, too! With literacy as a justice issue that reaches into many avenues of life in NH, the students made a collection box and organized a Children's Literacy Foundation new book drive for the congregation, as well as choosing a book to have donated in our honor.



In FEBRUARY, we celebrated Black History Month, by gathering at the church at 9:30 to get a plate of breakfast, then viewing the movie *The Butler*. The movie is loosely based on the real life of Eugene Allen, an African-American who had a unique up-close view of the Civil Rights movement as he worked in the White House as a butler for 34 years under 8 administrations, starting at the White House as a “pantry man” in 1952, and working his way up to becoming butler to the president.

In MARCH, we made Maple Syrup at the Allenby's Sugar House! As we changed sap into syrup, we looked at the many real-life “change-makers” who have risen up to uphold justice and fight for what *is right*, and those who have protested, written letters, crafted petitions, and built awareness of something that *is not right*. We hosted a potluck coffee hour at the sugar house for the rest of the congregation after Worship.



In MAY, we celebrated a belated Earth Day, talking about Creation Care and our own efforts to heal the earth, and hearing from the FCCW Green Team. We talked about how pollinators cause things to bloom and flower, and each student fashioned a natural clay “bee bowl” pressed with leaves and natural objects, and took home a flowering perennial to plant next to it.

JUNE 8 we celebrated Children's Day, sharing our year's activities with the congregation. A donation in each student's name was made to an organization that represented something the student is passionate about.

In SEPTEMBER, we began this school year's Love Does theme, each month pairing a story about Jesus' audacious love by Christian author Bob Goff, and a story in the Bible. ‘Ryan in Love’ was about a young man, Ryan, (a total stranger to Bob Goff!) who audaciously asks Bob if Ryan could propose to his girlfriend on Bob's porch. We paired this

with the story of the men who cut a hole in the roof to lower their paralyzed friend down to see Jesus...an act that did nothing for *themselves*, but that showed audacious love for someone else.

In OCTOBER we focused on diffusing conflict in groups and communities. With a contentious election coming up and all that was going on within the church community, we discussed how pressures and tensions build within a group, and how they might be resolved. Our Bob Goff story “The Interviews” told of Bob’s own children writing letters to hundreds of world leaders after Sept. 11, and inviting them to their house, paired with a verse from Matt. 18 about getting along. We sewed “CHAD Sibling Sacks for David’s House to help lessen the pressures of families with seriously ill children. We instituted ‘Adult Christian Education’; after worship and adults had an opportunity to also sew Sibling Sacks.



In NOVEMBER we celebrated Thanksgiving, talking about how audacious love requires going outside comfort zones. The story of Abraham being called to leave his land and family lead to a discussion of what makes people famous, and what we might want our own legacies to be. The Bob Goff story was about being thankful for, and saying yes to, audacious opportunities that God puts into our path. We made

Thanksgiving favors of paper leaves with Thanksgiving discussion starters on them to give to the congregation. After worship, the Adult Sunday School assembled a second set of Thanksgiving packets to distribute to the residents of Bittersweet Senior Housing in New London.



In DECEMBER, the Sunday School led Worship and the Christmas Pageant. Nancy Allenby gave a short message, followed by the students narrating the nativity story. The adults wore costumes and acted out character parts, complete with an angel choir. Everyone

participated, with the entire congregation contributing everything from laughter to animal noises throughout the telling of the Christmas story and singing a verse or two of a different Christmas song to go with each scene. Our Adult Sunday School opportunity was to travel to Woodcrest Village Senior Living to go caroling after Worship.

Nancy Allenby
Religious Education Director

SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Search Committee was formed in January of 2024 and tasked with certain goals:

1. Construct a church profile suitable for the search for a Settled Pastor to be shared with and published by the UCC, review and interview all suitable applicants and submit the final candidate to a congregational meeting for approval.
2. In September 2024 we were also asked to prepare the "request for pastoral leadership" for the interim period following the resignations of the co-pastors and to start that search.

The committee met on a weekly basis and with input from the congregation, proceeded with completing our mission. This involved research, discussion, decisions and agreements. We had some stumbling blocks with using an internet program called DropBox but we finally got it cleared up. We had a member resign due to time conflicts.

One major change we made was to state that we were searching for a full-time minister. We felt that our church has asked a lot of our part -time ministers in the past and we would financially be in a position now to explore new possibilities with a full-time person. However we have not precluded the option of a bi-vocational pastor.

We received three inquiries for our Interim position. Two were not suitable and we interviewed the third person, Rev. Rachelle Eaton. We arranged for her to meet with Council members for a “chat” and following positive feedback, offered her a call to serve as a Designated Term Pastor which she accepted. She began her time with us on January 19, 2025.

We completed our profile for a Settled Pastor by January 1, 2025 and informed the Conference that we had done so. We now will await the arrival of resumes of interested clergy in our internet DropBox. We have no idea of when or how many resumes will come our way but we will do our best to keep the congregation informed of our progress.

Paul Currier
Bob Evans
Susan Bruce- our Secretary
Jane Norman- chairperson

Charlie Foss
Paul Fenton- our chaplain
Joyce Kellogg- resigned

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Members: Janet Howe, Carol MacDonald and Robin Walkup
The Nominating Committee presents the following slate:

The Congregation is required to vote on the people in **BOLD** who are additions to committees or extending their terms on a committee.

Moderator

Open (28)

Clerk

Bob Evans (28)

Church Collector

Carol Foss (26)

Treasurer

Tom Hargis (27)

Deacons

Marie MacDonald (28)

Lucy Meuller (28)

Beth Balford (26)

Michiko Yamaguchi (27)

Trustees

Doug MacDonald (26)

Bill Clark (28)

Justice & Witness*

Jane Norman (27)

Bethany Balford (28)

Open (26)

Church Growth & Outreach*

Bob Evans (27)

Charlie Foss (27)

Jane Norman (28)

KREM Delegate

Carlyse Evans (26)

Delegate to the Annual Meeting

Open (26)

Delegates to the Association Meeting

Open (26)

Open (26)

Stewardship

Susan Bruce (26)

Robin Albing (27)

Paul Currier (28)

Nominating

Carol MacDonald (26)

Janet Howe (27)

Robin Walkup (28)

Music

Donna Reade (Music Director)

Margaret Campbell (26)

Paul Currier (27) *

Vikki Kimball (28)

*Janet Howe's term ends in 2027, and she has decided to step down. Paul Currier will serve the remaining two years of Janet Howe's term.

Religious Education

Nancy Allenby (Sunday School Director) (26)

Charlie Kellogg (26)

Steve Allenby (27)

Robin Albing (28)

Finance Committee

Paul Fenton (?)

Tom Hargis

*The Committees, Growth & Outreach and Church Justice & Witness will work together when needed to spread the workload

Finance Committee

During the Council Meeting on 1/7/24, Robin Walkup, Chair of the Nominating Committee, stated that Paul Fenton will continue to serve on the Finance Committee. The length of the term was not disclosed.

Kearsarge Food Pantry

Please note that the Wilmot Congregational Church no longer has a representative on the Board of the Kearsarge Food Pantry. In 2024, the Board decided it would no longer reserve a Board position to be filled by a representative of the Wilmot Congregational Church. That board position is now open to anyone and the Food Pantry Board elected a person outside our congregation.

THANK-YOU TO THOSE LEAVING POSITIONS AND “BIG SHOES TO FILL” AWARD

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

PRAYER OF DISMISSAL AND ADJOURNMENT