

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER.....	2
ASSOCIATE MINISTER .....	3
COMMISSIONED MINISTER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.....	5
INTERIM DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES .....	7
PARISH CARE COORDINATOR.....	8
MUSIC DIRECTOR .....	9
THE REVEREND BARBARA BARLOK .....	11
EXECUTIVE BOARD.....	11
BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION .....	13
BOARD OF DEACONS .....	14
BOARD OF MUSIC .....	17
BOARD OF OUTREACH .....	18
BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP.....	22
BOARD OF TRUSTEES .....	23
CHESHIRE INTERFAITH HOUSING COMMITTEE .....	24
DELEGATES-CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE AND NEW HAVEN ASSOCIATION .....	25
FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE .....	26
FINANCIAL SECRETARY .....	27
FLOWER COMMITTEE.....	27
HISTORY COMMITTEE.....	28
LIBRARY COMMITTEE.....	29
MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE .....	30
MEN’S BREAKFAST .....	31
PARISH CARE COMMITTEE .....	31
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE .....	33
STEPHEN MINISTRY .....	33
STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL COMMITTEE .....	34
WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP.....	35
CHURCH CLERK .....	36
CHURCH STATISTICS .....	37
CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARDS/COMMITTEES FOR 2009 .....	39

## **INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER**

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfast hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

What a caring, creative and dynamic congregation First Congregational Church is! Its white steeple, seen from afar rising above the tree tops, has been a beacon, guiding people on their journeys and pointing them to God. It has been my great privilege over the last 2 years to share in the ministry of this historic church. Like St. Paul with the Thessalonians, I give thanks to God for all of you.

This church now stands at the dawn of a new era. Jeff Braun, a person of enthusiasm and faith, will soon be on hand as your new Senior Minister. I am very happy for this congregation.

My appreciation goes out to all who have given their prayers and energy to the work of God here. 2008 has been a very productive year. 90 volunteers have helped 334 people/families within the congregation, donating 1,500 hours of service. There is a tone of warmth and vitality in the fellowship.

In cooperation with the town of Cheshire, the road in front of the church has been repaved and a new walk added to the green. Organizational tasks like a revision of the bylaws and personnel manual have been completed. Donna Mead has come on board as our parish care volunteer. Our youth group is flourishing, and the young people – with the help of the Warners – have started up a praise band. A truckload of turkeys was collected at Thanksgiving time to help others celebrate the holiday. Our salt and light grants have touched the lives of people as far away as Malawi and Nepal. The sanctuary is filled with the choir's praise to God – and who can forget the expression on our children's faces in the Christmas pageant. First Congregational Church has much to be proud of. We've been on the move.

There are some areas to wrestle with in 2009: stewardship, increased participation in adult Christian education, church growth and a vision for the future.

First Congregational Church has been blessed with exceptional lay leaders and staff. My thanks to Alison, my colleague in ministry, to Joe and Marianne in music, to Debbie in CE, Roger in youth work, Donna in parish care, Leslie and Michael in the office . And where would we be without Fred and Pat, who keep our facilities clean and in shape? Bob Mead's friendship and wise counsel have been a wonderful help to me.

My thanks to this congregation for the many gracious and warm ways you have made Patty and me feel welcome. God bless you as with Jeff Braun and his family you move into a new year of promise and opportunity. Share the gospel!

In Christ,  
Dave Buchan

## **ASSOCIATE MINISTER**

As I reflect on the ministry year of 2008, there is much to be thankful for and much to celebrate, and there remains much to accomplish: all of which points to the fruits of this time of transition and discernment here at First Congregational Church. I continue to feel called by God to ministry here and look forward to the new day God has in store for us.

My own intentional time of discernment became possible this past spring with the completion of six years of ministry service in January, thus becoming eligible for a sabbatical. Given this transition period as well as my family's needs, I took the first half of this allowed time, with the deacon's approval, and am saving the second half for a later, more settled time. Our own Peggy Allen agreed to serve as interim during those eight weeks bringing her gifted ministry, energy, and program plans with which to bless our congregation. And she did.

For me, then, 2008 was a "before and after" year with sabbatical as the rest stop in the middle—a time to put down the mantle of ministry and just be. One retreat at the start and one at the end served as bookends to this time apart where a recurring verse of scripture from the Song of Songs kept finding its way to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come." So, you may ask, what did I do with this time of "singing?" Actually, I did just that. My suddenly meeting-less Tuesday evenings allowed me to join The Greater Middletown Chorale for its summer session and concluding concert—a true joy. Focusing on something beyond church reminded me to find some balance in my life and make time for those practices that refresh, restore, and renew me -- like holding two brand new grandbabies, like riding my bike, reading, working in my yard. Since my return in July I have been keeping one ear trained to listen for God's voice as in that scripture: to keep coming away with God to be refreshed that I may bring the best me to our ministry together here at First Church. I thank you for the opportunity of this sabbatical time.

I offer, too, appreciation and thanks to the Deacons and the Parish Care Committee for reassessing the Parish Care giving needs in our church. In the long continuing discussion of how best to offer needed leadership in the absence of the Parish Care Minister position, the decision was made to seek a committed volunteer to serve as Parish Care Coordinator, thus relieving me from those portions of the PC Minister's job description that I was asked to take on. We found a more than able and highly committed PC Coordinator in our own Donna Mead.

Since February, Donna has served faithfully, diligently, and humbly in this role—not only keeping track of needs, but recruiting many in the congregation to help answer those needs along with our established parish care ministries. We *are* truly becoming a Congregation of Care. The Parish Care Committee also purchased a new computer for my office which is now networked to our in-church system. This important technology step allows us all to log information onto our database, which will help us keep better connected, be more proactive about parish care needs/ visitation, and continue to build our system of care.

Great strides have been made in the Congregational Districting Project, with the help of Bob Giddings and Lynn Ryan in constructing the actual geographical map of our congregation, Bob Mead in helping to place the pins on streets where we all live, and Nancy Brunetti, Jackie Cole, and Donna Mead in creating the 12 caring districts from the geographical range of where we live—all of which is meant to help us to know one another better. Now the fun begins! One of our districts is serving as a pilot district for this grass roots project of care. A leader in this district will reach out to those within the neighborhood bounds in fellowship and care to build connections. Our goal is to expand into all the districts in the next few years.

Small Group and Parish-wide events continued this year under the evolving theme of “Know- Love- Serve,” a theme suggested by Jesus’ great command to love God with all our heart, mind and strength- and our neighbor as ourselves. With this theme as my guide, studies, groups, and events have been planned to further our Christian formation as Jesus’ disciples. Faith formation is more than adult education in its traditional teacher-student sense. Formation encompasses the many ways adults learn and take in information. The traditional class model has its place in faith formation, but also included are active ways of learning: retreats, contemplative practices, mission and service projects with time for reflection, active immersion in scripture, groups that gather around a shared interest or topic, and groups that gather around fellowship.

To help us in our “knowing” God quest, several Bible studies were offered this year for adults. Debbie Gravell continues to offer her well-attended Wednesday morning Women’s Bible study. Dave Buchan offered two studies—one on the book of Acts and one of the book of Romans. Peggy Allen led a summer study on the Gospel of Mark. Additionally, a group gathered as the continuing Scripture by Heart project this time to memorize the Palm Sunday and Passion narrative from the Gospel of Matthew, presented at both services on Palm Sunday. Our annual Lessons and Carols service offered a group of readers another opportunity to gather around the nativity scripture texts and John Afman’s poetic interpretation of the scriptures.

Engagement in the arts provides yet another way to encounter God through different senses and intelligences. This year the Photography Show drew photos from all ages with the theme: “And God Saw it Was Good.” Another small group met this year to make the journey through Dante’s classic “The Divine Comedy”- a 13<sup>th</sup> century look at the intersection of faith and culture—with results that still speak to us today. Our church members also participated in the writing of Advent reflections for our Advent Daily Meditation booklet. The Banner Team is busy creating new Christmas banners and will enlarge our current collection.

Other groups formed this year are the Bereavement Group, led by Jan Garthwait, Frank Scinto, and the Saturday morning Men’s Group, led by Ford Cole and Dave Buchan. Two Lenten groups formed around the “Questions of Faith” video discussion series. Our youth are forming a group to serve as Acolytes in worship, under the leadership of David Dickinson.

In addition to the Photo Show, other parish-wide events were offered on Thursday evenings beginning with a shared meal, most weeks with a pot-luck meal. In January,

Cindy Wright presented a program on Ethical Wills. In February, Amy Webb presented “Africa Night” with an opportunity to learn drumming, and with Dave Buchan, offered a presentation on their mission experiences. In September, with the Board of Outreach, we welcomed members from the Spring Glen UCC church to share their experiences with Adult Mission trips. In October Cheshire native and Global Ministries Missionary Tim Rose shared his experiences of world-wide missionary work. Finally, in December a group gathered to learn about the Passion Play and future plans for a trip to Oberammergau, Germany in 2010.

Knowing and loving our neighbors who become our newest members has been the work of the Membership Committee. Under Jan Cowles’ caring touch, this committee continues to evaluate and tweak the New Member Orientation process so that we can best help our newest members find home here, a place where they can share their gifts and live out their growing faith.

Acts of service and mission grew tremendously this year. Lisa Canas’ Board of Outreach report captures God’s amazing Spirit at work multiplying resources. In addition, through Donna Mead’s efforts, church families who like to rake leaves were connected to those needing their leaves raked. Once again, white towels were collected at our Maundy Thursday worship service for the residents at Columbus House.

Alongside this specialized ministry focus, alongside the general ministry practices of worship leadership, working with boards and committees, pastoral care, weddings, baptisms, funerals, and administration, I also serve our wider church as a member of our New Haven Association’s Committee on Ministry. I currently serve as vice-chair of this committee, which oversees authorized ministry for our association of 21 churches. I appreciate your support in my serving the wider church and with opportunities for professional growth. In January I attended a three- day conference, *Pastor as Leader*, and in September I attended General Association, the annual gathering of Connecticut Conference clergy.

In all things I give thanks to God for this ministry I have been called to share in, and for you, brothers and sisters in Christ. I give thanks too Dave, Debbie, Joe, Roger, Donna, Marianne, Leslie, Michael, Fred and Pat. May we all look with faith, hope, and love at what wonders God is yet to work among us.

In Christ’s service,  
Alison

### **COMMISSIONED MINISTER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

I am entering my 13<sup>th</sup> year of ministry here at the First Congregational Church of Cheshire. I am ever grateful to all the gifted individuals who serve in the Christian Education Ministry. Without all of you we wouldn’t have the wonderful programs we have at our church. So many thanks for allowing me the privilege to partner with you.

#### *Church School Year at a Glance*

Our Church School is blessed by the dedicated and committed teachers, shepherds, helpers, nursery caregivers and snack helpers who volunteer at each church school hour.

Grace Knipe is so very faithful and dedicated in her ministry as the Church School Superintendent. Thank you, Grace, for the many details you attend to on Sunday mornings for our Church School and special programs.

- This year we entered our 5<sup>th</sup> year of Workshop Rotation Model, Bible Journeys. This Church School Sunday morning program continues to thrive and encourage our elementary age youth in grades 2-6 as they engage the Bible as it meets them in their lives.
- Over the spring Peggy Allen, Emilee Ziolkowski and I perused many different curricula for our Preschool 3 – 1<sup>st</sup> grades. Our vision was to find a Biblical story-based curriculum which was interactive, teacher friendly, family oriented and engaging. Our decision to use LIVE BIG curriculum produced by Cokesbury Publishing was a very exciting one.
- We trained the teachers and helpers in using this exciting material and they moved into using it this fall. Teachers are loving the materials as are families. There is an easy to use family component that goes home each week in the form of a bookmark.
- **Summer Church School:** (Preschool 3- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grades) I designed a model to teach children to use their children's Bibles, pray, journal prayers and create crafts that reinforced Bible skills. Parents were invited to purchase Bibles for their children, which we used every week in our summer church school program. This program of using children's story Bibles has continued with this age group throughout the church school year. The elementary age and Jr. High classes have been using their Bibles already each week.
- **Jr. High Church School Classes** (Grades 7-8) This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year this has been a pre-confirmation focus for this age group. In 2007, the class studied an overview of the Old Testament. In 2008, the class studied an overview of the New Testament. 2009 may bring some new ideas for teaching this age group.

### **Nursery Care**

Thank you to Elaine Daly who worked tirelessly as the Nursery Coordinator for the year. She passed the torch this fall to Lisa Skelly who is also doing a terrific and tireless job as Nursery Coordinator. Thank you to all who volunteer in this ministry to our youngest members of our congregation. We have seen many new babies especially at the 11:00 service. We are blessed.

### **Stepping Stones Ministry for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Grades**

This elementary youth group continues to thrive at its monthly meetings thanks to the leadership in spring 2008 of Jim Parys, Deb Brown and Marge Williams. This fall Deb Brown remained on the leadership team and we invited Karen Basset, Steve Mulholland, Andy Shoop and Kerrie Dunne to join her. The average attendance is about 15 youth.

**2008 brought changes to the Confirmation program.** I was the primary leader assisted by Emilee Ziolkowski, Roger Olander and Mark Dickinson. The group of youth were

mentored weekly and met monthly on various faith topics. Many thanks to those who have volunteered to form a relationship with help with the spiritual preparation of a Confirmand.

Many thanks to Leslie Holmes Meyer and Michael Lombardi in the main office for the many ways they support the Christian Education Ministry. Thank you to Fred and Pat Turner for their ever faithful service and willingness to help with whatever task needs to be done for the Christian Education programs to run smoothly.

It continues to be a privilege for me to participate with you in worship, chapel leadership and leadership of various programs of our educational ministries.

Debbie Gravell

### **INTERIM DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES**

2008 saw an increase in attendance mostly from the Middle School group and strong participation from our High School group as well. Regular meetings were a combination of games, discussion and worship. On some Sundays, we utilized a new series from Nooma. These are 10 minute videos that are geared to inspire youth and young adults. After viewing the videos together, we break into smaller groups led by our adult volunteers for a thoughtful faith discussion. We spent other weeks in various off-site activities such as walking a labyrinth, visiting the Lyman Orchard corn maze and going bowling. We also held a number of overnight lock-ins during the year for both groups. Thanks to Joellyn Jason, Chris Cowles, Don Lee, Kevin Ross, Todd Skrzyniarz and many others for their dedication to our program. Thanks also to Carol-lynn Murphy who makes sure that we have a meal provided on Sunday nights and to Charlene Black who does all the behind the scenes panning for the Mission Trip.

Gary and Carol Warner have done a tremendous job with our Praise Band. There is a lot of work that goes into learning songs, organizing rehearsal time and keeping focused those youth who are performing. This has become not only a way for youth to use their gifts for the glory of God but a blessing for the whole church.

Our Winter Retreat was held at Monadnock Bible Center in New Hampshire where focused and engaging worship is blended with group games and Christian speakers. This was an activity-packed weekend designed to deepen students' relationship with God and with each other.

The highlight of the year was our Mission Trip to Wilmington, Delaware where our youth brought help and hope to some of the residents of this depressed area. This coming year, we will stay a little closer to home and attend the local work camp in Groton, Connecticut. We hope to keep travel costs down, and save enough money to enable a more distant trip in 2010.

Funds for our program continue to be a worry. We give thanks for the generous help provided by many individuals within our church family, the Board of Outreach, and the Strawberry Festival committee. It would be extremely difficult for YUTES to be the success it is on the amount budgeted. Hopefully someday there will be a more realistic

budget amount so that we don't have to worry all year about meeting our costs and relying at the last minute upon the goodwill of those mentioned above.

Finally, thanks to all of you at First Church who support our Youth Group in love and prayer. There is a definite feeling that our young people are an important part of the life of our church. We are very aware that there are perhaps few congregations that make their youth program as important a part of their ministry as you do ours. Thank you!

Roger Olander

### **PARISH CARE COORDINATOR**

This is the initial report from the Parish Care Coordinator and a brief history of this new position makes a good starting point. During the budget process for the year 2008 it was determined that there were not enough funds to cover the salary for a part-time minister of Parish Care. There was, however, a well-stated need for an individual to coordinate the on-going and diverse Parish Care activities. The Board of Deacons and the Parish Care Committee developed a job description for a volunteer Parish Care Coordinator with the understanding that this non-paid position would be an interim position until adequate funding was available. A job search was conducted and the position became active on February 26, 2008. The focus of this job was to serve as the bridge between those with a given ministerial need and one or more of our various caring ministries.

This year, to date, a minimum of 90 members of our church family have provided direct, hands-on assistance and care to approximately 340 individuals and families, predominately friends and members of our church family. The type of care provided has included, but is not limited to, recognition and support during births and baptisms including the presentation of a baptismal blanket; cards and telephone calls for such occasions as hospitalizations, deaths, births, anniversaries, not to mention a few; presentation of prayer shawls to individuals experiencing a difficult time in their lives; friendly visitations of the home-bound; distribution and management of prayer pagers; providing meals, rides and accomplishing small chores; Stephen Minister visits; and compassionate assistance during times of bereavement. Care providers amassed over 1,600 hours in care of others and expended approximately \$5,500 out of pocket expenses without any direct support from the operating budget. These 2008 statistics do not account for the many acts of kindness that are spontaneous in nature and often go unreported. In short our church responds to Christ's commandment that we should love one another.

Admittedly, the Parish Care Coordinator's 40 hour per month schedule only scratches the surface. There is more to do than time allows. My goal for the coming year is to continue to develop and refine the administrative procedures so that this ministry can reach even more people in need. Moreover, I will continue to record and publicize the accomplishments and contributions of our care providers as a constant reminder of this on-going and growing ministry.

Donna C. Mead  
Parish Care Coordinator

## **MUSIC DIRECTOR**

The music program experienced a successful year as we provided music for worship services, special recitals, and musical events for both our congregation and the larger Cheshire community. The Senior Choir maintained its schedule of singing twice a month at both the 9:00 and 11:00 services. During Advent, the choir sang for both services every Sunday offering the congregation music every week. (We intend to do the same during Lent 2009.) Membership in the choir increased and those who participated were incredibly dedicated. On average, we had approximately 16 singers singing on any given Sunday, forming a balanced choir of men's and women's voices. For special events and services, the choir grew to be as large as 30 voices. All singers on our roster are kept informed about choir happenings and are regularly invited to sing. The choir remains the main source of music for the program, singing a diverse range of liturgical repertoire to enhance and inspire the worshipping experience for our congregation. Rehearsing weekly gave the choir a chance to learn approximately eight anthems per month as well as prepare music for additional service and events.

Two of the most prominent services in 2008 were our annual Memorial Music Sunday service and Candlelight Lessons & Carols. Memorial Music Sunday was presented at one 10:00 am service on Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>. The choir was joined by singers from the Greater Middletown Chorale and from the Cheshire community. The choral work sung was Malcolm Archer's *Requiem*, accompanied by organist Allan Conway. This undertaking brought singers together to learn and grow through music and faith, and inspired a tremendous sense of community.

Candlelight Lessons & Carols was also presented on the fourth Sunday of Advent in the afternoon. Despite poor weather conditions, the service was well attended by church goers and people from the community. The service included the full nine traditional lessons and carols, with special decorations inside and outside the church. The service was unique as it was structured around the original poetry by church member John Afman. John's poetry was paired with music and scripture, and were rehearsed and performed by a small group of readers organized by Alison McCaffrey. The service culminated with the efforts and talents of nearly 60 participants, making this service a milestone in the worship life at First Church.

The music board raised nearly \$4,000 over and above its \$6,300 budget, by hosting concerts, recitals and special worship services outside the usual Sunday morning hours. In addition to supporting the program, we look on these activities as an important way that our church can reach out to the community at large. We have been pleased to see that a significant number of non-church members have continued to attend and enjoy musical offerings at First Church thereby increasing our church's visibility in the area. We hope that music becomes more viewed as a source of outreach for First Church by more of our church family.

Our summer "Music on the Green" concert was held on the green in July. The band "Higher & Higher" and their lead singer, our own Jennifer France, performed for at least 200 people. This concert was sponsored by various local businesses and grants and was our third annual summer concert event. A great time of fellowship and community was had by all.

Patricia Barbano continues at First Church as our soprano section leader. She offers an addition soprano voice and leadership to the choir. Patricia participates as an ensemble singer, with warm-ups, special solo work, and coaching. She has been with First Church for nearly four years, and contributes enormously to the program and choir.

The Youth Choirs continue to introduce music in worship to our children and youth. The Junior Choir experienced an increase in membership—approximately 15 students participate regularly. Both the Primary and Junior Choirs sing once per month, as well as participate in the annual Christmas Pageant and Lessons & Carols. The Junior Choir continues to provide music for the entire worship service every month when they sing. They sing one anthem and all of the hymns to help lead the congregation in song. Weekly rehearsals are well attended and inspire musical growth and development through learning.

The hand bell choirs, under the direction of Marianne Beckmann, continued to involve adults and children in ringing for Sunday worship services once a month and at other special services and events. Adults and children alike continued to learn music through ringing under Marianne's fine leadership. Funding for the bell choir in 2008 resulted in the generous giving of four families as the program was officially cut from the church's budget.

The music board and program would like First Church to be a welcoming place for other musicians, and have continued to encourage the use of our church for recitals. In 2008, we hosted a harp recital, given by professional harpist Grace Cloutier; and two voice recitals given by friends of the music program, Sheri Hammerstrom and Raymond Calderon. All of these fine musicians performed for free so that funds could be donated to the music program.

Thanks to the many talented singers and instrumentalists in the congregation, there is hardly a weekend or service at any point during the year that does not have someone offering music during worship. Even our worship services in the summer feature soloists nearly every weekend. In 2008, our Senior Choir sang once a month during the Offertory during the summer. This was a great way for the choir to remain singing during the summer without having a full-time commitment.

2008 was a remarkable year in that the music program continued to expand and grow offering richer worship experiences and fulfillment to our congregation and the larger Cheshire community. Outreach through music remains a central vision and purpose to the music board as we continue to shape the program for the future. Through our music, we hope others in the community who are looking for a spiritual home might feel invited to walk through the doors of First Church to witness how much our church offers as a whole.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joseph D'Eugenio  
Music Director

## **THE REVEREND BARBARA BARLOK**

Report on the Four-way Covenant of the Rev. Barbara E. Barlok

The four parties of the Covenant of the Rev. Barbara E. Barlok are:

- 1) the United Church of Christ (represented by the New Haven Association)
- 2) First Congregational Church of Cheshire
- 3) Interfaith Volunteer Care Givers of Greater New Haven (IVCG) and
- 4) Barbara

My ministry is in the community as Executive Director of IVCG, a Friendly Visitor program established in 1984 by Interfaith Cooperative Ministries (ICM) in New Haven. IVCG assists older people by fostering independent living and reducing isolation through friendly visits, rides to medical appointments, help with grocery shopping and other errands, and respite for family caregivers.

It is one of over 650 Faith in Action programs nationally. Volunteers of all ages from 25 affiliated congregations, Yale and Quinnipiac Universities, and the community are recruited, trained, and matched with older and disabled people. About 500 volunteers provide over 15,000 hours of service annually to about 500 recipients in 16 towns. About 80% of services are provided through faith communities. The Rev. Arthur Yost, a retired United Methodist minister from West Haven and Margret Hofmeister, a lifetime member of the Branford UCC who is seeking ordination in the UCC, are part-time employees at IVCG.

This fall, IVCG supervised four students in the MSW program at Southern Connecticut State University. They interned through a special grant from the Hartford Foundation to the Aging At Home program to encourage students to seek employment in the field of gerontology. IVCG coordinated the delivery of 638 hot meals on Thanksgiving Day through Interfaith Cooperative Ministries (ICM) of Greater New Haven. I currently serve on the ICM Board of Directors. FISH, the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen (DESK), the Community Soup Kitchen and IVCG collaboratively sponsor an annual fundraiser - Cook and Care Walk-A-Thon - in October with about \$3,500 raised for each organization. I raised \$1,100 from friends in Cheshire! Over 150 people attended this year's Spirituality and Aging conference of the Connecticut Interfaith Network on Aging at The Mercy Center. The conference is a program of IVCG. Its 25th Anniversary will be celebrated in 2009. To honor my four-way Covenant, I preached and led communion in December at FCC of Madison.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. Barbara E. Barlok

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The Year 2008 was a remarkable year in the life of the First Congregational Church of Cheshire. Had our church been a ship at sea, there were moments when we encountered a "Perfect Storm" with historic conditions that challenged both our secular and non-secular lives. The theme of Executive Board meetings has been to focus on open communications and a strong sense of cooperation. It was a year to get back to basics, to

renew and strengthen our spiritual foundation and to prepare the way for an exciting 2009. As you read the reports from the staff, boards, committees and small groups, you will see clear evidence of their flexibility, determination and creativity. You will see a church that is alive and on the move; a church that seeks to listen to the word of God and to abide by His guidance. We are blessed with a strong and faithful membership who is working to honor our roots and traditions while simultaneously plotting a course that will take our church to new destinations.

Safe Church: In the summer of this year, the Executive Board formally concluded actions to comply with the recommendations of the April 2007 Response Team. We have updated safety-related documentation and check lists, verified that our professional and volunteer staff members have been properly trained, conducted emergency drills and established an oversight committee to monitor our on-going compliance with both internal and external safety directives. Most recently, we instituted measures to provide an additional layer of safety for our staff and volunteers from external threats. These measures include installation of an alarm system linked to the local police department and special threat reaction training provided by Lt. Jay Markella of the Cheshire Police Department.

Infrastructure: Our historic buildings and grounds are a great source of pride but also demand constant maintenance and upkeep. With great pleasure we note that work was completed on the resurfacing of Church Drive, repairing of sidewalks, curbs and the walkway crossing Church Green. With support from generous donations from Ladies Aid and several anonymous members of the congregation, we were able to complete a cost-sharing venture with the Town of Cheshire that enabled us to complete a major restoration project at a fraction of the full cost. This is an example of the creativity and flexibility that have kept us moving forward this year. In addition, our Board of Trustees has developed a comprehensive, long-range planning document that gives us a highly visible forecast of future repair and replacement requirements and costs. With disciplined annual funding we will have the ability to care for our facilities well into the future. Without incremental funding, however, we will shift a major financial burden on to those who will follow us.

By-Laws Update: This fall we concluded an 18 month effort with the vote to approve a comprehensive re-write of our church by-laws. Dennis Lape, Bill Gordon, Mark Sullivan and June Webster performed outstanding service to our church as they coordinated with staff, boards, committees, and individual members and completely revamped our governing directive. Their work standardized the by-laws in language, form and format; updated wording to reflect procedural and organizational changes made in the recent past; and established new procedures pertaining to the succession of church lay leadership, a more intentional future planning effort, as well as a comprehensive guidance related to the church's finances.

Outreach and Caring Ministries: Our ability to minister to those outside and within our church family was greatly challenged due to a significant reduction in our 2008 operating budget. The responses to this challenge have been heartening. Our Board of Outreach, for example, has transformed itself into a ministry of action. Where once our generosity was measured primarily in terms of financial support, we are now a more hands-on

ministry, providing many opportunities for congregational participation and direct assistance to those less fortunate. In a similar fashion, when faced with no funding for a minister of parish care, a volunteer stepped forward, and working with the Board of Deacons and the Parish Care Committee, created and filled the position of Parish Care Coordinator. This individual, working closely with the clergy, the Parish Care Committee and Stephen Ministers provides the link between those with needs and a very caring church family.

Membership & Welcoming: We have seen substantial growth in how we welcome strangers, friends and current members. Closely linked to this, we have also enjoyed the benefits of an updated new member orientation process that helps new members more fully understand the significance of being in covenant with one another.

The capstone of the year's events, however, comes with the news that our Senior Search Committee has completed its rigorous and demanding process culminating in the Call of Reverend Jeff Braun. Even as this report is being written, we are in anticipation of a Church Meeting where we will vote to officially call Rev. Braun. We are indebted to our search committee for their dedication and diligence. Moreover, we are most grateful for the blessings of our Interim Senior Minister, Dave Buchan and his wife Patty who have guided us through this period of transition and discernment.

As we look to the coming year, we know we will face great challenges and even greater opportunities. Leading the list of challenges is a very austere budget. Despite a comprehensive and well-executed stewardship campaign, our church finds itself in the middle of a financial "Perfect Storm." As with most churches during a period between settled senior ministers, some pledging families have taken a "wait and see" approach. In addition, some long-standing stalwart members have departed the church family, and without exception, we have all experienced the impact of a complete upheaval in the global financial markets. All these factors have combined to leave us with a major shortfall in our 2009 budget. We will live within our means during the coming year, but only through a series of across-the-board sacrifices. On a more upbeat note, we look forward to the coming year with the arrival of a new senior minister and all that comes with "new beginnings."

Bob Mead  
President

#### **BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

To begin this report, may I say Happy New Year to You All!

We have carried on with all the normal Christian Education events throughout the year. These include: the Fourth Grade Bible Potluck, Heifer Project International, Operation Christmas Child, Children's Day and Teacher Appreciation, Youth Sunday, Church School Kick-Off, Third Grade Potluck, Confirmation Classes and Stepping Stones to name a few. In addition we sponsored the Advent Workshop. We had more members of the congregation join in the fun this year.

This has been another transitional year as we continue to search for a Permanent Director of Youth Ministries. Roger Olander continues to serve the youth as our Interim DYM and he is working very hard to keep our YUTES continuing on in faith, fun and “Spirit”. The search continues and we pray we will have a permanent DYM in the near future. The Search Committee met with Rev. DaVita McCallister, Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries in the months winter of this year. She helped the committee hone their vision and job description for a DYM. During this time the YUTES made a video advertising the group for a new DYM. It is a great video and can be seen at the following link: [http:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_acOLqB9ZA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_acOLqB9ZA). **The search words are: Youth Ministry Job**

The year will end with our spectacular Christmas Pageant. We owe huge thanks to the director and Costumer of the event-Linda Milton. You are amazing and truly a gift to this church!

I want to thank all the out going board members-you know who you are-we will miss you! We are looking forward to welcoming our new members in January and February.

The Board of Christian Education is looking forward to 2009 in hopes of it bring a productive one that will focus on building the faith traditions of families and on bringing our children and youth a new and faith building experience.

“Whoever will be great among you, let him be your servant”. Matt. 20:26

Submitted by Lynn Ryan, Chairperson on behalf of the Board.

### **BOARD OF DEACONS**

A leader of the church gave a challenge to the Board of Deacons this year... to become “awesome” in whatever we did. I don’t know whether or not we attained that goal, but we certainly accomplished quite a bit. This was a great Board, with Assistant Senior Deacon Donna Mead (also serving as the newly appointed Parish Care Coordinator), Jim Louys (Treasurer), Don Lee, Joy Deegan, Jane Montgomery, Jackie Cole, Elsa Bradford, Joyce Mulholland, Diane Visconti, Matt Childs, Mark Dickinson, and our Deacons from the youth group, Andrew Stephan and Connor Jason. I am very grateful for their service.

The Deacons carried out their traditional duties such as, serving communion, delivering flowers every Sunday, sending cards or notes to those sick or shut-in, assisting the ministers at baptisms and other services, providing the confirmation reception, and reviewing membership. Beginning in January the Deacons undertook the task of reviewing and revising the Deacons Manual, which had not been updated for over five years. We then found that the Pastoral Relations Committee had also not been changed since its inception, and we updated the process and appointed new members. During this period, the Deacons also worked with the By-Laws Committee during the process of revising and improving the recently approved church by-laws. Continuing in this vein, and maintaining liaison with the Senior Minister Search Committee, we updated and improved the Senior Minister job description.

Conference Minister Davida Foy Crabtree visited Cheshire Congregational on March 9<sup>th</sup>, and the Deacons provided a fantastic luncheon for the church leadership. The coordinators, Joyce Mulholland and Jackie Cole, had this event planned to perfection! Tablecloths, flower centerpieces, real plates and utensils, and a wonderful hot buffet. It was truly a class act! We provided another luncheon in April for Mike Penn-Strah, our Association Minister. While not as elaborate, it was first rate.

Perhaps the most important accomplishment of this past year was the creation of the Parish Care Coordinator position. The church did not have the funding for a Parish Care Minister, and it was not rational to expect Alison to oversee both her calling and parish care. Working with the Parish Care Committee, we came up with the concept of a temporary volunteer layperson to serve as the church's Parish Care Coordinator until such time as funding became available. The Assistant Senior Deacon volunteered to fill the position, was found to be more than qualified, and has been outstanding in making this program strong and effective.

We voted to again have two summer services, at 8:00 am and 10:00 am. We decided to have the 8:00 am service led by lay people, and Deacons led many of the services, including giving the homily. The experience proved to be very uplifting and rewarding for all who participated. We also voted to have two evening services that were more contemporary in nature. Peggy Allen led us in these, and the youth participated with great performances by the Praise Band leading us in wonderful music.

Once again the Deacons organized our second "Homecoming Sunday" event. Both the choir and the Yutes' Praise Band provided joyous music for both services. After worship we had the dedication of the new walkway on the green, a cookout, all-church photo, games, and the Galvanized Jazz Band playing. The weather was perfect and the fellowship even better. We ended the day with a vesper service under the tent on the green

The Deacons are presently in the process of improving the way that the church keeps track of our membership. Deacons Mark Dickinson and Matt Childs are working with the Clerk and the Membership Committee to maintain an accurate record of our membership.

We helped organize and participate in the "Gifts of Thanks" service on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, and we hosted the town-wide Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve service. And, of course, we prepared and participated in the events of the Advent and Christmas season.

As the New Year begins, The Deacons will initiate preparations for the arrival and settling in of a new senior minister. It has been a busy year!

I thank God for the wonderful gift to have served you as Senior Deacon during this past year. It has blessed me.

Ford Cole  
Senior Deacon

### Deacon's Treasurer Report

<b>Fund Name</b>	<b>1/1/2008 Begin Balance</b>	<b>Contributions Received</b>	<b>Interest Earned</b>	<b>Disperse</b>	<b>12/31/2008 End Balance</b>
<i>Memorial</i>	\$8,113.01	\$3,635.00		\$10,557.66	\$1,190.35
<i>S.B. France</i>	\$960.96		\$114.24		\$1,075.20
<i>All Saints Scholarship</i>	\$1,877.46	\$500.00	\$1,005.41	\$2,400.00	\$982.87
<i>T. Clark Fund</i>	\$306.51		\$110.27		\$416.78
<i>Mary Hotchkiss</i>	\$3,606.32		\$1,229.06		\$4,835.38
<i>Emerson</i>	\$837.66		\$552.39		\$1,390.05
<i>Stephen Ministry</i>	\$150.00	\$155.00		\$169.40	\$135.60
<i>Salt &amp; Light Fund</i>	\$0.00	\$8,160.00		\$2,830.00	\$5,330.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,851.92</b>	<b>\$12,450.00</b>	<b>\$3,011.37</b>	<b>\$15,957.06</b>	<b>\$15,356.23</b>

#### Income Received

**Memorial Gifts:** \$3,635.00

*Given in memory of:*

Jack Altobello	Gil Lassen
Stella Andrews	Patricia Nenninger
Olga Becker	Terence Nicholoy
Maybelle Bens	Judy Ozdemirer
Ty Beeton Cobb	Dorothy Shultz
Claudia DuBoisson	Betty Shaw
Beverly Euerle	Nadine Simmons
Maerita Guertin	Sandra Sinclair
Ken Hale	Walter Sousa
Mary Hartman	Peter Spirito
Ruth Kurtz	Marvin Turner

**Scholarship Gifts:** \$500.00

**Trust Fund Income:** \$3,011.37

**Other Income:** \$155.00 Donations for Stephen Ministry

\$8,160.00 Salt and Light Grant Funds from Board of Outreach

#### Significant Allocations

Pew Cushions: \$10,124.96

Salt & Light Grants: \$2,830.00

Scholarships: \$2,400.00

Stephen Ministry Training Materials: \$169.40

Other: \$432.70

#### Ad Hoc Fund Handling

Staff Gifts: Income: \$2,571.00

Expenditures: \$2,675.00

Balance: (\$104.00) (from Memorial Fund)

## **BOARD OF MUSIC**

This was a very busy year as the Board of Music continued to support and expand the music ministry at First Church. Members of the Board included Susan Bishop, Charlene Black, Jane Bower, Jack Burton, Audrey Finkenstadt, Ramin Hakim, Andrew Hostage, Perry Stevens, Peter Stephan and Marty Swartz.

Under the excellent leadership of Joe D'Eugenio, the Senior Choir of First Church is a dedicated group of strong musicians and singers who devote their time and talents to learning and performing sacred music as a regular part of worship. Through discussions and reflections, the Board has offered input and feedback regarding the incorporation of music as a means of expression, sharing, and contemplation within worship and fellowship activities. Through fundraising efforts, the Board has supported the hiring of Patricia Barbano, soprano, as a section leader and assistant to Joe.

The Board supported several musical services as an expansion of traditional Sunday morning worship. One such program was the traditional Memorial Music Sunday which, this past March, featured a performance of Malcolm Archer's *Requiem of Hope*. This program provided participants with a unique opportunity to honor and remember people who have been important in their lives.

In this the Advent Season, the Board is also assisting with plans for a traditional Lessons and Carols Service. This has been planned in association with the ministers of the church, and will provide an expanded worship opportunity for the congregation to participate in the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, a celebration dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The Board continues to recognize the power of music as a mean of providing outreach to the entire community, and seeks to offer First Church as a gathering place for recitals and performances beyond traditional worship. This past year, the board sponsored two afternoon recitals by young artists. Sherri Hammerstrom, soprano, accompanied on the piano by Judy Woo, and Ray Calderon, tenor, provided excellent afternoon musical programs which were very well received. Both events, and the receptions following, were well attended by regular church goers as well as members of the larger community.

A major event sponsored by the Board was the third annual Summer Music on the Green event in July. This wonderful program drew people of all ages from the greater Cheshire area for a fellowship experience that included picnics, singing, dancing under the stars, and enjoying the magnificent view from the Green of the lighted church on a perfect summer night. The Board extends special thanks to Jennifer France Vickers and her band, "Higher & Higher" for their wonderful performance, and to our event planners Megan Stephan and Hope Reinhard.

All of these events would not have been possible without the active contributions of those Board members mentioned above. In addition to adding meaning to our worship and fellowship activities, these events have enabled the Board to raise approximately \$4,000 over and above our budget. These additional funds will be utilized to further the development of the music program, purchase new music, and support the section leader, an absolutely vital part of our choral music program. It has been our pleasure to sponsor

these events for the church family and to foster the continued development of a strong music program.

Martha Swartz and Jane Bower  
Co-Chairs

### **BOARD OF OUTREACH**

Meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of each month.

The 2008 Board consisted of Gretchen Bates, Joy Biggart, Lisa Canas, Kerrie Dunne, Christine Fitzmaurice, Mark Hostage (resigned), Cindy Mazzaferro, Peter Ploch, Beth Ross, Robin Sellati, Mark Sullivan (resigned), Amy Webb, Youth member: Eric Ploch. Rev. Alison McCaffrey served as liaison to the staff. Thank you to Rev. Peggy Allen who was our guiding light during Alison's sabbatical May 19- July 14. Thank you to those assuming specialized Board positions: Chris, treasurer; Gretchen, secretary; Joy, mail reporter. Thank you to all our members for individual services profiled in this report. This year's Board is to be commended for their time and prayerful consideration of all our charitable expenditures. Because Outreach budget is now entirely discretionary, each donation and hands-on mission took many hours of planning and often required lengthy meetings.

This year our Board assumed a significantly diminished budget than provided in past years. We understood the constraints of our budget and decided to "look at the glass as half full not half empty." We proceeded to contact by letter previous budget line-item agencies and inform them that our past method of financial support would be replaced with a more hands-on approach and some financial backing. Gone are the days of pre-budgeted line-items as status-quo. We made every attempt to stay with our standards: Food Banks, Fuel Banks, and Missions to those most in Need. Our Board with excitement looked at this time as an opportunity to encourage, educate, inspire, and promote more personal involvement in our Church's Outreach.

Our first priority was to support UCC Wider World Mission. We designated \$10,000, which is 40% of our total budget of \$25,000. Support of our own Youth in mission: \$3,000. To educate Ministers: \$500 to UCC New Haven Association Scholarship Fund.

In March, Rev. Bonita Grubbs and Al May from NH Christian Community Action, Inc. gave a presentation of their mission. Our CCA liaison Mark Hostage promoted our support of \$250 to their annual Food Drive.

April's focus was Cromwell Children's Home. Cindy Mazzaferro spearheaded many exciting hands-on and charitable projects. A total of \$700 was donated to CCH. Cindy organized Bingo and Spa nights and a fishing trip at her own lake home. Thank you to Betsy Adams, Sue Bishop, Chris Bokon, Ed Albrecht, Jessica Koch, Carol Kovaly, Tom Mazzaferro, Tracy Bloschichak, Holly Groom, Adeline Arumainayagam, and Jan Garthwait for their special mission with CCH.

May's focus was UCC World Church Services Blanket and Tool Mission. Our theme was "Blanket the World in Warmth" and our congregation responded generously with \$833 to UCC.

In May, Rev. Peggy Allen arranged guest speakers from Spring Glen Congregational Church in Hamden to present their Mission trips to the Gulf Coast post Hurricane Katrina clean-up and rebuilding. An adult mission trip to the Gulf Coast is planned in March 2009. The Spring Glen Church Group returned in September for a pot-luck dinner and presentation to our congregation. The cost of trip is about \$625/pp. A benefit concert will be held January 4, 2009.

Outreach accepted the resignation of Jan Cowles from her 19 years of service as our liaison to Covenant for Care ending in July. We have all been truly blessed by Jan's incredible years of devotion to this mission.

Outreach announced a name change for Covenant for Care. We have terminated our affiliation with the agency known as "Covenant to Care" and in doing so, can no longer use their name for our mission. The new name is "Covenant for Caring." We still have our connection with the Waterbury Department of Children and Families. Lori Mann and Juliann Nowie have stepped forward to lead in the "Collections" (clothing and household goods) portion for Covenant for Caring. The DCF Mission of Easter Baskets, Thanksgiving Meals, and Christmas Presents still needs an organizer. This years helpers for these missions were: Ross family members: Beth, Kevin, Lara and Emilee, Chris Fitzmaurice, Kerrie Dunne, Pete and Eric Ploch, Chris Albrecht, Gretchen and Ken Bates. Thank you to all in our congregation who made the Easter Baskets so beautiful and special; Shopped for the groceries and fixings and don't think those cards, drawings, and special treats go unnoticed in the Thanksgiving meal boxes; and all those who find the time and money to purchase a present "for just one more" child at Christmas!

June and July were dedicated to Food and Shelter. Our Shelters: Columbus House in New Haven, Safe Haven in Waterbury, and Chrysalis in Meriden-Wallingford were each given \$250 Connecticut Food Bank \$2,500 allocated as \$500 over 5 months; Operation Fuel and Cheshire Fuel Bank \$1,000 each allocated as \$250 over 4 months from September through December.

We supported Prison Ministry with \$250 to Manson Youth Facility in Cheshire. This Mission of a horticultural program was started by Lorrie Canas to aid the imprisoned youth in a life changing activity and impact recidivism. Her efforts and program, with acknowledgement to our Church as her primary supporter (\$1,000 to date), appeared in the Waterbury Republican Newspaper in September.

Jan Garthwait and Helpers, 5 times (months with a 5th Wednesday), organized, delivered, and served dinner at Columbus House. We give thanks to the many in our congregation that prepare the meat loaves, mashed potatoes, and pies that are so loved by those in need.

Team Steeplechase raised over \$12,000 for Relay for Life in our honor. Thank you to Betsy Adams, Rich Grudzias and Carol Ploch and their team for their many hours of

planning and giving. Rev. Peggy Allen provided a sunrise service at the Relay and our First Congregational Church was the only denomination present and provided spiritual connections to many during that service.

Our First Sunday of the Month Communion food offerings are given to GWIM (Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministry). We average 300 items each month. We also support FISH, a greater New Haven food bank that provides meals. Our donation to them is requested in Cereal. We delivered 60 boxes in July and 100 Boxes (50/50 match with Outreach) in September. Our total will be about 200 boxes of cereal for the year. Thank you to drivers Gretchen and Joy. We would like to thank 2 anonymous contributors of \$750 to each agency. One young girl in our Church anonymously donated food items "her presents" from those attending her birthday party. We give Thanks!

We were a presence at the Strawberry Festival in June. Serving water and showcasing our Church's Good Works we were able to invite others in our community to join us. Thank you water servers: Pam Euerle, Jane Montgomery, Gretchen, and the many groups that supplied great posters: Donna Mead, Parish Care; Sue Chatfield, Stephen Ministries; Amy Webb and Robin Sellati, Malawi Mission; Carol, Betsy, and Rich, Relay for Life.

We were a presence at Homecoming Sunday in September with Mission to our Troops, initiated last year by Beth Ross. Our focus this year was to supply troops in Afghanistan and Iraq with small toys to give to children, thus fostering good relations and giving to those most tragically affected by war. Thank you to organizers Kerrie, Gretchen, Beth and the many in our congregation that brought or bought at the picnic toys for this event. We sent 351 toys!

Mission Day in October continued into its Fourth year. Although a smaller group, our outside cleanup and leaf raking was much appreciated by Chrysalis House. Thank you to Chris and Jan Cowles, Ed and Chris Albrecht, Mark Hostage, Stacey Groshart and Meena, Pete Ploch, Alison McCaffrey, and Anne Giddings. Thank you to Joy Deegan for her many toiletry supplies to Chrysalis.

Salt and Light Grants (\$2,830) were given this year to Betsy Adams' Operation Sunscreen to our Troops; Amanda Ploch's soccer balls for an after school program in South Africa; Confirmands 2008's Clean water for an African village project; Chad Groshart for Himalayan Light Foundation; Amy Webb for Malawi Mission Liaison Trip. This fund is separate from 2008 Outreach Budget. Salt and Light money comes from monies accrued during the holiday season after the reduced 2006 Outreach Budget had been expensed to our charities and closed. Salt and Light Grant money was set aside to assist individuals in our church with personal mission for the greater good. Outreach with this year's budget would like to continue to provide individuals with this grant and approved replacement funds of \$2,000.

In September, we used \$366 to give the Cheshire Department of Human Services backpacks filled with school supplies put together and delivered by Beth Ross. Some of the school supplies were donated to us by Debbie Gravell and our own Christian Education program.

In November, we reestablished our contact with Etienne Alexandre, formerly of Taeria Foundation's Helping Hands in Haiti. He is now working with the Haiti Mission at Hartford Missionary Baptist Church in Hartford, CT. Etienne and Rev. Georges Lys were guest speakers arranged by Kerrie Dunne. Presenting their mission program in Haiti, the poorest of Caribbean Islands, expounded on the devastation by 4 hurricanes this summer, a school collapse with many deaths, mud slides, lack of electricity, clean water and basics. We were compelled to give \$500 to this mission. We will consider food, clothing, and school supply barrels in the coming new year.

We give thanks for the talents of Robin and Jack Sellati, All her music students, Christian and Alexandra Hakim, our Youth Praise Band, Gary, Carol, Christopher and Julianne Warner for providing a wonderful night of music to support our Malawi Mission. A free-will offering raised \$1800. Thank you to Outreach members who hosted the reception: Beth, Gretchen, Chris, Kerrie, Pete and Eric. There are about 20 individuals, families, and Outreach that sponsor a Malawi Orphan (\$265/yr). Many have donated cans/bottle deposit slips for Malawi Mission. Amy Webb traveled to Malawi in November for one month to assess our Mission there and provide us first hand evaluation of our orphans, breakfast program and to perhaps start a school scholarship program.

Christmas Outreach of \$300 each will go to "Will Santa Find Me" and Webster Correctional Institution for toiletries as gifts. We were given many toys from TOYZ in Cheshire through Lori Mann. Outreach plans to divide the toys between Cromwell Home and DCF as age appropriate.

Thank you to Sherry Kovalesky for her time and efforts running the Rummage Sale. Thank you to all the Women's Fellowship Groups who so generously gave their proceeds from the Rummage Sale and Christmas Fair to Outreach. Outreach members were pleased to assist the Women's Fellowship Groups during the Christmas Fair.

Since September 2007, the Board of Outreach has been responsible in obtaining the coffee for coffee hour from "Equal Exchange - Fairly Traded Coffee". The UCC Coffee Project works with Equal Exchange and encourages congregations to purchase their coffee for coffee hours and events from Equal Exchange. In doing so, they help to support small-scale farmers in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Through this project, farmers earn a fair price for their products, have access to affordable credit and gain a long-term trading partner they can trust in Equal Exchange. In short, the profits go back to the farmers instead of a large corporate conglomerate. First Congregational Church of Cheshire has been able to support the purchasing of this coffee solely by the donations received at coffee hour and no additional funds have been needed. Approximately every 2-3 months, an order of 2 cases of regular coffee and 1 case of decaf coffee is ordered. In addition, we are drinking organically grown coffee helping to promote a "green" earth as well as supporting the small farmer.

Outreach was the receiver of many anonymous gifts. Some gave their tax-rebates; others gave smaller and larger amounts; many gave gifts of personal talents and precious time...to ALL, we are grateful!

What's to come? Mission to the Gulf Coast in March 2009; What's left undone? Kacey Mitchell Memorial Foundation "Dining to Donate" date to be determined...but we will! Honoring Jan Cowles' remarkable service (Jan's and our calendars never meshed)...but we will!

If you are trying to balance these amounts and finding it difficult, so am I. I will leave the exact accounting to Walt, Sara, Betsy, and our own Chris. I have found abundance here worthy of noting Scripture: Matthew's account of Jesus Feeding the Five Thousand (Matthew 14.13-21): five loaves and two fish. God's Hand is in all we do and with faith, He has made such abundance for us this year. On behalf of the Board of Outreach, Thank you, our Congregation, for all your time and talents. To my hard working Outreach members, Thank you for showing us Creativity in the Spirit of Giving. God Bless You All.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa M. Canas, Chairperson

### **BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP**

During the course of 2008, the Board of Stewardship incorporated the concepts of the book "Ask.Thank.Tell." into its efforts. The book preaches two main concepts: First, the focus of pledging should not be about meeting a budget, but approaching and advocating for pledging by the membership as a means to bring them closer to God. Second, the book advocated methods of seeking pledges by actively asking for pledges, thanking the membership for pledges, and to the extent acceptable to Church leadership, tell the membership about the pledging.

In January, the Board put its "thanking" foot forward, hosting a Donor Dinner as a means of thanking the congregation for its pledges and other donations in 2007. By all accounts, this was a successful and well-received event. The thanking continued as part of a pancake breakfast on Stewardship Sunday (October 26, 2008) open to all, to raise the spirits and celebrate the stewardship season. From the amount of smiling, sticky faces out in the crowd, it also was well received.

With a more solid understanding of the church membership rolls from efforts made last year, the Board continued its efforts at brainstorming ways to improve both the amounts of the pledges as well as the amounts of members participating in the pledging process. This included efforts at targeting groups that seemed to be under pledging based upon the pledge rolls, including new members and parents of children in the Christian Education program. In addition, the Board initiated efforts in coordination with other boards to promote and increase endowment, or "Legacy," type giving by members, something we hope to continue into 2009 and beyond.

Unfortunately, the apparent success of the 2007 pledge drive could not be sustained in 2008. The second half of 2008 brought on severe economic crises for our country, one that the membership apparently could not avoid unscathed. In addition, the uncertainty associated with the church's being without a new Senior Minister for all of 2008 seems to have contributed to the decrease in pledging. Despite the efforts of a diligent and dedicated Board, as of December 1, 2008, pledges are down almost \$85,000.00 from last

year, and total pledges are down about 50 from last year. The Board hopes this deficit will decrease by the time the final budget for 2009 is approved.

The good news on the horizon is that the Church is likely to have a new Senior Minister in place by the spring of 2009, and that the ensuing stability and energy resulting from the same will have a positive effect on pledging going forward. For now, as a Board and as a church, we shall continue our efforts and tighten our belts.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Anthony R. DePaolo  
Co-Chair, Board of Stewardship

### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The year 2008 was a year that focused on many new and interesting tasks. The main goal for this year was to reach our objective of a self supporting reserve fund that would allow the Church to maintain its infrastructure as the facilities required either repair or replacement over time. The new budget for 2009 should allow this goal to finally be reached with an anticipated yearly budget of \$50,000. The plan that was developed in 2005 identified many line items which would require maintenance depending on its useful life. In 2008 the plan was updated to reflect the current conditions as subcommittees continually assess our infrastructure. We also requested that the funds for this work be restructured in our financial statement and be called the Capital, Replacement and Maintenance Plan (CRMP) which would be used to address all of the items described in the plan as needed at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

This year, many items were updated, replaced or provided to protect our facilities. The largest of these projects was the renovation of Church Drive. This project was initiated back in 2005. With much hard work in gaining Town support and approvals of the Historical Commission, a draft agreement, with the help of Brad Fuller, was finally reached with the Town that would allow Town funds to be used for road and sidewalk work on Church Drive. Initially the Church would contribute 30% towards the renovation project. The split for all future work would be a 60/40 Town/Church contribution. The components of the Church Drive project entailed a totally new reconstructed roadway, new sidewalks and curbing and a new brick walkway across the Green. Several generous donations were made by Church members to help pay for the Church's portion of the project. In recognition of this project, a plaque was designed and placed in the center of the Green walkway and dedicated at a ceremony on Homecoming Sunday.

In addition to the Church Drive project a whole laundry list of work took place. Besides our customary Fall and Spring cleanups, we also paved most of the rear drive entrance, replaced and added three (3) battery backup sump pumps in the Parsonage and Church Connector to alleviate groundwater seepage as well as a perimeter drain in the Parsonage, added three (3) dehumidifiers in the main building, the office HVAC was replaced, sanctuary and vestibule carpet was replaced, replaced the Chapel side roof and repainted the building extension, refreshed the handicap signage, repaired and/or replaced the electrical panels in the Whiting House and the Church which were showing signs of corrosion, flushed the heating system in the Whiting House, fixed the collapsed water

conveyance system for the front of the Connector, installed a new ADT panel, repainted the Church office and installed new carpeting and refinished the wood surfaces (thanks to Bob Johmann!), added signage on the sanctuary door from the library, spearheaded an energy savings program to reduce electrical consumption, replaced several toilet seats in the bathrooms, and repaired the Parsonage front steps and the Whiting House side steps. Specific focus was given to the Parsonage in anticipation of the new Minister coming on board. In the Parsonage the furnace was repaired, the upstairs bathroom renovated, the hardwood floors refinished, the fireplaces re-pointed and cleanout doors in the basement replaced, and generally cleaned up the building and removed unnecessary items from the premise.

On the lighter side, we negotiated a new tenant agreement with the Day Care and hired a new part-time staff person for the office, Michael Lombardi. Progress was made with Legacy Giving and the endowment program with meetings being held with outside consultants to better understand the process. We also made a presentation to the membership that provided an update on the Columbarium issue and status of our infrastructure. We are very pleased with the progress and options available to us at this time for potentially seeing “the light at the end of the tunnel” in getting a Columbarium constructed. As stated in 2005 there still remains a number of infrastructure items that need immediate attention if we are to be self sufficient with the CRMP program. That amount is now up to \$255,000 with the list presented in the power point presentation on November 2. Although there was no formal request for a fund raiser, any donations would be welcomed in order to prevent further damage from the environment to our infrastructure.

This year also presented us with some challenges. Security issues needed to be addressed to provide the needed safety for our staff, members and guests that frequent our facilities. A subcommittee was formed and met with the local police and security services. Some equipment and changes are expected to be implemented by the end of 2008.

There are so many more things that this board has participated in and has given so much of its time to, like grounds work, tree trimming, tree removal, root treatment and soil aeration, general cleaning up and painting. ALL the members are to be given a welcome applause for all their hard work over this past year.

Richard Kruczek and Edward Albrecht

### **CHESHIRE INTERFAITH HOUSING COMMITTEE**

Since land to build an affordable house is so expensive in Cheshire, CIH worked with the Senior Center to identify several older citizens who needed some home improvements, such as ramps, so they could “get out of the house!” CIH is currently looking for affordable housing projects in Cheshire - new construction or renovations. A bid on an existing house is currently under consideration. Finding suitable affordable land is the most critical issue. Collaborations have been explored with Cheshire Human Services, the Cheshire Senior Center, the Cheshire Housing Authority and Americares. Barbara Barlok and Glenn Nowie represent First Congregational Church on the CIH Board of Directors.

Submitted by the Rev. Barbara Barlok

## **DELEGATES - CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE AND NEW HAVEN ASSOCIATION**

Our church is part of a larger fellowship of believers who meet regularly as clergy and lay delegates. The local group is the New Haven Association of 21 churches who met on May 29<sup>th</sup> in Milford and October 30<sup>th</sup> in Dunbar Church in Hamden. The statewide gathering, the Connecticut Conference, consists of 253 churches, and met for the 141<sup>st</sup> time on May 10<sup>th</sup> in Middletown and October 17-18 in Bridgeport.

First Church is well represented. In the New Haven Association, Peggy Allen continues as Registrar which is a do-everything position. Alison is serving her first term on the Committee on the Ministry, which, among other responsibilities, supervises in-care seminarians leading to ordination. Elizabeth Esty is in her second term on the same committee. Martha Lape is serving on the Nominating Committee, from which John Afman has just retired. On the national level, the Rev. John Thomas, formerly an Associate Minister at our church, continues as President and General Minister of the UCC.

The theme of the association and conference meetings in spring 2008 was the power of the Holy Spirit to energize our churches. The early church's experience of Pentecost, where the disciples of Jesus were overwhelmed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, was re-experienced in worship and explored in discussions. Ideas were offered for programs at our churches:

Creative Worship (illustrated often in our church by Alison and Roger).....  
Mission Trips (Katrina relief work by members from the Spring Glen church who coached us on how to do it ourselves; our trip is now set to go in March 2009).....  
Effective Meetings.....Youth Ministry.....Stewardship....Devotional Journaling, Model Classrooms for Church School..... and Action Opportunities on Environmental and Health Care Concerns.

Each church in the association is being invited to describe its most successful programs and its most frustrating challenges, so that churches can seek assistance from each other in a cross-fertilizing of ideas and resources. The association is also exploring a multi-church youth ministry, and is asking each church to express interest in youth activities beyond its own walls.

Highpoints of the fall meetings of association and conference in 2008 included:

An address by our Conference Executive Minister, Dr. Davida Crabtree, on lessons she is learning from her battle with breast cancer. A copy is in our church office.

A landmark resolution calling for urgent action on climate change was approved in the fall, and will be submitted to the 2009 UCC General Synod.

An explanation of "Why the Per Capita Increase?" of \$1 per member, passed by the conference delegates, to a new total of \$6. A copy is in our church office.

An update on the capital funds campaign for the Silver Lake Camp and Conference Center.

The testimonies of seminarians on their progress toward or after ordination

Keynote address and workshops on the theology and proven methods for encouraging more generous giving by congregations

The adoption of a 2009 goal for “Our Church’s Wider Mission” budget of \$2,201,680 – an increase of 1% over 2008.

A report that local churches have maintained their basic support giving to the conference after several years of decline -- 51% of funds received by the Conference goes to mission work beyond Connecticut, while 36% fund the direct ministries to our churches. The 2009 Narrative Budget of the Connecticut Conference is available on the bulletin board near the Parlor.

Our delegates, whose names appear in the Nominating Committee report, are available to answer your questions and hear your opinions on local, state, and national issues in the UCC. We thank this past year’s delegates for their involvement.

Submitted by John Afman and Dennis Lape

### **FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

Committee Members: Martha Triplett Strollo, Jaclyn Hissick, Leslie Parys, Barbara Grudzias, Regan Huntley, and June Webster.

We are extremely grateful to all of the boards, committees, small groups, and individuals who helped out with the setting up, the serving, the cleaning up, and of course the baking for the weekly church coffee hours and the other special receptions which the Fellowship Committee is responsible for.

This year we have continued to work on establishing a calendar of assignments that will remain constant from year to year so that all of the organizations will know when their hosting date is. We encourage the hosting groups to use the coffee hours as a chance to raise awareness of the work they do or to showcase special projects they might be involved in. We are also always looking to create new opportunities for people who are not members of any boards, committees, or small groups to take part in the hosting.

The Fellowship Committee is happy to be serving Fair Trade Coffee at all of our functions. The Board of Outreach purchases this coffee for our use from the organization - "Equal Exchange - Fairly Traded Coffee". They are able to cover the cost with the donations received at coffee hour. Buying this coffee is an opportunity for Outreach because it helps to support small-scale farmers in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Through this project, farmers earn a fair price for their products, have access to affordable credit and gain a long-term trading partner they can trust in Equal Exchange. In short, the profits go back to the farmers instead of a large corporate conglomerate. In

addition, we are drinking organically grown coffee helping to promote a "green" earth as well as supporting the small farmer.

It is wonderful to see so many people staying after the church services to socialize and enjoy the refreshments. Good things happen over coffee and goodies.

June Webster

### **FINANCIAL SECRETARY**

Our team accounted for receipts of \$658,520.86 for 2008. As expected, pledges are the primary income but were down significantly during 2008 by \$29,416.16.

Plate and church school receipts	\$36,516.62
Prepaid for 2009	17,475.00
Significant offerings were:	
AIDS Orphans	4,415.86
Memorial Music	3,139.00
Youth Activities	2,659.00
Music Activities	2,437.38
Building Fund	1,350.00

This team which includes: Ann Madden, who deposits for us weekly; Dennis Lape, our computer person and coordinator of information and Louise Petrasko, who has been in place for many years. When a regular member cannot be present we "invite" Peggy Conant or Nora Adams, our alternates, to help out. Also, Charles Jones has taken over Sunday depositing as our new alternate since Dick Mattson retired to Florida in July.

Thank you to all for your multiple years of dedication to a very detailed process.

Emma Norback

### **FLOWER COMMITTEE**

The 2008 Flower Committee consisted of Karin Arai, Kelly Bunn, Patti Dickinson, Ruth Gleeton, Sharon Graver, Lynn Hackett, Jenell Janes, Anne McNulty, Susan Pappas and Karen Pettit.

The purpose of the Flower Committee is to coordinate the donation of the flowers that are given in honor of and in memory of family and friends and to arrange for the presence of flowers for weekly services and special events. A meeting was held on February 9th to set up a schedule for the callers/runners and plan special events. A description of the position was handed out and explained. The flower committee hosted two coffee hours with flower donation signup during the February 17<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup> Services.

At both Easter and Christmas we had people sign up for the flowers, delivered and set up for services. As members in our congregation have plant farms, we will continue to work with two different farms each year; one for Easter and one for Christmas.

Again this past year we set up special arrangements for Palm Sunday working with Alison McCaffrey. Flowers and palms were specially arranged with palms hung from the balcony. Sixty-six lilies were purchased for Easter.

Flowers were provided for the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service held at First Church on Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>. At Christmas, the committee received donations for 74 poinsettias. Most of the flowers were distributed to the sick and shut-ins.

During the year, various donations were received from church members and friends to be used for flower donations and decorations. This has allowed the committee to purchase new greens in late 2007 and new bows in 2008 to go on the greens and sconces. We have purchased silk flowers to make a fall/winter arrangement to provide another alternative for Sundays that donations are not available. The committee has also successfully worked with local florists to eliminate delivery charges for the weekly flowers.

The committee continues to be fulfilled by the work that they do. With our assistance, those sick or shut in receive flowers weekly, not just during the holidays. They brighten the lives of many.

For the Flower Committee  
Sharon Graver

### **HISTORY COMMITTEE**

The committee has continued the digitizing of our permanent records. So far we have 3 CD's with the following records:

1. Minutes of church meetings and other official actions 1900-1951.
2. Minutes of church meetings and other official actions 1951-1979.
3. Annual reports from the beginning in 1946 to 1960.

These CD's are readable on any computer having Adobe software.

The committee will continue the digitizing process in the coming year. Our limitation on the rate of digitizing is the cost of the process. Thus, the committee will be developing a plan to finance the conversion of the rest of our records. First we need to digitize those from the ones produced so far, up to the present time. Then we can go back to the older records that were archived on microfilm - a less useful method, but the best available in 1939 when they were done.

The committee held a work session to strengthen the shelving in the archive room, so that they can carry the weight of the records stored there.

Here are some of the activities that we want to record for those who will look back at what happened at the First Congregational Church of Cheshire in 2008:

1. This year our Interim Senior Minister Rev. David Buchan, ably assisted by Associate Minister Rev. Alison McCaffrey and Christian Education Director Deborah Gravell have done much to keep First Congregational Church moving forward in service to Christ in Cheshire.

2. Rev. Alison McCaffrey led the Scripture by Heart group in a presentation of the Matthew passion story on Palm Sunday.
3. In addition to the scripture readings and delightful music by our choirs, the Lessons and Carols program on December 21 featured original poetry by member Rev. John Afman.
4. We continue to have an outstanding music program led by Joseph D'Eugenio. For Memorial Music Sunday, the Senior Choir presented Requiem by Malcolm Archer.
5. Church Drive repaving with new drainage and new sidewalks and curbing were completed this year. An agreement between the town and the church resulted in a cost to the church of under \$40,000.
6. On December 14 the congregation moved to call Rev. Jeffrey D. Braun as our Senior Minister. He will be joining us in 2009.

Richard A. Eppler  
Historian

#### **LIBRARY COMMITTEE**

**Members:** Audrey Finkenstadt, Nancy Turner, Ruth Eppler, Joan Kevorkian, Lois Splain

The Library Committee met on the first Monday of the month with the exception of July & August. With the influx of donated books from John Afman during the summer, Nancy and Audrey met once to begin the processing of those books.

**Objectives:** To establish a collection of books and audio/visual materials meeting the religious needs of the church family, adults and children alike.

**Responsibilities:** Additions and deletions to the collection is the responsibility of the library committee. Recommendations from staff and the congregation are welcomed and considered, but are not binding. We assisted in the Coffee Hour in September.

**Collection Criteria:** Materials in various media will be included if the Committee deems them appropriate for the church library. Books not signed out in at least 15 years are being discarded as we continue to weed out books. This does not apply to religious classics and reference books. Discarded books are placed on a cart and are available at no charge to the congregation.

**Monthly Meetings:** We meet to process new books which include the typing of cards for the card files, categorizing, and recording of the books. Hardbacks are covered. Returned books are also processed and returned to their proper shelves. New cards are filed and new books are placed on their proper shelves. Overdue notices are sent out when necessary.

**Budget:** Our budget is limited, so we welcome donations and memorial gifts to purchase new books.

We sincerely hope that church members take advantage of our quite extensive collection. The various classifications are indicated on the shelves. Jr. High & Sr. High books and fiction are located in the parlor. The A-P classifications are in the Library. Classification lists are in both sites. The Children's Library is located downstairs. Simply sign the book card and leave it in the appropriate box and return it to the same location. New additions are listed in the Parish Post. Enjoy!

Audrey Finkenstadt  
Chairperson

### **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Membership Committee consists of: Sharon Brenneman, Jan Cowles, Marianne Eagleson, Pam Euerle, Kate Hall, Jay Knipe, Bobbie Porter, Carol Tucker

Serving three years on this Committee has been a unique pleasure. Each member has been dedicated in his mission to invite new people into the church in an intentional and caring manner. From Ephesians:

*Always be humble, gentle, and patient, accepting each other in love. You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way*

Our orientation day is a time to share an individual faith journey, our questions, our struggles. We provide information about the UCC, an honoring of promises to worship, stewardship, and involvement in the life of the church. We share a meal together, tour the building, and conclude with communion. The Potluck Dinner continues to be a wonderful extension of fellowship; typically two months after members have officially joined. Names continue to be directly forwarded to the Nominating Committee for possible invitations to become involved. In the past three years, 73% of the members joining are pledging. More remarkably, of the 29 "units" who have joined, 23 are actively involved in our church. It is clear that connections and relationships are vital. Their joining the church has been sustaining in attendance and involvement. We are all blessed by this.

Things we have added to this year:

1. Naming each new member at the service and share something about them to their church family. This adds a personal dimension to the process and helps the "old" seek out the "new" at the coffee hour
2. Including communion to our Orientation Day. Literally breaking bread together makes for a more meaningful experience for all of us

Things we are addressing:

1. Church Directory for a Spring launch
2. Possible power point presentation for Orientation

3. Subsequent opportunities for new members to learn more about the church's various groups on Sundays following their joining. (Christianity 101, History of the church, Budget Process/Stewardship, Faith Development, Parish Care Opportunities, Deacons, Outreach, CE, etc.)

Our members who have joined in '08 are:

*Regan Huntley, Chad and Stacey Groshart, Kristen Hallett, Christine Pittsley, Lorrie Canas, Ted and Tracy Bloschichak, Mark and Devon Ludwig, Bill and Doris Bazley, Janet Hisey, Brendan and Courtney Devine, Jane Brown, and Dawn and Brent Albright\**

*\*Brent attended the Orientation but wasn't able to participate in the official joining in October. He has chosen to wait for the next membership service/reception in '09).*

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jan Cowles and Pam Euerle, Co-Chairs

### **MEN'S BREAKFAST**

Starting in September we met eighteen times, ending in early June. We meet the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 6:30 a.m. in the church parish hall. Currently we have eighteen members with an average attendance of 12, depending on work and travel demands. Members volunteer to furnish a continental style breakfast at each meeting. We try to have an interesting guest or member speak at each meeting. This provides a variety of subjects and leads to good discussion by the members. Members are called prior to each meeting. We welcome any men to join us, just attend a meeting or call me at 272-1477 for information

Bob Johmann, Coordinator

### **PARISH CARE COMMITTEE**

#### **Members of the Parish Care Committee:**

Jim Van Der Beek – Parish Care Committee lead

#### **Members:**

Donna Mead, Martha Lape, Dick Eppler, Sue Chatfield, Ken and Pam Euerle, Charles Jones, Jackie Cole, Kevin and Beth Ross, Lynn Ryan, Jan Garthwait, and Nancy Linton.

The Parish Care Committee has made some real progress in 2008.

In March, Donna Mead was introduced to the Congregation as our new Parish Care Coordinator. Her role consists of attending minister meetings to coordinate parishioner needs with Parish Care ministries, updating Church Windows with visits, needs, services provided, etc.. Donna also runs the prayer pager ministry and matches Caring Visitors to those in need. She provides updates in the Parish Post, follows up with phone calls, and updates the Parish Care information on the church's web site when required.

Our committee has hosted the coffee hour after Thanksgiving each of the last 3 years. We continue to recruit resources at the small group expo each fall.

A summary of our active ministries in 2008 follows:

**Meal Ministry:** Nancy Linton continued to lead this ministry until June of this year. After 5 years of dedicated service, she decided to take a well deserved break. We thank her for her reliable, thorough leadership during her time. The Meals Ministry would not have lasted without her. Leadership is now being handled by 3 people: Jackie Cole, Bobbie Porter, and Marianne Eagleson. They will rotate leadership, every two months. Approximately 115 meals have been prepared and delivered. Lynn Ryan runs the freezer ministry where prepared meals are frozen for quick turnaround of a request or additional meals for over a weekend.

**Ride Share Ministry:** Kevin and Beth Ross coordinate this ministry and average 1-2 people driven to church each week. They also have provided approximately 1 ride a month to a doctor's office or treatment visit.

**Small Chores Ministry:** Charles Jones does an excellent job of coordinating this ministry. He has a very good pool of resources and completes the requests promptly. Approximately 10 small chores have been completed this year, ranging from changing batteries in a smoke alarm to painting and raking leaves.

**Baptism Ministry:** Ken and Pam Euerle head this ministry and provide the parents of baptized children a frame for the baby's footprints, a knitted baby blanket, and follow-up a year later with a card. They have done approximately 14 baptisms in 2008.

**Stephen Ministry:** This specialized ministry continues to expand under the leadership of Sue Chatfield. She is the lead trainer for continuing education. There are 14 fully trained and active Stephen ministers, 11 are assigned. Sue keeps track of the "Care Notes" ordering, on display in the hallway.

**Pager Ministry:** Donna coordinates the distribution and return of the 7 prayer pagers. On an average, 4 to 6 of them are with members of the congregation at any given time. A call to the pager sets the pager off and the person who has the pager knows that someone is praying for their healing.

**Caring Visitors:** This ministry was renamed from the original Caring Christians, as it more appropriately represents what we are doing. Donna has 6 trained resources who are visiting 6 members of the church on a regular basis.

**Cards Ministry:** Martha Lape coordinates the activity of the 4-6 women who make and send the cards to members of the congregation. The cards are thank you, thinking of you, sympathy, get well, encouragement, anniversary of church membership, birthday, weddings, or significant event. Almost 200 cards were sent in 2008. Martha has enough resources now to rotate everyone once a month over the course of the year.

**Bereavement Group:** Jan Garthwait and Frank Scinto have been running this ministry for over a year. The group has been so successful for those attending, that one person in the group has splintered off to start her own group, at her own church. Quite a testament to the job Jan and Frank are doing.

**Phone Ministry:** Martha Lape has renewed this ministry in November. The calls will be made to members on their significant birthdays or church anniversaries, just to mention a few reasons for the calls.

Submitted by:  
Jim Van Der Beek

### **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

During this year the Personnel Committee completed its review of the Performance Appraisal process for all employees of our Church. The revised procedures include two primary changes. First, the input of all supervising board members will be solicited and included in the final appraisal document. Second, the job description for each employee will be reviewed as part of the appraisal process and changed, if necessary. The revised procedures were presented to and approved by the Executive Board.

From a time point of view, the primary focus for the Personnel Committee during 2008 was on a comprehensive review of the Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies Manual. This document encompasses all aspects of employee relations including salary administration and benefits provided. A revised copy was presented to the Executive Board at its December meeting with final consideration and approval anticipated at the January 2009 Executive Board meeting.

The review was carefully considered by Committee members Dan Esty, Bill Gordon, and Roy Pritchard along with the undersigned as Chair. Our discussions and deliberations were greatly enhanced by the participation of Interim Senior Minister Dave Buchan. The final result was a recommendation that no material changes were required in our policies but a significant amount of re-writing was undertaken to improve clarity and assure compliance with all legal issues.

Other activities of the Committee included participation in the development of the operating budget for 2009 and consideration of the terms of call for our new Senior Minister.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all committee members for their work during this past year.

Bob Porter, Chair

### **STEPHEN MINISTRY**

The Stephen Ministry has successfully completed its fifth year. To date nineteen people have had the required 50 hours of training. Four of these were trained from mid-January through mid-May of this year. Presently there are fourteen active Stephen Ministers, many of whom have extended their commitment beyond the two year minimum.

The following is specific data about the Stephen Ministry program for 2008:

- Number of care receivers assigned to Stephen Ministers - 29
- Number of personal contacts made with care receivers -319
- Number of hours spent with care receivers -382.13.

In comparison with the data of 2007, there were 10 more care receivers receiving Christian care in 2008. The number of contacts to care receivers increased by 26, and there were 179 more hours spent with care receivers than last year.

The types of issues our receivers are or were struggling with include: chronic illness, terminal illness, grieving the loss of loved ones, recovery from surgery, loneliness, depression, adjustment to long term care, and relationship issues.

Peer supervision takes place on the first and third Wednesday of each month. The purpose of supervision is to give support to Stephen Ministers working with those dealing with difficult times as well as to provide accountability for the Stephen Ministry Program.

Continuing Education is provided on the first Wednesday each month before supervision. Topics from the training classes are chosen for continuing education to review or expand on. This fall we had guest speakers discussing Hospice Care and the spiritual component of hospice care. This was very informative as well as helpful. Other months Stephen Leaders or Stephen Ministers with expertise in various areas present topics for the group.

This year Stephen Ministers have participated in other areas in the life of the church. They assist the Deacons with flower delivery on the first Sunday of each month. Two Stephen Ministers have participated in the leadership team of a Bereavement Group that now meets monthly. In addition Stephen Ministers hosted a coffee hour in November.

In the Sunday Bulletin you may have read “One of the Ten Top Reasons for Becoming a Stephen Minister” that was printed each week this fall. If these bulletin announcements and the recruitment posters in the halls have piqued your interest in finding out more about the Stephen Ministry please contact me, one of the other Stephen Leaders, or the church office. If you know of someone who is struggling with challenges in their life and would benefit from having a Christian friend walk alongside him/her until the difficulty has lessened, please contact one of the above people

This is a very rewarding spirit-filled ministry and I am so thankful to those answering God’s call to reach out and help others in our church and community through the Stephen Ministry.

Sue Chatfield  
Stephen Ministry Coordinator

### **STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL COMMITTEE**

And a good time was had by all! This is a statement that you could make about each year’s Strawberry Festival. The kids have a great time with all the games, clowns, and other activities provided for them, the adults enjoy the music from the 102<sup>nd</sup> Army Band, the Coast Guard Dixieland Band and the Cheshire Community Band, and everyone enjoys the strawberry shortcake! In the words of the Cheshire Herald editorial about the Festival: “it was simple, delightful, and delicious! It sets the bar high and should serve as a shining example for which all other town events should strive.”

Without the help of over 100 teen and adult volunteers, the festival would not be possible. Volunteers run games and kid's activities, set up, clean up, cook, serve shortcake and other food, bring out more food when needed and, yes, they empty the trash cans! Our thanks to everyone for signing up and limiting the number of phone calls we have to make.

The profit from the 2008 Festival was \$5,645. We do not realize more because our expenses are quite high. There is a cost involved for each of the bands, the Oddfellow jugglers, the inflatables, the petting zoo, and food costs and other supplies have gone up. But all of this adds to the feeling of community that the day brings. We are grateful to church members who donate their time, their ponies, hay, trucks, wagons, and other equipment.

In 2008 the committee voted to make the following donations from this year's and previous year's profits: \$100 to Parish Care for Stop & Shop gift cards to be used for meals when the supply ran low or cooks were not available, \$3,000 to the Senior High Youth Group for its mission trip, \$1,200 to the Missionary Society of CT (this includes \$150 each to Back Bay Mission, Charles Hall home for Indian youth, Elon Homes for Children, Ryder Hospital, Evangelical Seminary in Puerto Rico, Uplands Retirement Center, Emmaus Homes, New Samaritan Corp. (which builds affordable housing in CT), \$1,500 to FCC for the Praise Band to purchase a keyboard. We have also set aside an amount for the purchase and installation of fans in the Parish Hall. This will not only move some air around in the warmer months but will help with heating costs during the winter.

Please look for the sign-up sheets in late April and choose the area you would like to work in and then enjoy a time of getting to know your fellow church members as you work together on this great event!

Brad Fuller, chair

Jim Louys, Martha Lape, Carol and Gary Warner, Beth Ross, Addie Marx, and Jessie Waszmer

### **WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP**

The Women's Fellowship consists of three groups: Tuesday Circle, Colonizers and Ladies Aid. Each group sends a representative to the fellowship meeting when needed. The groups meet separately once a month, and each has its own special outreach projects. This year for the first time the church was in charge of the Rummage Sale and the Annual Christmas Fair. All the women of the church are invited to join any one or all of the groups.

The following donations were made by the Women's Fellowship in 2008:

\$500 to the CT Women of the UCC for Project Giving Hope (Africa)

\$1,000 to First Church to partially cover the cost of the security system

\$720 to the Board of Outreach from the Rummage Sale proceeds

and approximately \$1,500 to purchase new tables for the Parish Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Addie Marx

## **CHURCH CLERK**

Summaries of the minutes of Church Meetings held during 2008 are listed below. The complete minutes may be found in the church permanent record book and are available to interested parties.

**Annual Meeting January 27, 2008** for the following purposes:

1. Accepting the Annual Report for 2007
2. Electing Officers, Board and committee members
3. Approving the Treasurer's ability to use Reserve funds if needed
4. Conducting any other business that may properly be brought before the Church.

### **Resolutions:**

1. The Annual Report was accepted as written.
2. The 2008 Nominating Report was read and the slate accepted.
3. The Treasurer was approved the ability to use reserves funds, if needed.
4. Other Business Items: No other items were raised by the congregation.

**Congregational Meeting May 4, 2008** for the following purposes:

1. Review of the Proposed Revisions to the Church By-Laws
2. Approving the Trustee's use of up to \$30,000 from unrestricted endowment funds for priority church maintenance

### **Resolutions:**

1. This was a review of the proposed revisions of Church By-Laws, with no vote taken.
2. Trustee's use of up to \$30,000 from unrestricted endowment funds for priority church maintenance was approved.

**Congregational Meeting June 8, 2008** for the following purpose:

1. Open discussion on the Proposed Revisions to the Church By-Laws

### **Resolutions:**

1. This was a meeting to receive congregational comments on proposed revisions to the Church By-Laws, with no vote taken.

**Congregational Meeting August 24, 2008** for the following purpose:

1. Final informational discussion on the Proposed Revisions to the Church By-Laws

### **Resolutions:**

1. This was a meeting to receive any final congregational comments on proposed revisions to the Church By-Laws, with no vote taken.

**Congregational Meeting September 21, 2008** for the following purposes:

1. Approve the Proposed Revisions to the Church By-Laws
2. Review the Proposed 2009 Budget

### **Resolutions:**

1. Revisions to Church By-Laws were accepted as written.
2. This was a discussion item, with no vote taken.

**Congregational Meeting December 7, 2008** for the following purposes:

1. Hearing the Report of the Nominating Committee
2. Hearing an Update from the Senior Minister Search Committee
3. Approving the Proposed Budget for 2009

**Resolutions:**

1. This was an informational item, with no vote taken.
2. This was an informational item, with no vote taken.
3. The 2009 budget was accepted as presented

**Congregational Meeting December 14, 2008** for the following purpose:

1. Calling Jeffrey David Braun as Senior Minister of this church

**Resolutions:**

1. Jeffrey David Braun was called as Senior Minister of First Congregational Church of Cheshire, United Church of Christ by a unanimous vote.

**CHURCH STATISTICS**

<b>Total Membership as of December 31, 2007</b>	<b>819</b>
<b>Adjustment for Membership Audit</b>	<b>+00</b>

**ADMISSIONS**

Confirmation Class	11	
Confession of Faith	2	
Reaffirmation of Faith	6	
Letter of Transfer	9	
Membership Reactivated	1	
<b>Total Admissions</b>		<b>+29</b>

**DISMISSIONS**

Letter of Transfer	1	
Transfer to Inactive	13	
Deaths	18	
<b>Total Dismissions</b>		<b>-32</b>

<b>Total Membership as of December 31, 2008</b>	<b>816</b>
---	------------

**ADMISSIONS:**

**Confirmation Class**

Karen Fetscher Brunetti	Amanda Marie Massa
Kimberly Ann Cavallaro	Almariet Palm
Michael Wade Dickinson	Jillian Ruth Stronk
Meghan Elizabeth Fackler	Jeanne-Marie van Heerden
Patrick Hackett	Eric Philip vonFischer
Connor Nicholas Jason	

**Confession of Faith**

Chad Groshart	Christine Pittsley
---------------	--------------------

**Re-affirmation of Faith**

Jane Brown  
Lorrie Canas  
Kristen Hallett

Janet Hisey  
Regan Huntley  
Dawn Klinner-Albright

**By Letter of Transfer**

William Bazley  
Doris Bazley  
Ted Bloschichak  
Tracy Bloschichak  
Brendan Devine

Courtney Devine  
Stacey Groshart  
Devon Ludwig  
Mark Ludwig

**Re-Activated**

Ronald Barlok

**DISMISSIONS:**

**Removed By Letter of Transfer**

Susan Stevenson

**Transferred to Inactive**

Jacqueline Fede  
John Fede  
Corrine Grace  
David Grace  
Lois Grace  
Magnus Hansen  
Ruth Hansen

Peter Murray  
Lisa Murray  
Donald Roberts  
Donna Roberts  
Samantha Roberts  
Sarah Roberts

**Deaths & Funerals**

John Altobello III\*  
Marjorie Beard\*  
Bob Behler  
Maybelle Bens\*  
Virginia Burton\*  
Arthur Clementsen  
John Davies  
Beverly Euerle\*  
Betty Floyd  
Mildred Goodwin\*  
Lois Grace\*\*  
Kenneth Hale\*  
Grace Hall\*  
Mary Hartman\*  
Arline Heupel  
Gilbert Lassen\*

Ed Lincoln  
Robert Lowell\*  
Eunice Marshall\*  
Kacey Rose Mitchell  
Mary Newman  
Rosemary Port\*  
Nadine Simmons\*  
Sandra Gaye Sinclair  
Elizabeth Shaw\*  
Peter Spirito\*  
Leocadia Sullivan  
Marvin Turner\*  
Marion Upham\*  
Lisa Verdolini  
Ann Williams

\* *member*

\*\* *inactive member*

**Baptisms:**

McGuire Platt Avitable	Anthony Charles Napolitano
Madeline Ann Childs	Layna Renee Paul
Antonio Leonardo DiMarco	Amelie Serena Perez
Sadie Elizabeth Eisbach	Liana Cathleen Perez
Patrick Michael Fitzmaurice	Daniel Francis Petruzella III
Stephen Andrew Fitzmaurice	Connor James Rayball
Chad Groshart*	Eric Roberto Scoffone
Meena Lily Groshart	Jason Patrick Steinfeld
Sophia Grace LoPresti	Liam Michael Suomala
Reese Adeline Ludwig	Anthony William Watrous
Madelyn Riley Marquis	Ryan Anthony Zauner
Elle Marie McCauley	Jack Nicholas Zauner
Lloyd Alton McPhee	

\* *Adult Baptism***Weddings:**

Matthew Benedetto and Emily Rodriguez  
 Daniel Jasinski and Leah K. Allen\*  
 Alexander Rhodeen and Sarah Keiser

\**member***CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARDS/COMMITTEES FOR 2009**

<u>OFFICERS</u>		<u>TERM EXPIRES</u>
President	Robert Mead	2010
President-Elect	Ford Cole*	2010
Immediate Past President	Susan Hostage*	2010
Clerk	Christine Albrecht*	2010
Treasurer	Walter Ryan*	2010
Associate Treasurer	Betsy Barber*	2010
Assistant Treasurer	Sara Buell*	2010
Moderator	Robert Giddings*	2010
Assistant Moderator	Elizabeth Esty*	2010
Financial Secretaries	Emma Norback	2010
	Dennis Lape	2011
	Louise Petrasko	2011
	Ann Madden*	2012
Alternates	Nora Adams*	2010
	Peggy Conant*	2010
	Charles Jones*	2010
Auditors (2)	Harry Black*	2010
	Robert Giddings*	2010
Historian	Richard Eppler*	2010
Women's Fellowship Representative	Addie Marx*	2010

\*To be elected

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Members-at-large		Kathy Duffendack	2010
		David Hostage	2011
		Jim Louys*	2012

BOARD OF DEACONS

Elsa Bradford	2010	Diane Visconti	2011
Jackie Cole	2010	Peter Gadsby*	2012
Donna Mead	2010	Dolores Bozzuto*	2012
Mark Sullivan*	2010	Mark Hostage*	2012
Matt Childs	2011	Jim Parys*	2012
Mark Dickinson	2011	Karen Brunetti* (Youth)	2010
Joyce Mulholland	2011	Connor Jason *(Youth)	2010

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Holly Crowell	2010	Larry Pivirotto	2011
Bill Eagleson	2010	Alan Skiparis	2011
Bob Johmann*	2010	John Whinfield	2011
Tom Reid	2010	Jack Burton*	2012
Chris Barbour*	2011	Betsy DePaolo*	2012
Martha Lape*	2011	Joe Madden*	2012
		Anne Giddings*	2012

BOARD OF OUTREACH

Gretchen Bates	2010	Peggy Allen*	2012
Joy Biggart	2010	Will Arpaia*	2012
Kerrie Dunne	2010	Jack Guetens*	2012
Christine Fitzmaurice	2010	Annette Shoop*	2012
Pam Cappiello*	2011	Amy Webb-Mower*	2012
Chris Eisbach*	2011	Melanie Belanger* (Youth)	2010
Cindy Mazzaferro	2011	Eric Ploch* (Youth)	2010
Peter Ploch	2011		

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sue Branzell	2010	Lucinda Orsini	2011
Grace Knipe	2010	Carol Ploch	2011
Lynn Ryan	2010	Ted Bloschichak*	2012
Patrice Noah-Scinto*	2010	Carol Cummings*	2012
	2011	Suzanne Lawson*	2012
Linda Milton	2011	Barbara Lyke*	2012

\*To be elected

BOARD OF MUSIC

Charlene Black*	2010	Ramin Hakim	2011
Jane Bower	2010	Joan Benedetto*	2012
Marty Swartz	2010	Megan Stephan*	2012
Susan Bishop	2011	David Wyllie*	2012
Andrew Hostage	2011	Patrick Hackett* (Youth)	2010

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

Tony DePaolo	2010	Bill Mann	2011
Ruth MacDonald	2010	Leah Sanders	2011
Michael Pownall*	2010	Charles Jones*	2012
Ken Allen	2011	Elizabeth Pritchard*	2012
		Glenn Thompson*	2012

FLOWER COMMITTEE

Karin Arai	2010	Anne McNulty	2011
Kelly Bunn	2010	Susan Pappas	2011
Jenell Janes	2010	Tracy Bloschichak*	2012
Karen Pettit	2010	Lynn Hackett*	2012
Patti Dickinson	2011	Kathena Nenner*	2012

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Jaclyn Hissick	2010	Regan Huntley	2011
Leslie Parys*	2010	Lisa Canas*	2012
Martha Triplett-Strollo	2010	Jane Richards*	2012
Barb Grudzias	2011		

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Joan Kevorkian	2010	Lois Splain	2011
Nancy Turner	2010	Shirley Albanese*	2012
Dolores Bozzuto*	2011	Audrey Finkenstadt*	2012

HISTORY COMMITTEE

Martha Lape	2010	Carolyn Garthwait	2011
Christine Pittsley*	2010	Marshall Tucker*	2012
Joy Deegan*	2011		

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Bob Porter	2010	Roy Pritchard	2011
June Webster*	2010	Dennis Lape*	2012
Bill Gordon	2011	Charlene Black*	2012

\*To be elected

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Pam Euerle	2010	Ken Stevens	2011
Jay Knipe	2010	Stacey Groshart*	2012
Carol Tucker	2010	Arlene Reid*	2012
Marianne Eagleson	2011	Ernie Swartz*	2012
Bobbie Porter	2011		

DELEGATES

CT CONFERENCE & NEW HAVEN ASSN.

Jack Sellati	2010
Norman Thompson	2010
Kathy Duffendack*	2010
Kirsten Sullivan*	2010
Dennis Lape	2011
Martha Lape*	2011
Betsy Adams	2011
Anne Giddings*	2012
Grace Knipe*	2012
Jay Knipe*	2012

GREATER WATERBURY  
INTERFAITH MINISTRIES

Farshid Hakim	2011
Jan Garthwait (alternate)	2011

CHESHIRE INTERFAITH HOUSING

Barbara Barlok	2010
Glenn Nowie	2010

USHERING COMMITTEE

Noureen Hakim	2010	Charles Jones	2011
Glenn Thompson	2010	Barbara Voegeli*	2012
Ken Euerle	2011	Hugh Larson (9 am Youth Chair)	2010
		Mark Hostage*(Asst. Youth Chair)	2012

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Carol Warner* (Chair)	2010	Rich Grudzias*	2010
Will Arpaia*	2010	Joyce Mulholland*	2010
Sharon Brenneman*	2010	Stacy Murphy*	2010
Jan Cowles*	2010	June Webster*	2010
Karen Gravino*	2010	Ford Cole* (Pres.-elect)	2010

\*To be elected