

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Cheshire, Connecticut

2005 ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Meeting – January 23, 2006

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT
272-5323

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SENIOR MINISTER

During 2005, we've seen gathering momentum and exciting new growth in nearly every aspect of our church's life...

Throughout this year we have seen our various Parish Care ministries mature and expand. Since September we have seen dramatic growth in existing ministries, the launching of several new ministries, and the envisioning of ministries to be developed over the next five years. We move into the New Year with a committed and newly energized lay leadership supported, connected, equipped, and encouraged by Peggy Allen's gifted ministry. We look forward to a year of continued growth as we search for the right minister to lead our whole church in this vital area of ministry.

Thanks to Alison's leadership, along with that of some very creative and spiritually alive people in our church, we have made important strides toward our meeting Envision goals of becoming a more welcoming, more deeply faithful church. The new greeter program has already made a positive impact on visitors and established members alike. And while there were many fine small group discipleship opportunities in 2005, they are likely to be eclipsed by what's in store for 2006.

2005 was another year of growth for our church's youth ministry. Other churches in town and throughout the state have recognized the quality and depth of what Glenn and the Resource Adults are building here and have looked to our church's youth ministry for ideas, inspiration, and practical advice. This year, it's been exciting to see the increased role that the high school youth are taking in shaping and leading their program.

The music ministry is growing in numbers and in spirit. With inspiring leadership from Joe, our music in worship (both on Sunday mornings and at special times) has been greatly enriched over this past year. It's more than great music that's coming through our music ministries, it is joyful praise and deepening devotion.

Children and family ministries were outstanding once again this year. The workshop rotation model has really come into its own and has been engaging for both children and adult leaders. Debbie has given guidance to Christian Educators from other churches (including the West Epping Uniting Church in Australia) who are eager to reinvigorate their own children's ministries.

Our Board of Outreach has worked to help us grow from a church that does outreach, into an Outreach Church. The hands-on mission day, the support of direct mission work in Malawi and Haiti, special appeals for disaster relief for victims of the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina are all initiatives which gave us an opportunity to reach out beyond our regular outreach budget. In 2006 we'll have more of these opportunities that will help us to see the central place that outreach has in our congregational life.

That's just a quick snapshot of what's happening in the life of our church. There's life and growth just about everywhere you look.

Even the bad news of 2005 promises to become good news in 2006. The leadership conducted a feasibility study in the fall that helped us to see how much work we need to do as a church to improve our giving, our finances, and our communications. Our attention to these three areas this year will help to support and sustain all areas of our growing ministry and mission for years to come.

In Christ,
Rick Dacey

ASSOCIATE MINISTER FOR PARISH LIFE

For me, 2005 was a year of expanding ministry here and in the wider church setting. Some areas of growth were built on established foundations, while others were new ministries and opportunities whose time had come.

Within our congregation, there is new energy and excitement building in the way we intentionally welcome one another. Our Welcoming Team has been meeting for 15 months now, helping us to do our part in offering God's extravagant hospitality to everyone who comes in our doors- members, friends, visitors, and seekers alike: "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at First Congregational Church." The Welcoming Team focused much of its efforts in 2005 on the Greeter Ministry, inviting and orienting over 65 people with gifts of welcoming to become the "hosts" of worship. We like to think of greeting much as one would think of welcoming guests into one's home: those first 30 seconds really count! Our greeters began their ministry with the Thanksgiving Eve Community Interfaith worship service taking their places in the parking lot and Church Drive circle, at all entrances, and in hallways ready with warm words and baskets full of cornbread; a foretaste of the kind of welcome we envision every Sunday in the coming years.

In last year's annual report, I wrote of my hope to gather a small group of people to look at the big picture of Small Group life. This hope has been answered in the newly formed Parish Life Team. This very committed and growing group is exploring the faith formation needs of adults and is working towards creating a 3-5 year curriculum of topics and experiences by which our adults can grow in faith in a variety of venues: small groups, workshops, lectures, retreats, trips, worship experiences, discussion series, and lots more!

Small groups continue to be offered on a topical basis. As always, if you have an area of interest you would like to share with others, or a topic you would like to explore, please let me know and we can form a group: others *will* come! I am very thankful to those who step forward with an idea for a group, and lead with such dedication, sharing their interests and passion with others. This past year books have been read and discussed with much thought and laughter, Teddy Bears and Prayer Shawls knitted, and Alzheimer Quilts created, finances looked at from a Christian perspective, the Israel- Palestine relationship considered, sermons discussed, the Bible explored from a variety of lenses, scripture learned by heart, faith explored through creative writing, and every day life and faith examined from a high school age female point of view! Special one time events were well attended: a bus trip to the Billy Graham Crusade in Queens, NY, and an evening with our Regional Minister Kent Siladi who offered the educational event UCC 101. All this in addition to all the ongoing groups where faith, fellowship, mission, and interest meet. In the coming year, the Parish Life Team is working toward the long-term goal of creating a congregation of small groups, so that everyone could be connected in relationship with others.

Another area of expansion was the offering of a labyrinth walk in the Parish Hall concurrent with the well-attended annual Good Friday to Easter Sunday Silent Vigil. Over 100 people came to walk this sacred path of quiet contemplation. This positive reception convinced us to offer the quiet respite of the labyrinth during Advent. Coinciding with the contemplative Shepherd's Watch Advent worship service, many found this to be peaceful alternative to the busyness of the season.

Our Prayer Ministry grew deeper this year with the addition of the Prayer Pager Ministry, a ministry where faith meets technology in a happy partnership. This ministry allows us to let people know that our prayers surround them. Each week in the bulletin the names and prayer needs of our prayer recipients are listed as well as instructions for sending the page. We have two pagers, supported each month by the

Deacons, with plans to purchase two more to expand this ministry. Both recipients feel well supported and encouraged by our prayers.

Also in 2005, we celebrated a service of installation for the Rev. Barbara Barlok, called by Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers as their Executive Director. This service was the culmination of a process of reeducating ourselves and rewriting our four-way covenant with Barbara, a long time church member and dedicated advocate for the elderly. As Barbara's local church, we are joined in covenant with Barbara, IVCG, and the New Haven Association of the United Church of Christ. She shares her gifts and knowledge in our congregation by leading an annual worship service celebrating the wisdom of our elders and is a very helpful resource to individuals in need.

I was blessed this year with the opportunity to attend several workshops, with the highlight being the Worship Connection event in New York City. While there I experienced rich worship services with well-known preachers and speakers, attended workshops for a variety of topics that have directly benefited my ministry. I appreciate the opportunity to attend continuing education events.

2005 was also a year of ministry in the wider church. After a two-year hiatus, Matt and I led a one-week bicycle conference for Connecticut high school aged youth. Beginning and ending at Silver Lake, we biked over 170 miles of our state's hilliest roads, staying overnight at UCC churches along our route. We enjoyed a night of hospitality right here in our Parish Hall and were treated to a warm welcome and showers, and a cook out by church members.

In addition, I began my two-year term as Moderator of our New Haven Association. In this role I moderate the twice a year meetings of our association churches, officiate at ordinations and installations, and attend the monthly Committee on Ministry meetings. I am very thankful for your support, which allows me this time to serve the wider church as we live out our covenant relationship. I am also serving on a Conference wide committee to develop a partnership with Central Congregational UCC in New Orleans as they begin to rebuild following Hurricane Katrina.

None of these ministries could ever be initiated or grown without the support and leadership of so many faithful and dedicated members and friends who freely share their gifts and ideas and participate as the body of Christ. I am so blessed by you! I am also blessed to work with our staff team whose gifts are many and varied, whose support and collaboration is a gift to me and us all: Rick, Debbie, Peggy, Glenn, Joe, Marianne, Fred, Pat, Judy, and Jessie. May God bless the First Congregational Church in Cheshire that we may be a blessing to the world.

Faithfully,
Alison McCaffrey

INTERIM ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF PARISH CARE

I began working at First Church at the end of August as your interim minister of parish care, helping the Parish Care Committee to keep things moving and growing while the church searches for a new settled minister. I have been impressed with the commitment of the members of the Parish Care Committee and the heads of the various caring ministries. It has been an honor to work with them.

After meeting the heads of our current ministries (rides, meals, caring crafts, birth and baptism, small chores, and Stephen ministers), I looked into the programs at several churches that have well-run parish care programs. The Parish Care Committee and I have been using the experience of those churches and our own on-going experience of the needs and gifts in this congregation to help plan for a more

comprehensive parish care program. This fall we have added the beginnings of a **telephone ministry**, run by Martha Lape, which currently contacts our more senior parishioners on their birthdays or anniversaries, and a **caring cards ministry**, sending cards of encouragement, sympathy, appreciation, Christmas cards, birth cards, and cards to parishioners' family members who are serving overseas. We have plans underway to begin a **freezer food ministry** as part of our meals program and to expand our **visitation ministry**. Our **Stephen ministry** program continues to expand with two or three new care givers ready to start training this month, and all Stephen ministers being assigned to care-receivers at this time. Although we decided not to move the bi-weekly required supervision sessions for Stephen ministers to Cheshire this year, I am in conversation with the head of this program in Southington to plan for its eventual move.

Those are the plans. We also have dreams – dreams of expanding our current ministries, of more support groups for members in crisis, of a parish nurse program.

As a member of First Church's ministry team, I participate in worship as needed. In December I coordinated our first service of healing and am grateful for the participation of Rick and Alison and of our Stephen ministers. I preached on New Year's Day, and also provided the invocation and benediction for the annual Veteran's Day observance and a service of remembrance and communion for the Tuesday Circle Group. I have also enjoyed visits and phone calls with many members.

This winter and spring as your search committee begins its search for a settled minister of parish care, I hope to continue to work with the Parish Care Committee, the staff and the heads of our caring ministries to strengthen the programs already in existence here and to continue to plant the seeds of new programs so that when the settled minister arrives the church will be in a strong place to continue to create a community of active Christian love and caring here in our midst.

Faithfully,
Peggy Allen

MINISTER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Christian Education Ministry continues to thrive in this church thanks to the many gifted individuals who have given of their time, talents and vision in all aspects of the Christian Education ministry.

This year has been a complete year of our new Workshop Rotation Model, Bible Journeys. Many people continue to work tirelessly researching curriculum, continuing to design and create the space for workshops, and teaching workshops each month.

I continue to spend one day a week taking the research and lessons from the curriculum committee and shaping it into lessons for our workshop leaders to use each month. Thank you to the many volunteers who have helped with this vision and plan. Special thanks to Cornelia Voils the CE Chairperson and Facilitator of our Design Team for all her hard work and hours of dedication to the Christian Education Ministry.

Our younger grades continue to be blessed with dedicated teachers who use the Bible Quest materials and enable children to reap the benefits of this story-based curriculum. Worship and education are both important to the spiritual development of our children. The chapel services weekly for the 9:00 children and monthly for the 11:00 children continue to be a vital piece of the Christian Education Ministry.

I continue to co-lead confirmation with Rick Dacey each Monday evening. This year we have 22 youth in the confirmation classes. Rick and I continue to brainstorm and tailor our curriculum to fit the needs of

the individuals in each year's confirmation class. Thanks to the many mentors who have volunteered to form a relationship with a Confirmand and have helped in the spiritual preparation for confirmation.

Special programs like Children's Day, Silver Lake Promotion, 4th Grade Bible Preparation, Summer Church School, Vacation Bible School and the annual Christmas Pageant are other programs that have been a part of the course of this year's church school program. Summer Church School this year was the Ten Commandments. This was designed to fit the spiritual understandings of the preschool through 3rd grade age group. We averaged about 25-30 youth each Sunday through the summer. Vacation Bible School was a huge success this year as we learned with "Serengeti Trek: Where Kids are Wild about God". Sixty children and 28 leaders traveled together through our various stations to learn about God and Jesus. This was a special ministry enjoyed by all from our congregation who attended and some families outside our congregation. The Christmas Pageant this year was "Good News of Great Joy." Many thanks to Joellyn Jason and Donna Andrews, our directors, and Joe D'Eugenio and the children's choirs, for their work on this pageant preparing the children for drama and music. It was a great job by all in the cast. Children also participated as shepherds, sheep and angels.

Quality ministry flows out of the whole body of Christ commitment to the education ministry of the church. Thank you to the many caring and dedicated volunteers that lead our many Christian education ministries.....

- Nursery continues to thrive under the direction of our Nursery Committee led by Anne Dacey. Each year the nursery committee recruits and trains our new caregivers and keeps the nursery running smoothly in all ways.
- Christians in Action (C.I.A.) continues to thrive under the leadership of Andy Shoop, Jim Parys, Sandra Farrell and Marge Williams. This exciting ministry to our 5th and 6th graders meets once a month and averages 10-15 youth.
- Our Church School is blessed by the dedicated and committed teams of teachers, shepherds, and helpers teaching at both of our Church School hours. The Jr. High classes are learning in units this year. Many thanks to all who have taught a Jr. High unit at 11:00 and to Melinda Van Der Beek who is teaching each week at 9:00.
- Grace Knipe is our faithful Church School Superintendent. We are blessed by the many ways she attends to the details of our Sunday morning Church Schools and for special events.

Many Thanks to.... Martha Lape, Judy Monarca and Jessie Waszmer, our office support staff, for the many ways they support the Christian education ministry. Thank you to Fred and Pat Turner who are always ready and available to help with whatever task needs to be done to enable the Christian education programs to run smoothly.

I feel very blessed to be here in this church. It is a privilege for me to participate in worship, confirmation, chapel leadership, and leadership of the various programs of our educational ministries together. I am eternally grateful to all of the many volunteers that give of their time to share in ministry and create the wonderful atmosphere we have here in the First Congregational Church School. Without your dedication, talents and gifts we would not be able to minister to children and families.

Debbie Gravel

MUSIC DIRECTOR

In an effort to amend the Music Board's report, which is quite comprehensive, I'd like to mention a few additional ways our music program has offered continuous musical variety to our congregation's worship

life and community outreach efforts.

This year during every Sunday in Lent, Pilgrimage blended scripture passages and contemporary music together, and offered our parishioners a quiet, candlelit church in which to contemplate and experience Lent in a personal way.

In Advent, a variety of worship services with music were offered to our congregation, including Shepherds' Watch and a special Healing Service. Shepherds' Watch featured classical violinist Mark Rike and singer Patricia Barbano. The music enhanced the reflective nature of the service and helped make it one of the most unique services of the year. The Healing Service offered our parishioners a chance to experience healing through the use of readings, the laying on of hands, and music from the piano, and the marimba, played by Jonathan Allen. This service was also the first of its kind in my tenure at First Church and was incredibly powerful.

Thanks to the organizational efforts of Amy Webb Mower and Robin Sellati, our Malawi project was in part supported by several AIDS benefit concerts which featured many of our program's talented parishioners. Amy and Robin produced several of these programs and they have had a direct impact on our music program.

It might be expected that less music would be heard during the summer months after the choirs have stopped singing and the bells have stopped playing. However, most Sundays this past summer had musical offerings by a variety of talented soloists which helped to keep continuity and consistency in the program all year round.

In all, approximately 50 adult parishioners and visiting singers sang with the Senior Choir for at least one service at some point throughout the year. At least half of these people sing on a weekly basis. Approximately 40 children in grades K-10 participated in our Youth Choir programs. Angela Baumann continued to assist as an accompanist and associate for our Youth Choirs, and Marianne Beckmann continued to build the hand bell programs by raising funds and purchasing hand chimes to make hand bell playing possible for our youngest children. Two professional section leaders, Patricia Barbano and Riss Tarangelo, were hired to sing with the Senior Choir and to offer vocal and instructional support to its members. About one dozen Music Board members served as singers and planners for many of the year's worship services and special music Sundays. Approximately 20 professional and amateur instrumentalists have participated in one or more of our services throughout the year, such as on Memorial Music Sunday, Lessons and Carols, and Christmas Eve. More than one thousand parishioners and visitors at First Church sang hymns and listened to choral anthems throughout the year and encouraged the rest of us in the process. It is because of the people who comprise these numbers that the music program at First Church continues to thrive and makes being a part of it a joy.

Joseph D'Eugenio

HANDBELL CHOIR DIRECTOR

Another year draws to a close and we find that the bell choirs have experienced a change in membership and have had the opportunity to work with hand chimes as a result of the generosity of a much appreciated donation for the purchase of these unique instruments.

MEMBERS

Adults: Martha Lape, Barbara Dowling, Susan Mancinelli, Annette Kelly, Robin Sellati, Sue Walker (until Sept.), and Wendy Jurgilewicz (new in Sept.)

Junior Bells: Emily Walker, Karen Brunetti, and Olivia Mulé (until Sept.); Morgan Ingmanson and Matthew Croteau (until May); Bridget Healey, Anne Marie Jurgilewicz, Katie Cavallaro, Jillian Hissick, Tyler Wright, and Hannah Rojas (all new in September); Emily Lasher and Madison Healey.

Handchimes: (grades 2/3) Jarrett Hissick, Danielle Palm, and Karalyn Wright.

The year began with handbells performing on January 30 – My Lord! What a Morning and He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands. March 6 was assigned to the Senior Bell Choir – Into the Woods My Master Went, versions I and II.

Robin Sellati and I prepared a duet for Maundy Thursday titled His Grace. This piece combined Amazing Grace (chimes) and It Is Well with My Soul (bells) and meant we needed to rehearse late afternoon/evenings.

I was involved in the Memorial Music program by playing a bell tree arrangement to create the distant bell sounds for the final piece of the program.

Easter required both Senior and Junior group participation for the offertory and a bell descant for Jesus Christ Is Risen Today.

In April, I was fortunate to be able to attend a bell/chime workshop which has bolstered my hand chime/bell chime experiences and has been useful here at First Church and in Clintonville School. The addition of the chimes at about this time in the year was greatly appreciated.

Each month the bells performed for the services until June. Summer brought a change in thinking about the Handbell service participation. We were able to “tweek” the original schedule because of scheduling conflicts and the new schedule seems to work very well. The Senior Bells play at the 9 a.m. service and Junior Bells/Hand Chimes play at the 11 a.m. service

October 23 – the Seniors performed Canon in D by Johann Pachelbel with organ accompaniment and Junior/Chimes played Coro De Las Campanas. In addition Robin Sellati and I did a Benediction of His Grace that evening at the AIDS Concert.

December 11 – I played some descant bells for the Junior Choir.

December 18 – Lessons and Carols – all member of bells and chimes plus two dads who seem to have joined the hand chime group (total of 20) played Angels We Have Heard on High, arr. from the Thompson book as a prelude.

December 24 – 5 p.m. service – I played a hand bell descant for the Junior Choir

December 24 – 7:30 p.m. service – Senior Bells plus Anne Marie Jurgilewicz played Soundings as a prelude and Sans Day Carol for the offertory.

We may also be performing on January 25 for a nursing home in Bethany. We are praying that this type of growth continues throughout the coming year.

Marianne T. Beckman

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

As I entered my fourth year of ministry, 2005 was unlike any other year here at First Church. As I look back at this past year, I realize how blessed the youth of our church and our community are to have a church that supports their faith journey. As a congregation, we are equipping these young adults to become the next spiritual leaders of their generation and the generations to come.

In the fall, three resource adults and I registered for the National Youth Workers Convention in Pittsburgh, PA. While at the convention, the RA's and I attended several classes and seminars. The information that we received was invaluable. On behalf of the resource adults and myself, I would like say thank you to the CE board and the entire church family for allowing us to attend this event. Much of what we've learned has already been applied and has had a tremendous impact.

Over the past year the Yutes participated in many programs which enabled them to challenge each other in debates and discussions about their faith. These sessions have helped many of them to begin their faith journey.

The Sr. High Yutes started the year off by getting to know each other a little better on a weekend retreat to the Silver Lake Conference Center. "The Game of Life" program that the Sr. High group participated in showed them how to apply their Christian values to every day life situations.

One of the best parts of every youth group year is putting together the youth Sunday service. This year the youth, along with Tim Schult and the other RA's, put together a program called "Can You Hear HIM", him being Jesus. As always, it was awe-inspiring.

We had 45 youth and adults attend one of the year's biggest events on the youth group calendar, a mission trip to Millersville, Maryland. Here is what one young person had to say about the Mission Trip: "You cannot fully imagine or appreciate the work-camp experience until you participate in it and come away moved, glad to have attended, exhausted, happy, and filled with all kinds of emotions. You are changed, determined to continue in similar efforts elsewhere in your life".

I would like to give a special thank you to all the men and woman who volunteer their time each week to help me with planning and leading programs, and providing guidance to all of the youth in our group. Because of the hard work and dedication that these people have given, the size of the Youth Group continues to grow and the program strengthens. These incredible people are vital to the Youth Ministry of this church. Without them, the job of Youth Ministry would be virtually impossible. So, to all the Resource Adults, thank you from the youth and me!!!

Finally, a special thank you to Rick, Alison, Debbie, Peggy, Joe, Judy, Martha, Jessie, Fred, and Pat for all that they do. As it says on our staff mission statement, "The staff here at First Church Cheshire is committed to team ministry. Recognizing the variety of gifts with which God has blessed us, we support, challenge, assist, and encourage one another as each of us responds to his or her call." I'm truly grateful to be a part of this wonderful ministry team.

Glenn Root

THE REVEREND BARBARA BARLOK

First Congregational Church of Cheshire (FCC) hosted the Installation Service of The Reverend Barbara E. Barlok on March 13, 2005 with The Reverend Samuel Slie preaching. The Deacons hosted a very

welcoming reception following the service.

I was installed as Executive Director of Interfaith Volunteer Care Givers of Greater New Haven, the calling body. The Rev. Richard Dacey represented First Congregational Church of Cheshire, The Rev. Alison McCaffrey and The Rev. Peggy Allen represented the New Haven Association, and Ms. Sheila Jewell, President of IVCG, represented the calling body.

“The Call of an Ordained Minister to other forms of ministry recognized by an Association or conference of the United Church of Christ establishes a covenantal relationship among the Ordained Minister, the calling body, the United Church of Christ as represented by an Association or Conference and the local church where the Ordained Minister is a member” (Manual on Ministry).

At FCC I work with the Deacons and staff to provide an “Elder Sunday” where older people’s lives are celebrated in worship and stories. Although Elder Sunday was not scheduled in 2005, I fulfilled my ecclesiastical ministry through preaching and officiating communion at the Woodbridge Congregational Church, and preaching at Yalesville United Methodist Church, Mt. Carmel Congregational Church, and Whitneyville United Church of Christ. I led a funeral service for Richard Simpson at FCC. I represent FCC on Cheshire Interfaith Housing and the Executive Committee of the New Haven Association of the United Church of Christ.

This fall I led a small group study of the Israel-Palestinian Situation which focused on Father Elias Chacour’s school for Muslim, Christian, and Jewish children in Ibillin, Galilee. Three members of FCC attended a Conference with Father Chacour at Old Lyme Congregational Church in November. It is anticipated that the study will continue through the reading and discussion of *Blood Brothers* written by Father Chacour (copies in the FCC library).

Barbara E. Barlok

PARISH CARE COMMITTEE

Members of the Parish Care Committee:

Peggy Allen – Interim Parish Care Minister

Jim Van Der Beek – Parish Care Committee Chair

Martha & Dennis Lape, Laura Whinfield, Dick Eppler, Bill Gordon,

The Parish Care Committee has gone through a series of changes in 2005.

The first half of the year, Donna Cassity developed and taught a seminar dealing with bereavement, called Christian Care-giving. The session was designed to ease the anxiety of the one giving the care, not receiving it. Her hints on how and where to touch, what to say, and how to listen were well received by those in attendance. She and Phyllis Balser developed and ran an 8 week Divorce Care and Recovery Group, March 31 through June 9. It was so successful that a follow-up is being planned for 2006.

In June, Donna Cassity accepted the call to be a full time minister at another church in CT. Peggy Allen was named the Interim Parish Care Minister on August 25, 2005. Since Peggy has taken charge, she has decided to accelerate the growth of Parish Care instead of waiting for all the pieces to come together. The original ministries, Meals, Small Chores, Ride Share, and Baptism have stabilized nicely and are now joined by a Birthday Calling Ministry and Card Writing Ministry. Martha Lape is calling members of the Church who are celebrating their 65 or over birthdays. The feedback from those being called is very positive.

The committee has also hosted two Coffee hours in June and November, recruited volunteers at the Small Group Expo in the fall, held a Showcase for Parish Care luncheon on October 23, and scheduled a healing service for December 18.

Meal Ministry: Leadership has changed throughout the year from Lisa Mendes to Nancy Linton, and will be led by Lynn Ryan shortly. Although the number of members and meals change from month to month, on average, 6 different members and 12-18 meals a month are prepared and delivered.

Ride Share Ministry: Kevin and Beth Ross coordinate this ministry and average 2-3 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: Rich and Barbara Grudzias transferred their leadership to Charles Jones in October. As more members became aware of this ministry, the number of chores performed has increased from 1-2 a month to 4-5.

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 24 baptisms in 2005.

Stephen Ministry: This is a specialized ministry with its own training requirements and purpose, yet Sue Chatfield, the leader, attends the Parish Care meetings. It is a natural fit to our meetings and will assist the growth of our committee in the future. They now have 8 fully trained Stephen ministers.

Jim Van Der Beek

EXECUTIVE BOARD

This was a year of seeking as we worked to discern God's call to our church: To determine how the church should reflect our vibrant, active and loving congregation.

In 2004, the Strategic Planning Committee, charged by the Executive Board, worked tirelessly listening to boards, committees, and staff to create a plan that would improve the functionality of the church's physical plant. In 2005 with a proposal in hand, church leadership sought input from the congregation on an expansion plan. By June, the Executive Board had hired Gronlund Sayther Brunkow (GSB) to assist us in determining whether the plan as proposed had the congregation's support.

Over the summer, the church developed a brochure outlining the need and the proposal. GSB then conducted a feasibility study using in-depth interviews focus groups, and written surveys.

The result: This independent group affirmed what we know to be our greatest blessings:

- We are a church that is growing in the Spirit
- We are a welcoming church
- We celebrate our Worship, our Christian Education program, and our music ministry

The assessment concluded that we love our existing buildings and we support maintaining them. It also concluded that we are less sure about the building plan as proposed. Given this information from an independent, impartial source, the church leadership agreed that we are not ready for a capital campaign in 2006.

However undecided we were as a congregation to pursue expansion, we were unified in our support to renovate the Meeting House. The Trustees executed on this brilliantly, and particular appreciation is extended to Rich

Kruczek and Martha Lape for their roles in managing this large undertaking.

The ministries of our church continue to thrive. For many years, the church was blessed to have Martha Lape serve as our office manager. In this role, she has touched nearly every one of us in some way, large or small, providing information, direction or support. In honor of her, the Martha Lape Outreach Fund was formed and endowed by a grateful congregation.

We also said “goodbye” to Donna Cassity, but development and support of the Parish Care ministry continues to build under Peggy Allen’s leadership as we search for a permanent staff member to take on this role. Even as we struggled over budgetary issues in December, the dedication to this ministry runs deep.

Our Board of Stewardship took a decidedly different approach this year, initiating a more visionary approach to budgeting and engaging the whole congregation in conversation about the blessings and challenges of our church. This was an enormous undertaking to assess levels of giving, recruit and train visitors, and collect information. The information shared with visitors will be compiled for discussion and serve as a tool to guide future leadership.

The vote this summer by the UCC on same gender marriage has caused us to face our individual feelings about this issue and about who we are as a church community. A visit by Kent Siladi in September, to speak with us about the UCC and Connecticut Conference, was well attended and sparked some thoughtful conversation about our denomination and its polity.

World events this year have continued to shape us as we seek to reach out to those in need from the Tsunami in Asia, Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast, to the war in Iraq. A mission day organized by the Board of Outreach, however, showed us that we could make a real impact in the everyday challenges that face our neighbors close to home.

It has been my privilege to serve as President of the Executive Board for the past two years, working with such gifted staff and lay leaders. It has given me new appreciation for the depth of commitment of my brothers and sisters in Christ and the spirit of God that is at work within us.

Kirsten Sullivan, President

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

Chairs: Elizabeth Esty, David Hostage

Members: Will Arpaia, Richard Cushing, Peter Gadsby, Matt Glatt, Grace Knipe, Al Worden, Greg Wright

Aided by the consulting firm GSB (Gronlund Sayther Brunkow of Burnsville, MN) and its associate Randy Wilburn, the Board tried a new approach to stewardship in 2005. The theme of the stewardship campaign for 2005 was inspired by hymn #577 from our new Worship and Rejoice hymnal, “Sing a New Church”. The verse selected encouraged us to “Trust the goodness of creation/ Trust the Spirit strong within/ Dare to dream the vision promised/ Sprung from seed of what has been.” The refrain united us all: “Let us bring the gifts that differ/And, in splendid, varied ways/Sing a new church into being/ One in faith and love and praise.”

During the stewardship season it is traditional to have a member of the stewardship board speak briefly about the issue. This year we asked several people in the congregation who feel strongly about stewardship to share their stories and Elizabeth Esty, Martha Lape, and Nancy Brunetti gave impassioned and effective talks. Rick Dacey gave several excellent sermons that contained a stewardship component. Ruth MacDonald assembled a stewardship brochure that focused on key needs for our continuing vision of ministry at our church: expanding ministry; supporting church staff;

increased outreach support; and long-term financial stability. After we delivered the stewardship message through the talks in worship, a series of letters including the stewardship brochure and a pledge card, and an inspirational prayer booklet, we tried a new approach. There had not been a direct visit campaign in our church since 1967. We organized a team of Visitors to meet with as many members of the congregation as possible, but there was a key change from the 1967 campaign: the Visitors did not visit to ask for money but to hear the church story from as many congregants as possible. Their joys and concerns are being processed and collated at this time and the information gathered will inform and affirm decisions made by church leadership in the future.

As of this writing, the Board of Stewardship has received 326 pledges totaling \$620,000. This included 42 new pledge units. Of returning pledge units, 187 made increases in their pledges, 73 remained the same, and 24 decreased their pledges. It is particularly heartening to note that those who chose to increase their pledges did so by an average of more than 30%.

We are grateful for the extensive effort given by the Visitors. Board members Greg Wright, Will Arpaia, and Peter Gadsby have completed their terms of duty and we thank them. We welcome Ellen Wright, Betty Pritchard, Joe Behuniak, and David Grace as new members of the board.

David Hostage, co-chair

BOARD OF DEACONS

It has once again been an exciting, full year at First Congregational Church of Cheshire. The Board of Deacons have worked together to complete many tasks. I would like to thank the members of the Board for all their work – Helen Wilson in her role as secretary, Mark Sullivan as our capable Treasurer, who also headed the Scholarship committee, Robin Sellati, our Corresponding Secretary, Terry Hamley, our very capable Communion Chair, Lisa Wilowski, who was our Video Committee liaison and responsible for our Flower Deliveries, Laura Whinfield, our Parish Care Committee representative, and Jane Montgomery and Nancy Brunetti, our skilled reception organizers. In addition I would like to thank Susan Mancinelli, Howard Murphy, Ken Hale, and our youth Deacons, Brynne Donahue and David Havlicek, who helped out in all areas.

Traditional Deacon duties kept us busy throughout the year. We were privileged to serve communion on the first Sunday of each month, as well as Maundy Thursday, three services on Easter, and the special Christmas Eve service. Members delivered flowers each week to members of our congregation, those needing visits due to an illness or loss or to celebrate a happy occasion. We enjoyed meeting new members of our church through this caring ministry. We attended new member orientations to share in fellowship and share our own spiritual journeys. We also greeted the congregation each Sunday until our Welcoming team took over the ministry. We now have over 45 trained greeters – people who are willing to share the hand of fellowship to those entering our church each Sunday!

We celebrated the growth of our Stephen Ministry program in June with Stephen Ministers Judy Ozdemirer, Nancy Demac, Karen Jones, and Frank Scinto joining the caring team we already have in place. They attended many training hours in Southington Congregation Church to begin work in this ministry. We thank them for the dedication, time, and love they bring to this congregation through this ministry.

In August, Donna Cassity, our Associate Minister of Parish Care, informed us of her prayerful decision to leave her position in First Church of Cheshire to take an interim Senior Minister position in Killingworth. We held a service of farewell for Donna, as well as a reception to wish her well on her new path. We were

fortunate to have the Reverend Peggy Allen, a member of our own congregation, willing to step into the position of Acting Interim Associate Minister of Parish Care. She has been more than capable in her position! Due to questions regarding the need of a minister vs. a lay person in this position, we held a Lunch and Conversation around the topic of Parish care on October 23, 2005. Those who attended came away with a new sense of how necessary a Minister of Parish Care position is to the growing need in our church. We have called a search committee that will begin the task of finding a minister to fill the position; their hard work will begin in 2006. Because this position is not yet permanently filled, our Stephen Ministers have delayed bringing the bi-monthly training of a peer support group to Cheshire.

Over the summer the Deacons agreed on the color of "Dorsett Cream" with which to paint the sanctuary. Work was done by the Trustees on repairing the pews, and the "new" look that the sanctuary sports has been appreciated by many. We are also in the process of having new pew cushions made with the help of Linda Milton a member of our congregation.

The fall brought a new seminary intern, Lynda Bigler, into our congregation. We held a reception to welcome her. Many have gotten to know Lynda by giving her rides this year.

In November we were honored to host the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve Service for the town. With the help of many people in the congregation, we sent each family home with a loaf of corn bread to have at their Thanksgiving meal. We had a lovely reception and shared fellowship with the many people who remained after the service.

We offered a service of healing on December 18, with The Reverend Peggy Allen and The Reverend Rick Dacey, assisted by the Stephen Ministers, leading the service. The service was full of the Spirit, trust, and love and a comfort for those who attended.

In the New Year, we will continue to share our love and compassion with our congregation under the leadership of Rick Dacey and Alison McCaffrey. We will continue to grow as a more welcoming, faithful community. The coming year will bring new issues as each does, but Susan Mancinelli will be a capable leader for the Board of Deacons in 2006.

Ellen Wright, Senior Deacon

BOARD OF OUTREACH

This year, the Board continued to work towards the vision set in 2004, to be a Congregation of Outreach.

The 2005 Board consisted of: Paul Adams, Christine Albrecht, JD Bates, Pam Cappiello, Mark Hostage, Matt McCaffrey, Henry McNulty, Susan Pappas, Leah Sanders, Barbara Voegeli, Susan Walker and Katie Worden, with Alison McCaffrey serving as liaison to the staff. Our meetings were held the 4th Tuesday of the month and this year we instituted a "Mission Moment" into our agenda - a time where we would focus on a scripture to center our thoughts on outreach.

With the vision of Congregation of Outreach before us, we decided to hold a workshop to set goals for the year. At the workshop held in April, we talked about how the job of outreach is overwhelming and real, and we found that scripture led us to think of how Jesus might respond:

Matthew 25:35-36

For I was hungry and you gave me food
For I was thirsty and you gave me drink
I was a stranger and you welcomed me
I was naked and you clothed me
I was sick and you visited me
I was in prison and you came to me

To elaborate on the vision of being a Congregation of Outreach, we set core values to guide us in 2005:

- Building relationships – with the organizations we support, and from the congregation to the organizations; making outreach ‘real’
- Response - both in financial support and personal participation
- Addressing both immediate and long term (Food bank addresses immediate hunger, Heifer project teaches how to provide a sustained food supply)
- Making a difference – Having donations act as ‘multipliers’
- Global / national / local – Addressing each, but having a balance

We also selected a project that we thought would make a meaningful contribution towards that vision: Mission Day, a hands-on sharing of time and talents with some of the organizations supported by the congregation. On October 29, Mission Day unfolded, with participation of 40+ members of the congregation who raked, painted and cleaned at 5 locations of our outreach organizations. Other members provided support to the teams in terms of tools and refreshments. While the day was fun, it also helped to connect us to those we support. – We heard about how our dollars translate into concrete help, and we saw that we really can make a difference through outreach, by reaching out with our whole selves.

In addition to Mission Day, the Board continued the ongoing financial support of the 25 organizations supported by the congregation. We allocated discretionary funds to a number of other causes, including the Malawi mission, Yute mission trip, families in need – including the Mason family who experienced a terrible tragedy, and a Cheshire family who was helped through a memorial contribution by one of the church members. We helped Helping Hands fill 2 barrels for Haiti, and held a coffee hour featuring outreach organizations.

In the coming years, we hope to continue the expansion of Outreach, not only by supporting the individuals and groups who reach out in different ways - Columbus House dinners, Small Groups ministries, Divine Backpacks, food donations, soup kitchen coverage, and the many wonderful efforts through Covenant-to-Care, but also to inspire new ways of reaching out, like Mission Day.

We developed a list of strategic projects for the future:

- Support for soldiers, such as a prosthesis fund for Iraqi survivors, or veteran and family support to the VA Hospital in West Haven.
- Prison release rehabilitation programs and post release support through Cheshire Correctional Institute.
- Building a low-income house through Habitat for Humanity
- Start a “Family of the month” program to help a specific family get through a crisis or tragic situation.
- Start an evergreen (renewable) grant fund for mission trips.
- Provide post Katrina rebuilding support to Back Bay Mission in Mississippi.

The 2006 Board is getting ready for another year, and invites congregational participation and input to expand and grow into the vision of being a Congregation of Outreach.

The Board and many members of the congregation have been disappointed with the erosion of the percentage of the church budget devoted to outreach. In the 2006 budget there will be a dramatic decrease in absolute terms from \$100,000 (2005) to \$87,600. We understand that this is due to the inclusion of other necessary expenses (operations and maintenance) as well as desirable expenses (salary increases for the staff). Our unhappiness with this situation is not born of jealousy or pride but rather of the realization that those in need will receive less.

We can (and will) do more with less in the coming year with the active support of the congregation. We will seek to improve the communication of the outreach message not only within the congregation but also in the wider community. We will increase the opportunities for the congregation to give of their time and talents through Mission Days and other venues. We will endeavor to lead the congregation with the spirit of abundance, not scarcity.

Christine Albrecht and Mark Hostage, Co-Chairs

BOARD OF MUSIC

The year 2005 was a busy one for the Music Board, as we have continued to honor our commitment to “grow” the music program at First Church. We have worked towards our goals of increased participation in the choirs, increased inclusion of some of the many talented individual musicians among us in worship services and other events, promoting outreach to the community with concerts, and continuing to set for ourselves a high standard of excellence in the music program.

In February, Robin Sellati generously volunteered to perform a concert to benefit the Tsunami victims. The concert was sponsored jointly by the Boards of Music and Outreach, who coordinated publicity, programs and a reception after the concert. We hope this will be the first of many such collaborations with the Outreach board.

In March, the Senior Choir led worship on Memorial Music Sunday, performing a “Requiem of Many Parts,” a unique and moving musical program designed and directed by Joe D’Eugenio. The service, which included full orchestra, was made possible by the generous donations of many church members. The service was professionally recorded, and CDs were duplicated and sold for \$10 a piece. Many thanks go to Roger Olander, who designed the beautiful cover art, had it printed, coordinated CD production, and physically assembled a full 100 CDs. Most of the CDs have been purchased. We are very pleased that church members and others will continue to benefit from this spiritually uplifting service.

Memorial Music Sunday was followed by two very beautiful and well attended Palm Sunday and Easter services.

The Music Board takes very seriously our responsibility for maintaining the church’s musical infrastructure. Over the summer, the handbells received a long overdue refurbishment, thanks largely to the generosity of the Strawberry Festival Committee. Handchimes were also purchased, which now allow younger children to participate in the bell choirs. The pianos and organ were tuned and serviced several times this year. We continue to pursue ways to fund a complete overhaul of our historic, \$2.5 million organ, which is an important part of our church’s heritage.

In September, the choir season began with excellent participation, especially in the primary choir which now boasts over 20 members! The Senior Choir has been strengthened by the addition of two paid section leaders, Patricia Barbano, soprano, and Riss Tarangelo, alto. Choir Academy was instituted to help

support less experienced singers who would like to participate. All of the choirs are thriving under Joe's direction, as are the bell choirs under the direction of Marianne Beckmann.

In December, our Advent and Christmas services were greatly enriched with solos and duets from our section leaders, as well as a trio of musicians made possible by the private donations of church members. The Senior Choir welcomed a substantial number of guest singers from both inside and outside our church community. Also in December, board members made over 300 chocolate covered pretzels that were sold at the Christmas Fair to help defray a slight deficit in the Memorial Music Sunday account.

In the coming year, the Music Board hopes to continue expanding the music program by holding a series of concerts intended to enrich the spiritual and social life of our church and the surrounding community. We hope these concerts can serve as one way to attract new people into our church, who then might be inspired to attend on a Sunday and perhaps find a spiritual home.

Megan Stephan, Chair

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

2005 marks the first full year of workshop rotations in Bible Journeys for grades 2-6 and already we are witnessing tangible results. The classrooms are very nearly complete in their transformation, which has been enhanced with the addition of new storage areas, 7 new Dell desktop computers with printers, a DVD player and a clavichord (small piano). The theme for the 2005-6 school year is "Bible Heroes", which was "kicked off" with a drawing at both hours for a DVD. Monthly orientation workshops helped teachers and shepherds coordinate the activities for the month. While there are many outstanding aspects of this program, 2 stand out above all the rest. First, teachers spend relatively little time pre-preparing for class and more time simply enjoying the experience of working with our little ones. Secondly, children hear the same message in different formats each week of the month and they are actually **remembering the message**. Many thanks to Jim Lawson for the donation of one of the computers, Betty Pritchard for donating a camcorder from the church video team, and to the many teachers and shepherds for making this program a resounding success.

The children spent all of March and April preparing for the Children's Day service in May, which focused on the Holy Spirit and Pentecost. They thoroughly enjoyed being worship leaders and the puppeteer entertained both the children and adults alike. The Christmas pageant, "Good News of Great Joy" was a traditional pageant with sing-a-long carols incorporated into the program. Joellyn Jason and Donna Andrews did a wonderful job directing our young actors. There were 3 potluck dinners this year: the Silver Lake potluck dinner for those interested in attending summer camp, the 4th grade Bible potluck and the 3rd grade communion potluck dinner.

Summer church school was host to 25-30 preschool to 2nd grade children every Sunday this summer. The theme centered on the 10 Commandments. Vacation Bible School made a welcome return with the "Serengeti Trek" theme. Sixty children and 28 adults/teens participated, with a family picnic as the finale. A mission project was incorporated with the children collecting school supplies for children in Africa.

There were multiple mission projects incorporated into the school year. During Lent, \$1,600 was collected through the "Read to Feed" program to benefit the Heifer International Project. In October, the children collected for UNICEF, with 50% of the money raised benefiting the Hurricane Katrina victims. In November, Operation Kid to Kid featured shoebox kits.

The confirmation class of 2004-2005 confirmed 26 youths. Despite rainy weather, they met their mission goal for the "Bread for Hunger" service project. The 2005-2006 class is well underway, with 22 eager and energetic youths.

Christians in Action, the 5th and 6th grade youth group, is also very active. The 2004-5 group was led by Cindy Cavallaro, Andy Shoop and Frank Scinto. The approximately 10 youths created Valentine and Easter baskets for the college YUTES and the Children's home in Cromwell. So far, the 2005-6 group, being led by Sandy Farrell, Marge Williams, Jim Parys, and Andy Shoop, has 15-18 youths attending and have already sent off 25 boxes to the Church World Service containing items collected in their neighborhood and in church school.

Many thanks to our dedicated board members: Donna Andrews, Beth Barnes, Charlene Black, Sharon Fuller, Kelly Garthwait, Sherry Gray, Rich Grudzias, Kate Hall, Joellyn Jason, Michele Jones, Kathryn Roberts, and Renee Walendziak.

Creating the curriculum, transforming our space, and recruiting teachers/shepherds continues to take many hands. Many thanks to Beth Barnes, Charlene Black, Cornelia Voils, Sandy Farrell, Joellyn Jason, Leslie Parys, Donna Andrews, Renee Walendziak, Michele Jones, Carolyn Brown, Jim Parys, Mark Hall, Jim Lawson and Grace Knipe for all of their contributions to the process. Finally, many thanks to Ann Dacey for coordinating the nursery care.

Cornelia Voils, Chair

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Year 2005 was a year that focused on many new and interesting tasks. Infrastructure rehabilitation was one main focus and with \$250,000 voted on by the membership to be used toward that purpose, much was to follow. The board put out requests for bids on interior painting and repairs, exterior painting and repairs, roofing gutters with a leaf guard system, pavement sealing and line painting. One would have hoped that the best laid plans would have gone very smoothly but that was not the case. After much hard work and numerous phone calls, as well as threats of contract cancellations, the infrastructure finally got a new face lift. The exterior of the Meetinghouse and the wood trim of the Whiting House had the old lead paint encapsulated with a 20 year sealant. New exterior, historically approved storm windows were also installed and the old interior ones removed in order to preserve the sashes. More than 25 broken glass panes were replaced. Additionally, most of the windows were made operable to allow much needed airflow to the balcony area, a move much appreciated by the choir members. A new 40 year architectural roof was also installed on the Meetinghouse and Whiting House as well as new sheathing over parts of both buildings. New gutters and leaf guard system were installed on both buildings. Rotted wood trim was replaced along the choir room and front of the Meetinghouse. Rotted wood was also replaced on a large section of the north side of the chapel which was deteriorated by some type of termite.

The interior walls, pews, trim and ceiling of the Sanctuary and vestibule also got a new look. The pews were tightened up, new supports were added, and a fresh coat of paint was applied. The same elastomeric, lead encasement system was used on the dome section of the ceiling in order to help preserve it from cracking. In addition, the remaining wall sections and ceiling areas that hadn't had the Glid wall treatment system applied in 1986 was taken care of, again to limit cracking. The Board of Deacons approved the color to be used in the sanctuary and once applied, it truly gave a new look to the project. New smoke detectors were also installed in the upper ceiling while scaffolding was available. The removal of the interior storm windows heightened the appearance of the historical windows when viewed from inside. The parking lot was the last item of the rehabilitation project to be done. The numerous cracks were either cut out with new paving applied or sealed with a crack sealant. New parking lines

were painted including handicap areas where signs were also installed. Of course, with the new look, many of the trustees decided to complete the painting project by touching up the trim on the connector.

On-going in December was the installation of a new water conveyance system which will receive rain water from roof runoff and limit the liability of basement flooding. This same conveyance system will set the table for a future extension for a parking lot expansion at the rear of the property. Of course, none of this work could have taken place without the new A-2 survey that was conducted on the complete property which we now have in AutoCad format. This new mapping was used to obtain the permit for the proposed parking lot expansion which is good for 5 years. This Board of Trustees was also the first board to deal with the newly formed historical commission, which went quite well. A Power Point presentation and material samples were used to present the Church's case. I'm afraid that we set quite high standards for those who follow.

Year 2005 also saw the completion of the repairs and/or renovation of the parsonage kitchen and bathroom and the upstairs bathroom that was part of contract promise to the Senior Minister, Rick Dacey. The work was spearheaded by Larry Pivrotto and Rich Kruczek. The Boy Scout troop made and installed a new sign on the green and with the help of Ted Wright and his machine, the trustees installed the required electrical lines to the new sign location.

The board was also faced with the retirement of Martha Lape, Office Manager and Marshall Tucker, Treasurer. This created the task of preparing job descriptions for the new administrative regime. This was a difficult task because both of the individuals did so much and it would take many more people to do the same work. With the assistance of Robert Mead and Bill Gordon, trustee members, plus the personnel and nominating committee, the search was completed. Judy Monarca is now the new Church Administrator.

In November, we finally saw the fruits of our labor in trying to obtain a grant from the Schlegel Fund of FCC of Waterbury, when we heard we were awarded a \$2,400 grant. We have been invited to submit for other projects as well. We still await response from the State Historic Preservation Fund for financial assistance. This was the first year that we saw funds set aside for the capital reserve fund for upkeep of the Church's infrastructure. This is a major step forward and can help us avoid the financial hardship we saw with this year's rehabilitation program. We need to attain a level of almost \$50,000/yr to support this effort. We also need approximately \$236,000 to complete the renovation program.

An important project was started this year with expectations for completion in 2006. It is the repaving of Church Drive with new curbing, sidewalks, and drainage. Rich Kruczek is working with the town manager, town attorney, and Brad Fuller which may consummate a deal where the town takes on the project and its costs to complete the work.

There are so many more things that this board has participated in such as grounds work and tree trimming and other small projects too numerous to mention. **ALL** the members are to be given a welcome applause for their hard work over this past year.

Rich Kruczek and Bill Eagleson, Co-Chairs

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Members: Betsy DePaolo (Chair), Sara Buell, Kathy Fraher, Nancy Linton, Jim Murnane, Gary Rowe, Gene Weller and Julie Witte. Staff Liaison: Rev. Alison McCaffrey

The main responsibility of the Membership Committee is to afford organization and support to the staff as they welcome new members into the church.

To this end, the committee met several times to plan assistance for the ministers in new member orientations. Two sets of orientations occurred in April and October. The assistance consisted of contacting potential members to inform them of the dates of the orientation meetings and to arrange for childcare if needed. Members of the committee also provided baked goods, coffee, and a cold drink for the meetings and two committee members were in attendance as representatives. Following the orientation meetings, new members were welcomed into the church and the committee provided a reception between services on April 24 and October 16. Acknowledgement of the new members of the church has been presented through photographs on the bulletin board in the lobby. In 2005, we welcomed 40 new members, including members of the Confirmation Class.

Betsy DePaolo, Chair

FLOWER COMMITTEE

The 2005 Flower Committee consisted of Betsy Adams (Chair), Mona Coley, Phyllis Eddy, Lynn Hackett, Regina Hackett, Jo Korten, Suzanne Lawson, Marge Kemp, and Pat Musante.

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 brief meeting was held in February to set up a schedule for the callers/runners. A description of the positions was handed out and explained.

At both Easter and Christmas we had people sign up for the flowers and we had them delivered. It is such a successful approach that we will be doing it that way in the future. As members in our congregation have plant farms, we 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. Over ninety lilies were purchased for Easter.

At Christmas, we bought 80 poinsettias. Most were distributed to the sick and shut-ins.

This 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.

Betsy Adams, Chair

CHESHIRE INTERFAITH HOUSING COMMITTEE

The Cheshire Interfaith Housing group sold our fifth house in the spring of 2005 to Alex and Marissa Luckaschenko. They are a family of two children (boy and girl) and a maternal grandmother. The house is on Peck Lane in the north end of town.

Our church, over the year, has donated \$1,200 as part of our outreach program. Besides working during the weekends on the house, CIH participated in the annual town Marketplace Fair at Bartlem Park, where we were able to publicize our mission on affordable housing. CIH is presently looking for property to buy or a house to renovate and sell.

Some of the CIH's assets from grants and fund raising have been loaned to the New Haven Community Loan Fund. This is a non-profit organization, affiliated with the Interfaith Cooperative Ministry in New Haven. The money is used to provide low interest loans for housing to low income families. This is a good way to utilize the funds we have available for the purchases of building lots and building materials.

I must say that serving on the Interfaith Housing Committee has been a pleasant and rewarding experience.

Respectfully submitted,
Wilson R. Grime

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Personnel Committee is to develop and administer uniform personnel policies for the staff of the church. We develop and maintain those personnel policies and procedures, support boards on performance evaluations of staff, and confer with the Budget Committee and other groups on such matters as pay raises and performance issues.

Members of the committee in 2005 were: Al Worden and Harry Payne (co-chairs), Ruth MacDonald, Ken Stevens, Mike Donahue, and Steve Holtman.

This year we worked to develop the performance evaluation process so that we have an appraisal system that will meaningfully assess performance and promote useful guidelines for job growth and improvement. Good progress was made on the timeliness of the appraisals, thanks especially to Ruth. We reviewed our Personnel Policy to insure its consistency with current U.C.C. policies and our own congregation's values. As part of the budget process, we also reviewed our staff compensation packages to reflect the high quality of our staff and the work they perform. We pledge to be a resource for the staff, committees and boards, and congregation of the First Congregational Church as we continue to support this great staff.

Harry Payne, Co-Chair

DELEGATES – KILLAM'S POINT – NOW KNOWN AS BRANFORD ROYAL GRANT CORPORATION

The Killam's Point Conference Center is a retreat center located in Branford, CT and situated on Long Island Sound. The 55 acre wooded parcel that encompasses the conference center is owned by the First Congregational Church of Branford and in 2005 was managed and operated under lease by the Branford Royal Grant Corporation.

The Branford Royal Grant Corporation is comprised of 14 area Congregational Churches who have been charged with providing a peaceful retreat area for the use of the member churches and various local non profit entities for reconciliation with oneself, with one another, with the environment and with God.

In November of 2004 the Branford Congregational Church voted to exercise its right to terminate the current lease with the Branford Royal Grant Corporation by providing one year's written notice of their intention. The Branford Royal Grant's lease that was entered into February 2002 and that was scheduled to expire in February 2024 was terminated in November of 2005

During 2005 the Branford Royal Grant Corporation focused on winding down their activities regarding the operation and management of Killam's Point so that the property and operation would be transferred

back to the Branford Congregational Church in an orderly manner. The transfer of responsibilities for the operation and management of Killam's Point occurred in November of 2005.

The Branford Congregational Church is now conducting a series of meetings and reviewing various proposals for the future of Killam's Point with the intent of preserving this area in its natural state as a ministry of the First Congregational Church of Branford. The Killam's Point Long Term Planning Committee of the Branford Congregational Church lists the following items as a basis for their church's ministry at Killam's Point.

1. To learn about oneself, one another, the world and God
2. To reconcile with oneself and with one another
3. To contemplate and renew one's spirit
4. To preserve open space for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

Al Worden

DELEGATES – CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE AND NEW HAVEN ASSOCIATION

Our church delegates, clergy, and interested members attended meetings of the Connecticut Conference and the New Haven Association this year. The Reverend Alison McCaffrey was installed as moderator for the New Haven Association and the Reverend Peggy Allen continued as the registrar and scribe for the association.

138th Connecticut Conference Annual Meeting

The spring meeting was held at the First Congregational UCC of Wallingford on May 14, 2005. Many delegates attended a variety of "Mission Matters" workshops in the morning and afternoon session. The highlight of the Conference was the keynote address given by the Reverend John Thomas who is the General Minister and President of the UCC. In the afternoon session, the Conference previewed the revised capital campaign with its focus on the Silver Lake Conference Center ministry. Also, a video about the upcoming 26th General Synod, to be held in Hartford, Connecticut, was shown.

The fall session of the Annual Meeting was held at Kennedy High School in Waterbury. More than 650 delegates, ministers, and visitors met in the two day session in October. By previous agreement, no social resolutions were offered during this meeting. Attendees listened to three keynote addresses from UCC minister and consultant Tony Robinson. The Reverend Robinson is the author of Transforming Congregational Culture. Also, the delegates approved the Conference budget and gave permission to embark on an \$8 to \$10 million capital campaign for the Silver Lake Conference Center.

Conference Information

A useful tool to keep current on Conference information is available through the Conference internet site. The site is www.ctucc.org.

Ken and Pam Euerle

THE WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

All the women of the church are considered members of the Women's Fellowship. There are basically three groups: Ladies Aid, Tuesday Circle, and the Colonizers. The Board Members of the Fellowship are Esther Moffatt – Tuesday Circle, Addie Marx or Nora Adams – Ladies Aid, Joy Deegan – Colonizers, Martha Lape – Secretary, and Jessie Waszmer – Treasurer.

Spring was a busy time for the women. A Rummage Sale was held on April 14-15. The State Women's Fellowship meeting was held here on May 7. Each of the groups provided baked goods for breakfast and helped with coffee during registration and lunch.

Several scout troops use our facilities and 6 years ago, as an Eagle Scout project, a Memorial Garden was established. The project was completed with the assistance of a Girl Scout troop (the girls were working on a service project). In May, the Colonizers (with the permission of the Trustees) began restoring the memorial garden by the Whiting House which has not been maintained.

A late summer board meeting was held to discuss the upcoming fall Rummage Sale and it was also decided to have a joint meeting of the three women's groups (something which used to be an annual event in spring). The meeting was held on October 11 with a potluck supper and a presentation by Amy Webb Mower and Robin Sellati on their trip to Malawi. It was a very enjoyable meeting and something that should be done more often.

Each of the groups use money that they make at the Rummage Sales and Christmas Fair for their own outreach projects with the exception of the contributions that the Board made to the following:

\$50	Deacon's Fund – George Venter
\$50	State Women's Meeting
\$1200	Strawberry Festival money

After 16 years of reporting on activities of the Women's groups of the church, I've decided to make a change. Addie Marx has agreed to take this position next year. I know she'll do a good job.

Joy Deegan

MEN'S BREAKFAST FELLOWSHIP

The Men's Breakfast Fellowship held eighteen meetings during the year. Our meetings are held the first and third Wednesdays, October through May plus one meeting in June and another in September. We meet in the Parish Hall at six thirty in the morning and one of the members provides a "Continental" style breakfast on a volunteer basis. The membership is called prior to each meeting.

We have a member or guest speaker at each meeting. Topics for discussion vary from religious themes to civic related subjects. A sampling of these subjects include "Sabbatical Studies and Australia" (Rev. Rick Dacey), Education in Cheshire (G. Florio, Supt. of Schools), Business Men and Their Faith, The Purpose Driven Life, Youth Mission Trip Experiences, Environmental Matters, and several other presentations relating to religion and our lives. All presentations afforded opportunities for lively discussion and comments. We have also hosted Sunday Coffee Hour between services.

Current membership includes: John Afman, Mohsen Akhavan, Wes Alexander, Bill Bengtson, John Conant, Chris Cowles, John Crowell, Rick Dacey, Bill Eagleson, Dick Eppler, Bill Gordon, Farshid Hakim, Bob Johmann, Dennis Lape, Joe Madden, Dick Miller, Roy Pritchard, Marshall Tucker, Marvin Turner, Al Worden, and Bob Mead.

A synopsis of each meeting may be found in the loose leaf binders titled "Men's Breakfast Fellowship" located in the church library.

Bob Johmann, Coordinator

CHURCH CLERK

Summaries of the minutes of Church Meetings held during 2005 are listed below. The complete minutes may be found in the Church Record Book and are available to interested parties.

Annual Meeting January 31, 2005 for the purposes:

1. Accepting the Annual Report for 2004
2. Electing Officers, Board, and Committee members
3. Conducting any other business that may properly be brought before the congregation

Resolution: **Items 1, 2**, were accepted and passed. **Item 3** was first presented by Marshall Tucker, Church Treasurer, requesting the authority to borrow up to \$250,000 to make repairs on the Meeting House, to renegotiate our current \$150,000 mortgage held by our Bank, and approval to take any interest not in the 2005 budget from Reserve Fund. A motion was made to authorize the Church Treasurer to borrow \$250,000 to make repairs on the Meeting House, \$150,000 to refinance our existing loan and to use up to \$12,000 from the Reserve Fund. This motion was seconded and approved by all church members. Dennis Lape presented **Item 3** also, representing the Board of Outreach, reading a motion to use \$5,350 from the Reserve Fund to complete the Outreach Spending Plan for 2004. A second to this motion was heard, and the church members raised their right hand of approval. One church member abstained.

Church Meeting August 7, 2005 for the following purposes:

1. Accepting Donna Cassity's resignation as Associate Minister for Parish Care.
2. Approving the selection of the Search Committee to call an Associate Minister for Parish Care to fill the vacancy created by Donna Cassity's resignation.

Resolution:

Item 1 was accepted by church members with regret.

Item 2 will be presented at another church meeting.

Church Meeting December 11, 2005 for the following purposes:

1. Approving a Pastoral Search Committee for an Associate Minister for Parish Care
2. Hearing a reading of the Nominating Committee Report
3. Approving the Final Budget for 2006
4. Approving use of an additional \$20,000 from the Reserve Fund for unexpected, non-recurring expenses

Resolution:

Item 1 Ellen Wright, Senior Deacon, read the names of seven church members for the Pastoral Search Committee for an Associate Minister of Parish Care. The church members present voted a unanimous approval of this presentation.

Item 2 The Nominating Committee read the Nominating Report

Item 3 A motion to call the vote on approving the 2006 Budget was made and seconded. The motion was approved by attending church members. The majority of church members approved the 2006 Budget, four-voted disapproval and one member abstained.

Item 4 A motion was made to approve the use of an additional \$20,000 from the Reserve fund. Church members approved this vote.

CHURCH STATISTICS

Total Membership as of January 1, 2005 1058

Admissions

Confirmation Class	24
Confession of Faith	3
Reaffirmation of Faith	8
Letter of Transfer	5
Total Admissions	40

Dismissions

Letter of Transfer	2
Transfer to Inactive	39
Deaths	13
Total Dismissions	54

Total Membership as of December 31, 2005 1044

ADMISSIONS

CONFIRMATION CLASS

Timothy Balsler	Benjamin Pascale
Jessica Black	Jennifer Persio
Stephanie Canada	Brent Reihl
Whitney Casavina	Samantha Roberts
Emily Cowles	Andrea Schlesinger
Jennifer Farrell	Andrew Stephan
Stephanie Fiske	Craig Strange
Cristen Heavens	Nina Sullivan
Shannon Kelly	Kelly Swartz
Eva Kolstad	Christopher Turney
Anna Lyke	Stephanie Whinfield
Alan Melville	
Jamie Murnane	

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Susan Bishop
Aaron Brodbar*
Corinne Grace

*with Baptism

RE- AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

David Grace	Daniel Petruzella
Daren Hill	Stacey Post
Rob Janes	Marybeth (Mimi) Rivard
Lisa Murray	
Peter Murray	

BY LETTER OF TRANSFER

Jenell (Smith) Jones
Susan Persio
Stacey Petruzella
Stuart Post
John Sullivan

DISMISSIONS

TRANSFERRED TO INACTIVE

Adam Abbate
Rebecca Abbate
Edson Bourn
Tyler Bourn
Christopher Carboni
Larry Carboni
Nicholas Carboni
Sharron Chassie
Sherwood Dawson Jr.
Virginia Dever
Luke Ebersold
Melanie Ebersold
Andrew Figliola
Jane French
Russell French
Barbara Gramenos
Erin Kennedy
Scott Kennedy
Marion Lee Kirby
Robin McEwan Kittle

Charles Latvis
Joy Latvis
Brady Laubscher
Tricia Laubscher
Dale Miller
Patricia Murray
Candance Niles
David Niles
Patricia Reynolds
Daniel Rollins
Madine Schmid
Carl Slay
Gail Slay
Susan St. Pierre
Lacy Sutak
Debbie Thelen
Donald Thelen
Catherine VanValck
Curtis Wheeler

REMOVED BY LETTER OF TRANSFER

Kathy Carboni
Harold Schoff

FUNERALS AND DEATHS

Lois Armbruster*
John Balser*
Jacqueline Bourn *
Nancy Brinton**
Virginia Butterfield*
Raymond Campell
Leverett Clark
Seth Lee Cowles
Raymond Drufva*
Florence Ives Emerson*
Keith Ferguson
Gregory Garthwait
Seva Gibbs
William Grove*
Shirley Jackman*

Mary Lee Kirby**
Howard Linke
James V. Morton*
Faye J. Peck
Mary L. Pfeiffer*
Daniel W. Prince, III
Clifford Scofield
Ruth Schoff**
Doris Simon**
Richard Simpson
Marjorie Scott*
J. Gray (Pete) Somers
George C. Venter*
Thomas G. Wylie*

*Member
**Inactive Member

BAPTISMS

Macie Klare Allen
Faith Nicole Beyerle
*Aaron David Brodbar
Emma Elizabeth Brodbar
Wyatt Christopher Brodbar
Colin Michael Brown
Katelyn Courtney Daly
Anthony John DePaolo
Zachary James Eisbach
James Edward Fasano, Jr.
Alicia Marie Gray
Katelyn Carol Gray
Olivia Michael Harris

Elise Doyle Hurlburt
Abigail Hay Nicholson
Margaret Parker Petruzella
Andre Allen Roberts
Noah Alexander Rojas
Karissa Ann Spring
Leah Renee Steinfeld
Samantha Olivia Sullivan
Blake Michael Tripodina
Amber Love Vincent
Caleb Brennan Walendziak
Ethan Joseph Wojtowicz
Joshua Nichols Zatulskis

*Adult Baptism

WEDDINGS

Karl Hugo Ehrenfels*	to	Sophally Ear
John George Moyher	to	Kelly Danielle Balser*
Christopher Edward Smith	to	Jennifer Sara Susanna Knickerbocker
Robert Walter Ziolkowski	to	Emilee Mary Giering Ross*
John Charles Sullivan	to	Nancy Elizabeth Linton*
Whitney Carter Watts*	to	Gina Elizabeth Mesite
Robert Kippen Janes, Jr*	to	Jenell Elaine Smith*
Justin Michael Kurtz	to	Meredith Caroline Ingraham
David Hunter Grace*	to	Corinne Teal Marr*

*Member

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

During the year, the Financial Secretaries processed receipts totaling \$691,157.97. The breakdown of major contributions is as follows:

2005 Pledge Payments	\$562,610.73
Plate and Church School	62,641.31
2006 Prepaid Pledges	18,255.00
2004 Pledge Payments	4,164.50

Special offerings were received for Outreach programs including the Christmas Fund, Disaster Funds, AIDS/Orphans, and Hurricane relief. In addition, we received building funds and fuel drive monies.

Regular attendants of the group are Ann Madden, Dennis Lape, and Louise Petrasko. Assisting when “invited” are alternates Peggy Conant and Nora Adams. Dick Mattson makes deposits and has been known to help count in an emergency.

Thank you Fred Turner for being a special back-up person and to Jessie Waszmer for being one go-to-for-answers person. When necessary, each one was willing and available to pitch in for extra duty.