



Tony Ehrlich, 2011

**The First  
Congregational  
Church of Lee**  
*An Open & Affirming  
Congregation of the*  
**United Church of Christ**

**2023 Annual Report**  
and materials for the  
**2024 Annual Meeting**

held on  
**Sunday, February 11, 2024**



~ 2023 ~

*Marie Brazee*  
*Dorothy Fraser*  
*Patricia Hill*



# Contents

In Memory.....	2
Minutes: Annual Meeting, January 29, 2023 / Special All Church Meeting, May 28, 2023 .....	5
Clerk’s Report – 2023.....	8
Active Members and Friends 12/31/2023.....	9
Report of the Pastor – 2023 .....	10
Report of the Moderator – 2023.....	12
<i>Mission &amp; Ministry</i> – 2023 Report.....	12
<i>Facility &amp; Finance</i> – 2023 Report.....	16
Budget for 2024 .....	18
<b>Nominations, Church Leadership for 2024</b> .....	19
Church Staff .....	20



# ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA - FEBRUARY 11, 2024

11:45 am

Call to Order & Welcome – Cristina Markham

Opening Devotions – Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig

In Memoriam - Cristina Markham

Minutes From 2023 Annual and Special Church Meetings – Melissa Myers

Slate of Officers – Cristina Markham

Budget Report 2023 and proposed 2024 Annual Budget – Jane Gleason

Minister’s Report – Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig

Other reports – Please note that reports will not be read at the meeting, so please read them in advance. Committee Chairs are open to questions regarding their reports.

New business

Motion to Adjourn

Stand for Lord’s Prayer



MULTICULTURAL BRIDGE FOOD DISTRIBUTION

# Minutes: Annual Meeting, January 29, 2023

---

Present: There were 35 members in attendance.

Call to Order and Welcome: The meeting was called to order at 12:15 PM by Dave Markham. Dave introduced Reverend Terry Ogawa, the SNE UCC Conference Minister. Reverend Ogawa explained that the purpose of an Interim minister is to prepare the church for a settled pastor. She does not feel we are ready to call a settled pastor at this point in time. With Pastor Jay leaving, we have several choices. We can call another Interim, a Bridge Minister for 1-6 months, or Pulpit Supply which would cover only worship services for 1-4 weeks at a time. She indicated that the bridge minister cannot be a member of the church. This eliminates Cara Davis, who served our church in this capacity, while Rev. Neil was on sabbatical. She indicated that while the Search Committee for a settled pastor continues their work, a separate group must be formed to conduct a search for a bridge minister. This group cannot be comprised of any members currently serving on the Pastoral Search Committee.

Reverend Ogawa feels that our current governance structure needs to be changed and bylaws rewritten, if necessary. Considerable discussion followed about our committee structure, nominating process and term limits.

When the profile for the settled pastor is completed, it must be sent to Reverend Ogawa for her advice and comments before being posted. Dave thanked Reverend Ogawa for her presence and counsel this morning.

In Memoriam: Dave Markham read the list of members and friends who have passed in 2022.

Minutes of 2022 Annual Meeting: The minutes were included in the Annual Report.

Motion: To accept the minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting as printed. Moved by Garth Story, Seconded by Margaret Markham. All voted in favor.

Slate of Officers: Dave Markham read the Slate of Officers:

Moderator – Open	Assistant Moderator - Open
Treasurer – Jane Gleason	Assistant Treasurer – Carol Blakeslee
Collectors: Dave Topham, Betsy Matarazzo	
Clerk – Melissa Myers	

Discussion was held about the open positions and specific job descriptions for those positions. Members were encouraged to talk to others who have held these positions for specifics on the duties involved.

Motion: To accept the current Slate of Officers. Moved by Garth Story, Seconded by Ellen Krupka. All voted in favor.

Budget Report: Jane Gleason provided an update on our 2022 finances and reviewed the proposed 2023 budget. As this is a transition year with our current interim pastor leaving, and the search for a settled pastor in process, the pastor's compensation has been calculated in three parts – 6 months of our interim pastor, 3 months of a bridge minister and 3 months of a settled pastor. Our support staff received a 5% increase, our administrative assistant received an additional one-time adjustment and our sexton's increase is pro-rated to his one-year hire anniversary. Utility costs were increased by 20% and additional expenses for technology and improvements to our streaming services are included. We will be using \$20,000 from our invested funds in support of this budget, which is approximately 4% of the value of that account.

Motion: To accept the 2023 budget as presented. Moved by Tari Roosa, Seconded by Judy Morehouse. All voted in favor.

Minister's Report: Pastor Jay reflected on his time with us and his leaving.

Other Reports: Committee Reports are contained in the Annual Meeting Report and hopefully everyone has read through them. Dave asked if there were any questions regarding the reports. Pastor Jay indicated that since we will not be constructing a labyrinth, a letter will be sent to donors asking if they want their donation refunded or if they would allow it to be used for new carpet. Wanda noted that many folks donated to the labyrinth project in honor of Bill Neil. Jay will contact Bill to discuss this with him.

Motion: To accept the reports as written. Moved Elaine Scott, Seconded Garth Story. All voted in Favor.

New Business: Garth Story reported that the Pastoral Search Committee has been diligently working on the profile which is close to completion. It will be reviewed by the Committee and the Church Council, and then forwarded to Reverend Ogawa for advice and recommendations. Finally, it will be posted to the UCC website and hopefully candidates will respond.

Dave Markham indicated that the work done when searching for Jay will be useful in finding an Interim/Bridge Minister. He proposed that a small team of 4 people work on defining the position, number of hours per week, and identifying our church's needs over the next six months. Dave and Margi Ohman agreed to serve on this committee.

Barbara Mahony shared that she attended an Open & Affirming workshop at the UCC Church in Enfield, CT. Many congregations are struggling with this decision. She reminded us that we have been Open & Affirming since November 13, 2013.

We stand adjourned at 1:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jane Gleason* (for Melissa Myers)

## **SPECIAL ALL CHURCH MEETING**

Sunday, May 28, 2023

40 Church Members were in attendance.

Cristina Markham shared that the church is in need of replacement of the red carpet in the sanctuary, including:

- main aisles, side aisles
- front and back of church
- platform area in front of the altar
- pulpit area including steps
- music corner

In addition, this is an excellent opportunity for some pews to be removed as follows:

- *Front pews to the left and right of the main aisle* to allow for better accessibility during service, communion, funerals, the choir and concerts, along with other church activities.
- *Front pews behind the piano* to allow for more room in front of the piano for all the reasons stated above.
- *Two pews along the left aisle* to allow for ample space for wheelchairs to integrate into rows instead of in the aisle.
- *Two pews in the front left corner* to allow for storage of bell equipment that has already been approved.

Cost and Funding

Country Carpet Quote	\$23,800
Bell Equipment Storage	+\$ 1,400
<i>Total Anticipated Cost</i>	\$25,200

Current Funding Available

\$10,000	Zukowski Memorial (2022)
\$ 5,343	Carrington Memorial (2022/2023)
\$ 175	Krupka, Fraser, Brazee Donations (2023)
\$ 500	Other Memorials (2023)
\$ 2,509	Repurposed labyrinth funds
<u>\$ 1,750</u>	Facilities project account (designated for carpet)
\$20,277	<i>Total</i>

Additional Funds Required

\$25,200
<u>- \$20,277</u>
\$ 4,923 Additional Funds Required

Additional Funding Possibilities

- Congregation Donation Appeal
- \$2,000 Charter Memorial (2023)
- Niebuhr Endowment Funds

David Markham thanked Ellen and John for their work preparing us for this necessary project. He noted that any cabinetry built for storage, such as for the bells, will be done in a way that fits architecturally with the church.

Q. Purpose of pew removal?

A. To give more space up front for concerts, funerals, handicap accessibility, etc.

Q. Can gray carpet on stage be recycled if someone needs it for a project?

A. It's glued down. If can salvage, will repurpose.

Q. Will be the same color?

A. It will be a complementary color to the existing carpet.

Ellen Krupka shared that she will visit with Country Carpet, the best choice for our particular situation, in advance. Once ordered it will take 3 - 6 weeks to come in and will then get on scheduling system with the carpet installation company. It is not expected that this project will interfere with worship in the church sanctuary; however, if it cannot be avoided the community room could be used in the short term. Also, there are a number of things we have to do as a church group to prep and that list will be again presented for volunteers.

*Motion:* A motion was made, by Charles VanAusdall and seconded by Melissa Myers, to move forward with the carpet replacement as outlined above. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Myers, Church Clerk



# Clerk's Report – 2023

The current count of our membership to date is as follows:

## Membership 120 on 2022/12/31

Additions 7  
Nate Buller *by Confession*  
Leda Buller *by Confession*  
Elaine Gross *by Transfer*  
Timothy Hill *by Confession*  
Maggie Hill *by Confession*  
Mary Melius *by Confession*  
Amanda Schenker *by Confession*

Removals *by death* 3  
Maria Brazee  
Dorothy Fraser  
Patricia Hill

Removals *by transfer* 2  
Rev. Cara Davis  
Dorothy Phillips

## Membership 2023/12/31 122

Baptism 1  
Charlotte Marie Gaherty on 11.26.23

There were no weddings in 2023.

*Respectfully Submitted, Tari Wheeler Roosa*  
*For Melissa Myers, Clerk*

December 2023

Making Gingerbread Houses





# Current Members and Friends 12/31/2023



FOOD  
DRIVE

# Reports of the Pastors – 2023

Rev. Cara Davis and Rev Marisa Brown Ludwig

## Report from the Bridge Minister

I was called to be the Bridge Minister at First Congregational Church, Lee on April 2, 2023, following your interim minister, Rev. Dr. Jay Terbush. My scope of ministry included Sunday morning worship, pastoral care, and participation in M and M, F and F, Council meetings, as well as staff meetings.

Even before I started, however, I was called to do two memorial services for two long-time and beloved church members, Dorothy Fraser and Marie Brazee., then headlong into Palm Sunday and Easter.

Early into our time together, it became apparent that an expanded Non-Harassment Policy was needed that would give broader coverage to the whole congregation, not just the staff and children. Likewise, it became evident that a comprehensive plan for a safe evacuation from the Sanctuary, with annual drills, was also needed. Both MM and FF leaders with other volunteers stepped up to address these issues.

On we went to an even more challenging task: creating a Signage and Building Use Policy that could guide FF in their decisions around keeping the building and property safe, welcoming, and family-friendly for anyone using the park or the building. Not to stop there, church leaders and myself met with the Town Manager to at last put in writing an agreement between Town and the Church regarding the use and maintenance of the park and parking lot.

At the urging of the area minister of the SNEUCC, leaders developed and tested a succession plan for officers. Lastly, a Stewardship Process was established as an Ad Hoc committee made up of the Treasurer, a Collector, the minister and 1-2 at-large members from FF and MM to run one month prior to Stewardship Sunday.

Through the weeks of summer many Wednesday mornings were filled with book studies or contemplative walks. I had the privilege of celebrating with you your 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of being an Open and Affirming Church, and the on my very last Sunday, the joy of baptizing a beautiful child of God.

I offered support to the Search Committee as needed, participated in the weeklong UCC General Synod, and took Part I of a class on Interim Ministry.

You have called an excellent new Minister, Rev. Marissa Brown Ludwig, and you are growing. Your warm, open and affirming welcome, your music, the quality of your care and respect for one another, and your passion for justice are only a few of your assets. Your leadership is strong and able, and opportunities abound for everyone to serve in some capacity that best utilizes the skills and experience of this gifted congregation.

As I end my Bridge Ministry on November 30, 2023, I am confident your church will continue to grow and thrive as your new minister comes alongside you. It has been a privilege and a joy to be with you these 8 months. I am so very grateful for the time we had together.

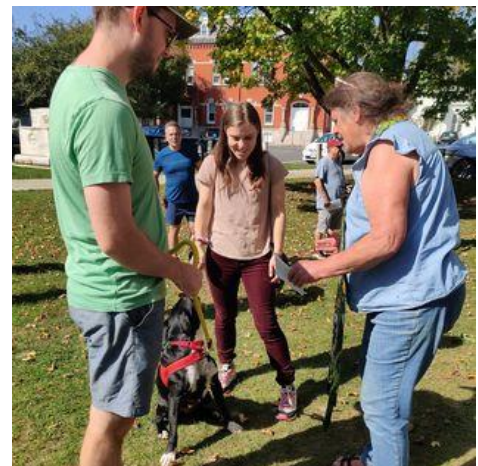
With love, in Christ, and many blessings,

Rev. Cara Davis



Blessing of the Animals

October 2023



## Report of the New Settled Pastor December 2023

I greet you all with a wide thanksgiving that you have called me this past fall of 2023 to become your new settled pastor, and I am excited to grow into relationship with all of you this coming year. What a blessing it is for me to serve and companion such a warm, welcoming and faithful community as I have found here at First Congregational Church of Lee!

SEARCH TEAM THANK YOU– I want to start by thanking deeply the Lee Search Team who walked with me through the discerning process starting in Summer 2023. Their energy, commitment, spirit and deep discipleship moved me and supported our moving together towards the candidating weekend we had on November 5, 2023. They continued to walk with me transitionally as I moved to begin in November one day/week to help plan Advent/Christmas and in the first weeks of my time with you, once I started on December 3, 2023.

I offer a prayer of thanksgiving for Garth Story, Olivia Tousignant Kuhn, Margaret Markham, Elaine Scott, Carol Blakeslee and Melissa Myers.

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS – Together we started out my new ministry with you on the first Sunday of Advent on December 3rd, with me helping to greet the arrival of the International Peace Light from the Lee Cub Scout Pack 45 Troop 3 with Tari and Joshua Hall on Friday, December 8<sup>th</sup>. We shared that light into the church kitchen stove pilot lights, and I then lit a candle on our altar for Sunday worship all through the Advent and Christmas season, from which all our candles were lit, connecting us with the Holy Land, particularly poignant this year.

I got to welcome the Sounds of the Season concerts December 15 & 16<sup>th</sup> that are such a wonderful holiday tradition here at Lee, led by Lee Music Director Jim Morrison with the Christmas Angels Chorus and Judy Olds, with the Lee Bell Choir – all of which included so many of you, the Lee Church members!

Christmas Eve we had a wondrous Lessons and Carols service at 6pm, and I got to meet many of your extended families and loved ones. What a gift for me. On December 31<sup>st</sup>, we had a special New Year's Eve Day worship that remembered those members of the church and your loved ones who had died in 2023, and we lit candles of Release and Remembrance as we crossed over into the New Year together.

ECUMENICAL/INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIP – on December 17<sup>th</sup> there was a wave of bomb-threats to synagogues across the state, including three here in the Berkshires including Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington and Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams. I talked to Church Council and with their support, I researched all the Jewish communities and rabbis in the Berkshires that week and reached out to the rabbis to introduce myself, expressing my solidarity with them against hate and antisemitism. This has led to a series of lunches and coffees this coming winter as I meet many of the rabbis and forge greater connection for future times. I also had lunch with the Lead Organizer of the Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO), Sean Manion and Wendy Krom to learn more about them, and ways I can support Lee Church's membership and delegates in their great works of interfaith justice.

STAFF – I have been deeply welcomed by your hard-working staff of Tari Wheeler Roosa, Jim Morrison and Jason Matthews. They have each worked with me to begin building connection so I can join them as a staff team serving all of you here together, building on each person's gifts and strengths. I feel blessed to have such a talented and faithful staff to work with in the coming year.

LOOKING AHEAD – in 2024 I look forward to working with you and the Leadership here at Lee to expand and grow the ministries to children, youth and young families, adult education, pastoral visiting, social justice, ecumenical and interfaith outreach, potential UCC/ecumenical partnerships for education/justice and worship together in the future, and other places where your dreams for Lee Congregational Church may take us.

Rev Marisa Brown Ludwig

# Report of the Moderator – 2023

This past year was a year of so much change. We said a tearful goodbye to Dr. Jay Terbush, our interim pastor, and welcomed Rev. Cara Davis. Reverend Davis jumped in as an integral and active part of policy updates, building projects, pastoral search support, member needs, book studies, nature walks and many other community building endeavors. She went truly above and beyond for us, keeping our ship not just afloat but cruising forward at a good clip. We are forever grateful. THANK YOU!

At the end of the year, we learned about the result of the pastoral search committee's tireless efforts. Pastor Marisa Brown Ludwig was voted in as our settled pastor! We are so grateful to the search committee for the diligence and care and prayer and TIME they put into the search process. THANK YOU! We are very much looking forward to the next chapter in our church's story, with Pastor Marisa's love and guidance.

Our projects were big this year, as well. New carpet in the sanctuary! So many hands were involved in getting this project going and executing it. Talented volunteer hours were crucial in both pre- and post-installation, and I find it incredibly heartening to see the end result. It doesn't just beautify our church, it embodies the heart and hands of everyone who participated...whether as a monetary donation, handiwork, hours of phone calls to plan and organize, or prayers for success, we couldn't have done it without ALL of you. THANK YOU!

Our building usage policy was updated and clarified to better represent our church's mission and the light we desire to reflect into the community. Tough decisions were made about where we stand with both alcohol and cannabis advertising and usage on the property. Being an Open and Affirming church and a "safe space" for all, lead to votes that weren't agreed upon by everyone, but reflected a unanimous spirit of inclusion that I have personally never seen in a church before. Our new harassment policy emphasizes this level of inclusion, providing a clear code of conduct required by all of our members and guests. This again highlights the fact that our church building is a safe space where all can gather without fear or discomfort. Hooray for the hard work and prayer and patience people demonstrated while trudging through these tough decisions. THANK YOU!

It has been such an honor to serve this past year as your Moderator. When I first met Pastor Marisa, I shared with her that while I wasn't sure initially if this position was right for me, seeing the passion so many people have for this church energized me into action. It was a wonderful summer craft fair, a festive and fun (and lucrative) Holiday Fair, dinners and game night were well-attended and the Heifer Project, which had our donation matched, did tremendous good for so many. The Stand Out for Justice demonstration doubled its attendance this year, many special children's activities were planned and enjoyed for after service fun, and the Holiday Concert and Bell Choir were once again a tremendous success. Thank you to all of the people who helped organize these events, along with those who greet, serve communion, plan and play music, sing, clean, provide coffee hour refreshments, help with children's time, light candles, read scripture, write letters to the home bound, and on and on. Your efforts are seen and important and appreciated. THANK YOU!

May our church continue to grow and be a beacon of God's love, peace and hope for our community and beyond.

*Respectfully Submitted, Cristina Markham, Moderator*

## **Mission & Ministry – 2023 Report**

---

During this year of transition for our congregation, Mission & Ministry continued some traditional programs and introduced some new activities as well. We continue to use the framework created last year as we engage in discussion and consider new missions and activities;

- Is this activity something God is calling us to do?
- Do we have the resources?
- How can we involve others

### Community Dinners

We offered Community Dinners twice per month through May on the first and third Wednesdays. Over time the attendance was inconsistent and we agreed that we need to evaluate this mission activity. Is it worth doing and how can we do it differently to increase participation.

### Connecting Conversations

This year we combined the duties of our Sunday morning greeters and Faith Friend. We have two greeters each Sunday and easily combined these welcoming activities. We held our first post-Covid Connecting Conversation dinners in people's homes. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, Cristina Markham, Anne & Gary Fix and Jason & Sarah Matthews hosted 18 people in their homes for dinner and conversation. We plan to continue this very successful and enjoyable event.

### Food Distribution

Our congregation continues to support the Lee Food Pantry both financially through generous donations and volunteers who work at the Food Pantry once a month. We continued our collaboration with Multicultural Bridge using our community room for their bi-weekly food distribution program through the month of May.

### Sponsored Events

Our fundraising efforts include the August Craft Fair, Holiday Fair, 3 Church Suppers, Christmas Concert, and donation of school supplies to Lee Elementary. Our third annual Pet Blessing was a very popular event.

We expressed our concern about the spread of Christian Nationalism and how this trend misrepresents Christianity with a Standout against Christian Nationalism protest in the Church Park.

This year represented our 10-year ONA anniversary. We recognized this event with several speakers during worship, followed by a potluck luncheon and opportunity to ask questions of the speakers.

### Spiritual Activities

With Reverend Cara's guidance several groups read "The Flag and The Cross", "White Christian Nationalism" and "Learning to Pray." Rev. Cara also initiated a weekly contemplative walk in various locations in our area and a Psalm Reading workshop hosted by Ellen Krupka.

### Policy Update

With the assistance of a group of church leaders and members we updated our Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures.

### Members of M&M

Carol Blakeslee, Jane Gleason, Barbara Mahony, Cristina Markham, Margaret Markham, Judy Morehouse, Laura O'Shaughnessy, Dorothy Phillips, Tari Roosa, Elaine Scott, Susan Stone, Martha Congdon.

On a final note, we sadly said goodbye to Dorothy Phillips who has moved to Saratoga, New York. We wish her well but will miss her and her leadership of this group. Margaret Markham and I have big shoes to fill!

*Respectively submitted, Jane Gleason, co-chair*

## **Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO)**

Berkshire Interfaith Organizing has had an exciting year of growth and reorganization and we're not done yet! In August, Sean Manion came on board as our new Director/Lead Organizer. He came from the Brockton area of the state and was ready for a new challenge, which we were delighted to offer him.

As you might recall, last year (January-February 2023) we held listening sessions with members in all of our congregations, after which we held a read-out meeting where our congregations spoke about and then voted on the priorities of their congregations. Following this vote we have been working on two major issues in 2023: housing and transportation. In the area of housing, we are working on some outdated building regulations that make repairs hard to do, making it harder to offer more housing /rental opportunities. In the area of transportation, we listened and heard people talk about how they can take public transit offered by Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) to get to work, but could not get home on the bus, as the bus service had already ended before their work did.

We held a successful annual appeal this year, which was supported with a \$7,500 challenge grant from Inter Valley Project, BIO's coordinating agency. We look forward to a fundraiser /House Party this current year of 2024. Stay tuned! Our work goes on and we hope to expand our workforce, both salaried and voluntary, as we stay focused on improving the quality of life in the Berkshires.

Our Annual Meeting will be held on February 25, 2024, from 3-5 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 175 Wendell Ave. Pittsfield, Ma. 01201.

All are welcome.

*Respectfully Submitted, Laura O'Shaughnessy, BIO delegate for the Lee Congregational Church*

## Music Committee

The year 2023 was a very busy year for music. Our Director of Music, Jim Morrison, continues his excellent “job” and works with singers of all different levels to make “harmony”. In 2023 Dorothy Phillips moved, and we certainly miss her voice. We also say “Thank You So Much” for covering for the few Sundays that Jim is away. Mike Powell has joined as a regular choir member. Jim has also been very busy researching new equipment and trying to keep our copyrights up to date. Jim also makes himself available for all funerals and weddings in the church. Throughout the year Jim has selected music for every Sunday, always deciding on a piece that would go along with the message of the day. Jim has also encouraged anyone in the congregation to request a hymn or song.

He started working on the Christmas Concert, “Sounds of the Season” in the summer. A great big “THANK YOU” goes out to Maria Colli, who keeps everything organized, copied, handed out, sending out emails to the group, etc. The Christmas Angel Chorus not only has members of the church’s choir, but it also has many of the Earth Angels and others, which makes this choir amazing. The pieces that Jim picked were varied and well suited for families. The concerts were held on December 15 & 16. There were approximately 350 people attending each night. The concerts were free, but people did give about \$2,300 in donations, and that money was passed along to the church for whatever project they wanted.

Also, in the midst of all the Christmas excitement, on December 9<sup>th</sup> Jim lead a group of singers and Santa to three various locations for caroling. One of these places was Riverbrook Residence for Women. It was the first year since Covid we were able to enter the building again, and what a thrill for all. This is where the “spirit” of Christmas resides. We all were so excited!!! Songs were sung, chipmunk costumes were put on and Santa came! The “spirit” entered into all of us.

Now, to the “ding-a-lings”, The Lee Bell Choir. This is also an ecumenical group of dedicated individuals with different levels of music knowledge and playing ability. The group’s head “ding-a-ling” is Judy Olds. Jim has added his expertise concerning adding harmonies and singers to some of the songs. During 2023, the group played a “Cabin Fever” Concert & dinner to raise money for handchimes. The handchimes enhance the bells and are used in different pieces. \$1,600 of the \$3,000 was raised. The concert was free, but people did donate, and attended the dinner. A big “thanks” to Joe Sorrentino for being our chef. Another “Cabin Fever” concert is being planned for 3/16/24 to hopefully finish paying off the difference. Then on Mother’s Day, the bells were the primary instrument for the church service. This past year’s theme was “Under the Sea” and we hope that all enjoyed the music and the decorations that were hung. The group took the summer off and was back at the end of September to work on Christmas. The bell choir is the pre-concert to the “Sounds of the Season” concert. The group also played at the Berkshire Museum for the Festival of Trees on 12/27 and were told that we were one of the most wanted groups back from 2022, and this year we broke the attendance record at 175 people.

There have been and still are new challenges. We are still dealing with issues of copyright/permissions since we have started streaming on Facebook. Currently the church is paying annual fees for CCLI and CCS, which totals \$980.00. We have also found out recently that some of our more “popular” pieces, ie “What a Wonderful World”, “Ebony and Ivory”, and songs from “Joseph”, need different copyrights/permissions in order so they can be streamed. This will make using these types of songs a challenge and will most likely incur additional costs. We are hoping that we can work through this issue.

The church’s sound system has been upgraded with a new lavalier microphone for the minister and eight new wireless microphones for the podium and choir. These microphones are omni-directional and capable of picking up sound from all different directions. We also need to see if the two shot-gun microphones are working the way they should. These were purchased and installed with the hope that they would pick up the congregation and choir when they are seated for streaming. We are also looking to “hard wire” two microphones up near the organ so that the wireless will not be needed up there.

All will take time and patience and with prayers to God.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*The Music Committee, Judy Olds, Tari Roosa, Heather Archibald, Maria Colli*



## Diaconate Report

Members of the Diaconate committee are: Elaine Scott (chair), Susan Stone, Jane Gleason, Ellen Krupka, Tim Martin, Danna Snow and Mike Powell. Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig provides oversight and guidance. Meetings are held bi-monthly after church services in the church parlor.

Below are the highlights defined for Diaconate Protocol/Procedure:

- a. In order to be invited and selected to become a Deacon and participate in the duties of the Diaconate Committee of the First Congregational Church of Lee, the potential deacon is required to be a practicing member of the First Congregational Church. A Deacon is selected by members of the Diaconate Committee and the presiding church Minister to serve as a Deacon and perform various duties established by the Committee.
- b. Selected deacons will participate on the 1st Sunday of the month Communion and any other times during the year requested by the Minister. They will serve the Communion elements to all attendees wishing to participate in the Communion practices of the Church services.
- c. Deacons will be expected to participate in baptisms at the request of the Minister.
- d. Two Deacons are expected to attend the memorial services of church members.
- e. The Deacons also strive to be aware of the needs of the Church members and friends and inform the Diaconate Committee and Minister of said needs so any and all concerns can be addressed at the bi-monthly Diaconate meetings. Deacons are provided cards to send to members as they see fit.

During the Diaconate meetings the monthly Communion schedule is discussed and 3 Deacons are assigned a specific month in advance.

Deacons have been provided brass colored badges to be worn during church services making them more accessible to the congregation in case our members have needs that need to be addressed.

Member needs are brought forward for discussion during the bi-monthly meetings and ideas/suggestions are presented to the committee on how best to support those people in need.

The Diaconate is here to serve and support the Minister and the congregation. Rev. Marisa is our counsel, providing prayer support in our meetings, and shares her plans with us and helps us understand how we can best serve our family, the church, and our God.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Elaine Scott, Chair*

Standout  
January 2023



# Facility & Finance– 2023 Report

Dave Markham, Chair; Members – Charles Van Ausdall, Ellen Krupka, Jane Gleason, Garth Story, John Arnold, Tim Martin and Dave Topham

**2023 Accomplishments:** The following are a summary of the significant projects that were completed in 2023.

- Sanctuary Carpeting – Significant effort was done to not only develop a plan on how to cost effectively replace the carpet but also how to increase handicap seating and repair areas where pews were removed. Thanks to Ellen Krupka for her leadership and all who supported in various ways. And thanks to the entire congregation for financial support. Special thanks to Garth and Karen Story, Tim Martin, Tim Hill, Nate and Leda Buller, Jason Mathews, Dave Markham.
- Outside Painting – The handicap ramp as well as the rear classroom staircase were stained. Various surfaces around the church were cleaned and painted. Various surfaces were power washed. Special thanks to Tim and Niti Martin who not only worked on the projects but also financially supported the effort.
- Rental Income – We continue to rent 3 offices upstairs in the classroom wing. We voted in November to increase the rent by 10% due to increased utility and insurance costs. In addition to the offices, we continue to rent out space in the building to individuals or groups that request the space and use the space consistent with the mission of the church.
- Church Property Policy. – We developed a church property use policy that clearly spells out restrictions on the use of church grounds.

## Endowment Update:

The endowment has grown significantly in 2023 rising 54%. Our Endowed and Invested Funds are managed by Terry Webb and Jessica Morris of the Royal Bank of Canada in Great Barrington. As our funds are primarily invested in stocks, they will undergo the ups and downs of the market. We have remained vigilant that we will try to limit our withdrawal to 4% of the value on January 1. As a result, the endowment continues to grow. We are monitoring our monies and meeting regularly with RBC.

## The Future:

We do have some significant work to do on the building. Most notably is outside painting of the high areas including bell tower and steeple. We cannot put this off too long as we are getting some significant bare wood on some of the front of our church building. This effort will require a dedicated team to begin to get quotes and determine how to fund the effort.

All of us on F and F appreciate your support. If you want to join our group we would welcome that. In 2024 the group will be looking for a new chairperson. Thanks for your continued support of the upkeep on our beautiful church.

*Respectfully Submitted, Dave Markham, Chair*

## History and Archives Committee Report

Members of this committee are: Sandy Cozzaglio (Chair), Susan Stone, and Ellen Krupka.

Due to the COVID pandemic in February/March 2020, and subsequent flare ups of COVID in the past year of 2023, we have not met to review, organize and file pertinent historical information, pictures and reports.

Occasionally, we receive requests from people looking for ancestral information of prior church members and their activities. When possible, we try to respond to those requests. Susan Stone has provided information to people occasionally requesting such information on ancestral families.

In prior years we have presented historical displays of various church activities in the glass display cabinets inside to the right of the doors to the Church sanctuary, but due to COVID we suspended that activity.

As a result of the Sanctuary Carpet “replacement project” in October 2023, the glass display cabinets were moved to the NARTHEX to allow for more room in the Sanctuary as you enter the Church. The glass cabinets currently display old artifacts from the Church.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Ellen F. Krupka*

## 2023 Financial Report by the Treasurer:

This year was a transitional year as our Search Committee continued its work of calling a settled pastor for our congregation. Reverend Terbush ended his interim work with us in March and Reverend Cara Davis guided us from March through November. Our new settled Pastor Marisa Brown Ludwig began her ministry with us in mid-November.

**Offerings:** Our total offerings for 2023 were \$127,106. This is \$7,394 less than our projected budget. Thank you to everyone for your generosity and faithfulness in pledges and contributions.

**Fundraisers:** We were able to hold all of our traditional fundraisers - August Craft Fair, Holiday Fair and Christmas Concert. In addition, we held three "Old-Fashioned" Church Suppers. These events raised a total of \$12,473, \$973 more than our budget projection.

**Building Usage:** Total rental income for the year was \$17,972, \$28 less than budgeted. In addition to the office rentals, we have several groups and organizations continuing to use our facility which has provided this income.

**Endowment Fund Transfers:** We had budgeted endowment withdrawals of \$20,000 to balance the 2023 budget. In November we withdrew \$15,000 from this account. During November and December additional pledges were received and we did not need to use all of these funds. This surplus will be carried forward to 2024.

**Memorial Funds:** During 2023, we received \$4,537 in memory of church and community members who have passed. Facility & Finance will consider how these funds might be used.

**Miscellaneous Income:** We received unspecified donations, in the amount of \$3,270 including the annual donation from the Farmer's Market.

**Salaries and Compensation:** The pastor's compensation and benefit costs were lower than budgeted due to Reverend Terbush leaving earlier than anticipated and Reverend Cara, who was part time, continuing through November, which was longer than originally anticipated. Compensation for our support staff was on budget and in line with expectations.

**Facility and Finance:** Facility and Finance costs totaled \$35,725, \$6,731 less than budgeted. This is largely due to no new projects being undertaken this year. The carpet project was completed with memorial funds and donations made specifically for that project.

**Mission and Ministry:** In addition to costs related to worship service, we have supported the missions listed below:

CWS Blankets	\$ 493	Lee Food Pantry	\$5,273
Heifer International	\$2,371	SNEUCC	\$6,538
OGHS	\$ 455	BIO	\$ 500
Habitat for Humanity	\$ 500	Berkshire Assoc.	\$ 250
UNICEF USA	\$ 600		

We were also able to upgrade the music program by purchasing new microphones for use with our sound system.

## 2024 Proposed Budget:

This year's budget proposal contains salary, housing allowance and benefits for our full time settled pastor. Also included is a 3.5% increase for our support staff, to be disbursed following a personnel evaluation.

Our anticipated utility costs have been increased by 5% and insurance coverage by 8%. We have budgeted for some necessary upgrades to our website and funding for mission and diaconate expenses.

This proposal includes actual pledges received to date and an estimate of non-pledge giving. We have increased our office rental rates by 10% for each of our tenants. Additional income sources used to support this budget include a surplus from 2023 of \$20,000 and a transfer of \$28,000 from our invested funds, which represents 4% of the value of that fund.

We have a shortfall of \$13,000. This shortfall will be funded with additional withdrawals from the invested funds if necessary. The budget will be reviewed throughout the year and additional funds will be utilized only if necessary.

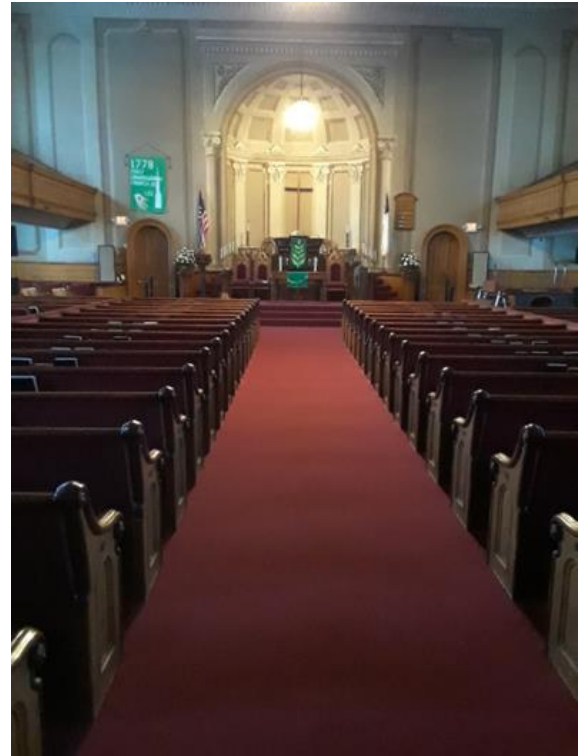
*Respectfully submitted,*

*Jane E. Gleason*

# Budget for 2024

## Comparative Budget 2024 vs. 2023

<i>Financials may be requested from the main office</i>	\$	-	\$	
---	----	---	----	--



# Nominations, Church Leadership for 2024

---

## Church Officers:

Moderator –Cristina Markham

Treasurer – Jane Gleason

Collectors – Dave Topham, Betsy Matarazzo

Clerk – Melissa Myers

Assistant Moderator – Sarah Hoecker

Assistant Treasurer – Carol Blakeslee

---

## Additional Volunteers for major workings of the church

### Delegates to Berkshire Association & Southern New England Conference UCC –

Valerie Brey

Elaine Gross

Olivia Tousignant Kuhn

### Mission and Ministry: Co-Chairs – Jane Gleason & Margaret Markham

Barbara Mahony

Tari Roosa

Carol Blakeslee

Susan Stone

Rev Marisa Brown Ludwig, *Pastor*

Elaine Scott

Judy Morehouse

Leda Buller

Jim Morrison, *Music Director*

Cristina Markham, *Moderator*

Martha Congdon

Laura O'Shaughnessy

Margy Ohman

### Facility and Finance: Chair (open)

Tim Martin

David Markham

Nate Buller

Rev Marisa Brown Ludwig, *Pastor*

Ellen Krupka

Garth Story

John Arnold

Dave Topham

Jane Gleason, *Treasurer*

Cristina Markham, *Moderator*

**The Personnel Committee** by definition is the Assistant Moderator, Assistant Treasurer, and the chair or representative from Pastoral Relations, Mission & Ministry and Facility & Finance.

### The Pastoral Relations Committee

Wanda Klahn

Tim Martin

Charles VanAusdall

Olivia Tousignant Kuhn

**The Church Council:** Moderator, Asst. Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, Pastor, and Chairs of Facilities & Finance and Mission & Ministry with one additional person from each of the two committees, Berkshire Association delegate

### Diaconate: Chair – Elaine Scott

Ellen Krupka

Susan Stone

Michael Powell

Tim Martin

Danna Snow

Nate Buller



There is always room for additional helpers on any of these and other committees.

# Church Staff

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ The Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig  
Director of Music \_\_\_\_\_ Jim Morrison  
Office Administrator \_\_\_\_\_ Tari Wheeler Roosa  
Sexton \_\_\_\_\_ Jason Matthews



## The First Congregational Church of Lee

*An Open & Affirming Congregation of the*  
United Church of Christ



25 Park Place, PO Box 395  
Lee, MA 01238-0395

413.243.1033 [uccleechurch@gmail.com](mailto:uccleechurch@gmail.com)  
[www.ucc-lee.org](http://www.ucc-lee.org)

