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THE UNITED CHURCH OF ROWAYTON
65th Annual Meeting, February 5, 2017

OFFICERS FOR 2016,

Moderator	Des McLaughlin
Clerk	Bill Peltz
General Treasurer	Peg Mullaney
Business Manager	Lou Froelich

STATISTICAL REPORT

Total Adult Members on rolls as of December 31, 2015	374
Inactive Members Removed from Church Records During 2016	1
Transfers Out During 2016	1
Members Deceased	5
Members Received During 2016	16
Confirmands Received in 2016	8
Adult Members on rolls as of December 31, 2016	383
Baptisms	6
Weddings	3
Funeral and Memorial Services	6

Members and Friends who have died in 2016

Donald Kiggins
Robert Grosvenor Ely
David Wright St. Clair Hopkins
Walter Plaut
Carol Wrigley



If you go to Rome today, and if you visit the catacombs, you will find there scratched on the walls one of the earliest symbols for the Christian church. It is a boat. Now, in the days of Jesus there were two ways to power a boat on open water. One was by rowing, sweat power provided by human beings. The other way was through the use of sails, harnessing the power of the wind. When the early Christians drew a boat as the symbol of the church, it was NEVER a rowboat. It was ALWAYS a SAILBOAT.

From *Sailboat Church* by Joan Gray

When people ask me what I think our House of Worship looks like, I always say, “A billowing sail!” This goes well beyond the physical building itself. I believe that The United Church of Rowayton is a “Sailboat church.” We are powered by God’s Spirit. Yet, even as a sailboat church there is a great need for energetic participation to keep the church moving on. Anyone who sails knows there is a tremendous amount of work to do aboard a sailboat to try to catch the wind so that there is progress. The work in the church is also oriented toward following the Spirit of God. Sailing gracefully requires skill, good communication, a common understanding of the objectives and a willingness to be graceful when things don’t go as planned so that we can quickly resume a course toward our mission: *To be a Christian community, dedicated to welcoming all who seek a relationship with God, to sharing God’s Word and love, and to nurturing all in their faith journey.*

This Annual Report is a written document describing our sailing adventure in the year 2016. I am grateful for our staff and leadership who help us be the sailboat church we are. Our staff and leadership truly help us sail on! As you read the reports say a prayer of gratitude for any name you read. Look at the staff listing and say a prayer of gratitude for our staff. It is a blessing to sail on and share this ministry with them.

Judi and I sail into our 31st year, having been called here in July 1986, and we are feeling so loved and supported. I am so grateful for the celebration we had in October for our 30th Anniversary serving here. May we all, together, continue to face the challenges of life always searching for the courage we need found in the breath of God, the Spirit of God, empowering us to believe that God’s loving Spirit still blows in the world, and as we, one local church, put up our sails God does amazing things!!!

With love,

John

FROM THE LAY LEADER

I am entering my last year as your Moderator and Lay Leader. In my Annual Report last year I wrote about the strength we possess in all aspects of our Church and congregation. I am pleased to say that none of that strength has diminished. In fact I believe it has grown stronger. I believe this because I see it all around me in our Church community. Pastor John is fond of and uses the Prayer of Saint Francis in his sermons and in the prayers of our services. It is below – short and powerful:

*“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.”*

All the human and emotional actions described in the prayer, where Saint Francis asks of the Lord to give him the strength to carry out, we see take place in our Church community. I believe Pastor John loves and uses this prayer because it symbolizes his approach to life and what he imparts to us each service. Every aspect of our community focuses on these human traits whether that is in the work of our volunteers, our Christian education or our fellowship. I know this prayer helps all of us to be the best that we can be.

Another part of the strength of our Church and community that I am proud to point out is the reinvestment that we make into one of our most valuable assets, our physical properties. This demonstrates that we recognize an important aspect of our strength is the upkeep and improvement to those assets creating a positive image for all in our community.

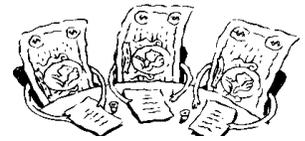
We recently sold a parcel of land around the corner from the Church which we have owned for some 76 years. The proceeds from this sale will help strengthen the financial soundness of the Church.

We are currently undergoing some difficult times and transition in one of our Church programs. When there is sudden change in any organization there is always a need for people to step up and shoulder the weight of that change, continue to work at and implement the objectives and goals of the organization and seek to improve and make it stronger. We are seeing this from a number of our members who are close to the program and I can't possibly thank them enough for demonstrating another example of the strength of our Church community. The prayer of Saint Francis is truly alive and working in our midst.

Let me finish as I did last year:

Our Church is strong because we “all” travel our journey of faith together.

Respectfully Submitted,
R. Desmond McLaughlin
Moderator and Lay Leader



BOARD OF HOUSEHOLD CONCERNS

The Board of Household Concerns is responsible for all aspects of the Church's finances including the setting of budgets, revenue and support, expense monitoring, managing the Church's endowment and other invested funds, and maintaining the Church's physical property, plant and equipment. Committees and Sub-committees that report to the Board include: Investments, Stewardship and Property, Plant and Equipment.

Each Board member serves a three-year term. For 2016, members were:

Gehr Brown	Heather MacLeod	Norm Walker
Anne Campbell	Frank Mullaney	Chris Wittstock
Frank Jenkins	Courtney Oldrin	John Livingston (Pastor)
Rob Lamendola	Josh Overbay	Tom Robinson
Pete Ludwig		

Jim Clark (Investments)	Lou Froelich (Business Manager)	Peg Mullaney (Treasurer)
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BUDGET: The final budget for 2016 reflected a less than 1% increase in spending vs. 2015. At 2016 year-end, the Church revenue and support exceed expenses due largely to savings in heating oil, electricity and limited snow removal, with no other significant “surprises” on the expense side for the year.

While there are other sources of income (Tag Sale, Silent Auction, and rental income), we depend primarily on annual pledges and unpledged giving to support Church operations. For 2016, pledges exceeded the \$400,000 budget target, receiving approximately \$419,889 by December 31st, 2016 - with \$126K of “2016 Pledges” actually received in 2015, and the remainder, \$293,784, in 2016.

The approved 2017 Budget (see below) is essentially unchanged vs. 2016. Administrative expenses increased by \$3,000 due to a slight increase in annual dues the Church pays to the Connecticut Conference – United Church of Christ.

STEWARDSHIP: Courtney Oldrin is leading the Stewardship campaign for the first year and I am pleased to note that as of January 12, 2017 we have \$330,416 confirmed in pledges from 140 pledge units, about 80% toward our goal of \$403,000 for 2017. We are optimistic that our goal will be met or exceeded.

The financial support of the Congregation has been a highlight, achieving annual targets, leading to healthy operations, adequate cash balances and robust programs and community outreach!

INVESTMENTS: The market value of the Church's investments’ portfolio stood at approximately \$1,915,000 as of September 30, 2016. Factoring in cash withdrawals for capital improvements, performance for the first 9 months of the year was up about 6.5%, aligned with its peer group. Our investments’ portfolio is balanced (55% equities, 35% fixed income and 10% cash), and focuses on investing in socially responsible funds and companies.

SILENT AUCTION AND FUNDRAISING: Due to the efforts of the Fund Raising Sub-committee, the Church's Silent Auction was a success - with the result that over \$14,000 in support of 2016 operations was raised. Plans are to continue with the Tag Sale (2017) and the Silent Auction (2018) in alternating years. Our policy continues to be one of not including any anticipated Tag Sale/fundraising monies in the annual Operating Budget. If you are reading this, and have new fundraising ideas, please contact any member of the Board!

PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT: We take pride in keeping our grounds and buildings maintained, efficient and beautiful, with the help of Wayne Gamache, volunteers and local contractors.

In 2016, the major PP&E improvements included:

- (Parsonage) Attic/wall insulation, rear deck replaced, wall/ceiling repairs
- (Property) Re-sealed and repaired all parking lot and driveway areas, fence repairs
- (Sanctuary) Cleaned/organized basement/utility room, cleaned HVAC ducts, and painted
- (Sanctuary) Replaced missing/damaged cedar shingles on roof

In 2017, the major PP&E projects proposed include: exterior/parking lot lighting, HVAC upgrades, walkway/patio repairs, new windows (Parsonage), painting (Parsonage).

Frank Mullaney, Anne Campbell and Lou Froehlich will act as Project Managers for these projects, and will keep the PP&E list tracker updated. We use the Property, Plant and Equipment Improvement List (organized by building and priority) to track and manage PP&E projects over the life of the church.

RECOGNITION AND THANKS:

- On behalf of Frank Jenkins, Co-chair, and I: a BIG thank you to our fellow Board members for their service, time and efforts - especially those who took meeting minutes!
- Lou Froelich (Business Manager) and Peg Mullaney (Treasurer) — for your time and efforts devoted to the Church and the accurate/timely financial reports!
- Kris Jenkins (Office Manager) for everything she does to assist our efforts!
- Anne Campbell for research and counsel on property matters!
- Gehr Brown and Pete Ludwig for their continued direction and oversight!
- Courtney Oldrin for shouldering the Stewardship campaign – nice work!
- Frank Mullaney, Anne Campbell and Tom Robinson for taking the reins on keeping the Property, Plant and Equipment Improvement List up to date so that we don't lose sight of things!
- Norm Walker and Chris Wittstock for bringing financial expertise!
- Heather MacLoad for problem-solving and wittiness!
- Pastor John for guiding us on our faith journey and being a wise counselor!
- Wayne Gamache for keeping our Property, Plant & Equipment in fine working order daily!
- Joanne Brown, Lynne Pratt, Caroline Robinson, Debbie Douglas, Sandy Aldrich, Lois Froelich, Kris Jenkins, Michelle Deluca, Emcee Graham Powell and ALL volunteers and donors - for a successful Silent Auction!
- The Congregation whose financial support and participation make this Church all it is!

Sincerely,



Rob Lamendola
Co-chair
Board of Household Concerns

2016 FINANCIAL SECRETARY REPORT



Total Receipts (as of December 31, 2016)

Pledges Paid	\$293,784
Unpledged Contributions, Plate, Church School	21,683
Rentals	51,909
2015 Pledges	5,875
Fundraisers	14,436
2016 Pledges paid in 2015	126,105
 Total	 \$513,792
 2017 Pledges Paid in Advance	 69,330
Endowment Income	0
 Grand Total	 \$583,122



TREASURER'S REPORT as of December 31, 2016

Fairfield County Checking Account	\$111,073
Fairfield County Money Market Account	\$124,304
Amerprise Financial	\$19,440
Total	\$254,818
 Benevolence Checking	
Deacon's Fund	\$2,385
Mission Trip	\$125
Outreach	\$864
Sabbatical Fund	\$10,163
Total	\$13,536
 Capital Checking	
Capital Fund (Depreciation)	\$6,105
Memorial Gifts	\$3,491
Total	\$9,596
 Flower Fund	\$4,586
Memorial Garden Checking	\$480
 Schwab Unrestricted Account	\$188,956
Schwab Restricted Account	\$70,073
Schwab Memorial Garden Account	\$28,948
Schwab Investment Account	\$33,486
(Includes Rainy Day, Memorial, Other Unrestricted Dollars)	
Total	\$321,463

Proposed Budget for 2017

INCOME	ACTUAL 2016	BUDGET 2016	PROPOSED 2017
Actual Pledges Received	\$419,888	\$400,000	\$403,000
Anticipated Pledges			
Building Rental	\$24,245	\$20,000	\$20,000
Transfer from Endowment	\$0	\$38,000	\$38,000
Nursery School	\$27,665	\$27,500	\$27,900
Plate/Unpledged Contributions	\$21,683	\$21,500	\$21,100
Fundraisers	\$14,436	\$0	\$0
TOTAL:	\$507,917	\$507,000	\$510,000
 EXPENSES			
Board of Christian Education	\$5,708	\$7,000	\$7,000
Class Activities and Curriculum, Youth and Confirmation Programs, Special Events, Child Care, Adult Ed			
Board of Christian Outreach	\$46,900	\$47,900	\$47,900
Board of Deacons	\$6,975	\$10,100	\$10,100
Spiritual Development, Sabbatical, Music Program Development, Supplies, Instrument Maintenance and Special Programs			
Salary and Benefits	\$275,638	\$286,200	\$286,200
Clergy and Staff including Director of Music, Children's Choir Director, Office Manager, Business Manager, Maintenance Manager and Director of Christian Education			
Administration	\$51,103	\$50,000	\$53,000
Office Expenses, Communications (Telephone, Website), Payroll Taxes, Legal and Auditing, Insurance, Advertising Stewardship and Social Committees UCC Membership Dues			
Plant and Facilities	\$74,846	\$98,300	\$98,300
Heating Oil, Electricity and other Utilities, and General Maintenance of House of Worship, Meeting House and Parsonage Plowing and Landscaping			
Capital Repairs	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500
TOTAL:	\$479,579	\$507,000	\$510,000



Board of Deacons Annual Report - 2016

As stated in our by-laws, the Board of Deacons shall have general supervision of the spiritual interests of the Church and public services of worship. Accordingly, each Board member signs up to become one of the “Deacons of the Month” twice so that the responsibilities are shared between two deacons each month. Deacons responsibilities include finding ushers for the Sunday worship services and any other special services that occur during the year, preparing for and assisting with the monthly Communion worship service, being available to assist the pastor in whatever way needed, and helping oversee any of the special spiritual events which may occur during the year.

This year I was able to completely revise and update the “Board of Deacons Guidelines,” and institute an easier and more equitable method for assigning the Deacons of the Month.

The remarkable and enthusiastic group of people who have served with me on the 2016 Board of Deacons are Tammy Langalis, George Albano (Jr.), Marcia Smith, Dan Borgman, Caroline Robinson, Ellen Mulhearn, Roger Wachnicki, Carolyn Snyder, Mike Harden, Bill Sarr and Jessica Knowles. Each one has brought something special to the Board, and it has been a privilege and a pleasure working with them. I would like to thank each and every one of them for their support and assistance during a busy year of wonderful celebrations and events.

This year’s events included:

- Easter and all the special services leading up to it.
- Confirmation Sunday - with a great group of Confirmands.
- An exciting Rally Day to launch our new Church year.
- A marvelous and moving celebration honoring John Livingston and his 30 years of pastoring, mentoring, counseling, friendship, love and compassion at UCR.
- A delightful and spirited service for the “Blessing of the Animals”.
- A wonderful service celebrating 50 years of the United Church Nursery School.
- The induction of this year’s new members and the pancake breakfast which followed.
- Our “Living Nativity” with all its lovely, joyful pageantry, as well as a wonderful sense of humor from our “Wise Guys”.
- Our summer worship services in Pinkney Park continued to grow in popularity, and we were extremely lucky with the weather - only 1 service needed to be moved indoors.

Altogether this has been a full and productive year.

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as Chair of the Board of Deacons this year. I feel lucky and blessed to have served with a great group of people, and I shall truly miss working with each and every one of them. More than anything, I will miss working with John Livingston on such a personal and spiritual level. I have benefitted greatly from this experience.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,
Neville Peltz, Chair

♥ CAREGIVING MINISTRY ♥
Dedicated to listening and keeping in touch

MISSION STATEMENT

The Caregiving Ministry of The United Church of Rowayton is dedicated to utilizing its spiritual gifts in a shared ministry that provides for the well being of God's people. Caregivers are caring Christian friends who listen, understand, accept and pray for and with care receivers who are experiencing the joys and sorrows of life.

Current Caregivers

Diane Albano, Billie Anker, Joanne Brown, Stephanie Close, Ann DiLeone, Debbie Douglas, Ray Meurer, Petrea Poler, Graham Powell, Lynne Pratt, Caroline Robinson, Linda Scull, Marcia Smith, Patrick Steele, Shawn Sullivan, Donna Wachnicki, Roger Wachnicki and Michael Ziegler.

"I can no other answer make, but, thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks." Hundreds of years ago William Shakespeare wrote those words. This statement is perfect for our Caregiving Ministry. We are so thankful for their dedication to the Church Family. This year Carol Haskell and Heather Hopkins retired from caregiving group. Both of these women were original members of our Ministry – Heather, a caregiver who was instrumental in starting the Ministry, and Carol, a caregiver and keeper of our Card Ministry. We thank them so much for all their years of service!

Once again, we thank Caroline Robinson and her faithful helpers for preparing meals for our Caregiving By Cooking program.

In October, the Ministry sponsored a stress program for our Church Family and friends. Leading the program was JoAnne Harrison-Becker of Therapeutic Recreation Services, who has given many lectures around the country. JoAnne assessed our level of stress and took a look at what's causing stress in our lives; how to detect if stress should be a cause of concern; how to recognize physical, psychological and emotional signs (and effects) of stress; how stress affects memory; anti-stress and relaxation exercises and "more stress: less sleep."

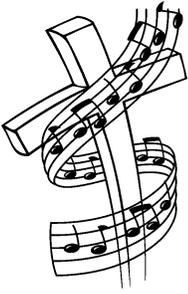
All of our work is strictly confidential.

Respectfully submitted,
Joanne Brown and Ann DiLeone
Co-chairpersons

Caregiving Ministry



MUSIC DEPARTMENT



I believe I am writing my 38th annual report on behalf of the music program at The United Church of Rowayton. It is a time to prayerfully reflect and take time to feel blessed for the talent and commitment that thrives here each and every year. I have pictures of the choirs throughout the years and see the years of change. Although there are singers and ringers no longer with us, we have maintained a strong program with some new faces and some choir members who have devoted all of these years to be a part of the music program at the United Church. We are so blessed.

The youth music program has dedicated children and parents who make sure they are involved in music at the Church. They are loved and appreciated by the Congregation. How blessed we are to see these children grow, move on to college and then see them thriving as adults. We pray their music continues to bless them through the years. I can't believe I am seeing my own granddaughters singing in a choir. What a joy!

We must continue to keep the music alive and well in our Church. I am always open to new ideas and ways to make sure we are providing a vibrant program for our Congregation. Looking at synonyms for blessed, I find words like joyous, laud and fortunate. I also see the word "content." We are never content. The music program continues to strive for a full, fully committed, bursting at the seams program. Won't you join us?

Respectfully submitted,
Marsha Hall
Director of Music



ALTAR COMMITTEE

The Altar Committee continues to provide Altar flowers for Sunday worship as well as carnations for Mother's Day. We also care for the plants in the sanctuary. We decorate the sanctuary at Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving with plants, flowers and greenery as the season requires. We provide and care for the Advent wreath as well as all the outside wreaths. Our funding continues to come from the congregation throughout the year in the form of memorial flowers for loved ones or the celebration of a particular joy. We do not receive any funding from the annual Church budget. Any surplus monies from these gifts, particularly at Christmas and Easter, form the basis for our regular expenditures. Cost of flowers has increased, as everything else, but so far we are still OK for funds.

The Committee members are the same as last year, namely Stephanie Close, Kate Davies, Kathy Draper, Lynne Pratt, Caroline Robinson, Danielle Holmes, Beverly Viele and myself, June Strubinger. The Deacons supply the communion and baptismal roses. The Committee in a combined effort took charge of the Harvest Festival decorating. It was decided to extend the decorations by another week as it seems a shame to put so much effort for only one Sunday. It is always a fun challenge to express our creativity.

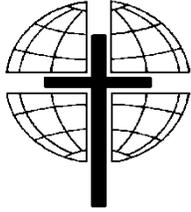
Everything except the floral plants and Altar arrangement was donated for the occasion by the members of the Committee. We enjoy making the Church look festive. The planter care has been handled by Stephanie Close. Plants are replaced as needed to keep the planter attractive. There are extra plants to care for at Christmas and Easter which are later given away. I'm still trying to get one person to take charge of the whole job.

We thank the Congregation for its contributions throughout the year. Their gifts allow us to provide a pleasant setting for worship each Sunday. We are grateful for their generosity.

Respectfully submitted,

June R. Strubinger

Altar Committee Chairperson



BOARD OF CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

The Board of Christian Outreach thanks the Congregation for making a difference through volunteering, donating goods and providing monetary support to elevate the challenged in our community. 2016 was a successful year!

In 2016, \$47,900 (same amount allocated in 2015) was distributed principally to non-profit organizations serving Norwalk residents. Attached find a list of the 2016 grant recipient organizations, its general mission and amount of financial assistance provided. Each Board member interviewed the non-profit assigned to them, made a report and recommendation for funding. Attention was given to the amount of each organization's overhead as a percentage of revenue as well as its strength in raising funds from other resources. This allowed us to direct UCR dollars to groups and causes that needed the funds the most and have the greatest impact.

Again the UCR Public Relations team really helped the Board this year. An interview with The Hour inquiring about the annual Backpack Drive increased our donation to Department of Children and families by more than 25 backpacks from 2015. Stew Leonard's donated 20 turkeys to our annual Thanksgiving Dinner Drive, and we increased our White Dove program for Person-to-Person from 50 white doves to 60. The Board changed the Winter Food Drive for P2P to a successful Toiletry Drive and provided families with shampoos, lotions and razor blades. Tammy Langalis, Board member Caroline Robinson, Heather MacLeod and Loretta Juknaite represented UCR volunteering with Simply Smiles located in South Dakota this summer. In the fall they presented the highlights and mission of their trip to the Congregation.

The monthly Wednesday night food prep at the Open Door Shelter in Norwalk coordinated by Margaret Steele successfully continues on the second Tuesday of the month.

Please join me in thanking the outreach team for their time and hard work: Margaret Steele, Kerry McFarlin, Lara Walsh, June Foster, Julie Begos, Thomas Guarcello, Mark Scott, Tammy Langalis, Christine Sullivan, Emily Overbay and Betsy English.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Ritchey, Chair

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN OUTREACH BENEVOLENCE 2016

Americares Free Clinic	\$1,500.00
Provides walk-in care for underinsured clients	
Appleby School-Based Health Clinics	\$3,000.00
Provides on-site physical and mental health services to adolescents at local schools	
Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County	\$2,500.00
Provides comprehensive mental health services to local children and their families	
Carver Foundation	\$2,500.00
Helps children reach their greatest potential by providing educational, social and recreational programs.	
Community Plates	\$2,000.00
Collection of fresh produce and prepared meals for distribution to the “food-insecure”	
Domestic Violence Crisis Center, Inc.	\$2,500.00
Helps those involved in physical, emotional and sexual abuse	
ElderHouse, Inc.	\$2,500.00
Provides seniors with a safe and supportive environment	
Family and Children’s Agency – summer camp	\$5,000.00
This fund sends approximately 25 pre- and early-adolescents to summer camps	
Family ReEntry, Inc.	\$3,500.00
Works with those who are incarcerated and the recently released to re-integrate into society	
Friends of Hill Top Homes	\$1,000.00
Keystone House	\$1,500.00
Helps people with mental illnesses remain in society	
Norwalk Grassroots Tennis	\$1,500.00
Improves the lives of underprivileged youth through the ideals of Arthur Ashe.	
Norwalk Meals on Wheels	\$2,000.00
Provides 2 meals/day to Norwalk residents not meeting their nutritional needs	
Open Door Emergency Shelter	\$4,000.00
Addresses the needs of the homeless and working poor	
Our Churches Wider Mission	\$2,000.00
This contribution to basic support is sent to our Conference	
Person to Person	\$2,000.00
Provides food, clothing and financial assistance to needy Norwalk families	
Silver Lake	\$900.00
UCC – CT Conference Retreat Center; Serves up to 1,300 youths	
Simply Smiles	\$2,000.00
Dedicated to providing brighter futures for children specifically in South Dakota and Oaxaca, Mexico	
STAR, Lighting the Way	\$2,000.00
Provides services, beginnings at birth, for mentally challenged clients	
Thanksgiving Gift Certificates to Dept. of Children & Families	\$1,500.00
For turkeys and other fresh foodstuffs	
United Church of Christ Wider Mission	\$2,000.00
This contribution of basic support to our Conference	
Visiting Nurse & Hospice of Fairfield County	\$2,500.00
Provides home health and hospice care services	

Total: \$47,900.00



“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” **Proverbs 22:6**

We as members of the Board of Christian Education firmly believe this to be true. For this reason, there is no better time than this academic year of 2016-17 to revitalize and strengthen the youth education programs for The United Church of Rowayton.

September’s Rally Day kicked off the season with lots of energy as one could imagine. The ice cream and sprinkles definitely gave it the feel of celebrating being together again after the summer break.

In October the Anchors were “dropped” for the first time and have been going strong ever since. The Anchors are our 6th, 7th and 8th graders coming together on alternating Wednesday evenings to share community and all that comes with it; fellowship, fun, prayers, concerns, Christian education, service, food, song, and the list goes on....The group has grown to 21 attendees on average and we expect it to continue to grow as the word of its success reaches others even outside our Church family.

December 4th was an awesome Advent Sunday day of celebration. The Congregation started their day off with an inspiring worship service and message from our Pastor John and then satisfied their appetites with our traditional pancake and bacon breakfast. We then closed the day with families of our nursery school as we witnessed our Tree Lighting and shared pizza and dessert and even a visit from Santa! We had our best turnout ever for both events and look forward to carrying on these traditions into 2017 and years to come.

This January and February we will take a closer look at the programs for grades Pre-K to 5th. We are excited to invite the parents of these children to a special event (date to be determined) to share ideas and goals and be involved as we plan to enhance our Sunday School experience for all.

As the second half of the school year unfolds, special thanks and recognition should be mentioned. To the our infant and toddler caregivers, we truly appreciate their commitment every Sunday through May to watching over the little ones during worship.

To the lesson leaders of 2016 and the past, thank you for your service to our Sunday School students. They really enjoy when you get involved and come to their classrooms to lead their lessons. The remaining months of the academic year will fly by and we do still have a few openings on the calendar to teach, so if you’d like to sign up for one or two classes, now is the time.

To John, Kris and Lou, we deeply appreciate all the support and assistance you offer. If it weren’t for you all we would not be able to accomplish all that we do. And a special heartfelt thank you goes to the members of the Board of Christian Education: Brian Anderson, Robert Ayala, Samantha Buisson, Nick Chermayeff, Debbie Douglas, Alyssa Shapiro and Emily Zerega. We are truly blessed as a Congregation to have such a stellar group of individuals working together to put our children first as the highest priority. They are an amazing team of people passionate about starting our children off the way they should go so that when they are older they will never turn from that path we’ve set before them!

Respectfully submitted, Val Harden, Chair of the Board of Christian Education

LAY DELEGATE TO THE CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE FAIRFIELD WEST ASSOCIATION

What is RIMACT?

On June 10-11, I moderated the Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference and facilitated a small group discussion about RIMACT (pronounced RYE-mac). This acronym represented the three UCC Conferences in Southern New England: Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. About a year ago, their boards of directors voted unanimously to enter into a year of discernment to determine how God may be calling our three Conferences to merge, federate or remain as is. This group discussion was part of a series of gatherings in which clergy and lay leaders could share opinions and ask questions.

Conference boundaries were established when the United Church of Christ was formed from the merger of several denominations in 1957. But times have changed, and the conference model has become increasingly less effectual. Consequently, all Conferences in the United Church of Christ are contemplating their futures. At a December meeting of the Fairfield West Association, I learned our Southern New England Conferences decided to recommend a unified, not merged, structure – one that is united in mission and ministry.

What's in it for us at The United Church of Rowayton? In brief, pooled increased resources will become available to the local church and the impact of the Conferences' ministries will become more profound. What is the timeline? This winter local churches are urged to weigh in on the question. In mid-June 2017, the three Conferences will gather in plenary session to decide their next step.

These are interesting times for our greater church, and I was honored to have been allowed to play a small role in it.

William H. Peltz
Lay Delegate

HISTORIANS COMMITTEE

The narrative history of our Church for 2016 has been completed for review and approval by the Pastor with an eye to it being published about the time of the Annual Meeting. Copies will be available in the House of Worship for anyone interested.

Maintenance of the files continues, as does gathering of new material. We encourage anyone to offer clippings, photos or other items of possible interest for consideration and request their source and date be clearly indicated. Such items should be placed in the Church Office "slot" labeled Flowers and Historical.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Ziegler

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

The Memorial Committee has received gifts for the year of 2016 in memory of the following:

Jim Mulhearn
Grove Ely
David Hopkins
Carol Wrigley

Respectfully submitted,
Lois Froelich

MEMORIAL GARDEN COMMITTEE

The Memorial Garden is for past and present members of The United Church of Rowayton, and their immediate families: spouse, partner, siblings, children and parents. Applications for a reservation are available in the Church Office. Any member of the Memorial Garden Committee will be happy to answer any questions that may arise.

In 2016 there were six new reservations and two interments. The Memorial Garden now has 241 members, with 124 interments. With the current Garden configuration, there are 33 available spaces.

All of the Memorial Garden funds have come from reservations of Church members and contributions specifically designated for the Garden. The Memorial Garden continues to be financially responsible for its maintenance and upkeep.

The Memorial Garden Committee thanks our Church Family for their continued support for this beautiful project.

Chris Basta

Kate Davies

Caroline Robinson

Marcia Smith

Emily Zerega

Respectfully submitted,
Michael A. Poler



NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to identify, encourage and enlist members of the Congregation to serve on the Boards and Committees of the Church as well as individuals to serve in Delegate and Officer positions.

Candidates will be presented on the proposed slate at the Annual Meeting held in February. Thank you to all who have agreed to serve.

The Committee is always open to welcoming members of the Congregation who are interested in becoming involved in the Church and in the various activities of Christian outreach and service. If you are interested in serving on a Committee or Board or would like to recommend someone for consideration to serve, please contact one of the members listed below.

Currently serving on the Committee are: Stephanie Close, Sandy Aldrich, Courtney Oldrin, Meggan Douglas Warren, Judi Livingston and Sue Guarcello.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Oldrin

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The Social Committee had a successful year again for September, 2015 through May, 2016.

There were four events that the Committee supervised.

September 20, 2015, was our Welcome Back Fellowship, chaired by Linda Fritsch.

December 20, 2015, was our Cookie Exchange chaired, by Ellen Mulhearn.

March 6, 2016, was the Spring BBQ chaired by Linda Fritsch.

May 15, 2016 was our Spring into Summer Lunch, chaired by Patty Genuario.

We are looking forward to planning another successful and fun year for 2017.



Respectfully submitted,
Linda Fritsch, Chairperson



PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Public Relations Committee in 2016 distributed 12 press releases about Church events, published six *Newsletters* that were sent to Church members, posted one video on YouTube, and advertised weekly sermon topics in *The Hour* and *The Darien Times*.

The 12 press releases were emailed to area newspapers and TV stations about the Toiletries Drive, Easter Basket Drive, Jazz Music, Wildman Scholarship Winners, Backpack Drive, Fall Food Drive, Anchors Program, Stress Seminar, Blessing of the Animals, Nursery School 50th Anniversary, Thanksgiving Food Drive and Tellebration.

The church newsletters were written, published and distributed by Kris Jenkins with the support of Board Members, Committee Members, Church staff and others in the Congregation who contributed articles. Kris also arranged for the placement of advertisements of weekly sermon topics in *The Hour* and *The Darien Times*.

A video taken during the Blessing of the Animals was produced by Bill Peltz using video he took and still photos taken by Sandy Aldrich. The video was posted by Bill on YouTube and the church website. Separately, John Massey produced a 30-second video that was sent to TV stations promoting the Blessing of the Animals using video taken at last year's event.

The press releases were based on reporting by Committee member Joanne Schreiber with editorial support by Joyce Meurer. Photography was provided by Sandy Aldrich and Bill Peltz. Debbie Douglas used social media such as Facebook and Nextdoor Rowayton to give added distribution to the press releases. All Church members are encouraged to post comments about Church activities on their own Facebook page or other social media.

Special thanks go to Sarah Ritchey of the Board of Christian Outreach for working with the Public Relations Committee on five press releases, including the Toiletries Drive, Easter Basket Drive, Backpack Drive, Fall Food Drive and the Thanksgiving Food Drive. Also special thanks go to Val Hardin and her daughter Charlette for taking part in a photo release about the Easter Basket Drive that used a photo taken by Sandy Aldrich.

The Committee welcomes ideas from Church members for press releases or photo opportunities. Also, if you see something of interest about the Church, take a photo using your smartphone and send it to me at jmeurer@optonline.net.

Respectfully submitted,
Ray Meurer