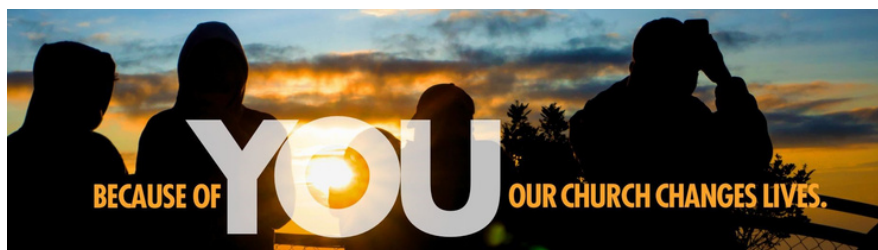


OUR ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Because of you, our church changes lives! Our annual Fall Stewardship Campaign provides a chance to think in a particular and prayerful way about the choices we make with our money in support of the church. This month we begin our 2023 Stewardship Campaign to support the ministry of our church in 2024. Christian Stewardship is about more than the church's need to receive; it is about our need to give as an act of discipleship! As we move through November, several members of the congregation will share their thoughts and experiences about the ways our church has helped to change lives and how your continued support will encourage even more transformation. Everyone will receive a stewardship mailing explaining the needs of our church, our financial goals, and the many ways to make a financial pledge. The Stewardship Team asks everyone to respond before December 10 so that we can solidify our 2024 budget. Your prayerful, generous, and timely response will help to make the new year one filled with blessings for our faith community.



NAVIGATING OUR 2024 BUDGET TOGETHER

An Invitation From Our Moderator to Participate in One of Our Listening Sessions to Be Held on November 5, 12, and 16

Traditionally, our church has operated with an annual budget that included a modest deficit between our revenue and expenses. Over the years, we have managed to address these shortfalls through a combination of generous pledges, careful budgeting, and judicious withdrawals from our savings. This approach has allowed us to maintain our mission and ministry with dedication and commitment.

However, we now find ourselves in the midst of what can only be described as a perfect storm of financial challenges. Our transition from a long-term pastoral relationship, the loss of our partnership with Port Pre-School, and the ongoing effects of a post-pandemic world have all contributed to this perfect storm. Our savings accounts will no longer be sufficient to cover the proposed 2024 budget deficit, leaving us in an extremely vulnerable position in 2025.

These financial challenges come at a time when we are also grappling with the demands of our aging infrastructure - including window repairs, elevator maintenance, and other essential building needs. This compound set of circumstances has led the Executive Committee to explore various options to bridge the budget gap. While each option has its merits and challenges, none on its own may lead us to a balanced budget, and all of them will require the support and involvement of our congregation.

(continued on the next page)

CHURCH BUDGET LISTENING SESSIONS continued...

The options we are considering include:

- 1.) **Status Quo:** Control costs and make small cuts whenever possible.
- 2.) **Increase Revenue:** Focusing on replacing rental income and increasing pledges.
- 3.) **Deep Cuts:** Relying on more volunteers to provide for our congregation.
- 4.) **Staff Consolidation:** Acknowledging that staff provide valuable services but represent a significant payroll expense.
- 5.) **Reduced Pastoral Services:** Transitioning from a full-time to a part-time Pastor, resulting in reduced services.
- 6.) **Shared Ministry:** Reducing costs by sharing a minister with another local UCC congregation.

Because your voice matters, we invite you to actively participate in this important decision-making process. To do so, we will be hosting three Listening Sessions during the month of November, followed by our Fall Congregational Meeting (see *below*). Your input is invaluable, and we encourage you to learn more about these options, express your thoughts, and hear from others.

Here are the dates and times of the Church Budget Listening Sessions:

- Sunday, **November 5** at 9:00 a.m. in the Dennett Room
- Sunday, **November 12** at 11:00 a.m. in the Dennett Room
- Thursday, **November 16** at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

We ask for your prayers of wisdom and courage as we navigate these financial challenges together. Your involvement and support are crucial as we work to ensure the continued strength and vitality of our beloved First Congregational Church.

Yours in faith and community,
Jason Jacque, Church Moderator



FALL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ON NOVEMBER 26

Please plan to attend the Fall Congregational Meeting on Sunday, November 26, immediately following the 10:00 worship service in Fellowship Hall. A proposed church budget for 2024 will be presented to the church and will be the primary item on the agenda. Remember that the proposed budget is a working document and can be amended and changed prior to being voted on at the Winter Congregational Meeting at the end of January. We plan to abbreviate the 10:00 worship so that we can start the meeting at 10:45. Our plan is to present the budget in a timely manner to as many members of the congregation as possible. We are, after all, a Congregational church - which means that decisions are made not by any single person, or group of leaders, but by the vote of the entire membership.