

# **Annual Report for the Year 2023**



## **Westminster Presbyterian Church**

**presented at**

**The Annual Meeting of the  
Congregation and Corporation**

**February 25, 2024**

**The Annual Report  
for the Year 2023  
Westminster Presbyterian Church**

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**Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Statistical Report  
Membership Statistics for 2023**

Total Communicant Membership as reported December 31, 2022

**154**

**Additions during 2023**

	Male		Female		Total
By Certificate	0		0		0
Reaffirmation	0		0		0
Profession	0		0		0
Confirmation	0		0		0
Other	0		0		0
TOTAL	0		0		0

**Losses during 2023**

By Death	1		2		3
By Certificate	0		1		1
Other	0		0		0
TOTAL	1		3		4

Total Communicant Membership as reported December 31, 2023

**150**

Affiliate Members    Male: 1    Female: 1    Total: 2

*Into the Church Triumphant*

***Members Peter Cruikshank, Flora Duncan, Inez Senger and friend of Westminster, Sally West.***

Child Baptisms                    3  
Adult Baptisms                    0  
Marriages                            0

**Attendance Figures**

**2023 Hybrid Analytics**

Average in-person attendance:    42  
Average online attendance:        13  
Average total attendance:         55

**Christmas Eve 2023 (Hybrid)**

10:00 a.m.  
In-person attendance:                111  
Online attendance:                    17  
Total attendance:                     128

**Easter 2023 (Hybrid)**

In-person attendance:                107  
Online attendance:                    17  
Total attendance:                     124

9:00 p.m.  
In-person attendance:                73  
Online attendance:                    14  
Total attendance:                     87

**Overall average attendance for 2023: 55**

## Report of the Clerk of Session William Hoelzel, Clerk

### Members of the Session

Peter Benner	William Hoelzel	Art Riihimaki
Ma'Lynn Feingold	Cindy Buckley	Craig Schramm
Greg Hammond	Ann Osoba	Janet Wade-Utay

For Westminster, the pandemic finally ended in 2023. It was the first year that we met together in-person every Sunday for our worship service, though we continue to offer online worship as well.

This was the year we began to build on the Proximate Purpose that the Session had defined in the January retreat: to make Westminster “a community hub focusing on mental health, food insecurity, and affordable housing.”

In February, we talked with the National Alliance on Mental Illness–CT (NAMI) about developing a “FaithNet” in which churches join together to host support groups for people who have mental illnesses and for their caregivers. We’ll keep working on that idea, and two other areas we’ve made our focus.

**Community Conversations.** In Sunday afternoon sessions, our congregation invited our neighbors to join us to learn what we can do to help others. We’re hoping that they see our commitment to these issues, and they want to become part of our effort:

- **Affordable housing** (April) — We heard a “Faces of Homelessness” speaker from Hands On Hartford and a speaker from the Open Communities Alliance on policy initiatives to address the state housing crisis.
- **Mental health** (November) — A leader at NAMI-CT gave us an overview of mental health issues, and a panel discussed aspects of mental health that are affecting our community.
- **Planning for 2024** — Session plans programming in early 2024 that includes mental health first aid training, suicide awareness, and fighting opioid drug addiction.

Our programming was supported by grants of \$15,500 from the Synod Innovation Program and the PCUSA Mental Health Ministry Program. These programs were the first of several that were funded by our grants. Tom Buckley led our grant writing effort.

**Repurposing our building** (the education wing). We’re analyzing the costs of revamping our building so we can become a community hub that offers space to groups that share our vision and values on housing, food insecurity and mental health. We are focused on:

- **Working with Clubhouse International.** A group from Beth El Temple (on Albany Avenue) hopes to establish a “clubhouse” -- a structured setting for people who have mental health issues. The Beth El group thinks Westminster would fit them well. Clubhouse members would meet weekdays to prepare to live independently and to return to the workplace. We visited the Primetime Clubhouse in Torrington and we’ll keep working with the Beth El group in 2024.
- **Building a commercial kitchen.** During the year, a group led by Barbara Riihimaki, Cindy Buckley, Sandy Fry, and John Rhine talked with town officials about upgrading our church kitchen so we can consider renting it to new food businesses, especially women and people of color. Forge City Works in Hartford and Hands On Hartford are helping us understand how this idea would work and what it would cost.
- **Updating the Covenant Room** to make it a more welcoming place for Christian adult education. We thank the estate of John Berman for this gift.

(continued...)

*(Clerk's Report continued....)*

Our minister of music will report separately on her work this year, but one big performance to note was “Raking in the Fall,” the fall festival that our Tilton Music Scholars launched in September. Musicians performed, artisans and crafters sold their work, and food trucks fed the multitudes.

As we began discussing the budget for 2024, each ministry team prepared and submitted its budget requests to the Finance Team. We closed with a budget deficit in 2023, and the Session is working diligently to creatively close the gaps going forward. Our proposed budget represents Session’s discernment of the work that God is calling us to do at this time.

We are moving forward together, fewer in number perhaps, but stronger than ever in our commitment.

**The Rev. Julie Emery  
Pastor/Head of Staff**

*“I will lead the blind by a road they do not know;  
by paths they have not known I will guide them.  
I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places to level ground.  
These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them.”  
Isaiah 42:16*

As we begin the year 2024 and look back on 2023, these words of hope from the prophet Isaiah speak to this season of church ministry and our life together. I realize they may not *seem* hopeful. To imagine that we are like those without sight, traveling a road we do not know may be uncomfortable for those of us who prefer clarity and direction. And yet, as we make our way as Christians in the 21st century it is apparent that we are living in a ‘liminal’ season for the Church; a time when some of the ‘old ways’ of being church no longer work, and the ‘new ways’ of being church have not yet come to fruition.

We have been saying this for awhile now: much has changed in our cultural context and those changes have directly effected the way we encounter and experience our faith. Family life has shifted: younger families have less time for worship or faith formation. “Empty nest” families also juggle opportunities for travel, or pressing needs of aging parents, or their own health concerns. The pandemic pushed many to fall out of the habit of regular church attendance and they have struggled to re-engage. All this has meant a diminishing membership with a equally diminishing capacity to give the time, talents and treasure needed to keep our church afloat.

In response to these shifting needs of our community, and with a deepened practice of prayer and discernment by the leaders of Westminster, the year 2023 began with a Leadership Retreat during which the Session sought to clarify our “proximate purpose,” (a term coined by consultant and author Susan Beaumont.) Out of that retreat grew an imagined direction for Westminster to better serve the needs of our surrounding community. We felt called to help address mental health concerns alongside food and housing insecurity for and with our neighbors in need.

Our Session leaders began drafting a grant proposal that laid out a plan for Westminster as a “community hub” of resources, conversation and support for neighbors in need. We received funding from the PCUSA and from the Synod of the Northeast to help us in this endeavor. Our first event was in the spring, and drew church members and community members together to hear from a speaker who had experienced homelessness, and from a policy advocate on affordable housing in Connecticut. In the fall, we continued our community conversations with a speaker and panel on mental illness and the challenges facing those in need, along with resources for support.

Both of these events were successful in bringing people together, offering support and connection around challenging topics, and allowing for more open dialogue about issues that are surrounded with stigma. These conversations and connections around a meal, invitations to imagine new ways to connect with and support our neighbors, felt like we were living the gospel in new and creative ways. They drew volunteers who were formerly uninvolved as well as community members who did not yet know our church. Those events and opportunities will continue into 2024 and hopefully beyond.

Meanwhile, in addition to these initiatives, we have sought to continue the ways of being church that have sustained us for generations: vibrant worship, a strong music program, commitment to teaching children about God’s love for them, seeking to support families as they balance faith alongside an increasingly busy and stressful lifestyle, supporting and visiting our aging members. There is new life sprouting up: visitors often comment on how warm and welcoming we are as a congregation; Westminster members who left long ago have returned; young families have found Westminster to be a place of deep love and welcome for their children; young adults have found a place of joyful connection and support in our choir.

*(continued...)*

*(Pastor Report continued...)*

It can be challenging to make our way through this liminal time without being overwhelmed by anxiety and worry. The financial concerns facing Westminster are very real. We cannot continue to draw down our endowment in order to do the ministry we seek to do and survive for very much longer. We need to grow our membership and our generosity. We must also consider innovative ways to leverage our resources - our building and grounds - to do the work of compassion and justice in our community. This time is both critical and exciting, if we can move beyond fear and into faith.

That faith, in the life and words of Jesus, consistently directs us to look for ways we might show compassion to our neighbor, lift up the downtrodden, stand up for the oppressed, and reach out to the forsaken. Our faith promises that if we place the needs of the 'least of these' before our own, God will be with us. This is the gospel we proclaim and share as followers of Christ. And this, I believe, is what will bring us out of our current crisis and into a place of sustainable Christ-centered ministry.

The words of the prophet Isaiah often speaks to a community in the midst of change, fear and uncertainty. Over and over again God's word is one of trust and faith. "You may not be able to see the path ahead," God says, "but I will guide you." "The journey ahead may be challenging," God says, "but I will not forsake you." As we continue to forge our way in these uncertain times, we put our faith in the God who has brought us to this moment and will bring us into the future.

In faith and hope,

Julie

# Ministry Areas

## Worship

*The Worship team supports our pastor in offering creative and vital worship that invites and engages people of all ages and backgrounds, welcoming the people of God into praise, lament, singing, and prayer in the communal worship of God.*

*Guiding Scripture: Psalm 100, “Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the lands! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!”*

Worship Elders: Ma’Lynn Feingold (in-coming) and Janet Wade-Utay (out-going)

Minister of Music: Callie Boone

Team Members: Rev Julie Emery, Wanda Bender, Callie Boone and Karen Hammond

A/V Support: Styx Hatch, technician and Janet Wade-Utay, volunteer

Communion Coordinators: Liz Doering, Wanda Bender and Karen Wagner

Banner Coordinators: Ben Reiger and Janet Wade-Utay

Chancel Choir: Eliza Cleaveland, Christina Lanergan, Art Riihimaki, Barbara Riihimaki, Janet Wade-Utay, Karen Wagner, Sydney Rekow, Merrill Hoelzel, Martie Boyer, Danielle O’Neil and Heather Tusch

Hand Bell Choir: Nicole Aronson, Marti Boyer, Liz Doering, Barbara Riihimaki, Carol Schramm and Janet Wade-Utay

Tilton Choral Scholars: Zachary Burns, Makenna Fowler, Ryan Mancini and Vanessa Paré

## Callie Boone Minister of Music

I would like to invite you into a moment of reflection: consider a time when you entered a space and did not feel like you belonged. How did the lack of warm invitation impact your ability to connect with others? What did that impact have on your ability to grow, find opportunity, feel joy, move through challenges, or show up fully as yourself?

In my experience, an absence of feelings and actions that promote belonging results in a disconnect in faithful fellowship. To the Music Ministry team, the absence of connection is not authentic to our way of being together. To create an environment that is authentic to us, we put our attention on “**saying yes to welcome**” in 2023. Our goal: to promote a space where connection was the impetus for faithful, musical contribution to worship at Westminster.

For us this year, the commitment to welcome has gifted our music family with **growth**. In June, we welcomed a new A/V technician, Styx Hatch, who has been an exceptional resource for our in-person and Zoom worshipping communities. In the fall, we welcomed two new Tilton Scholars, Makenna Fowler and Zac Burns, into our midst. We also welcomed several new members to the Chancel Choir. The addition of these new members elevated the sense of vitality in the music ministry and allowed us to create music that was both a faith-filled and robust contribution to worship.

Our attention to welcome became a catalyst for **opportunity**. We had the chance to form a pop-up Children’s Choir for Music Appreciation Sunday. We also had the pleasure of celebrating the gifts and talents of many musicians in our midst in worship that day. A new partnership with Cuatro Puntos has expanded our understanding of music as a form of social justice, cultural celebration, and worshipful expression. The return of Thread City Brass and the Christmas Eve Chancel and Bell Choir catapulted our Christmas Eve worship to an even higher level of musical celebration. The welcome of so many folk into our ministry empowered us to be a catalyst for musical and worshipful connection in the WPC community.

*(continued....)*



*(Minister of Music report continued....)*

Welcome has guided us towards a **renewed exuberance** in the Tilton Scholar Program. Community in Concert - celebrated this year at the same time (June) with a new name - hosted guest musicians alongside Ryan Mancini, Vanessa Paré, and Anna Pan. Together they crafted an experience of music that was an energizing gift to our congregation. In the fall, Ryan and Vanessa welcomed food trucks, vendors, and the West Hartford community to enjoy a fall festival that beat any rainy day, Raking in the Fun. Together, these two concerts raised approximately \$6,000 in support of the scholarship program. The funds are a step towards maintaining the program in the future.

Finally, welcome **guided** us through some deeply challenging moments this year. A flood displaced the handbell choir from their rehearsal space. The bells themselves had to be sent away for repair. The handbell choir welcomed the disruption with grace and good humor that allowed us to continue in fellowship and music making together, even in incredibly unique circumstances. The organ also underwent a major repair after a broken part took several months to rebuild. Anna welcomed the trial by experimenting with different music so gracefully that many may not have noticed the change.

It is important to note that none of the works of this ministry would have been possible without the support of countless volunteers and attendees who stepped up with a surge of time, talent, and treasure. Your commitment to welcome us into your prayers, schedules, and financial giving is greatly appreciated and critical to our ministry. Thank you.

In 2023, we as a music family were able to show up fully in community, connection, and authenticity. By “saying yes to welcome,” we not only grew our relationships within the church, but outside of it. We intentionally crafted a belonging that drew us closer to each other and to God. What a gift.

Please know that if you are ever interested in the opportunity to take part in the Music Ministry, we are here for you.

## **Worship Team** **Ma’Lynn Feingold, Elder**

We met throughout the year to plan hybrid worship services and continue to rebuild our worship team. In addition to Sunday services, we celebrated Ash Wednesday service in the chapel. During Holy Week, we joined First Presbyterian Church of Hartford (FPCH) for Maundy Thursday Communion Service at Westminster. Worship included a meal.

Our summer worship was a bit more relaxed but continued in the hybrid format. In the fall, we once again welcomed everyone back to worship with renewed energy. Our monthly Living in Faith Together Services (LIFT) continued. This year, Christmas Eve fell on Sunday and we celebrated with two services. The morning service was designated “the Family Service” and included a Paper Bag Pageant to recall the Christmas story that involved people of all ages to retell the story. The 9pm service music was enhanced by Thread City Brass, our bell choir, and a reunion voice choir of musical celebration of the Savior’s Birth.

We continued to enjoy the musical talents of our music scholars throughout the year. Vanessa Paré (mezzo soprano), Andrew Gagli (tenor), and Ryan Mancini (bass) gave strength of voice to our choir and shared solo talents, blessing worship in many ways. Andrew graduated in the spring but we were blessed with a new tenor in the fall, Zac Burns. Zac was joined by soprano Makenna Fowler. We were also treated to spring and fall concerts by our music scholars. The concerts were fun and offered an opportunity to appreciate the varied talents of our music scholars while raising funds for the music scholar program.

In addition to the music of our adult choir, the Westminster Bell choir played multiple times throughout the year, enhancing worship with music at Christmas, Easter, and several other times during the year. We are thankful for their commitment and the music ensemble they create.

*(continued....)*

*(Worship Team report continued...)*

We are deeply thankful to the Old Guard for their generous donation to Westminster that enabled the upgrade of the A/V system in the Fellowship Hall to improve the hybrid meeting/worship experience there. The system upgrade included the addition of computer controlled cameras, a new projector and computer. The sound system was upgraded to include a hearing assist system through our restricted fund for the differently abled. The hearing assist systems were added in the fellowship hall and upgraded in the sanctuary.

We want to thank all the many wonderful volunteers and staff who work tirelessly to make our worship and musical experiences a blessing to all. This includes the audio-visual technicians, zoom hosts, bell ringers, choristers, communion planners and servers, flower donors and arrangers, welcome team, elders, liturgists, musicians, pastors and lay preachers, our music minister, church administrator, sanctuary decorators, instrumental soloists and all other volunteers who enhance our worship.

As we look forward to 2024, we have continued opportunities to support the development and delivery of meaningful and creative services that bring a worshipful experience to both in-person and virtual worshipers. If you love worship, we invite you to join us in big or small ways to make it happen. Please come join us!

## **Flourish Team**

### **Peter Benner, Elder**

*Flourish supports and encourages ALL people as they grow on their faith journey through community, Bible study, prayer, practice and service.*

*Guiding Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:5-7 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”*

### **Karen Hammond**

#### **Director of Faith Formation**

I recently heard someone say that Faith Formation is the ministry area that surrounds all of the other ministry areas in a church. I believe that the speaker meant that as a Christian community, forming our faith should be a part of each and every thing we do.

I love this description! It allows us to see Faith Formation as not just a class, a program, or an activity. Our faith is constantly being shaped and formed. If we are an active and alive congregation, then all that we do should be encouraging each of us to examine, evaluate, stretch and grow our faith.

This mindset will help you see why the list of Flourish Team Highlights for 2023 involves so much more than just traditional “Christian Education” programs. It is a welcome challenge and absolute joy to be our Director of Faith Formation.

### **Flourish Team Highlights for 2023**

- Each Sunday morning our Sanctuary includes stations that are set up to be an active way to participate in worship. The stations change each week to be aligned with our liturgy and scripture for the day.
- In addition, Sunday morning worship services incorporate a “Time for Children” when children of all ages are invited to join Karen Hammond to hear about a special connection to the scripture for the day.
- In January, Karen Hammond attended the APCE (Association of Partners in Christian Education) Annual Conference in Birmingham, AL. This week of connection, worship and idea gathering also included the opportunity to lead a workshop (attended by about 30 participants) on how to reimagine Faith Formation programming.
- In February, we began a unique Confirmation program. We kicked it off with a 24 hour retreat which was attended by 6 amazing youth, their adult mentors, Karen Hammond and Rev. Julie Emery. The culmination of this weekend was a Confirmation Celebration during worship on Sunday, February 5th. Mentors and youth continued to meet throughout the rest of the spring and summer.
- Our Annual Community Easter Egg Hunt was held on April 8th with over 150 members of the community attending to enjoy crafts, snack, and egg hunt and lots of fun.
- In May, Karen Hammond attended a 2 day “Faith for a Lifetime Symposium” facilitated by John Roberto and other leaders of the Lifelong Faith organization. It was a wonderful time to dig into and evaluate our church’s culture and practices, as well as imagining what the future might look like.
- In June, a collaboration with Minister of Music Callie Boone resulted in a very fun pop-up Children’s Choir. The kids of various ages enjoyed singing during our Celebrating Music Sunday worship service

*(continued....)*

*(Flourish Team report continued....)*

- Also in June, Karen Hammond, Rev. Julie Emery and Minister of Music Callie Boone attended a Music that Makes Community one day workshop and the 3 day long Intergenerate Conference, both held in Nashville, TN.
- We kicked off a “new year” in September with a fun cookout after worship that allowed lots of time for conversation and connection
- Throughout the fall, parents of school-aged children gathered on several Friday evenings at Karen Hammond’s home to connect with each other and discuss how to raise “good” people and how the church and faith can be a part of this.
- In November, we provided the congregation with a brief “30 Days Thankful” daily prompt and meditation on gratefulness.
- On Christmas Eve, our Sunday morning worship incorporated a Paper Bag Pageant. We had a large congregation and everyone (all ages!) joined the fun of telling the Christmas story in this simple and unique way.
- LIFT (Living In Faith Together) continued in the Spring of 2023
  - ◊ January - We held an evening time of worship and learning based on Matthew 25. We received a \$1000 grant from the Presbyterian Youth Triennium and used this money to purchase items for homecoming baskets which were assembled by participants and donated to South Park Inn to be given to clients moving to their own apartment.
  - ◊ February - Our morning LIFT focused on Wisdom
  - ◊ March - Our morning and evening LIFT times focused on Fear
  - ◊ April - Our LIFT time encompassed two versions of community conversations around housing. In the morning we studied and discussed together scripture verses that highlight helping others. In the evening we opened our church to the community to hear speakers share information about homelessness and lack of access to housing in our area.
  - ◊ May—Our end-of-the year LIFT was a fun and festive cookout

## **Engage Team** **Greg Hammond, Elder**

*The Engage Team strives to have all members involved in the ministry of Westminster through the offering of their God-given time, talents, and treasures. We are committed to spreading our Christian message by making meaningful connections with the broader community.*

*Guiding Scripture: Romans 12:4-8 “For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, through many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”*

Members who contributed to the Engage Team in 2023: Larry Carr, Ann Cox, Abbey Downing, Sandy Fry, Duane Grabber, Greg Hammond (Chair), Karen Hammond, El Harp, Becky Kimberly, Barbara Riihimaki, Stacy Raney, John Rhine, and Michael Seltzer.

### **Stewardship**

We did not establish a separate Stewardship Committee for the 2023 stewardship campaign. To cut down on meetings, the stewardship campaign was developed and managed by the Engage Team, which included several Session members chairing several of the ministry teams.

Initially the 2023 stewardship campaign fell short of the \$300,000 goal with initial pledge commitments of \$254,763. Thanks to the commitment of four member households, a \$20,000 matching fund was created to match any additional financial commitments. With a strong response and matching funds, the 2023 Stewardship Campaign exceeded the stewardship goal with a total of \$303,393 in financial pledges and \$4,623.35 in per capita commitments.

The 2023 Commitment Cards also included an opportunity for members to share their time and talent by choosing from a list of volunteer opportunities available with the six Westminster ministry teams. We received Time and Talent Commitment Cards from 44 members who volunteered for 167 opportunities.

### **Communications**

As with the Stewardship Committee, the Communications Committee did not meet separately, but was consolidated with the Engage Team in 2023. The Engage Team continued to utilize a framework for sharing Westminster’s activities and events to the various media in our surrounding community.

Throughout November, Westminster shared the Alphabet of Gratitude from Vibrant Church Communications on its social media. We are grateful for the time and effort of Karen Hammond who set up and scheduled all the social media posts.

### **Engage Team Highlights**

- January – March 2023: A ultimately successful stewardship campaign that included a second effort matching campaign. The final result exceeded the campaign goal for the year.
- January 19, 2023: A new small group called Theology on Tap met for the first time at New Park Brewing in West Hartford to have a theological conversation led by Rev. Julie Emery. The group met for a few months before disbanding due to schedule conflicts and challenges with attendance.
- February 18, 2023: El Harp hosted the first monthly gathering of the ROMEO men’s group at his home. The group continued to meet throughout the year.
- February 26, 2023: The Engage Team hosted a special annual meeting “brunchy” coffee hour in between the worship service and the annual meeting. Thank you to Stacy Raney for organizing the event.

*(continued....)*

*(Engage Team Report continued...)*

- April 8, 2023: Westminster hosted a Community Easter Egg Hunt. The event was well received and attended by many families with young children. The event attracted a very diverse group of over 200 people. The appearance of the Easter Bunny (thank you Aiden Emery!) was a huge hit with everyone.
- April 23, 2023: Westminster hosted the first Community Conversation on Affordable Housing.
- May 13, 2023: Members gathered for the spring cleanup to provide the church grounds with some attention and care.
- June 9, 2023: The music scholars organized and performed in a Community Concert held at Westminster to benefit the Tilton Music Scholarship Fund.
- September 10, 2023: Westminster hosted a “Welcome Back” picnic lunch. Approximately 50 people attended. It was well received and enjoyed.
- September 30, 2023: Raking in the Fun Fall Festival was organized by the Westminster music scholars. The event included a live band, 3 food trucks, various vendors, a bake sale and 50/50 raffle. All the funds raised were for the Tilton Music Scholarship Fund.
- October 28, 2023: A small but productive group of members gathered for a fall clean-up of the church grounds and some apple cider and doughnuts.
- November 12, 2023: Westminster hosted a Community Conversation on Mental Health.
- Throughout the year the Engage Team continued to greet and write welcome notes to visitors and send monthly birthday cards to members. The Engage Team also started a project to review how engaged members are by looking at the involvement of each member in a small group at Westminster. Thank you to Sandy Fry and Barbara Riihimaki for gathering and organizing the small group participants and information.

## **Nominating Committee** **Larry Carr, Chair**

I wish to thank all the members of the 2023 Nominating Committee for their efforts in identifying and recruiting a new slate of leaders for the coming year. Our members included: Barbara Riihimaki, Art Riihimaki, El Harp, Eina Rieger, and Rev. Julie Emery.

The Committee embarked on our task in April, and we identified a number of candidates to approach about serving in a leadership position. The positions included session members, elders, deacons, nominating and endowment and memorial gifts committees and the finance and audit committees. The Committee considered 41 church members to fill these open positions or to extend their terms beyond 2023. Our committee members then reached out to selected members to inquire about their willingness to serve, and to acquaint them with the roles and responsibilities of the different positions. In total, there were 9 members assuming a new leadership role, and 28 who extended their terms by one or more years.

The slate of candidates that were presented and confirmed at the Annual Meeting was:

<b><u>Session</u></b>	<b><u>Term Ends</u></b>	<b><u>Nominating Committee for 2024</u></b>
Cindy Buckley	Interim through Fall 2023 (new)	Barbara Riihimaki
Craig Schramm	2024 (new)	Eliza Clevealand
Art Riihimaki	2025	Chair, Elder TBD
Peter Benner	2024 (new)	Eina Rieger, member at large
Ma'Lynn Feingold	2025 (new)	Larry Carr, member at large
Ann Osoba	2025	
Gregory Hammond	2024	<b><u>Endowment &amp; Special Gifts</u></b>
Janet Wade-Utay	2025	George Arwady           2025
Will Hoetzel	2025	El Harp                    2024
		Art Riihimaki           2025, Chair
<b><u>Deacons</u></b>		<b><u>Audit Committee</u></b>
Abbey Downing	2025	Ann Jarrett               2024
Ellen Smith	2024	Gregory Hammond      2024
Jean Summers	2025	
Nancy Dewey	2024	
Jane Sebolt	2024	
Charlotte Logan	2024	
Linda Geisler	2024	
Sandra Fry	2026 (new)	
Molly Gavin	2025	
Wanda Bender	2024	
Heather Tusch	2024 (new)	
Joanna Myers	2024 (new)	

## **Serve Team** **Tom Buckley, Elder Emeritus and Cindy Buckley, Elder**

*The Serve team provides opportunities to experience and share God's love through serving others, advocating for God's justice, and educating our congregation regarding issues of social justice and community need.*

*Guiding Scripture: Isaiah 58 and Micah 6:8 "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"*

*The Serve Team is the "mission arm" of our church, engaging in charity, mission and pursuing justice locally and beyond.*

Serve Team Deacons: Abbey Downing, Joanna Myers, Ellen Smith and Heather Tusch

Westminster continues to support a variety of community-based organizations. The following received financial assistance in 2023: Foodshare, Loaves and Fishes, Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), Interval House, My Sister's Place, Prudence Crandall Center for Women, Habitat for Humanity, HANOC (Hillcrest Area Neighborhood Outreach Center (HANOC)), Hands on Hartford, More Light Presbyterians, Forge City Works and Eats on the Street.

Other organizations that were supported financially as well as with time and talent include: GHIAA (Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance): Tom Buckley is one of the GHIAA leadership team who serves as liaison with GHIAA. In addition to financial support, Westminster was active in the legislative process addressing low-income housing with a bill entitled "Fair Share" as well as the "Husky 4 immigrants" coalition, which successfully raised to age 15 health insurance for undocumented immigrants. Other GHIAA initiatives in 2023 were in the areas of education, gun violence and environmental justice.

Covenant to Care: Thanks to the great work by Ellen Smith, Deacon liaison, with social worker Nadia Pelaez, in addition to the financial assistance in the form of gift cards, seven back packs with school supplies, eight Thanksgiving baskets (which also included \$50 gift cards to Walmart for food or other needed items) and Christmas gifts for 15 children were provided.

South Park Inn (SPI): Abbey Downing is the Deacon liaison. In addition to the financial assistance, we continue to prepare and serve a hot meal once per month. Also, in response to a request from SPI we provided personal clothing items such as socks, tee shirts and underwear and 24 gift cards at Christmas for the Magi gifts with a total value of \$350. Many of the SPI guests expressed their gratitude for the cards. The thank you note we received praised Westminster for **35 years** of kindness and generosity from Westminster.

Jessie's Garden: Funds were provided to church member Ann Cox to purchase garden supplies and plants. In addition, many person-hours of garden time and talent resulted in a bountiful harvest that provided beans, tomatoes, herbs, eggplant, and peppers. All produce was donated to Loaves and Fishes in Hartford which provides meals daily to the food insecure.

West Hartford Food Pantry: Although we do not provide financial assistance, we continue to accept and deliver (via Abbey Downing) donations of nonperishable foods.

The total of Westminster's financial support for these community-based organizations was \$14,950.

*As part of Westminster's Community Hub, other social justice activities included a community conversation on housing held in April which attracted 40 attendees, and a community conversation on mental health held in November that had 50 attendees (see the Community Hub report on the next page for more details).*



## Westminster Community Hub 2023 Annual Report

The Westminster Community Hub Task Force consists of Peter Benner, Larry Carr, Julie Emery, Molly Gavin, Greg Hammond, Merrill Hoelzel, Cindy Buckley, Laura Opsahl, Tori Seitz, Vanessa Seitz, Diane Smith, Janet Wade-Utay and Tom Buckley (chair)

The Westminster Community Hub Task Force was formed in August 2023 for the purpose of organizing, coordinating, and brainstorming the activities of the Community Hub. The Hub was conceived by the Session in January 2023 as the outcome of its “proximate purpose”. This was defined as: ***Westminster will become a community hub focusing on mental health, food insecurity, and affordable housing. The role of the Westminster community hub will be to welcome, coordinate and build relationships to address concerns and needs in our community.***

The Hub Task Force delineated how best to use the grants received specifically for the development of the community hub, primarily focusing on mental health. WPC received a total of \$15,500 from the Synod Innovation Grant and the PCUSA Mental Health Ministry Grant. The Task Force focused on the goal of providing 2-4 community conversations per year. They also discussed how to create podcasts from these community conversations to increase the reach of discussion within the community. In addition to planning specific community conversations, the Task Force discussed how and who to partner with in these discussions and more broadly with our community hub activities.

Before the Task Force was officially formulated, a smaller group of people worked with GHIAA and our Serve partner Hands on Hartford to present a community conversation on housing in April. This event focused on homelessness and affordable housing; and created an action item for attendees to provide advocacy for the “Fair Share” housing legislation that was being supported by all the GHIAA faith-based organizations. The event had 40 attendees and included a speaker from the Hands on Hartford “Faces of Homelessness” speaker bureau, a speaker from Open Communities Alliance, and a free dinner open to the public.

The community hub task force used this April housing program as a template to plan the November 2023 community conversation on mental health. This program had 50 attendees and featured a mental health overview presentation by Tom Burr, director of the CT chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), a panel discussion and dinner. We also had a comprehensive display of materials from the West Hartford/Bloomfield Health District.

A subgroup of the community hub task force and the Session explored options on how our kitchen may need to be upgraded for commercial use. They reached out to experts on kitchen design and needs assessment people on what gaps may be in our community for food production and/or commercial kitchen space. That group will work with the Session to determine next steps on how or if the commercial kitchen options make sense for the goals of the community hub.

As 2023 ended and 2024 began the community hub task force worked on future programming for the early part of 2024, and how the community hub should focus their role moving forward, including the potential hiring of a community hub coordinator. Discussions were held on presenting three more mental health programs and dates were finalized. The Mental Health First Aid Training Program will be February 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Naloxone training program (for opioid addiction) will be April 21<sup>st</sup>, and the QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) program for suicide awareness will be May 19<sup>th</sup>. Future discussion for the task force will focus on the role of the community hub in the community and what partners should be included. Criteria for hiring a hub coordinator will be developed, in addition to building our partnerships with the West Hartford/Bloomfield Health District, and other faith organizations to assess their mental health gaps and needs. One potential goal would be that Westminster could be a leader in developing a network of faith organizations helping each other with the mental health challenges and opportunities in our community.

## **Care Team** **Ann Osoba, Elder**

*The Care Team seeks to be a caring presence in the lives of our members through nourishing the body and soul by bringing “Living Proof of a Loving God” to our members through one-on-one ministries of visitation, prayer, phone calls, meals, flowers, notes, and other avenues of caring. We seek to show each member of Westminster that they are loved, remembered, prayed for, thanked, and supported.*

*Guiding Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12 & 26 “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”*

Deacons: Nancy Dewey, Molly Gavin, Linda Geisler and Jean Summers  
Care Team Member: Nicole Aronson and Laura Opsahl

The Care Team continued its ministries of support and care in 2023. Our team of supportive volunteers in 2023 continued reaching out to our church members via in-person visits, phone calls, emails, notes, and meals.

The Care Team hosted one memorial service reception with worship service assistance, reception set up, assisting the family and guests during the reception and clean-up of the used spaces. The team also offered worship service assistance for one other on-site memorial service. The family gathered for a reception off site at a local establishment.

The Care Team has collaborated with the Worship Team to assist/support and engage with the online community on Sundays during Worship. “After Church Chat” was developed (an online Sunday morning coffee hour) to provide a space for social interaction among the online church members.

Under the wonderful leadership/direction of one of our well-known church members, El Harp, and his dedicated Romeo group members, they provided several delicious Sunday morning coffee hours for the church members who attend in person on Sundays. It has been wonderful working with this wonderful group!

Future plans for the Care Team include continuing Sunday morning coffee hour in 2024 held once a month. The hope is that a few people can come together each month to host. Pick a creative name for yourselves and host a coffee hour. Care Team members are also seeking individuals who are interested in knitting or wanting to learn to knit by gathering together after church in person and/or online to make prayer shawls or to make no sew blankets.

Discussion continues to be centered around on ways to support/care for our Westminster’s congregation from the young to the very “experienced” and all ages and stages in between.

Thank you, God, for all the volunteers who were part of our caring ministries this past year in 2023.

## **Memorial & Meditation Garden El Harp, Chair**

Committee members: George Dewey, El Harp, Art Riihimaki, John Rhine and Karen Wagner.

The Memorial and Meditation Garden was dedicated in 1986 and continues to be a resting place for the ashes of our members and friends. The location and landscaping provide a special place for reflection and thanksgiving for the lives of those remembered.

This past year, Inez Senger (May 15, 2023), Bernita Sundquist (November 17, 2020), Ralph Sundquist (September 22, 2022) and Flora Duncan (June 9, 2023), joined other members and friends in the Garden. We also mourned the deaths of beloved Westminster members and friends including Peter Cruikshank (January 17, 2023) and Sally West (August 6, 2023).

Each spring on the Sunday before Memorial Day, following our church service, a special service is held in the Garden as a reflection of the love and care from their families and friends. We welcome all to the service.

At the publication of this annual report, we mourn the loss of El Harp (February 2, 2024), a long-time chair of the Memorial & Meditation Garden Committee and a dedicated, passionate steward of the garden and all who resided there. El joined his friends in the garden on February 18, 2024.

## **Sustain Team**

*The Sustain Team supports Westminster's congregation and leadership teams by coordinating, managing, and leading Westminster's facilities, employee support, and finances for today's and tomorrow's needs.*

*Guiding Scripture: Matthew 6:2-4, 19-21 "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*

Leadership: Elder Craig Schramm (Buildings & Grounds) and Elder Art Riihimaki (Finance)

Buildings & Grounds Committee: John Rhine, Scott Brown, El Harp and Alan Zapata

### **Building and Grounds Committee Craig Schramm, Elder**

Our Team continues to be charged with maintaining the buildings and grounds of Westminster, arranging our facility for special events, and coordinating the rentals of our property. As usual, we have mixed blessings to report for 2023.

We are truly blessed with wonderful facilities at Westminster, but we continue to be challenged with the care and upkeep of aging infrastructure, particularly in terms of our roof and heating system. We had a radiator pipe burst early in the year, flooding the Bell Room and damaging the bells. Fortunately, our insurance policy covered the bell refurbishing as well as the vast majority of repairs and upgrades to the Bell Room. We used the repairs as an opportunity to install insulation along the west exterior wall, drywall over the cinder block walls, install a new floor, and finish with a fresh coat of paint. We anticipate that the new room will be attractive to potential renters of the space. We have addressed additional, though fortunately less consequential, heating issues this winter, and we hope that no new problems will arise this season.

Our 20-25 year-old roofs are also showing their age. We have had some minor water leakage for some time, but the leak trickles have become more cascades in the last two months. Repairs are underway, involving replacing caulking, resealing patches, repairing masonry issues, and placing metal caps over the chimney and stone trim. Fortunately, our roofing contractors feel that the basic structure of the flat and pitched roofs remains functional at this time, but it is anticipated that we will need roof replacement in the next 5-10 years.

In both the spring and fall, the Engage team hosted two church cleanup days, which greatly contributed to grounds maintenance. We did some much-needed tree work, under the generosity of the Roosa grant. In addition, the Scouts did their usual thorough job in clearing leaves from the property this fall. We repaved some deteriorating areas in the parking lot. We continued our contract with Excel Cleaning Services, to help with church building clean up on Tuesdays and Fridays.

We have gotten more active in promoting Westminster for rental groups. We welcomed back previous renters this year, including the Old Guard, the Musical Club of Hartford, YMCA and Bloodline Sports basketball, 45+ women's exercise, AA, Al-Anon, Overeaters Anonymous, and Scouting Troop 163. We met the music group Cuatro Puntos, who presented a music event, and the Bengali group Hoichoi, who held the celebration of their Durga Puja festival in our facility. We made plans to introduce pickleball to our activities, under the sponsorship of the YMCA.

We were able to keep expenses close to our 2023 budget, exceeding it somewhat because of higher-than-expected increases in utility costs. In 2024, we will be tested by continued increases in both electricity and natural gas, as well as the planned roof work. We hope to mitigate some of these expenses by increased rental use of our facility.

We would like to thank our Sexton, Mike McElroy, for helping to coordinate all of these issues and for his willingness to respond to urgent needs even on weekends. We also acknowledge our Team members, Scott Brown, El Harp, and Alan Zapata, for their advice and assistance when needed. Lastly, we thank John Rhine, former Elder Chair and now functioning Co-Chair/Co-Sexton, for both his former leadership and current hands-on support for Mike on many projects. Anyone interested in joining our intrepid band should contact our current Elder Chair, Craig Schramm.

## **Ministerial Relations and Personnel (MR&P)** **Janet Wade-Utay, Chair**

Committee: Janet Wade-Utay, Chair, Russ Cormier, Molly Gavin, John Rhine, Craig Schramm, and Rev. Julie Emery

The Ministerial Relations & Personnel (MR&P) Team works closely with WPC's pastor and staff throughout the year.

Our work in 2023 focused in several areas

- **Revision of Employee Handbook** – The last revision of the employee policies and procedures manual was in 2013. Since that time many new federal and state laws have placed additional responsibilities on employers, including religious organizations. In addition new PCUSA policies have been implemented that require churches to take action. Session approved an MR&P recommendation to contract with the Human Resources Team of Accounting Resources Inc (ARI) to draft an update to the new manual. The policy manual has been renamed the Employee Handbook and was released in September 2023 with staff training in November. In 2024, the MR&P team will need to develop procedures for some of the new handbook requirements. We offer special thanks to Pam Rekow and Janet Wade-Utay for serving on the employee handbook team.
- **Bookkeeper Search** – After almost two years working with an outside accounting firm, ARI, the Finance team with MR&P recommended that the Session bring the bookkeeping function back in-house. MR&P and the Finance Team partnered to form a bookkeeper search team. The team began work in June that culminated in the hiring of Eric Ouellette as our new bookkeeper on September 1, 2023. We offer special thanks to Cindy Brown, Molly Gavin, Greg Hammond, Laura Opsahl, Art Riihimaki, Pam Torsiello, and Janet Wade-Utay for supporting bookkeeper search team throughout the summer. Additional thanks to Cindy Brown for providing training, answering questions and continuing to research information with Eric to make the transition from ARI and the onboarding process as smooth as possible.
- **Employee benefits/ Health Plan Offering** – MR&P continued to look at employee benefits offered both by the Presbyterian Board of Pensions (BOP) and through Advanced Benefit Strategies to offer the best possible benefits to our staff. In 2024, the BOP has extended the availability of the Retirement Savings Plan, Vision eyewear, and dental plans to all employees working for Presbyterian churches regardless of hours worked. These new benefits allow participating employees to benefit from a larger group plan to keep health costs lower and also to save for retirement. The benefits added in 2023 will continue as options for employees in 2024.

MR&P prepared the staff budget and proposed Pastor Terms of Call. Due to the on-going budget concerns at Westminster and with deep regrets, MR&P proposed a 0% cost of living increase and reducing the Director of Faith formation role to a 12 hour position.

At the beginning of 2023, we thanked Pam Rekow for her years of dedicated service to Westminster as MR&P chair. We also said thanks to John Rhine for his support of MR&P as his time on Session ended in June. We welcomed Molly Gavin and Craig Schramm to MR&P and are grateful for their service.

## **Endowment and Memorial Gifts Funds Committee**

Members: Sarah Ambrosino, George Arwady, George Dewey, Duane Grabber, El Harp and Art Riihimaki

The committee invited Rev. Dr. Rose Eileen Niles, who is the Ministry Relations Officer for the Northeast Region for The Presbyterian Foundation, to speak at our October worship service and meet with us after the service. At that meeting, she described and passed out several pamphlets that outlined what the Foundation offers and how to encourage people to donate through wills and other methods. A small group of 5-6 people attended that meeting.

The committee also met later to discuss what we should be doing in the coming year. The committee expects to be much more active in 2024.

Finally, we remember El Harp who served for many years on this committee. His leadership will be missed.

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation  
Westminster Presbyterian Church  
February 26, 2023**

Moderator Julie Emery called the meeting to order at 11:20am with an opening prayer.

Moderator Julie Emery declared that there was a quorum of at least 25. Actual attendance was 38. The Clerk read the call for the meeting. Notice had been given on at least two preceding Sundays.

The congregation **VOTED** to approve the agenda.

The congregation **VOTED** to approve the consensus motion, including receiving: the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation of February 27, 2022; the minutes of the Congregational Meeting of June 19, 2022; the statistical report of the membership; the Pastor Report from Rev. Julie Emery; the Minister of Music Report from Callie Boone; the Director of Faith Formation Report from Karen Hammond; and the Clerk of Session Report.

Moderator Julie Emery invited each Elder chairing a ministry team to present their team’s highlights.

Moderator Julie Emery invited Treasurer Kevin Morrison to present on behalf of the finance team, including an overview of 2022 Year End Financials and the 2023 Operating Budget. Kevin provided a presentation of the information, and he and Art Riihimaki, Elder for Finance, answered questions from the membership.

It was **MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED** to receive the 2022 budget.

The Chair of the Ministerial Relations and Personnel Committee, Janet Wade-Utay, for the Session, presented the Pastor/Head of Staff’s terms of call for 2023.

It was **MOVED** and **VOTED** by a secret ballot vote using the Zoom Polling feature with 29 in favor, 4 against, and 5 abstentions.

The Pastor’s terms of call for 2023 as voted are:

**Proposed Pastor Compensation for 2023**

Cash Compensation	\$72,466.92
Housing Allowance (actual to be set by Senior Pastor)	30,000.00
Effective Salary	\$102,466.92
Medical (29% of effective salary)*	29,715.41
Pension (8.5% of effective salary)	8,709.69
Death & Disability (1.5% of effective salary)	1,537.00
Medical Deductible (1.5% of effective salary)	1,537.00
Dental PPO (Actual cost est. 1.8% effective salary)	1,844.40

*(continued...)*

(Annual Meeting of the Congregation minutes continued...)

Social Security - Employer (7.65% of effective salary)	7,638.72
Retirement Match	1,537.00
Vouchered Expenses:	
Business Expense Allowance	3,000.00
Education Allowance	3,000.00
<b>Total Compensation</b>	<b>\$161,188.14</b>

Number of working units per week   13  

Weeks of annual vacation   5  

Additional Sunday leave   1  

Weeks of annual study leave   2  

Number of paid holidays  10 

After completing 6 years of service, the Pastor is entitled to a sabbatical of 3 months.

It was **MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED** to recess the Annual Meeting of the Congregation at 12:20pm to convene the Annual Meeting of the Corporation.

Following the Meeting of the Corporation, the Annual Meeting of the Congregation reconvened at 12:26pm.

There was no Other Business brought before the congregation.

Moderator Julie Emery closed the meeting at 12:28pm with prayer. It was **MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED** to adjourn at 12:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Will Hoelzel  
Clerk

The Reverend Julie Emery,  
Moderator



*(Annual Meeting of the Congregation minutes continued...)*

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Corporation  
Westminster Presbyterian Church  
West Hartford, CT  
February 26, 2022**

Moderator Julie Emery called the Meeting of the Corporation to order at 12:21pm.

It was **MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED** to elect Art Riihimaki as president pro-temp of the corporation.

It was **MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED** to approve the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Corporation of February 26, 2021.

No other business was brought before the Corporation.

It was **MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED** to adjourn with prayer.

Moderator Julie Emery led a prayer in recognition of the following members and friends of the congregation who joined the Church Triumphant in 2021: Rhoda Bannon, John Berman, Ruth Curtis, Jim Elsner, June Johnson, Ralph Sundquist and Howard West.

The meeting was closed at 12:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Wade-Utay  
Clerk Pro-Temp

**Minutes of the Called Meeting of the Congregation  
Westminster Presbyterian Church  
June 26, 2023**

Moderator Julie Emery called the meeting to order at 11:15am with prayer.  
A quorum was present. There were 25 members in attendance, including on-line participation.

The Session has called this congregational meeting for the purpose of amending its bylaws and electing new officers. The call for the meeting was published on two Sundays: June 12 and 19, 2023. The call was read by the Moderator Julie Emery and then it was **MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED to approve the agenda.**

Moderator Emery said Session had submitted a motion to amend the WPC bylaws to reduce the number of Elders from 12 to nine in light of the reduced total membership of the congregation. **It was MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED to approve the change.**

Elder Larry Carr proposed the following slate of **Ruling Elders** to be elected

Cindy Buckley (Serve Ministry) -- Fall 2023 (interim)  
Craig Schramm (Sustain Ministry) -- 2024  
Peter Benner (Flourish Ministry) -- 2024  
Ma'Lynn Feingold (Worship Ministry) -- 2025  
Ann Osoba (Care Ministry) -- Extended thru 2025  
William Hoelzel (Clerk) -- Extended thru 2025

Moderator Emery asked if there were any nominations from the floor for Ruling Elders. Hearing none, the Moderator called for a vote. **It was VOTED to elect the slate of Ruling Elders as proposed.**

Elder Carr proposed the following slate of **Deacons** to be elected.

Heather Tusch (Serve Team) -- 2024  
Joanna Myers (Serve Team) -- Extended thru 2024  
Erin Doucette (Flourish Team) -- 2026  
Wanda Bender (Worship Team) -- Extended thru 2024  
Jean Summers (Care Team) -- Extended thru 2025  
Charlotte Logan (Care Team) -- Extended thru 2024  
Linda Geisler (Care Team) -- Extended thru 2024  
Sandra Fry (Engage Team) --2026

Moderator Emery asked if there were any nominations from the floor for Deacon. Hearing none, the Moderator called for a vote. **It was VOTED to elect the slate of Deacons as proposed.**

## **Finance Committee Report For Year Ended December 31, 2023**

The Finance Committee is responsible for overseeing the financial functions of the church with the various members responsible for different functions including bookkeeping, financial reporting and controls, treasury functions and budget development. The members of the committee are Art Riihimaki, Julie Emery, Kevin Morrison, Liz Doering, and Eric Ouellette.

Our Endowment Funds and some restricted funds are invested with Charles Schwab and New Covenant Trust Company. Art Riihimaki and Eric Ouellette are signers on the Schwab Funds and Kevin Morrison and Eric Ouellette are signers on the New Covenant Funds. The Endowment Committee is responsible for overseeing the funds.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our counters who work in teams to ensure all contributions are recorded properly and deposited weekly: Art Riihimaki (team leader), George Dewey, Jean Summers, Liz Doering, Liza Cleaveland, Sandy Fry, and Rick Thibodeau.

During the year, we hired Eric Ouellette as our new bookkeeper. He has been working diligently to correct some errors we found in assigning expenses to the correct categories and in developing the financial reports to be clearer. Many thanks to Janet Wade-Utay who directed our search.

We also thank Cyndi Brown and Pam Torsiello who have stepped away for our team during the past year.

### Financial Highlights for 2023:

Presented for the congregation are an Operating Statement, Balance Sheet and Restricted Fund Balances. Accounts and activity have been consolidated where appropriate for ease of review. A detailed listing of Other Restricted Funds is included with the financial statements.

Operations for 2023 resulted in a deficit of \$96,519 compared to a budgeted deficit of \$52,012 and a 2022 deficit of \$42,930.

Revenue for 2023 was \$447,028 including \$53,090 in transfers from endowment funds. This was \$51,912 less than budgeted primarily due to a shortfall in public/private grants of \$70,000 offset by higher special gifts of \$18,846. Revenue for 2022 was \$447,485.

Disbursements for the year totaled \$543,547 which was approximately equal to the budget, but \$53,132 higher than 2022. The main reasons for the increase from 2022 were higher buildings and grounds costs of \$5,259, higher office expenses of \$6,189 due to added ARI fees and higher staff expenses from additional staff and costs of updating the employee manual.

During 2023, the permitted amounts from housing and investment funds were transferred to operations and the costs of the music scholars covered by transfers from the Endowment and Willard funds.

Receipts from restricted funds exceeded restricted fund disbursements by \$47,323 which increased cash balances. Investment activity resulted in a gain of \$116,305.

Respectfully submitted,

Art Riihimaki  
Kevin Morrison

## Comparative Operating Statement - Actual and Budget For the Year Ended December 31, 2023 and 2022

	12/31/2023	12/31/2022	Change from 12/31/2022 Fav/(Unfav)	Annual Budget 12/31/2023	Change from Budget Fav/(Unfav)
<b><u>Receipts:</u></b>					
Pledged Contributions	290,702	294,396	(3,694)	300,000	(9,298)
Plate Offerings	1,830	2,034	(204)	1,800	30
Per Capita Contributions	5,930	5,591	339	5,400	530
Building Use	36,628	25,275	11,353	30,000	6,628
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>335,090</b>	<b>327,297</b>	<b>7,794</b>	<b>337,200</b>	<b>(2,110)</b>
<b><u>Gifts:</u></b>					
Pandemic Grants and Credits	-	28,725	(28,725)	85,000	(85,000)
Public-Private Grant	15,000	6,500	8,500	-	15,000
Special Gifts	43,848	38,305	5,542	25,000	18,848
	<b>58,848</b>	<b>73,530</b>	<b>(14,683)</b>	<b>110,000</b>	<b>(51,152)</b>
<b>Investment Income</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>(3,000)</b>
<b><u>Transfers and Loans:</u></b>					
Transfer from Investments	22,800	26,552	(3,752)	22,800	-
Transfer from Manse Housing Fund	16,640	20,106	(3,466)	16,640	-
Transfer from Tilton Music Fund	4,550		4,550	4,100	450
Transfer from Endowments	9,100		9,100	8,200	900
<b>Total Fund Transfers</b>	<b>53,090</b>	<b>46,658</b>	<b>6,432</b>	<b>51,740</b>	<b>1,350</b>
<b>Restricted Income</b>	<b>123,495</b>		<b>123,495</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>123,495</b>
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>570,523</b>	<b>447,485</b>	<b>123,038</b>	<b>501,940</b>	<b>68,583</b>
<b><u>Disbursements:</u></b>					
Worship	12,914	3,654	9,260	\$ 16,350	\$ (3,436)
Flourish	3,854	1,605	2,250	2,800	1,054
Serve	26,508	25,754	754	27,840	(1,332)
Care	243	(99)	342	520	(277)
Engage	879	1,886	(1,007)	2,380	(1,501)
Sustain (Office Expense)	42,500	53,344	(10,844)	44,442	(1,942)
Sustain (Church Building)	93,143	69,869	23,274	97,929	(4,786)
Staff Expenses	363,506	334,401	29,105	358,691	4,815
<b>Total Ministry Programs</b>	<b>543,548</b>	<b>490,415</b>	<b>53,133</b>	<b>550,952</b>	<b>(7,404)</b>
<b>Purchased Equipment</b>		1,993	(1,993)	-	-
<b>Restricted Expenses</b>	76,172	2,200	73,972	-	76,172
	<b>76,172</b>	<b>4,193</b>	<b>71,979</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>76,172</b>
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>619,720</b>	<b>494,608</b>	<b>125,112</b>	<b>550,952</b>	<b>68,768</b>
<b>Net Operating Revenue</b>	<b>(49,197)</b>	<b>(47,123)</b>	<b>(2,074)</b>	<b>(49,012)</b>	<b>(185)</b>

## Comparative Balance Sheet December 31, 2023 and December 31, 2022

	As of 12/31/2023	As of 12/31/2022	Change From 12/31/2022
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b><u>Cash &amp; Cash Equivalents</u></b>			
Webster Bank Checking	30,762.37	10,100.94	20,661.43
<b>Total Bank Accounts</b>	<b>30,762.37</b>	<b>10,100.94</b>	<b>20,661.43</b>
<b><u>Charles Schwab</u></b>			
Charles Schwab General Account	67,083.96	61,056.79	6,027.17
Unrealized Gain (Loss)	-	58,631.75	(58,631.75)
Charles Schwab Housing Account	284,813.39	270,892.65	13,920.74
Schwab-Memorial Garden Fund	12,614.47	11,245.60	1,368.87
Schwab-Scoville Differently Able Fund	8,739.76	7,810.29	929.47
Schwab-Scoville Scholarship Fund	8,604.92	7,694.05	910.87
Schwab-Todd R. Tilton Music Scholarship Fund	1,037.20	14,145.93	(13,108.73)
<b>Total Charles Schwab</b>	<b>382,893.70</b>	<b>431,477.06</b>	<b>(48,583.36)</b>
<b><u>New Covenant Trust Company</u></b>			
L&R Allen and E Willard Fund	184,676.98	171,971.08	12,705.90
L Senger Christian Ed Leadership Fund	60,933.71	53,272.56	7,661.15
Westminster Endowment Fund	200,375.88	189,193.55	11,182.33
Murray-Heilig Family Fund	94,309.36		94,309.36
<b>Total New Covenant Trust Company</b>	<b>540,295.93</b>	<b>414,437.19</b>	<b>125,858.74</b>
<b><u>Accounts Receivable</u></b>			
Deposit Receivable	1,450.00	1,450.00	-
Loans Receivable: Senior Minister	9,969.32	13,509.56	(3,540.24)
<b>Total Accounts Receivable</b>	<b>11,419.32</b>	<b>14,959.56</b>	<b>(3,540.24)</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>965,371.32</b>	<b>870,974.75</b>	<b>94,396.57</b>

*(continued...)*

(Comparative Balance Sheet continued...)

**LIABILITIES AND EQUITY**

**Liabilities**

<b>Total Other Current Liabilities</b>	<b>(1,618.54)</b>	<b>1,967.32</b>	<b>(3,585.86)</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>(1,618.54)</b>	<b>2,257.32</b>	<b>(3,875.86)</b>

**Equity**

**Endowment & Memorial Gift Funds**

<b>Memorial Garden Fund</b>	12,614.47	15,915.05	(3,300.58)
<b>L&amp;R Allen and E Willard Endowment Fund</b>	184,676.98	148,139.23	36,537.75
<b>Westminster Endowment Fund</b>	200,375.88	140,104.00	60,271.88
<b>L Senger Christian Ed Leadership Fund</b>	60,933.71	49,253.15	11,680.56
<b>Todd R Tilton Music Scholarship Fund</b>	1,037.20	5,415.43	(4,378.23)
<b>Murray-Heilig Family Fund</b>	94,309.36		94,309.36
<b>Scoville Scholarship Fund</b>	8,604.92	7,627.19	977.73
<b>Scoville Differently Able Fund</b>	8,739.76	7,877.15	862.61
<b>Manse Housing Fund</b>	284,813.39	279,631.70	5,181.69
<b>Total Endowment &amp; Memorial Gift Funds</b>	<b>856,105.67</b>	<b>653,962.90</b>	<b>202,142.77</b>

**Restricted Funds**

<b>Total Restricted Funds</b>	<b>136,582.25</b>	<b>102,244.77</b>	<b>34,337.48</b>
<b>Total Special Offerings</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>747.50</b>	<b>(747.50)</b>

**Unrestricted Funds**

<b>Net Operating Fund</b>	(151,438.35)	100,253.13	(251,691.48)
<b>Allowance for Gains (Losses)</b>	58,631.75	58,631.75	-
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	67,108.54	(47,122.62)	114,231.16
<b>Total Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>(25,698.06)</b>	<b>111,762.26</b>	<b>(137,460.32)</b>

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY**

<b>965,371.32</b>	<b>870,974.75</b>	<b>94,396.57</b>
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**Audit Committee Report**  
**Art Riihimaki, Elder and Finance Committee Chair**

In 2023, the Finance Team of Westminster Presbyterian Church discontinued its relationship with an outside accounting firm to handle the church's finances. In September 2023 an in-house bookkeeper was hired. This transition has delayed the audit report. An audit will be completed for the years 2022 and 2023 and will be made available when completed. We will continue to make sure our finances are being managed and recorded properly and clearly. Audit Committee members include Greg Hammond, Chair, and Ann Jarrett.

Respectfully submitted,

Art Riihimaki

# Westminster People 2023: A Year in Photos

## Highlights from LIFT (Living in Faith Together) Sundays





**Confirmation Retreat**



**Annual Community Easter Egg Hunt**



*(continued ...)*

Annual Community Easter Egg Hunt (continued...)



## Community Conversation on Homelessness



## Greater Hartford Interfaith Alliance (GHIAA) Lobby Day in Hartford



## Spring and Fall Clean Up



## Pentecost Sunday



## Community in Concert Fundraiser for Tilton Choral Scholars



**Music Appreciation Sunday**



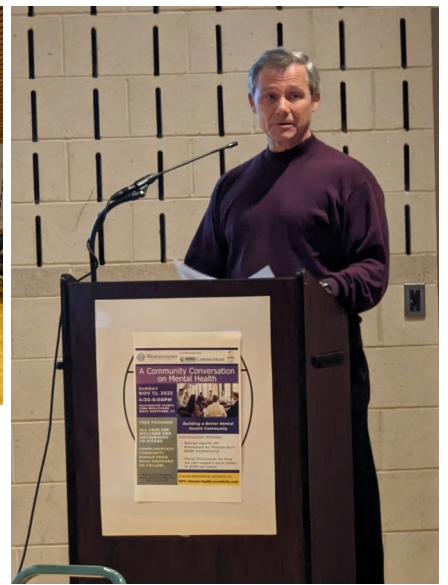
**Baptisms**



# Raking in the Fun Fall Festival



## Community Conversation on Mental Health



## Christmas Eve: Paper Bag Pageant





## Westminster Presbyterian Church Vision & Mission Statements

*Westminster is a vital, engaging, inclusive family of faith that serves God by: supporting each other on our spiritual journeys, sharing the gifts we have been given, and demonstrating the love and justice of Christ in our community and world.*

*Westminster offers living proof of a loving God.*

## Westminster Presbyterian Church Staff

The Rev. Julie Emery, Pastor/Head of Staff  
Callie Boone, Minister of Music  
Karen Hammond, Director of Faith Formation  
Becky Kimberly, Church Administrator

Mike McElroy, Church Sexton  
Eric Ouellette, Bookkeeper  
Wanda Bender, Security Coordinator

## Leadership of Westminster Presbyterian Church

### Session Elders

Peter Benner, Flourish Team  
Cindy Buckley, Serve Team  
Ma'Lynn Feingold, Worship Team  
Greg Hammond, Engage Team  
William Hoelzel, Clerk  
Ann Osoba, Care Team  
Art Riihimaki, Sustain Team (Finance)  
Craig Schramm, Sustain Team (Buildings & Grounds)  
Janet Wade-Utay, Sustain Team (Ministerial Relations & Personnel Committee )

### Deacons

Wanda Bender  
Sandra Fry  
Nancy Dewey  
Abbey Downing  
Molly Gavin  
Charlotte Logan  
Joanna Myers  
Jane Sebolt  
Ellen Smith  
Jean Summers