

Barre Congregational Church



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POSITION POSTING

Barre Congregational Church

35 Church Street, Barre, VT 05641 <https://barrecongregational.org>

Affiliation: United Church of Christ, Vermont Conference, UCC Washington County Association #808.

UCC Conference Staff Contact: Rev. Lynn Bujnak, lbujnak@vermontucc.org

Position type and duration: Settled, full-time.

Current size of membership: ~140, with ~40-50 attending a typical worship service.

COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

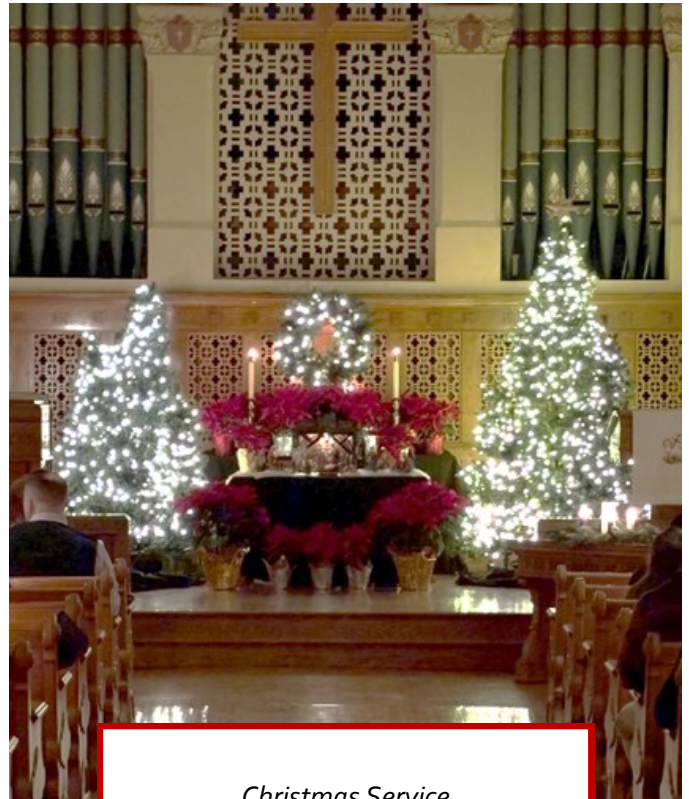
Position: Full-time, settled minister of a single church congregation.

Salary plus Benefits: We offer a total compensation package that meets conference guidelines.

Housing: The congregation does not own a parsonage, but a housing allowance will be provided. Our settled minister should plan to live near Barre so that they can play an ongoing role in the BCC church community and the surrounding community of Barre.

Scheduling expectations: Activities both in our church and in the Barre area can take place any time of the week. The minister's role will not begin and end on Sunday! Our settled minister's schedule includes four days minimum in the church office, up to one day working from home, and two designated days off per week. We recognize and encourage our minister to maintain work/life balance.

Peer and professional support: Biannual UCC Washington Association meetings, UCC Vermont Conference annual meeting (April), annual Clergy Convocation (September) and the Barre Area Clergy Association. The Vermont Conference offers trained spiritual directors, a library of print and multimedia resources, a Facebook group for clergy, a weekly electronic newsletter, and support and guidance from the Vermont Conference Minister and Associate Minister.



Christmas Service

WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINSTER WITH US?

Barre Congregational Church seeks a minister who will meet us where we are, recognize and celebrate our strengths, and help us improve our weaknesses.

We want to care for each other and the community, serve the elderly and homeless, and maintain a strong alliance with neighboring churches, while welcoming all to worship. We want a leader who empowers and guides us to become lay leaders. As such, we will share the responsibility of being the church with our minister, as we strive to do God's work in our lives and our community. We want our minister to guide and work closely with lay leadership as we continue to rebuild relationships between our congregation and neighboring churches of other denominations that were significantly weakened by COVID and various local challenges.

We value the role that our minister will play in supporting our congregation through pastoral care, preaching, prayer, study groups, and activities inside and outside the church. We recognize that this role is a balancing act to both meet the needs of the church and play an active role in the community. We wish to empower leaders within BCC to help support our new minister according to our strengths. We trust our new settled minister to discern how to apply their time, talents, strengths, and interest. We expect him or her to focus on the emerging demands of our congregation and our community while taking care of his/her personal needs.

We seek a minister who exhibits certain key foundational skills. All candidates must be:

- ♦ An inspiring speaker who energizes us to grow, change, and put our faith into action, helping us see how scriptures apply to our lives.
- ♦ An uplifting person who delivers thought-provoking messages that may tie into local or current events, giving us something to ponder during the week.
- ♦ A preacher knowledgeable in Christian Scripture, theology, and other writings related to Christianity.
- ♦ A good teacher who encourages joy and active participation during church services.

Our minister must be comfortable with all people who are marginalized or face injustice in Barre. Our church needs someone at ease with and respectful of the homeless, addicted, abused, and the poor. We welcome a pastor who is knowledgeable about their lives, challenges, and needs.

All candidates must be able to consider different points of view; manage conflict and use diplomacy; give advice in ways that the congregation, lay leaders, and staff will be able to hear and consider; accept constructive criticism without taking it personally.





COFFEE HOUR



Candidates must connect with us and help us connect with each other; communicate in a variety of ways, including the written word, the spoken word, use of technology, and other ways as needed; be at ease with people of all ages, socio-economic status, race, physical or mental condition, sexual orientation, or gender identity; and work smoothly and effectively with a group of diverse congregants who hold a wide range of political opinions ranging from progressive to traditional. All candidates should be able to embrace the role of team leader, as first among equals, and to encourage the development of leadership skills in church members.

Our new minister will be taking responsibility for the tasks listed below. However, not all tasks need to be performed by the minister personally. Some may be performed by other paid BCC staff members or lay volunteers from the BCC congregation. The minister's role will be to monitor, manage, guide, and ensure that all tasks are completed on schedule and effectively.

Worship responsibilities include preaching sermons that are engaging, practical, and theologically grounded; administering the church's sacraments; leading special worship services, such as Advent, Holy Week, Easter, etc.; and collaborating in the planning, preparation and leading of Sunday worship, with input and assistance from the Music Director, Diaconate, and other congregational committees of ministry.

Pastoral care responsibilities include working with the Partners in Pastoral Care committee to provide pastoral care to members during crisis and celebrations, and to visit and give comfort to congregants who are sick, in crisis, and/or confined; making themselves available to the congregation and the broader community for funerals and weddings; supporting and advising the leadership of faith formation currently for our adults and hopefully for our children and youth in the future.

Leadership responsibilities include encouraging, engaging, and empowering lay leaders to cultivate their talents and gifts; providing leadership as necessary to the church council and ministries; supporting faithful financial development and stewardship; organizing confirmation classes; welcoming new members; and participating in wider UCC church activities, such as conferences and association meetings.

Mission responsibilities include seeking opportunities to provide outreach for homeless and low-income individuals in need through pastoral care; identifying helpful resources/opportunities; making appropriate referrals; seeking opportunities to cooperate with other local clergy and their churches to offer joint interfaith services and to work together on mission in the community.

Our new Pastoral Relations committee was formed in June 2023 to fulfill a requirement of the church bylaws. Its purpose is to support the pastor and facilitate healthy communication between the pastor and the congregation, to advise the pastor, and to advocate for the pastor's leadership. We will strongly encourage our minister to practice intentional self-care, including spending time in personal prayer and reflection. The emotional and spiritual health of the minister is as important as that of any other member of BCC.

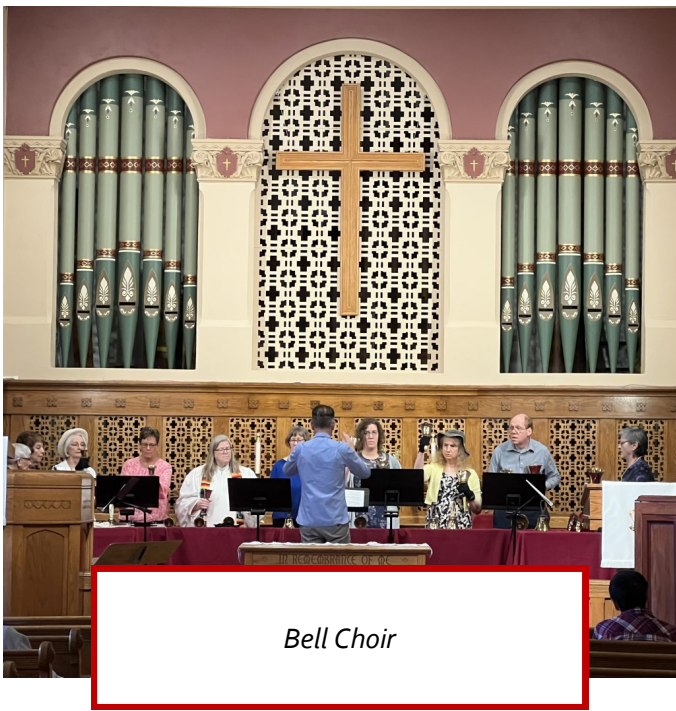
In partnership with our new minister, we will seek to serve the spiritual needs of our current members, supporting and guiding them to become strong lay leaders. Together, we plan to enthusiastically welcome anyone who seeks to belong to a vibrant and friendly church.

Our congregation represents a variety of viewpoints, and our members are a mix of traditional, conservative and progressive people who try to listen and respect each other's views. Although we may hold differing opinions, all are welcome to participate fully and without reservation in the life, leadership, ministry and mission of this church as we seek to grow together in a community of faith. Our new minister must be comfortable working with a congregation who hold diverse opinions on many issues of the day.

The minister will lead us in discussions and decision-making to become a stronger, robust church and to rebuild our membership; communicate frequently and fully with the ministries (committees) and congregation; encourage us to make our members and visitors welcome and teaching us how to follow up with all people so they continue to feel welcome in our church family; offer faith-based experiences and opportunities; encourage us to provide opinions, ideas, and perspectives within our walls and feel it is safe to be able to speak freely.



Choir



Bell Choir

We will partner with our minister in representing BCC in the Barre community to lead us in discussions and decisions about how we could best be of service to those outside our walls; build and strengthen connections with our neighbors; offer faith-based experiences and opportunities to all; explore different ways to serve the aged, homeless, poor, and addicted; encourage us to broaden and broadcast our welcome to excluded people living on the margins of society; encourage us to provide opinions, ideas, and prospectives in the community; and initiate and participate in efforts to champion and improve the Barre community.

After a time, we will jointly review the scope of work with our new minister to determine if any adjustments are needed.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

We believe that the top four priorities for Barre Congregational Church must be:

Strengthening Sunday morning worship. We have just been through a period of neglecting our Sunday services and focusing elsewhere, which caused a sharp decline in attendance and involvement. Recently this trend has been reversed, and it is critical that we continue to build the Sunday morning bridge that holds our congregation together.

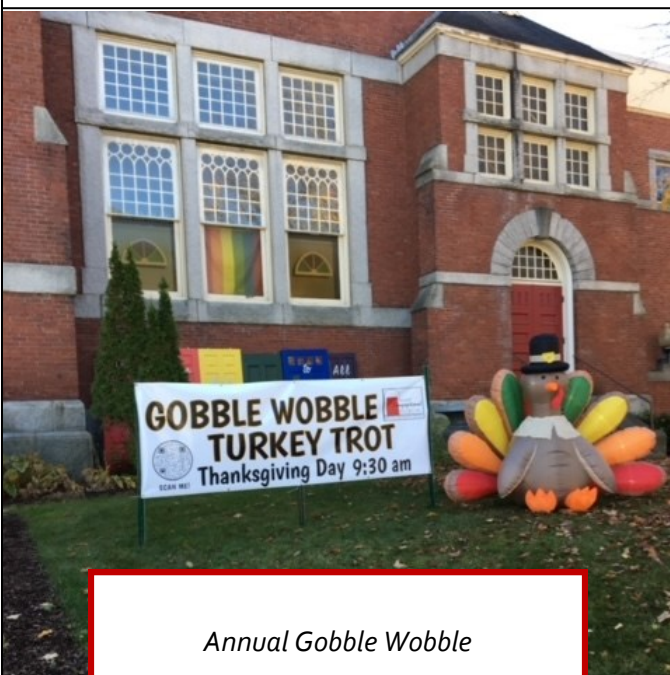
Providing pastoral care and support to BCC members in the community. With more and more of our members and former members reaching elderhood, being unable to attend services in person, and at risk of isolation as they require assistance to live, this area must receive a great deal of attention.

Growing the congregation. We hope to seek out and attract newcomers, broaden our welcome, and sustain that welcome for those who choose to become members. We will reach out to people of all ages who may benefit from our congregational community, and in turn contribute to it. To maintain the viability of our congregation in the future, we will need to expand back to at least the size we were in 2018.

Continuing our mission in the broader Vermont community. Mission and outreach have been key parts of the BCC vision for many years, and we seek to continue and strengthen that mission. At the same time, we recognize that we cannot afford to neglect the internal BCC community. Going forward, we will need to find a balance between inward-focus and outward-focus, keeping both strong so that both can continue.

Our church is ready to tackle challenges, try new approaches, and find some God-given answers to how we can “be the church” in Barre, Vermont. The search committee is committed to finding the right minister to join us and lead us on our journey into the future.

Could that be you? We hope so. We look forward to meeting you.



Annual Gobble Wobble



Green Up Day

WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

Barre Congregational Church (BCC), established in 1799 in the heart of Barre, Vermont, extends kindness to all people, believing they are created in God's image and therefore deserving of God's love, compassion, and acceptance. We welcome all individuals seeking a deeper faith and a closer walk with Jesus Christ. We celebrate and affirm the sacred worth of every person as a unique individual made in the image of God, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, or physical, cognitive, or emotional ability. We invite all to find a safe and nurturing spiritual home with us.

Our congregation has a rich history of engaging with Jesus' vision, message, and mission. In recent years, we have adopted the identity of "the church with the red doors," as three sets of double red doors adorn the front of our meetinghouse. These distinctive red doors are a constant reminder of our intentional practice of faith, both within the walls of our church and in the broader community. Crossing the threshold of these doors symbolizes the dual nature of our Christian journey: an inner journey of personal spiritual growth and an outer journey of service and engagement with the world.

Our church building, constructed in the mid-1800s, is fully accessible to all, with an elevator providing access to every level. Recently, we renovated several sections of the church, including installing an HVAC system, a new propane tank, and ceiling vents in the sanctuary. The Community Room, Lynn Carpenter Room, and Don Allen Room were all completely renovated.

Thanks to the generous donation of a longtime member, Barre Congregational Church has recently acquired a 1931 E.M. Skinner pipe organ, which is now operational and being used in worship. We eagerly anticipate the completion of the installation, which will further enhance the musical experience for our congregation and community.

BCC is an Open and Affirming (O&A) congregation.



"The Church with the Red Doors"

DEMOGRAPHICS

Our membership reflects the trends observed in both the state and the nation. Like most mainline churches, we have experienced a decline in membership over the years. During the previous interim period (2019 – 2021) the church lost members. Since 2019, few new members have joined, resulting in many current members having joined over a decade ago. Many members have been part of the church for 40-50 years.

Our congregation is an aging community, with the largest age group over 65 years old. We have a sizable endowment designated for the elderly in the congregation. Developing programs that focus on the needs of older parishioners will be an important part of the new minister's role. The majority of our members are part of joint households with no minors.

As senior citizens continue to be the largest and fastest growing age group in Barre and the wider community, there are opportunities to serve this demographic, whose needs are likely to increase in the coming decade. An important part of our new minister's role will be developing programs that focus on the needs of our older parishioners while also seeking to attract new members of all ages.

However, this also presents a challenge, as an increasing number of our congregation are over 65 and may be less physically able to volunteer and assist with various tasks. We currently lack enough younger, healthy, active adult members to accomplish all our desired goals.



Barre Congregational Church Welcomes All

OUR CHURCH LIFE

In accordance with the church bylaws accepted in 2014, the Church Council comprises the pastor, moderator, vice moderator, clerk, treasurer, and the chairpersons from the Administration, Diaconate, Faith Formation, Finance, Mission and Outreach, Property, and Worship and Arts Ministries. Various committees, teams, and groups with specific tasks, such as the Stewardship Team, the Arts Committee, the Growth and Vitality Team, and the Fellowship Group, operate within or as offshoots of these ministries.

A core mission of the church is to show love towards one another within the BCC congregation. Our Partners in Pastoral Care committee was formed in January 2024 during our interim period to reach out to members of the congregation in need by making phone calls, visits, sending cards, and providing meals to those who are ill or have experienced a death in the family. The committee currently has twelve members and has received two training sessions to develop communication skills.

To encourage social gatherings and foster fellowship and a Christian community, our deacons organize several church-wide potlucks each year and seek other opportunities for fellowship.

Our outreach programs to the local community include providing a hot meal to the homeless shelter once a week, a weekly take-out breakfast meal, and staffing and funding Laundry Love program.

BCC provides financial support to several local organizations, including the People's Health and Wellness free clinic, Circle battered women's shelter, Good Samaritan Haven homeless shelter, Hedding Food Pantry, Vermont Interfaith Action, and Enough Ministries. We support those in need by providing meals, clean clothes, and occasional financial assistance to Good Beginnings of Central Vermont. (Good Beginnings supports new parents through the challenging transitions of the immediate postpartum period with respite, companionship, and connections to community, as well as help accessing resources for breastfeeding and parenting support, postpartum depression, and basic needs.)

BCC belongs to both the Vermont Conference of UCC and the UCC Washington Association #808. We provide financial support and send delegates to the annual state conference meeting and participate in the national synod meetings by sending delegate(s) to represent our church community.



Our church provides meeting space for Cub Scout Pack #717 and for the local Alcoholics Anonymous group. We have a church liaison to work with the Scouts. BCC actively participates in two local interfaith organizations: the Barre Interfaith Group and the Barre Area Clergy Association. The Barre Interfaith Group brings together various faith communities to serve the needs of the Barre community through interfaith worship services, advocacy for low-income and disadvantaged individuals, and support for social justice causes. This group also facilitates coordination among local churches to provide direct outreach and assistance to community members experiencing poverty and homelessness. The Barre Area Clergy Association, which includes local Episcopal, Methodist, Unitarian Universalist, and Presbyterian churches, creates opportunities for interfaith events such as concerts, movie nights, worship services, a Good Friday walk, and ecumenical services.

OUR COMMUNITY

Central Vermont is a beautiful place to live. We marvel at our surrounding views of lakes, rivers, mountains, forest, rolling hills, and farmland. Nature blesses us with opportunities for outdoor recreation, including hiking, biking, canoeing, skiing, snowshoeing, gardening, and more.

As a complement to Vermont's breathtaking views, we also have a lively arts community, including dance, theater, contemporary and classical music, and the visual arts. This includes the live performances at the Barre Opera House and visual arts at Studio Place Arts in Barre.

Montpelier, the state capital, is nearby; it offers Capitol City Concerts and the Lost Nation Theater. Burlington is within an hour's drive of Barre, and where you can find the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, University of Vermont Lane Series music, St. Michael's Playhouse, and the Flynn Theater.

With the beautiful landscape forming the background over everyday lives, we live as most people do. We engage in work, carry out creative pursuits, and often serve in one civic capacity or another. Our families, friends, and neighbors keep us busy, as do community activities. Recognizing our abundance, our church community is increasingly concerned about those among us who struggle to meet their basic needs.

Vermont and Maine are the two demographically oldest states in the US. Senior citizens continue to be the largest and fastest-growing age group in the Barre community. There are opportunities to serve this group, whose needs are likely to grow in the coming decade. In 2019, 33% of local Barre families were headed by a single parent (*source: US Census*).



Downtown Barre, Vermont

The state of Vermont has an 11% poverty rate (*source: US Census*), and the rate in Barre is even higher. Much of this poverty does not represent homelessness, though that is also a significant problem in the region. Barre is primarily a blue-collar working community, though it includes a significant number of teachers, accountants, and other professionals. Most available jobs pay only moderate incomes.

Barre consists of two separate entities. The central one is Barre City; surrounding it in a ring is Barre Town. These two entities are closely connected, sharing municipal water, sewer, and school systems, but differ in many ways.

CHALLENGES

Over the past five years, BCC has faced significant challenges. Following the retirement of our long-term pastor, we had an interim pastor for two years before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. When we finally acquired a new settled pastor, the pandemic was well underway, making it difficult to establish a solid relationship.

In July 2023, the Winooski River flooded, causing record damage in Barre. The Governor of Vermont declared an emergency, and FEMA offices were established in the city. Hundreds of properties were damaged, and many businesses and homes were lost. During this time, we assisted Barre residents who experienced significant losses by contributing food, personal hygiene supplies, financial donations, and volunteering to clean flooded businesses and homes. We also established and staffed a Help Center for flood victims seeking FEMA assistance and expanded our Laundry Love program to support those affected by the flood.

Our immediate priority is to meet the needs of our existing membership, encourage inactive members to return, strengthen Sunday morning worship, and hold events that foster active engagement and fellowship among members. As part of this initiative, we will work to strengthen our music program, which was a central feature of BCC before the pandemic.



Service During COVID

A longer-term goal is to be more visible and vocal in the Barre community, sharing God's word and finding new ways to serve the elderly, poor, homeless, and single parents. To achieve this, we aim to bring back programs discontinued during COVID-19, such as Sunday School, Youth Group, community dinners, Saturday morning breakfasts, and the creation and distribution of Thanksgiving baskets to needy families in the community. By reviving these programs and initiatives, we strive to be more actively engaged in serving those in need and making a positive impact in Barre.

LAY LEADERSHIP

Last fall, members of the congregation met to brainstorm our priorities for the interim period. Based on this discussion, our Moderator made a list of tasks that needed our congregational commitment.

Members of the congregation stepped up to create a detailed calendar to track events and tasks. A team of five people bring together a new and fresh worship service every Sunday. Our new Partners in Pastoral Care team responds quickly when a congregant or a congregant's family member is near death, or facing one of life's trials. The team also calls or visits former or absent members to say hello, listen, and (if the former member agrees) welcome them back to church.

The Partners in Pastoral Care team has developed its skill with delicate conversations done with great care. The team will continue to provide care after our new settled minister arrives, and will work in partnership with the minister.

Our search committee held focus groups to listen to nearly 50 members talk about our priorities for the attributes of our new minister and what they would like for the church in the future. Those sessions required planning, execution, and most importantly, compiling and analyzing the results. As a result of these sessions, members felt heard and taken seriously about their concerns about the church and its future. We think this was another activity that helped to bring people together much more than they have been in the past few years.

We have successfully organized pulpit supply through June 2025, with both members of the congregation and outside ministers providing leadership on Sundays. Church members have expressed great delight in hearing from our own members and look forward to more. Our Music Director and office staff coordinate music and bulletin details that are new and different every week and reflect each worship leader's creation of a unique service.

Many other ministries and committees contribute to the smooth running of the BCC church.

While we know we can flourish even without a settled minister, we look forward to partnering with a future minister to jointly lead BCC into its next phase.



Vermont in Autumn

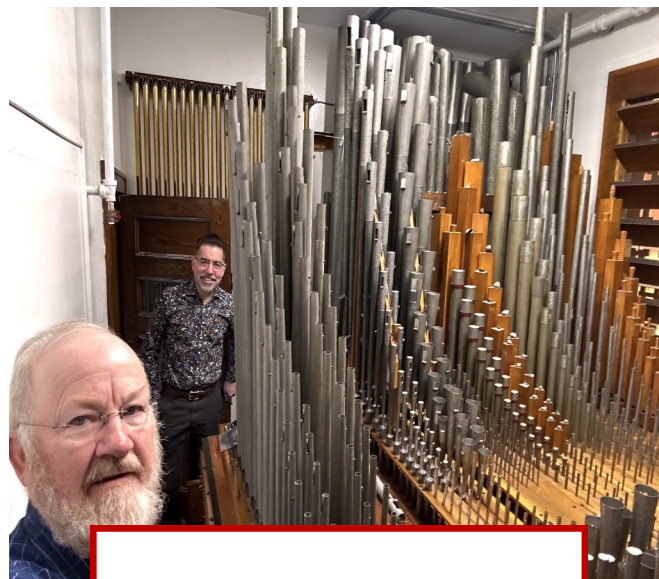
OUR WONDERFUL STAFF

Our music director and organist is **Eric Giles**. He will work closely with the minister to create cohesive and inspiring worship services.

Peggy Johnson is our building supervisor. She manages all upkeep on our large and historic building, welcomes those from the community who use our space, and keeps it spotlessly clean and inviting. She excels as a gardener.

Our office administrator is **Lydia Welch**. She is young and brings a breath of fresh air to our church. Full of new ideas for helping the BCC interact more with Barre, Lydia is more tech savvy than any of us, and can create whatever we need in terms of documents, bulletins, the weekly newsletter, an in-depth calendar, a pictorial directory, and our website.

Debbie Ziter is our bookkeeper. She runs her family business as well and still handles our complicated bookkeeping system with accuracy and grace. She is a fast learner and a team player. Eric has been with the church for 20 years. Peggy, Lydia and Debbie were hired in the fall of 2023. Each of them brings talent, commitment, creativity and positivity to their work and to the members of the BCC. Our next minister will find the staff to be supportive and willing to offer guidance as they acclimate to their new role.



Organ Installation



Our Congregation

FINANCES

Barre Congregational Church maintains a financially stable position. Our church endowments and investments demonstrate consistent average growth each year. The church modifies its budget annually through a collaborative process to accommodate new programs and initiatives. The finance ministry oversees the budgeting process, incorporating input from the minister and various ministries. The final budget is approved first by the Council and then by the congregation.

To further enhance our financial solvency, we invest a portion of the monetary gifts received by the church. The remaining donations are allocated to opportunities that allow us to serve the community effectively. This approach ensures that we maintain a solid financial foundation while actively supporting and engaging with the people of Barre.

OPERATING BUDGET FOR 2023/24

	2022 Actual	2022 Budget	2023/24 Budget
Total Income All Sources	\$341,724	\$286,936	\$273,940
Total Expenses	\$230,507	\$286,936	\$271,652

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Our congregation takes great pride in our church and recognizes our strong reputation within the community. We are dedicated to upholding this reputation and building upon it. As we navigate this pivotal moment in our history, transitioning between settled ministers, we are experiencing a resurgence of enthusiastic commitment to the church and to one another. Our congregation is open-hearted and excited about the possibilities that lie ahead.

In the process of researching and writing the church profile for our search and call process, the search committee engaged in meaningful conversations with church members, local residents, and community leaders. Through these discussions, we have gained valuable insights and are now ready to face challenges head-on, explore new approaches, and seek God-given answers to how we can effectively "be the church" in Barre, Vermont. The search committee is fully committed to finding the right minister to join us on this journey, guiding us as we move forward into a promising future together.

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

Jim West, Chair

Bonnie Finn, Vice Chair

Bonita Cortese, Pastoral Chaplain

Jan Aldrich, Secretary

Catherine James

Sally Beebe

Pam Murphy