

Bethany United Church of Christ, Montpelier, Vermont
United Church of Northfield, Northfield, Vermont

Joint Profile

April 2025

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Warm Greetings! Thank you for your interest in our profile.

We are Bethany United Church of Christ in Montpelier, Vermont and The United Church of Northfield in Northfield, Vermont. The United Church of Northfield is a federated UCC/UUA church. Established in 1808 and 1836 respectively, we are the sole UCC churches in our towns, which are located ten miles apart along a well-maintained state highway.

Like many other churches, membership decline over the past decades has given us an opportunity to consider new ways of being church, in both structure and ministry. With encouragement from the Vermont Conference UCC, our congregations have made the decision to join in calling a pastor, enabling us to provide full-time ministry, salary and benefits. Our hope is that we will not only share a pastor but will also find ways to partner in ministry to our congregations and our communities.

Naturally, there are differences between the congregations, which you will glean from the profiles. But our congregations are much more alike than different. We have a desire to not only survive but to thrive, for the sake of our congregations and our communities. We believe that however small we are, we have an important role to play in promoting peace, love and justice locally and globally. We are ready to make the changes needed to better serve all God's children and we want our new pastor to be a full partner with us as we undergo transformation.

Ideally, we would like the pastor to lead worship at both of our churches on most Sundays. At the same time, with our experience arranging for pulpit supply and having lay leaders serve on Sundays, we are open to creative configurations of the pastor's time. We will follow the Conference's guidelines for compensation (see more detail at the end of our profile), with the expectation that the pastor would live in Northfield's beautiful parsonage.

In the following pages you will find the profiles of each church, which were created by the individual search committees and approved by the individual congregations. With the release of this document, our search committees will now join to review and act upon the ministerial profiles. If you like what you learn about us, we'll be delighted to receive your profile in return!

Bethany United Church of Christ

Montpelier, Vermont

www.bethanychurchvt.org

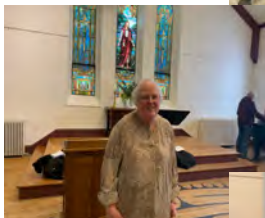


Bethany Church strives to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8). We will do justice by practicing inclusion and acceptance of others. We will practice mercy by extending care and service, locally and internationally, while continuing to walk humbly with God.

Congregation Profile

Spring 2025

Who We Are



Justice, Kindness, Humility

Bethany United Church of Christ (Bethany) in Montpelier, Vermont, a vibrant congregation deeply engaged in social justice and community service, recognizes itself to be **on the threshold of a new way of being, and seeks a minister to partner in co-creating our future.** We believe that God is still speaking and find courage in the scriptural reminders to “fear not” and focus instead on ways that we are called to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

We believe this congregation has an important role in facilitating love, peace, and justice in the world. It provides crucial spiritual and material support for its members and the larger community.

We recognize we are living in a time of profound change and are ready to explore new, socially relevant ways of pursuing peace, love, and justice in the world. We know change is a process, not an event. We embrace the ambiguity of moving forward without certainty of what the future holds. We seek a minister to journey with us as we discern *how* we will be Bethany.

- We are navigating tensions inherent in this transition. Change is hard and we feel the pain of loss of our old, familiar ways of being. We also feel pain at not adapting quickly enough to be responsive to societal and environmental changes.
- Our willingness to change is reflected in part by our willingness to move to a small-church model and partner with another congregation.
- The flood of 2023 highlighted a theme in our collective story – that we see adversity as opportunity to think about our purpose in new ways and to transform when the need arises.

Our membership (formal and otherwise) consists of a core group of committed people, some who regularly attend worship on Sunday morning, some who are engaged primarily in missions, and some active in both. This group is generous with both time and limited financial resources. Most are closer in age to retirement than elementary school, and our youth connection is largely through sponsorship of two vibrant Scouts troops.

We value our membership in the United Church of Christ and commitment to Open and Affirming. We value diversity and encourage each other to reflect deeply and ask questions as we grapple as a community with complex issues. We include both biblical and contemporary readings in worship because God is still speaking. We place no emphasis on doctrine or creed and encourage members to be open-minded and open-hearted.

We highly value music as part of our worship. Current members especially appreciate the music created with the organ, piano, and the choir in our sanctuary. We are blessed with talented musicians willing to share their diverse gifts.

Living Our Values – A few Examples

To Do Justice

When William graduated from college after years of overcoming obstacles, he and we were delighted with the accomplishment! William lives in the village of San Antonio Grande (SAG), El Salvador, which has had a sister relationship with Bethany Church for over 30 years. His family is financially poor and he would never have been able to obtain an education without help from Bethany, which raises money every year to help pay high school and college expenses for young people in SAG. During our visits to SAG, William was always on the quiet side, but at a Zoom meeting with us and twenty people from SAG, he took the lead, demonstrating confident leadership as an agricultural engineer working toward sustainable agriculture in his community! Justice happens when resources are shared to create a more equitable world.



To Love Kindness

Learning that Reg was not going to leave the hospital was a hard pill to swallow. He was a friendly, fun-loving bear-hugger we all loved dearly, and we depended on him to be our historian, Sunday bellringer, and all-around wonderful companion. Both of our temporary pastors were away when we got the news, so Bethany member Liz rose to the occasion to comfort his family and help make his memorial service arrangements. She manifested God's great mercy to everyone with broken hearts.

Joanne was calmly mediating a conflict between two guests at the community lunch, while the kitchen volunteers went back and forth delivering pans of lasagna to the servers. Bethany has provided a free lunch every Tuesday for 25 years, and with the increase in homelessness in Montpelier, many guests are experiencing tough times, which has resulted in more anti-social behaviors. At Bethany, we extend compassion and mercy to family and strangers alike. For our Bethany Bowl team, mercy is the order of the day.

To Walk Humbly with God

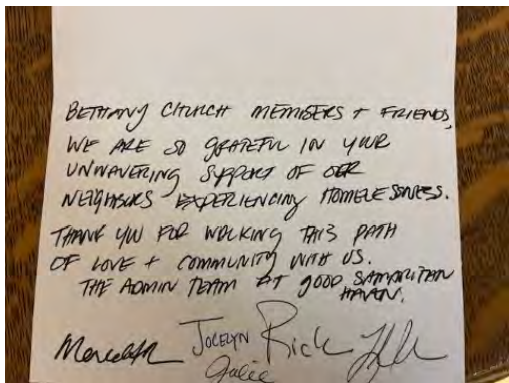
The 2025 California wildfires were horrific, and we wondered how we could help. On an ice-cold Saturday morning, volunteers met at church to assemble 100 hygiene kits, which were blessed at the next day's service and mailed to Church World Service on Monday. At the same time, the Board of Directors voted to contribute \$500 to the UCC's wildfires fund. Small contributions toward a huge problem? Yes, but we are privileged to humbly walk the way of God modeled by Jesus. We are inspired to do so not only from what the Bible tells us, but also by occasions like the following:



When Montpelier had a devastating flood in July 2023, every downtown building experienced destruction. Bethany lost its entire lower level, which held our commercial kitchen, large fellowship hall and several meeting rooms. Dozens of community volunteers descended upon us to tear down every sheet of drywall, shovel loads of mud and muck, push ruined refrigerators and freezers up narrow stairs, and so much more.

To walk humbly is to recognize our smallness, to know that we will be both givers and receivers of gifts, and to believe that when we walk with God, even small acts increase peace, love, and justice in this world.

Our History



Reflecting Back

Historically, our congregation built dynamic community both within the congregation and beyond. We gathered for worship, education, youth groups, concerts, potluck suppers, and for many years we had an annual lawn sale that attracted folx from across central Vermont. We were involved in peace and justice activism, supported One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need and other UCC ministries, and provided leadership in the Vermont Conference.

We are an Open and Affirming congregation. The ONA decision process helped us work together toward shared understanding and clearer articulation of our values. This was an important shift coming a few years after divisions in the congregation related to the departure of a previous minister. While we still sometimes struggle navigating diverse perspectives, in recent years major flooding and declining membership (parallel to state and national trends) have created context for us to re-evaluate how we are called to be a faith community and to embrace the opportunity for renewal. Recognition of the need for change began more than 10 years ago when we simplified our bylaws (to a Board of Directors and Teams model).

The location of our building in Montpelier's historic downtown district allows us to offer physical space as a resource for the community. Our church is one of the larger buildings in town, and we joined the Montpelier District Heat project in the 2010s to help make the city's transition away from fossil fuels more affordable for everyone. Prior to [catastrophic flooding in July 2023](#), various community and support groups regularly rented space from us at well-below market rates. Since the flood, our capacity to host these groups has been limited. Until about ten years ago, our church office was a contact point in the community for emergency assistance via our Deacon's Fund and access to the local food pantry.

For over twenty years, we have hosted a community meal, Bethany Bowl, every Tuesday at noon. Since summer 2023, Bethany Bowl has operated from a church building a few blocks from Bethany and now collaborates with other local congregations that provide community meals. For three years prior to the flood, our basement was used as a winter overflow shelter for members of our community who were unhoused. Although we no longer have shelter space, our connection with the local homeless shelter, Good Samaritan Haven, continues. Our mission focus also extends beyond our local context to a thirty-plus year-old sister parish relationship with the village of San Antonio Grande in El Salvador that includes friendship and support of community programs.

Snapshot of Our Congregation

Snapshot

Despite much change in recent years, our congregation continues to gather for Sunday morning worship. Attendance is typically 25-30, from approximately 45 active members. We seldom have the same group attending from week to week. Most of the active members are older – both in age and in years since joining the congregation. One family with school-age children is active in the congregation. We sponsor two scout troops. There is a core group of very committed members who wear multiple leadership “hats” and participate in most activities. Most active members with adult children notice that these children engage with organized religion primarily through service projects and attending worship on special occasions (Christmas, Easter, when visiting parents, weddings, and funerals). We are a primarily White congregation that flies a Black Lives Matter flag from the side of our building and has taped rainbow stripes across our front doors. We have gay and lesbian members. Among our active participants, two regularly participate in Association or Conference activities.



Our Congregational Covenant for the Search Process

As a congregation we covenant to walk with each other in all God’s ways during our search for a minister. In all our activities, we will be guided by the teachings of Jesus.

- We will show one another love, kindness, courtesy, patience and support.
- We will listen to really hear what others are saying to better understand and connect with one another, becoming open to expanding horizons. We will listen to discern God’s will.
- We will speak to the point, telling the truth as we see it, sharing honestly and gently in love. Our words will be thoughtful, caring, and encouraging. We will speak to each other and not about each other. We will share our thoughts and feelings to be part of the community.
- We will respect each other and the different perspectives, ideas, values, and feelings that are expressed. We will respect and be open to the differences in the traditions of Bethany and the Northfield church. We will respect the search process—the time and effort it takes and even the discomfort it may create.
- We will appreciate all the blessings we’ve been given: every person with their diverse talents and perspectives; the help, kindness and concern of others; and the time we have together. We will appreciate our history and traditions, as well as the innovations that will take us forward. We will appreciate the opportunity to partner with our neighboring church and the vulnerability we bring to the process, thankful to know that God is in charge.
- We will help one another be courageous and adaptive as we imagine and adopt new ways of being Bethany Church. When change comes hard, we will grieve together and navigate the difficulties with love. While we will seek consensus, in its absence we will encourage acceptance of majority decisions. As we help one another find peace and joy in our communal and personal lives, we will be moving forward toward our ongoing purpose of loving God in word and action.
- With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will do our best to help each other along this journey of discovering our future life together.

Worship and Education



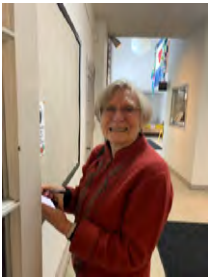
Worship

Although our services tend to be fairly traditional, we are open to different styles of worship leadership and resources. We use the New Century Hymnal; at the same time, we're happy to learn new music. We have a beautiful organ and welcome other instruments as well. Communion is monthly and not always on the first Sunday. Congregational participation is encouraged—in making announcements, passing the peace, praying, doing responsive readings, and at times during conversational-style sermons. We tend to be informal and friendly, showing care for each other and laughing easily. We greet newcomers with sincere friendliness. Since we no longer have a nursery or Sunday School, we welcome all children in the service and have rocking chairs and a children's area in the back of the sanctuary.

Education

Adult education has not been a priority for several years. This is not to say we are disinterested. We have just not had the bandwidth to offer it on a regular basis. A group called Brown Bag has been meeting for 50 or more years. Open to all, its participants tended to be older women, who read books by progressive Christian writers. The Brown Baggers certainly led the way in progressive thinking at Bethany! A much smaller group now, including women from outside the church, they still meet regularly and together read 2-3 books yearly.

Our congregation has continuously sponsored scout troops affiliated with the national Scouts BSA organization for over 50 years. We currently have two active Scouts BSA troops, one for boys and one for girls. Bethany was the first organization in Vermont to charter a girl's troop with the Scouting America. The programs focus on youth development and community service. Troop leadership has not explicitly emphasized spirituality beyond recognition that Bethany is the sponsoring organization and an invitation to help with ushering a Sunday service, most recently Palm Sunday. The scout leaders and members represent a mix of spiritual and religious traditions, and some are deeply involved in other local congregations. While the scout troops are not technically our youth group, functionally our support of local youth development is through the Scouts. Our relationship with the scouting groups is also an important way that we connect with younger families in the community. Those families are not always members of our congregation, but they feel a strong connection to Bethany. This is shown through their choice of Eagle service projects such as building a new creche or helping finish the Parlor as part of our flood recovery.



A Look at Our Community

Montpelier and Central Vermont

Montpelier is the picturesque capital city of Vermont and has a “nighttime” population of approximately 8000 people. During the day, the population can far exceed that due to government employees and others who commute for work, shopping, or cultural activities. The community is mostly peaceful as people go about their daily routines. The downtown district is still recovering from the July 2023 flooding, so some storefronts remain empty and small businesses continue to struggle.

A major challenge facing our community is housing, which is scarce and expensive. Even those with financial resources struggle, and some areas of our community are occupied by unhoused people camping outdoors. This housing challenge highlights the nature of our economic diversity: we have the extremes of wealth and poverty, with fewer in the middle than even a decade ago. High property taxes and general affordability are challenges across Vermont. Overall, the population is aging, which has increased the economic challenges related to providing equitable and inclusive education for our youth and social services for seniors. Our city welcomes new Americans who enrich the cultural diversity of our primarily White region. As noted above, Bethany has been working in the community to address some of these challenges through making our building available for community groups, community meals, and emergency shelter.

We collaborate with other congregations in the following ways: coordinating efforts to provide meals to all in need; meeting to address the crisis of people unhoused; joining voices for special musical programs; sharing worship space as needed; attending events promoting justice and peace.

Non-Member Contacts

Bethany has a reputation for being community-minded and active in both justice and charitable ministries. This reputation was earned from decades of bustling activity. The names of three non-members who could be contacted and asked about their perspective on our church are listed below. Contact information will be to pastoral candidates during the search process.

- Beth Merrill
- Rev. Marjorie MacNeill
- Dan Currier



Supporting Our Ministry

Financial Resources

We are blessed with generous members, past and present, who contribute time, talent, and financial resources to support our ministries. Our fiscal year 2025 (July 2024 – 2025) budget is based on anticipated expenses of \$169,410. The majority of those expenses are for salaries, building maintenance, and utilities. We also contribute to the UCC conference and Our Church's Wider Mission. We projected that 80% of this amount will be met with pledges (\$94,200) and other unrestricted operating revenue (\$42,000) primarily from investment earnings. The remaining amount will be paid through drawing on our endowment funds. Details are in the attached 2024 Bethany Annual Report.

Our historic building in downtown Montpelier contains both "old" and "new" features. The original part of the building holds our chapel space (with a labyrinth painted on the wooden floor) and a bell tower. The sanctuary, parlor area and upstairs rooms were built more recently. We typically gather for worship in either the chapel or sanctuary. We have extensive space in the basement, but since the 2023 floods this is unusable. On our balance sheet, the building is valued at approximately \$2.6 million. As of January 2025, our endowment funds are valued at approximately \$400,000. We explored a capital campaign approximately 25 years ago and voted not to move forward with the proposal.

For the past decade we have chosen to draw on endowment funds to supplement pledges and investment earning rather than cut programming or salaries. Most of us grapple with tension between a faith tradition that tells us to beware the dangers of amassing financial wealth at the cost of justice, kindness, and humility and the risk to our survival if we do not use our financial resources wisely. Referring back to the Who We Are page earlier in this document, most of us have been willing to take the leap of faith that being present in the world now is worth risking the long-term financial viability of this congregation. That recognition is opening us to thinking of new ways to connect with others in shared mission, including the proposed new collaboration with the Northfield congregation. It has also opened us to thinking about [new ways to partner](#) with other organizations in the community for use/responsibility for our building.

The salary and benefits we can offer a new minister are half the Vermont Conference recommended full-time salary and benefits for a congregation of Bethany's size.



Looking Forward

How We Serve Others

Our primary outreach ministries are Bethany Bowl and our San Antonio Grande, El Salvador relationship, both of which require time and money. We hope to be able to maintain these ministries. We also have a longstanding partnership with our local Department for Children and Families office, through which we collect gift cards for foster families at various times during the year. We encourage members to donate to the local food pantry. We recently responded to the California wildfires crisis by assembling 100 hygiene kits for Church World Service and making a financial contribution to the UCC's wildfires fund. We are very interested in helping meet community needs and realize that we need to coordinate such efforts with other churches and organizations. We were once active with the work of the Vermont Low-Income Advocacy Council and had membership in Vermont Interfaith Action. We want to re-engage with both groups. When we had more members, a few were active on the Conference level, and others made sure we held OGHS, NIN, the Souper Bowl of Caring and other special offerings, but we have not done these in recent years.

As we look into the future, we want to explore new ways we might be called to respond to needs in our community, including childcare and welcome of new Americans. We are willing to undergo transformation to continue walking the path of Jesus in this and future times, promoting justice and peace, showing mercy and serving others in meaningful, relevant ways.

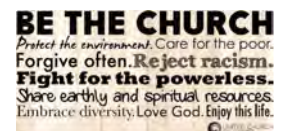
Needs for Ministry that will Claim our New Pastor's Abilities, Gifts, and Time

We envision that our new pastor's main focus will be on helping us to discern our path forward – to travel with us as we move from the threshold of change into a new way of being. We are looking for someone who is willing to learn with us and to share in the leadership of our congregation. We envision this will involve elements of the following:

- Helping us reshape our identity – within Bethany and between Bethany and the Northfield congregation.
- Offering pastoral care.
- Connecting with the community – helping to keep Bethany visible and relevant.
- Leading worship in ways that are accessible and that engage the wider community.

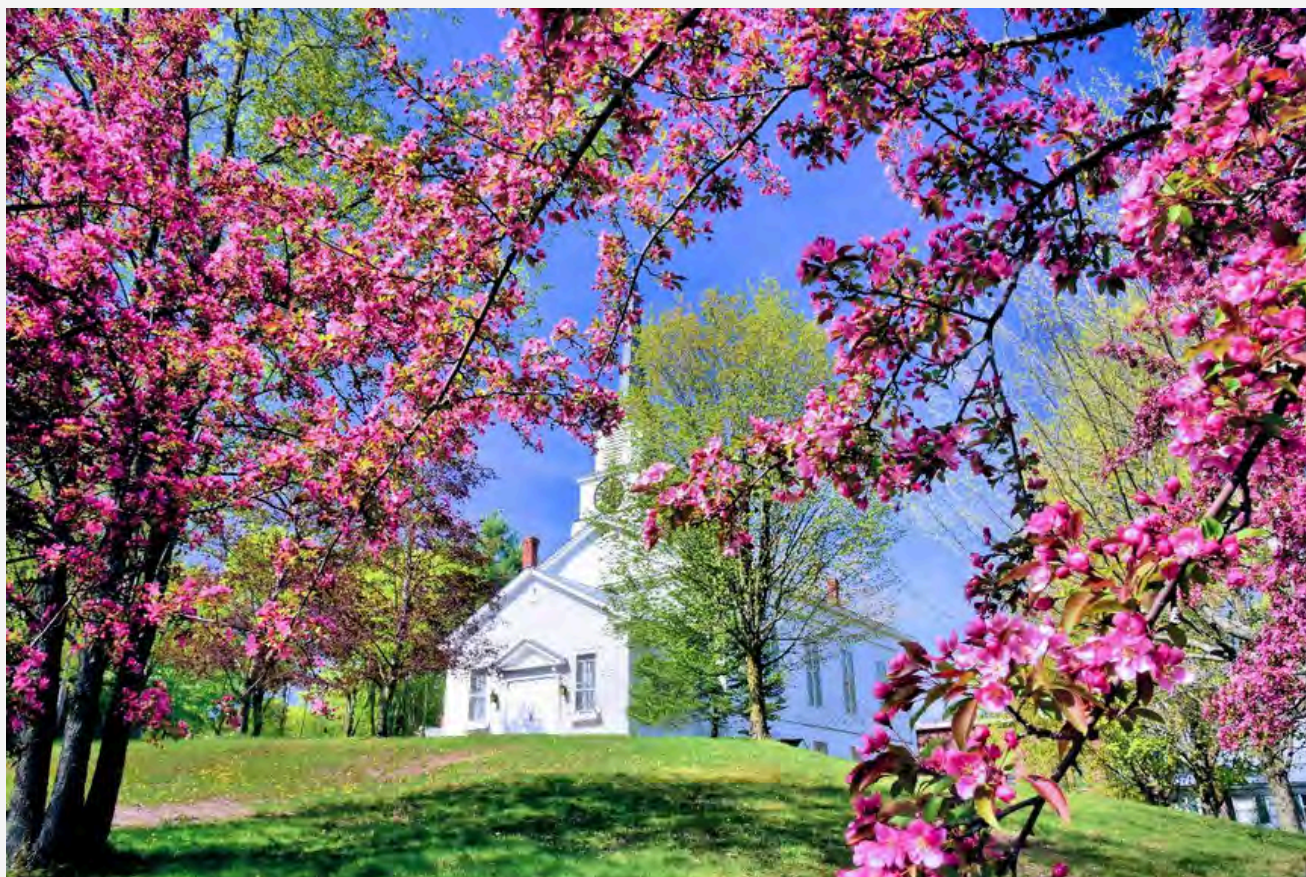
Ways the Congregation Will Engage with Ministry

- Continue to be present and participate. Be here!
- Embrace change and join the process of developing new ways of being Bethany.
- Tap into our strengths and abilities to meet community needs.
- Continue to care for each other, including via the Congregational Care Team.

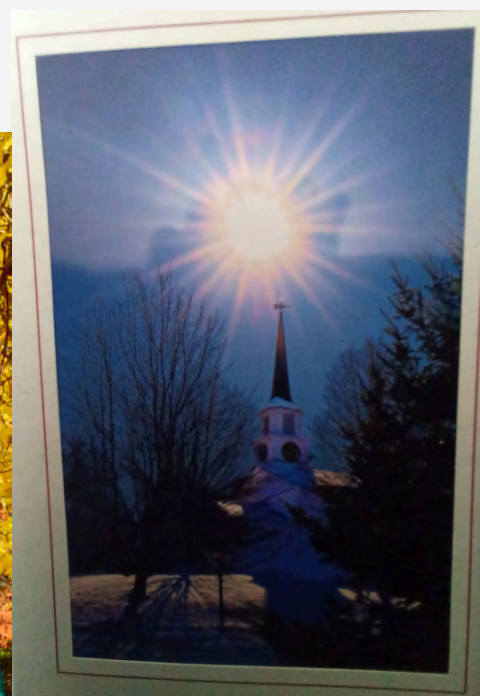


Next Steps

This is who we are and why we want to survive and thrive as a faith community. We value being part of the UCC, a denomination committed to extravagant inclusion, service to neighbors near and far, and justice for all. As the first church established in Vermont's capital city, we've been a significant force for good for 217 years. We are ready to undergo transformation to continue our ministry. We are excited to partner with a new minister as we enter a new era in the life of our congregation. We look forward to learning more about your vision for the future and orientation to congregational leadership in this time of profound societal change.



THE UNITED CHURCH OF NORTHFIELD VERMONT



THE UNITED CHURCH OF NORTHFIELD VERMONT



Thank you for your interest in The United Church of Northfield (UCN)

As a congregation we are, first and foremost welcoming, and we invite you to look deeper into sharing your future with us. We are looking for a full-time pastor whose ministry will be shared 50/50 with the Bethany United Church of Christ, Montpelier, VT. We look forward to shared experiences and a commitment with our congregation of about 71 people and the greater Northfield community. We, in turn, are committed to supporting the pastor in all ways to succeed, integrate and enjoy the experience of working with our congregation, our community, and the shared ministry with the Bethany Church.

Our church is in the center of Northfield's historic downtown overlooking the town Common. It's a short walk from the church and parsonage to Norwich University, our town library, the bank, the town office, hiking trails, eateries, a coffee shop, microbrewery, pharmacy, hardware store, a Farmer's Market and more. We are centrally located to many of the ski areas such as Mad River Glen, Bolton, Stowe, and Killington as well as the Green Mountain National Forest and several Vermont State Parks. Northfield is committed to conserving its natural resources and making our town more accessible and safer for pedestrians, hikers and cyclists alike. As a community we care deeply for our most vulnerable members through a variety of volunteer support services, such as the Senior Center, Meals-On-Wheels, and CERV (Community Emergency Relief Volunteers, our local food and clothing shelf). The United Church of Northfield is considered part of the fabric of the community.

During this time of personal exploration of faith and what it means to serve God's purpose, we have made many discoveries. Some of them we wish to leave in our wake like, fear of the future, worrying about finances, and falling into the mentality of "...that's the way it's always been done". There are also things we fiercely want to retain, like our commitment to being an Open and Affirming congregation, our federation of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), our music ministry, our commitment to mission work, serving our community, social justice, supporting young families, and placing value on beliefs different from our own.

Although most of us meet in the church on Sundays and get together afterwards for fellowship and a coffee hour, we have friends and members of the congregation who join us live each week through Zoom, which is critical to their participation in our church.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF NORTHFIELD VERMONT



Our Unique History and Our Future

The United Church of Northfield (UCN) was constructed in 1836. It is the central feature of the Depot Square Historic District of Northfield, Vermont. Over the decades fires destroyed all but two of the 19th century structures in the District: The old Central Vermont Train Depot (c.1858) and The United Church of Northfield. The church is on the Vermont State Register of Historic Places and eligible for registry at the national level.

Charles Paine, a Northfield entrepreneur and Governor of Vermont from 1841-1843, constructed the United Church of Northfield. He built what was known then as Paine's Meeting House, to give his millworkers a space to meet and worship. The beautiful white clapboard, Greek Revival building with its prominent clock tower and steeple stands overlooking the square.

The horse sheds have been removed but with few exceptions it appears much like it did in 1836 at the dedication. The First Congregationalist Society purchased the building in the early 1850's, and soon after the building became too small for its growing congregation. The building was cut in half and lengthened to accommodate 16 additional pews. At about the same time the building was raised, the earth beneath excavated and a hall built under the first floor to rent out for community events. Howe's Hall continues to function as a space for congregational and community events.

In 1929 the First Congregational Society and the First Universalist Society joined together to form the United Church of Northfield. That federation continues to the present. The United Church of Northfield represented religious freedom and community spirit, and continues that tradition today. We hope to grow that tradition into the future through standing for not only religious freedom, but for diversity, justice and equality for all God's people.

We Proudly Adopted our Open and Affirming Covenant of Faith In February 2019



The United Church of Northfield is an open and affirming congregation. We are committed to making justice and inclusion a reality in our world. We embrace and celebrate diversity and the dignity and worth of every individual. Whatever your age, race, beliefs, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, or physical, cognitive or emotional abilities; we value you and invite you to participate fully and without reservation in the life, leadership and mission of our church as we seek to be an expression of God's love in our community and the world.

Who We Are ~ A Snapshot of our Congregation



We have examined and reformed our purpose and vision statements to reflect the community we are today. This work is undertaken as part of the 2024/2025 year-long workshop on “How to Make Your Church Grow” sponsored by the Vermont UCC Conference. Focus is on church vitality, building on our strengths, deepening our faith and making a difference.



Purpose Statement

Meeting in faith, honoring diversity, transforming through love and kindness, serving the community with joy.



Vision Statement

The United Church of Northfield places faith as the foundational building block upon which everything we work to do is placed.

Faith in God, each other, the smaller and larger community, that good will be done and that justice will prevail if we commit to it.

In our church we warmly welcome all who come through our doors or whose paths we cross and will strive to demonstrate our acceptance and openness to who they are, what gifts they bring and how they see their place in the world.

Our church is known by all for both its inspiring historical presence overlooking our town's common, and as a source of promise, hope and faith in action serving our community.

Our average attendance on any given Sunday this past year is 25-30 people with an additional 5-8 persons attending by Zoom. The average age of attendees is about 60 years old. We have an active core group of 34 persons with members and friends totaling over 125 persons. We offer three pathways to active membership in the United Church of Northfield through affiliation with the United Church of Christ or the First Universalist Society or without affiliation.



The Stewardship Committee organizes an Annual Retreat, usually on a Saturday in January. A main focus of the retreat is to plan for the year ahead and review and update, as needed, the church's Action Plan. The Annual Meeting is held on the first Sunday in February and held directly following Sunday service, led by our church moderators.

A Look at Our Community

The town of Northfield sits close to the geographical center of Vermont. The population, as of July 1, 2023, is estimated at 5,935 by the US Census Bureau. Northfield is home to Norwich University, the oldest private military college in the country. There are many boards and committees that work actively to meet the needs of the community. There is visible evidence of the importance of our public recreation needs in the trails in our town forest, new playgrounds, improving roads, replacing sidewalks and working to improve internet services.

In discussions with people in our community, both UCN members and others, we recognize the need to provide increased support to young children and families. There is need for support services for family caregivers, particularly caregivers providing for the needs of the elderly and those with dementia. UCN has a Calling and Caring Ministry and an active deaconate to assist shut-ins, the sick and the isolated of our congregation. We offer rides to church services and events for those without transportation. Requests for emergency assistance are funded by the Pastor's Discretionary Account.

There is currently much collaborative community development work going on in Northfield as a result of the Our Common Future planning process carried out last year- which resulted in subcommittees on a community center and Norwich/Northfield collaboration among other initiatives. This is an opportune time to actively shape the future of our community. As people of faith coming together intentionally in spite of our differences, we can bring our skills for finding joy and meaning in working in community to this larger effort.¹

¹UCN, Purpose, Mission and Vision: A Progress Report to the Congregation from the Church Vitality Committee, October 2024.

There are several community organizations that are doing a great job providing services and community planning for Northfield:

- CERV (Community Emergency Relief Volunteers) is a nonprofit providing residents with a food shelf, clothing shelf, and emergency grants for utility and medical bills.
- Veterans Place is a transitional housing facility providing assistive services for homeless veterans with a tie to Vermont.
- Mayo Healthcare provides residential rehabilitation and continuing care.
- Four Seasons Community Care provides residential care.
- Northfield Senior Center provides social, recreational, educational and nutritional services [Meals on Wheels] to seniors to enhance their lives, share their knowledge and remain productive citizens.
- Brown Public Library provides a children's hour each week.
- Northfield Community Center Task Force is working on revitalizing the town center.
- Norwich University/Northfield Community Task Force is coordinating student activities with town projects.

The UCN provides space for community gatherings, meetings, trainings, workshops, dinners and musical events.



Community support groups meet in Howe's Hall, as do the Girls Scouts, and an infant/toddler community playgroup. Zumba classes and trainings by the Food to Farm and Forest Initiative also use the space on a regular basis. We have a music ministry which supports student performances, recitals and practices. A town "Nerd Choir," supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, sang in the sanctuary every Sunday evening from January 2023 through February 2024, and continues to offer Karaoke nights and potluck dinners in the hall. We provide a venue for concerts several times a year.

The UCN is active in addressing the food insecurity facing many in our community. In partnership with the Northfield United Methodist Parish, we offer bi-monthly free meals for the greater Northfield community. Participants experience good food and fellowship at a sit-down, family-style dinner. We provide volunteers to work at the CERV Food shelf and have an on-going collection for needed food shelf items. On a monthly basis a special CERV offering is collected to provide monetary support. We also provide fundraising support to the Northfield Senior Center Meals on Wheels program; most recently with an Empty Bowl Soup fundraiser.

There has always been praise and support from the community for all that the UCN does; we are considered integral to the fabric of the community. We share our facility, time and talents with them and they share themselves with us by engaging in programs and attending dinners, as well as donating to fundraisers and applauding our efforts to raise awareness of environmental and social issues.



Other Faith Communities in Northfield include:

New Life Community Church
Northfield Bible Fellowship
Northfield United Methodist Parish
Norwich University White Chapel
St. Mary's Episcopal Church
St. Jacob Orthodox Church
St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church
Trijang Buddhist Institute

A Look at Worship

Coming from different backgrounds, we make sure our worship services are inclusive. The format of a service as it currently stands consists of: Prelude, Candle and Chalice Lighting, Words of Welcome, Call to Worship, Hymn, Prayer of Transformation, Words of Grace, Music Offering by the music director and/or choir, Scripture Readings, Sermon, Hymn, Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer, Lord's Prayer, Call to Offering, Doxology, Prayer of Dedication, Passing of the Peace, Hymn, Brief Announcements, Benediction and Postlude. This is not carved in stone. With concurrence of the Deacons and the Council we are open to new ideas as well.



The church values the special celebrations of holy days. In addition, special theme-based services occur throughout the year. The church is supported by a strong active lay ministry and choir. Each Sunday a Coffee Fellowship Hour follows the service. This gives time for gathering and visiting, while enjoying a few treats and beverages.

How We Serve Others

The United Church of Northfield serves others in a number of ways and looks to deepen and expand the relationships with those we are already serving.

- Mission Ministry projects.
- Zoom services each Sunday online open to everyone.
- Monthly Community Dinners in partnership with the Northfield United Methodist Parish, open to all.
- CERV (Community Emergency Relief Volunteers): We collect a CERV local mission offering the fourth Sunday of each month, we collect food donations and other needed items and provide volunteers for the food shelf on a weekly basis, and provide gifts of new clothing for children in need through the Angel Tree at Christmas.
- We support Our Church's Wider Mission and are a 5 for 5 Church, giving faithfully to special offerings of Our Church's Wider Mission of the United Church of Christ.
- We maintain a small pollinator garden to educate our congregation and community regarding the intricate balance of nature.
- 5th Sunday Special Presentation: We invite a representative from a local non-profit to give a short presentation about their organization's mission, target population and goals. We in turn give them a donation for their organization.
- Howe's Hall is a recently renovated, pleasant and functional, large open space with an attached kitchen that serves the church and offers a much-needed community gathering space. We rent it out to groups needing a training or webinar space, and make it available on a weekly basis to Community Support Groups, the Girls Scouts, as well as for Zumba and the Family Center of Washington County Play Group. Once or twice a year we put on a Coffee House which brings community and congregation together for an evening of family entertainment featuring local talent and refreshments. Fundraising events in the hall include our annual Strawberry Festival, a craft fair for local artisans, and occasional dinners.



- One of the fundraising events that is most successful is our Empty Bowl Soup Luncheon. This fundraiser is done in support and with the collaboration of the Northfield Senior Center Meals on Wheels Program, a program that helps address the food insecurity facing many elders in the community. Local Potters donate their artistic talents to create the bowls that are donated for purchase.
- We respond to requests for emergency assistance with aid for rent, heating fuel, car repairs, gas, utility bills, etc.
- Christmas and Easter flowers are distributed in the community accompanied with a social visit.

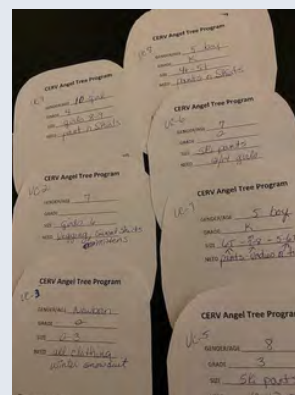


In the realization that our neighbors are not just the people next door, we most recently held a benefit Ethiopian dinner to support the rebuilding efforts for the Church in Gembe, Ethiopia, which was decimated by fire.



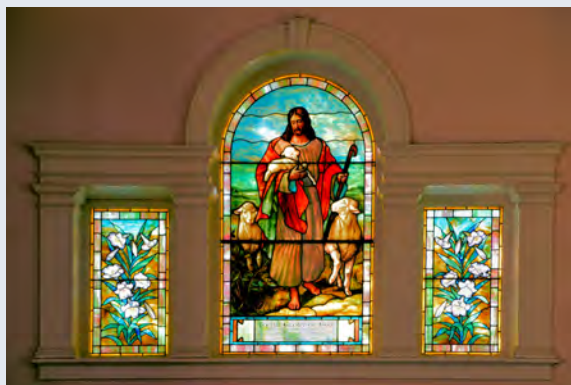
In addition, we sponsored the Shri Shri Gita Society in Varanasi, India and a young boy from their orphanage, Grace House, in need of critical oral surgery.

We are also active participants in the CERV Angel Tree Program



Supporting Our Ministry

The Pastor is the spiritual shepherd of the congregation and collaborates with the church laity and staff to accomplish the administration of the church and brings the ministry of the church to life.



We are a church with a strong foundation of lay ministry. We have a Church Council, Deacons, Mission and Stewardship Committees, and church employees (Sexton, Director of Music, and Secretary). We pledge to support the ministries of our church with our time and talents, as well as our financial giving. We strive to grow in our ministry. We respect and encourage the evolution of the pastor's role as we explore our future together.

During the time that we have been without a settled pastor (since August 2023) we have identified areas of our ministry that we consider priorities. We have made a year commitment through the Vermont Conference of the UCC to explore church vitality. The two focus areas are: 1) purpose, vision and an action plan, and 2) reaching new people. We have kept the church active through the use of supply pastors and a committed lay ministry.



We are historically good stewards of our church properties. From 2018-2023 we raised through donations and grants over \$258,000 to totally insulate the church, renovate Howe's Hall (including a new floor, kitchen upgrade, wiring and plumbing), restore windows, and paint the church. Howe's Hall is the community area beneath the sanctuary with the kitchen. Before that, in 2012 we raised \$101,000 for the restoration of our steeple and bell tower.



Our parsonage, at 356 Central Street, is set in a quiet residential neighborhood within walking distance to the church. The spacious house, two full floors of 1800 sq. ft. plus a full attic and a basement, features plenty of natural light, 4 bedrooms, 1 ½ baths, an office, living room, dining room, and kitchen. We have recently updated the wiring, insulated the walls, put in new windows, replaced the washer and dryer and bathroom fixtures, and are under contract to replace the roof. Outside is a large back yard, wrap-around porch, garage and small utility shed.

Expectations of the Pastor

- **Worship:** The pastor is expected to facilitate spiritual growth and learning, providing a faith-based blended service that will meet the needs of both our UCC and UUA members. In addition, the pastor is expected to plan and execute all necessary sacraments and ceremonies. The Pastor and Director of Music coordinate the music ministry.
- **Pastoral Care:** The pastor is expected to be available to listen and talk.
- **Community Outreach:** The pastor is the face of the church in the community. As such, we encourage the pastor to become involved and keep abreast of what is happening within the town. This might involve board or committee attendance, working closely with other churches, or other interactions.
- **Church Communication:** The pastor is responsible for contributing to and approving content posted on our digital outreach and social media.
- **Church Administration:** The pastor is expected to serve as an ad hoc member of all standing church committees, have weekly office hours, and coordinate and approve use of the sanctuary.
- A Pastor's Discretionary Account is set up for the Pastor's use to respond to requests for emergency assistance.

As we are a team, the congregation pledges to support the pastor in all roles and responsibilities.



Thank-you for taking the time to get to know us!



The Pastoral Search Committee:
Lauren Howard (emeritus)
Judy Howard (emeritus)
Steven Allen
Catherine Howard
Laura Ranker
Dexter Rowe



Closing Words

We, at the United Church of Northfield, are excited to invite you to join us. If you think we might have a future together, please submit an application and contact:

Rev. Lynn Bujnak, Conference Minister
Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ
36 North Main Street, Randolph, VT 05060
lbujnak@vermontucc.org
Phone: 802-505-8727

Rev. Jackie Lingelbach, Operations & Ministries Coordinator
Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ
36 North Main Street, Randolph, VT 05060
jlingelbach@vermontucc.org
Phone: 802-505-8727
Mobile: 802-505-0186

or

Emily Cherry, Transitions Administrator
Unitarian Universalist Association
Transitions Office
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02210
ECherry@uua.org
Phone: 617-948-6408

The link to the UUA jobs board where our listing can be found under “Community Ministry” is <https://ministrysearch.uua.org/jobs-board>.

References available upon request

VOICES FROM THE CONGREGATION

Members of the United Church of Northfield, Catherine Howard (UUA) and Judy and Lauren Howard (UCC) offer their perspectives below on their decisions to join one affiliate or the other.

I came to the United Church of Northfield by happenstance. Joining worship through Zoom, I found a UUA pastor in the pulpit and a welcoming and spiritually energetic congregation in the pews. It was this pairing that made me desire to be a member of the United Church of Northfield as a UUA. This unique setting allows me to be more of a Christian than is typical elsewhere. This is a place where hearts genuinely welcome all, and the Bible is not the only scripture that is considered holy. This is a place that doesn't check your membership card or require the secret club password to be spoken before opening the door and welcoming you into their midst. The United Church of Northfield is the place I choose to call my spiritual home. ~ Catherine Howard

As UCC members for over 40 years, we are still on a search for spirituality with a Christian perspective. What drew us to this church was the ability to grow in faith, to be able to examine and interpret Bible passages without rigid doctrine, and the understanding that there is eternal life through God's grace and forgiveness. The fact that this congregation is caring, works well together, and treats each other as family encouraged us all the more. ~ Lauren and Judy Howard.



Compensation Package

The salary and benefits for this position follow the ministerial compensation guidelines of the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ. Base salary ranges from \$42,312 to \$56,312 depending upon experience and educational credentials.

A housing allowance is offered which includes residence in the parsonage of The United Church of Northfield. The parsonage, located at 356 Central Street, has a square footage of approximately 1800 sq. ft. and includes four bedrooms, living room, dining room, study, kitchen and 1 ½ baths, a full basement as well as an attic.

Other benefits include social security offset, pension contribution and disability, life, health and dental insurances.

More details will be provided during the process.

United Church parsonage, Central Street, Northfield



Bethany United Church of Christ Montpelier, Vermont



Annual Report 2024

For I was hungry, and you gave me food,
I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger, and you welcomed me...

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me.

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Clerk's Report, Bethany Church

2024 Report of the Clerk

[In June 2022, Bethany Church's active membership was calculated to be 147 members / active members.]

During the 12-month period, July 2022 - June 2023,
the following Membership Activity occurred:

Additions: 0

Losses:

Deaths: 5

Transfers to other churches: 4

Moved out of area: 1

Other losses:

During the calendar years 2022 and 2023, Bethany Church lost actively participating members. We realized that a number of people no longer (or very seldom) attended Sunday church services nor participated in church-sponsored events. A decision was made to consider those people as inactive members.

July 1, 2024

Recalculated number of Active Members: 56

Respectfully Submitted,
Betsy Parah, Clerk

Notes of the 2023 Annual Meeting, June 22, 2023

28 members were present - a quorum

Carrie Youngblood presided over the meeting. Rev. Amy Pitton offered a prayer.

The minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting had been included within the materials sent out (also posted online in the Kiosk) Tom Clougher moved that these Minutes/Notes be approved, seconded by Marcia LaPlante. There was no discussion; vote: the Notes were approved. Joanne Hardy moved, seconded by Reg Welch, that the 2023 Annual Reports be accepted as received. Motion was approved.

The next order of business was the consideration of, and a vote to be taken on changes to Bethany Church's By-Laws. Theresa Lever read the proposed changes, which were generally motivated by an insufficient number of people now being available to fill vacancies on the Board of Directors (per existing By-Laws) – our governance structure needs to reflect current realities. The proposed By-Laws changes were distributed to members (also via the Kiosk) prior to this meeting. Discussion followed; Patty Turley (parliamentarian) offered explanations and clarification as discussion proceeded. Some highlights of the changes: Bethany Church will have 3 officers: President, Clerk and Treasurer; possibly also President-Elect.

New people came forward to serve: Eric Benedict as President, Esther Farnsworth and Carol Welch to join the Board of Directors and Joanne Hardy to be Treasurer for 6 months. Patty Turley offered an amendment to the By-Laws changes: No member of a committee, including the Board of Directors, shall serve for more than six consecutive years, (to be added to the written record). Carrie Youngblood called for a vote on the By-Laws as amended. Don Welch so moved, seconded by Sandra Clougher. The motion was approved.

The next order of business was: "Shall Bethany Church lease space to the Good Samaritan Haven for an Overnight Emergency Warming Shelter?" Rev. Amy had received a recent report from Rick DeAngelis of GSH that a Warming Shelter at Bethany Church would only be needed for 6 months. It is also true that the State of Vermont (the source of funding assistance for unhoused people) moves notoriously slowly. There was discussion. Amy said she personally was not in favor of a six-month shelter. It would bring in money, but coexisting would represent a huge distraction for Bethany. Patty Turley moved to table the question, seconded by Don Welch. Carrie requested that the wording, "The Bethany Congregation is still open to this conversation" be added. The motion passed unanimously.

Carrie Youngblood presented the side-by-side budget with 2023 year-to-date income and spending and also a version extended out (= multiplied x 2) to represent an entire 2023-24 spending plan. Discussion ensued. This document was provided to all Bethany members as well as being posted in the Kiosk. Because recent Congregational meeting discussions revealed a willingness on the part of most pledgers to increase their 2023 pledge by 10% or 15%, the 6 month (and 2023-24 extended) Spending plans are based on a 10% increase in pledge income.

In the 2023 Bethany Stewardship letter as well, this pledge increase is requested, if feasible. Conrad Rowell said that someone needs to be studying Bethany's income each month to have a firm grasp of what the trend is; he said he'd attend BoD meetings regularly to share ideas. The Treasurer shares the current (monthly) Treasurer's Report with the Board of Directors every month, so within six months, we will have an idea of how the financial picture is developing, John Hall moved, seconded by Tom Clougher, that the Six-Month Spending Plan be accepted - vote passed.

Bethany Church (our representatives are Rev. Amy Pitton and Amy Bell) has contacted the Preservation Trust Organization of Vermont, who will help us chart a path forward as a financially troubled church. The Preservation trust will work with us long-term to develop a plan for our building and can provide financial assistance (related to our building only). Several meetings have been held already, and visible action is hoped for within the current 6-month period. Rev. Amy and Amy Bell recently attended a helpful extended Partners in Sacred Places retreat on Grand Isle; Bethany appears to be a very busy church for who we are. Advice so far for Bethany (Bethany's survival as church/institution) is that we should find another "anchor partner" - a shelter/day care that is willing for money to be put into Bethany Church - a needs assessment within our community, then find a major partner from the outside - Preservation Trust will make these connections for us. Amy and Amy were quite encouraged by this commitment.

Heat The cost of the District Heat for Bethany Church has gone up again, noticeably - stone church, heat rises - the recently installed controller is working as it is supposed to.

There being no further business to come before the 2023 Annual Meeting, Gilman Wright moved, and Betty Welch seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Vote passed, adjournment.

Notes taken by Betsy Parah

President's Report

Man plans, God laughs - Yiddish Proverb

This has been a year of surprises, challenges and changes, but despite all that has happened, Bethany has adapted and continued to demonstrate its vitality and life.

At last year's Annual Meeting, Bethany charged the Board of Directors to work out a proposal for Bethany's future direction and to report back to the congregation at a meeting in 6 months. This was our plan.

The year actually started out with catastrophic flooding in Central Vermont on July 10th. In anticipation of potential flooding, the staff, members of the Property Team and some leaders and scouts with Troop 709 moved many items up from the basement to the main floor. Unfortunately, the flood waters rose several inches above the main floor. The church was completely flooded. The flood waters had receded by the following evening; however, it took until early Thursday morning for all of the flood waters to be pumped out of the basement. On Thursday and Friday, numerous volunteers from the community worked with members and staff to clear out the basement of the damaged items which were in the church. Then on Saturday and Sunday, more volunteers helped to strip all of the walls and ceilings down to the framing studs and carry the removed wallboard and other materials up to the trash piles on Main St. Over the coming weeks and months much work was performed to repair the building's mechanical systems which allowed us to return to using the building by mid-October. A new mechanical room was built in the corner of the parlor to hold the relocated heating controls, water heater and one of the basement breaker panels. Another basement breaker panel was relocated near the Sanctuary.

Janel and Ken Johnson have closely worked with Sarah in the office and have been navigating through the many details and paperwork associated with receiving FEMA funds. These funds are offered in a cost share where FEMA reimburses a significant portion of the expenses spent recovering from the flood. Because volunteer labor is valued as part of our cost share, this will help provide additional funds beyond insurance and donations for covering the recovery costs. Thank you!

Despite the flood damaging our building, our church community continued on undamaged by worshiping with different area congregations each week on a rotating basis - First Congregational Church of Berlin, Barre Congregational Church and the Old Meeting House of East Montpelier Center. In September we held some worship services on our front lawn as well as meeting with Trinity UMC at Guare Funeral Home and we were able to return to our Sanctuary for worship on October 8th.

With the flood, Bethany Bowl lost the use of the kitchen in the basement as well as many food items which didn't get brought up (or were left on the main floor). Volunteers managed to continue by setting up a storage area in the rooms next to the Chapel and operating out of other locations with a functioning kitchen. Thank you to Rachel Lever and the rest of the bowl team!

In between dealing with the flood recovery, the Board continued to discuss what sort of changes would be required for Bethany to continue into the future. At the end of September, Reverend Amy Pitton realized that her ministry with Bethany had come to a natural end, and by resigning, she could give us the gift to consider all of the possibilities without fear. With sadness and gratitude, the board accepted her resignation. Her last day of active ministry was December 31st, and we thanked her for her 21 years of ministry with us with a celebration following her last service.

Our music director, Christopher McWilliams also resigned his position at the end of the year as well. We celebrated his time with us during a reception following the Christmas Eve service.

Starting the New Year without a minister or music director was a challenge, but our community stepped up. We were able to put in place a rotating mix of lay people and pulpit supply ministers to lead worship as well as hiring different local musicians to provide music for worship. Thank you to Carrie Youngblood (and others) for helping to coordinate these arrangements. Thank you to Denise Ricker for providing us with many wonderful flute solos.

As we started the new year, we had a series of conversations with the leadership of Trinity UMC who also experienced changes in their ministerial leadership. These conversations resulted in several joint worship services at Bethany and Trinity when they were able to return to their building. One of the joint worship services at Bethany was the last service for Trinity's (and Plainfield UMC's) minister Sinu Je, and following the service they were able to hold a farewell celebration for him in our chapel. We also hosted a joint Ash Wednesday service which was led by Trinity's new interim pastor.

In April, an arrangement to provide the most important aspects of an interim minister was set up with Rev. David Vanderlinde-Abernathy and Theresa Lever to provide worship leadership, visitation and pastoral care as well as mentoring guidance as Bethany works out the next phase. The initial agreement is from May until August 2024; however, it can be extended (or shortened) as Bethany needs.

Our office coordinator and sexton, Sarah Haugen helped greatly with our recovery from the flood and transition to having volunteer/lay leadership. After helping to get us organized, Sarah also resigned on May 10th. Again, our community has stepped up and we have volunteers helping with the many tasks which she did running the office and cleaning of the building.

During May, Rev. Vanderlinde-Abernathy helped moderate a series of discussions with the UCC churches in Berlin and Northfield to explore the idea of jointly calling a minister. After a series of meetings, the First Congregational Church of Berlin decided not to continue this conversation; however, Northfield Unified Church and Bethany decided to continue. Assuming that Bethany's congregation approves proceeding in this direction at the Annual Meeting, the intent is to jointly develop a profile which will be used in calling a minister who will work part time for each church. Eric Benedict

Pastors' Report

Rev. David Vanderlinde-Abernathy & Theresa Lever

Grace and peace to all you good people of Bethany Church.

We are writing jointly to report on some details about our ministry at Bethany and to thank you for your faith in us as your co-pastors. In January 2024, the church began a time without a regular pastor. Thanks to Carrie Youngblood 🙏, there was a worship leader and a musician every Sunday. Committed to Bethany, Rev. David declined invitations from other churches and has been our worship leader at least twice a month since January. Beginning in April, Theresa and David began sharing leadership for worship, with an occasional “supply” person when they were both unavailable. This arrangement will continue at least through August. In May, the Vermont Conference licensed Theresa to serve the church, which authorizes her to provide all the ministerial services David can provide.

Worship – There is a small, attentive, participatory group of worshipers every Sunday, and there is always lovely music. Services continue to be in the Bethany tradition.

Pastoral Care – Theresa has the primary responsibility for keeping in touch with people who are not able to come to church. She and David have shared caring for people who have need because of serious situations or a death.

Theresa has responsibility for supporting the SAG, Bethany Bowl and PINS ministries, and any other that may develop in the near future.

David has the task of supporting Bethany's activities in determining its future. He has the blessing of the Conference and has been working with Bethany's Board and congregation in our efforts to move forward, including facilitating our joint meetings with the United Church of Northfield.

Now that we've taken care of details . . . we close with this affirmation: There is no church without its people—you are the church! You are all Bethany Church means inside the walls of the building and all it stands for outside in the world. With your hands and your hearts, your time, skills and money, you embody this church you love so devotedly. The world is better off, ***and the realm of God is closer to realization***, because of your participation, however small or large, in this Body of Christ.

We give thanks for the privilege of serving such a faithful and caring congregation.

Blessings,

Rev. David and Theresa

Property Team Report

The Property Team started FY24 with Sarah Haugen, Stuart Williams, Gary Rogers. Midway through the year we welcomed Amy Bell to the team.

After 20 years of leadership Gary Rogers decided it was time for him to take a much-deserved retirement from the Property Team. We are so grateful for his leadership and countless hours of work that has made the building a special place for all of us.

Stuart Williams also decided to step away from the team. Stuart has been such a tremendous asset and he will be missed.

After the historic flood in July the team spent the majority of its time cleaning and getting the building ready for occupancy.

The property team oversaw both the fall and spring cleanups of the building. Each time a total of 6 to 10 people helped sweep the parking lot, clean up garbage, cleanup and plant flower beds, rake leaves, clean windows, sweep entryways, and various other tasks. There are many tasks and maintenance work that falls under the Property Teams direction, below is a partial list of the work:

1. Flood repair and reconstruction work
2. Fire Alarm repairs
3. Relocation of utility room within the Parlor
4. Mold mitigation in basement
5. Sound system repair
6. Window cleaning in the Sanctuary
7. Organ repair and Humidifier replacement
8. Parking lot monitoring and collection of rents
9. Parking lot cleaning and snow removal
10. Cleaning inside and outside the building
11. Lawn mowing

Thank you to everyone that helped after the flood! We would not have been able to get the building open when we did without you.

Blessings,
Peter Ricker

Deacons Annual Report 2024

Over the past 6 months, the Deacons team has shrunk in size. Liz Sykas and Amy Bell are the deacons, and Gayle McFarland is our deacon adjacent! (I'm just realizing collectively we are L.A.G.)

Since December, we have continued our support of Rev. David Vanderlinde-Abernathy and Theresa Lever as they provide worship for the congregation. This included nursing the sound system until the I-pad could get a new battery, and then, with Eric's help, the lectern microphone mystery could be solved. We are happy to say that the only thing requiring memory is to check and change our batteries. Thanks for all your patience as we worked to find the solution.

We are also doing our best to fill in some of the gaps that Bethany is experiencing now. Caring for the Sanctuary piano, assisting with funerals and memorial services, flower the communion table and making sure Fiona got her Bible. (Thanks Sandy C. for the reminder.)

Blessings to you all,
L.A.G.

Congregational Care Team

Submitted by Theresa Lever

With all the changes and challenges Bethany had over the year, the Care Team got lost in the shuffle. Visits and calls were made but the only consistent activity was Judi Joy sending birthday cards. Thanks, Judi for your dedication! The cards are lovely (I know because I received one). Last fall, I created a directory of Bethany members' and friends' contact information, with encouragement to be in touch with each other. The directory is periodically updated and you can get a copy from the church office or by contacting me. In early May, we had a very nice meeting of caregivers, to hear each other's stories and provide mutual support. We want to do more of this, so please let us know if you'd like to be included. Also, please tell us if you are hospitalized, confined to home, feeling down or lonely; your church family truly wants to companion you in difficult times. We plan to be better organized in the coming year!

Bethany Bowl

Submitted by Rachel Lever

What a crazy year it's been for Bethany Bowl! We must have the most flexible, adaptable team in the church!

When the flood left us without a kitchen and most of our equipment, we quickly moved operations to Christ Church, who had their kitchen up and running within a couple of weeks. And that's where we've been all year, along with the Unitarians, Methodists, Episcopalians and Catholics.

At first, we all distributed Skinny Pancake entrees (free to us) outdoors, but we were able to move inside before the cold weather arrived. Christ Church has been extraordinarily generous and hospitable. They applied for and received a grant for both a commercial refrigerator and freezer, with plenty of room for the other four churches to keep their own food. They renovated their pantry room, which includes shelves for each of the churches. And we are grateful to have the use of two rooms on Bethany's main floor for storing supplies and a donated refrigerator and small freezer.

Skinny Pancake provided free meals for a few months. Then Woods Lodge, a Northfield caterer that started a non-profit called Feed Every Need, delivered a variety of individual meals each week, later switching to large pans of hot casserole. We prepared all the extras, such as coleslaw, applesauce, cold or grilled sandwiches, and cookies. We always had casserole leftovers, which we delivered to Another Way. For the past several weeks, we've been back to preparing our own main meal. We've created a 5-week menu for the summer that includes one week with fresh pizza from Costco's food court—a big hit! We serve about 50 meals each Tuesday and are now freezing 15 meals for Christ Church to deliver to Another Way every Sunday.

We've gotten very good at working in Christ Church's kitchen—including setting up, cooking and serving, using their dishwasher, storing food, and cleaning up. But the churches agree that the long-term goal is to move operations to Trinity Methodist Church, which has a large, beautiful, modern kitchen and a large, comfortable dining/meeting room. That level of their church was not flooded, but the delay in occupying the space is because of problems with restoration of utilities, which will soon be completed. Most of the community meal providers are committed to continuing using one kitchen, which has been beneficial to guests who no longer have to wonder which church is hosting the meal on a particular day.

We continue to have a good relationship with Community Harvest, which delivers locally-gleaned food every week. We also appreciate weekly donations from Red Hen and Manghi's bakeries! Occasionally we pick up free and/or low-cost food from the Vermont Foodbank. We purchase other food and supplies from MacAuley's. We received a Foodbank grant to rebuild a small kitchen, but we did not use it for this purpose because the future of the Bethany building is uncertain. The Foodbank told us to keep the funds and use them for another flood-related purpose, so from July to December we covered the cost of all the supplies for the five weekday

meals at Christ Church. We've been using a Foodbank Farm Grant to purchase meat from Fairmont Farm, which held a Soup Cook-off in May that raised over \$400 for the Bowl.

We have a great team! Liz Sykas picks up the donated bread. Joanne Hardy, Chris Terry, Stu Williams, Mary Spicer, Rachel and Theresa Lever are food preparer (whoever is available that week), along with our newest team member, Esther Farnsworth! Phyllis Arsenault sets up the dining room, and she and Chris are the servers. Chris also deserves thanks for providing cookies weekly, and Nancy Couch bakes a huge batch once a month! Phyllis cleans all the tables, and whoever can stay late does the remaining clean-up—often Joanne, Stu and/or Theresa. Rachel and Joanne are the planners and Rachel places all the orders.

We could tell you more, but the page is running out, so we'll close by saying that this is a thriving ministry that involves many hands and which, as always, involves much more than feeding people. It's about being open and welcoming, and communicating the fundamental message that every person deserves respect and care. Our Bethany Bowl team is very happy to be ministering to the community in this way!

PINS

The PINS team still exists. Bethany has supported the Barre DCF office for many years. Children in foster care, their foster parents and social workers benefited from school supplies, snacks and gift cards.

Unfortunately, the Covid 19 epidemic, followed by the flood last July, limited our work. We collected gift cards at Christmas this past year and the year before, however, we did not manage to collect school supplies those years. Given all that our congregation is dealing with this summer, we have decided to forgo the school supply collection again this July. We hope things will be more settled in a year and look for our request for gift cards next Christmas. We encourage people who are able to consider donating to other school supply collections in our community.

Thank you for your long-time support for the PINS mission.

Sandy Clougher, Sue Day and Carol Welch

Brown Bag

Brown Bag has been meeting on Thursday noon since 1978. The group changes as new members join, and old members go on to another life. Noon was chosen because most of the people attending were working at full time jobs and could come during their lunch hour. We had wanted to learn more about the Bible and studied several books by Robert Macafee Brown; read books about our faith and what it means to be a church; sometimes watched videos; and invited pastors to share in our discussion. At present we are reading the memoir of Senator Patrick Leahy, "The Road Taken". It takes us through his early life and his years in the Senate. We have agreed that we are proud that Leahy has served Vermont with courage and integrity during some tumultuous years.

We are not a serious group. Sometimes political discussion dominates our time. We talk about the technology that we try and are expected to understand. We hear stories about the challenges and pleasures of life on the farm by Donna Hall. And, most of all, we laugh a lot at ourselves and all the crazy things and wonderful things that are happening all around us. We end our meetings with prayer concerns. We welcome others to join us.

---Esther Farnsworth

Scout Report

Cub Scout Pack 777

Pack started the year by sending three Scouts to scout camp at Norris scout reservation in Eden Vermont. We participated in the yearly salute to Veterans Day parade, held in St. Johnsbury Vermont and toured the Montshire Museum. The Pack currently has five active Scouts, three in our arrow of light den and two in our wolf den.
Dan Currier

Troop 1709

The ladies of Troop 1709 have had a busy year, earning 42 merit badges at summer camp (during the flood) and merit badge days, 8 rank advancements plus an eagle application and have participated in district events like fall and spring Camporees, Klondike Derby. and Norwich University Camporee as well as group adventures with 1709 canoeing at Lake Elmore and a day trip down the Lamoille River.

Volunteering with a local nonprofit (Amy's Armoire), giving service by cheering on and assisting new riders at a bike giveaway with the Vermont Chapter of AMBUCS, Barre's Night to Shine and assisting at Bethany's Palm Sunday services gave the scouts opportunities as a team to give back to the community in a meaningful way in addition to their individual services during flood cleanup and beyond.

Many scouts of 1709 assisted as staff or counselors in training for summer camp on the weeks they were not camping as a troop

Scouts cheerfully participated in outdoor skills training, camping, hiking and team building activities in preparation for a backcountry backpacking trip at Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimmaron, NJ July 2023.

Three members of adult leadership attended Wilderness First Aid Training with one also completing OIPIK (winter camping) and Wood Badge (BSA leadership) trainings.

This winter, we said goodbye to one of our founding members as they aged out of scouting, and have a roster of eight scouts currently registered with the troop. Members have worked on recruiting for scouting on both Troop and Cub levels and we are looking forward to welcoming some new members in the fall.

Vicki Delmas Scoutmaster, Troop 1709

San Antonio Grande Ministry Team

Through the gifts of generous donors at Bethany and beyond, we continue to help the young people of San Antonio Grande further their education. This year our funds are covering transportation for a handful of high school students, since the government does not help with this expense, and scholarships for four college students, who are studying international relations, nursing, tourism, and agricultural engineering. One student, Wuilian, expressed deep gratitude for our ongoing support of his studies, since he was unable to complete them in the usual time, and we extended our assistance. His family has very low income and he has worked extremely hard to achieve his goal of earning an agricultural engineering degree. Congratulations, Wuilian!

The sewing workshop serves two purposes: teaching skills for personal and financial gratification and functioning as a support group for the participants, who are mostly women and girls. Participant Irma Riveras explains why this is such a valuable ministry:

Hello, my name is Irma Riveras.

I am an old woman, but eager to learn embroidery and sewing.

I have a small machine, and I work on class assignments there.

I take care of my mother and I have a grandchild who gives me joy.

I like this sewing space because we meet women who have the same feelings and we talk with each other while we learn. We are very grateful because you continue to support these women who, despite our conditions, continue to have dreams.

The June 14, 2024 edition of the Kiosk contains the testimony of Maura Muñoz, our faithful friend who handles the funds we send, guides the students, is the sewing group teacher, and supports all of our sister parish efforts. ***Please read her testimony for a clear picture of the value of our San Antonio Grande ministry.*** We pay Maura a salary to carry out all these tasks, which she does conscientiously. She has had serious health challenges this past year, including needing regular kidney dialysis. Yet, with the support of her husband and daughter (who received scholarships from Bethany to earn her nursing degree), she has managed to attend to all her responsibilities. We thank her for her dedication and pray for her healing.

The 2024 budget includes:

College scholarships (tuition, school fees, transportation, supplies) - \$4,140 (\$1,380 per person)

College scholarship for William's final semester - \$690

Transportation to high school - \$2,000

Sewing group expenses - \$600

Maura's salary - \$3,600

Prior to COVID, we held regular fundraisers, including dinners and concerts. Our ability to fundraise has been affected by the flood and the smaller number of Bethany folks available to work on events, as well as the lasting effects of the pandemic. The annual appeal in December is the primary source of donations, and we are tremendously grateful for both new givers and those who have been generously supporting this ministry for many years. Thank you! In addition, Old

Meeting House in East Montpelier has contributed \$1,000 annually for several years. If you are acquainted with any members of that church, please take the time to give them heartfelt thanks.

The community of San Antonio Grande is aware of Bethany's challenges and Maura often sends warm wishes on the community's behalf, letting us know that they are praying for our well-being. She also informs us when prayers are needed because of events in SAG or the country. At the time of the writing of this report, in addition to lifting up Maura in prayer, we are concerned about the heavy rains that have claimed several lives through landslides and accidents. Even when the weather is good, life in El Salvador is not easy, and our sister parish ministry is a bright spot in the lives of the residents of the village of San Antonio Grande.

The SAG Ministry Team

Esther Farnsworth, Donna and John Hall, Joanne Hardy, Theresa Lever, Betsy Parah, Katrina Pelkey, Liz Sykas

Treasurer's Report

Bethany Church has been really challenged this year starting right off in the fiscal year with the big flood in early July and following several years of Covid. Not surprisingly, this affected all facets of our church life including our finances.

We had a second half-year budget starting in January. At the same time, we had a turnover in the treasurer's position when Joanne Hardy left, and I took over. Sarah Haugen, the office manager, took responsibility for keeping records. Thank you for supporting me as I assume these additional bookkeeping duties now.

The biggest decrease in our expenditures resulted from personnel changes. Pastor Amy Pitton left Bethany at the end of December, 2023. She received payment for the three-month sabbatical and benefits we owed. Those payments ended in late March. Sarah Haugen filled three positions: project manager, sexton and office manager. She left in mid-May. For now, these positions are all unfilled and unpaid. Christopher McWilliams, musical director, also left Bethany at the end of December. Currently we pay musicians and substitute pastors on a per diem basis for coverage. Volunteers are covering many church jobs. Thank each of you for all the work and commitment.

The largest increase in expenditures is paying District Heat bills. This significant cost and debt will continue into the future.

Many members supported the pledge campaign in May. We have income and investment funds. Our church has financial support in the upcoming year, and we will make decisions about the future of our congregation. The process will include making financial plans.

Thank you to Eric Benedict, Joanne Hardy, Tom Clougher and many friends for supporting me as I become increasingly competent as your treasurer. I really appreciate your trust

Sandy Clougher, Treasurer

Bethany Church, UCC

Operating Income and Spending Comparisons

		FY24	FY 24	FY25
		Full Year	Jul 23 - Apr 24	Full Year
		Proposed	Actual	Proposed
Income				
	Pledge/Collection Revenue	116,405	90,965	94,200
	Operating Revenue, Designated	200	2,021	200
	Operating Revenue, Unrestricted	46,584	36,441	41,852
Total Operating Income		163,189	129,427	136,252
Expense				
	Team Expenses	2,475	2,749	1,575
	UCC Conference Expenses	12,149	13,446	12,149
	Building Upkeep/Maintenance	29,451	20,717	31,200
	Worship Expenses	5,268	4,168	3,684
	Administrative Expenses	17,864	15,470	17,864
	Staff Pay, Benefits, Cost	150,100	136,732	59,439
	Professional Staff Expenses	1,400	-	700
	Utilities	39,000	12,927	42,800
Total Expense		257,707	206,210	169,410
Net Ordinary Income		(94,518)	(76,783)	(33,159)

Actual received pledges

SAG, Bethany Bowl (designated income) and expenses (Team expenses) omitted for simplicity.

Staff includes: 52 weeks musician, 6 months sexton ((winter) rental coordinator

Minister: 6 months of Rev. David VA every other week

6 months of ½ minister

Utilities increase includes - \$4,000 additional district heat demand charge

Increased insurance post flood