

Mt. Sinai Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

Annual Report of 2024



Table of Contents

Officers

Moderator.....	1
Church Clerk.....	4
Treasurer.....	5

Ministry Boards

Building and Grounds	8
Congregational Nurture.....	11
Finance Board.....	14
Missions.....	16
Island Heart Food Pantry.....	19
Worship and Sacraments Ministry Board.....	23

2025 Church Council

Officers and Leads.....	29
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Mt. Sinai Congregational Church, UCC

Mt. Sinai, New York

2024 Annual Report

Message from the Moderator –James Cibulka

Every year our church ministry board leads and church officers submit an annual report. They summarize the respective activities and accomplishments of each board and officer during the past year. They follow this Moderator's report.

Taken together, these reports attest the vitality of Mt. Sinai Congregational Church as we covenant with one another and with God to achieve our mission, which is rooted in a tradition of faith and service that dates back over two centuries. We are proudly an open and affirming congregation which welcomes and embraces everyone. As our Constitution states, we are committed to share Jesus Christ's gospel of truth, peace, justice, and love with all people.

The year 2024 was one of transition in our church's leadership. Our previous moderator Dennis Laderwager resigned to relocate to North Carolina. In June I became the new moderator for the remainder of his 2024 term. Amanda Gordon and I announced to the congregation that that we would be working collaboratively and that she would act as board lead for the Nominating and Personnel Standing Action Teams. Amanda has been an active participant in all Council meetings.

Most significantly, our church welcomed a new pastor, Bill Kovacsik, who joined us in September. Prior to his arrival, during the period of transition between ministers, members of the church stepped forward to share responsibility for Sunday services and the manifold tasks that needed to be carried out in the absence of a permanent pastor. The success of this transition, particularly because it followed from and for a time overlapped with the Covid crisis, strengthened our church community, and exemplified one of our church's finest qualities, a commitment to selfless service.

In the short time since Pastor Kovacsik's arrival, he has revitalized our church's spiritual life, strengthened pastoral care to our members, and begun to help us chart together our church's future.

The remainder of my report focuses on the work of the Church Council, which meets monthly. According to the church bylaws in place during 2024, the Council consists of minister (non-voting ex-officio), and nine voting members: moderator, clerk, treasurer, and leads of the Worship and Sacraments Ministry Board, the Congregational Nurture Ministry Board, the Missions Ministry Board, the Faith Formation Ministry Board, the Building and Grounds Ministry Board, and the Finance Ministry Board. A principal duty of the Council is to plan for the church's future and provide a forum for communication among the various ministry boards and action teams. Each month members submit to the Council a report on activities under their jurisdiction, including a Treasurer's report, and the Clerk's minutes of Council meetings. Members highlight any activities that are noteworthy for the entire Council's attention. The annual reports which follow summarize the work of individual boards this year. My report concentrates on some of the major Council deliberations falling outside individual board missions, as well as matters which require congregational approval.

A new office administrator Kevin Martin was hired effective February 27, 2024. After several months there was a need to enumerate more clearly the specific duties and responsibilities inherent in this part-time position. The Personnel Standing Action Team undertook this task and shared this information with the Council, with the goal of delimiting unrealistic expectations being placed on the administrator.

The Council considered how to coordinate the work of the Game Changers and the new Strategic Planning Action Team operating under the jurisdiction of the Finance Board. The goal of these discussions was to avoid overlap in purpose and dates of events. Goals, roles, and a scheduling protocol were developed.

The work of the Minister Search Committee was discussed at various meetings, as the work of the Search Committee proceeded. The Council had appointed the Search Committee. Dennis Laderwager served on the Search Committee until his departure in May, while Jim Cibulka and Amanda Gordon, as members of the Search Committee, served as informal liaisons to the Council after his departure. (Terry Burke replaced Dennis on the Search Committee). While full responsibility for the search activities rested with the Search Committee, planning was coordinated with the Council once a candidate was identified and invited to join us for a Candidates Weekend September 7-8.

Faith Formation's representation on the Council was an issue raised with the Council. A change in the bylaws was undertaken, which was approved by the congregation on January 12, 2025. Until this became official, Stacey Humphreys was invited to participate in Council meetings as an invited guest. At the same meeting where the bylaws were changed, Stacey Humphreys was elected as Faith Formation Board Lead.

The Nominating Standing Action Team was convened, chaired by Amanda Gordon, to propose a slate of candidates for board lead vacancies and moderator. Jim Cibulka was nominated to continue as moderator in 2025. Michele Cipriano was nominated for lead of the Building and Grounds Board. Connie Simas was nominated for an extension of her term as lead for the Missions Board. These nominations were approved respectively at the annual meeting on November 10 and at a congregational meeting on January 12, 2025.

After a budget hearing in October, presented by Finance Board Lead Carol Wiebelt and Treasurer Rita Larosa, the congregation unanimously approved the 2025 budget as proposed at the annual meeting. The congregation expressed its appreciation for proposing a balanced budget. The pledge campaign goal was also successful, raising over \$200,000.

The Council considered current challenges facing Island Heart Food Pantry, including finances, volunteers, and a potential change in leadership. The Council committed to an annual contribution to the Food Pantry. After the current director moved out-of-state, Lead for the Missions Board Connie Simas proposed a plan for new leadership. Janice Flaiz was appointed the new director. Laurel Weresnick, a former member of our church and current volunteer at IHFP, was designated as assistant director.

The Church was informed by its insurance company that it was asking all churches to review their current policies concerning “safe conduct” for children and youth. While our church was informed that it has an excellent policy in place to address sexual harassment, this policy needs to be amplified to address protections for children and youth. After I consulted with our insurance agent and the New York State UCC Conference representative, Amanda Gordon and I began a revision, which is still underway.

The Council approved plans to purchase defibrillators (AEDs) for the church and Island Heart Food Pantry. Plans were undertaken to recruit members to undertake training. The goal was to make AEDs available in early 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

James Cibulka

Moderator

REPORT OF THE CHURCH CLERK 2024

Number on the Roll 12/31/23 **227**

Additions (New) 3

 Transfer 0

 Request 0

Total Additions **3**

Deletions

Deceased 2

Total Deletions **2**

Number on the Roll 12/31/24 **228**

There were two baptisms, two weddings, and one vow renewal.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Burke, Church Clerk

2024 Treasure's Report

Rita LaRosa, Treasurer - Debby Michienzi, Financial Secretary

I would like to thank Debby, Barbara Lyon, Terry Burke, Margret & Jim Cibulka and the late Alphonse Esposito, our Counters in 2024.

I am very grateful to Debby, Carol Wiebelt and Kevin Martin for their great help to the Treasurer.

	2023	2024
General Fund Astoria	55,494.28	46,484.63
Buildings & Grounds Fund	0.00	0.00
Insurance	-635.75	12,378.50
Mission Ministry Board	1,827.98	2,627.06
Pass Through	2106.00	30.00
Women's Fellowship	0.00	0.00
Caring Ministry	194.71	194.71
Music Ministry	0.00	0
Dream Fund	1,354.42	0.00
Total Astoria Main Account	60,341.64	61,714.90
Emergency Assistance Fund	3,913.78	3,914.11
MSUCC Food Pantry	10,965.56	8,973.31
Money Market B & G Funds	54,588.50	48,348.50
2nd Money Market		71,837.05
Raise Right		2,234.57
America Funds – Dream Funds	65,799.88	3.20
Madsen House Sale Income	3,483.60	5,990.61
Madsen House Sale Income Merrill Lynch **	49,240.45	51,880.76
Madsen House Sale Total	52,724.05	57,871.37
Hallock Sale Income Money market	0.00	0.00
Hallock Fund Merrill Lynch	154,000.38	247,432.82
Hallock Fund Total	154,000.38	247,432.82
Wicks Restricted Funds		
Merrill Lynch Wicks Fund 2239	487,522.90	473,000.16
UCC Cornerstone Fund CD	84,963.96	84,963.96
Wicks C.D. Restricted Funds total	572,486.86	557,964.12

In 2024 — 14 families gave more than they pledged for a total of **\$26,629.00**.
13 families did not complete their pledge and **\$10,924.00** was written off at year end.

In 2023 –15 families gave more than they pledged for a total of **\$10,410.00**.
21 families did not complete their pledge and \$12,978.00 was written off at year end.

Mt. Sinai Congregational, UCC 2024 Annual Report - 3 Year Summary

Mt Sinai Congregational Church	2025 Budget Pledged 61	2024 Actual 12/31/24	2024 Budget Pledged 63	2023 Actual 12/31/23
4000 Operating Unrestricted Income				
4001 Pledged Income	200,000.00	202,896.93	184,230.41	156,891.72
4002 Loose	5,000.00	6,604.50	3,500.00	6,033.60
4003 Donations	30,000.00	43,596.76	25,000.00	71,798.17
4004 Holiday Offerings		2,466.00		735.00
4005 Building Use Fees	7,600.00	8,382.00	6,720.00	5,454.00
4006 Rental Income				
4006 UCC Cornerstone Interest	2,400.00	3,346.27	2,400.00	2,430.71
4007 Fundraising	22,000.00	35,604.43	13,700.00	24,574.87
4007-1 Mission Income-Hallock Fund	3,300.00		5,000.00	5,030.00
4008 Misc & Refund Income		2,106.59		4,052.11
4009 Transfers from General Fund Surplus	8,970.49	1,490.00		8,800.00
4011 Raise Right Income		709.75		
Total 4000 Operating Unrestricted Income	279,270.49	307,203.23	240,550.41	285,800.18

6000 Operating Acct Unrestricted Expenses

6010 Pastoral Ministry

6011 Senior Pastor

6011-1 Pastor Salary	35,350.00	11,078.49	29,568.00	23,493.57
6011-3 Pastor Social Security	3,515.55	0.00	2,940.54	
6011-4 Pastor Furnishings		0.00		
6011-5 Pastor-Health Dental Vision	3,791.00	0.00	25,716.74	12,390.90
6011-6 Pastor Annuity & Disability/Life	7,667.94		6,413.73	3,546.40
6011-9 Pastor Auto	1,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
6011-91 Pastor Prof& Continuing Ed	2,160.00	0.00	1,500.00	
Total 6010 Pastoral Ministry	53,984.49	11,078.49	66,139.01	39,430.87

6020 Worship

6021 Music Director Salary	9,600.00	10,400.00	9,600.00	13,265.00
6022 Musicians	300.00		300.00	550.00
6023 Music & Copyright	900.00	1,012.92	900.00	8'05.62
6024 Organ & Piano Repair & Maint.	1,400.00	880.00	1,400.00	912.01
6027 Pulpit Supply	2,000.00	5,969.04	15,600.00	3,811.92
6028 Worship & Tech Supplies	1,500.00	1,921.82	1,500.00	2,097.39
Total 6020 Worship	15,700.00	20,183.78	29,300.00	21,441.94

6040 Congregational Nurture

6041 Membership & Fellowship	1,500.00	447.99	1,500.00	612.24
6044 Fundraising Expenses	6,000.00	10,999.78	1,280.00	1,433.73
6045 Publicity & Marketing	2,500.00	2,040.97	2,400.00	2,547.28
6046 Caring Ministry	200.00	0.00	200.00	100.45
Total 6040 Congregational Nurture	10,200.00	13,488.74	5,380.00	4,693.70

6050 Mission

6052 Wider Church Delegates	800.00			0.00
6054 Mission Ministry	2,500.00	968.61		747.00
Total 6050 Mission Ministry	3,300.00	968.61	0.00	747.00

Mt Sinai Congregational Church	2025 Budget Pledged 61	2024 Actual 12/31/24	2024 Budget Pledged 63	2023 Actual 12/31/23
6060 Christian Education				
6061 Church School Superintendent	9,360.00	9,360.00	9,360.00	9,360.00
6062 Sunday School, Youth	1,000.00	1,730.50	1,000.00	901.91
Total 6060 Christian Education	10,360.00	11,090.50	10,360.00	10,261.91
6070 Finance Ministry Board				
6071 Administrative Assistant	33,800.00	28,381.37	17,680.00	16,072.74
6072 Bank Fees, PayPal & Misc	250.00	318.78	200.00	259.47
6073 Copier Expense	4,000.00	3,840.54	3,900.00	4,435.64
6074 PRC	0.00	545.00	0.00	0.00
6075 Supplies & Postage	2,000.00	6,390.00	3,500.00	4,207.97
6076 Computer expenses	1,990.00	4,916.26	1,990.00	2,377.39
6078 Personal and Payroll expenses	11,550.00	8,326.98	4,690.38	11,290.36
6079-1 Stewardship	250.00	129.80	250.00	
6079-2 OCWM	7,100.00	9,784.00	9,000.00	9,031.00
6079-3 Ex. Council	4,810.00	4,016.80	4,457.00	
6079-4 Suffolk Association	1,550.00	1,652.00	1,853.00	2,023.00
Total 6070 Administration	67,300.00	68,301.53	47,520.38	49,697.57
6080 Building & Grounds				
6082 Church				
6081 Cleaning Staff	20,800.00	22,246.69	18,720.00	20,168.60
6081-1 Maintenance Staff	6,500.00			
6082-1 Utilities/garbage/pest	26,500.00	35,703.06	26,367.00	29,133.84
6082-2 Insurance - Church	33,676.00	27,986.16	29,540.00	19,434.36
6082-3 Grounds Maint-Church & Par.	8,300.00	6,400.52	8,050.00	8,240.00
6082-4 Snow Removal-Church & Par.	5,250.00	4,140.00	5,000.00	1,100.00
6082-5 Cleaning Service		0.00		
6082-6 Custodial Supplies-Church	2,000.00	503.62		
6082-7 Maint./Repairs Supplies	1,000.00	49473.79	1,200.00	1,600.00
Total 6082 Church	104,026.00	146,618.44	88,877.00	79,676.80
6083 Parsonage				
6083-1 Utilities/garbage! Parsonage	7,400.00	4,282.43	7,372.00	4,838.37
6083-2 Insurance	1,615.00	1,341.20	1,416.00	931.41
6083-3 Parsonage lawn & snow	0.00	0.00	500.00	100.00
6083-5 Repairs-Parsonage	500.00	4,193.06	500.00	0.00
Total 6083 Parsonage	9,515.00	11,316.69	9,788.00	5,869.78
6084 Red Barn Expense				
6084-1 Utilities/garbage/ Red barn	780.00	352.07	771.00	670.91
6084-2 Red Barn & Food Pantry Ins.	3,605.00	2,995.24	3,162.00	2,080.53
6084-3 Red Barn Repairs & Misc.	500.00	1,490.00	500.00	0.00
Total 6084 Rental Property Expense	4,885.00	4,837.31	4,433.00	2,751.44
Operating Unrestricted Expenses	279,270.49	287,884.09	261,797.39	214,571.01
Total Operating P& (L)	0.00	19,319.14	(21,246.98)	71,229.17

BUILDING AND GROUNDS MINISTRY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT - 2024

PARSONAGE

1. House

a. Clean out services were used to remove all items in the house and garage that were left by the Hobson Family.

1. Hunks Moving Junk

2. Island Junk Removal \$270.00

b. Complete professional cleaning and sanitizing in the house by Serv-Pro.

c. Back porch renovation

1. Steps repaired by entrance side and replaced by the back yard side

2. Screen removed for an open porch

d. Yankee gutters replaced by aluminum gutters and leaders

e. External repairs made, damaged shingles replaced as needed, windowsills repaired/replaced as needed.

f. New roof put on garage side extension

g. Exterior of the house and porch painted

h. Volunteers came to clean, dust, prepare for "move in day" for Pastor Bill.

Diane Corson, Diane Murphy, Dal Kittredge, Pat Hewlett, Nancy

West, and Charlie West who sink raised nails into the living room N

i. New window shades were installed in all the windows by Michael Dionisio

j. Air conditioners were installed for the summer and removed for the winter seasons by Michael Dionisio

2. Plumbing and Heating

a. Repair of kitchen faucet and securing of upstairs toilet to the floor by Bob Schultz and Bill LaRosa

b. Previous repair by emergency call as smoke was spewing out of the chimney. Debby Michienzi was called by a neighbor. Babara DeBree and Mike Dionisio went to the house. Swezey was contacted. Chamber heat had been turned down for summer usage but not turned back up for fall and cooler weather use. Oil was being called for by the burner but not burned correctly. The House was not occupied at this time. Swezey turned off the unit and returned the next day to replace parts damaged and oil soaked by the error.

C . No heat was reported in the house early January upon Pastor Bill's return. Swezey called. The switch had been affected by the lightning storm New Year's Eve and had turned off when electricity was lost in the area. Michele Cipriano, Barbara DeBree arrived at the house. Mike Dionisio was able to resolve the problem by pushing the re-set button. The heat went on. Swezey checked out the burner and felt the problem had been resolved.

3. Grounds

a. Prior to Pastor Bil moving into the Parsonage, the grounds were cleaned up by Michael Dionisio. The lawn was cut, shrubs were trimmed, weeds were cut down and the yard was cleaned of the debris.

b. Pastor Bill requested that some trees be cut down and trimmed for his concern for safety reasons. The Street tree arborists completed the task. The trees were chipped for later use in the surrounding garden and tree areas. The chipping was at no cost.

THE CHURCH AND VOORHEES HALL

1. New carpeting was placed in the hallway from the side door entrance to the Choir Room
2. Loose Blue Stone slabs were reinforced and secured.
3. A handrail was placed on the Red Barn side of the entrance steps to the Church

and a handrail was secured in the Narthex steps going downstairs by Michael Dionisio.

4. The Church Steeple was restored by Valley Restoration Co. of Conn. A piece of wood from the original steeple with signatures of those donors was rescued and is now in the showcase of historical memorabilia in Voorhees Hall.

5. A new oil burner was installed in the outside burner room. The original was over 20 years of use and was leaking in several places. Swezey Fuel Co. provided the installation.

Continued daily maintenance of the Church, Voorhees Hall and the Parsonage was followed and completed during 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara DeBree, Lead of Building and Grounds Ministry Board

Thank you Board Members Debby Michienzi, Secretary, Michele Cipriano, Bill LaRosa, Bob Schultz, Tim Sicurella

CONGREGATIONAL NURTURE ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Mission Statement - The purpose of the Board of Congregational Nurture is to carry out the Church's mission of loving one another. Recognizing that all people are children of a loving God, we are called to create a welcoming, nurturing, supportive and caring community for all who seek to follow Jesus's commandment to love one another.

The Congregational Nurture (CN) Board consists of the following groups: Membership, Caring Ministry, Hospitality, Men and Women's Fellowship Groups, Red Barn, Game Changers, and the Technology and Communication Team.

MEMBERSHIP- (Diane Murphy Lead)

New members inducted in 2024 include Joanie Schreiber, Maureen O'Sullivan, and William Kovacsik (Pastor). Ms. Schreiber has been working with Missions, and Ms. O'Sullivan has joined the Hospitality team.

Membership and Caring Ministry teams consist of many of the same people and as such they have decided to meet and work together. Their primary focus has been on creating an inquirers class and inviting non-members to join the church. They have quickly integrated all three new members taken in this year into church activities.

Membership has also taken on the role of recognizing members of the congregation who have provided outstanding service to the church by sending out thank you notes.

This team also monitors the church pews and guest book for visitors each week. Welcome gift bags are handed out to new faces attending church. Notes are written to visitors inviting them to contact the Membership team if they have any needs or questions. Membership has also worked to make sure our membership roles are accurate.

CARING MINISTRY -(Paula Hennessy Lead)

Caring Ministry keeps up with members of the congregation when they are not able to attend church through phone calls, texts, cards, email and home visits.

Caring Ministry has functioned to provide meals to those needing assistance; the Wiebelt Family has been a primary recipient of this service in 2024. The card ministry run by Jane Carter, sends out holiday wishes, birthday greetings, and get well soon cards to those who have trouble leaving home. Sunday School children continue to make cards for this ministry and they are much appreciated. The prayer list is now handled by the office administrator, Kevin. The congregation is aware that they can call or email the office to add someone to the list, which is then printed in the bulletin.

The Grief Support Group led by Diane Corson, has held two sessions this year. This group is open to the community as well as congregation members. Participants find this group so helpful that they tend to stay in touch even when the sessions conclude.

HOSPITALITY- (Nancy West Lead)

The Hospitality team has consistently provided a coffee hour on the first Sunday of each month and they do a great job! They have also assisted for special occasions such as the Farewell party for the Laderwagers, the Suffolk Association meeting, and Mary Larson's memorial service. In September 2024, the Alternative Coffee Hour was instituted to provide one additional coffee hour in the month. Individuals or groups can offer this coffee hour, the sign up sheet in on the Congregational Nurture bulletin board.

RED BARN- (Barbara DeBree, Patrice Perreca leads)

The Red Barn has become a major fund raising arm for the church. The hard work of a team of volunteers has helped keep the church in the black, but more importantly, has served to be a gathering place for members of the community. This important mission of the church will continue to need volunteers and inventory to keep running at the start of the new season in the spring.

GAME CHANGERS - (Barbara DeTurk, lead, Carol Melendez co-lead in 2025)

The Game Changers completed a busy agenda for 2024. Those activities were: Bible study class, Super Bowl Chili fund raiser, Retreat with Rev. Whitman "Through the artist eyes: Rembrandt and the Prodigal Son.", Food is Medicine by Iman Marghoob, Antique Fair/Quilt Show, Family Fun day at Cedar Beach, 2 Steeple Showcase concerts run by Carol Melendez, Holiday Bazaar run by Diane Corson, the Cookie Exchange, and a wonderful organ concert organized by Sue Hoff.

The participation in these activities kept our church engaged with the community as well as nurturing our congregation. Next year the Game Changers will run a slightly reduced set of activities, focusing more on community and congregational engagement, less on fund raising.

2025 Calendar of Events Planned

Bible Study - With Terry Burke. Jan/Feb

Chili Fest - Feb 9, Super Bowl Sunday

Food as Medicine - Man Marghoob March/April

Quilt Show - May

Senior Safety with Suffolk Police - June (to be arranged)

Steeple Showcase concerts - summer

1/2 Day retreat with PRC leadership - Fall (to be arranged)

Holiday Market - November 15, 10-3pm

Advertising

Game Changers has started to advertise on Facebook in 2024 on a weekly basis with postings of the activities ongoing in the church. Leesie Schultz has taken the lead on these posts.

Barbara DeTurk has been in charge of advertising church events on multiple platforms such as News 12 online events page, Times Beacon Record, Next Door, Miller Place Beach

Association, Suffolk Association, Community Journal, and Pennysaver. This advertising has helped the church reach the local community.

MEN AND WOMEN'S GROUPS - (Marian Brozinsky, Doris Esposito, Barbara Lyon, Bob Schultz, Dennis Murphy leads)

The Men and Women's groups in the congregation allow members to engage and get to know one another in an informal setting. The Men's group meets weekly at 8am in either Zona or Ralph's Fishing Station. The Women meet for breakfast the first and third Thursday of the month at Zona at 9am. The Lunch Bunch meets monthly at a different restaurant each month. Another group of crafters, run by Doris Esposito, meet Tuesday afternoons in the church to knit, crochet, and make items for sale at church functions.

TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION TEAM - (seeking a lead at present)

This team under the leadership of Carol Wiebelt until recently has been active in 2024 in many ways:

- Completing the church logo in 3 versions to allow usage in different formats
- Organize/catalogue technology equipment
- Equipment purchased to live-stream church services
- Updating the church webpage completed by Erica Schultz
- Created QR codes for the church website, 2025 pledge page, and Island Heart Food Pantry, QR codes are now included in the Membership gift bags.
- Implemented Dropbox for sharing relevant information
- Working towards running the church calendar through "Breeze" software program for posting on the church website

At present this team is focused on providing live-streaming of the Sunday church service. They have accomplished a great deal in 2024 to facilitate our on-line presence. Special thanks to Carol Wiebelt for her hard work and leadership of this group.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara DeTurk
Lead Congregational Nurture

Finance Ministry Board 2024 Annual Report

Thank you to the Finance Board members, Rita LaRosa, Treasurer; Debby Michienzi, Recording Secretary; Vicki Francis and Dennis Murphy for their thoughtful input this year. Thank you also to Jim Cibulka, who was an integral member of the board until he moved into the Moderator position. We worked hard all year and are looking forward to 2025.

Overall Budget

This was the first full year of our **Balanced Budget Plan** after making the difficult decision to decrease costs by calling a half-time pastor. While we waited for our new pastor with bated breath, (“Welcome Pastor Bill Kovacik!) we saved money, addressed pressing personnel and technology needs and started to plan for the future.

Bank Accounts & Investment Accounts

Excess funds building up in the General Funds account during the 16 months we were without a settled pastor were transferred to a new Money Market account in order to be able to earn a higher interest rate. This account presently contains \$71,837.05.

Our investment accounts did well overall this year.

- Increases to the Wick’s Fund (restricted to use for catastrophic damage to our building) beyond the mandatory threshold of \$485,000 allowed us to move surplus funds to the Buildings & Grounds Money Market account to be used for maintenance expenses such as steeple repair (\$47,500) and purchase and installation of a new boiler (\$5,400). Funds remaining in this account will be used for additional property improvements.
- In January, the balance of the Dream Fund (\$65,000) was rolled into the Hallock Fund as the two had the same purposes. The Hallock Fund now has a combined total of \$247,442 for Missions and Programs. Later in the year Council voted to set aside \$5000 per annum for the Island Heart Food Pantry to help offset increased food costs.

Emergency Building Fund (formerly Cornerstone Line of Credit) – Due to high renewal fees from Cornerstone, we decided to discontinue the line of credit (LoC) being held there. The \$75,000 CD, which secured the LoC and was renewed in 2023, will remain with Cornerstone for the next four years after which we will look into a favorable place to transfer the money. The CD, a part of the Wick’s Fund total, would be available to cover initial costs in the event of catastrophic damage to the church building.

Fundraising - Through the hard work of many, our fundraising events brought in \$35,604.43, almost \$22,000 more than anticipated. The Board approved the Strategic Planning Team's *RaiseRight* fundraising proposal which was implemented in October and will be run throughout the year. The question, "Do we really need to pay tax on sales at the Red Barn thrift store?" was researched. The answer is "Yes." NYS tax law states that despite the church being a tax-exempt organization, it must pay taxes on sales from any kind of a "shop" that sells "tangible personal property." A shop is "... any place or establishment where goods are sold from display with a degree of regularity."

2025 Budget and Giving Campaign

The 2025 budget process was started in August. We discussed expenditures, potential income and giving with the goal of preparing a balanced budget. Vicki Francis volunteered to coordinate the Pledge campaign with Carol Davis-Wiebelt, and the Board Leads provided necessary information. The end result was a balanced budget of \$279,270.49 with \$200,240 in pledges and the remainder coming from sources such as donations, building-use fees and fundraising. The budget was presented to the congregation who approved the plan. We are very grateful to our members and givers for their generosity, foresight and above all, trust.

Submitted by,

Carol Davis-Wiebelt

Finance Ministry Board Lead

Missions Board Annual Report for 2024

January

In January, Missions held a winter coat drive for the benefit of Maureen's Haven Homeless Shelter in Riverhead. We collected and delivered 75 winter coats and jackets to this facility.

February/March

For a Lenten exercise in February and March, we collected men's briefs for the clients of the Pax Cristi Hospitality House men's shelter in Port Jefferson. We collected about 100 pairs of men's briefs for this endeavor. During this time, we began a relationship with the management of Pax Cristi whereby several members of Missions volunteered their time to help Pax Cristi organize their clothing inventory. We went twice to the facility to help with inventory and storage organization. We continued this relationship throughout the year by delivering meals and/or excess food items from the pantry to them.

Also in February, Daisy Brownie Troop 707 from Waverly Elementary School had a field trip to the pantry to learn about our operation and to help stock shelves.

In March, our church hosted the Turkish Iftar Dinner in Voorhees Hall. The Missions Board coordinated the number of guests from the Turkish Cultural Center, Temple Beth Emmet and our church. We did the set up for this function, stayed for a delicious meal and cleaned up afterwards. This dinner is a wonderful opportunity to get to know our neighbors and interact with them on a social level.

April

Missions held a Beach Clean-up at Cedar Beach for Earth Day. This was the third annual beach clean-up we have done. While there isn't a huge response from the church for attendance, those who do show up seem to enjoy the day and they appreciate the effort of keeping the beach clean.

In collaboration with Worship and Sacraments, Missions distributed flower seeds to members to encourage planting for pollinators.

June

Missions purchased Pride bracelets and Gun Violence Prevention bracelets for the congregation. We supported the Pride March in Huntington.

I attended several UCC webinars from their “Engendering Spirit” instruction. These webinars covered topics on reproductive justice, using inclusive language, and gender related issues.

Missions purchased MSCC ID badges for use at the pantry, but we have had many other occasions to use them during the year.

August

Throughout the month, Missions collected school supplies for the children of the families who come to the pantry. We collaborated with HotWorx exercise studio in Miller Place to collect enough supplies to make 40 full school back packs for distribution. These were given out at the pantry on the last Wednesday of August, just prior to school opening.

September

Missions introduced UCC Voter Pledge Cards to the congregation. These were cards developed by UCC National to encourage people to make a commitment to vote for candidates who would protect the environment. We set up a basket in the lobby for completed cards, and we ultimately submitted 30 cards to UCC National prior to election day. Participants were also able to submit their pledge directly on the UCC website.

Members of Missions held a Food Drive at Lidl in Selden on September 14. This drive was a tremendous success for the pantry. We will be going there again in the early part of 2025.

October

Missions participated in the annual Run4Biegel virtual race in Heritage Park. The proceeds from this race allow child victims of gun violence to attend summer camp.

We hosted Food Pantry Day on October 6 at church. We asked for specific needed items for the pantry, and we raffled a quilt made by Janice Flaiz. The quilt raffle sales garnered \$500 in donations to the pantry.

November

In November, we held the annual Thanksgiving Drive for the families of the pantry. With a major contribution of food items from the Rocky Point Rotary as well as generous contributions from members of our church, we were able to assemble 120 food bags for distribution. We had an overabundance of turkeys and hams this year from several locations, and we were able to share our bounty with other food pantries in the area.

December

Our annual toy drive in December enabled us to benefit children serviced by the Family Service League. In addition to our own generous donations, the Mt. Sinai Fire Department donated all the toys they collect in their toy drive. Together, we were able to contribute to making the holidays bright for the approximate 600 children in this catchment area.

Monetary Donations

Bread for the World

Church World Services

Scott Biegel Fdn.

Sunshine Prevention Center summer camp

UCC 5 for 5

2024 was an engaging and gratifying year for Missions. It is our privilege to fulfill the mission of the church in this way.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Simas

Island Heart Food Pantry
2024 annual Report

The success of the IHFP is possible due to much effort and teamwork. First and foremost, the dedication and compassion of over 30 volunteers make it one of the most vibrant hunger resources in Suffolk County. Additionally, the support from Long Island Cares, Island Harvest, Trader Joe’s, Lidl, Temple Beth Emeth, Universalist Unitarian Fellowship of Stony Brook, Rocky Point Rotary, and many individuals and businesses keep the doors open. In September, the Mt. Sinai Congregational Church Executive Council also approved an appeal for financial support and committed to an annual \$5000 contribution.

IHFP 2024 Distributions:

	Adults	Children	60+	Families	Individuals
2022	9,279	6,218	2,164	3,577	17,661
2023	13,355	7,987	2,862	5,093	24,204
2024	13,934	8,257	1,589	5,148	23,780

Attaining sufficient resources this year was again difficult as price increases continued, affecting donors and the major food banks, which then trickled down to IHFP. Although we secured several grants, the funds did not go as far. Grants include:

- HPNAP – Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program Grant; \$3039 LIC (previous year \$3154)
- TEFAP – The Emergency Food Assistance Program Grant (pounds per year) (LIC)
- Wakefern Community Grant (LIC/ Shop Rite); \$250 LIC (previous year \$750)
- HPNAP Operational Grant – Staffing costs only; \$1750 LIC (\$3500 previous year)

It was necessary to apply several times for a reallocation of the HPNAP funds, a necessary food grant, which runs from July through June. Those requests were rarely granted although we did receive a huge stock of food from them (LIC) at [grant] years end in June.

The HPNAP Operational Grant was repeatedly appealed and denied. This is a reimbursable staffing grant which is granted in July and issued after submitting documentation in Dec & May.

In addition to food shortages, the IHFP also faced unrelenting volunteer hurdles, forcing considerable operational changes. In the search for viable solutions to these difficulties, directors consulted with other agency representatives and proposed the following options:

- Reduce frequency of guest visits
- Reduce food amounts (conflicts with grant conditions)

- Implement a residency eligibility
- Invite guests to participate in distribution
- Request other agencies accept our overflow
- Change operational hours/days
- Band with another agency
- Close

After much consideration, the directors successfully appealed for annual financial support to the MSUCC Executive Council. They also decided to reduce the days of operation from Wednesday and Thursdays (2-4:15) to Thursdays only (1-4) beginning August 1, 2024. All guests were alerted well in advance of such changes, and a comprehensive sweep across Brookhaven/ Suffolk/Long Island resource directories was conducted. These changes have been effectual.

The search for volunteers was also directed to communities outside the MSUCC, including those above-mentioned supporters, the AARP “Create the Good” program, surrounding colleges and school districts, and an article in the Times Beacon, which proved effective.

Communication/Outreach:

- Outreach to Suffolk County Girl Scouts, surrounding school districts/universities via school representatives
- Old Man’s News articles
- Repeated appeals to Newsday, Times Beacon, News12, Patch for publicity; Patch Article (5/24), Newsday (5/30), Times Beacon (5/30), Times Beacon (10/10)
- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at Stony Brook - strengthen our partnership; several articles in their newsletter; they regularly distribute IHFP brochure; receptive to IHFP needs
- Direct correspondence with National Association of Letter Carriers (DC) re Stamp Out Hunger food drive. IHFP Director letters re this food drive published in Times and Newsday
- Director again on the LI Cares HPNAP Grant Committee, eligibility scoring
- Advocacy – promote petitions re the Farm Act and Feeding NYS via articles and Facebook
- Maintain Facebook page
- Booth at the MSUCC Chicken BBQ
- IHFP Budget report sent to Missions Board and Executive Council (8/16)
- Co-operate with the Keith Owens, Inc, supporting their Thanksgiving efforts.
- Helping Hands Rescue Mission (Huntington)

2024 Food Drives/Fundraisers

- IHFP Benefit Concert with Andy Del and the Courageous Cats, Fundraiser
- Rocky Point Rotary Club – Financial support (\$2000); several huge food drives
- Temple Beth Emeth of Mount Sinai – several food drives incl “Grocery Store Scavenger Hunt”; Financial support; TBE Youth program
- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stony Brook – several food drives; financial support
- Sachem North High School Honor Society- a Personal Care drive; volunteers
- Bomba Socks donations received
- Laddie A. Decker “Super Bowl” canned food drive
- Daisy Girl Scout Troop 707 from Waverley Elementary School in Sachem – visit to the pantry, donations, helped organize and stock the shelves
- Stamp Out Hunger food drive by the National Association of Letter Carriers (providing 577,737 meals to LI’ers, 63 huge bins to the IHFP)
- Mt Sinai Elementary School Student Council food drive
- Local Boy Scout Pack 204 - PB&J Drives, Facility clean-ups and other assistance, food drives
- Mt Sinai Congregational Church – Weekly donations program; Financial support
- Lidl Market – donates imperfect products; allow us to have food drives. This has proved to be an excellent additional partner in our efforts to serve the community.
- Jane Guido Memorial Foundation - several large food drives
- Little Rascals Food Drive
- Leisure Village Entertainment Club (\$1000.donation)

Operational:

- Hired Strong Island Sprays for ticks and mosquitoes on premises
- Several nationwide food contamination alerts. Follow-up.
- Ongoing Operations: Weekly ordering/pickup/delivery, sort/stock/rotation food, secure volunteers, distribution, clean facility, temperature logs, pay bills, donor request/response, daily numbers, submit monthly reports (to OMN, LIC, Island Harvest); Exec Council reports; Keep church pantry stocked; Inspections; annual Food Safety & Civil Rights courses satisfied

Extraneous Programs:

- Easter and Halloween Goodies, Back-To-School supplies; Free Little Library; Sleeping Bags
- Voter Registration (July/August)
- The PSEGLI Residential Energy Affordability Partnership (REAP) Program - a community assistance event to help pantry guests reduce their household energy costs (May)
- Connect with SEPA Mujer for informational event on trafficking and other immigrant issues

- Annual Thanksgiving Meal Drive – Distributed 100+ full holiday meals/gift cards to guests
- Christmas concluded with packed boxes of food for each family, Bomba Socks, and some toys for the children

Sadly, in August, the pantry lost one of its longtime volunteers, Al Esposito. Al always stepped in whenever needed, as a reliant Trader Joe's deliverer and other tasks needed at the pantry. He was a wonderful, generous spirit and will be missed by many.

Another core volunteer who will be hard to replace, Dennis Laderwager, relocated mid-year.

Kat Lahey also relocated out-of-state in October but was asked to continue as co-director. KL sent a list of duties, grant information, and other needed material in effort to find a replacement co-director.

Submitted on 1/17/25 by Kat Lahey

2024 Annual Report of the Worship and Sacraments Ministry Board

Board Members and Teams

Jamie Dunlop, coordinator, Baptism Standing Action Team

Doris Esposito, coordinator, Communion Standing Action Team

Vicki Francis, coordinator, Ushers and Greeters Standing Action Team

Celeste Gronda, member at large; streaming camera operator

Sue Hoff, Board Lead; coordinator, Music and Pulpit Supply Standing Action Teams

Patrice Perreca, coordinator, Liturgists and Church Environment Standing Action Teams

2024 was a year of transition for the worship board. We went from being the worship service creator/manager to becoming the supporter/collaborator when Pastor Bill Kovacsik arrived and conducted worship on September 8th. The board was relieved (literally) of the responsibilities of seeking persons to bring the message each Sunday, and creating the liturgy and selecting the music for each order of worship as well, tasks we had been doing for the previous eight months and in 2023. I offer my deep and personal gratitude to the nineteen members, friends, and relatives who took to our pulpit and offered their messages to us while we were without a minister.

Another transition occurred when Jayne Hardy, our office administrator resigned, and Kevin Martin was hired for that position. Until Kevin is comfortable formatting the order of worship, bulletin insert, and special inserts for Sunday worship, Sue continues to do those tasks, grateful that she no longer has to enlist speakers and select or write the liturgy as well because Pastor Bill handles all of that now.

Changes such as these challenged the worship board; still, this faithful group responded with creativity and commitment to its mission to "work with the minister, Church School Coordinator, and music director to plan all aspects of the worship service, including music, liturgy, children

and youth participation, special services, and seasonal decorations," and "to make worship accessible and meaningful for a diverse congregation."

Lent, Holy Week, and Easter

Because Lent arrived in early with Ash Wednesday on February 14th, the board spent January, February, and early March planning for Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter. Lacking a minister, we decided to forego Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday services. Instead, we conceived of a Lenten theme that would offer structure to the season and inspiration for worship leaders and worshippers, alike. That theme was, "Lent 2024: A Journey from Re: Choice to Rejoice." We brainstormed words that began with the prefix, "re" and asked our speakers for the Sundays in Lent to consider using one or more of them as a prompt for their remarks. In addition we selected music, banners and decorations, and liturgy that would coordinate with each speaker's chosen "re" word. The results were worship services that were remarkably varied and *really* inspiring.

Holy Week began with Palm Sunday's customary "parade" of people with palm leaves from the church sign into the sanctuary. Because we had decided against a Holy Thursday service in the sanctuary, Sue created a "Maundy Thursday Service of Shadows" that folks could do at home. A link to this was sent to all in an email blast and included as a link in the *Old Man's News*. For Good Friday Patrice set up a Stations of the Cross experience in the sanctuary that was available from noon to 3:00 p.m. when the sanctuary was open for quiet time.

We held our Easter sunrise service at 6:00 a.m. on Cedar Beach. Jeff Keister and board members Jamie Dunlop and Sue Hoff, led the service. It was well-attended. Later, Rev. Barbara Toll of the New York Conference, UCC led the church in Easter worship. Her "re" word was, naturally, "Resurrection."

Following Easter Sunday and during the Sundays of Eastertide in April we focused on the theme, "Climate and Faith." We used some of the materials in the SALT Project's program of that name in composing the liturgy and selecting music for the Sundays in April. Connie Simas and the missions board worked with us by offering pollinator-appealing flower seed packets to children and adults in attendance on Earth Day Sunday. Also during April at the request of the Sunday School teachers, the worship board took on the task of enlisting volunteers to offer the children's message each Sunday until we have a minister to do them.

"Ordinary " Time following Pentecost

In June we arranged to have an ASL interpreter sign the worship service on the last Sunday of the month. So, on June 30th we welcomed Maggie Passamonte, a graduate of the Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technical Institute for the Deaf. While we realize there may be no deaf or hearing-compromised persons in the pews on Sunday, offering an ASL-interpreted worship service is a signal of our extravagant welcome as indicated in our Open and Affirming statement. And, who knows? Maybe someone seeing this information on Facebook or the newspaper will be encouraged to access our online worship service each month.

In July Jamie reported to us that the search team was "very close" to calling a new minister. The board breathed a collective sigh of relief. In the meantime, we kept on keeping on.

September found us collaborating with Pastor Bill Kovacsik for his candidating Sunday, September 8th. And we were beyond delighted that the congregation affirmed the search team's call for Pastor Bill to become our settled part-time pastor. We are excited to have him on board and are enjoying a solid working relationship with him, celebrating his spirit and guidance.

In October we discussed our Advent theme, "Starry Nights" based on SALT Project's booklet of the same name. We would offer paper copies of the booklet for people to take home or e-copies they could download or print at home and use. We discussed devoting one Sunday in Advent to a "Hanging of the Greens" service, possibly December 1st or 8th, and Christmas Eve services would be at 5:00 and 9:00.

In November the board assisted the Suffolk Association ministers in planning the memorial service for Rev. Mary Larson at their meeting at Mt. Sinai on November 4th. We remember Mary with love and gratitude for her service among us at Mt. Sinai many years ago.

Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas Eve

We decided to repeat last year's Thanksgiving beach service at 9:00 Thanksgiving morning. Jeff Keister, Eddie Melendez, Jamie and Sue would lead the service, which consisted of music, scripture, and liturgy from various Native American tribes. Temple Beth Emeth graciously offered to host the interfaith Thanksgiving Sunday service again, with Pastor Bill and members of our church offering the message and reading the liturgy.

We solidified plans for Advent and Christmas Eve. The "Hanging of the Greens" service would be on December 1st and would feature a cut live tree, donated by Carter Christmas Tree Farm. We discussed whether to use electric lights on the tree; this does represent a fire hazard, and we may look into new LED lights for next year. We would decorate the tree with star ornaments, and Patrice found Advent banners that looked like "starry nights," our theme! Patrice would get wreaths for the windows and doors, and we'd ask for volunteers to come on Saturday, November 30th, to set things up for the service on Sunday. On December 1st, after all the wreaths and garlands were in place, the tree was lit and decorated, and the banners were hung, the sanctuary was just beautiful!

Preparing for Christmas Eve, Pastor Bill suggested we present a puppet play he had written for the 5:00 family service. Celeste (Angel Gabriella), Patrice (Wooly, the sheep), Pastor Bill (Danny, the shepherd), and Sue (the narrator) would present the play during the service. The kids *loved* the puppets! Also, Pastor Bill purchased battery-operated candles for the kids to use at this service. The 9:00 Christmas Eve service would be a traditional candles and carols service.

In early December Kevin received an email from an organist who lives in Iowa asking if the church would be interested in hosting an organ recital. It turned out this request came from a young man, Michael Kearney, who grew up in Miller Place. He and his wife and baby would be visiting his family at Christmas, and having seen information online about our pipe organ, he decided to contact us. We enthusiastically accepted his offer, had the organ tuned, and thoroughly enjoyed his performance on December 28th. Michael graciously offered to split the proceeds of the concert evenly with the church, the funds to go for organ maintenance and repair.

I know this is a long report, and if you've read this far, I hope you've understood why. The responsibilities of the worship board are so numerous and critical that a brief summary would not do them justice. On a personal note, the members of this board listed at the beginning of the report, and one not officially on the board, Bill LaRosa, who maintains our candle supply, candlesticks, and Communion service ware, are among the most faithful servants in this church that is rich with faithful servants. I also want to thank Mike Dionisio for his help with everything we ask him to do; he never says "no." And thanks also to Kevin Martin for his help with the bulletins, orders of worship, and special inserts; he also always says "yes." I owe all these folks my deepest gratitude for their commitment to doing the work, yes even going beyond the call, of maintaining high standards of worship experiences that bring people closer to God and the love brought and taught to us in the life of Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Hoff

Lead, Worship and Sacraments Ministry Board

2024 Annual Report of the
Music Coordinator

Choir Members

Barbara Lyon, soprano
Donna Rodman, soprano
Marian Brozinsky, alto
Sue Hoff, alto
Dennis Murphy, tenor
Eddie Melendez, tenor
Jamie Dunlop, tenor
John Casper, bass
Steve Little, bass

Musicians

Jane Carter, organist *emerita*
Linda Preuss, pianist

Special Music

Jeff Keister
Cara Navaretta,
The Bluegrass Buddies
Rev. Elaine Kirkland
Lisa Lally
The Children of the Church

Please offer your gratitude to these people who so faithfully share with you their music during worship on Sundays.

Selecting music for worship at our church is a process of identifying gathering songs, anthems, sung responses, and hymns to coordinate and enhance the liturgy and message each Sunday of the year. Taken into consideration are the number of choir members who will be available on any given Sunday and the difficulty of anthems that might be appropriate for the theme of the service. When the choir is on hiatus during the summer, I try to enlist some folks to offer special music. And in 2024, of course, we featured an organ concert during the Christmas holidays. All of this is a challenging and interesting job!

We do need more singers! Please consider joining the choir. Often, due to travel or illness, we might be down to only 5 singers and maybe not even cover all voice parts. You don't have to read music, though it helps. Even if you feel like you could only participate for, say Christmas Eve or Easter, that would be wonderful! Just show up at rehearsal (**9:00 Sunday mornings**) for a few Sundays ahead of the date to prepare. We welcome all singers with joy!

Respectfully submitted.

Sue Hoff, music coordinator

2024 Church Council

Officers

Moderator: James Cibulka

Clerk: Lynn Burke

Treasurer: Rita LaRosa

Ministry Boards

Building and Grounds: Michele Cipriano, Lead

Congregational Nurture: Barbara DeTurk, Lead

Faith Formation: Stacey Humphreys, Lead

Finance: Carol Wiebelt, Lead

Missions: Connie Simas, Lead

Personnel: James Cibulka, Lead

Coordinator of the Personnel Teams: Amanda Gordon

Worship and Sacraments: Susan Hoff, Lead