

## **What Your Support Means to Our Church.**

The simple answer is: it means a lot. Pretty much everything, in fact. Your support keeps the church alive. There are all kinds of support: serving on committees, volunteering at events like the Holiday Fair, being part of hospitality teams, contributing to and helping out at potlucks, fattening the plate during services, helping out at fundraising events.

Of course, a big part of supporting the church is contributing your hard earned dollars. Money pledged by the congregation is our biggest source of revenue, it keep us in business, so to speak, every year. To show you how important pledges are: this year's approved budget is \$84,398 (which is basically the expenses we expect to need to keep the church above water); to meet that figure, the congregation has pledged \$53,483. That's roughly 63% of revenue we need to remain solvent. The rest of our income results from fundraising efforts, such as the Holiday Fair (which this year was a smashing success, over \$9,000), also offerings made during services, additional donations, and a few other sources.

But, as I said, your contributions are what really help keep us going. So, what do your pledges pay for exactly? Well, mostly for the expenses we incur just by being. That includes maintaining the building and grounds, some administrative expenses, such as the bookkeeper who pays the bills and keeps track of progress on our budget, insurances, hospitality costs (especially coffee, which is critical for coffee hours); worship expenses primarily our part-time minister – Twinkle, who provides three services per month for 10 months of the year); the music program, especially supporting the wonderful choir that performs on Sunday); child care during services. And it allows us to contribute as a congregation to the community outside the church, through contributions to Starfish Village, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday plate donations, donations to such charitable organizations as Waterville Homeless Shelter; and fees for our participation in the UUA.

I mentioned maintaining the building and grounds. Your pledges support this wonderful building in which we are gather every Sunday. Buildings need constant attention. Property & Grounds is probably the biggest part of our budget; it includes everything from cleaning the building, cutting the grass in summer, plowing and sanding in the winter, to maintenance of the lift, maintenance of fire extinguishers. And of course, there are regular utilities to be paid – electricity, oil, water, sewer, etc. An aged building like this often need repairs, too. Rurik Spence, our Property & Grounds manager recently developed a spreadsheet with 177 items that need attention. Since then, he and his team have already addressed a considerable number of the more pressing issues, but many more remain. And most of them will cost money to accomplish.

But this building is the heart and soul of our community. The sanctuary is where we worship every Sunday. With music and sharing and messages that make us think, maybe laugh, and sometimes challenge us. And, the building includes Averill Parlors, which is busy every day of the week with meetings and music and the Evening Sandwich Program, which is now operating three days per week. (And Larry and his crew are here on other days, bringing in donated food and planning the meals). In addition to the regular meetings and gatherings, the space is also used for community; recently, for instance, some church members participated in an English-language course for new immigrants to the area.

Several years ago, committees were formed to investigate where the church was headed. Once it was determined that maintaining this building was more cost effective than other options, we elected to install the lift to improve accessibility. And in the last several years, we've upped our game technology-wise, improving the sound system in the sanctuary and creating a robust Zoom capability for people who can't make it to the services in person. We have a website and a Facebook page. Last year, we renovated Averill Parlors to make it safe and accessible and welcoming for everyone. And we have improved the sound system there, too, which especially benefits the awesome Coffee

House services we have every first Sunday now. This year, in conjunction with the repaving of the lower parking lot, we had the walkway to the Averill Parlors door reconstructed and canted the slope away from the building, which helped to solve water leakage problems in Averill Parlors. Problems continually arise – replacing a water heater, making repairs to the furnace, etc. – and they need to be fixed.

All of these things, of course, cost money, and virtually all of this has been paid for by contributions from you, the members of the community. As you can see, you get a lot of bang for your buck, as they say. Your money helps our church community continue to thrive and grow and enables us to reach out to the larger community in which we all live – both to help those in need and to welcome community members into *our* community.

Now we are making our annual request for you to pledge your support for the coming year – so, please contribute ... according to your ability. Whatever amount you feel you can contribute – small or large – is welcome. And if you already pledge and you can find in your heart (and your wallet) to increase your pledge, that would be very welcome. As prices for goods and services continue to rise, our budget needs to grow to accommodate those increases.

That's my spiel. Thanks for listening.