

2025-26 Ministry Plan and Program Review
 First Congregational United Church of Christ, Corning, NY
 Sunday, June 28, 2026

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Moderator's Message

The last 12 months have brought many challenges and opportunities to First Congregational. We hired a new admin, hired and subsequently lost a keyboardist, welcomed new members, and bid farewell to several families who moved away. We launched the Church's Future Working Group, adjusted the scope of some ministry teams, and completed a survey on what's important to us as a church family.

In the next 12 months, we will call new pastoral leadership, make plans for future growth and partnerships, and continue to focus on what's most important: our faith, our fellowship, and our church family. Please read through this report carefully, as it contains our plans for all of those wonderful and exciting developments. There is room for everyone to get involved: by serving on a team, providing resources, or keeping the church in your prayers. I promise to keep spiritual matters front and center as we take this journey!

Yours in Christ,

Jill VanDewoestine
Moderator

Administrative Board Report

Objectives:

- Support the Ministry Teams and operations of the Church by managing its business affairs with advice from the Finance Team.
- Review and coordinate the church calendar to agree on dates and allow advance planning.
- Conduct annual program staff review and carry out human resource policies via the Personnel Team and Pastor-Parish Relations team.
- Develop the annual Ministry Plan and Budget with the finance team for adoption by the congregation.
- Discern which matters will be decided by Congregational vote beyond those listed in the By Laws.
- Enable & encourage new members from our community in an inclusive & welcoming manner with assistance from the Membership Team.
- Support the work of the Church's Future Working Group and the Interim Search Committee

Accomplishments:

During the 2025-2026 program year, the Administrative Board supported the Ministry Teams and church committees through monthly meetings. Highlights include:

- Held a training meeting for all AB & MT participants on governance structure, information sharing, standard reports, etc. in August.
- Held monthly meetings in person as well as Zoom to improve communication and foster good working relationships
- Cleaned up Google shared drives to make information available and easier to find
- At the recommendation of the Finance team, launched the Church's Future Working Group to look at options for growth, partnership, and operational wind-down.
- Fostered effective cross-team communication and coordination of activities between the ministry teams.

Respectfully submitted, Jill VanDewoestine, Moderator

Nominations for Administrative Board, Committees, and Ministry Teams 2026-2027 Program year

Administrative Board

Moderator	Jill VanDewoestine	2nd year of 2 possible
Assistant Moderator	Bob Walker	1st year of 2 possible
Clerk	Lynn Decher	No term limit
Treasurer	Jennifer Fais	No term limit
Board Members	Pam Schmitt	7th year of 6 possible
	Judy Garrett	6th year of 6 possible
	Joyce Nelson	2nd year of 6 possible
	Star Bright	2nd year of 6 possible

Committees reporting directly to the Administration Board

Audit	Joyce Nelson, Margo Brown	
By-laws	John Brown, Jennifer Fais, Pam Schmitt	
Chief Collector	Jill Palmer	
Collectors	Margo Brown, Star Bright, Lynn Decher, Judy Garrett, Rachel Gustina, Rachel Hofstetter, Noel Sylvester, Pam Walker	
Church's Future Working Group	Lynn Decher, Jennifer Fais, Bruce Graf, Tom Kowalik, Jill VanDewoestine, Tom Wilkinson	
Finance	Bruce Graf, Jill Palmer, Star Bright, Jennifer Fais	
Fundraising	Bruce Graf, Diane Haskins, Rachel Hofstetter, Joyce Nelson	
Historian	Noel Sylvester	
Membership	Beth Briggs, John Brown, Margo Brown, Mary Daly, Bruce Graf	
Nominating	Judy Graf, Maria Quintal, Judy Garrett	
Pastor/Parish	Tom Wilkinson	3rd year of 3 possible
	Star Bright	2nd year of 3 possible
	John Brown	2nd year of 3 possible
	Barbara Cooper	2nd year of 3 possible
	Mary Daly	2nd year of 3 possible
	Pam Schmitt	2nd year of 3 possible
Personnel	Jill VanDewoestine, Bob Walker, Noel Sylvester	

Ministry Teams:

Building & Grounds	Rachel Hofstetter	6th year of 6 possible
	Joyce Nelson	4th year of 6 possible
	Jill VanDewoestine (Technology)	2nd year of 6 possible
	Peter Reif (Heating and Thermostat Systems)	
Church and Family Life	Tom Wilkinson	3rd year of 6 possible
	Margo Brown	3rd year of 6 possible
	John Brown	3rd year of 6 possible
	Star Bright	2nd year of 6 possible
	Jennifer Fais	2nd year of 6 possible
	Bob Walker	2nd year of 6 possible

Delegate to Susquehanna Association and N.Y. Conference	Lourdes Pascual Jennifer Fais (April '27) Noel Sylvester (April '27)	4th year of 6 possible 1st year of 6 possible 1st year of 6 possible
Memorial	Margo Brown Jan Kostolansky Pauletta O'Donnell	7th year of 6 possible 7th year of 6 possible 1 st year of 6 possible
Mission & Outreach	Lynn Decher Mary Daly Laurie Johnson	3rd year of 6 possible 1st year of 6 possible 1st year of 6 possible
Midday Fellowship	Diane Haskins	2nd year of 6 possible
Scholarship	Dave Lambert Margo Brown Judy Garrett	6th year of 6 possible 4th year of 6 possible 4th year of 6 possible
Spiritual Life	Maria Quintal Beth Briggs Judy Garrett Jennifer Fais Joyce Nelson Judy Graf Eric Meek Monica Meek Chris Wilken	6th year of 6 possible 5th year of 6 possible 5th year of 6 possible 2nd year of 6 possible 2nd year of 6 possible 1st year of 6 possible 1st year of 6 possible 1st year of 6 possible 1st year of 6 possible

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Corning, NY
Congregational Meeting Minutes - June 29, 2025

The Moderator, Bob Walker, called the meeting to order at 10:54 a.m. He verified that a quorum was reached with over twenty-five members in attendance and on Zoom. The moderator explained the purpose of the meeting: to approve the slate of nominations for the upcoming year and to accept the annual report as written and submitted.

Bob requested a motion to approve the slate of candidates for the board.

Motion: Jim Flaws

Seconded: Star Bright

Corrections to the minutes:

Add Star Bright to PPR committee on page 3.

Delete "39: s" from line 3, paragraph 4, page 17.

Delete last paragraph on page 15.

Motion to approve corrected minutes.

Motion: Jill VanDewoestine

Seconded: Jill Palmer

Bob Walker adjourned the meeting at 11:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Margo K. Brown, Clerk

Ministry Plan Summary

Building & Grounds:

- Create a welcoming, safe, and comfortable internal and external facility and environment.
- Care and custody of all church property, ensuring safe and proper use of the building and proper maintenance of the grounds
- Develop building and grounds use protocols
- Recommend funding for repairs and capital improvements as needed.

Church and Family Life

- Plan multi-generational activities for our congregation.

Midday Fellowship

- Provide a safe and cordial environment for everyone in the church while fostering caring for our church family.

Mission and Outreach

- Work with Church's Future Working Group to discuss the role of "mission" in church revitalization. Possibly change focus from non-profit speaker invites to actual hands-on community outreach endeavors with one primary mission as an identifier for FCUCC. This approach is recommended by various authors who study church decline and renewal.
- Continue to participate in church projects, especially as teams emerge or are reshaped in response to evolving changes within the church.
- Take advantage of our Chamber of Commerce membership to promote our events. Consider church member attendance at Chamber-sponsored networking events when appropriate.
- Consider the United Way Day of Action as a group outreach activity.
- Consider ways to actively support our church's ONA designation, such as possibly designating SoFLX Pride as our mainstay June special mission.

Spiritual Life

- Partner with the Pastor and others to create and offer worship services that serve member needs and encourage membership growth.
- Maintain an inclusive, strong music program.
- Help the congregation learn about and deepen faith through multiple opportunities.
- Develop and carry out programs that impact all generations.
- Make efficient use of human and financial resources to carry out this Ministry Plan.

Ministry Team Reports

Buildings & Grounds

Accomplishments

- Our building continues to support community groups by granting permission to hold meetings, concerts, recitals, etc. in our building. Thirty-one community groups use the building, which is a slight increase over the previous year. There have been 14 one-time users, 4 two-four times users, 5 weekly users, and 7 monthly users. Of the 31 users, 11 are new this program year. One wedding and two memorial services were held during the year.
- The Building Usage Form, revised 11/24, works very well for us. It can be found on the church website, from our Administrative Secretary, or directly from Joyce Nelson or Rachel Hofstetter.
- There were some issues with our cleaning service during the last year. Expectations of both parties were reviewed in a meeting, and plans for follow-up were made. We again requested the timely submission of monthly invoices for payment.
- A wood-coated lockable desk was purchased, new cameras installed, and upgrades to the Zoom system were completed. Zoom users have shared that the system is much better.
- Pergola construction began in June 2025 and was completed in August 2025. A dedication in memory of Robert (Bob) Garrett was held on September 14, 2025.
- An ant issue was a big problem in the kitchen and Fellowship Hall. Ehrlich Pest Control service was contacted. We now have a semi-annual contract for spraying, which is working well to deter pests.
- Inspections of all fire extinguishers in the church building and garage were completed by the United Fire Equipment Company on June 12, 2026. The Corning Fire Department completed its Fire Inspection for the church in June 2025. Their annual inspection will be done in June 2026.
- Boilers were inspected by the boiler inspection company and are functioning properly.
- Health Permit for our kitchen is current.
- Two toilets were replaced in the women's bathroom due to malfunctioning and leakage.
- A new coffee maker was purchased to replace our 25-year-old machine. As with our old coffee maker, the new one maintains hot water at all times as it is used during the week, as well as on Sundays.
- All church carpets were cleaned in mid-September 2025.
- Interior & exterior window washing was completed in September 2025.
- A new church cemetery sign was made and installed by Tom Kowalik. Tom used the same design for the sign, which was an Eagle Scout project approximately 15 + years ago that had deteriorated.
- The winter season snow and Ice removal contract with TLR Contracting & Lawn Care for the parking lot and sidewalks was renewed, and there is no cost increase from the prior year.
- Peter Reif replaced batteries in the thermostats when boilers were started for the winter season.
- Many pieces of siding had deteriorated on the church garage. The side door would not close properly, and the garage door was also hard to open. Tom Kowalik and Bob Walker provided input, and 2 estimates were obtained. DeWalt and Sons Contractor began work in November and completed as much as could be done prior to the weather turning bad. The job will be completed in June 2026.
- It was decided to service the John Deere Tractor. A final decision to keep or sell will be made later.
- During the Hanging of the Greens, it was discovered that the two banners Bob Garrett designed and made 31 years ago, which always hung in the back of the sanctuary, were getting cracked and worn. A decision was made to investigate if they could be replaced with a more durable material and made shorter for easier hanging. When the banners were laid side by side, we discovered Bob had actually painted the two banners as one scene. The banners were taken to Multi Media Design and Printing,

and they created a new one-piece shorter banner depicting the scenes on both banners as Bob had originally painted them. The new banner will hang in front of the Sanctuary for Christmas 2026.

- With the help of Tom and Shirley Kowalik, our back entrance and hallways were made more welcoming, clean, fresh, and less cluttered. Walls were patched and painted along with door trim and molding. A new “YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!” sign and directional sign for Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall were hung. We also installed a new literature rack and bulletin board in the hallway. A new magnetic board for name tags and signup sheets was installed in Fellowship Hall.
- Issue with toilets overflowing several Sundays in a row, not just in the bathrooms and janitor's closet, but also in the hallways. Brian Beck, our plumber, was contacted, and he spent hours cleaning out the sewer line on May 10th & 11th. This is the first major sewer problem the church has had since it was built 65 years ago. The original architectural drawings needed to be used to determine where the sewer caps were located, because when the flooring was installed, it was placed over the caps. The caps outside could not be located as they were overgrown with grass.
- NYSEG repaired and seeded the cemetery lawn where their trucks made ruts and tore up the lawn backing over the yard to replace a light pole at the corner of the lot. This is still a work in progress with NYSEG, as the grass is only growing on approximately 30% of the area they planted.
- Dane Jack, Electrician, repaired wiring to the timer and installed a new timer that controls the upper track of spot lights on the stained glass window.

Future projects

- Continue to monitor the fire and boiler inspections and the Health Permit for the kitchen to keep them up to date.
- Plan for future thorough cleaning of some rooms.
- Plans for window washing and sprucing up the outside of the church.
- Create a visually appealing mail slot cover for the Narthex mail slot. This mail slot is no longer used as the mailbox is outside the back entrance.
- Andy Rochester, our network consultant, has recommended the replacement of the 3 separate routers with a single mesh network. This will enable people to sign into a single network and not have to choose between specific routers. This will also bring our network security capabilities and ability to manage the system easily up to date. He will send some recommendations so that a decision can be made as to when to move forward. The cost is expected to be less than \$1000.
- Paint the frame of the A-frame in front of the church. Due to the height, this must be professionally done. Funds are included in the 2026 budget for this completion.
- Paint other outside trim as needed.

Thank You

- Our building is well known in the community and is greatly used for meetings, concerts, recitals, and other activities by outside groups, along with our own activities. We strive very hard to keep all in good order for everyone. We want to thank everyone who contributes in any way possible to assist with various needs of the building and grounds.
- A big “Thank You” to Peter Reif for the care & monitoring of the heating and thermostat systems.
- We also want to give a special thank you to Tom and Shirley Kowalik and Bob Walker for all the assistance they have given us on special projects.
- A special thank you to Jill VanDewoestine for solving all the Zoom issues.

Respectfully submitted by Rachel Hofstetter and Joyce Nelson 6/17/26

Church and Family Life

The Team met on September 2, 2025, to plan activities for the year. Members volunteered to lead various programs.

- October 19 – Church members and family met in Ives Run for hiking and picnicking. Bob grilled, and we shared a terrific array of food on an exceptionally beautiful fall afternoon.
- December 7 – Hanging of the Greens. Worship and Faith Formation were involved. Star and Des agreed to inventory and update the Christmas decorations.
- January 16 and February 20 – Two small group dinners were held at the home of John and Margo Brown.
- March 13 and 27, Star organized two sessions of Pickle Ball at the mall.
- On June 20 there will be biking and hiking at the Grand Canyon of PA.

Plans for 2026-27

One event is planned for September 30 – Baseball Game in Rochester (Tom Wilkinson)

The team will meet in the summer to plan the rest of the year.

Church's Future Working Group

Summary:

- Our church is at a pastoral leadership, financial, and membership crossroads, where sustainability is at risk in the next few years.
- We have formed a Church's Future Working Group to lead the church through a discernment process to determine God's Mission and Vision for our future.
- While we consider broader options, we have completed some short-term actions to increase publicity and make the church building more functional and attractive.
- After gathering inputs from the congregation and church revitalization experts, we will hold discussions on survey results and how we see ourselves to develop outreach messages that are consistent with our programs.
- Our next steps will include joining a church revitalization program sponsored by the NY Conference.

Note: Hiring of an interim pastor will be handled by a separate Search team, not by this group.

Introduction:

In 2026, the church faces several challenges.

- Membership continues to decline through members passing away and leaving the area, and new member levels are not enough to offset that trend.
- Our finances are stable, but over 60% of our pledges are provided by fewer than 10 members. We have reserves that will cover 1-2 years if we lose some of these pledges, but without new members, we are at financial risk.
- We have volunteer gaps in critical areas such as Faith Formation and the Assistant Treasurer's role.
- Reverend Henry will be retiring in April 2027.

As a part of the 2026 Financial report, the congregation approved "Convening of a strategic planning team that will explore means of managing our programs and resources wisely and identifying options for local partnerships, either secular or sacred, to improve our long-term prospects." The scope includes all aspects of the church, including financial, programmatic, lay and pastoral leadership, community engagement and support, sacred and secular partnerships, UCC and outside guidance, membership structures, and buildings and grounds management.

As Moderator, Jill VanDewoestine recruited the team, which includes Lynn Decher, Jennifer Fais, Tom Kowalik, Bob Walker, and Tom Wilkinson. Pastor Henry is advising the team, but is not a formal member, due to his short tenure as pastor. The team formally kicked off the process in February by defining a name: Church's Future Working Group, a purpose, and a process/timeline.

Purpose Statement:

As a church, it's time to reexamine how we do God's work in our changing world. The Church's Future Working Group is convening this year to look at new and creative ideas to grow in our faith and serve our community better. Our work will result in a sustainable path forward for the foreseeable future that would include:

1. Path 1 - Revitalization and independence
2. Path 2 - Define & explore collaborations
3. Path 3 - Wind down church operations over time

Initial Process/Timeline:

- February: assemble team & preliminary planning – done
- March: finalize project plan & meeting/communication cadence – done
- April – June: conduct analysis & first report-out to congregation – done
- July – September: approach third parties & hold initial discussions, second report-out to congregation – partnership discussion delayed pending outcomes of church growth activities
- October – November: develop recommendations & final report to congregation - plan to present initial results from church growth and church study cohort activities

Survey results

A church-wide survey was conducted that asked the following questions:

1. Why do you attend this church?
2. What is this church's core mission?
3. What do you tell people about this church?
4. What programs should this church offer?

Over 20 responses were received. Since the questions were open-ended, and many responses could apply to multiple questions, we grouped all the responses according to common themes. We will publish a more comprehensive review of the survey for a future meeting.

The top tier of responses was:

- Do God's work/missions/community care
- Welcome and accept all/ONA
- Enjoy friendship/fellowship

The second tier of responses was:

- Ask questions/explore faith/grow faith
- Promote kindness & love/follow a liberal, progressive interpretation of the Bible
- Good sermons/good pastor/good worship
- Care for each other/care for church family

The last tier of responses was:

- Share our building

- Attract families & younger members
- Work with other churches & nonprofits
- Enjoy music
- Eat together
- Make attending easy
- I don't know/we should figure it out

We also met with Rev. Barbara VanOlpen, Associate Conference Minister for Clergy & Congregations, on her experiences with church renewal. Main takeaways from that conversation were:

- Thriving UCC churches are leaning into progressive values such as ONA, have active adult faith formation, and have other revenue streams besides annual pledges and Sunday offerings.
- Church renewal requires a strong spiritual component, whether from the pastor or lay leadership. You need to have a true sense of purpose that is bought into by most members.
- Working with a coach is a really good idea to keep focused and help with accountability.
- Don't short-change the search and call process! Several NY Conference churches have done so recently and have called someone who has caused major problems. Also, the work that goes into the profile can help drive vitality work.

Short-term actions - buildings & grounds

- We are exploring ways to add more art to spaces, starting with quilts and stained glass windows, to provide beauty and variety in our building. These pieces on loan from area artists will be displayed on a rotating basis.
- For Pride month, we assisted in decorating the church building with rainbow bunting to make it more obvious to the public that we are an Open and Affirming church.
- A large canopy banner was designed and ordered to display the church's name and address on our booth at the Pride Festival.

Short-term actions - publicity & outreach

- We are leveraging our membership in the Chamber of Commerce by exploring promotional and networking opportunities.
- Working with Charlette Smith (Administrative Assistant), we implemented some ways to boost our social media presence by filming sermon teasers and maintaining a more active posting cadence.
- Publicity for the Blair-Bigler-Perry concert has included paid ads on Nextdoor as well as Facebook & Instagram; community calendars; direct contact with other churches and music organizations; and public flyers, to augment the consistent and faithful efforts of Beth Briggs/Music.
- Based on ideas from "Real Good Church," we developed a social media campaign that will run weekly throughout the summer. Charlette is also encouraging building users to tag us when they post.
- We had an "ask a church member" and "ask a pastor" at our Pride Festival booth that allowed people to find out more about our church.
- For the Fall Fest & Bazaar, we will offer space to building users to help their community outreach efforts. We are also developing a new t-shirt design for the church family to wear that day.
- We are considering hosting a bookshelf at Card Carrying bookstore on Market Street.

Long-term actions

- It is critical to church growth that we solidify our understanding of the church's purpose in our community. With support from the Susquehanna Association and the New York Conference, we will join a cohort of 3-5 other area churches that are going through similar processes. These cohorts will be

advised by Rev. VanOlpen and church growth consultant Paul Nickerson.

- Of the three goals we have, we are focusing on revitalization and community involvement. We have decided to delay serious discussion of winding down for now.

Next Steps

- Publish a more detailed report on the church survey and hold an after-church discussion on implications
- Kick off the NY Conference-led church renewal cohort with joint training and workshop
- Explore partnerships with non-profit building users to increase worship participants

Reference materials were provided by Pastor Henry and other books we have identified, including:

1. Real Good Church (Rev. Molly Baskette)
2. Standing Naked Before God (Rev. Molly Baskette)
3. We Refused to Lead a Dying Church (Paul Nixon)
4. Leading Congregational Change (Furr, Herrington, Bonem)
5. Eight Virtues of Rapidly Growing Churches (Byassee, Miofsky)
6. Anatomy of a Revived Church (Thom Rainer)

Finance Team

2026-2027 Objectives:

1) A New Way to Handle the Treasurer's Job

Because the Assistant Treasurer, Allison Zimmerman, has moved from the area, a search is on for a replacement. Jennifer and Charlette are exploring how to split up QuickBooks work. This will not only take some of the load off the Treasurer, but will also give Jennifer a backup. Please continue to address your questions/concerns to the treasurer@corningucc.org email and Jennifer will be the one with your answer. And here is a handy tip (and a safe way for the church to handle money): If it is **income**, please be in touch with Jill Palmer, Chief Collector. If it is an **expense**: it's the Treasurers' job.

- 2) The Finance Team will continue managing the Stewardship Process. In August, the Finance Team will meet to outline the process, choose dates, and assign responsibilities for September and October. We should be finished by the end of October.
- 3) Our Budgeting process runs from October through the end of January (our Annual meeting). The Annual Meeting is likely to be held on the last Sunday in January: January 31, 2027.
- 4) The Finance Team will continue to use our Breeze software to track all giving, to send information to QuickBooks (Treasurer), and to create year-end statements and other reports as requested.

2025 - 2026 Accomplishments

- 1) The Treasurers' activities are too numerous to mention. A short list includes, but is not limited to: entering the budget into QuickBooks and maintaining it all year, paying all the church's bills, managing the outsourced payroll, managing the church's accounts at the Credit Union (including our CD management), managing all the funds in the Balance Sheet, tracking all the income to the Church (mostly comes through Breeze), producing the monthly Treasurers' Reports, etc. Special kudos for tracking the funds for the Refugee Project. All the fine details can be found in our January Financial Report.
- 2) The Finance Team manages the Stewardship in September and October. Gathering all the pledges and determining our basis for the next year's budget. Our pledge total for 2026 was \$145,349.

- 3) Our Budgeting process runs from October through the end of January (our Annual meeting). We produce a draft Budget that is continually updated until we produce the Proposed Budget, which is presented to the Board in early December. The Proposed Budget gets updated through January. The final, approved Budget is the product of the January Annual Meeting. The Income/Expense total for the 2026 Budget was \$178,028.
- 4) Special attention was given to our CD portfolio this year, as several of the CDs matured.

Fundraising

Responsibilities:

- Develop and recommend fundraising ideas to raise funds to meet the budget.
- Undertake/coordinate fundraisers in cooperation with the Chief Collector and Treasurer.

Accomplishments

- The Fall Harvest and Bake Sale was held on Saturday, September 6, 2025. The profit was \$1550 after costs were subtracted. Music was again provided by the Corning Brassworks in the morning and Art Hofstetter in the afternoon. Both were very positively received.
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner was held on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. This year's community recipient was the Corning Area Food Pantry. A donation of \$500 was given to the food pantry.

Future Plans

- There will be a Fall Fest & Bazaar held on Saturday September 12 from 9a – 3p. We plan to do additional sales through Marketplace, eBay, &/or Craigslist, as we did for the 2024 sale. That format worked very well for specific items. More information will be provided as details are confirmed.
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner is part of the discussions. It has not been decided if we will be hosting it or whether we will be assisting the church that will be hosting. More details will be provided in the future.
- Continue discussion regarding future fundraising ideas.

6/14/26 Respectively Submitted by Rachel Hofstetter, Bruce Graf, Joyce Nelson

Membership Team

Accomplishments:

- 1) Each meeting, we have a discussion about membership - anybody noticeably absent?, visitors?, should we send a card?, etc. Do we need to update our Breeze/Membership/Church Family data?
- 2) Twice a year (May and November) we review our Active Membership list and make sure all additions or deletions are current. This process produces our official Active Membership List that is used for our annual meetings. Also our count for UCC membership dues.
- 3) We looked at ways to better track attendance, including Zoom, but haven't created a real process yet.

Midday Fellowship

Responsibilities

- Meet to enjoy fellowship and write cards to shut-ins and the home-bound, kids at college, and other church families needing support on the second Wednesday of each month.
- Provide interesting noontime programs, as speakers are available.

- Undertake community outreach projects such as the mitten tree, which provides mittens, scarves, and hats for elementary school children.
- Create and mail care packages to youth away from home.
- Bake and deliver Christmas cookies to home-bound church family members.
- Coordinate the Coffee Hour Host list, encouraging volunteers to sign as another way of fostering inclusive fellowship within the church community.
- Assist in providing food for church receptions in partnership with the sponsoring Ministry.
- Go on an annual Mystery Trip beyond the church walls to learn about area landmarks and enjoy a meal together in a restaurant setting.

Other suggested ideas:

- Take opportunities to build community such as making sandwiches for local shelters or emergency service providers.
- Share our skills by teaching church members to knit and crochet, for example.
- Assist the Fundraising Committee with the periodic Flea and Farmers Market
- Assist Mission/Outreach with gathering donations for a variety of Mission Projects.

2025-26 Activity Report

- June 2025: We distributed Prayer Shawls to several church members and sent some with Des Pascual, who is the chaplain at Arnot Hospital, to give to people who needed our care. Since the new church program year was starting in July, we agreed on Midday Fellowship representatives. Jan Kostolansky stepped down, and Diane Haskins volunteered to report on our activities at the monthly Admin. Board and Ministry Team meetings. We also made future plans.
- July 2025: Our meeting was held at the home of Sylvia Brown. We talked about future plans and our Annual Mystery Trip.
- August 2025: We enjoyed fellowship and sent care cards.
- September 2025: We began our blanket collection for the Corning Area Food Pantry and looked ahead to fall and winter.
- October 2025: We had a Dish-to-Pass Luncheon. Our Speaker was Mike Martino, Esq, discussing Wills and Trusts. We made plans for our Mitten Tree.
- November 2025: We talked about making treats for our homebound: soup and homemade bread instead of the customary cookie selection, calling them our Gifts of Comfort and Joy.
- December 2025: We prepared the treats for the homebound and our staff. These included a fabulous soup (thank you, Greg Brown), homemade holiday napkins (thank you, Jan K.), mini-loaves of zucchini, banana, and lemon/poppyseed (thank you all!). We delivered these holiday baskets to 20 recipients. We also collected the mittens and gloves to be delivered to the elementary schools and began planning 2026 Activities.
- January 2026: We continued planning for 2026 including a fancy Valentine Day High Tea on February 8. The weather was very bad that Sunday, so we postponed that tea to Mother's Day Sunday.
- February 2026: We signed Valentines for our college students and finalized the menu for the fancy St. Patrick's Day Celebration Coffee Hour planned for March 15. Once again, Greg Brown was our chief chef who prepared a real feast with everyone's help that Sunday.
- March 2026: We had a dish-to-pass lunch. Our speaker was Joel Vanslyke, PT, from Choice Physical Therapy.

- April 2026: We had a dish-to-pass lunch followed by an exciting presentation. Our Speaker was John Brown, talking about his Trip to Utah and the Navajo Indian Reservation. We also finalized plans for a wonderful Mother's Day High Tea that we all enjoyed on May 10.
- May 2026: We had a bag lunch, planned the June 6 Blair-Bigler-Perry Reception, our Fall Fest and Bazaar, and how we can contribute to the June Pride Festival. Jan K. noted that she would not be able to head up the Mystery Trip planning this year. It was suggested that we might team up with the Church Life and Family Team. We also agreed on our 2026 - 2027 Midday Fellowship Ministry Plan.
- June 2026: We all pitched in and helped create flower kits for the June 13 PRIDE Festival.

We look forward to another wonderful year of fellowship and community.

Respectfully Submitted,
Beth Briggs

Mission and Outreach

Current Responsibilities:

- Present several local non-profit organizations as a month-long church mission feature (educational, special offering, and volunteering opportunity)
- Promote Salvation Army holiday giving or another benefit
- Organize our church's presence at the annual Pride Festival in Corning each June
- Maintain the literature display racks with current materials
- Seek community outreach collaborations
- Participate in church initiatives

Accomplishments July 2025-June 2026

- Provided the August and March Shepherd's Table meal at the Salvation Army. Upon our recommendation, our church's administrative board approved in April the discontinuation of this long-standing tradition due to attendees' preference for numerous take-out meals rather than communal fellowship and overall lower participation. (The pandemic influenced this trend).
- Holiday Giving: Salvation Army food drive and mini red kettle; Pathways angel tree.
- Recommended reducing the number of local missions presented from six to four, based on the tracking of congregational giving since 2018. Conversations with our church treasurer resulted in suggesting budget support for each collection, and budgeting for all 5 for 5 benevolences to reflect collective rather than individual giving. Both suggestions were approved at January's annual financial meeting. The Christmas Fund will remain an active promotion each December.
- Promoted the following local mission opportunities:
 1. Pathways Therapeutic Foster Care – October
 2. Nonnie Hood Parent Resource Center – February
 3. Arbor Housing Domestic Violence Services – April
 4. Faith in Action STNY – June
- Finalized 2026 membership in the Corning Area Chamber of Commerce with a meeting attended by Judy Garrett and Lynn Decher in February. Jennifer Fais, Jill VanDewoestine, and Lynn Decher composed

a profile of our church for the new member highlight to appear in the June e-newsletter for Chamber members.

- Initiated our church's sponsorship of the 7th annual June Pride Festival in Corning, which is hosted by SoFLX (Southern Finger Lakes) Pride, to support our Open and Affirming (ONA) status while also supporting the festival, and to potentially generate interest in our church. Our church logo appears on the event website sponsorship page.
- Prompted consideration of church decorating for June Pride Month. Enthusiastic results include our new UCC "LOVE IS LOUDER" banner, rainbow bunting, and the exceptional original art installation on the bell tower created by Jennifer Fais and Noel Sylvester- "GOD'S DOORS ARE OPEN TO ALL." Many hands and ladders helped with this decorating effort. Thank you!
- Helped organize our church's booth for the Pride Festival. What is new: a canopy banner identifying our church, a spinning wheel to engage with the public about church life and belief, and a flower craft reflecting the festival's theme, We Bloomed Anyway. Thank you to all for your ideas, your efforts, your presence, and your prayerful support to help this endeavor be successful!
- Purchased a literature rack for the rear entrance "Welcome Wall" to expand display space in conjunction with the Building and Grounds project to update the appearance of that area, which includes advertising of church and community events.

2026-2027 Ministry Plan

- Work with Church's Future Working Group to discuss the role of "mission" in church revitalization. Possibly change focus from non-profit speaker invites to actual hands-on community outreach endeavors with one primary mission as an identifier for FCUCC. This approach is recommended by various authors who study church decline and renewal.
- Continue to participate in church projects, especially as teams emerge or are reshaped in response to evolving changes within the church.
- Take advantage of our Chamber of Commerce membership to promote our events. Consider church member attendance at Chamber sponsored networking events when appropriate.
- Consider the United Way Day of Action as a group outreach activity.
- Consider ways to actively support our church's ONA designation.
- Possibly designate SoFLX Pride as our mainstay June special mission.

Respectfully submitted, Lynn Decher, Rachel Gustina and Pauletta O'Donnell

Nominating Committee Report

The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to present a slate of nominees for leadership positions as outlined in the By-laws. These are to be voted upon for approval by the Congregation.

This year, the Nominating Committee hosted a table – with treats! – on three Sundays in April and May to enable members of the Church to sign up for positions for the 2026-2027 program year. Those not reached at the table were contacted individually, and announcements of vacant positions were made to the whole congregation.

The Nominating Committee proposes that the term limits in the By-laws be suspended for the 2026-2027 program year. This is necessary to fill the nominating slate for the coming year, due to the smaller number of people available to take on responsibilities.

The Committee is pleased to present the slate of nominations.

Respectfully submitted, Maria Quintal, Judy Graf, and Judy Garrett

Pastor Parish Relations

We meet every 4 months. Our first focus is listening and advising Pastor Henry when appropriate as he continues in his spiritual leadership role for the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Corning, NY. Our secondary focus is listening and questioning how we can be more of an assistance to both Henry and the church at large. Our conversations are confidential, and there are positive feelings of trust, care, and concern among the committee members.

Pastor Henry is making plans for his retirement in April of 2027. Our discussions center on making this as smooth a transition for everyone concerned as possible. Pastor Henry has many good ideas on how to make this happen, yet voices concern that our church is moving too slowly in getting the process underway.

Another topic of concern is communication between members and nonmembers of the church with the pastor, and how this communication should be conducted in a respectful manner when there are differences and/or questions regarding the message of the week. The pastor should always be open to listening and discussing others' viewpoints, but upon exiting the service might not be the most appropriate time. Our committee urges taking advantage of the pastor's office hours, preferably by appointment, for extended discussions.

Respectfully,
Tom Wilkinson (Chair)

Personnel Team

Activities

- Personnel team met with staff to check in on performance and concerns and ensured all staff completed NYS-required Sexual Harassment training.
- Personnel team met with all paid staff to check in on objectives, performance, communications, and other issues.
- Personnel reviewed the pastor's benefits and made recommendations on staff salaries.
- Faith Formation hired a nursery staffer (Katie Shattuck) who served throughout the fall and spring. She will be replaced in the fall by Tess Barber.
- The technology team hired two Zoom techs (Finn Barber and Harrison Moon) in July 2025 to replace Patrick Wilkin. Finn resigned in June 2026 to begin college.
- Personnel hired Charlette Smith to replace Brenda Passmore as church administrative assistant in October 2025.
- Personnel hired Katie Klawitter as the church keyboardist in August 2025, who resigned in March due to the loss of her husband. The music team filled in keyboardists for the remainder of the choir season.

Upcoming 2026-27 Activities

- Hire one or more keyboardists to start in September.
- Maintain personnel processes (salary recommendations, staff evaluations and concerns, training, etc.) and files
- Work with the pastor and staff on personnel-related issues as they arise.

Spiritual Life (a merger of the Worship & Music Team with the Faith Formation Team)

Worship Responsibilities:

- Work with the Pastor to set the annual worship calendar (number, times, and types of services.)
- Recruit, organize, and train help for Sunday worship:
 - Ushers
 - Liturgists/special services readers (Advent, Maundy Thursday, etc.)
 - Children's Message
- Work with the Sanctuary Steward on sanctuary needs.
- Organize monthly communion: order supplies, select services, prepare and clean up.
- Explore inclusion of congregation in worship services.
 - One idea is to ask anyone in the congregation who felt so inclined to share a personal reflection of a time when they felt moved in some way by the Spirit and how it had changed their life. Volunteers would be asked to type up and share the reflection with the Pastor as they worked together to incorporate the reflection into a worship service.
 - Coordinate Youth Sunday and develop intergenerational services, and the like.
- Work with the Pastor to identify, support, and evaluate pulpit supply.
- Support/guide the technical team to ensure an effective Zoom worship experience.

Music Responsibilities

- Support the Chancel Choir and the Bell Choir
- Organize and promote the annual Blair-Bigler-Perry Concert
- Continue to engage our youth as often as possible in such worship elements as music, singing, and reading the liturgy during a worship service.
- Meet quarterly with music staff so we can coordinate worship themes with special music and better inform the congregation of these exciting special services. Also, explore ways to teach the congregation new hymns during worship and suggest music elements, such as having the Choir sing "Alleluia" or "Let Peace Begin with Me" (for example) at the conclusion of worship.
- Organize the summer music program and assist in recruiting summer keyboardists.
- Oversee the maintenance of the organ, pianos, bells, printed music, robes, etc.
- Assist the Personnel Team in the evaluation of music staff.

Faith Formation Responsibilities

Nursery

- Assist the Personnel Team in hiring the nursery caregiver.
- Check on the cleanliness and safety of the environment, and that the toys in the nursery are appropriate for babies and toddlers.
- Purchase supplies for the nursery as needed.

Children and Youth

- Determine the best configuration of a Faith Formation program for children and youth, including worship service participation.
- Choose and purchase appropriate materials for this program, including crafts and supplies.
- Secure adults to facilitate activities.

- Order Bibles for elementary children when appropriate.
- Hold a confirmation study with adult mentors from the congregation when there is an interest.
- Plan and lead youth mission trips, ideally every two years.

Special Worship Opportunities

- Plan the Kick-Off Sunday for Intergenerational Spiritual Life, to be held in September.
- Choose and facilitate a Christmas pageant to be held in December.
- Hold an Easter egg hunt.
- Facilitate youth Sunday, to be held in June.
- Present glass eggs to those graduating from high school.

Child Safety

- Conduct background checks for everyone who works with children.
- Implement child abuse prevention training for all adults who work with children.
- Ensure a 2-adult policy whenever children are present.

Adults

- Hold Coffee Hour forums.
- Hold small group discussions, with the possibility of using a variety of media.
- Encourage Lenten study participation with other churches.

Accomplishments

What a busy year 2025/2026 was! Despite the few challenges we experienced along the way, there were still many opportunities for faith-building and lifting the spirit.

Pastor Henry and Bob Walker offered a Bible Study group beginning September 9th and into the fall. On World Communion Sunday, October 5th, we again enjoyed breads from around the world during communion and at the luncheon following the service. On All Saints Day, November 2nd, we celebrated and honored the lives of 11 of our dearly departed, including five of our members. On Baptism Sunday, January 11th, Pastor Henry invited the congregation to a "Reaffirmation of Baptism" ceremony. Participants walked up to the font for a sprinkling of water to reaffirm that God claimed us as God's own and that we are God's beloved. Most of the congregation participated. Pastor Henry also provided several interactive sermons on the subject of suffering and other topics throughout the summer, inviting the congregation to participate. He is currently providing interesting sermon "Teasers" on social media.

It was unfortunate that our organist, Katie Klawitter, needed to resign for personal reasons. Beth Briggs, our music steward, was most diligent in recruiting keyboardists to take Katie's place and to provide music throughout the summer. She also organized the entire June 6th Blair-Bigler-Perry Concert, and it was a grand success.

Many other opportunities for faith-building through music have been made available to us throughout the year. What a blessing to have enjoyed the music from the Chancel Choir throughout the year, and especially at the Christmas Concert. The Bell Choir provides heavenly music four times a year. The Christmas Season was made even more special with our Youth leading the Children's Pageant and an amazing solo of "O Holy Night" being sung by Patrick Wilken on Christmas Eve. We were delighted by the music from the Corning Brass Works who provided special music in May, and our church members from that group, John Brown, Tom Kowalik, and Lane Meek also played another time. We have been truly blessed by our Youth's many talents. They have delighted us with their reading skills, singing, playing the piano, trumpet, and even acting! Our Church also hosted a spring concert entitled "All the Beautiful Years" presented by the Women's Chorale of Corning. We continued collaborating with area churches to help enhance the ecumenical experience. Community

Mennonite Fellowship offered a Blue Christmas Service, a Lenten Study Program, and an Ash Wednesday service. The Episcopal Church's annual Jazz Sunday. Emanuel Lutheran Church and UCC interchange summer worship experiences. UCC hosted the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper this year.

The challenges we were facing with Zoom have been virtually solved; new communion cup holders are now in use, and the two banners from the back of the church are now one large, beautiful banner. Our future challenges may be in attaining the help we need to continue the programs listed above and others, such as additional intergenerational special worship opportunities. We foresee another successful year ahead, even as Pastor Henry retires on April 1st. We wish him and Des a long, happy, and fulfilling retirement!

Aside from the Pastor, it requires many people to provide a successful church program. We would like to express our deep gratitude to the following people, and others we may have missed, for sharing so much of their time and talents this past year to make UCC the special church that it is:

Liturgists (Readers)—Bruce Graf, Mary Daly, Tom Wilkinson, Emily, Adeline and Tom Sarafian, Joyce Nelson, Laurie Johnson, Rachel Hofstetter, Star Bright, Eric, Monica, Sig and Lane Meek, Des Pascual, Jan Kostolansky, Mike Flanagan, Barb Cooper, Ellis Wilken, John Brown, Bob Walker, Carole Fimlaid

Chancel Choir—Mike Flanagan, Melody Flanagan, Pastor Henry, Dan Marcellus, Jill Palmer, Star Bright, Barb Cooper, Darlene Schieber, Dave Lambert, Beth Briggs, Pam Schmitt, Des Pascual, John Brown

Ushers—Diane Haskins, Lynn Decher, Bruce Graf, Rachel Hofstetter, Judy Garrett, Star Bright, Margo Brown, Pauletta O'Donnell, Tom Wilkinson, Joyce Nelson, Bob Cooper

Children's Moment Presenters—Jill VanDewoestine, Pastor Henry, Keith Barnes, Darlene Schieber, Bob Walker, Mike Flanagan, Jan Kostolansky

Keyboardists/Organ—Katie Klawitter, Claire Smock, Melody and Mike Flanagan, Monica Meek

Tech Crew—Josh Wilken, Andy Rochester, Jill VanDewoestine, Patrick Wilken, Phinn Barber, Harrison Moon

Communion Preparers and Servers—Joyce Nelson, Rachel Gustina, Rachel Hofstetter, Des Pascual, Laurie Johnson, Pauletta O'Donnell, Noel Sylvester, Jennifer Fais

Advent Candle Lighters/Readers—The Sarafian Family, the Meek Family, Ron and Laurie Johnson, Jan Kostolansky, Sylvia Brown, Pat Iddings, Pam and Bob Walker

Altar Steward —Joyce Nelson

Bulletin Preparers—Charlette Smith, Brenda Passmore

Pulpit Supply/Guest Ministers—Gary Brown, Eric Detar, Barbara VanOlpen

Many thanks to everyone who facilitated and 'performed' during Youth Sunday, Children's Pageant, and Christmas Eve Service!

Respectfully submitted, Beth Briggs, Jennifer Fais, Judy Garrett, Joyce Nelson, Maria Quintal