

Building Personal Connections and a Stronger Financial Foundation for Our Church

Over the years, the generosity of our members and friends has blessed us to be able to support an expansion in our Church programs, staff and missions through which so many have benefited.

In 2006, the financial leadership of our Church began a strategic review to assess the alignment between expected resources and our growing needs. The review included a feasibility study which interviewed a number of families and showed a strong commitment to our Church and its programs. It further indicated that our members have a strong desire to support the Church both financially and personally and consider The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme to be a “special place”.

At the same time, the review concluded that the Church’s revenue growth was no longer able to keep up with the support of current programs, much less allow for the normal cost increases associated with salaries, benefits and the maintenance of our historic properties.

In response, two years ago we conducted a Visitation and Pledge Campaign for 2007 during which 250 visits to our congregation were made by 85 members of the visitation team. The goals of the visits were to not only explain the church’s financial situation, but to “reconnect” on a personal basis and listen to each person’s concerns and dreams for the church.

The experience was very positive according to those who participated. Pledges were up 15% from the prior year, which allowed us to start addressing several of the needs identified in the financial plan, including an increase in benevolences, salary and benefits, and church operating costs.

Then last year, over 100 additional members and friends were visited. And while we finished shy of our \$650,000 goal, feedback again was very supportive of our approach to become “reconnected” to each other through the visits.

Looking forward, we hope to sustain this positive momentum and build on our success in increasing the support for our church’s ministries each year.

We also recognize that these are difficult economic times for many of our members and friends, making increasing financial support a challenge in many cases. However, we should all also recognize that difficult economic times place additional demands on the church to support increasing numbers of those in need, and we hope our members and friends can help meet these growing needs.

With these considerations in mind, your Stewardship Board has established the following goals for 2009:

- Continue the personal visitations
- Visit most members and friends once every 5 years
- Conduct a minimum of 100 visits
- Achieve a somewhat lower, but still challenging pledge goal of \$620,000

If you are contacted for a visit this year, we ask that you welcome your fellow members and friends into your home as a minister of the Church. For all our members, we very much appreciate your ongoing support to maintain and grow the vitality and spirit of this “special place”.

Your Board of Stewardship

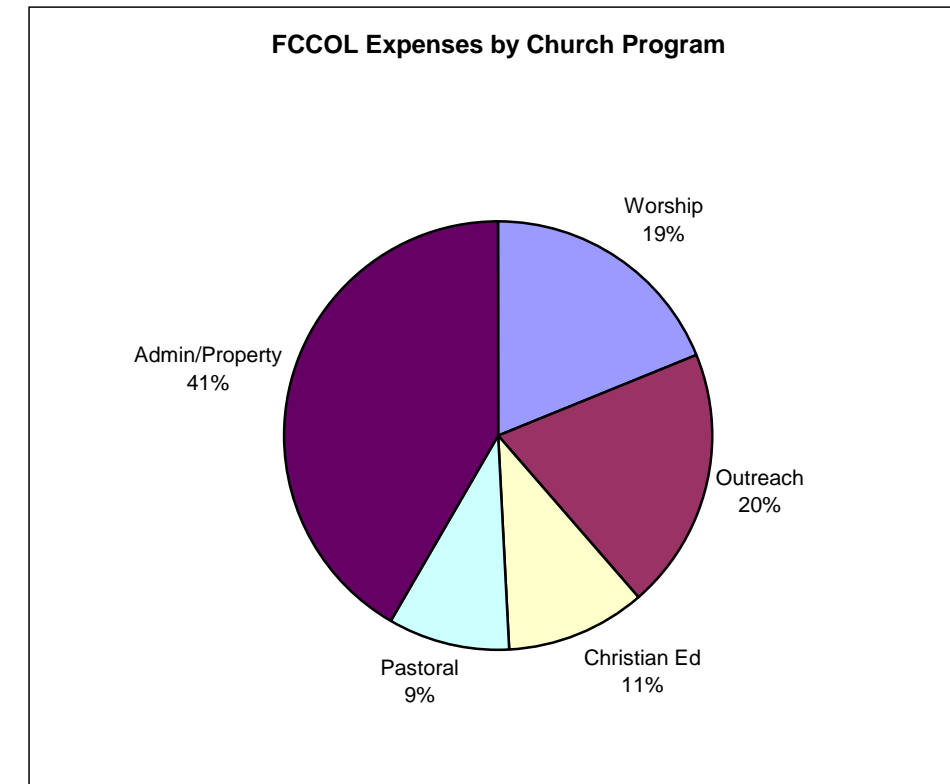
Bruce Anderson, Chairperson

John Braselton, Deborah Butler, Martha Gibson, David Griswold, Greg Hack, Henry May,
Brenda McConnell, Bill Stubenbord

A Financial “Snapshot” of FCCOL in 2008

How is our annual income spent?

This chart illustrates our 2008 budgeted expenses by Church program. Our ministers’ and lay employees’ salaries and expenses are allocated to each program.



Total Expenses = \$ 802,606 (100%)

Where does our financial support come from?

The church’s revenue to support these programs comes primarily from pledged income from our members and friends:

- **Stewardship Pledges** \$ **625,000** (78%)
- Other Offerings \$ 70,236 (9%)
- Endowment & Interest \$ 95,370 (12%)
- Other Income \$ 12,000 (1%)

- **TOTAL INCOME** \$ **802,606** (100%)

Our pledge goal for the **2009 campaign** to support our programs is **\$620,000**. Meeting the church’s needs in 2009 with its increased demands to meet inflation, expanded ministries and more people in need in difficult economic times, will depend heavily on the success of our visitation and stewardship campaign.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

➤ ***How will the money be used?***

The Church needs ongoing funding to maintain current programs, provide modest cost-of-living salary increases to our ministers and staff, and to maintain and operate our facilities. And there is opportunity to expand our Christian Education programs (both adult and youth), benevolence giving and music programs. Additional pledge income over time will also allow us to prudently manage our dependence on endowment income. We are now taking 5% of the value of the endowment each year for operating purposes.

➤ ***Why are we having a visitation and pledge campaign again this year?***

The feasibility study which was conducted in 2006 clearly indicated that our members saw the need for a visitation program which would give us the opportunity to reconnect with one another while at the same time have the potential to increase our pledge income. Over the past eight years our expenses have increased by 4.3% each year, while our revenues have increased by only 3.6%. If allowed to continue, our currently healthy financial base will be eroded.

➤ ***How will I determine the size of my pledge?***

In the current economic climate, and with so many other worthy causes competing for our dollars, pledging is an especially personal decision. We encourage you to think about what FCCOL means to you in the context of these other interests and needs. What is it “worth” to experience spiritual growth, to have our children learn about God, to receive hospitality and give to those in need, to reflect on our ministers’ sermons, or to listen to our ministry of music?

➤ ***What are SHARES?***

A *Share* equals \$50 per week for one year, totaling \$2,600. Since some may find that a half share is affordable, there must be others willing to provide leadership by subscribing in blocks of five, three, or two *Shares*.

➤ ***Why is a pledge preferred to a donation?***

To reach our goal, we ask every family to give to their potential. A pledge is a personal **promise** to give so we can plan the church year well in advance, and it signifies our commitment to God’s work, and to each other. For most, an annual pledge, paid over 12 months or 52 weeks, helps to make a more substantial gift.

➤ ***Will everyone be visited?***

While we would like to visit each member and friend of the Church, we do not have the number of volunteers to visit our entire congregation annually. It is our hope that the visitation program will continue and most members and friends can be visited over a 5-year period.

➤ ***How will the visitation be conducted?***

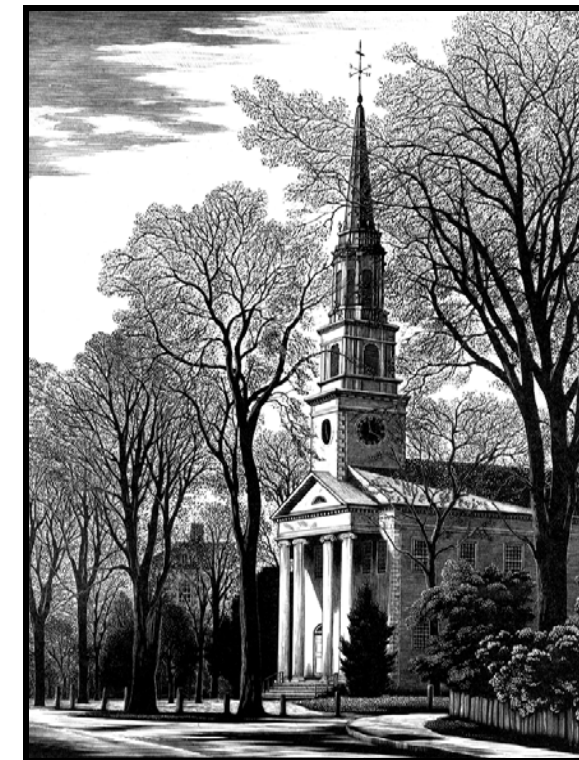
Volunteers will each make personal visits to 3 or 4 families in our congregation from October 20 to November 16. Volunteers will be making visits as ministers of the Church which will give you the opportunity to discuss your relationship with the Church, your participation in its programs, and to ask questions. The important feedback we gain from these visits will help the church better plan its programs and ministries.

The church appreciates your prayerful consideration of your 2009 pledge

The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

2009 VISITATION and STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

“Helping Others in Hard Times”



A PLACE OF GRACE

Following the life and teachings of Jesus, we are a church that strives to be a **place of grace**, welcoming **all** regardless of theological expression, age, race, gender, sexual identity, national origin or financial means. In our Church Constitution we recognize that “each member shall have the undisturbed right to follow the word of God according to the dictates of his or her own conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.” The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, established in 1665, cherishes this proud Pilgrim tradition. We are honored by your presence among us, and we invite you to help us become what we endeavor to be.