



JANUARY 2026

THE SPIRE

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
77 Main Street
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Pastor's Message January 2026

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you." Isaiah 60:1-2



As recounted in Matthew's Gospel, wise men in "The East" noted the rising of a star after Jesus' birth, and felt compelled to follow the star and honour the new king. Much as we are greeting a new year, the Magi were greeting a new era in human history. During this season of Epiphany, our worship services move from the excitement of Christ's birth into the start of his ministry: his baptism, gathering his first apostles, healing and attracting crowds. The light, as Isaiah promised, had come! Just as the star attracted the wise men from the east, God's light can attract people from every compass point even today! That divine star promises new life, better life, as we follow its guiding

light. As each New Year brings possibilities for improvement (most of make resolutions, after all), the ever-present light of God continually gives us opportunities to be aware of the Glory of the Lord all around us. May such glory inspire us, lead us, and bring us ever closer to a Godly sense of community in Christ.

With the start of the new year, I'm cutting back my hours as I head toward retirement. I'll be in the office once a week, usually Wednesdays. Of course I'll still be here for worship on Sundays, acoustic worship once a month, memorials and special events. It'll be exciting to see what 2026 brings for our church!

Annual Meeting will be held on the final Sunday of the month, following worship. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Best wishes for the coming year,
Michael Mario, Pastor

TO: All Members of the First Congregational Church, UCC, 77 Main Street, Springfield VT

CALL TO ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
Sunday, January 25, 2026

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Springfield, Vermont, will be held on Sunday, January 25, 2026. We will meet in the Vestry after the Sunday service for a potluck brunch at 11:30, with the meeting to follow. This meeting will transact the following items of business:

1. To receive and act upon the Year-End Reports of the various officers and committees.
2. To approve the minutes of the January 21, 2025 Annual Meeting.
3. To approve the budget for January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026.
4. To review slate and elect officers for the ensuing year.
5. To take up and act upon any other items of business that may properly come before this meeting.

The Annual Reports, including the Financial Report, will be emailed to the membership. Please contact the church office to have one mailed via USPS.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON HOW TO ATTEND THIS MEETING REMOTELY WILL BE FORTHCOMING.

Respectfully,

Peter Andrews

Peter Andrews
Moderator of the Church
Dated this 31th of December, 2025

**ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE ON
JANUARY 12TH.**

Christmas Food Festival Was A Success

Polly Blais and Carol Richardson organized the first ever Christmas Food Festival held in the Vestry on December 20th. There were 7 Vendors who paid for the table space and then sold their Food. All were happy with their results, including our own Church Food Table which took in \$276., in addition to the \$155. received in table rental. Thanks to everyone who baked and helped. 802 Soul Foods rented the kitchen to sell take-out dinners and will be back doing the same thing on Friday, January 16th from 5-8 PM.

The Christmas Eve Service was well attended and the generous offering of \$347. was divided between Habitat for Humanity and the VT UCC Hope Fund. The week before was the annual Christmas Fund offering with \$50. received and sent to the VT UCC.

Community Lunches are on hold until we find a new Coordinator. Pat Townsend has been organizing these meals since March 2024 and she is stepping down from this task. There are lots of volunteers who will help on that day, and instructions to follow that Diane Holme originally set up, but we need a new person to organize the monthly menus and volunteers!

TREASURER'S REPORT

(as of Nov. 30, 2025)

YTD income	\$100,972.
<u>YTD expenses</u>	<u>\$161,585.</u>
Difference	(\$60,613.)

Total Liquid Assets	\$266,054.
<u>Restricted Funds</u>	<u>\$162,982.</u>
Avail. Liquid Assets	\$103,072.

Church services will continue to be live streamed on Facebook each Sunday at 10:00 and the services can be viewed anytime through the church website.

Sunday church services are also recorded on DVD for SAPA TV to be shown at a later date. The present channels are 160 for VTEL TV and 1077 for Xfinity Comcast and services are shown on Sunday at 10AM and Wednesday at 4PM. There is at least a one week delay.

Potluck on Sunday, January 25th after church and before the Annual Meeting, about 11:30. Bring whatever you would like to eat – brunch to lunch – and enjoy some good conversation with friends! It's always fun to see what a variety we have and too many desserts are never a problem!



CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

Jan. 8 *Cindy Hughes*
Jan. 13 *Mary Cross*
Jan. 29 *Judy Trombly*
Jan. 31 *Elmer Kruse (98)*

CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARIES

Jan. 25 *Michael and Heidi
Mario*

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY and ANNIVERSARY
TO EVERYONE IN THE MONTH OF
JANUARY.**

Special Congregational Meeting on 10/26 and meeting with Mike Schmitt on 11/9.

The meeting on 10/26 was well attended. Pastor Michael will be retiring at the end of this year. He has offered to continue as a Bridge Pastor until we find a new Pastor. A Search Committee was formed. We had a conversation about renting space in our church to community groups as a result of our Leadership Council recommending that we speak with Mike Schmitt, President of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Mike had some thoughts about possibilities. The members on 10/26 asked that Mike meet with us to share these ideas and for us to explore this opportunity.

Members and friends were invited to meet with Mike after worship on 11/9. Mike spoke about three groups looking for space for their collections and for classroom/lecture space. The groups mentioned were the Springfield Historical Society, Stellafane and the Vault. Mike said that a "management committee" could be formed from the community and likely at least one church member to find funding/grants for any structural changes needed and would oversee the process of re-imagining our church building. Church members were concerned about how all of this would work and still have Sunday services and an ongoing faith community. Mike also mentioned the idea of a Culinary Institute and another member mentioned earlier the possibility of a Music Academy. The next step may be to ask Vanessa Rebentisch, Director, of Springfield on the Move to speak with us. Members also wanted more information about how the three groups needing room for their collection would use our available space. Members had questions about how the second floor classrooms could work. There are lots of good questions and a lot of possibilities. What can we give up to make this large, beautiful building fit into supporting the revitalization of Springfield?

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885-5728

Michael Mario, Pastor
Sheila Turner, Adm. Assistant
885-5728
Todd Murray, Sexton
885-5728

Church Office Hours
Tues. and Wed.
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Pastor's Hours
Wed.
9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.