



## The Congregational Church in Killingworth

United Church of Christ  
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January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Dear Church Family,

Hopefully this letter finds you well and off to a good start in the new year!

**This is a long letter, but an important one – please take the time to read it carefully and prayerfully reflect on it.**

There are many exciting things happening in our church which we would like to share with you, as well as some challenges that need the attention of us all.

First and foremost, we have the incredible good fortune of having completed our first full year with our outstanding new full time Pastor, The Reverend Martha Bays! It seems like only a few months ago that Martha “took the helm” but in fact, it’s been 12 months – and she’s goin’ strong! How lucky we are to have found her!

Also, as many of you probably know by now, we have formed an Events Committee and have begun a series of entertaining events that we hope will not only generate funds for us, but also make our church a destination for the town and our friends and neighbors on a Friday or Saturday evening. Musical events, wine tastings, food adventures and a potential lecture series are only the beginning. Our goal is to have an on-going calendar of enjoyable evenings and good reasons to stop in rather than just drive by.

**Other positive highlights of 2009 include:**

- Twenty three (23) new members joined the Church
- Formation of the Men’s Group which has proven to be an incredible asset to the Trustees with regard to keeping ahead of ongoing maintenance and repairs
- A wonderfully gifted new Music Director in Maryann and an energized Choir have really jump-started our music program
- True “Hands On” missions work right here in our own community with participation of over 50 members in Helping Hands and Shoreline Soup Kitchen as well as extended missions work via the Midnight Run and support of other missions projects through financial efforts

There is so much good news and positive energy here at our church - and we invite and encourage you to “get energized and get involved” in it! We need to **KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING!**

Now, the above said, like most of our neighboring churches – and in fact, like many individuals in our community today – we are experiencing difficult financial times.

The fact is, the Church has been running significant deficits for the past several years.

- We have closed the books on FY 2009 with a deficit of approx. \$14,000. This shortfall will be made up by once again, shifting money out of our savings / investment accounts.
- Our projected deficit for FY 2010 is close to \$20,000!!

I think that we all understand this pattern can't continue. Even though we still have some limited savings, it is not fiscally responsible to use these to cover shortfalls in our annual budget year after year.

In line with this, the Trustees have cut the budget **to the minimum required to still be able to maintain our beautiful church facilities and deliver the much needed services of our Pastor, our Sunday School and our Music Program.**

At this point there is nothing more that can be reduced in our budget **without sacrificing our core programs and services.** These are the very things that keep current members here and attract potential new members who want to become a part of this great place.

Therefore, assuming we are all in agreement with the above, the only solution is to generate more revenue in order to restore the financial health and maintain the social and spiritual vibrancy our church has enjoyed since the founding of Killingworth.

So, you may be asking yourself, "how can I help"? Or, "how can I become more involved" in the much needed work of restoring our financial security and developing an endowment for future needs?"

**The answer is:** Lots of ways, especially with your time, your talents and your financial strength!

Listed below are the areas that carry to largest impact.

**1. Pledging –**

- a. We need to encourage those in our congregation who have not already pledged, to please step forward and do so.
- b. Even if you feel you cannot deliver on the same level as you have been able to in the past, please do not let that stop you from pledging entirely! (Of course, any increases in existing pledges are always helpful too ;-))

**2. Membership Growth –**

- a. Just as important, we need to grow our membership. Not only to increase our pledge base, but to also add new voices and energy to our congregation.
- b. You can help with membership growth by **advertising** – by that I mean making a point of mentioning:
  - Who we are
  - What we do
  - Why it's important to you
  - How it helps others, often right here in our own community
  - The inner satisfaction one derives from the above, etc.

Membership can mean different things to different people. It doesn't have to be only about worship – it can and should (in my opinion) be much larger than that; fellowship, sense of community, charity, etc.

**3. Fundraising –**

- a. **Annual Fair** - We need to keep our annual fair alive and growing as it is the biggest fundraiser we have. What if we didn't have the Annual Fair? Where would we recoup that revenue? Fair revenue averages \$12,000 to \$15,000 every year. If we are to do the fair, we really need someone to step forward to chair this event. Better yet, a Chair and a Co-Chair.
- b. **Events Committee** – The purpose of the Events Committee is to **evaluate, coordinate and support** any kind of event that will generate funds as well as bring people into our midst, on a recurring basis.

- c. **Event Identification and Marketing** – You can help the Event Committee by:
- Generating ideas – What would you pay \$20 or \$25 to go do or see?
  - Planning entertaining activities or evening events, e.g., speaking series, concerts, whatever.
  - Leverage your friends, business associates, etc. **THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!** Any and all ideas have potential, but not if they're only in your head!
  - Market Us! - When there is an event planned, make sure to advertise that with friends, family, etc.

#### 4. Volunteerism –

- a. We are always looking for ways to decrease expenses and help our already stretched staff. Our buildings and grounds require continual maintenance – e.g., snow plowing, grass mowing, painting projects large and small. With 27 acres, essentially four buildings, five furnaces, three wells, three septic systems, the list of projects never ends. **Come forward with your talents for any of this type of work** – talk to any of the Trustees or Charlie Smith who heads up the Men's Group and offer your time.
- b. We are blessed with our secretary Maureen who does a marvelous job and who has also assisted with fundraising on her own. And our Sexton works at keeping the buildings clean. However, there is a large gap between what we can afford and what needs to be done. We need more administrative and janitorial services but cannot afford them. You can help by volunteering to assist with administrative tasks and/or cleaning chores.
- c. Additionally, “shares” of our Adopt A Budget Line Item are always available for sale.

#### 5. Communication / Participation –

- a. Our financial situation is a very difficult issue for the Trustees. If anyone *ever* has a constructive idea - *please* - bring it forward! We are all in this together. We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month and “our door is always open”! If you would rather meet in private, please contact me directly in full confidence.
- b. Please consider attending and participating in the our Spring and Fall meetings. We have over two hundred members, but there is rarely more than 20 – 30 folks at these extremely important meetings. **THIS IS YOUR CHURCH!** Have a voice in it.

In conclusion, there are so many good things going on for us to be grateful for. We have a beautiful historic church that is bright, alive and energized. Just as we will all survive these difficult financial times, so to will our Church - since we all are the Church.

That's why we need you, your ideas, your time and your talents.

Please, get involved in a way that suits you best and share in the great things happening in our church. And help share our challenges too.

I will leave you with a notable quote from the bottom of an email I received last week, written by a true sage....

*Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple. ~ Dr Seuss*

On behalf of all the Trustees, we look forward to seeing and chatting with any of you at any time.

With Warm Regards,

*Geoff*

Geoff Cook  
Chairman, Board of Trustees