

Pastor's Report for 2025 Annual Meeting

United Church of Ludlow

The Prophet Micah reminds us in 6:8 that what God requires of us is to “do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” As I look back on the work of our church in 2024, I think we are working to do just that. We continue to support community groups including Rotary, the Alzheimer’s Memory Cafe, the Ludlow Women’s Group, Windsor County Youth Services and Black River Good Neighbors with meeting space and the latter with financial support. We raised money for and committed to making Disaster Kits to support anyone in need in our state after a disaster. We passed an inclusive Mission and Vision and we worked on an Open and Affirming/Reconciling Covenant which we will vote on at this annual meeting. We truly are striving to live God’s message of inclusive love through Jesus Christ in our community, nation, and world.

This year we welcomed three new members: Carol and Fra DeVine and Cindi West. We also celebrated the lives of Dick Dansingburg, Stew Schmidt, Richard Holden, John Wu and Pat Liao. While we miss all of them, we are so blessed to have shared the journey of life and faith with them.

We continued the new tradition of Wild Church this year worshipping the Creator along the shores (and even with our feet in) Lake Pauline at the home of Linda and George Thomson. This time of connecting with God in nature provides a different type of renewal that I believe we have all come to appreciate. It was also fun to share in a bountiful pot luck following the service. I shared this style of worship when we hosted the Windham Union Association Meeting here on November 17 where we held a brief imaginative form of Wild Church using branches and forest sounds inside our church. I am hopeful that other churches might take on the annual Wild Church tradition as well.

I worked with the Building Inclusivity Team in preparing for the Open and Affirming/Reconciling Vote by holding three Dine and Discuss Events discussing our history, our Mission and Vision and what being Open and Affirming would mean. In addition we conducted a number of Moments for Mission where people shared their experiences with the LGBTQIA community and held a Zoom Bible Study called: Faithful and Inclusive: The Bible, Sexuality and the United Methodist Church where seven to nine people attended each session.

We had a very successful Ring Out Love Capital Campaign raising enough money to restore our historic bell, install a new sound system for the sanctuary and to begin some needed exterior work on our church. It was a true joy to hear our bell ring again beginning this November. In my three plus years here, I had only heard the bell ring once before the restoration. We hosted two fun SINGO events featuring live music by Sammy Blanchette hosted by our own Jane McGarry. The money raised supported the Ring Out Love Campaign and disaster relief.

On a personal note, I finished my three year Pastoral Preparation Program, took a contemplative course focusing on St. Theresa of Avila and had a restorative solo church planning retreat at the Mercy Eco Spirituality Center.

I am grateful for all that we have worked together to accomplish this year and look forward to seeing what the next year brings as we welcome everyone, celebrate diversity, nurture spiritual growth, work towards peace and justice and serve our community, nation and world.

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Michelle Fountain
United Church of Ludlow