




**BLOOMFIELD  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH**

**2021-2022**

**A Year  
in Review**

# Pastor's Message

Hope is a powerful thing. Hope can diminish and even dispel the deepest feelings of despair. It can lift our spirits and help us move forward in times of great difficulty.

Hope is also elusive in that we cannot buy it or save it. We cannot simply create it or know exactly where it is when we temporarily misplace it.

Hope is also powerful because it can lead us to do things we might otherwise think are impossible. Hope is a core characteristic of faith that gets us to take leaps. Hope leads us to do bold things that help God's Creation and Created beings.

There are few more powerful things anyone can give another person than Hope. That is what this Community of Faith is doing. That is what you are doing, and it is making a difference.

We are providing Hope in many ways. Here are just a handful of examples.

- Hope comes in the form of meals for individuals and families in need who receive it with a sense of dignity and love.
- Hope comes from standing-up for those hurting and oppressed – through learning and speaking and marching.
- Hope comes in the form of gathering together in times of joy and in times of pain.
- Hope comes from providing Covid-19 tests to people who can't access or afford them, not just giving peace of mind but letting people know they are not alone – and in the process, probably saving lives.
- Hope comes from giving toys to children and helping to repair the broken situations of those who are elderly and without resources.



# Pastor's Message

- Hope comes from helping a community raise money for Ukraine.
- Hope comes from being present with people during their most difficult times and their mountaintop moments.
- Hope comes from music during worship, with the return of concerts in the sanctuary, and with new "Music Nights" that draw diverse groups no matter how you measure it.
- Hope comes from new families, new baptisms, new members, and old friends.
- Hope comes from children in church, Sunday School, and Youth Group.
- Hope comes from the explosion of growth from our newly reinvigorated Child Development Center.



These are just a part of how this community of faith inspires and strengthens Hope, not just among our congregation but deeply and broadly in our community.

I received the following message a few days ago from the Pastor of another church. It said, *"Your church's ministry makes a difference far beyond the walls of your church!"*

Indeed, it does. Indeed, you do. Why? Because you are the church. You are the disciples doing the work Jesus asked us to do. Jesus' final and most important commandment was this,

*"Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this, everyone will know you are my disciples."* (John 13:34-35).

You are bringing Hope into each other's lives. You are bringing Hope into the wider community. You are bringing Hope into the world. How? Because you are living out that commandment - right here, right now.

Thank you. It is a blessing to serve, learn, and grow with you. May this "Year in Review" and all of its fantastic content inspire Hope in you and lead you to take that next leap of faith, knowing that if we follow this guy Jesus, the Holy Spirit will continue to show up, and even more amazing things will happen.

Peace, Pastor Shawn

## Now, Let's See What We Did!

# Building Hope in Our Community



It may be hard to believe, but this year, the Community Kitchen gave over 17,000 meals worth of food.

One of the most visible ways we provide Hope in the community is through our many meaningful mission programs. This year, the Community Kitchen provided 17,700 meals worth of food to those in great need. Plus, they did so with a smile - rain or shine!



People line-up around the church and into the street to get a meal. Many people talk about how much the meals help and how it gives them Hope to know that someone cares.



# Building Hope in Our Community

## The Bloomfield Backpack Program Delivered...

### Over 10,000 Meals This Year!!



The Bloomfield Backpack Program delivered 72 bags for 36 weeks. Each bag has four meals worth of food. Do the math and that's **10,368 meals** to children and their families every week throughout the school year.

Volunteers deliver backpacks to various locations, *including people's homes*, every Friday morning and then pick them up each Monday.



Food came from many sources. CT Foodshare is our anchor partner, Geissler's here in Bloomfield, and Tops Marketplace in Plantsville help a lot too. You all support the program in so many ways as well. From donating food, to volunteering time, and to financial donations. We couldn't do it without you!



We have great faith partners too. From Seabury to The First Cathedral (above), to Old St. Andrews, to First Glastonbury, and many more. This program gives people Hope well beyond our Community of Faith.



# Building Hope in Our Community

## Thanksgiving Meals Provided to 200 Families

The Holidays can be difficult for many people. This church responds in special ways during this season. For Thanksgiving, the Missions Ministry Team and the Community Kitchen provided over 200 families with full Thanksgiving meals.



(Left) Hope touched us personally as well when we returned to a beloved tradition of bringing food forward in person for "Thanksgiving Sunday". There was more than enough.

Did you know we also help the Town of Bloomfield Social Services provide Thanksgiving meals to seniors in town? This year we helped them give an additional 150 meals to families with turkeys and all "the fixin's"!

We were blessed to get turkeys from many places this year. Foodshare was our rock again. We had other partners as well, including but not limited to Geissler's Supermarket here in Town and Tops Supermarket in Plantsville - each donated dozens of turkeys.

Our Community of Faith continues to amaze by serving warm meals and providing groceries in these times of great need.



# Building Hope in Our Community

## Christmas Gifts for Covenant to Care Children

This Advent we returned to another wonderful tradition, the Covenant to Care Christmas Tree. The tree went up in front of the doors to the Chapel. Soon the tags for children were flying off of the tree. We had to fill the tree multiple times!



Thank you to everyone who contributed in so many ways.

A special "Thank you" to Judi Bunker who pours her very big heart into this effort every year

## New Community Christmas Toy Drive

This year we partnered with Mayor Danielle Wong on a new Toy Drive for the community. Working with Mayor Wong and the Bloomfield Youth Recreation Leagues, more toys were obtained for children in need. It was such a success that we filled our Library Room with toys! This effort also aligned well with our church's toy drive since all of these toys also went to Covenant to Care.

In addition to getting lots of toys, we also built relationships for the future. Why did they ask us to partner with them? They knew we would be there for the community.



### ALTERNATIVE GIFT-GIVING CATALOGUE

Celebrate the Season of Giving with Us

## Our "Alternative Gift-Giving Catalogue"

Many of us struggle to find the right gifts to give our loved ones during Christmas. Many of us resent the commercialism of Christmas and wish to find better ways to give. We piloted a solution for that! The "Alternative Gift-Giving Catalogue" offered precisely that, alternative gifts. Ways to give back to missions that serve our community and dedicate these gifts to those you love. Many people gave it a shot and loved it, and we collected thousands of dollars for great causes in the process. Thank you!

# Building Hope in Our Community

## We Gave Out Over 1,000 Covid-19 Test Kits!

We were very fortunate to obtain COVID-19 testing kits when so many across the State struggled to do so. We were blessed with the means to purchase these tests, as well as the space, time, and volunteers to distribute them. We chose not only to help the families in this Congregation but families throughout Bloomfield.



We delivered tests for people in need through our Community Kitchen and Backpack Programs and through our Child Development Center, and other targeted efforts like working with Deputy Mayor Greg Davis. Our goal was to help these families access the tests and give them Hope by showing that they are not alone and have not been forgotten. That gave Hope to those here in the community and probably saved lives.





# Building Hope in Our Community

## Loaves and Fishes Provides a Warm Meal and Hope

The Loaves and Fishes team began providing meals again in August and then in person this May. It is a blessing for everyone involved.

**The Loaves and Fishes team provided over 1,000 meals to the homeless and hurting in Hartford this year.**



Above to the Left: Barbara Coady donated home made blankets to Loaves and Fishes

## Even More From Our Mission Ministry Team

We also impact the community and beyond through our Mission Ministry Team. This Team is a part of the total mission-based emphasis of Bloomfield Congregational. In addition to leading the annual "Thanksgiving Boxes" effort and supporting other mission efforts in the church, they ensure we keep our focus on many different needs - locally and internationally.

**Locally, we supported ten shelters in the Hartford area.** Two of the shelters focus on creating safe places for women and children at risk. **Internationally we contributed to refugee concerns in Afghanistan and Ukraine and contributed to a fund to get water to Teo Sinte, a small town in El Salvador.** Four scholarships to Bloomfield High School students will be given out again this year.



The Mission Team also manages the Prosser Fund. This fund is for Bloomfield residents over the age of 60 who need short-term help getting over an acute financial burden or emergency. Most of the needs are rental, medical, and utility assistance. This year we have already provided over \$60,643 for 41 families with these needs.

**Our Missions Ministry Team provided over \$70,000 in direct funding locally and internationally.**



# Building Hope in Our Community

How can we possibly get all of this done? With Hope, hard work, and a bunch of powerful partners.

**FOODSHARE**



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH GLASTONBURY**

And Other Faith Organizations



**The Wider Bloomfield  
Community and Beyond .... +**

**YOU**

Did You Know? In this fiscal year, we raised over \$60,000 beyond our budget for our programs.

**This year through our programs,  
Bloomfield Congregational Church provided over 30,000  
meals worth of food to the community. This is Astonishing!**

# Building Hope in Our Community

## 750 Lights Memorial and Vigil

In November, Bloomfield Congregational led a "750 Lights Vigil" to remember the over 750,000 lives lost due to Covid-19. Each light represented 1,000 people.

People gathered in front of the church to pray, light candles, sing, be together, honor those who died, and lift Hope in tough times. Many said how meaningful the vigil and the display of the 750 lights were.



After the vigil, the display was left up for a week. Many people wrote to us about how meaningful the imagery was and how it gave them a sense of Hope. Others came to the church during the week to walk among the lights, remember, and start to heal.



## 1,000 + 10 + 1 Lights Memorial and Vigil

Unfortunately, while we've made progress, in May, the United States passed a somber new number, 1,000,000 documented deaths due to Covid-19.

We also experienced the tragedy of the hate-filled, racially-motivated killings in Buffalo and the massacre of elementary school students and teachers in Texas. So we pivoted our "1,000 Light Vigil" to a "1,000 Lights + 10 + 1 Vigil" to acknowledge these other events and lift the light of Hope - for ourselves, the community, and the future.



Dedicated volunteers set up the 1,000 + 10 + 1 Lights Vigil designed by Leslie Mills.



# Building Hope in Our Community

## Candlelight Vigil and Fund Raising for Ukraine



On March 9th, we hosted a "Candlelight Vigil for the People of Ukraine and the World." We also ran a town-wide drive for Ukraine Aid that raised...

**Over \$10,000!**



The collection of goods filled Dave Nail's pickup truck AND the front cabin PLUS multiple other carloads in Mary Laiuppa's mini-van!

The items were taken by truck to New Jersey and flown to Warsaw, Poland. The items were brought directly to relief organizations at the Poland/Ukraine border. Financial donations were sent to the UCC Ukraine Emergency Fund.



Our efforts to support people in Ukraine generated significant interest from the public and the media. Mary Lauippa, whom NBC CT interviewed, reminded us that "You never know when [you'll be] in need, and those people are in need really bad."

# Building Hope in Our Community

## Parish Care

If you are a part of our church community, in any capacity, we care about you.

In the same spirit, everyone in our community is also a Parish Care provider. Every time we offer our friendship, compassion, time, talent, or treasure to help someone else, we provide Parish Care. When we greet the newcomer in our Sanctuary or notice that a long-time attendee hasn't been here in a while, we pick up the phone to check on them; that is Parish Care.



When we pray for someone struggling with illness or loss, and we reach out with calls, cards, and visits, that is Parish Care. Parish Care is a listening ear, a hot meal, and a ride to church. It's a helping hand or a shoulder to lean on or cry on. It's someone to sit next to or celebrate our joy with and know we are loved.

Parish care is a ministry of kindness for the entire congregation. If you or someone you know needs something from the Parish Care Team, please don't hesitate to contact any of us. And, if you can reach out to members or friends of the congregation and provide some comfort and support, please let us know; we would be happy to coordinate with you.

## The Memorial Garden



The Memorial Garden is another way we care for people within and beyond our Community of Faith. Whether lovingly saying goodbye to someone or visiting them, it is a profoundly important space. It is also somewhere people come to sit in the beauty of nature and the Spirit of God.

Thank you to the many people who care for this fantastic Spiritual resource that provides joy, comfort, and, yes, Hope – especially Mike Fuss, who plans and coordinates its care year-round.



# Impacting Our Community - Social Justice

## Pride Flag Raising

This year, the Town of Bloomfield raised the Pride Flag for the LGBTQ+ community for the first time in its long history. Our church played a meaningful role in this event. How?

Councilmember Rickford Kirton asked if we would open our doors for the organizing meeting among leaders in the LGBTQIA+ community. Why is that important? Because he knows where we stand. He knows we are a safe place for those in the LGBTQIA+ community. That's a big deal. We need to do more of that. We need to make sure people know where we stand. The leadership team also asked us to be part of the organizing committee and open the event with a prayer.



## Hope Comes By Standing With Those Who Are Oppressed



## Being Allies Brings People Hope

Why is that important? Because many people have been hurt by religion. Too many houses of worship in the Country, State, and our Town are opposed to LGBTQIA+ people and their relationships. They are pretty clear about that. So, having us speak about God and love, openness, and equality before God matters. And you showed up. On that rainy, dreary morning, this community of faith showed up. Among those in attendance, many were from our church. It's no surprise, but we need to keep working on it. We need to stay persistent until the freedoms we enjoy are open to everyone.

**"What does God require of you? To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."  
- Micah 6:8**



# Impacting Our Community - Social Justice

We took the next step in our "Sacred Conversations Towards Ending Racism" work and took to the streets.

## Anti-Hate Rallies

On Sunday, April 24th, a passionate group from our congregation, organized by Sacred Conversations, participated in an Anti-Hate Rally in Hartford. The goal of this rally was to protest the recruitment efforts of a white supremacist group. Our Sacred Conversations team organized our participation.



The rally started in Keney Park and proceeded through the North End. Many from the church chose to attend, with the Hartford Courant reporting "nearly 100 demonstrators rallied and marched" in total.



Pastor Shawn, who attended the rally, said: *"It is critical for people who aren't being attacked to stand by those who are oppressed. They are our neighbors. They are people who matter. We're not going to put up with people whom we care about and people whom we love being attacked, oppressed, and harassed for who they are."*

## Powerful Messages

We continued to financially support important projects like this Black Lives Matter mural depicting prominent local and national groundbreakers.

Our sponsor-level funding put the project over the top and allowed it to move forward.



# Impacting The World - in The News

## People Were Paying Attention, in the Community and Beyond

### BLOOMFIELD HONORS THOSE LOST TO COVID WITH '750 LIGHTS VIGIL'



**By John Karas**  
 In a beautiful ceremony, Saturday, Bloomfield honored the 750,000 people lost due to Covid Nationwide, with a "750 lights Vigil," one light for every 1,000 people lost to the virus.  
 The event was hosted by the Bloomfield Congregational Church on its front lawn on the green, and aimed at helping the community heal by acknowledging the collective loss, recognizing the reality of the pain caused by this virus and embracing hope as the faithful and the rest of the community came together.

"We are working to do something meaningful for the community," explained Pastor Shawn Fisher of Bloomfield Congregational. "So many people wonder when the right time to do this is. We feel it is now. We know the loss isn't over, but there comes a time when it is healthy and necessary to recognize loss and to come together as a community to support each other. It can help give hope."  
 The symbolism of the vigil was simple but potent - light expelling the darkness of the pandemic, and shining on a brighter future ahead. It's a tradition shared by every religious tradition on earth, and it helped bring together Bloomfield residents of different backgrounds and traditions.  
 While the bad weather prevented many from attending, those who did, lived a great experience.  
 Among those who spoke to those gathered were State Representative Bobby Gibson and former mayor and current Councilwoman Suzanne DeBianchi-Brown. Dr. Heidi Blumensfeld, a physician, and Jan McHale a nurse spoke about their experiences with COVID before Dr. Blumensfeld led the gathering in song.  
 Pastor Shawn had noted before the vigil that "the collective light of the 750 lights and the light of the people who attend, we hope will help wrap people in the warmth of hope, giving us a path to move forward together." And that's exactly what everyone present felt.  
 The display will be up for the next week, and everyone is invited to come to walk by and experience it. Pastor Shawn told the Messenger.  
 Photos by Cheryl Rice

### BLOOMFIELD HONORS WITH '750 LIGHTS VIGIL' THOSE LOST TO THE PANDEMIC



The media was interested in what we were doing, whether it was vigils that provided light in times of difficulty to giving Covid Tests to those most in need, or even how we work to make things better by growing our lettuce hydroponically.

### BLOOMFIELD CONGREGATIONAL IS WORKING QUIETLY TO FILL THE GAP WITH COVID TESTS



In the middle of the crisis of increased Covid cases and lack of tests, Bloomfield Congregational Church has been quietly working to help people fill the gap. The church has spent \$12,000 on tests and masks and has given out nearly 2,000 of them to people who lack access or the funds to afford them.

Photos: (left) Volunteers at Bloomfield Community Kitchen at Bloomfield Congregational give out bags of food with surprise At-Home Covid-19 Test Kits. (top) A roller bag ready to go with food and masks and Covid Test Kits from the Bloomfield Backpack Program.  
 Rev. Shawn Fisher, Pastor at Bloomfield Congregational said they have been getting the test out through their Saturday  
 See CHURCH page

## Bloomfield Messe

Bloomfield's own weekly newspaper July 16, 2021 www.BloomfieldMessenger.com Price  
 CHURCHES USE A MODERN METHOD FOR AN OLD PURPOSE - FREE FOOD FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT

**By Lucy Anne Hurston**  
 In the richest country in the world, in the state with the highest per capita income, we have many families barely making ends meet. Simply put, they do not have enough food to eat. Food Insecurity is when you do not know when your next meal is coming or what it will be comprised of for your consumption. This should not be! We are a most wasteful country when it comes to food. We need a multi-pronged approach to address this within our community.  
 Food is love...because food is life! I have spent a large portion of my life facilitating getting food to needy people. In various ways, I continue that work. As Executive Director of the Bloomfield Community Kitchen (BCK), we have worked for years to provide all forms of food to people: hot sit-down meals (in the "RedeemTime" - that's pre-Covid), hot, to-go meals and grocery bags during Covid and now an additional new plan for the post-Covid era: fresh vegetables and herbs grown behind the church to be distributed for FREE. BCK has embraced Hydroponics!  
 From Bloomfield Congregational Church lens



Foodshare, Levo International, Ater Farm, Bloomfield Congregational Church and Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Thanks to this partnership, we have installed hydroponic buckets called HATs in the rear of both churches. Each container holds space for 35 seedlings to grow. Week 1 we learned the routine from Bill Heiden, Executive Director of Levo International, Inc. www.levointernational.org  
 The bucket was filled with 27 gallons of water and the 2 required powder packets were dissolved in there. With the lid in place, we placed the cups in  
 Photos: Above, members of HAT (below) at



We also made great use of our prime location to communicate clearly to people - and people noticed.

### BLOOMFIELD CONGREGATIONAL LEADS EFFORT TO SUPPORT UKRAINE AND THE COMMUNITY



With all that is going wrong in the world, it is wonderful to see when something goes right. We at the Bloomfield Messenger saw a lot of that coming from Bloomfield Congregational Church this week. Last week, they ran a two-day "Ukraine Aid" effort and on Wednesday brought the community together to host "Candlelight Vigil for Ukraine and the World".  
 When asked why the church was doing this, Rev. Shawn Fisher, Pastor of Bloomfield Congregational said, "So many people want to help. People in our church wanted to organize an effort. People in the community wanted to know how they could help. So, we made it happen."  
 More than \$4,000 dollar were donated by parishioners and residents, and thousands of dollars worth of goods were also collected to support the effort.  
 "People in Town know they can trust us to get things to the right people in the right way. It's amazing to see how many people, who are not a part of this church, who have diverse faiths, came here to make a difference," said Pastor Shawn.  
 See UKRAINE page

### A LOGO THAT SPREADS HOPE INTO THE COMMUNITY



ly, in the white space in the middle of the image you can see honoring the steeple of the church. Our steeple is an iconic image in the area and an important symbol of strength and sustaining as a congregation through time since 1738. Then we have the bright images shining out of the steeple. That represents our commitment to going beyond our building's walls and into serving the community. It represents reaching beyond our comfort zones to engage in matters of social justice. It represents the Holy Spirit spreading goodness and hope and love to everyone. It represents that we at Bloomfield Congregational, as a community of faith, are more concerned about what is taking place out side of our walls than within them.  
 M: So, why do you like that people see a butterfly?

You have probably seen them We wanted a new image to represent



# Impacting The World - In The News

## CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH LEADS EFFORT TO SUPPORT UKRAINE



Pastor Shawn is increasingly being sought out to speak and write on issues that matter. Many want to hear they are not alone - others want to hear that they have allies. All want Hope.

### 'BENDING LOW TO SEE THE GLORY' - SURVIVING IN CRAZY TIMES

implications of a global pandemic that has left us physically, mentally and spiritually drained. There are the challenges of your daily life. Then there is an unjust war being driven by an evil person who is threatening the use of the worst weapons ever created, being cheered on even by some unethical people in our own country. And, it's all being played out on live TV and on our screens and spirits.

What can we do? We can't change Putin. We can't change his allies in America immediately. Turning off the TV doesn't make it go away. What can we do? Maybe we just need to take a look at things differently for a moment. Maybe we need a new lens in order to see through the darkness.

I had the profound experience to travel to The Holy Land four years ago. At the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (pictured here) in order to enter, we needed to bend low to get through the door. It's not that the whole church is small. Inside it is glorious - breathtaking in its construction and in the intricacy and majesty of the art. You wouldn't know it once through the door though. The door is small. It looks dark when you enter. It's not easy to get through. You have to choose to do it and make an effort to do it. You can't just get swept in by the crowd. It's only once you have submitted to its way, and bent low to enter, that the glory is revealed.

benefit from doing this. Bending low. Humbling ourselves. Choosing to take a way that is different - one that isn't simply going along with the crowd. (The crowd isn't leading us where we need to go.) We can no longer trust following the ways of the world. (The ways of the world are not getting us where we need to go.) We need to choose a different way, one of bending low and trusting the harder way of taking the small door. Because, when we do that, something amazing often happens.

After doing that. After choosing the small door. After choosing to go through - even though what lies ahead is not yet revealed. After choosing this path, even though it may look dark. After bending and entering...

It is THEN that the glory is revealed. It is THEN that the light shines on the path for where to go. It is THEN that the sun rises over the walls that once blocked the light. And you can look back, and see the door behind you, and know it was the right size. And know, that light shined on the path all along.

We need a new path. It will not come from thinking we have the answers. We won't find it by doing things based on total confidence in ourselves. We've tried that. For too long and it simply doesn't work - the state of the world today demonstrates that.

We need a new way. One where we risk taking the small door, the one we've never taken before. The one where we don't...

But it is not just print media. We received a lot of TV coverage and really expanded our presence on social media as well.

## Interview with a Turkey

Here Pastor Shawn gets interviewed by Scott Haney of Channel 3 News about our work serving meals to those in need in our community and our special partnership with Foodshare.



## 750 Lights

The Bloomfield Messenger continues to cover our events that matter locally, like our 750 Lights Vigil and Memorial. Channel 8 and Channel 30 each thought our Vigil was important for the region.



## Aid for Ukraine



Above: Mary Laiuppa, who helped drive the effort to get donations for Ukraine, is interviewed on WVIT, Channel 30 TV.

## Anti-Hate Rally

The Hartford Courant covered the "Anti-Hate Rally" we participated in. In the article they quoted Pastor Shawn and took note of our church.



## Candlelight Vigil for Ukraine



# E-Outreach

When our Administrative Assistant Morgan came on, they saw the importance of maintaining and helping to grow our social media channels. Outreach has changed over the years, and digital "e-outreach" is an essential tool in any church's toolbox. With so much of our focus on our local community, we need to use these platforms effectively.

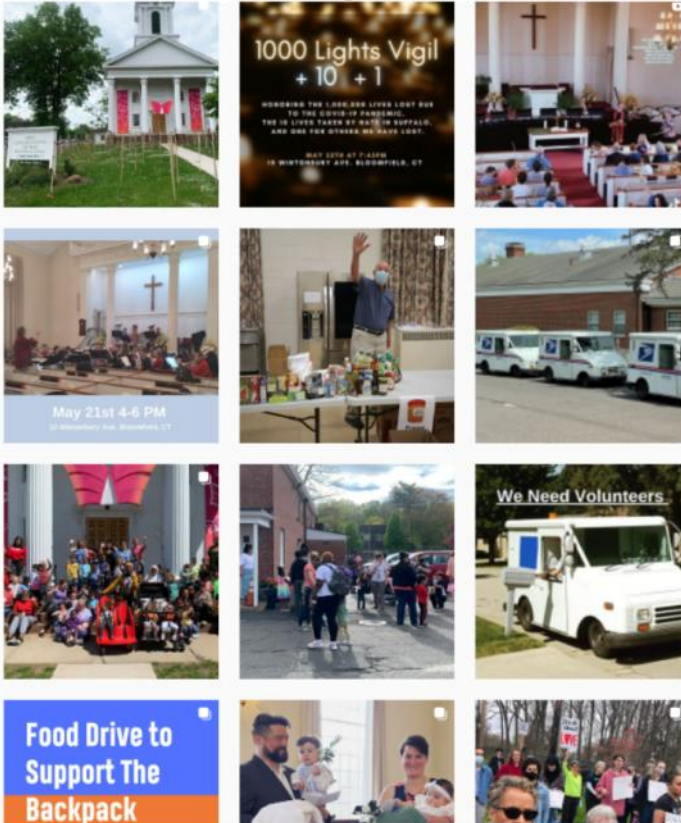


TikTok



Instagram

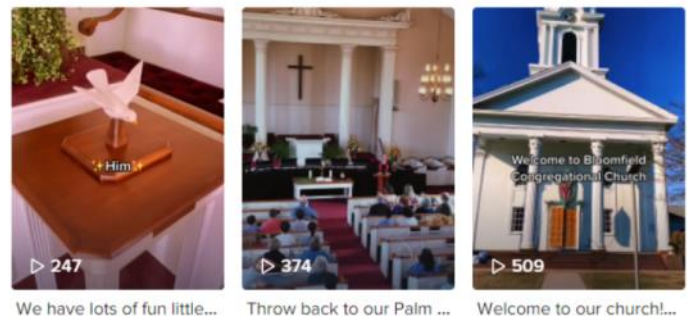
## Instagram



Our favorite part of social media? We get to share all the amazing things we are doing! We also get to share volunteer opportunities. And in times of need, it is a way to ask you and our community for help when we need it.

It is exciting to be on TikTok as a church. We have the pleasure of getting to make videos of some of our best moments, but it also allows us to be more relevant to younger people. With all the media for kids today, it feels good to put out wholesome content.

## TikTok



Our goals for this coming year will be to grow these channels so that we reach a larger audience. We want to develop our live streaming so that it's even easier to feel like you're a part of the service each Sunday, even from the comfort of your own home.

And, in times like these, where Covid has limited the ways we feel connected, we are grateful to be able to help bring Hope straight to your computer screens.

**You are not alone.** If you are ever down or feel alone, reach out to us. We are here for you. And feel free to check out one of these pages and be reminded that you have a big vibrant Community of Faith around you.

**Did you know?  
Each week we send emails  
out to 160+ people!**

Are you interested in receiving the Good News Tuesday or our Friday ENews? We also send out a copy of our monthly newsletter via email as well!

*Good News Tuesday*

To be added to our weekly emails go to [www.mybloomfield.church/](http://www.mybloomfield.church/) and scroll down to our sign-up form!

# Music In Ministry

Music matters. It touches us differently, vibrates inside us, and can help us feel good. It can connect us to God and each other by making us feel Hope. It was our pleasure to bring back live music.



## The Accidental Handbell Ensemble Returns

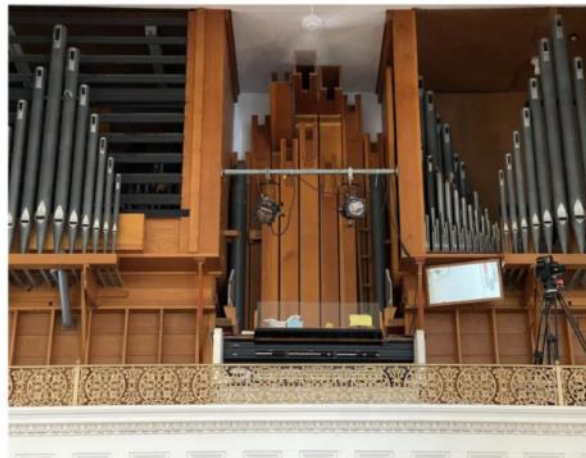
After nearly two years, on October 17th, the Accidentals Handbell Ensemble returned to service! "We are so excited to welcome back our ringers and begin performing again," said Minister of Music, Eustace Straker.

Music will always be an integral part of our church. The return of the Handbell Ensemble, the ability to have live performances again, and the fellowship of our musicians are Good News!



## Organ Repair

Allen Hill, our technician, has been busy tuning the organs. Soon the repair work will begin and we will have a newly re-leathered instrument. Thank you to everyone who is supporting this renewal project.



# Community

## Engaging the Community By Participating in Town Events



"Celebrate Bloomfield" events started with a great vendor fair and concert on the Town Green. We showed up in several ways.

First, our church said a lot itself with the sculpture of our logo spreading out beautifully and with our colorful banners and pride flags flying, reminding people of the broad reach of God's love. Pastor Shawn was also asked to kick-off the event with a prayer and kicked off the concert with one of his songs!

Our Child Development Center had a fabulous tent letting people know about the exciting things happening there. They handed out information and the popular lawn signs of our logo.

## Blessing of the Animals

The Blessing of the Animals is a popular annual event for our church and the wider community. People came from Bloomfield and beyond. They came with their beloved companions of many, many shapes and sizes. They arrived on leashes, in carriers and water bags, and in other ways. Suher O'Connor brought her fish to get blessed. Heather O'Conner brought her dog. Pastor Shawn even blessed a Bearded Dragon from the Hellman family and many more!



# Community

## Living Nativity and Parade

As the Town had its annual Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting, our hearty, faithful youth and adults reminded everyone of the reason for the season with our Living Nativity.



## Carol Sing and Santa

We had an incredible turnout for our Christmas Carol Sing, and then it was party time when Santa showed up!

People came from the Church, the Child Development Center, and the wider community. There is such a need to be together. We are blessed to be able to provide these opportunities.



## Hartford County Firefighter's Memorial

On Sunday, October 17th, we had the blessing to be the host church for a service to honor firefighters in Hartford County who died in the past year and support those left behind. It was a deeply meaningful service that brought together the best elements of faith, community, and public service. This event was a wonderful reminder of our church's history of being both a sanctuary and meeting house for the community.



The Chiefs who do this each year were thrilled with the service. One said, "You raised the bar. Thank you." Another said, "This was by far the best-attended event we have had in many years. Thank you for supporting us". Pastor Shawn thanked them for their kind words and said it was our honor and blessing to be able to do this, and we all thank them for what they do for us - running into the places from which we run and helping those who are most in need.

# Worship

We always have wonderful worship. But, let's be honest. We never know EXACTLY what will happen when Pastor Shawn is preaching. This year we did more with the visual arts, drawing us deeper into the experience of worship. This was especially true during Advent, when Leslie Mills created a remarkable visual experience with a barn door, lanterns, and more. Pat and Kurt Robair and the Deacons made sure the Sanctuary was stunning as well

Being together for worship matters too. It's a critical way that we make and deepen relationships that extend well beyond that one hour together.

It's about sharing and teaching and listening and learning from each other.



## Children's Messages

We all know the "Children's Message" is for all of us! We have had plenty of exceptional Children's Messages. Below is a picture of the Balloon Ride message. Ms. Dorine also makes sure to engage her children. Here she is preparing our children to share and learn for Black History Month.



# Worship



## The Inn

A lot of people worked very hard to make Advent special - including new approaches to bringing creative elements into our worship for "The Inn" series.



# Hope Comes At Christmas



## Making Room For Love

Then Pastor Shawn got to work. Burying Leslie in garbage bags, having us play musical chairs (not shown) and having us throwing paper representing throwing out the garbage we are still holding onto in our lives so we can Make Room for Love.

## Visual Learning

We also had an environmental worship series, ensuring we remain focused on global issues like Climate Change. Then, sometimes it's just pure fun, like when Pastor Shawn showed up as Scooby-Doo on the Sunday of Halloween. Many other people in the congregation came in their Halloween best as well.



Worship is essential, but it doesn't have to be quiet, predictable, and serious. It can be loud and fun and silly and still be deeply meaningful. Let us know your ideas for how we can incorporate new visuals and other elements into our services.

# Baptisms

## Baptisms, Baptisms and More Baptisms

We are so grateful and blessed to have had not one, not two, but **EIGHT baptisms** in March and April. The baptism below was with the Boisvert Family. Micah and Eliana were baptized that day (pictured below).



Our next baptism was with the Owens family in April. This baptism was of Maeva Jo (below).





# Baptisms



"It is so wonderful to see more and more people feeling safe to come to be together personally. On top of that, we've had a number of baptisms that point to hope and a growing community of faith. We need these points of hope. We need these moments of joy. I think we will see a lot more of them going forward," says Pastor Shawn.



It's a special thing to welcome new people into the family of Christ, and to watch our community of faith grow. We are grateful to have the DeHoyos - Paolucci family as part of our community of faith. Both Sawyer and Sage were baptized.



# New Members

## New Member Sunday

In March, we were blessed to have SEVEN new members join our vital and vibrant community of faith. The Holy Spirit was moving, as was the congregation as people came forward to greet our new members!



The new members are (from left to right above) Rosaline Reyes-Feurtado, Nate Boyster, Kaylene Wetherell, Manuela Friedman, Jill Engel-Hellman, Matt Hellman, and David Nail.



And, to all of you who have been active in our community of faith for a while, we value and appreciate you too! We appreciate your warmth, commitment, and faithful support.

## Meet the New Members!

*"We are so excited and feeling very blessed to have this diverse and faith-filled group of New Members who bring their unique gifts and talents to our Community of Faith."* - said Carolyn Delgado, Deacon Chair.

Among our New Members, we baptized three of them as part of our New Member Sunday. The three baptized were Nate Boyster and Kaylene Wetherell, and Rosaline Reyes-Feurtado.



**Nate Boyster and Kaylene Wetherell**

## What Influenced You to Join?

*"One of the main reasons we joined is we plan to be married next year. And we want our wedding to be in a church. We also want to have a better relationship and understanding of our faith."*

- Nate Boyster and Kaylene Wetherell

*"I saw that everyone was accepted. I felt a sense of belonging. I felt genuine love."*

- Rosaline Reyes Feurtado



**Rosaline Reyes Feurtado**

# New Members

## What Influenced You to Join? (cont.)

*"Initially, it was the location - the church was on the drive from Jill's work to home. Also, it was seeing the butterfly yard signs around town. Once we connected that the signs were from this church, we decided to visit."*

-The Hellmans

*"I loved the welcoming and open atmosphere, the friendly people, Pastor Shawn's enthusiasm, the beautiful music, and the church's work for the community to strengthen it and connect people through faith."*

- Manuela Friedman



**The Hellman Family**

## What's Something You Want The Community to Know About You?

*"We value the social justice focus of the church. We want our three kids to have these same values. We enjoy doing things outdoors like hiking, bike riding, and sports for fun."*

- The Hellmans

*"I love animals, especially dogs, and nature. I find spirituality and peace when I walk in the forest. The best thing in my life is my wonderful son Silvan."*

- Manuela Friedman

*"I am relatively new to going to church. However, I have always believed in and respected God and Jesus. My parents also taught me that I should always respect God and Jesus."*

- Nate Boyster



**Manuela Friedman**



**David Nail**

## Reconnecting

We asked the same questions of "reconnecting" member David Nail.

### **What influenced you to rejoin?**

*"The Community Kitchen and Carolyn Delgado! I started helping her out with the Community Kitchen because they needed a hand."*

### **And what is something you want this community of faith to know about you?**

*"My choice to reconnect with this church is the best thing I have done in the last twenty-nine years."*

# Faith Formation

## Youth Group Returned!

Youth Group returned Sunday, October 10th, and it feels so good to be back! We enjoy our "Upper Room" and enjoy each other's company. We started strong with our Harvest Family Fun Night in October. In November, we engaged the community and the church through community projects, including a Pie Baking Fundraiser to raise money to buy Christmas gifts for children in Bloomfield. We discovered what we could do to help each other and help our community! We've have a great time making a difference in our lives.



Helping other people gives them Hope knowing there are people who care. Making a difference helps us have Hope that we can change the world.

## Harvest Family Fun Night

Friday, October 29th, we hosted a community Harvest Family Fun Night! We had games, refreshments, pizza, candy, and more! You brought your friends, wore great costumes, and got excited about Halloween fun!

We are so excited that so many people from the larger community came. We continue to gather again and again and have some much-needed fun!



## Thanksgiving Pies!

The Youth Group was back at it this year making more great pies for Thanksgiving. They prepared, cut, and baked lots of pies! Then, they sold the pies to have money to buy Christmas Presents for children in need.

## Souper Bowl of Caring

We raised \$356 with the Souper Bowl of Caring for the Community Kitchen to tackle hunger! We couldn't have done it without you! You give us Hope.



**THANK YOU!**  
Bloomfield Congregational Church's 2022 Collection  
raised:  
**\$356.37**

Thanks to your efforts this year, more dollars have been raised, more lives have been changed and the nation has seen the impact of people working together to help those in need. Thank you for working to transform the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving.

**SOUPEL BOWL OF CARING**  
tacklehunger.org

February 13, 2022

Alison Reese  
Executive Director  
Souper Bowl of Caring

# Faith Formation



## Sunday School

Playing and building the kingdom of God together in Sunday school and after church.



## Yard Work at the Church

Here the Youth Group makes the garden by the front sign even more beautiful for Easter.

# Child Development Center

## Growing While We Help The Community

Our school grew tremendously this year. Not only did we grow in numbers, but we added a whole new program! In August we received a license from the Office of Early Childhood to serve children under the age of three.



Then



Now

We launched the Infant-Toddler Program in September with a handful of children. Currently, we have 30 infants, and toddlers enrolled! Our preschool program started with 18 children in September, and we currently have three classrooms with a total of 41 children!

All of our classrooms serve children of different learning abilities, so we added a Special Education Teacher, Mrs. Anne Marie, in January. She has 30 years of experience and has been a blessing to everyone.



This expansion took place throughout the pandemic. We held strict protocols and procedures when dealing with illness and provided COVID-19 testing kits to our families and staff. Another blessing this year was having our new Nurse, Ms. Angela, join our team. Every week she checks in with all the classrooms and communicates with families about illness and protocols as necessary.



Over this year, we have grown from a staff of nine and are now at 25! We're helping the community!

# Child Development Center

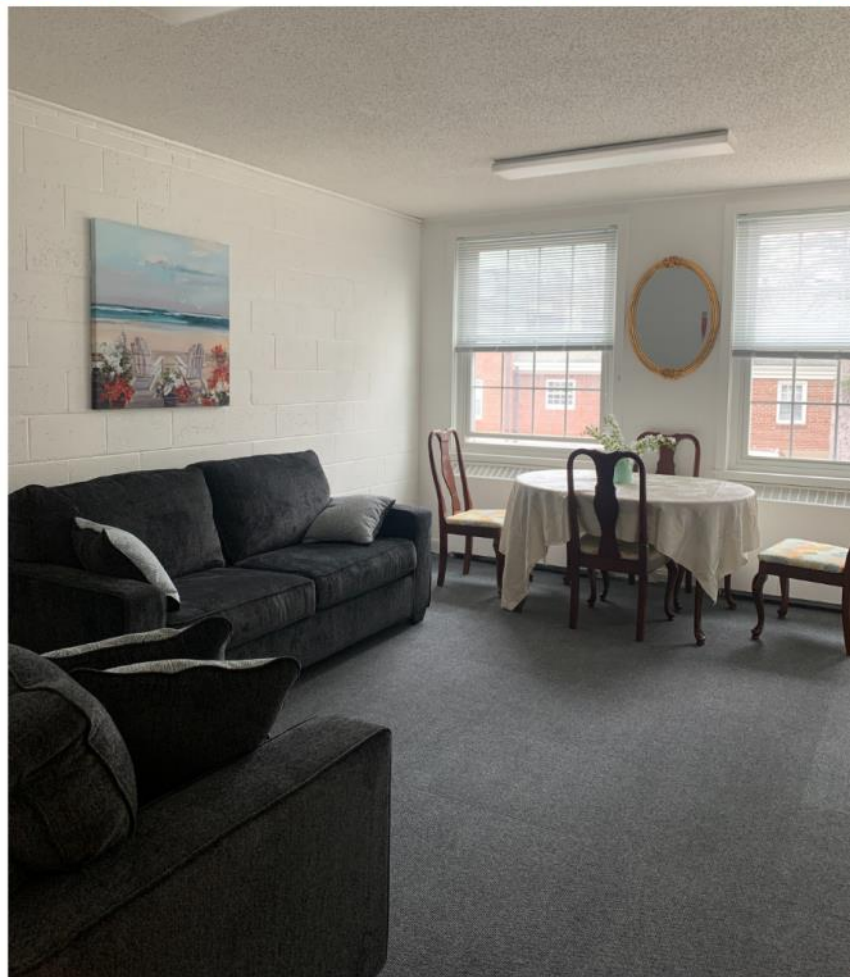
Our school provides the best care and preschool experience in the region, and all in a way that gives anyone, regardless of income, access that level of quality. That helps people. That helps the children. That helps the community and gives people Hope.



## Growing and Growing!

Throughout this expansion, many renovations took place. Our first renovation started over the summer, and it was converting a preschool classroom into our first Infant-Toddler classroom. We received a \$25,000 grant through the Women's Business Development Council in December. We used this to transform an old food pantry into an office space for Mrs. Anne Marie to work with children one-on-one and provide support and resources to the classrooms.

We also renovated a space upstairs for a new staff lounge where the teachers have meetings, training, and a place to relax when they are on breaks. We also transformed space for our School-Age children to use before and after school and created another preschool classroom.



# Facilities

## We Made Great Progress with Our Facilities



### We Got AC!

With our growth as a church and with physical distancing needs due to Covid, we now use the Sanctuary for Sunday Worship all year. But, there was an issue. *It gets HOT IN THERE.*

Our Community Missions Programs also run year-round now, and we needed it to be safe for our volunteers in Fellowship Hall.

We looked at many alternatives and dug deep into our electric systems. Then we did it! **We got air conditioning in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall.** It's a big deal, and we did it with great respect for both spaces.

Thank you to the Facilities Team, our Board of Deacons, and the Church Council. Thank you, especially to our Building Manager, Michelle Alves, and Mike, who always has solid, creative ways to make things happen.



### New Playground for our School

When we launched the new Infant and Toddler program at the Child Development Center, there was a need for playground space for that age group. We had an existing area, but it was not in good shape. This year, we made the necessary improvements! Railroad ties were dug up and repaired. Weeds and debris were removed, and better ground cover was applied. Playground items were improved, and a new, safer fence was installed. It's already getting great use!





# Facilities

## Plumbing in the Church ...

Even the church needs a colonoscopy once in a while! Here Michelle works with "Joe the Plumber" to ensure our drains are in working order, so we don't flood!

## And Around the Church

One of our drains by the Tunxis Avenue entrance had deteriorated from underneath and was in jeopardy of collapsing. We blocked it off so nobody would hurt themselves (or their cars!) and then got it repaired right.



We looked down our pipes (left) and drains (and found some pretty interesting things!). It's all getting cleaned up now.



## Roof Project

When we saw indications of a water leak, our Building Manager, Michelle Alves, and our new Chair of the Facilities Ministry Team, David Sherman, got right on the job. A leak had been coming from a small section in our roof connecting the Gale (brick) part of our building to the annex that connects to the Sanctuary. The roof was fixed quickly, and all is well with the roof now. (left)

## Electrical

A lot of our electric systems need upgrading. We've been doing it step by step as needed for our missions efforts and to keep everything in great shape. We will keep you updated.



# Facilities



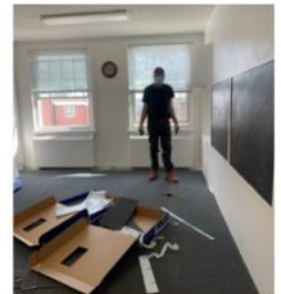
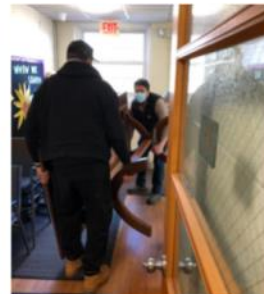
## Announcing the new Chair and Vice Chair of the Facilities Ministry Team...

We are happy to share that David Sherman (left) and David Nail (right) are the new Chair and Vice Chair of the Facilities Ministry Team. Thank you!



## Teachers Lounge

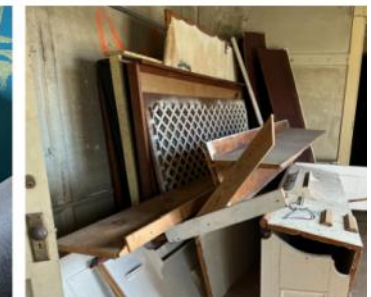
As we grow, we continually look to better use our space. Our Child Development Center grew, and so did the need for a quality teacher's lounge. So, we converted the "Counting Room" used once or twice a week into a room used almost every day to take care of our amazing teachers.



## Basement Clean Up

The space underneath the sanctuary became filled with stuff gathered over 50 years.

It was time for a 50-year overdue "Spring Cleaning."



## Before (Top) and after (Bottom)

Thanks to many volunteers and staff, including many of you, we placed many good things into the hands of people who could use them. We now move on to the final cleanout and begin to "Dream of What That Space Might Be." We would love to hear your ideas!



## What Hope Can We Create in the Community?



### **Solar Project Update**

**We did it!** After extensive research, analysis, and discussion, on January 30th, we voted unanimously to install Solar here at Bloomfield Congregational Church!

**It is a huge step.** It will reduce our carbon footprint in our area and the world. It signals that we care about things that aren't just about what will help us today but also what will impact people far into the future. It communicates to our children and the broader community that we put real resources behind our words.

**Work is scheduled to begin this Summer!** Yes, despite extensive supply-chain challenges globally, we are expected to start work on the Solar project this Summer. It will be a great process to use as a teaching tool for our youth and the children in the Child Development Center. We have also already been asked to report on this project in the Bloomfield Messenger so that it might influence others in the wider community.

**Thank you!** There are a lot of places that talk the talk. There are far fewer who put their money where their mouth is. You did that. That matters. It makes a real impact, and it gives people Hope knowing someone is doing something about the things that matter.

**You matter. We matter.** Let's celebrate that – and then keep doing things that matter.

# Feel Good

## Irish Dance Team Returns

The Irish Dance School returned to practicing in Fellowship Hall this September. Led by instructor Tara Deveney, the program has become very successful on regional and national levels.

“We were so proud to have eleven dancers represent the New England Region at this year’s US National Championship. It was held in Phoenix, AZ and our dancers did exceptionally well! It takes enormous sacrifice for both the dancers and their families. We are so proud of our entire team!” -Tara Deveney.

**We are so proud of you!**



## Hydroponic Garden to Fight Hunger!

Did You Know? We grew food right here at Bloomfield Congregational Church. How did this happen? We worked with the Bloomfield Hunger Action Team to get a \$500 grant for hydroponic garden equipment from CTFoodshare. We also partnered with Sacred Heart, right next door. It was another way to deepen relationships across local faith communities. The food went to two places: our very own Bloomfield Congregational Community Kitchen and Bloomfield Social Services. It was a fantastic way to get fresh food to people who needed it.



## Outstanding Community Partner Award - Again!

Bloomfield Congregational was recognized again with the “Town of Bloomfield Outstanding Community Partner Award” at the Mayor’s Ball. This isn’t why we do it, but these things matter. We are supposed to be the “City Shining on a Hill.” We are doing that.



# Feel Good

## A Successful "Coffee House" Music Night...

Our new "Music Night" was a huge success! It was "Standing Room Only" for the over 40 people who attended. There were so many people that the crowd spilled into our hallway. It was a wonderfully diverse crowd in so many ways. People need to be together.

Thank you to everyone who came and enjoyed the live music and the tasty coffee, drinks, and snacks. Our goal was to have a good time, and we are happy to share that it was accomplished. We also want to extend a big thank you to all the talented musicians who performed and Morgan Bayona for coordinating it! We will be doing this again.



## Using Our Location

We have a great location in Bloomfield. Using that location effectively is essential. Over the past several years, we have done things to improve how we look and present ourselves to those who walk or drive by so they have a better chance to see that we are a vibrant and vital community of faith.

We also use it to communicate where we stand on important issues. We fly Pride flags. We prominently display Black Lives Matter signs. We make statements with the banners we hang from the front of the church. We also do it with the remarkable sculptures we use, most notably the stunning one of our logo that captured the community's hearts.



## Thank You Mail Crew!

A shout out to our dedicated "mail crew" who makes sure our communications get to you effectively and timely. Thank you, especially to the leader and coordinator of the work, Ozma Gibbs!

# Feel Good

## Rally Day

September 12th, we had our annual Rally Day celebration. We had great music and an exciting service, followed by a party that included a mariachi band, bounce house, refreshments, and the (maybe too popular) "dunk the pastor," tank.

There have been many new faces recently. We're not sure exactly what's going on, but nearly 25% of people attending are new to the Congregation this year!



## Eye on the Ball

This has nothing to do with the church but Pastor Shawn **FINALLY** got a ball at a Red Sox game during their playoff run in October.

(he freely concedes they are unlikely to make the playoffs this year... :-)

## Post Office Collection Day Success

The Postal Workers of Bloomfield ran their "Fill a Bag to Help Feed Families" Day, and we were the beneficiaries. The Postal Workers and their iconic vehicles kept arriving with bag after bag of food. They did a lot of work collecting and delivering the food, so we made sure to take care of them with plenty of pizza, water, soda, and snacks.

When all was said and done we received (get this) 280 bags containing over 6,200 pounds of food. That's over three tons! That is AMAZING!

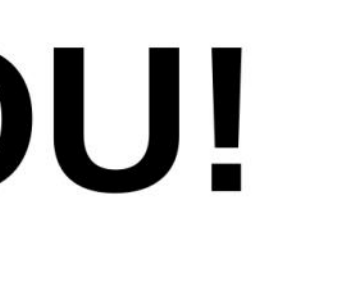


**Thank you.**

**Thank you for creating Hope.  
We have been through a lot. You  
have been through a lot. We have  
been through a lot together.**

**Thank you for creating:  
Hope in this Church  
Hope in this Community, and  
Hope in places we may never  
know.**

**It matters. You matter. We matter.  
Now, how are we going to build  
on that...?**



## **KEY CONTACT INFORMATION:**

---

Bloomfield Congregational Church  
10 Wintonbury Avenue  
Bloomfield, CT 06002

### **Church Office:**

(860) 242-0776 or [office@firstchurchbloomfield.org](mailto:office@firstchurchbloomfield.org)

**Pastor Shawn Fisher:** ext. 201

**Director of Faith Formation Dorine DeCarli:** ext. 203

**Minister of Music Eustace Straker:** ext. 202

**Child Development Center Director Jessica Salvador:** ext. 204 or  
[bloomfieldfccns@gmail.com](mailto:bloomfieldfccns@gmail.com)

**[www.mybloomfield.church](http://www.mybloomfield.church)**

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/mybloomfield.church/>

**YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/c/bloomfieldcongregationalchurch>

**Instagram:** [https://www.instagram.com/bloomfield\\_congregational/](https://www.instagram.com/bloomfield_congregational/)