

Congregational Church of New Canaan

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, March 1, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 11:05am by Senior Deacon Dawn Doak. The meeting was held in the Meeting House, as well as via video conference. A quorum was present in the Meeting House as well as via video conference. Ms. Doak led the congregation in an opening prayer.

Annual reports and enlarged slide graphics were distributed to those in person and were also available online to those attending via video. The presentations outlined the meeting as follows: State of the Church (Deacon Report), Trustee Report, 250th Fund Request, Raymond Trust Report, Nominating and Governance Report, and Word of Thanks. Votes would be taken on the following: the 2026 budget, the 250th Fund Request, and the slate of nominations to various church committees.

Deacon Report:

Ms. Doak reported that the State of the Church is strong. We continue to be encouraged by the growth of our in-person and online worship attendance. We welcomed 68 new members this year, including so many young families that our church school enrollment has shown a 20 percent increase over last year.

Our membership stands at over 1200 church family members. The Annual Report shows a net decrease in membership due to a 2025 audit of our membership database which resulted in removing several names of folks who have long since moved away but were still counted in our computer system. Our current membership numbers show that our engagement is significantly stronger than originally thought.

Our most thoughtful discernment this year has been centered on the future, specifically our church's 300th anniversary in 2031. Our fourth century vision includes physically improving our space on God's Acre, with an eye towards security and capital enhancements. A challenge we face is that the well of emerging ministerial and pastoral talent is lower than it should be. Talent and succession planning for ministers and pastoral leadership will be critical to the future of our church. By leveraging our Raymond Fellows program, looking beyond traditional seminary pipelines, and cultivating in-house talent, we hope to be proactive in addressing this challenge. Ms. Doak closed by thanking the ministers, church staff, deacons, and trustees for their hard work over the last year, and specifically to the retiring deacons: Twee Haffner, David Beck, Teri Reed, and Tom Muller.

Trustees Report:

Amy Werner, Chair of the Board of Trustees, presented the financial results for 2025 and the proposed budget for 2026.

In 2025, the church received \$2,395,193 in pledges versus a budget of \$2,500,000. Taken together, pledges, gifts and bequests are the most essential source of funds for our operating budget and accounted for 75% of our operating revenue and totaled \$2.9M. Program revenue totaled \$392K, which was higher than budgeted due to increased participation. Rental income of \$104K includes Preschool rent, as well as use of the building by AA and weddings. The last category of funding is the annual release of funds from our endowment, which comes from the church's pooled investment fund (the CCPIF). The investment policy sets a formula for how much can be drawn each year, and those dollars are used to support specific areas of current spending.

The total expenses in 2025 were \$3.7M and were in alignment with the approved budget. A full 30% of our operating budget was put to work in missions and ministry. 17% was allocated to Learn and Grow: Church School, Bible studies, Fellowship opportunities, Youth Group, and Confirmations. 17% was spent on Worship and Sing, which covers the cost of our beautiful services including music, flowers, and the Raymond Fund Program. Finally, 17% was spent on Communication and Connection, representing the administrative costs of our office and important communications needed to keep everyone connected.

Restricted Funds: Another source of church income is our Pooled Investment Fund, or CCPIF. We have seven named funds that are managed by the Investment committee and are rebalanced annually. The CCPIF grew by 13.2% in 2025 and held \$13M in funds as of December 31. The calculated authorized draw in 2025 was \$466,225.

Ms. Werner noted that there are three main sources of funding to the church, and there are three main uses. The primary use of funds is toward current operating needs – the day-to-day operation of the church. Pledges are the primary source of funds for our operating budget. Normal gifts/bequests also support operating needs and include plate offerings, contributions for altar flowers, memorial donations, and similar giving. This money is spent in the same year it is received on programs, worship, staffing, and facilities. The second use of funds supports strategic growth – initiatives that unfold over time and help the church evolve. These funds move at a different tempo and can be either designated or restricted. Designated gifts support a specific named purpose. Unrestricted gifts give us flexibility to respond to emerging needs. For example, The Baggins Gift of \$500K in 2022 was unrestricted. This gift allowed the prior Trustees to fund the new playground without

touching the operating budget and later, to provide funding for the preschool – which has now been fully returned.

Ms. Werner then introduced a new source of unrestricted funding for church growth: The God's Acre Gift. Just before last year's annual meeting, the church received a gift. The Trustees initially applied it toward the operating budget, resulting in a reported budget surplus. Subsequently, and with the donor's permission, Trustees reallocated the gift – and named it the God's Acre Gift – which will be dedicated to strategic planning and growth. This gift will support our fourth century vision, enabling long range planning and strategic investment without drawing from current year operating funds.

2025 Actuals vs. Budget financials were then presented. 2025 operating revenue of \$3.85M was compared to the budget presented last year. The primary variance reflects the reclassification of the God's Acre Gift. Joyfully, additional gifts in 2025 brought the God's Acre Gift balance to \$1.5M. Examples of potential uses for this gift include studying how to optimize and enhance our campus, developing a leadership pipeline for future generations, and expanding how we serve as the hands of Christ in our community and the world. These funds are meant to be used – in the ways that the congregation discerns together – as we prepare for our fourth century.

Ms. Werner then presented the proposed budget for 2026.

The financial health of our church is measured not only in dollars received but also in participation in our stewardship campaign. As of today, 353 families have submitted their pledges. We are \$40,000 short of meeting our 2026 pledge goal of \$2.5M and hope the remaining families will submit their pledge cards soon, especially since engagement has increased across almost all of our programs and ministries. The Church depends on pledging member generosity to fund the operating budget. Pledges, gifts and contributions represent 75% of our overall operating revenue. Pledges alone contribute more than 62% of our funding.

While pledge participation is slightly down, that average giving was up by almost \$750 per family. The average gift was \$5,500 and the median gift was \$2,400.

Rental revenue will increase in 2026 as the Preschool on God's Acre (PSGA), which our church owns and operates, pays rent according to its lease agreement. In less than one year of operation, the school is profitable with no debt to the school or church. 86 children from 75 families, along with 21 teachers, enjoy a curriculum based on kindness, unity, courage, and respect.

In 2026, a modest 3.3% growth in expenses has been budgeted. Salaries and benefits are expected to increase due to a 3% cost of living increase, and a 4% cost of benefits

increase. Strong budgeting for Missions remains a priority. For many of us, this is the heart of our church. Funding for Missions was increased 5% over last year's budget. We are budgeting an increase for Building and Grounds, as maintenance contracts costs have increased and we saw an increase in snow plowing and heating costs in the first months of 2026 due to a harsher than normal winter. We have also included an increase in Capital Improvements budget, anticipating repairs to our roof after ice dams earlier this year, some of which required interior and exterior work.

While the proposed 2026 budget is underfunded by \$68K, we are carrying forward a healthy surplus from 2025 given that actual spending was down from budget in some key categories such as Capital Improvements, Adult Christian Formation, and Parish Admin. As such, Trustees feel comfortable with the proposed budget at its current funding.

Ms. Werner opened the floor to questions about the proposed 2026 budget. There were none. A motion was sought to approve the budget. Anna Rogers moved to approve it, Dirk Dunlap seconded the motion. The budget was unanimously approved. Ms. Werner thanked the outgoing Trustees Dave Carlson, Dirk Dunlap, and Homer Parkhill, in addition to thanking Derek Metz for assuming the role of Chair of Trustees as her term concludes.

250th Fund Request

The 250th Fund was established in 1983 as an endowment to provide resources in perpetuity for the Church to distribute support to community partners. This funding is over and above the operating support that we provide to our long-term partners. The Mission and Social Action (MSA) Committee is responsible for stewarding our financial donations to the organizations serving the most vulnerable in our local community and around the world.

Brian Werner, outgoing chair of the MSA Committee, welcomed Kirk Carr as the new incoming Chair. In 2025, we continued to stand faithfully with our six core partners: Pivot Ministries, Open Door Shelter, Pacific House, Inspirica, Filling in the Blanks, and Meals on Wheels of New Canaan. In response to the feedback from the congregation, the MSA Committee has expanded our local partnerships to focus more on women and children. We welcomed Partnership to End Human Trafficking (PEHT) and the Mercy Learning Center, which empowers low-income women with free literacy and life skills since 1987.

After careful review, MSA recommends allocating \$29,321 from its 2026 distributions to two projects that align with our mission and meet urgent needs. First, \$20,000 to Pivot Ministries to help purchase a new van to help transport residents to job interviews, family visits, church services, and medical appointments. Second, \$9,321 to Mercy Learning Center for a new security camera and PA system. Serving 600 women and 80 children in the

Bridgeport area, these additions will help create a more secure environment. Mr. Werner requested a motion to approve the 250th fund allocations for 2026. Barbara Clayton moved to approve, Kirk Carr seconded. There were no questions. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Raymond Trust: Seth Alvord

Seth Alvord reviewed the terms of the Raymond Trust. The trust was established under the Will of Deacon William E. Raymond in 1883 to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to those in Connecticut who otherwise would not have access to such worship. The requirements to read the Will at the Annual Meeting was waived.

The Raymond Fellows Program offers an annual stipend to divinity school students who commit to a rigorous program of training and teaching during the academic year. For 2025-2026 program year, our Raymond Fellows are: Elyon Wells, Eliana Canas Parra and Benji Suprice. In 2024, the program was expanded to include lay preaching fellows. Our lay Raymond Fellows are Marianna Kilbride, Tony Kiniry, and Khanisha Denise Moore. Thank you to George and Carol Bauer for their generous \$10,000 grant that provided educational support for our lay fellows.

Nominating & Governance:

Peter Wilson, the outgoing Chair of Nominating and Governance, reviewed the slate of candidates for the upcoming year.

Our new slate for 2026-2027 is as follows:

Board of Deacons will add for three-year terms: Andrew Dugal, David Haddad, Hope Hetherington, Ashley Simon, and Hoyt Davidson for a one-year term.

Board of Trustees will add for three-year terms: Eric Denlinger, Laura Herman, Terri Leopold, Jay Twombly, and Eileen Thomas for a one-year term. The new Chair will be Derek Metz.

Nominating & Governance will add for three-year terms: Lindsay Tucker and Kyle Keogh. Lesley Cousley will become the new Chair.

Personnel will add Roger Bolton for a two-year term, and Diane Bailey will become the new Chair for a three-year term.

Missions & Social Action (MSA) will add for three-year terms: Michelle Crookenden, Beth Picard, and Peter Wilson. Kirk Carr will be the new Chair.

General Counsel: Richard Gervase for a three-year term.

Treasurer: Marie-Ange Masters for a three-year term

Assistant Treasurer: Chuck Baker for a two-year term.

Rodney Chabot moved to approve the slate of candidates. Amy Werner seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the slate was unanimously approved.

Word of Thanks:

Rev Chapin Garner offered a prayer of thanks for the strong state of our church and for all members who work hard to make it such a wonderful place to worship.

Mariann Kilbride moved to adjourn the meeting. Dirk Dunlap seconded the motion.

The annual meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm.

Presiding Church Clerk: Anne Gunter