

# The Eastford Communicator

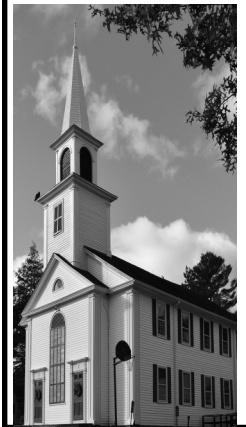
April/May 2023, Vol. 32, Nos. 4,5

## A MESSAGE FROM MIKE MORAN, CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF EASTFORD

We at the Congregational Church of Eastford want to extend our deepest gratitude to the wonderful people of Eastford. Following the loss of our beautiful historic building, your response was immediate. From the selfless work of the Eastford Independent Fire Company to the help from the Eastford School so we have a place to meet, to the flood of your kind words of support, generosity, and willingness to pitch in and help us – we are simply overwhelmed. Eastford has set a beautiful example of love and community support. Thank you, and again I say, thank you! As far as the future, we believe that the Lord has called us to bring God's love to you – with or without a building. The Congregational Church of Eastford is and will remain here to serve you. We have come up with ways to host our ongoing activities so we can continue serving you and the surrounding towns. Now we will now turn to rebuilding – it is too soon to describe what that will look like. In the meantime, all our ongoing activities and events will continue – hopefully without missing a beat. Here are a few things you can mark on your calendar (details at [cceastford.org](http://cceastford.org)). A "Creativity Celebration" where anyone who comes can exhibit their creative things – artwork, crafts, quilts, music, comedy acts, you name it. It will be June 10 from 2-4pm in the school gym; Frog Jump and Band Concert – 5-8 pm on July 22; Sports Camp for Kids ages 4-12 – Mon – Fri July 24-28, 8:30-12:15. Oh, and please join us for Sunday worship at the school – 10:30am through Memorial Day, and 9:30am from June 4 through Labor Day. We would love to see you. If you wish to make a financial gift, go here <https://cceastford.org/give/>

And again, thank you! Blessings, Pastor Mike

1829-2023

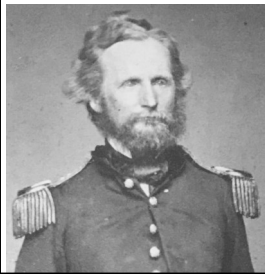


The Congregational Church of Eastford was founded in 1777 while the "Eastford Society" was part of the Township of Ashford.

In 1778, the first church building was completed. Then in 1829, the church that we have known was built.

The Town of Eastford separated from Ashford & was founded in 1847.

In 1861, the funeral of General Nathaniel Lyon was held at the Church with 20,000 mourners present. Photo: Historical Soc.



Photos From Eastford Historical Society archives:  
Right: 100th Anniversary in 1929;  
Below right: Children's Sunday School ca. 1920s.

Below left: April 23, 2023 Sunday School Kids' Club held at Eastford Baptist Church, after EBCs pastor Timothy J. Howard, Jr.'s outreach to Pastor Mike:

"We love and support you and are here for you every step of the way."



"The Church is not the building."

"The Church is the body of believers, and it is a really precious bunch here in Eastford. We are so grateful we were able to get together as a church family and worship and pray just hours after the fire," said Pastor Mike Moran.

Photo right was congregation on April 23, 2023 at Eastford Elementary School after invitation by Supt. Leake.







Thank you to those who contributed to this Communicator: the Congregational Church of Eastford, Eastford Historical Society for historic photos & research, the Barlow Family, Toni Doubleday, Liz Ellsworth, Jane & Guy Grube, Rebecca Gurland, Bev & Bruce Lindemann, Nancy Mayhew, Dottie Torcellini McKenna, Mike Moran, Marian Slye, Deb & Rob Torcellini, Linda Torgeson, Julia Torcellini, Barbara Urban, & for their fire services & reports: Quiet Corner Alerts! Photo left: Church bell in ruins. On April 16, 2023 Benjamin Torcellini and David Budd were the last to ring the Church's bell that had rung since 1829 for Sunday services, weddings & other events. To view Benjamin Torcellini's video of the heroic retrieval of the bell from the rubble: go to the May 16, 2023 Facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EastfordCT06242>

\*\*\*\*\*  
**EASTFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING & PROGRAM:**  
 "CAMP EASTFORD FROM 1910-1950", Thursday, June 29, 7:30pm at Eastford Town Office Bldg.

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WEDDINGS: Nancy & Russ Mayhew (August 25, 1962)

NUMBER ON THE ROLL	145
ATTENDANCE TO-DAY	74
COLLECTION TO-DAY	736
ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY	61



The Eastford Historical Society would appreciate your memories & photos of activities at the Church. Please contact President Linda Torgeson (860) 974-3311.

From Rob Torcellini  
Our little town is saddened over the loss of the Congregational Church. Not only was it the local church and historical building, but also a community center. My parents were married here & my daughter. I've attended countless weddings, funerals, and social gatherings there. The Church provides many community outreach programs such as the senior citizen concerts & dinners, annual band concert & frog jumping contest, town road trash cleanup, and volunteering for educational events & tutoring at the elementary school. Thankfully no one was hurt, and it can be rebuilt. Our volunteer fire department provides thankless support to our town, and multiple tanker and ladder trucks came from neighboring towns. If your heart desires, I'm sure the Church would appreciate financial support to aid in the rebuilding. You can donate through the web site. <https://cceastford.org/give/>

Dottie & Hank Torcellini  
(May 23, 1964)



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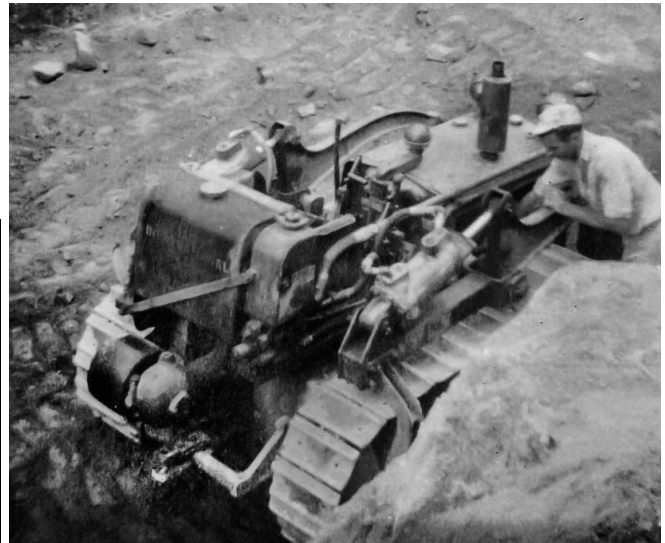




Photo from EHS Archives: Congregational Church Sunday School 1951



Photo right is of Herman Barlow, Sr., on his bulldozer, excavating below the main building in the 1940s to create a basement. He also excavated for the addition that created the Community Room in the 1960s.



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MEMORIES, ANNIVERSARIES

**MEMORIES**  
by **JAMES BARLOW**  
The Congregational Church of Eastford has been a fixture from my earliest life. My parents, Herman and Jean Barlow were married there in 1950. Dad was a church leader in the 1960s. Grand-father Ed Trepal organized events there in the 1960s: musical barbershop quartets, the annual frog jump and cake walk, the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976, where everyone wore fake straw hats

Photo below is the 25th Anniversary of Herman, Sr. & Jean Barlow in 1975



made of Styrofoam and sang and danced to old songs. Now, it's my turn to be a leader in our congregation and, like many others, I have been involved in a variety of roles - leading men's retreats, teaching adults and kids, serving meals, playing with kids in the nursery, organizing pine car races, and occasionally preaching on a Sunday. It was a great joy to worship in a church building with a rich history. On a recent Sunday, I held my granddaughter in my arms and thought of all the people who had worshiped there before me. We lost a beautiful historic building that held many memories. It is a great loss. But I am also confident that the church is not the building, but its people. New memories will be made for my grandchildren and yours. Will the next 200 years be as fruitful for our church as the last 200? I believe that with God's help they can be.

Photo below is the 50th Anniversary in 1990 of Helena & William Nieminen

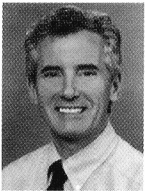
**50th anniversary**



Mr. and Mrs. William Nieminen of Eastford were joined by approximately 50 friends and relatives at the Eastford Congregational Church March 24 to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. The couple was married March 24, 1940, in Webster, Mass. and have lived in Eastford for the past 50 years. The honored couple received well wishes from New York, Michigan, Wisconsin and Florida as well as Connecticut. They also received a special congratulations from President and Barbara Bush. The party was given by their three daughters, Dorothy Bressette and Marian Slye of Eastford and Barbara Urban of Putnam. They also have seven grandchildren.

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# EASTFORD GROVE CEMETERY ASSOCIATION, INC.

## Notice

### Submitted by the Board of Trustees

**Flags:** American flags and Fire Department Flags will be placed at the cemetery on Friday, May 26th @ 5:00 p.m. The Memorial Day weekend is May 27-29, 2023; all flags are removed after Veterans' Day, November 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Flag Holder:** If you are interested in ordering a flag holder for your veteran's flag, call 860-974-1349 before May 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Plot/Space Purchase:** Appointments can be made to view the cemetery grounds and to select a plot for purchase. To make an appointment, call 860-974-1349.

**Plot Diagrams Available:** Plot owners, or a family member, may obtain a diagram of their plot by writing to: EGCA, INC. P.O. Box 284, Eastford, 06242.

**Mowing Season:** Between March 15<sup>th</sup> and Thanksgiving, only live flowers may be planted, or placed in plastic pots, **WITHIN 12" of the base of the monument**; all artificial flowers and ornaments are **prohibited during the mowing season and will be removed.**

For more information, contact a member of the Board of Trustees: Linda Torgeson, Rick Torgeson, Lauren Anderson, Ken Grube, David Barlow, Carolyn Hazard, Scott Huri, Alex Kowalchuk. Kindly consider assisting the Eastford Grove Cemetery Association in its pursuit of efficient perpetual care of the Grove Cemetery. We are a non-profit group that does not receive funding from the Town of Eastford. A tax deductible donation from you will help us meet present and future beautification and maintenance requirements. Contribution in any amount will allow us to continue to meet the goal of providing a well-maintained, respectable final resting place for your loved ones. Additionally, you could leave a gift to the Eastford Grove Cemetery Association in your will or living trust, known as a bequest. This allows you to offer future support without giving up assets today. Or, you may also wish to consider making "The Grove Cemetery Association" the recipient of a memorial donation ("in lieu of flowers"). We appreciate your consideration of our appeal and welcome any questions or concerns regarding the cemetery operation. Questions? Call (860) 974-1349. You may also visit our website: <https://sites.google.com/site/eastfordgrovecemetery/>

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From Bev & Bruce Lindemann: "We were born here, raised here, and married here 49 years ago. My great uncle was the minister of the Congregational Church in 1920 (see cover photo). This church community is our heart, and it continues: Sunday Services at the School, Grief Share at Town Office Bldg., Adult Caregivers of Aging Loved Ones Group at Eastford Library, Celebrate Recovery at Congregational Church of Pomfret, Kids Club at Eastford Baptist Church, and the Church is renting an office in the center of Town. The Town and neighboring communities have been so generous. It is exciting to see what the Lord will do to bring beauty out of the ashes. (Sources: WINY Radio & Bev Lindemann)  
\*\*\*\*\*

**The Center of Community by Liz Ellsworth:** I am still processing the heartbreaking news from Sunday, April 23, 2023 in Eastford, my hometown, where my childhood church, the Congregational Church of Eastford, burned to the ground. This church, which dates back to 1829, was the center of much of my youth - holidays - Easter Sunday, Christmas, Thanksgiving Eve service, Children's Sunday - Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. And community events, such as 8th Grade Graduation, senior citizen dinners, town-wide Heritage Day events, frog-jumping contests and cake walks, sledding days, lectures, band concerts. And later, friends' weddings, baptisms, and some funerals. Friendships built and community felt. A place where my mom, Mary Ellen Ellsworth, taught Sunday School, and a place where my daughter, Hannah, got to experience community events, like the frog-jumping contests - a 100 year tradition. A place in a small New England town that brought us all together - a clear fixture on the hill. A few weeks ago, on a trip home, my mom, and my sister, and I stopped the car to view the countryside, and there - in the center - was the steeple of the Church, remembered in a photo from that day.



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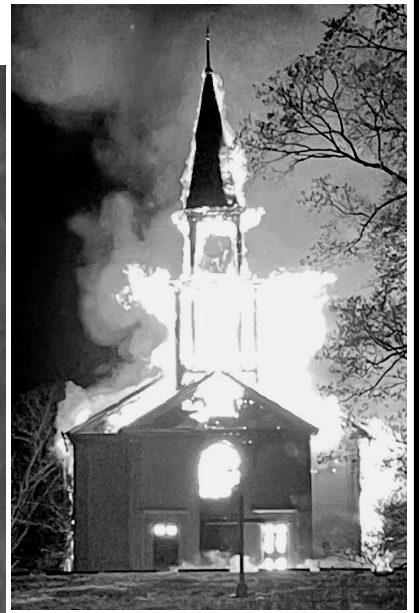
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The Congregational Church of Eastford Fire on April 23, 2023—more than 20 fire units responded.



Eastford Congregational Church Fire Report and Photos excerpted from Quiet Corner Alerts!  
*Above: Chuch engulfed in flames. Left: Bungay Fire Brigade Chief David Elliot & Eastford Deputy Fire Chief James Roy.*

Report from Quiet Corner Alerts! On April 23, 2023 at 3:25am, during a raging thunderstorm, Eastford Independent Fire Co. No. 1 responded to a fire at the Congregational Church of Eastford. Additional fire companies were requested and more than 20 units responded. Early in the firefighting, the roof and steeple of the church collapsed, and the decision was made to change to a defensive firefighting posture, which meant that no crews would be entering the building as it was too hazardous. Approximately 10 tanker trucks, each carrying 1500+ gallons of water, were filled at a nearby pond, and filled aerial trucks from Woodstock Volunteer Fire Dept., Dayville Fire Dept., and UCONN Fire Dept, to flow 1,500+ gallons of water per minute on the fire and reach the innermost parts of the structure. Crews fought for three hours. In the end, the building was a complete loss. Eastford Deputy Chief James Roy said: "It was a lengthy process, a lot of heavy fire, [Firefighters] had powerlines to contend with, and the thunderstorms coming through the area hampered the operation. Eastford is a small community, [The loss of the church] is a tremendous loss to the town." Agencies that responded included Eastford Independent Fire Co. No.1, Chaplin Volunteer Fire Dept., Ashford Fire Dept., Union Volunteer Fire Dept., Woodstock Volunteer Fire Assoc. Station 76, Muddy Brook Fire Dept., Bungay Fire Brigade, Pomfret Fire Dept., Mortlake Fire Co., Williamsville Fire Engine Co., Dayville Fire Co., Attaugan Fire Dept., Community Fire Co., West Thompson Fire Dept., East Thompson Volunteer Fire Dept., IAFF Local S-15 UConn Fire-Rescue, Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services, CT., Willington Hill Fire Dept., KB Ambulance, QV Medic, Killingly Rehab Team, and the Special Signal Fire Association / Providence Canteen (which provided shelter, hot coffee and food for the firefighters).

*(Right: Firefighters pour 1,500 gallons of water per minute to extinguish the fire, extinguished after three hours of heroism.*





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**THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH'S ONGOING COMMUNITY OUTREACH INCLUDES EVENTS FOR ALL AGES:**  
**COMING SOON: FREE "A CREATIVITY CELEBRATION," SAT, JUNE 10, 2-4pm, Eastford Elementary School.** Community members are invited to share your family-friendly creative endeavors (Art-Painting, Fiber Arts, Sculpture, Photography; Music, Poetry; this event is not for selling items; refreshments; sign up at: [www.cceastford.org/events](http://www.cceastford.org/events). Annual Events: Pine Car Prix (photo above, happened on April 16, 2023, one week before fire); Cookies and Cocoa w Santa, Grief Share, Holiday Meals for Seniors, Frog Jump / Band Concert / Cake Walk (photo below right: Hannah won a cake!). On April 30, 2023, Green-Up for Townwide Clean-Up (photo center below) with co-sponsors: Town of Eastford & Eastford Baptist Church, leaders shown are (l-r) Herman Barlow, Jr., Seth Budd, Pastor Mike Moran of Congregational Church, Pastor Timothy J. Howard, Jr. of Eastford Baptist Church, & Roger Wolfe, Chair, Eastford Conservation & Historic Preservation Commission, not shown is leader Mary Belden who headed out early, photo by Sarah Minor).

**FROG JUMP/BAND CONCERT**  
July 22, 5-8pm (photo right);  
**SPORTS CAMP FOR KIDS,**  
July 24-28 (photo below)

