

# ***Southport Congregational Church***

United Church of Christ

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October 14, 2023

Dear Members and Friends,

We write with information on **what you can do right now to save our Church and community from the United Illuminating (UI) high voltage line proposal** which we described in our September 29 and October 3 messages (attached).

To briefly recap:

UI has proposed a plan to the Connecticut Siting Council that includes **permanently taking more than 8.5 acres of property owned by Southport and Fairfield residents, businesses, and non-profit organizations – including Southport Congregational Church.**

Once UI has acquired this property, it will clear-cut mature trees and vegetation over large areas of Southport and Fairfield in order to install massive high-voltage electrical line infrastructure through historic Southport, including on Church property.

**UI's proposal will have a devastating and irreversible impact on our Church, our Preschool, the Village of Southport, the Town of Fairfield, and you.**

As it pertains specifically to our Church, UI's proposal – currently under review by the Connecticut Siting Council – includes:

- (1) Acquiring “permanent easements” on Church property – allowing UI to do whatever it needs to do to install and maintain its infrastructure. **This will control and restrict what we will be able to do, and will not be able to do – with our own property;**
- (2) Permanently clear-cutting a 35-foot swath of mature trees and vegetation on Church property (as a part of the 7.3-mile blight of clear-cutting all the way from Southport through Fairfield into Bridgeport).
- (3) Digging 40-foot-deep foundations for the utility poles on adjacent properties;
- (4) Installing utility poles that are significantly taller than the Church steeple; and
- (5) Suspending high voltage lines over the Church parking lot.

This is the impact only to Southport Congregational Church! UI's proposal – if approved – will affect our entire community. It will ravage **all** of the small businesses, restaurants,

*The Southport Congregational Church is a warm and welcoming community of faith called to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves with a spirit of abundant life and joy.*

and residences on the route in a similar way. As such, it will no doubt devalue every resident's property values!

**This is not a theoretical problem that is years away. This is upon us NOW! If approved, UI will begin work very soon – starting in 2024.** You might ask, how could a project this big get this far along without my learning about it? The answer is that UI has been strategically working behind the scenes using its lawyers to move its proposal through the proper channels without adequately informing residents and business owners of the magnitude and impact of this project. It's as plain and simple as that.

Many of you have asked: **What is the Church going to do?** As we communicated in our first message, our Church has a team of Church members studying the facts, evaluating how to position the Church best legally to protect our interests, and we are considering the full range of obligations and interests that we, as a Christian faith community, have to our members and our neighbors. Our Church has also **filed to become an official party (as an "intervenor") to the proceedings before the Connecticut Siting Council.**

Others have asked: **What can I do now?** There are four things you can do immediately:

**First – Please donate!** Southport Congregational Church has set up an account specifically designated to provide financial support for our opposition, which will include, at a minimum, legal fees, expert costs, and communications expenses. Please indicate "UI Project" on your donation and thank you! Together, we are stronger.

**Second – Please sign** the Southport Congregational Church petition opposing UI's proposal. It will be available in our Church this Sunday, and in the Church office after that.

**Third – Write personal emails or letters** to Governor Lamont [here](#) and First Selectwoman Kupchick [here](#). You may consider using the following recommended message:

"I am a resident of Fairfield and a member of Southport Congregational Church. Before the end of August 2023, I was unaware of the scope, magnitude, and impact of United Illuminating's proposal as reflected in its March 17, 2023 Connecticut Siting Council application ("the UI Proposal"). I am **opposed** to the UI Proposal, and believe the Connecticut Siting Council should **extend its hearing schedule** to allow all affected parties time to seek intervenor status, present relevant evidence (including expert analyses), and otherwise participate in the Siting Council's fact-finding and deliberative process."

**Fourth – You may also join** the Sasco Creek Neighbors Environmental Trust, Inc. ("SCNETI") – a 501(c)(3) non-profit, which is fighting on behalf of **all of us** to stop this proposal! **Southport Congregational Church has already joined SCNETI and will be serving on its Advisory Board.** You, too, can join SCNETI as an individual through its website, which you can access [here](#).

As you know, we are not alarmists or supportive of hyperbole. But the fact is - **this is a permanent, irreversible** (once it has happened) **imminent and existential crisis** for our Church and community. **If we do not act now with great resolve and unity, we not only**

**risk our Church's future operation and full functioning, but we will have allowed unfettered corporate action to lull us into complacency.**

In the words of the Apostle Paul:

***“Let us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.”***

*(Ephesians 4:25)*

Yours in service,

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