



First Church
IN MARLBOROUGH
— SINCE 1666 —

FIRST CHURCH IN MARLBOROUGH

CELEBRATING

Three Hundred & Fifty Years

350 YEARS

ANNUAL REPORT 2015 / 2016

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First Church in Marlborough (Congregational) United Church of Christ
37 High Street
Marlborough, Massachusetts 01752-2344
(508) 485-6297

AGENDA OF ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 1, 2016

1. Call to order: Joan Campbell, Moderator
2. Opening Prayer: Rev. Dr. Kaz Bem
3. Introductory Remarks: Joan Campbell, Moderator
4. Approve the Minutes of the 2015 Annual Meeting held on May 3, 2015
5. Approve the Annual Reports not including Matchmaking (Nominating) or Budget
6. Approve Matchmaker (Nominating) Report and election of Nominees
7. Swearing in of Church Officers and Trustees
8. Approve the Operating Budget for Fiscal Year July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017
9. To vote approval for the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer to be granted full authority to buy, sell, exchange or in any other way transfer title of stocks, bonds, and any other investments, their rights or warrants which stand in the name of the Church; and that they may be enabled to execute the legal transfer of same with the approval of the Trustees.
10. To act on the matter of authorizing the Treasurer to borrow money with the approval of the Trustees.
11. Other business—Discussion only (Only matters appearing on the Warrant can be voted upon)
12. Closing Prayer: Rev. Dr. Kaz Bem
13. Adjournment

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WARRANT OF ANNUAL MEETING – 2016
MAY 1, 2016

The Annual Meeting of the voting members of First Church in Marlborough (Congregational) will be held in the Sanctuary of the Church on 37 High Street, Marlborough, Massachusetts on Sunday, May 1, 2016 at 11:30 AM to act on the following:

1. To hear and act on all reports.
2. To receive the report of the Matchmaker (Nominating) Committee and to elect officers for ensuing year.
3. To act on the appropriations of such sums as may be needed to defray expenses for the budget year July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 and to adopt methods of raising the same.
4. To vote approval of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer to be granted full authority to buy, sell, exchange or in any other way transfer title of stocks, bonds, and any other investments, their rights or warrants which stand in the name of the Church; and that they may be enabled to execute the legal transfer of same with the approval of the Trustees.
5. To act on the matter of authorizing the Treasurer to borrow money with the approval of the Trustees.

Warrant posted April 17, 2016 according to law.

Deborah L. Marino, Church Clerk

CLERK REPORTS

MINUTES OF 2015 ANNUAL MEETING MAY 3, 2015

The Annual Meeting of the voting members of First Church in Marlborough (Congregational) was held in the sanctuary of the Church on 37 High Street, Marlborough, Massachusetts on Sunday, May 3, 2015 at 11:30 A.M.

Attendance sheets were passed out and were signed by 57 members.

The meeting was called to order by Moderator Steve Ziegler. Reverend Dr. Kaz Bem gave the opening prayer. Steve reviewed the meeting agenda and thanked all those who were in attendance for coming and supporting the church at its 355th annual meeting.

Steve announced that a major focus of this year's annual meeting would be to hear and vote on the revised by-laws that Church Council has been diligently working on over the past several months.

Stephanie Hasbrouck, chair of Church Council, opened the discussion with the acknowledgment that the church has been using the ministry model successfully for the past several years. The Council felt they were "polishing up" what was already in use.

Sue Pellerin asked that a correction be made in the bylaws in Section 13, page 10, amending it to read, "The Trustees shall consist of the Treasurer, plus up to 8 volunteer members of the church...", omitting the word "Pastor". The congregation voted to change this wording.

A discussion ensued concerning Bylaw Article 1, Section 3, paragraph D, concerning inactivity of members. A motion was made to change the wording of the paragraph to read, "Any active church member, who for a period of two years, in spite of kindly approaches, has not communicated with the Church, or contributed to its support, as mutually determined by the Pastor, Clerk, Collector, and Deacons, shall have their membership suspended." The word "extinguished" would be modified. Pastor Kaz stated that in August of each year the church goes through the membership list and letters are sent to inactive members encouraging them to contact the church or they would be put in the "friend" category. Dues to the UCC are no longer done on an individual level, but the membership lists need to be kept current. The congregation voted to make this change.

Discussion continued with Article II, Section 3, page 8 concerning the election of officers and others. The new wording would be "The Moderator, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Collector, Assistant Collector, Trustees, Pastoral Relations, Council members-at-large and Auditors shall be elected annually at the annual meeting of the church. The congregation unanimously voted to add the word "annually".

Discussion continued with Article II, Section 11, paragraph 2, to modify "Pastoral Relations, (names as supplied by the Pastor...), to read "Pastor and Pastoral Relations...". Article II, Section 12, page 10, paragraph 3, was discussed to modify the wording to read, "The group, respective for any and all pastors..." which would clarify the fact that each pastor has his or her own pastoral relations committee. The congregation voted to change the wording of both of these modifications.

A motion to amend the bylaws as presented by the Church Council was made and the congregation voted to accept them as such.

Sue Pellerin announced that each facilitator of each ministry group as presented in the bylaws should have a copy of the updated bylaws to utilize and refer to as the groups meet. Bylaws should be liberally distributed to all in the congregation so they can be readily accessed when needed. A visual board is being constructed for the parish hall so everyone can see who facilitates each ministry group and how each group works within the whole. The Crier will also have the ministry model system illustrated for further clarity.

The minutes of Annual Meeting 2014 were voted on by the congregation to accept as written.

A few corrections to 2015 reports were discussed. On page 16, Gary Hollis, chair of Diaconate, asked to add that Diane Urwiller's "in care" ministry has been completed. On page 46, the Treasurer's report needed correction of the date 2/28/14 to 2/28/15 in the second paragraph. These corrections were voted on by the congregation to accept as modified. It was also mentioned that some mini-versions of the Annual Report were distributed to defray the high cost of copying. The congregation voted to approve the 2015 Annual Reports of the ministry groups and committees with the exception of the Matchmaking Report and Budget.

The Matchmaker (Nominating) Committee was represented by Sue Pellerin. She asked that a few changes be made to their slate of proposed candidates. The name Linda Warren was added to the Church Council at Large as Secretary. The name David Youngstrom was added for a 2 year term as Trustee. The names Marcia Fitzgerald, Gary Hollis, and Andy Dunn were added for 1 year terms on Diaconate. The names of Lee Atherton and Russ Goliger were added as MAC/UCC delegates and Lee Atherton as Central Mass delegate to the Central Association for 2015-2016. All slates were completely filled and Sue thanked everyone who had come forth to work for the church. The slate of proposed candidates was approved unanimously by the congregation.

Moderator Steve Ziegler swore in Deborah Marino as Clerk. Deborah then installed all officers and all new committee and ministry members in attendance. All others were sworn in in absentia.

Jeremy Crocker, Church Treasurer, presented the operating budget for fiscal year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. He has made a new, improved and easier to read form for this year's budget analysis. He noted some changes in recording from last year: Men's and Women's Fellowships' financial statements have been included even though they remain autonomous groups within the church. They report to the treasurer although they operate independently. He noted on page 50 of the budget papers that the new position of "Sunday School Program Leader" has been added. This is a "core teacher" responsible for core instruction of all the students in the Parish Hall, who then disperse into groups according to age. This new position will lessen the need for large numbers of parent volunteers and will require less preparation of classroom activities by those volunteers who do help. Jeremy stated that an increased amount has been budgeted for the church organist and that some of the restricted funds are "best guesses" due to market volatility. He opened the floor up for questions.

Jeremy discussed the four type of restricted funds to aid in clarity:

- *Unrestricted funds
- *Board designated funds—funds restricted internally, i.e. by the Trustees
- *Temporarily restricted funds—spendable only when certain conditions are met
- *Permanently restricted funds—externally restricted and only the interest generated may be used for specific intents.

There were many questions about these varieties of funds. Jeremy noted that if the church dissolved, permanently restricted funds would have to be returned to the original donor or the Massachusetts Attorney General would have to get involved. The Alice Blakely Scholarship Fund was noted as an example of a permanently restricted fund which has provided tens of thousands of dollars in scholarship aid to First Church students over the years. The use of this fund is legally bound to the donor's wishes. The Church has a Memorial Fund Policy. If a donor states the desire to give funds to the church, the Trustees would comply with their wishes if possible, but it is their intention to encourage those who would give to allow the use of funds, with the discretion of the Trustees, to be used where most needed. The donor or family would receive communications of how the funds were used.

Jeremy stated that First Church is healthy financially. As of June 30, 2014, the Statement of Financial Position shows 1.5 million dollars in Church assets. Only 8.3 percent of the assets are in permanently restricted funds. The proposed 2016 deficit is smaller than the one for fiscal year 2015, which was \$46,000. Giving through December 2014 was very good, but the snowstorms and severe cold weather brought giving down in January, February, and March 2015. The deficit for this new budget is proposed at just over \$23,000. The church has already had its stewardship drive so pledging is complete for this year, and we are voting on this budget with a six month pledge history. Pledges were up this year, a nice gain over the past few years. The budget is an "educated guess" and projection of data knowledge. The church looks at prior expenses, pledge history, and loose collection history and makes a conservative judgement of financial position. The Christmas offering was twice what was projected, a nice surprise. When all questioning was complete, the congregation voted to accept the 2015-2016 Operating Budget as written.

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer were voted to be granted full authority to buy, sell, exchange or in any other way transfer title of stocks, bonds, and any other investments, their rights or warrants which stand in the name of the Church and that they are enabled to execute the legal transfer of same with the approval of the Trustees.

The membership voted approval of authorizing the Treasurer to borrow money with the approval of the Trustees.

The floor was opened to discussion of other business. Sue Pellerin answered questions concerning the Ministry Model. She clarified that Sue Buckingham is facilitator of the Spiritual Formation Ministries, Tammy Ducey is facilitator of Mission and Outreach Ministries, Sue Pellerin facilitates Parish Life, and Liz Mahoney volunteered to lead Worship Ministries. The facilitator position for Stability Ministries remains open. Sue stated that it is vital that the groups remain visible and that the smaller groups that fall under the larger domains need to meet on a regular basis with each other. Council will help any group without a facilitator initially. Pastor Kaz has volunteered to aid where needed also. She stated the Church needs to own the model system that it has chosen by embracing it and bringing it forward. Any member may serve in any group and even serve in several if desired. It is a "free form system". Anyone should be comfortable

to go to a facilitator with issues of things that need to be addressed. Richard Rowell volunteered to write Crier articles for the 5 Ministry groups to allow the congregation to see what is happening within them.

Cindy Vail asked that everyone wear their name badges. We have many new members and the use of name tags has fallen off.

Jeremy Crocker noted that a new IT director for the church is desperately needed.

Marian Hopkins commended the clerk and all other volunteers for their dedication.

Russ Goliger asked the Church to help him discern whether he should seek a life in the ministry.

Pastor Kaz Bem gave the closing prayer, stating that all we do we do for the glory of Christ and His church.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 by Moderator Steve Ziegler.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah L. Marino (Church Clerk)

CLERK REPORT

The membership of First Church of Marlborough (Congregational) UCC at the close of 2015 was 214, an overall increase of five members since 2014. Average church attendance at worship services was 96. There were 19 children on average attending Sunday school.

Reverend Dr. Kaz Bem officiated at the baptisms of eight children:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| April 26, 2015 | Jacob Marino Atsma, born 9-08-14 in Worcester to Gary and Jennifer Atsma |
| May 17, 2015 | Jason Mark Spacek, born 9-03-14 in Newton to Mark and Katherine Spacek |
| May 24, 2015 | Nathan Christopher Lule, born 3-22-07 in Framingham to Sarah Kabugo Nantongo and Edward Lule |
| May 24, 2015 | Emmett Harrison Seaver and Jack Lawrence Seaver, born 10-10-14 in Worcester to Jonathan and Jessica Seaver |
| August 2, 2015 | Nathan Michael Ziegler, born 5-27-15 in Fairfield, OH to Eric and Courtney Ziegler |
| October 18, 2015 | Amelia Ripley Donovan and Gracelyn Marie Donovan, born 09-15-14 in Worcester to Dana and Sky Donovan |

New members were welcomed at two occasions by the congregation and Rev Dr. Bem:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| January 18, 2015: | Andy Dunn
Kevin Dyer
Rose Eastman |
|-------------------|---|

Eric Fournier
John Harvie
Heath Oikle and Oikle
May 10, 2015: Aaron Hollis, confirmand
Max Hooker, confirmand

Our membership was saddened by the deaths of several members and friends:

January 5, 2015 Myrtle (Sleepe) Ferrara, former long term member of the church
January 10, 2015 Erick Bealand, friend of the church
January 16, 2015 Polly A. Wydom, former member of the church
January 16, 2015 James S. Chase, former member of the church
January 31, 2015 Wayne Edward Eaton, active member of the church
March 27, 2015 Betty Munroe Owens, active member of the church
May 20, 2015. Margaret White, former long term member of the church
Aug. 6, 2015 James Tripp, former member of the church
Aug. 13, 2015 Frances Rocheford, former member of the church
Sept. 13, 2015 Helen M. Randall, active member of the church
Nov. 15, 2015 June M. Winegardner, former member of the church
Dec. 22, 2015 Dorothea (Craig) Brown, former member of the church

There were three weddings of church families officiated by Rev. Dr. Kaz Bem:

June 5, 2015 Tyler Schwartz and Felicia Vautier (private location)
Aug. 14, 2015 William Stone and Ruth Fowler (married in the sanctuary)
Nov. 6, 2015 Spencer Ziegler and Ashley Raymer (private location)

There were no special meetings of the church in 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Marino
Church Clerk

PASTOR'S REPORT

Dear Members and Friends of First Church,

While I was preparing to write this section for the Annual Report, it dawned on me that this is my fifth report for you. So, not just to procrastinate, but also to get some perspective, I decided to do something different. Before I wrote the following paragraphs, I read all of the reports already submitted. What has struck me is just how faithful ya'all are to Jesus Christ and God, and to his church, as embodied by First Church in Marlborough.

Let me begin by commending you for gathering very faithfully for worship. Our attendance average is ca. 96 adults per Sunday, so a little less than last year. However, that statistic includes not only the summer "slump" months, but also all the weekday services that we have throughout the year on special occasions, and that awful winter in 2015. Your faithfulness in coming together to worship God is something that delights me – and brings true glory to our God. Less you think I am saying this just for attendance sake – let me assure you that I am not! There is an old saying, that if you looking for water you can find it everywhere – but when you want to quench a thirst you go to a well. In the same way, faith, our Christian faith, is rooted, refreshed, and renewed by the constant coming together of Christians to worship God, to ponder together on God's Word, and by encouraging one another by prayer and fellowship. Our regular Sunday worship is the most powerful way to ground us in God's love and grace. It is the spring of our Christian faith. Even authors who are not necessarily very orthodox Christians recognize this. The writer Annie Dillard once wrote about Christian worship: "Does anyone have the foggiest idea what so of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets." And it is my belief, that our vibrant, engaging worship makes the rest of the activities and mission of First Church function as well as they do.

The Music Ministry, thanks to our talented team is growing, expanding and ever changing. We have not only been using for almost a year now the new hymnal "Glory to God", but also on top of bells, and flutes, and organs, we can enjoy a brass quartet, a trumpet – and many more musical goodies. Our Bible Study has looked at diverse Bible Study materials: beginning with the Kerygma Series, through UCC Resources, ad hoc studies on the fate of the Apostles, going to the movies on a couple of occasions and working with our denomination's international mission agency, Global Ministries and their Bible Studies with special focus on the current situation in the Middle East. Our two Sunday-School co-superintendents have changed the way our children learn about Jesus and God with visible results: the parents are happier, and so are the children. Speaking of children, for the third year in a row, the number of baptisms (8) has once again exceeded the number of deaths of our active members (3) and I hope and pray this trend continues in the coming year. Also, this past year we have grown modestly in terms of numbers, but what is really important is what one of you pointed out in an email: "I have noticed that we are getting more diverse in terms of people in the pews. This makes us, I think, more like the crowd Jesus hanged out with, and that is a good thing." I need to note here, that our Sunday worship runs so smoothly because of the incredible work the deacons do quietly in the backstage.

The ever changing face of First Church is visible not just in the fact that we have over 10 nationalities worshipping on any given Sunday – they come from all continents but Australia – seriously, if you know a Kiwi or an Assue you should bring them to First Church!!! It also shows in our growing awareness that we are a part of the church universal: The United Church of Christ (in the United States) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (worldwide). In the past year our international mission and outreach connected us with children refugees fleeing from Central America to the southern US border, the Syrian and Iraqi refugees in the Middle East (via the Global Ministries) and by contributing to disaster relief efforts of the UCC in the United States and beyond. Earlier this year we hosted Rev. Victor Makari, a Global Ministries missionary in the Middle East, who shared with us so eloquently the importance of Christian presence and witness in Israel/Palestine and Jordan. I hope that in the coming year we will strengthen our ties with Global Ministries, especially with the Sri Lanka school our first missionary, Rev. Edward Warren (1786-1818) helped to establish in 1816. I am currently working on us being present at their celebrations in the fall of this year. I also hope we can host again a missionary from Global Ministries at our church.

I think one of the most rewarding parts of my last year's ministry with you has been the way our 350th Anniversary celebrations have caught on with you. I remember over a year ago someone joking that I seem to be the most excited person about this in the congregation. Well, I am happy to report that my enthusiasm has been contagious, and you have far outpaced me in having fun with the celebrations! And so you should – it is YOUR anniversary, our 350th Birthday. God willing, if our plans go the way we want them to, we will honor our Puritan/Yankee/Congregational/International Calvinist/Local heritage with a great splash and gusto! I do hope this will be another opportunity for you all to connect, and reconnect with First Church and our mission to Marlborough and to the world!

All of this – and much more – is just is a huge blessing from God, for which we have to be ever thankful. And I am deeply convinced this has come about because of your faithfulness.

I like to add to each report a piece about looking forward. Our 350th anniversary celebrations are obviously the biggest thing on my mind right now. However, as I discussed with the Deacons in February, there is always new work to be done, new wineskins that need filling. The church is never static – and don't take my word for it, just see for yourself what Jesus made the disciples do after Easter! The face of the church – in the United States, of the United Church of Christ, and globally is changing. This means new ways of doing church, doing our mission, teaching our children and incorporating them into Sunday worship. Believe it or not, I don't have any answers for where we are going, and only some bare hints of how to get there. And while some of us don't necessarily like change, think of it this way: our church was built on change. Had our forbearers in faith been content with the way things were, they would have stayed Church of England and in England! There is a reason why our branch of Protestantism is called "Reformed and always reforming." Or, if you will "God is still speaking!"

In all of this only one thing remains the same, constant, never changes: God is faithful to us, and to God's church. Jesus Christ has been faithful to First Church in Marlborough for the past 350 years, and will continue to be so, if we are faithful to God.

Allow me to add a personal note, as I do every year. You might have heard me say this a million times, but I truly LOVE what I do. I love ministering with you all, preaching, leading worship, meeting with you, praying with you, being your own crazy #dorkpastor. Your faithfulness, kindness and generosity makes my load so easy and light – I cannot thank you enough for it all. If there is any way I have let you down, or offended you in this past year, I sincerely ask for your forgiveness.

The church that gathers on Sunday today, is a very, very, very different one than used to gather here 50, 100, 200, 300 or 350 years ago when Rev. Brinsmead preached and presided. It is a shame that some things are lost, and a blessing that some new things have come to us. What holds us together is our faith in the Risen Christ who proclaims today as he did before: "I am the Living One." (Revelation 1:18)

So remember your baptism, take courage and First Church-on!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Kaz

CHURCH COUNCIL

Church Council Ministry Objectives: To facilitate communication amongst the ministry teams and to determine and interpret polity decisions. Church Council is open to anyone who would like to attend, listen, give input and get updates on Church Life. Council meetings take place on the 4th Monday of each month. Church Council Members: Chair - Paul Hasbrouck, Vice Chair - Todd Beauchemin, Secretary - Linda Warren, Moderator - Joan Campbell, Outreach Ministry - Tammy Ducey, Parish Life - Susan Pellerin, Spiritual Formation - Susannah Buckingham, Stability - Marnie Hooker and Worship Ministry - Liz Mahoney.

The church calendar year has seen a tremendous amount of work by council members on the completion and recording of the updated bylaws of the church. The bylaws were submitted before the congregation at the May 2015 annual meeting and were accepted with minor revisions. The modern thinking of the updates has brought us from the “horse shed era to the modern day”. I would like to thank the council members for the long hours spent reviewing and updating the document. Congratulations Team! We believe this document will serve the church well for the next generations.

The year has been the first full year of reporting under the new Ministry Model structure. The implementation of the new format has allowed for the improved efficiency of the meetings and greater communication among all church ministries.

Council would like to recognize the efforts of the planning committee that has been coordinating and overseeing the celebration of the 350th Anniversary events of First Church. We look forward to sharing in the celebration of events in 2016.

We look forward to spending the rest of the remaining months of the year lending leadership and guidance and serving as the focal point for communication among the various Ministry groups within our church. We welcome the input and feedback from First Church Members at any time.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul Hasbrouck
Chair, Church Council

WORSHIP MINISTRY

DIACONATE

We are molded, each one of us, in the image of God.

As I am writing on this cold February day, snow falling, wind blowing, I'm looking so much to the warm spring days.

As many in the congregation know, our mission and ministry at First Church is one that is to: (1) support the logistical aspects of worship services, (2) assist in planning and supporting baptisms, (3) arrange lay leaders, greeters & ushers, (4) and assist in planning & supporting with the Pastor's leadership for Holy Week and Advent services. This is the core of our responsibilities. We continue to support funerals and other services that take place in the sanctuary. We also have committed to support coffee hour once a month and coordinating the Easter Sunrise breakfast.

In the past year our core group of twelve dedicated individuals assisted Pastor Kaz in what I would call a successful year. We said goodbye to Todd Beauchemin and welcomed new members Dot O'Shea and Andy Dunn.

In May the Deacons attended a retreat at Community of Jesus monastery on Cape Cod.

We said good luck to Diane Urwiller as she traveled to Florida. We voted to accept Russ Goliger as a student in care when he was accepted into the Boston College School of Ministry.

We ended the previous year with our annual get together in June at the home of Pastor Kaz, enjoying many dishes brought by members. It was a wonderful evening ending with prayer on the roof patio as the skies brighten and a storm cleared.

The summer brought a change as we decided after we surveying the congregation, to have our Sunday worship services in the evening. During Kaz's vacation in July, Rev. Jon Wortman from Pilgrim Church in Southboro along with Rev. Lee Atherton and Russ Goliger preached at First Church. We would also like to thank Rev. Phyllis Frechette for preaching during the year.

The deacons voted to obtain the new "Glory to God" hymnal. Donations from the congregation were accepted to offset part of this cost and the hymnals were dedicated during the year.

We have supported numerous members through the congregation's generous donations to the 'Deacons Fund'.

I would like to thank the following people for their involvement in services this year: Steve Kotsopoulos, Sandy Stetson, Laurel Hill, Emily Ducey, Max Hooker, Amelia Kinney, Kira Macauley and Aaron Hollis.

Submitted by: Co-Chair Gary Hollis

Deacons: Co-Chair Bob Murphy, Deb Beauregard, Bill Davis, Andy Dunn, Bev Fiske, Marcia Fitzgerald, Diane Gilchrest, Kathy Leonard, Frank Marino, Kim Matheson and Dot O'Shea.

FLOWER TEAM

The beautification of the church throughout the year is truly a shared activity of the whole church and the flower team. Thanks to all for purchasing poinsettias, lilies and tulips for our Christmas and Easter seasons. Over 60 Easter plants and nearly 50 poinsettias were received from Trombetta's Farm Garden, our plant provider each year. They were fresh and lovely, adding a beautiful touch to our holiday celebrations. Your generous donations also provided fresh greens and some new additional garlands at Christmas. The choir loft and organ pipe section, as well as the front entry, were a focus of new decorations. Next year we hope to add a garland on the balcony and maybe some additional touches for our 350th Anniversary year! Special thanks to Cliff Fenton and Dick Yurkus for assisting us throughout the seasons. Also, we couldn't possibly function without the organizational skills of Cindy Vail who contacts donors, checks previous flower donations, and coordinates with the florist.

Eco palms were used during the Palm Sunday service. Straight palms were available after the service for those wishing to make crosses. After the service, leftover palms were saved to burn for next year's Ash Wednesday Service.

We are truly blessed to have Marcia of the Floral Gallery as our weekly florist. The Floral Gallery is located at 146 Williams Street in Marlborough. Marcia's lovely creations are custom-made at the donor's request, and always fresh and seasonal.

The Flower Ministry is part of our outreach to members and friends of First Church. The flowers in front of the sanctuary on Sunday mornings are only the beginning of our mission. After the service the flowers are given to their donor or taken to cheer members or friends who are ill or to celebrate happy events. They are enjoyed by so many.

We are happy to receive requests for flowers to be put on the altar throughout the year. We can almost always provide the donor with the date of their choice. Multiple arrangements add to the décor! We have floral trust funds as well, which provide flowers on a yearly scheduled basis. We always welcome ideas for seasonal decorating in the church entryway or sanctuary.

Submitted by:

Joan Beauchemin, Deb Marino and Cindy Vail

MUSIC MINISTRY

Our congregation enjoyed the blessings of wonderful music crafted by talented and dedicated musicians. This year has seen the continued growth of our Choir, the vibrant contributions of the Joyful Ringers to both the congregation and community, the purchase of the new hymnal, the acquisition of a piano, and the introduction of a First Church Brass Ensemble. We were also blessed to have seen our music leaders expand into other communities and to provide opportunities for aspiring musicians. As we look back on our year, we are thankful to God for this ministry and the opportunity to lead our congregation to an ever deepening experience of the Holy through music.

Chancel Choir

2015 - 2016 saw an increase in the number of singers averaging 10 - 12 members per week. We had the joy of welcoming Alyssa Arnold, Soprano, Andrew Arnold, Bass, and Jane Snyder, Soprano to the choir. This year we focused on the quality of sound production and blending our voices working through repertoire that reinforced our goals. The Chancel Choir provided music for the majority of worship services throughout the year.

Joyful Ringers

Continuing last summer's new "tradition", several of the Joyful Ringers began the year by meeting in July and August to learn and perform new music. We were blessed to be joined once again by Marian Hopkins' daughter and two grandsons from Spain, and this time they brought their cousin along to join in the fun. Four of our ringers also participated in learning two quartets, which they performed in church along with the larger group.

In the fall season, we joined musical groups from several other churches to play at the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service at the Methodist Church in Hudson, and five ringers represented the Joyfuls at the Festival of Trees Holiday Fair at the Royal Trade Plaza in December. In addition to our once a month Sunday service commitment, we also participated in the Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols service. And as opposed to last year, this February the winter weather cooperated, so we were able to host the annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, which was both a financial and culinary success!

We played on Palm Sunday and offered a piece written for handbells and organ- a first for us! In May on Music Appreciation Sunday, we are planning a piece with the Chancel Choir, organ, and handbells. Collaborations abound!

As a group, we have focused quite a bit this year on musicality through dynamics and tempo changes, and learning to listen more to the larger musical whole while mastering our own parts. It has been a year of great growth, but we never forget to have some fun, too!

Children's Choir

This year, the children's choir was dormant. We are currently considering new possibilities and leadership to serve the children's music needs.

"Glory to God" Hymnal

After having auditioned the "Glory to God" Hymnal, Trustees approved the purchase of 190 pew hymnals, 10 large print hymnals and one accompaniment edition. Included in the purchase as free gifts, were three accompaniment editions and two large print editions. Fund-raising efforts gave parishioners the opportunity to purchase and dedicate hymnals. This provided a significant offset to the cost of the purchase. We dedicated the Hymnals on October 11, 2015 and throughout the year have noticed the congregation enjoying the richness of the music and lyrics of the less familiar hymns. Big thanks go to Dorothy Shea, Kathy Leonard and Gary Hollis for coordinating and affixing the dedication plates and to members of the Chancel Choir for collecting, packaging and storing the old hymnals and distributing the new hymnals throughout the church pews and choir loft.

Reaching New Opportunities and Building Excellence in Church Musicianship

Last year a scholarship was created through the generous donations of the Women's and Men's Fellowships and the Music Ministry. The scholarship provided a year's worth of organ lessons and was awarded to our Substitute and Summer Organist Jennifer Bastien. We are happy to report that Jenn continued her studies with Roger Mansen and as a result of her growing skill is currently serving as Interim Music Director in Littleton, MA. Jenn's move has provided us an opportunity to provide valuable experience to another aspiring musician. This year, Timothy Goliger will serve as substitute organist/pianist for the summer. Timothy is an exceptionally talented freshman from Marlborough High School.

Small Groups, Instrumentalists and Soloists

We have enjoyed the offerings of many small groups and soloists. Special thanks go to Sarah Shaw for providing trumpet accompaniment throughout the year and for forming a Brass Ensemble for special music and Easter Sunday.

Acquisition of a Steinway Piano

A parishioner anonymously donated a Steinway upright piano which we acquired in the fall. The Steinway was placed in the choir loft and the piano in the choir loft was moved to the floor of the sanctuary.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Russ Goliger, Music Director

Diane Burke, Director of Joyful Ringers

MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

Russ Goliger

Our Music Director, Russ Goliger, is a Member In Discernment through the Massachusetts Central Association of the UCC and is In Care at First Church. Member In Discernment is a title designated to those considering ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ. As a Member In Discernment, Russ is supported both by our church and the Committee on Ministry (COM) through the MACUCC. Russ' mentors from the COM are Rev. Betsy Waters and Marjorie Whittemore. Russ has also assembled a six-member Discernment Support Team comprising of volunteers from the church with whom he meets periodically to provide updates and discuss insights made and questions that arise during this important time of reflection. In addition to the discernment process, Russ is pursuing a Masters of Divinity at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. This year Russ' course work included Old Testament Genesis through Kings, Foundations of Moral Theology, Introduction to Pastoral Care and Counseling, Ministry in Mission: Human Formation, Pastoral Ethics, and Philosophy of the 19th and 20th Century. His research included Physician Assisted Aid in Dying, a biblical exegesis on the Binding of Isaac, A Moral Theology and Justification of Homosexuality, Brief Therapy, Vocations in the 21st Century, and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Inspired by his coursework, this year Russ hosted an "End of Life Care" workshop to help those who find speaking about the dying process to get the conversation started.

Diane Urwiller

It has been six months since I said goodbye to Massachusetts for Miami, FL. Although I lived in Florida for nine years, I was not ready for the Miami lifestyle and my car theft! I have a new car and now I am focusing on my next move to the West Coast of Florida after I finish my residency chaplaincy in August. I await the next step in my calling process to ordained ministry in November 2016.

I attend the Plymouth Congregational Church in Coconut Grove which has a membership of about 2000. It is a Spanish style stone church built by a stone mason from Spain in the 1920's. My ministers have been very helpful during my transition but my residency requires me to work on call 24 hour shifts on the weekends and holidays. There is an on call room where we can try to sleep, but the pager can go off at any time day or night since the hospital chaplaincy is 24/7. Jackson Hospital is a county-run hospital so people from all walks of life come to be served. We are a trauma center, as well as a transplant clinic that serves people from all over the world. This program has been a wonderful experience, meeting people from diverse cultures from all over the world. I have been present in many traumatic situations as loved ones say goodbye to a patient in the last moments of their lives. We must always look to death as a means to be with God in our next life with Jesus's promise of life ever after. Probably my favorite part of my ministry is going to the neonatal unit visiting the premature babies as their mother and father share their joys, as they watch their tiny child grow in that incubator, can hold their baby for the first time, feed their baby, and share their anticipation of bringing their child home. Each day I hear special stories that make the Bible come alive as I visit those in need; this has been a special gift to be able to serve all in this hospital as my ministry grows each day. God has placed me where I can serve those in need.

PARISH LIFE AND LEADERSHIP MINISTRY

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP (58th year)

The First Church Women's Fellowship has 28 active members and 3 honorary members. We are a busy and highly productive group who meet monthly from September to June of each year.

The Women's Fellowship supports First Church in many ways. We provide kitchen and coffee hour supplies each week. The Fellowship pays to have the Parish Hall floor stripped and waxed twice per year and pays to have the kitchen and stove cleaned thoroughly each year. We routinely give scholarship aid to church youth who wish to attend Star Island for a week in the summer. We maintain a scholarship fund for members of the church studying for the ministry. We are currently planning to re-carpet a large portion of the sanctuary with funds raised through the fellowship activities and a generous gift from the Eaton Fund. In January 2016 we donated a large sum toward seed money for activities celebrating the First Church 350th Anniversary.

Women's Fellowship is very active in outreach activities to the wider community. Each month we collect non-perishable items for our local food pantry. In December, we had a "baby shower" and collected baby food, diapers, baby clothes, blankets, and other baby necessities for the food pantry. A cash donation was also sent to the pantry. Cash donations were also sent to Heifer, New England Home for Little Wanderers, Cottage Hill Academy, Church World Service, the Eagles golf tournament, the Christmas Fund for retired ministers, and many other charities seeking aid.

The group has had some enlightening and enriching programs this past year, including our September entertainment with Dr. Gary Hylander who presented "The Lincoln Marriage," an informative and surprising look at the marriage of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln. In October, the Swing Fever Trio entertained us with a delightful mix of Gershwin, Lerner and Lowe, and Cole Porter tunes. In November, Dr. Carol Harvey presented a talk on travel, giving us numerous suggestions on what to pack, how to plan, and where to get the best prices when planning trips here in the US and abroad. Our December meeting included singer Tony Funches, who returned to us to present an evening of popular and holiday favorites in his own special interactive fashion. In January, our special entertainment was a musical evening with our own Ashley Levy on piano and Sarah Hanahan playing sax with Jeremy Galloway, a jazz guitarist. They gave many interesting insights into their ongoing musical pursuits. Our February meeting fell on the same evening as the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper and it was decided that the monthly meeting would be cancelled. In March we enjoyed a craft night with coordinator Joan Beauchemin who instructed us in the time-honored methods of May basket creations. Our April program was Gypsy Phillips who demonstrated belly dancing for fun and exercise. Rev Dr. Kaz Bem spoke to us in May about Poland and its religious history. Our June banquet is always a time to look back on all we have accomplished over previous years and to enjoy our time together in a relaxed setting. In September, January, and April we enjoyed a covered dish supper. Three major fundraisers were held this year: the fall rummage sale (October 15-16), the Meetinghouse Fair (November 21), and the spring rummage sale (April 14-15). These were very well attended and their proceeds allowed the Fellowship to continue their tradition of giving back to the church and community. The Ash Wednesday silent luncheon (Feb 10) was cancelled due to snow this year. The Fellowship voted to host the coffee hour on the 4th Sunday of each month this year, as well as assisting with refreshments at the special Feb 23rd Historical Society meeting at the church. Many times throughout the year Women's Fellowship assists with funeral collations and special events.

Historically, the purposes of Women's Fellowship are to encourage women to grow to full stature as mature Christians, to enlist them in a closer fellowship of Christian love, to help them better understand the life and work of the church, and to provide opportunities to serve the church and greater community in needed causes. We welcome all teens and women of the church to join us at our meetings (2nd Tues of the month) and share our joy in service to others.

Submitted by Deborah Marino,
Recording Secretary

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The Men's Fellowship group is made up of the following active members: Cliff Fenton, Robert Vail, Gary Hollis, Bill Davis, Bob Murphy, Ed Beauchemin, Arnie Goodrich, Larry Wenzel, Jim Saart, Peter Nott, Dave Williams, George Duquette, Peter Lane, Frank Marino, Bill Provencher, Tom Sullivan and Max Wills.

These gentlemen all help in many activities one of which is the monthly Spaghetti Supper which we sponsor on the 4th Wednesday of each month. On average we serve 100 meals at each supper, not just to church members but to the greater Marlborough community as well. We extend our thanks to Joan Beauchemin and Janet Yurkus for all they have done to make this event successful.

Men's Fellowship has donated \$800 in travel scholarships to church members and tithes 10% of gross income back to the church. This year's total was \$200. We have also given \$300 to church people in need.

We assist the Women's Fellowship with the setup and cleanup of Parish Hall for the Meeting House Fair and their rummage sales which are held each spring and fall. We also assist in other projects when the Church needs our assistance.

The Fellowship goes to a PawSox baseball game every June. This year's date is June 25th. Family members are also invited.

Submitted by: Bill Davis

SPIRITUAL FORMATION MINISTRY

The Spiritual Formation Ministry is made up of Stewardship, Christian Education Ministries, and any other events that encourage opportunities for members to nurture and explore their relationship with the Holy Spirit. On February 20, 2016 Russ Goliger led an informational session with the “5 Wishes”. This session delved into end of life care using the 5 Wishes document as a guide to help people discern their care as end of life events occur.

Currently at First Church Christian Education focuses on Sunday school, youth group, Confirmation Class, and adult bible study. This year Pastor Bem has continued with several weekly bible studies. Please see the reports that follow for our year in review.

Respectfully submitted,
Susanna Buckingham

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – SUNDAY SCHOOL/NURSERY

Anita Stetson and Lynette Biggs have been running Sunday school this year. They have shared the responsibility of teaching, getting parent volunteers, buying supplies, and organizing supplies and activities. This model has been very successful for the children and parents. They also share the responsibility of making sure the nursery is staffed or notify parents if the nursery will not have coverage.

Sunday school had a total of 40 children registered for the 2015-2016 school year. An average of 21 children regularly attend. Approximately 15 adults give their time and talent to make Sunday School a success.

Sunday school curriculum was ordered for the fall, winter, and spring sessions. It is also constantly updated to have current information and details. The curriculum carries the same message that the adults are hearing upstairs.

The structure of Sunday school has changed this year. All children stay upstairs for the Word For All Ages and the Bible readings. When the children gather downstairs they get an explanation of the readings and a lesson that goes hand in hand with the readings. They then break out into groups to work on projects that reinforce the lesson. Our children have been very engaged, hard-working and are developing a wonderful sense of community. They take pride in their work and projects.

SCHOLARSHIP

With the by-law changes this year there are some minor changes in the area of scholarships. One change is that Alice Blakeley Scholarship recipients must attend church to receive their very first scholarship award. The second change is that Christian summer camp scholarship awards may be based on how actively the applicant participates in church/youth activities.

The following students were awarded scholarships from the Alice Blakeley Memorial Scholarship Fund in June 2015:

Andrew Ducey- Elmhurst College
Kevin Ducey – Bennington College
Clarence Forman- Merrimack College
Joseph Gilchrest- Plymouth State University
Pamela Gilchrest- UMASS Lowell
Jordan Hanahan- UMASS Amherst
Kelsey Hanahan- Northeastern University
Sarah Hanahan- Hartt School University of Hartford
Sarah Hollis- Lesley University
Eva Kotsopoulos- College of Wooster
Kenneth Lowell- undecided
Jessica Merritt- UMASS Amherst
Rachel Patten- Elmira College
Matthew Snow- Elon University
Brenton Sullivan- Mount Wachusett Community College
Michael Youngstrom- Northeastern University

These students submitted an application, which was reviewed and found to meet the criteria necessary to receive a scholarship.

The following young people were awarded scholarships to attend Star Island Summer Programs:

Emily Ducey
Hannah Cole
Madison Cole
Kira MacCauley

Respectfully submitted,
Susanna Buckingham

YOUTH GROUP

The First Church in Marlborough Youth Group has had a great fall! The group is designed especially for those young people (mostly high school students) who have already been confirmed or passed confirmation age at First Church. This report will discuss what we've been up to this year so far and end with some previews for the rest of the spring.

Hiking Mt. Wachusetts with Kaz!

We kicked off our youth group events this fall with a hike on a somewhat rainy and foggy fall morning up Mt. Wachusetts. Thanks to the generous donations from First Church members, Kaz had to come along for the ride! It wasn't an ideal day for hiking, but we made the most of it and had a great time (even Kaz, I think...). We warmed up afterwards with a tasty brunch together before returning to Marlborough.

Movie Night

Kaz had our youth group over to his apartment where we had dinner and watched a movie about the White Rose, a group of young people committed to nonviolent resistance against the Nazi regime. After the movie, we had a good conversation about the film and how it related to faith and to our lives.

Youth Led Service

Our youth group worked with Kaz and me to plan and lead the worship service for Transfiguration Sunday. The youth picked the hymns, divided the leadership roles, and wrote the offertory prayer and sermon, then actually led the service.

2016 Preview

We have a few events coming up yet this spring. We kicked off Holy Week with a movie night on Palm Sunday at Kaz's house. We will also have a joint retreat with the confirmation students and will serve the needy by helping out together at Our Father's Table. We are going to close off the year with a day trip where we say goodbye to those members who will be graduating high school and heading off to college.

Submitted by: Ben Crosby, Youth and Confirmation Leader

CONFIRMATION

The Confirmation Program at First Church in Marlborough started with a new cohort of seven confirmation students this fall – the largest group in recent memory! This report will outline the basic structure of our confirmation program and discuss some of this year's highlights.

How Confirmation Works at First Church in Marlborough

Confirmation at First Church is typically a two-year process, culminating in students writing their own statements of faith and presenting them to the congregation on Confirmation Sunday. We are a few months away from completing the first year of this process.

Our confirmation program is built upon regular, engaged attendance at worship. Students are required to attend at least two services per month and submit sermon notes at least once per month. Students also are asked to attend the full complement of Holy Week services at least one of their years in the program. Our confirmation students don't just sit in the pews, though – they serve the congregation by acting as crucifers during Communion services. Of course, the way that our students are used to worshipping at First Church is not the only way that Christians worship, so students are required to attend at least two services at other churches during their time in the program.

The real meat of our confirmation program is in the work that students do with their mentors and in catechism class to explore the teachings of the Christian faith and relate them to their lives. Each of our confirmation students has selected a mentor. These mentors are adults who are not an immediate family member who the students meet with regularly to go through a curriculum exploring the basic themes of Christianity together. We also meet as a whole group with Kaz and me around once a month for catechism class. We use the Heidelberg Catechism, one of the most important statements of Reformed Christian belief, to complement the work students are doing with their mentors to explore questions like the nature of Jesus and salvation. Our confirmation students are even required to memorize two of the questions in the Heidelberg Catechism, so feel free to ask them "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" and "What

must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?” – they should be able to answer in the words of this historic and rich confession of faith!

Finally, it's important that our confirmation students know that the Christian faith isn't something that is just for thinking about or for an hour on Sunday mornings but actually calls us to live a life of service to each other and to the world each and every day. We have our confirmation students serve the church not only be acting as Crucifer but also by attending at least one First Church committee/ministry meeting and doing a service project for the church. Our confirmation students also serve the world by participating in at least one volunteer opportunity or service project addressing a need beyond our church's doors.

2015-2016 Highlights + Previews

Our Confirmation Class of 2017 has had a great start to the program this year! Below please find some of the highlights, as well as some previews of the rest of the year.

Catechism Classes: What is Your Only Comfort in Life and in Death?

Our catechism program kicked off this fall with classes led by Kaz and by me. Our classes have focused on the question of comfort and what we take comfort in – drawn from Questions 1 and 2 of the Catechism – and on Advent, the person of Jesus, and the Apostles' Creed. These classes are a space where our students can bring their questions and thoughts and get to know each other better – also, there's sometimes pizza!!

Serving the Homeless and At-Risk Community at Worcester Fellowship

Our confirmation group spent a cold November Sunday serving the homeless at Worcester Fellowship, an outdoor church that meets on the Worcester Common. The students gathered bright and early before the Sunday service in the First Church kitchen and formed a sandwich-making assembly line to produce around 50 lunches. We then went to church together and, after church, piled into cars to head out to Worcester. Our confirmation students helped run the serving line which passed out food, drinks, and warm clothes to people and then participated in the short church service afterwards, even offering up prayers during the time to share joys and concerns! Afterwards, over lunch in the Worcester Subway, Kaz led us in a great conversation about why we as Christians help those less fortunate than ourselves.

2016 Preview

This year's confirmation program will last into June of 2016 before breaking for the summer. We have some exciting things planned, so don't hesitate to ask our confirmation students about them! Not only will there be more catechism work, but our next catechism class will debut a short prayer service which I wrote especially for our confirmation program. We'll also be following First Church Confirmation tradition and taking a group trip to the Saints Anargyroi Greek Orthodox Church in Marlborough. Between the incense and the Greek chanting, it should be an interesting experience for our confirmations students! They will also be joining up with our high school youth group for a joint retreat this Spring.

Submitted by: Ben Crosby, Youth and Confirmation Leader

STEWARDSHIP

The 2015 stewardship pledge campaign was more detailed and extensive than the previous year, with a significant emphasis on converting loose givers to pledging. As usual, before the campaign began, a detailed evaluation of the total potential pledges from members and friends of First Church was performed, with some names removed but many others added. A new, colorful pledge pamphlet was created, and letters were customized for prior year pledgers, those new to First Church, and folks who had given loosely in the past but had not pledged. Letters and pledge pamphlets were sent out to 158 members and friends in the first week of November 2014. In addition, a weekly announcement was made throughout November providing instructions and requesting pledge forms. A Stewardship Moment was included as part of the weekly services, where members of the church would speak for a minute or two about why they give to First Church. Pledges were requested to be turned in by November 30, 2014, while follow-up reminders via phone calls, emails, and in person were made throughout December and January to those who had not responded by the end of November.

The results of the pledge campaign were very good. We ended up receiving 107 pledges, which was 5 more than the previous year. Additionally, pledge amounts went up significantly. The total amount of pledges was \$160,156, an increase of \$13,847 or about 9%. This marked the fourth straight year that pledges increased by over \$12,000, a significant testament to the generosity of the members and friends of First Church. While some of the increase was current pledgers increasing their giving, the real difference came from new pledgers giving significantly more than what was lost due to pledgers who stopped or reduced their pledge amount. For the first time in recent history, the church achieved a 70% pledge rate (number of pledgers vs. total potential givers), a strong sign as to the health of our church.

One bit of sad news is that the Stewardship team lost a long-time member, Chip Horne, right during the middle of the 2015 pledge campaign in November 2014. We were blessed that Sarah Shaw joined the team, and we encourage more people to do the same.

As the Stewardship team looks ahead to fiscal year 2016, some goals we have established are:

- Continue the style of pledge campaign conducted this year
- Increase the focus of the pledge campaign to include more people giving electronically
- Examine potential secondary stewardship efforts that could be pursued

Many thanks go out to the members and friends of First Church for their continued support, and to all the members of the Stewardship team for all the time and effort they put into organizing a successful pledge campaign.

Submitted by: Jeremey Crocker, Stewardship team member

MISSION AND OUTREACH MINISTRY

Our Father's Table

We participate with OFT once a month, the 3rd Tuesday, making supper and serving the homeless population in Marlborough. Carol MacEwen reported that there is a great crew of volunteers. This year, for the Christmas Party, we collected 300 pairs of socks and more than 100 combs for the guests of OFT. For the upcoming year we will be looking to collect XX and XXX sized sweatshirts.

Marlborough Food Pantry

We collect, and Bill Davis delivers baskets full of donated food and toiletry items every week. We are lucky to have so many contributions.

Prayer Shawls

The Prayer Shawl Ministry is ongoing with the help of many people in the church who enjoy knitting and crocheting. Anyone who needs to feel comforted or loved may have a shawl to wrap around their shoulders. Anyone who would like to give one to a friend or loved one just needs to see Pastor Kaz, Carol MacEwen or one of the deacons. This year they were delivered to loved ones in NH, VT, VA, TN and even Florida.

Stars and Angels

Thanks to all of the First Church angels who participated in our 2105 Stars and Angels program. You provided gifts and grocery food cards to 5 local families consisting of fifteen children ranging in age from 18 months to 16 years. The gifts were delivered after church on Sunday December 13 and be assured that you made this Christmas very memorable for these families. (Susan Pellerin)

Katy Mahoney Backpack Program

The Katy Mahoney Backpack Program donated nearly 50 backpacks full of school supplies to the Marlborough Education offices. 49 children in grades K-4 were able to start school with a new backpack and all of the supplies they would need for the year. Thank you to all who shopped or contributed to the project and made it a success yet again. Thanks to Carol and Laurel for all your help!!! (Liz Mahoney)

FIT (Families in Transition)

First Church collaborated with many to obtain food and kitchen items to be placed in bags to donate to Families In Transition. We received a donation from Stop and Shop in Hudson that provided 50 bags to fill with food items and kitchen essentials that were donated by our church family. These bags were distributed to families that have for any reason been relocated to alternative housing to provide basic kitchen needs and food to begin anew.

WAGLY/OUT Metrowest

First Church made a donation to WAGLY and also put a team together to participate in the first OUT Metrowest Trivia night...of which we were the defending champions until early April 2016! A fun time was had by all and we plan to make this an annual event.

Fellowship Freezer

We have discontinued the Fellowship Freezer for First Church...not that it cannot be resurrected...But for now we found that much food was going to waste and those that came to church and requested assistance did not want a frozen meal but money or a gift card to purchase a meal etc.

STABILITY MINISTRY

TRUSTEES – GENERAL

I'm happy to report that it's been a relatively stable year for the trustees; no major building malfunctions and no mega snowfall. Let's all pray that this blessing persists for a while to come.

Due to last year's snowfall, however, we were able to make some much needed improvements to Parish Hall with the insurance monies. You'll all notice the new entrance to Parish Hall as well as the new door (and lock).

Also, in looking at the current budget vs. actual numbers this fiscal year, we are tracking well under our projected deficit. This is great news!

From an HR perspective, trustees initiated a feedback survey this year to help us with our annual review process. This helped us greatly improve the quality and relevance of information provided during our employee reviews.

Todd Beauchemin has agreed to be our new computer systems person. This year, he's upgraded the office computer software and installed new and improved wireless access throughout the building.

One important item to note this year: The Trustees and Council agreed to place our church records (of which there is a list) on permanent loan to the Congregational Library in Boston with the explicit caveat that we retain their ownership.

Finally, I am an outgoing member of trustees this year, and I am honored to have worked alongside everyone on the board these past 4 years. I would like to personally thank all past and present members of the Trustees for all of their hard work and dedication. God Bless!

Kim Beauchemin, Chair
Board of Trustees

TRUSTEES - PERSONNEL

A member of Trustees serves as the 'HR Liaison' between the Trustees and the paid staff of First Church. Personnel issues such as employee concerns, employment contracts, job descriptions, wages and benefits and performance reviews are the focus of this position. If you would like to discuss the role of our employees and how the Church interacts with them, please feel free to contact the current HR Liaison. On behalf of the Trustees, we look forward to your input whether it be joys or concerns.

Our thanks to all of our staff who share their talents, education, skills and ministries to enrich our church community. Our 'full time' employees include: Rev. Dr. Kaz Bem, Jeremy Crocker – Treasurer, Cliff Fenton – Sexton and Russ Goliger - Music Director. The Office Administrator is also in this category and we would like to extend thanks to Amy Lapetina who left this position in April after eight years with First Church.

Our '1099 Staff' includes: Ben Crosby - Youth and Confirmation Leader, Lynette Biggs & Anita Stetson – Sunday School Co-Superintendents, Jim Duncan – Organist, and Ashley Flanigan - Nursery Care.

We are grateful to have such a wonderful group working at First Church and I would ask you all to thank them for a job well done.

Submitted by:
Susan Pellerin, HR Liaison for Trustees

TRUSTEES - BUILDING MAINTENANCE

Snow and ice damage from the 2014/15 winter resulted in an insurance claim with the proceeds used for the following needed repairs. Damaged Parish Hall gutters were replaced, the aluminum siding along the parking lot was repaired with vinyl siding and extensive water damage to the exterior and Parish Hall entrance area was repaired with a new entrance door installed. During July the east side interior wall of the sanctuary (on the parish hall/parking lot side) will be repaired and repainted as well as classroom #6 ceiling on the lower level due to the water damage. Thank you to contractors and church members Adam Battaglino for the exterior and Parish Hall entrance work and Wally Flynn for the siding work.

The forced hot water heating system required relatively minor repairs to one of the circulator pumps and to the oil burner. Three of the four oil tanks had sealant additives added to prevent and insure against leaking. As reported last year, the fourth oil tank has been emptied and is out of service due to corrosion and is pending replacement or removal. This action is pending a re-evaluation and decision of converting to natural gas heat or not.

Eversource confirmed that the existing gas line into the church is of sufficient size to supply a gas heating system if the church converted. Estimates were received from three commercial heating system contractors late summer/early fall 2015 and further review and economic feasibility of converting to gas heat was deferred to 2016. The estimates range from converting to a gas burner only, a full standard efficiency heating system replacement and a high efficiency gas heating system replacement. Meanwhile, the 2015/16 heating fuel oil expense has been much lower than in recent years due to the improved oil burner efficiency, lower oil prices and mild weather.

Our thanks and gratitude to Women's Fellowship who funded the repair and replacement of carpeting in the sanctuary which will take place this summer once painting repairs are completed.

Thank you to our high energy Sexton, Cliff Fenton, Troop 41, Women's Fellowship, Men's Fellowship, and those individuals who have helped maintain the grounds and appearance of First Church.

Submitted by:
Dave Youngstrom & Larry Wenzel

TRUSTEES - BUILDING USE MINISTRY TEAM

The purpose of the Building Use Ministry Team is to work with the existing organizations that currently utilize our facility, act as a liaison with the Trustees and the outside groups, and continue to open our doors to the community in fellowship.

2015 was another good year of continued activity and use of our church facility. This past year there were 27 different events that were held in the Fellowship Hall, Sanctuary, Temple Room or class room.

Here is a summary of the events this year:

DATE	EVENT
1/4/2015	Family party
1/17/2015	Birthday Party
2/4/2015	Healthcare Screening
2/12/2015	GLP Writer's Meeting
2/14/2015	Birthday party
3/7/2015	Tambre Knox Voice Recital
4/12/2015	Lessons with Jenn Recital
4/18/2015	Memorial Service
5/7/2015	GRASP Meeting
5/17/2015	ZCK Music Productions Spring Concert
5/30/2015	Dance Recital
6/20/2015	Birthday Party
7/18/2015	Baby Shower
8/8/2015	Recycling Event in Parking Lot
8/13/2015	Funeral for Frances Rocheford
8/14/2015	Wedding Ceremony
9/19/2015	25th Wedding Anniversary
10/10/2015	Fundraiser for Ugandan Mission
10/17/2015	Birthday Party
10/31/2015	Renewing Churches
12/4/2015	Home for the Holidays
12/5/2015	Merrimack Valley Ringers Concert
12/6/2015	Lessons with Jenn Recital
12/12/2015	Family Chanukah Party
12/12/2015	GLP Fundraisers
12/13/2015	Assabet Valley Mastersingers Messiah Sing
12/20/2015	ZCK Music Productions Christmas Concert

Long-term renters also continued to use our building:

- Ghost Light Players held 3 performances
- Early Risers
- Friday Night New Life
- Robin Carter Yoga (1st Saturday of the month)
- We added a new renter, GRASP that meets Sunday evening

We said goodbye to the Friday Night New Life group as of March 1st. Their numbers were dwindling, the format of the meetings are changing, and they have moved to another location in hopes of keeping the group together.

Through all of these events the Building Use Ministry Team brought in \$11,700 in contributions that goes towards First Church's annual budget. We want to thank all of our renters, Men's and Women's Fellowship for their incredible co-operation and flexibility in accommodating the varying and sometimes conflicting needs of our church facility. We continue to use the Master Calendar that has made it simpler to schedule the longer running events. Please see the Building Use Application Form on our website if you wish to request a hall for an event.

Plans for 2016 are shaping up:

- The Ghost Light Players Theater Group is gearing up for three more performances. This is their 5th season and the Building Use Team is happy to have helped to get this community theater group going in Marlborough.
- There is a new Champion Youth organization that we have been working with that will provide cheerleading and other youth oriented opportunities for ages 4 - 13. The current spring session is on track to begin Saturday April 23rd.

Our team is always on the lookout for different opportunities to open up our doors to the community as well as sharing in the cost of our building.

Special thanks go out to Laurel Hill, Cliff Fenton, Gary Hollis, Amy Lapetina, the deacons (who helped with several events), and George Pellerin for their continued dedication to this mission.

We are always on the lookout for members to join our ministry team to help out with coordination with our renters and the opening and closing for events. Please see Laurel, or George if you are interested in helping out.

Submitted by George Pellerin, Laurel Hill and Gary Hollis

MULTIMEDIA AND CHURCH WEBSITE

The multimedia group records weekly worship services from the beginning of September through the end of June each year. The recorded services are delivered to Marlborough and Hudson local access stations for weekly broadcasting at various times through the following week. Sunday services or part of any service can be provided to members on request for downloaded electronically or on a DVD. Sunday services are now uploaded weekly to YouTube.

Marlborough's WMCT television station is currently (spring 2016) in negotiations with the cable companies with hopes of upgrading outdated equipment. If upgrades are allowed in the budget, the audio and video of their broadcasts should improve greatly.

The First Church website contains information for visitors and has some archived material, including sermons, and now carries the new church logo.

Submitted by: David Youngstrom

PASTORAL RELATIONS

Submitted by Patricia Kennedy

The Pastoral Relations Committee is comprised of Fred Haas, Patricia Kennedy, Jim Saart and Janet Yurkus.

The committee met with Pastor Kaz intermittently throughout the year. During these meetings Pastor Kaz expressed his goals and plans for the church for the coming year. The committee members provided support and guidance to Pastor Kaz regarding issues of parish life. Committee members also brought forth any concerns that were voiced by church members. These concerns were discussed and resolution was proposed.

Pastor Kaz is planning a sabbatical from October through December 2017. He is pursuing funding for his sabbatical and interim pastoral coverage through the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program. The grant was submitted in April, 2016. We will receive notification of our successful application by August, 2016. Pastor Kaz has discussed his plans for the sabbatical at length with Pastoral Relations. Church members will be educated about the sabbatical in the coming months.

Pastor Kaz will take the month of July off as his usual summer holiday. Pastoral coverage during this period is being organized.

COMPUTER SYSTEMS

The use of computers and information technology continues to increase by First Church. Heavy use of computers is required by our Pastor, Treasurer, and especially our Office Administrator for their daily duties at First Church. Use of cloud technologies such as Google Calendar have also been used by the Office Administrator as well as Diaconate for scheduling purposes. Throughout 2015 a number of initiatives have kicked off to continue improving the use of computer technologies at First Church.

First an effort is underway to improve wireless network coverage and security. A new firewall and wireless access point was purchased which allowed computer systems to provide wireless coverage as well as guest wireless coverage for employee use as well as guest use of the First Church computer network. We still have some improvements to make by locating the access point in an appropriate location within the foyer to provide greater coverage, it is currently located in the Treasurer's office.

Next, we are upgrading the computer systems to Windows 10. The Treasurer's system as well as the Pastor's system have already been upgraded and computer systems will perform an update to the church office system prior to the hiring of a new Office Administrator.

Finally, in an effort to take greater advantage of our First Church email, (office@firstchurchnet.com), along with the Trustees (trustees@firstchurchnet.com), we have added new email addresses for the Treasurer (treasurer@firstchurchnet.com), Church Council (council@firstchurchnet.com), Diaconate (deacons@firstchurchnet.com), as well as the various Ministry Facilitators on Church Council:

- Moderator - moderator@firstchurchnet.com
- Outreach - outreach@firstchurchnet.com
- Parish Life - parish@firstchurchnet.com
- Spiritual Formation - spiritual@firstchurchnet.com
- Stability - stability@firstchurchnet.com
- Worship Ministry - worship@firstchurchnet.com

Throughout 2016, we will continue to look at areas where we can improve and continue to leverage computer technology to help increase lines of communication, awareness of First Church, ease of use, and focus on conserving costs. The initial areas of interest are to finalize the wireless improvements and look at Google Apps for email as well as calendaring and other services (which is provided free of charge for non-profits).

Submitted by:
Todd Beauchemin

DELEGATES TO THE MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

We sent two delegates to the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (MACUCC), Laurel Hill and Russ Goliger. Highlights of the 2015 Annual Report include:

- Our MACUCC Board made history by meeting with the Boards of the Connecticut and Rhode Island Conferences.
- MACUCC joined with Rhode Island in the fall and Connecticut in the spring to host Super Saturday.
- For the first time in many decades, MACUCC celebrated a merger of Associations when the Andover and Essex Associations merged to become the Northeast Association.
- In August the Massachusetts Conference co-sponsored the 2015 National Church Leadership Institute, which brought together national and local leaders from many denominations, uniting to build a more just and generous future.
- This year saw the launch of several new initiatives through MACUCC's contract with the Center for Progressive Renewal (CPR), which provides for online webinars, in-person coaching and networking.
- MACUCC invited Committee on Ministry members to come together to explore common experiences and issues. In December 2014, a national gathering of UCC Conference staff from around the country was held to share best practices and insights particular to authorized ministry.
- In a commitment to align resources with mission, the MACUCC Board voted to NOT renew the Craigville Retreat Center lease culminating a 55-year arrangement between the Conference and the Cape Cod facility.

The full 2015 Annual Report is available at:

http://www.macucc.org/files/files/documentsnews/macucc-annreport_2015june4finalfixed061515.pdf

Respectfully submitted,
Russ Goliger, Conference Delegate

MATCHMAKER (NOMINATING) REPORT

MATCHMAKER REPORT

The Matchmaker Ministry has completed its mission and we have filled the open church positions for the FY 2016-2017 slate (July 2016 – June 2017 church year) to the best of our ability. We are filled with gratitude for all of you who feel called to support the ministries of First Church.

Faithfully Yours,
Susan Pellerin and Cliff Fenton

Slate of Proposed Candidates for the Annual Meeting First Church in Marlborough (Congregational) United Church of Christ May 2016

Officers (1 year terms)

Moderator	Joan Campbell	1 yr – 2017
Clerk	Deborah Marino	1 yr – 2017
Assistant Clerk	Janet Yurkus	1 yr – 2017
Treasurer	Jeremey Crocker	1 yr – 2017
Assistant Treasurer	Sandra Stetson	1 yr – 2017
Collector	Susan Pellerin	1 yr – 2017
Assistant Collector	Cliff Fenton	1 yr – 2017

Church Council At Large (3 people)

Todd Beauchemin	1 yr – 2017 Chairperson (Final year)
Linda Warren	2 yrs – 2018 Vice Chairperson
John Harvie	3 yrs - 2019 Secretary

Trustees/Stability (8 people-3 year terms)

Dave Youngstrom	1 yr – 2017
Jeremey Crocker/Treasurer	1 yr – 2017
Larry Wenzel	1 yr – 2017
Sandy Stetson	1 yr - 2017
Gary Hollis	2 yrs - 2018
George Pellerin	2 yrs – 2018
Richard Rowell	3 yrs – 2019
Paul Hasbrouck	3 yrs – 2019
Stephanie Hasbrouck	3 yrs – 2019

Diaconate/Worship (12 people-1 year terms)

Bill Davis	1 yr – 2017	Susan Hanahan	1 yr – 2017
Rose Eastman	1 yr – 2017	Susan Pellerin	1 yr – 2017
Liz Mahoney	1 yr – 2017	Bob Murphy	1 yr – 2017
Diane Gilchrest	1 yr – 2017	Kathy Leonard	1 yr – 2017
Dotty O’Shea	1 yr – 2017	Andy Dunn	1 yr – 2017
Gary Hollis	1 yr – 2017	_____	1 yr – 2017

Pastoral Relations for Settled Pastor (4 people)

Jim Saart	1 yr – 2017
Janet Yurkus	1 yr - 2017
Fred Haas	1 yr - 2017
Pat Kennedy	1 yr - 2017

Matchmakers (3 people)

_____	1 yr – 2017
_____	1 yr – 2017
_____	1 yr – 2017

Auditors (3 people)

Susan Hanahan	1 yr - 2017
Joanne Kotsopoulos	1 yr - 2017
Karen Sullivan	1 yr - 2017

MACUCC/Delegate to Central Association 2015-16

Central	Laura Lane	1 yr - 2017
Central	_____	1 yr – 2017
MACUCC	Russ Goliger	1 yr - 2017
MACUCC	_____	1 yr - 2017