

ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017



THE UNION CHURCH IN WABAN

ANNUAL MEETING
JUNE 4, 2017

OUR COVENANT

We, the members of The Union Church in Waban, true to our founding principle of being an inclusive church, covenant together to nourish and to sustain in our common life and practice a fully welcoming and affirming church for all persons. Welcoming all persons who seek to join with us in a commitment to love God and our neighbors, affirming the inclusive love of Jesus, we are open to all, without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ability or economic circumstance. We invite all to full participation in our worship, membership, leadership and life of this church.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE UNION CHURCH IN WABAN

Sunday, June 4, 2017

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Co-Moderators	Annie Gatewood Karen Weisgerber
Clerk	Sandra DaDalt

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Christian Education PACSS	Liz Caronna Amy Clark Feldman
Deacons	Jim MacDonald Judy Nagle Mark Smith Molly Owen-Kiritsy Deb McGovern Gerry Elion
Mission/Outreach PACSS	Nancy Zollers Beth Sears
Music Program	William Merrill
Moderator's Team/Nimbus	Karen Weisgerber
Stewardship	Grant Gund
Teaching Parish Committee	Frank Laski James MacDonald Jaap van Reijendam Thomas Vawter Jenny Weisz

Pastor Stacy's Report – "A Ministry of the Communion of Love"

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

Many years ago, when I was in the final phase of completing my education and training for ordained ministry, I was asked to describe the ministry to which I felt that I was being called. Without a moment's hesitation, I replied "to a Ministry of Communion." And not just me, I continued. "I trust that it is Communion to which the church is being called as well."

I went on to say that in Communion I saw realized God's commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Through Communion I saw how we all are to share in and be recommissioned by that great call to love. And Communion, I said, does not, of course, just happen around the table. It happens when we as church join with God making God's love real in our time and place the goodness, the peace and the oneness that God laid down on those first days of creation and that even now God envisions for each and every one of us and for this beautiful but deeply wounded world. Sharing in and extending this Communion of Love – is the ministry to which we are called and the purpose of our being, I said so many years ago.

As I reflect back over this year, I cannot help but marvel at and give praise to God for the Ministry of the Communion of Love that is so very alive and so very real here in our life together as the Union Church in Waban.

Here the Communion of Love is thriving in so many ways. We see it as our children lead us in service projects and as our elders gather monthly to share in a hot meal and lively conversation. We see it as we gather with our brothers and sisters of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization to make God's justice our lived reality. We feel it as the music we make together stirs our souls in ways spoken word simply cannot.

In the wake of the recent, horrible bombing of the arena in Manchester, England, I wrote that "Being church now is more important than ever. We need people who will stand for Love and who will risk Love because we trust that our very lives and the life of the world depends upon it."

I praise God that we are and are ever more becoming that people. People wholly committed to and engaged in a Ministry of the Communion of Love.

~*~

In the space below, I'd like to lift up some of the ways the Ministry of the Communion of Love was lived out this year that may not find their ways into other reports.

Organizational Structure and Staffing:

For the past several years, we have been engaged in a process of evolving our organizational structure to more aptly serve the life of the church. We have moved from committees that were nominated to teams that are more fluid and open. We are now nominating to Council instead of having Council consist of the chairs of the committees, and celebrate how effective Council is in its oversight and leadership. We have strong leadership and structure in Mission/Outreach; Christian Education and the Co-Moderator Team which provides oversight for building issues, communication and human relations. It has been a very intentional and thoughtful process of evolving our organizational structure, and I am very grateful for all the hard work and thoughtfulness that has brought our church to this place of organizational health and thriving.

This has been a significant year in the life of the Union Church in that we welcomed Amy Clark Feldman into our newly-created staff position, Associate Pastor of Youth and Family Ministries. It has been a great joy to share in ministry with Amy this year, and I look forward to the continued flourishing and growth that her leadership is bringing and will bring to the church and to the lives of our children, youth and families.

Adult Education and Spiritual Formation

This past year has seen the continuation of a robust offering of opportunities for adult education and spiritual formation.

- Weekly Sunday morning **Bible study** has continued with solid and faithful attendance, and we have learned much and explored our faith together.
- **Waban Health Worship** has continued to be a monthly, spirit-filled time where eight of us UCWers gather with 15-20 residents for a time of singing, praying, reflection and communion.
- **Book Group** continues to be faithfully led by Priscilla Kelso and Tom Vawter, and always provides for a rich time of sharing and discussion.
- **Wednesday open coffee** at Starbucks continues to be a great way to catch up with whoever drops by.
- **Wednesday morning prayer** group was faithfully led by Sandra DaDalt and Karen Weisgerber, and provided a quiet and sacred space for silent and spoken prayer. We are considering changing the time/day for this prayer gathering next year, and would welcome input.
- **Java Gents** continues to be faithfully led by Jay O'Beirne, and faithfully fed by Buz Bedford, and provided for great sharing and fellowship for the men of the church. While usually a breakfast gathering, Java Gents did gather one time in the evening for BBQ and beer, which was tremendously well received.
- **Wellspring**, our women's group, continues to be faithfully led by Priscilla Kelso and has embraced the structure of taking up a module that stretches over several months and explores different aspects of our faith and the world. Our winter and spring module was "Finding Balance in an Edgy World."

In addition to this regular programming, some new offerings were added this year.

- **Lunch Bunch** was reconfigured to great success. The deacons have worked very hard this year to enhance our ministry to our elders. The centerpiece of this work is Lunch Bunch, which now includes a monthly hot meal to between 10-15 people with good-spirited and robust conversation. In addition, Lunch Bunch attended a holiday and a spring concert at the Newton Senior Center in the morning before returning to the church for lunch. I am so very grateful to our deacons who have turned Lunch Bunch into such a nourishing time for so many of our elders.
- This year we added a **second Bible study** using the Exploring the Bible curriculum from the Massachusetts Bible Society. The study has involved three, six session modules. The first was an overview of the Bible that we engaged in in the fall. The second, which we took up after Christmas, was a study of the Old Testament, and we are currently finishing up a study of the New Testament. This Bible study meets every other week at 10:30 now on Monday. The six of us who have traveled together in this study this year have found the material to be challenging and engaging, and it has really been a transformative experience for us.
- This spring, Tom Vawter and I facilitated a **small group retreat, “Coming to our Senses”** at Toah Nipi retreat center in Rindge, NH. Drawing on the the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina* (sacred reading), nine of us used the natural world as our “text” and engaged our senses as we woke up to the world around us. The retreat was very well received, and I would like to think about making a spring small group retreat part of our regular offering.
- Finally, this year during Lent we added a weekly **Wednesday night worship**. Organized and led by our ministerial intern, Andrew Heintz, this service provided an opportunity to worship in new and innovative ways in a smaller and more intimate setting. The services were very well received and also provided a rich learning laboratory for staff.

Sunday Morning Worship and Worship Team

Sunday morning worship continued to embody the Communion of Love that is at the heart of the ministry of the church. Whether it be the warmth of Judy Nagle’s welcome as we walk in the door, or the steadfastness and dedication of Tom Humphrey managing a host of critical tasks that keep everything running seemingly effortlessly, every Sunday morning the sanctuary is filled with Love, Grace and Service that continues to nourish and renew us.

Wanting to continually lean into ways that Sunday morning worship can continue to be such a spirit- filled and nourishing experience, worship team arranged for a series of **congregational conversations**. These conversations were facilitated by Alan Cody and Diane Tillotson and gave us an opportunity to hear from each other and to express our own thoughts about what is working well in worship and what may be opportunities for change.

We had a total of 55 participants (not including Stacy who took notes, and Amy Clark Feldman and Andrew Heintz, who were observers) in three congregational conversations which occurred after worship on Jan. 22, Jan. 29, and Feb. 26, 2017; Lunch Bunch on Jan. 25; one email from a member, one phone conversation with a member, and one comment by a member after church who could not come to a session but did want to give input. Of these, 37 were unique participants (again, not including staff), i.e. had not attended a prior session.

The participants broke down as to “time in the church” with the following distribution (based on self-report or best guess by facilitators).

<1 year	1 -5 years	6-10 years	>10
3	12	3	19

These conversations resulted in a treasure trove of insight into our worship life. The worship team met on April 9th to begin to digest the findings and will meet again on June 17th for a half day retreat where subgroups will be focusing on Music (Bill Merrill, Bethany Worrell, Diane Tillotson, Jim MacDonald); Structure of Worship (Alan Cody, Judy Nagle and Deb McGovern); Inclusion of Children and Youth (Amy Clark Feldman and Karen Weisgerber) and Special Services (Tom Vawter and Stacy Swain). These subgroups will take all that we have heard and summarize specific learnings and recommendations that will guide the worship team in crafting worship in the year to come. These learnings and recommendations will also be fully shared with the congregation.

Pastoral Relations

I am grateful for the continued support of the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC). The purpose of the PRC is to assist in fostering a healthy relationship between the Pastor and the congregation in order to enhance the effectiveness of the church’s mission. The focus of the PRC, therefore is more relational than task oriented and centers on providing support and feedback/communication. My pastoral relations committee consists of Cindy Spertner, Alicia Collins, Susan Hunt Stevens and Alan Cody.

Membership Data Base and Website

Our office manager, Aidan Cunningham and staff rolled out a new membership data base called “Church Teams” which has proven to be a very powerful tool in consolidating information in one place and in providing for more efficient reporting. Aidan also continues to enhance our Website making many changes behind the scenes that have resulted in a comprehensive online master calendar for the church, a much more informative and dynamic home page and an interface between of EBlast content and the Website, just to name a few.

Coming up

Next year promises to be a very robust and exciting year as we continue to live into this Ministry of Love to which we are called. We will grow together in love as we engage in a **feasibility study** learning about our strengths and aspirations, and exploring the possibility of a capital campaign and the opportunities for growth that that would open for us.

Next year is also a **trip year to Nicaragua**. From the responses to date it looks like we may have our largest group of travelers yet! David Spertner has called together a trip planning team (Cate Brown, youth leader, Aden O'Beirne, assistant youth leader, Alex Brown and Stacy Swain) which is already hard at work. As we lead up to the trip, there will be many ways for the wider congregation to share in plans for the trip.

Our beloved **All Church Retreat** is scheduled for October 20-22 at Rolling Ridge Conference Center in North Andover. This will be a fabulous time of fun, fellowship and renewal for UCWers of all ages. Please save the date! More information about the retreat will be available over the summer and into the fall.

In summary

I want to thank all of you for what has been a grace-filled year. It is such an amazing privilege to be one of your Pastors and to engage in this Ministry of the Communion of Love. I praise God for so many ways that love is coming alive in the hearts of all who gather and in our life as one body together. In this world that is hurting so very much, this Ministry of Love is not only our source of healing and hope, but it is where the doorway to our future lies.

With peace and gratitude,

Rev. Stacy Swain

Pastor Amy's Report

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

Matthew 7: 24-27

It was almost exactly one year ago that I received the call to serve as this church's Associate Pastor for Youth and Families – and what a full, meaningful and joyful year it has been! This church's love of and care for its children and youth regularly leaves me in awe. I have been inspired, over and over again, by the dedication and faithfulness of so many adults – teachers, youth ministry team members, members of the church leadership and congregation – who have generously given their time, creativity, talents, resources, and selves to nurture, guide, include, and be present for our younger congregants. And it is these younger congregants – our children and youth – who have perhaps surprised and inspired me the most this year. It has been a privilege getting to know each of them better, and to witness their compassion, creativity, insight, vision, faith and capacity for joy. This was the first year of our new Youth Ministry Team and program for our youth, which built on the good work of the Youth Ministry Taskforce, and included fellowship and service events for youth each month throughout the year. Details of this ministry with our youth are included in the *Children, Youth and Families* report. Almost without exception, the events were well attended and meaningful, and set a solid foundation for continued growth and deepening of relationships and faith in the coming years. I am so grateful for Susan Hunt-Stevens and Christy Lang-Hearlson's leadership as co-chairs this year of the Youth Ministry Team, and for each of the team members, youth and families who participated in and supported this ministry.

This year also brought significant changes and new initiatives to our Sunday School classrooms and programs for younger children (also detailed in the *Children, Youth and Families* report). Here I would like to highlight the Mini-Missions initiative, which empowered our younger children to connect faith and service in particularly meaningful ways. I am grateful for all of the Mini-Mission leaders, and especially for Jill Coull, whose capacity to imagine and organize gave the initiative life and legs. The Teacher Teams this year were also wonderfully creative, flexible and dedicated – trying new structures, ideas and ways of thinking about and organizing the Sunday School time. At last count, 23 members of the congregation taught Sunday School more than once during the year (this number doesn't include special guests, or members who taught one-time events – who we also thank!). What an extraordinary team! At the heart of those teacher teams were some teachers who taught much more regularly – some almost weekly – and those who served as lead teachers, assisting with curriculum development. I would like to say a special thanks to Cindy Spertner (lead teacher of the Stars Room) and Liz Caronna (lead teacher for youth) as well as the team of teachers for the Rainbow Room, who contributed so meaningfully to the faith, spiritual growth and learning of our young ones.

This Children's Sunday (June 11th), the children and youth will lead worship focusing on the story Jesus tells of the wise man who build his house on the rock (see the passage from Matthew above). As the kids have been unpacking this parable together – thinking about what the rock, storms and sand might be in their own lives – I have been struck by how relevant this parable is for our life together as church, and for our current ministry with children and youth. At a recent conference I attended in Chicago (Faith-Forward.net), speakers shared an urgency, related to the importance of ministry to young people and families today. There was a sense – perhaps others feel it – that the winds and storms swirling (or threatening to swirl) in homes, schools, neighborhoods, our country and world, make it even more important to provide our children and families—with the help of the Holy Spirit – something solid to stand on; a rootedness in God's unmoving, steady, bold Love; and sense of the support of and connection to the body of Christ that will hold them up and guide their footing with courage, resiliency, openness, love, hope and joy. It is good, meaningful and faithful work, and I am so grateful to be sharing this ministry with each of the members of this congregation.

Looking Ahead: As mentioned above, and more fully in the *Children, Youth and Families* report, this year we watered seeds planted by the faithful work of the Youth Ministry Taskforce, teachers and others, and planted new seeds. I look forward to working with the Youth Ministry and Teacher Teams, as well as CE PACSS and the UCW leadership, to see what has grown; what needs more watering to flourish next year; and perhaps what needs to be trimmed or weeded, in our ministries with children and youth. Of note (and highlighted in the other report) we are excited to be gathering incoming 9th and 10th graders for an Exploration of Faith (Confirmation/Confirmation equivalent) group next year, and will work to coordinate this with the Youth Ministry Team. In addition to this work, I also hope to renew focus on the following:

- People: This is what it's all about -- supporting, encouraging, trusting and caring for one another; sharing our lives and experiences of God. We model this for our children; our children model this for us. Our ministry teams do this well, but I look forward to thinking about how we can more fully connect, get-to-know, and support one another in ways in life-giving ways next year. Concrete implications include:
 - Leadership Development and Teambuilding: Adding a few members to our leadership teams (namely CE PACSS); and developing new ways to support, connect and equip current teams, with a focus on relationship-building (and perhaps seeking to go more deep than wide in terms of programming).
 - Communications: Developing new systems and spaces where we can connect with one another and communicate in-person and online – including within teams (e.g. teachers sharing ideas); between teams (e.g. with the Mission PACSS); between participants (e.g. a safe online way for the youth and/or families to connect with one another and with ministry news); and with the wider church.
 - Pastoral Care: I look forward to having more time to get to know and support our families and members of all ages.

- Families: Relatedly, I hope to work with CE PACSS to think about how to better support parents and families – whether with gatherings; support groups; pastoral care; forums/speakers around specific topics of interest, or other ideas.
- Worship and Intergenerational Engagement: I look forward to building on this congregation’s solid foundation of inclusion of children in the worship life and community of the church. This may include continuing to develop the existing intergenerational worship elements/services; and perhaps experimenting with new forms and forums in conjunction with the worship team (e.g. prayer stations; intergenerational events; special services).
- Interfaith: I look forward to joining a newly forming interfaith group of religious educators in Newton, as we seek to learn from one another and build connections that may foster good relationships and build peace.

A Note about Clinical Pastoral Education and Ordination: As many are aware, alongside my ministry at UCW this year, I also completed 400 hours of Clinical Pastoral Education, which meant that from October to May I served as an interfaith chaplain at Brigham and Women’s Hospital for at least two days a week, including frequent overnight shifts. Also, this year I completed the ordination process with the American Baptist Churches, culminating in my ordination council on May 8th and my upcoming ordination on June 25th, 2017. These valuable experiences will shape my remaining years in ministry in important ways, but also consumed considerable time and energy. I am very grateful for the support and grace shown to me by the church – and Rev. Stacy Swain, in particular – as I completed these processes.

Gratitude to my Pastoral Relations Committee: I am so grateful for the members of my Pastoral Relations Committee – Anya Bassett, Molly Owen-Kiritsy, and Bob Pazmiño – who have been sources of incredible support, encouragement and insight. I am so glad to share this walk of ministry with them.

Gratitude to CE PACSS, Church Council and Rev. Stacy Swain: As I end my report, I would like to thank the members of CE PACSS, and most especially Liz Caronna, who has been a wise, grounded, generous, and faithful partner in and leader of this ministry every step of the way. It is a joy and blessing to share this ministry with her. I would also like to thank our co-moderators: Karen Weisgerber (who serves as a member of CE PACSS), and Annie Gatewood (who also serves on the Youth Ministry Team), as well as Rev. Stacy Swain, for their countless hours, wisdom, creativity, and unwavering support of my ministry, and our children, youth and families. I am so grateful for them and their leadership, and very much look forward to seeing what God will do in and through this beloved community – and especially through our children, youth and families – in the coming year.

With Gratitude and Joy,
 Amy Clark Feldman
 Associate Pastor for Youth and Families

Moderators' Report

Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank.

Proverbs 22:29

As I reflect on my third year as co-moderator, I cannot help but marvel at the skills of the people with whom I have worked. I began my tenure with the thoughtful guidance of Alicia, and for the past two years had the privilege of working side by side with Karen Weisgerber. Stacy has, of course, been a constant source of spiritual comfort and leadership. And, the addition of Amy Clark Feldman as our Associate Pastor for Youth and Families has been a Godsend, never failing to show me the light of the young people among us. The development of a moderator's team this year has illuminated the insights and wisdom of Judy Nagle, Karen O'Beirne, and Linda Lynch. We met frequently to tackle the administrative functions of the church (see Karen's report on the Moderator's Team). Council has functioned a bit differently this year, allowing the PACSS (planning, action, coordination, strategy, support) to tackle mission and Christian education (CE) more directly. Although we met less often, good hard work was done by all. Every member (Liz Caronna, Beth Sears, Kent Wittler, Sandra DaDalt, Frank Laski, Jim MacDonald, Judy Nagle, Karen O'Beirne and Karen Weisgerber) served with the community's best interest in mind.

The PACSS are responsible for planning the programming of teams with ideas generated from within the Church as well as outside of the church, organizing teams into action, coordinating service activities and communicating those activities within and outside of the church, and providing support and strategy to team leadership. Nancy Zollers and Beth Sears took the new PACSS structure and ran with it, developing and enhancing a robust yet cohesive menu of mission offerings. Amy Clark Feldman and Liz Caronna revitalized the CE program and continued the progress of the emerging youth group. Council has proposed to permanently change the by-laws to reflect this new governing structure. I am surely leaving folks out, people who serve out of the limelight (e.g. Tom Humphrey, all of the team leaders) but I see a vibrant community filled with those who are skilled in their work and work in the service of our God.

Other items council addressed were both practical and philosophical. Our original roof has had a long life and is ready to retire. A new roof is quite expensive, leading us to think about funding it through a capital campaign which then led us to thinking more broadly about the future of our building and how it could serve our needs while being the best stewards possible. In the short term, we installed the first phase of a new sound system, greatly improving the worship experience. Meanwhile, the world around us was and is swirling. The presidential election in November highlighted our increasingly divisive nation. One of our very closely held values is to practice the radical welcome of Jesus, which raised the question, "How do we maintain our inclusive welcome while living out the gospel in the current political climate?" During several thoughtful conversations, council kept coming back to the reality that we, as a community, have not changed our beliefs and continue to practice loving our neighbor, doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God.

Next year will be an exciting and busy year. In the early fall, we will complete a feasibility study determining whether our congregation will enter into a capital campaign; over 50 people are planning to go to Nicaragua in February; and 10 9th graders will be engaging in a year long spiritual exploration (formerly known as confirmation). Let the work before us be skilled!

Respectfully Submitted,
Annie Gatewood

Clerk's Report

Church Membership

Active membership, July 1, 2016	225
New members	
(Reception on November 6, 2017)	5
Frank Slack	
Carol Bascom Slack	
Jenny Weisz	
John Weisz	
Gerry Elion	
Transfer of Active Members	2
Sarah Drummond	
Dan Drummond	
Transfer of Inactive Members	2
(This transfer does not affect the active membership number)	
John Salo	
Kristine Salo	
No deaths of members	0
Active membership, June 30, 2016	228

Services Conducted

Sunday Worship Services	47
Summer Services	4
Waban Health Services	10
Special Services	11
(Blue Christmas, Ash Wednesday for kids and Ash Wednesday for adults, five Wednesday evening Lenten services, Maundy Thursday, Holy Saturday and 7:00 a.m. Easter morning service)	
Baptism	1
Cecily Clare Buckman, December 23, 2016	
Confirmation Service	0
Memorial Services / Internments	5
Doris Walka, March 6	
Jean Anderson, March 25	
John T. Heemskerk, April 8 Memorial Service	
John T. Heemskerk, May 4 Internment	
Ken Wellington, April 22 Memorial Gathering	
Weddings	1
August 6, 2016 – Christine Moody and Chris Haggie	

Total Services Conducted

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra DaDalt, Clerk

REPORTS OF THE MINISTRIES
OF
THE UNION CHURCH IN WABAN

CE PACSS

Christian Education Planning Action Coordination Strategy and Support

Children, Youth and Families: Christian Education and Spiritual Formation

It has been a full and meaningful year for our children, youth and families. The Youth Ministry and Teacher Teams, with the CE PACSS and Associate Pastor Amy Clark Feldman, have worked to grow and nurture our existing ministries, and to launch new events and initiatives based on the work and recommendations of the Youth Ministry Taskforce and UCW leadership, as well as feedback from and ideas generated by teachers, parents, and the children and youth themselves. The following are highlights from the year:

NARRATIVE LECTIONARY

Reflecting UCW's commitment to children and youth, Rev. Stacy Swain and the church agreed with the recommendation of the CE PACSS to adopt the Narrative Lectionary, on a trial basis, as a guide for scripture readings throughout the year, allowing for kids and the wider church to consistently focus together on the same Biblical stories each week. The Narrative Lectionary is designed to follow the narrative arc of the story of God and God's people from Creation through the early church – generally focusing on the Old Testament in the fall, and New Testament in the spring. This narrative approach allowed children and youth to better understand and connect to the chronology and interrelationship of the Biblical stories, and see themselves as part of God's still-unfolding story. That the children, youth and wider church were focused on the same stories each week allowed for a sense of unity and inclusion of the children in the spiritual life of the wider congregation.

CHILDREN

Sunday School – New Rhythms on Sunday Mornings

This year the teacher teams of our Rainbows (k-3rd graders) and Stars (4th and 5th) undertook a revamping of the Sunday School time and curriculum to be more flexible, meaningful and engaging for our younger children, including a wide range of ages and learning styles. In the Rainbow class, in particular, we replaced the packaged curriculum we had been using with a simplified structure that included: *Welcome, Song, Circle, Story, Stations and Sending*. The goals of the time included focus on:

- ***Relationships with God, one another, and teachers:*** Each day began with a *Circle* time, when the children were invited to share meaningful events from their weeks, and grow in relationship with one another and their teachers. Teachers also encouraged the kids to increasingly take ownership of the time and their formation as a group by allowing the children to choose certain 'jobs' or roles (e.g. 'lighting' the candle; reading the story).
- ***Biblical Story:*** This focus on the Biblical story included Godly Play-style storytelling and wondering; acting out the story; or exploring the story in other ways. The use of the Narrative Lectionary allowed children and teachers to follow the story of God and God's people through time, and to gain a sense their place in God's continuing story, as well as feel a connection to the wider congregation.
- ***Differentiated, Experiential and Service Learning:*** Following the storytelling, children were invited to continue their exploration by choosing a 'station.' Stations allowed the kids to choose an activity most meaningful to them and their style of learning, and drew inspiration

from a variety of sources including *Spill the Beans* curriculum. Stations could include art, a hands-on building/other project, or quiet reading and playing with Godly play materials. Frequently, this time included an option for service, such as clean-up around the church; writing letters for the Russell School or Bread for the World; or, most significantly, Mini-Missions (see below for a full description of this initiative).

- **Worship – Music and Prayer:** Following our desire to instill in the children a love of and sense of connection to worship, we included music and prayer in each class. Collaborating with Bill Merrill, Music Director, Bethany Worrell, Assistant Music Minister and members of the Worship Team, we often helped to choose opening hymns for Sunday worship that were part of the Sunday School repertoire (e.g. “Peace Like a River”) or that were more accessible for children; and also taught stories or songs during Children’s Time that supported the children’s connections to the Biblical Stories and liturgical seasons (e.g. sung versions of Hosanna on Palm Sunday; and Alleluia on Easter).

Mini-Missions

Developed by the Teacher Teams – ably led and inspired by Jill Coull – Mini-Missions engaged our young ones (k-5th graders) in simple, tangible service projects in the community, with the goals of helping them see service as an integral part of their faith and lives, and realize they can make a difference in their communities and the world.

Children owned the projects (which ran from February through May) from start to finish. Mini-Mission adult leaders pre-selected local (or semi-local) charitable organizations (including the Newton Food Pantry, Birthday Wishes and MSPCA -Angell Animal Medical Center) that accepted a variety of donated items, and the children were then allowed to choose the cause and organization they want to help. The children organized themselves into groups that selected a story or passage from the Bible to help guide their work, researched the needs of the organizations, and then presented their organizations and projects to the congregation. By the end of the initiative, the children had collected more than 16 boxes of needed items for their chosen organizations, and in May, each of the three groups delivered the donated items to the organizations, had tours of the organizations and, to the extent possible, engaged in service projects on-site.

We are very grateful to the many people who helped support this initiative, and are especially grateful to Mini-Mission leaders – the kids, families, and teachers – who made it such a meaningful experience. Each of the groups had at least two adult leaders, and a number of other adult teachers/supporters, who helped organize, guide and enable the kids’ work. We extend a special ‘thank you!’ to each of them.

Special Services – Intergenerational Worship

We also worked to involved children and youth more fully in the worship life of the congregation:

- **Kick- Off Sunday** – This year’s kick-off Sunday included an ice-cream social and Mission/CE Fair that included a space for CE registration and Q&A.
- **Christmas Pageant** – The kids did a wonderful job crafting and leading the full worship service on this day.
- **Ash Wednesday** – This year, children and parents were invited to a special 45-minute service before the formal Ash Wednesday service. The service was designed to be more participatory and hands-on for all ages. We hope to hold this service again next year.

- ***Hanging of the Greens, Christmas Eve, Easter*** – Children were again included in the entirety of these services, with special elements designed to engage and minister to all ages.
- ***Lenten Communion Series***: See below for a description of this meaningful series on Communion that included Communion service led by the youth, as well as youth involvement in worship arts.
- ***Children’s Sunday*** – At the writing of this report, this worship service has not yet taken place, but the kids and teacher teams are busy preparing for a meaningful morning

CE Staff Members: Our professional nursery caregiver, Lisa Barry, and our Assistant Teacher, Ryan Barry, both continued this year as faithful, dependable and caring members of the CE teams. They are both adored by children, families and the wider congregation, and we are so grateful for their ministries with us.

Mission PACSS: We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Mission PACSS – and Nancy Zollers and Beth Sears, specifically – for their commitment, flexibility and positive approach to including children and youth in the mission ministries of the church. It is a joy to work with them, and we look forward to the continued partnership between our two PACSS as we seek to include children and youth in mission and service.

YOUTH

Sunday School – Focus on Relationship, Biblical Story and Experiential Learning

This year, we also created curriculum following the Narrative Lectionary for our youth Sunday School group. The classes incorporated time for relationship-building and prayer; as well as a focus on the Biblical story, and service learning. Additionally, youth teachers sought to include the youth more fully in the worship life of the church, through programs like the Lenten series below, and through the worship arts (e.g. the youth created this year’s Lenten Prayer station). Teachers also sought to overlap with and reinforce the work of the Youth Ministry Team, designing classes around Youth Ministry events (e.g. preparing for the Waban Health Mitten Tree, and Common Cathedral during Sunday School, or designing a class around the work of Heifer International). Sunday School also served as a space where the youth were able to reflect on Youth Ministry events more deeply, and explore links to their faith and lives. The following is a description a special initiative focused on Communion that highlights some of these foci and connections:

Creating the Beloved Community — A Lenten Walk of Communion: Each Sunday morning during Lent, the youth focused on different aspects of what it means to gather around the Table and share Communion. They baked bread – including bread that was used for Communion, as well as sweet bread shared with friends at the Waban Health Center – made a worship-art centerpiece for Communion, and lead the congregation in Communion with a liturgy they wrote themselves. This series also included an overnight in the church (see below), as well as special youth involvement in the Maundy Thursday dinner.

Youth Ministry Team

The Youth Ministry Team, co-chaired by Christy Lang Hearlson and Susan Hunt Stevens, and based on the hard work, visioning and planning of the 2015-16 Youth Ministry Task-Force, had a full year

of growth, new initiatives, learning, relationship-building and fun. Our work and planning was guided by the mission-statement developed by the task-force:

The Youth Ministry of the Union Church in Waban is a fully welcoming community that sees all young people as beloved children of God who can live out God's love in the world. In our ministry, young people are invited to:

- *Develop authentic relationships with other youth, caring adults, and God;*
- *Embark on a spiritual journey grounded in the life, teachings, and community of Jesus Christ;*
- *Explore how their gifts and questions can contribute to the life of the church and the flourishing of all creation;*
- *Participate in meaningful service and joyful mission as part of this community of faith.*

Guided by these goals, the Youth Ministry Team designed and implemented a full schedule of events, which generally included one fellowship event and one service event per month. Events this year were well-attended by both the youth and Youth Ministry Team members and/or other adults. Through these events, and weekly Sunday School, we have witnessed the group grow in significant ways in terms of their relationships with each other and sense of connection as a youth group, as well as in their faith lives, connection to the church, and contributions related to service/mission and worship leadership. Events this year included:

- ***Fall-Kick Off Party:*** Cook-out, games and time to connect at the church
- ***Fall Camping Trip to NH:*** Weather made this a day-trip that included exploring caves, hiking and a gondola ride in the White Mountains
- ***Common Cathedral:*** This included an event to prepare food the evening before, as well as serving food and worshipping with the congregation on Boston Common
- ***Heifer Farm Overnight:*** The youth overnight at Heifer Farm was well-attended, meaningful and memorable!
- ***Community Thanksgiving Dinner:*** Youth helped set up and serve food at this dinner held at the church
- ***Waban Health Mitten Tree Collection and Caroling:*** Youth led this collection, delivered the collected gifts and sang carols for our friends at the Waban Health Center
- ***UCW Youth Christmas Party:*** This fun evening included a white elephant gift exchange
- ***Fancy Dinner on the Town:*** Kids went out for dinner together around Valentine's Day
- ***Pancake Breakfast:*** Youth cooked and led a Shrove Tuesday-style pancake breakfast for the younger kids on the Sunday before Lent
- ***Lenten Labyrinth Sleepover:*** Kids spent a meaningful night at the church, with games, worship and fellowship.
- ***Lenten Communion Series:*** See above for more details on this series that ran through Lent and involved both service learning and worship leadership.
- ***Gaining Ground Farm:*** Kids helped to clear fields and plant berries for this farm that provides produce to food pantries and meal programs in Massachusetts.
- ***Year End Pool Party:*** Youth celebrate and look back over a great year!

Spiritual Support Team: A special thanks goes to the members of the Youth Spiritual Support Team: Vicky Smith, Bart Kelso, Ann Williams and Jandi Dennis. These adults faithfully prayed for and

supported the youth and Youth Ministry Team members through the year, and we are so grateful for their presence and prayers.

A Special Note of Gratitude: Our prayers and gratitude travel with Christy Lang Hearlson and Adam Hearlson as they move to Pennsylvania. Both Christy and Adam played critical roles in leading and inspiring the Youth Ministry Task Force and Youth Ministry Team. We will miss them, and their children, immensely, and are so grateful for the seeds they so faithfully planted in this community. We will continue to nurture and benefit from the fruits of their ideas and work.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Our ministries with youth and children grew and developed in significant ways this year. The Youth Ministry and Teacher Teams, with CE PACSS and UCW families, will spend time this summer and beyond evaluating what went well, and what we may want to continue, tweak or change in the year ahead. We are inspired to continue imagining, growing and nurturing our ministries for youth, children and families – both for the short-term (next year), and also long-term, as we seek to live rooted in God and connected to one another in our beautiful and broken world. In addition to that important on-going work, the following are some of the areas of focus for the coming year we wanted to highlight:

CE PACSS and Leadership Development: We will continue to work to develop and support a robust CE PACSS, and are looking for two additional members of this important visioning and planning group. We also hope to grow and provide new opportunities for development and support of teacher teams, and other CE leadership. This may include more regular opportunities for the teachers to gather and support one another (online and in-person), and reaching out to additional members of the congregation who can teach, mentor, and share God's love with our children and youth.

Exploration of Faith (Confirmation or Confirmation-Equivalent): We are excited to offer this special experience next year for our youth entering 9th and 10th grades (or older). This group will meet monthly to explore and deepen their faith, and their relationships with one another, the church, and the wider community. The youth will be paired with mentors, and the year will include opportunities for service learning, as well as interfaith and ecumenical engagement.

Supporting parents and families: We hope to explore new ways to support parents and families in their daily lives and walks of faith. This may include small groups, invited speakers or forums around specific topics, and pastoral visits.

We are deeply grateful to all those who participated in and supported UCW's ministries with children and youth – and offer a very special thanks to our wonderful, dedicated, and faithful teachers and Youth Ministry Team members, who gave so generously of their time, talents and care.

We likewise share a special note of thanks to each of our children and youth, who shared their love, wisdom, creativity, and leadership with one another, the congregation, and the wider community in ways that inspired and enriched us all this year.

Most especially, we are thankful for God's guidance, presence and grace in all that we do.

With gratitude and joy,

Liz Caronna
Chair, CE PACSS

Amy Clark Feldman
Assoc. Pastor for Youth and Families

The Deacons

During the 2016 – 2017 church Year, the Deacons continued to serve the spiritual interests of the church and community by supporting worship and the care and spiritual formation of the congregation. As such, we supported summer services in July, our Hanging-of-the-Greens Advent service and our Maundy Thursday dinner and Tenebrae service. We also repeated the following worship services:

- In September, we welcomed our members back from summer vacation with our traditional Gathering Sunday service.
- We continued the popular Sunday morning Bible study classes and Wednesday morning prayer gatherings. Each Sunday morning before regular worship service, a small but regular group of members met to read various sections of the Bible. Each Wednesday morning another group of members participated in quiet meditations and prayers. In addition, we were pleased that Pastor Stacy added an additional Bible study class using the Exploring the Bible curriculum through the Massachusetts Bible Society.
- On World Communion Sunday in October, a joint service was held with the Taiwanese church.
- During Lent, our traditional Ash Wednesday service featured the traditional music and prayers, the distribution of ashes, and the walking of the labyrinth.
- During Lent the youth were integrated into the celebration and serving of communion to coordinate with their studies and discussions surrounding communion.
- Also during the Lenten season, we continued with a Holy Saturday service with music, candles, communion, and a reaffirmation of our Baptismal vows.
- A special Lenten series of services were held each Wednesday evening with special themes, including painting and quiet.
- The Deacons continued a Blue Christmas service. The Blue Christmas offered support of those for whom Christmas might be a sad time of year, for reasons of the loss of a loved one.
- On Easter Sunday morning, our student Andrew lead an intimate sunrise service for a few congregants outside the church.
- During the Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day services, a special candle lighting memorial was observed.

The Deacons are responsible for the care and concerns and spiritual well-being of the members of the congregation. The Deacons are also responsible for sending cards and special messages to members of the congregation who have lost loved ones, who are sick, or who are, in some way, experiencing difficulties. The Deacons provide for scripture readers and perform the head count for all services. Each first Sunday of the month, the Deacons prepare the elements and, with the help of a few additional recruits, distribute the elements during the service.

As we come to the end of this year, the Deacons are saddened to accept the end-of-term resignation of our beloved deacon Molly Owen-Kiritsy. She is stepping down from Deacons after two years of fantastic and faithful service.

We will be blessed with new members of deacons (to be named at annual meeting).

Deacons' Meetings

The Deacons meet with Stacy on the first Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. in her office.

Respectively submitted,

Your Deacons:

Jim MacDonald

Judy Nagle

Mark Smith

Molly Owen-Kiritsy

Deb McGovern

Gerry Elion

Mission Outreach PACSS

Planning, Action, Coordination, Strategy and Support

Mission-outreach is an opportunity to rediscover the passion of God... and the formula that keeps the church alive: Christian mission is a never-ending journey of being pleasantly surprised and challenged by the Holy Spirit to live the gospel anew!"—Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, professor, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University

Introduction

Relying on our faith and Biblical guidance, as well as the support of Pastors Stacy and Amy, the Mission Outreach team worked to provide meaningful, diverse and frequent opportunities for members of the Union Church and their families, as we;

- work with established and effective **partners** in our community,
- to continue and to strengthen our **relationships**,
- to **collaborate** with them in efforts on behalf of **our neighbors**,
- to **join together as members of a church** to engage meaningfully to improve lives and support justice while educating ourselves,
- **supporting leaders** in the Congregation as they pursue their interests,
- and thoroughly **communicate** to everyone in the church about both the upcoming opportunities available to them as well as the outcomes of every mission effort.

Mission activities in brief

The mission team efforts are summarized in the list below. Please see Nancy Zollers or Beth Sears for questions, ideas or more information.

1. This church has investigated and explored the possibility of joining interfaith mission/outreach work for many years. This year we deliberated together about how to best accomplish that. Joining **Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)** has extended our reach exponentially as we have joined over 40 synagogues and churches in this region in education and action. GBIO works to build relationships in order to promote social justice in health care, housing, criminal justice reform, and education. We have attended large action events, small organizing meetings, education forums, state house press conferences, and informational/relationship building meetings. We have learned the painful truths of solitary confinement, home eviction, bankruptcy due to health care costs, and other tragedies confronting our neighbors. We have also now joined a systematic and faith-based organization that has record of accomplishments, in order to remedy these issues collaboratively. (Kathleen Hobson and Mark Smith).¹
2. Working with **Project Care and Concern** and Sister Joyce in Dorchester we have had the opportunity to participate this year in several new ways, beyond our Mitten Tree gift

¹ The names in parenthesis indicate the team leaders for the various initiatives.

3. project. Sister Joyce was one of three guests blessed and welcomed at the Housing and Homelessness Valentines Day Love-In and Teach-In. Also, our Easter special collection benefited the work Sister Joyce accomplishes in the Bowdon-Geneva neighborhood, and elderly transitional housing in South Boston facing food insecurity. Third, Sister Joyce has identified children who can greatly benefit from summer camp, but who cannot afford to go. Union Church has subsidized their tuition and sent them off with backpacks of supplies and love from us.
4. Also participating in the Housing Teach-In were our partners from **CAN-DO (Josephine McNeil) and Engine 6**. CAN-DO develops affordable housing in Newton and supports the families who move in. Engine 6 advocates for affordable and diverse housing in Newton, including for formerly homeless individuals.
5. **June Cooper of City Mission Society**, our partner at Russell School and in homelessness prevention, celebrated City Mission's 200 year Anniversary attended by some mission folks and Rev. Stacy Swain. (Anne Gatewood)
6. Our long-term commitment to a Boston Public School and its students, parents and staff (**The Russell Elementary School**) continued this year with support for the student 5K and Field Day, (Kevin Johnson), Literacy Night, Community/Health Day, Parent Council, School Site Team, delivering copy paper to support teachers, Music Program, Supporting a new Parent Newsletter, Summer Camp tuition support and backpacks, and Computer Coding Club (Rob Purser and Susan Hunt-Stevens)
7. The **Nicaragua Team** has kept the people of San Juan del Sur in our hearts through four initiatives this year, in addition to trip planning for 2018. They initiated a Skype call to La Pastora of our sister church Alpha and Omega, created a Teach-In by journalist/filmmaker Carlos Solis "Que Pasa Nicaragua?" who informed us on the context of poverty and political struggles of the Nicaraguan people, kept in touch with and provided tuition to higher education Brugger student, and organized the sending and receiving in return of cards/letters/drawings from every single Sunday School student in San Juan del Sur. In addition, the Nica team collaborated with Nicaraguans in Boston Association (Alfonso Hernandez) to learn more about the needs of current Boston-area Nicaraguan people, including asking us to support the Safe Communities Act (S.1305 and H.3269. (Soo Laski)
8. **The Concert to End Gun Violence** began our church year when Bill Merrill led us in joining with churches and others across the country in song and prayer to lift our faith and hope after a summer of terrible violence and despair. Open to the wider community, we came together in the sanctuary to seek God's guidance and participate in healing. The concert was a part of the Do Not Stand Idly By initiative of GBIO and the concert Bill created was spirit-filled and beautiful.
9. Our partnership with **Ecclesia Ministries** allowed us to participate in Common Cathedral again this year. Working with the youth, we prepared lunches and traveled to Boston

Common to share a church service and a meal together. We collected and delivered needed items of new socks, and art materials for Common Art (Jane and Rob Purser)

9. Our continued involvement with the objectives and the people of **Haley House** continued with supper and poetry night at their Dudley Square café. The chance to be together as church and listen to students, with the support of their teachers. read original poems and narratives was beautiful, fun and moving. (Wat Matsuyasu and Karla Armanoff)
10. **The 1K** initiative began its work with a 6-week Bible Study (Bart Kelso) and discernment. Then we began a systematic process of determining how to identify the financial needs in our broader community, for example, an established business or group in need of financial support (e.g. micro loan). We also surveyed community leaders, non-profits and others. We educated ourselves and discussed the five options for support under 1K. We are continuing to seek a loan recipient. (Brita Gill-Austern)
11. **Cookout with our neighbors from the Mitten Tree**
Our gifts that you purchase and bring to our Mitten Tree each Christmas are the only gifts that the recipients receive and they “know” us this way. Some of these folks, living in transitional housing in Boston, were celebrated by us with a cookout and conversation. The opportunity to begin to get to know them was a gift. They are grateful for our gifts and the cookout together, and we are grateful that they have invited us to do more meals together in the future.
12. Because the Christmas **Green Sales** now fund all of mission work the mission team worked hard with the support of Vinita Leslie to achieve robust sales this year.
14. **The Syrian American Medical Society New England. (SAMS)** joined us at the Union Church to speak and to share with us about the medical and humanitarian crisis in Syria and the surrounding region. (Brita Gil Austern). The Congregation was moved as a result of this event church to designate our Christmas special collection to SAMS.
15. Also, as a result of this new partnership with SAMS, we have met with three synagogues and others seeking partners in their efforts to bring refugee families to Newton. These are ongoing initiatives, and we look forward to any opportunities that UCW can consider in the future.
16. Our annual **Thanksgiving Dinner** was attended by old and new neighbors who again found a place to enjoy conversation and a great meal (Alicia Collins).

17. We continued our partnership with **Bread for the World**, which “is a collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. By changing policies, programs, and conditions that allow hunger and poverty to persist, we provide help and opportunity far beyond the communities where we live.” It offers us the opportunity to impact hunger, poverty and justice by letter writing. The Offering of Letters to legislators and policy makers creates impact from our seats. The 2017 Offering of Letters campaign urges Congress to invest in and protect vital policies and safety-net programs — including WIC, global nutrition, SNAP, and refundable tax credits. We have made great progress reducing hunger and poverty in our country and around the world, but our work remains unfinished. (Priscilla Kelso)
18. As a United Church of Christ affiliate church, we support the **UCC Wider Mission** fund for disaster relief.
19. We supported the last **Zambia** school girls who we have educated through Capital Campaign funds for 10 years. (Anne Gatewood)

Envisioning next year

Being a church, we are keenly aware of our obligations as people of faith, but we can easily feel overwhelmed. We could despair thinking about how we spread love - charity or justice - in this terribly wounded world, about all the need and how small we are to help. We are particularly aware of the growing disparities that are glaringly apparent, and look for God’s guidance on how to respond to the deep divides that result.

This walk of mission-outreach love and generosity, especially to the most vulnerable, *could* be difficult, but fortunately the Union Church has partners! How could we do, and give, and pray, and know, without our important and loving partners who guide us?

Some of our goals for the opportunities mission team offered included; 1) involving our youth, 2) serving both regional and international neighbors, 3) achieving participation by many, 4) responding to Congregational energy and requests, 5) evaluations of why it worked? And, thinking through how to follow up.

We will again hold our successful Mission Sunday in the new church year for you to stop by the table and help us know your thoughts as we try to achieve a coordinated, inclusive Mission agenda that is active and well- communicated, and integrates all of our thinking, planning and implementation with Christian Education, Youth task force, worship team, and pastors. Not only that Sunday, but always, Congregation members’ thoughts and your prayers are always encouraged and very welcome. Thank you.

Love God with All Your Heart and With All Your Soul and Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

Nancy Zollers and Beth Sears

Co-Moderator's Team Report (Nimbus)

With the reorganization of our committee structure into both a CE and Mission PACSS (planning, action, coordination, strategy, support), the Union Church Council realized the need for a group to take on administrative and other aspects that had fallen outside the purview of both these key groups. The purpose of this third group would be to manage aspects of church life that do not rise to the level of Council, yet must be attended to on an ongoing and regular basis. This included administrative overview, Human Relations, Building, as well as oversight of general communication. In addition, the group was invited to keep an eye on not just the present, but the future as well – with the church year in full view.

In the visioning phase, Stacy described the ideal qualities of this group as ‘nimble and porous’ – and so the name “Nimbus” was born.

The team consists of the minister (Stacy Swain), co-moderators (Annie Gatewood and Karen Weisgerber), a representative for Building (Judy Nagle), for HR (Linda Lynch), and Stewardship (Karen O’Beirne).

During the course of this year, the group addressed two key issues: assessing building priorities and revising our HR process.

Judy reports, regarding the building:

We continue in our ongoing maintenance of the building by: replacing light bulbs, unclogging drains, replacing broken drains, adjusting door locks, fixing “stuff” that gets broken, cleaning and upkeep of spaces, working with our tenants, arranging tree removal, mowing, weeding, shoveling and sweeping! An endless list!

Unfortunately, our roof will need to be replaced as soon as possible. We have a feasibility study planned for the fall. This will determine how we move forward with this project.

There have been countless folks helping with many of these tasks, and we thank you for your dedication and hard work in caring for our church, inside and out.

With regard to Human Relations, the team used the resource “Completing the Circle” which revises the typical institutional HR review process into one that is more relevant and applicable to churches. The current year is a bridge between our old system of targeted interviews as a process of garnering performance reviews to one similar to Completing the Circle – based on a series of year long conversations. We are excited about this new approach of interfacing with our staff and

giving and receiving information in a way that helps them as well as the church community grow in our work together.

Last, with the realization that the church roof must be replaced, the team now is in the process of formulating a feasibility study for a capital campaign. The need to replace the roof opened our minds to the possibilities a capital funds initiative might bring for our church over the next 5-10 years. The feasibility study will gather information from congregants about the hopes and dreams for our church, the more concrete vision for what might be done to move towards achieving these, and the financial feasibility of moving forward. The feasibility study itself will be conducted by outside consultants (Williams Consulting Group) in late September 2017. This is a wonderful opportunity to look ahead into our church life and live into *being* church together.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Weisgerber, Co-Moderator

Music at UCW

This past year has truly been a rich and exciting one for the music program at the Union Church in Waban.

Our choir has grown with the addition of two male singers, Phil Rounseville, tenor, and Don J Bravo, baritone. Both these singers have added to the sound of the choir and have been very dependable. We also have had the gifts of Andrew Heintz, who added his knowledge of some lovely hymns to the repertoire of the congregation and choir.

In September, the choir participated, with the help of some outside soloists, in the CONCERT ACROSS AMERICA TO END GUN VIOLENCE. This was a wonderful event, which served to raise consciousness about this pervasive problem in our country.

We also recognized the problems of refugees in a service that dealt with welcoming the stranger into our midst, singing "Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor" by Irving Berlin.

One of the memorable services included the "Elijah-Widow" duet, sung by Bethany Worrell and Don J. Bravo.

Our bell choir has continued to grow in their ringing and contributed much beauty to the Thanksgiving Song sung by the choir. They also rang during Advent, joined by Greg Feldman on his guitar. During the Christmas services, our soprano soloist Bethany Worrell sang one of the most beautiful renditions of "O Holy Night" we have ever heard.

In January, the choir sang several American folk hymns, including "Down in the River to Pray" accompanied by Greg Feldman, and "Great High Mountain".

One of our special services featured music by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Bethany Worrell was joined by the gifted violist Elizabeth Stefan in this lovely music.

The Easter service was enriched by the playing of a superb trumpeter, Hyungbin Jung. We will look forward to his joining us again next year!

Our recent Memorial Day service was a memorable one, with Andrew Heintz leading us in a Hymn Sing that included many of our favorite hymns and songs. I hope this will become an annual event.

A few of the issues that I look forward to addressing next year are:

- 1) The maintenance and repair of our organ
- 2) Continuing the growth of our choir, especially in adding women to our members
- 3) Increasing the amount of actual sheet music purchased, instead of copied music
- 4) Awareness of hymns that are familiar and easy for the congregation to sing.
- 5) Continued effort to introduce more variety of styles into the service music

I believe that we are close to accomplishing some of these goals, and I look forward to seeing more of them realized during the next year.

With gratitude,
William Merrill
Music Director

Stewardship Annual Report

June 1, 2017

The following report provides a review of the investment account and the stewardship campaign.

Investment Account

As of April 30th, the balance in the investment account was \$325,709.92. This compares favorably with the April 30th balance in 2016, which was \$316,541.84.

Since 4/30/2016, the church withdrew \$30,490 from the investment account, and we received \$11,760 in deposits. Our investments had a 9.36% return net of fees for the trailing twelve-month period. The account currently has 55% in Equity, 41.5% in Fixed Income and 3.5% in Cash.

Stewardship Campaign

As of May 30th, the church had received 34 pledges for \$83,680. We have yet to receive pledges from several families who have been generous in the past. As a result, we are optimistic that the number will grow after some friendly reminders.

The outstanding balance for 2016/2-17 pledges is \$50,345. Within the next week, the committee will be sending current pledge statements and a letter requesting congregants to pay any outstanding balances. We have a call scheduled for June 19th to review the status on unpaid pledges.

Teaching Parish Committee

The work of the Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) began with creating a welcoming climate for our student intern Andrew Heintz as he transitioned from his home base in North Carolina to Episcopal Divinity School and Union Church. TPC supported

Andrew so he could successfully carry out his field education plan to advance in his aspiration to explore parish ministry, with emphasis on the social justice imperatives for church.

Throughout the year the TPC focused on providing advice and support to Andrew and his supervisor Rev. Stacy Swain. The TPC met monthly, conferring with the student on the development of his learning goals and learning plan objectives and assessing his progress. Our meetings with Andrew and Pastor Stacy were productive, focused on the support needs of the student. In addition to the monthly meetings, individual TPC members provided support as requested on an ongoing basis, and through their efforts made significant contributions to the learning process.

The TPC experience this year with Andrew has served once more to confirm that the congregation of the Union Church provides a vital learning environment. Andrew introduced the congregation to many enriching spiritual exercises that were well accepted and appreciated. Stacy through her careful mentoring and generous personal support, continues to invite students to take on challenging assignments and empower them to advance and succeed.

The essence and spirit of our TPC year was nicely captured by Andrew and Stacy in their reports to our field education partners at Andover Newton Theological School. They wrote:

Union Church has been a wonderful place to learn. Congregants, lay leadership, and pastors have all been willing and excited to help me in my learning whenever I have asked. I have been able to have conversations about the traditions and history of the church, as well as inspiration for how to minister for and with the people. (Andrew)

It has been a joy to have Andrew as part of our ministry team. He has brought much into the life of UCW and I believe he has grown considerably. I look forward to the coming years and to seeing all that God is doing in and through him. (Stacy)

In the spring, TPC conducted interviews and recruited a student for next year. We will welcome Brian Donovan, a student at Boston University School of Theology, who will join us for his field education in September.

Over the last five years, our TPC experience has strengthened our commitment to extending Christian education to providing opportunities for professional development and spiritual growth to those called to God's ministry. We have a congregation that welcomes students, enjoys their presence and in countless ways contributes to making the Union Church a true teaching parish.

As members of the TPC team, we feel blessed for the opportunity and challenged to fulfill the promise of this most important ministry.

For the Teaching Parish Committee
Frank Laski
James MacDonald
Jaap van Reijendam
Thomas Vawter
Jenny Weisz

THE UNION CHURCH IN WABAN

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 -2017