

**2014 – 2015**  
**Annual Report**



*First Church of Christ ~ Simsbury, CT*

**First Church of Christ and  
Ecclesiastical Society of Simsbury, Inc.  
689 Hopmeadow Street  
Simsbury, CT 06070**

**Annual Meeting – April 26, 2015**

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Prepared for the Annual Church Meeting  
April 26, 2015

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AGENDA FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST AND ECCLESIASTICAL SOCIETY  
OF SIMSBURY, INC.

MEETINGHOUSE, APRIL 26, 2015

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1	Opening Prayer	Rev. Dianne Arakawa	
2	Confirm Quorum	Steve Osborn	
3	Approval of 2014 Annual Meeting Minutes	Jim Trimble	Vote
4	President's Comments	Jim Trimble	
5	Vice President's Comments	Cindy Braunlich	
6	Transitional Senior Minister's Comments	Rev. Dianne Arakawa	
7	Treasurer's Financial Update	Ron Patterson	
8	Nomination of Board Members	Dane Woodberry	Vote
9	Questions and Answers	Jim Trimble	
10	Report of the Search Committee	Mark Scully and Mario Chiappetti	
11	Adjourn		

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MINUTES  
ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING  
APRIL 27, 2014  
FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST AND ECCLESIASTICAL SOCIETY

President Westbrook called the meeting to order at 11:05 am.

Clerk Ketchabaw confirmed, by visual observation, that a quorum was present.

Reverend Arakawa offered an opening prayer.

It was moved; seconded; and carried that a reading of the 2013 Annual Meeting minutes be dispensed with since the minutes were published in the 2013 Annual Report. It was moved; seconded; and carried that the minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting be approved as presented in the 2013 Annual Report.

President Westbrook reviewed the highlights of her report as contained in the Annual Report. She noted that the year 2013 had been a time of transition and change at First Church with the resignation of Reverend Morgan; the search for and call of our Transitional Senior Minister Dianne Arakawa; and the financial shortfall confronting the fiscal year 2014 budget. In her parting comments she challenged the congregation to assume a positive intent of others and that now is the time to reenergize our suspended Church Governance study and recommendations for improvement.

Vice President Trimble commented on his report that "you should never follow someone better" and complimented retiring President Westbrook for her service during a challenging two years of leadership! Jim overviewed briefly his strategy to establish a "search committee" to seek our next settled pastor, noting that the committee should be diverse and inclusive of all congregational demographics. He asked that those with interest in serving contact him and that he intends to invite all to an overview of the search process commitment, followed by personal interviews. He challenged the congregation to become "fishers of the community" and to spread the good news of First Church programs and worship.

Reverend Arakawa noted in her comments that she feels hope and momentum within First Church going forward. She noted that First Church needs to address how it will strengthen our ministry by introducing a variety of fresh, innovative strategies for growth, with compliments to Chris Morken for his initiative and development of membership recruitment and contact with departed members. All of the challenges confronting us as we move forward as a congregation will depend on a faithful, mutually supportive response to change and rising above any "us versus them" mindsets. Dianne commented that her survey results have been shared with two congregational focus groups (that were miserably attended) and plans another in the near future. She expressed her appreciation to the Executive Officers; to the members of the Executive Council; and to the Ministerial and Administrative staff for their support since her arrival at First Church.

In the absence of Dane Woodberry, Clerk Ketchabaw presented the Nominating Report for the 2014/2015 Officers and for Board membership nominees. It was moved; seconded; and carried that the Nomination Report be approved.

Treasurer Ron Patterson commented that the Church is on a sound financial footing following a difficult 2014 budget development and recent congregational approval. Our endowments are underwriting our financial shortfall but he cautioned that a capital fundraising will become necessary in the not too distant future. He commented that the Historic Grant process underway is contributing in a major way to our financial planning and will probably become a strategy of support to our buildings and grounds. In that regard, Ron extended his appreciation to Rick Wilde and Dane Woodberry for their efforts in accomplishing this major step forward.

During the "question and answer" period it was asked if Reverend Arakawa's survey findings would be made available to the congregation. Dianne responded that she is not willing to share just yet until her research and discussions are concluded. It was suggested that she consider a congregational forum some Sunday after worship service.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 am.

Respectfully submitted;

William Ketchabaw  
Clerk of the Congregation

## Report of the Transitional Senior Minister

*The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they may travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people. (Exodus 13:21-222)*

This past year has been a purposeful and productive one in the life of the First Church of Christ. There were innumerable experiences expressing and exemplifying the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst, from worship and special services to mission program and projects. For these, I remain grateful to be serving in my position in my second year in the interim.

Since April 2014 we stabilized the arrangement of the staff, both program and office. On May 31<sup>st</sup> Erica Nierendorf, who had served as our part-time licensed Associate Minister for a year-and-a-half, accepted a position as a Resident Chaplain in the Clinical Pastoral Education program at Hartford Hospital. In June Rev. Kevin Weikel, our Associate Minister for Youth and Young Adults, decided not to pursue consideration as a candidate for the settled Senior Minister position. Against a recent church history of three fulltime ministries and then two-and-one-half ministries, he and I proceeded to define our ministries for this past church year. In general, Kevin let go of some weekly Friday meetings with the Junior Fellowship, took up with Miranda Moeller of W. Avon Congregational Church the formation of a 20/30 group for 2015, and adjusted to taking on some special services including Baptisms, Weddings and Memorials. I widened my ministry to include the Friends/Visitors, five Small Groups for Bible study and Women's Retreat planning team for their May Silver Lake event, and Welcoming Team. By the end of this winter I realized that due to lack of time repeated pastoral visits to members became less frequent, excepting of course in the cases of emergencies or end-of-life issues. As part of ongoing corrections in the administration, Cindy Cole's title was clarified as Director of Children's Ministries.

I have continued to work with Personnel and supervise the office and program staff, excepting the Financial Assistant who reports to the Treasurer. Along with Personnel we repositioned supervision of the Director of Children's Ministries to the Associate Minister for Youth and Young Adults in order to bring our educational ministries in line. The Financial Assistant resigned last September and our Administrator last October. As a result, we hired a new Financial Assistant, Lisa Reed, last October, promoted Eileen Kaczor from Administrative Assistant to Administrator/Office Manager, and hired a new Administrative Assistant, Martha Hillemeir, at the start of the new year. This left a one-to-two-month gap during which time the remaining office staff was compelled to do multiple tasks, and I to manage payroll with our designated check-writing company. Since then Eileen has produced a number of important procedural guidelines; circulated new best practices forms; updated our website, including mounting our sermons just recently through YouTube with the aid of Dave McElligott; and is working on the directory. Despite these changes, a tough winter and notable illnesses, everyone on the program and office staffs has worked very hard and well, and the congregation can take confidence in this.

I have planned worship and special services with Mark Mercier and, to a lesser degree, with Kevin Weikel, led those services and preached Bible-centered sermons at the six out of eight services (8:30 and 10 am) each month, excepting those from June through August when we hold only one 9:30 am service. We were forced to cancel one set of services this past February 15th due to a snow storm. Mark has been sensitive and masterful in producing music that enhances the themes of the services. Noteworthy services with guest preachers included Revs. Tamara Moreland, Kent Siladi, Thomas Clough of the CT Conference as well as Rev. Bob Evans of

Plowshares and Rev. Todd Williams, a member. We also honored Rev. Leonard Clough, a member, for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Ordination. I helped arrange and participated in our three Christmas Eve Services. (This past year the 25-year-old Puppet Pageant puppets were beautifully restored by a team consisting of Kathy Wildman, JoAnn Hogan, Salvadore Sanchez and Mark Mercier.) For our Ash Wednesday service Mark Mercier and I reconnected with the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Hartford. We invited their Associate Pastor and Minister of Music to share our service in our sanctuary, which proved a memorable reunion that should be continued. During Holy Week in addition to the Palm Sunday service with the distribution of palms, and Maundy Thursday Communion/Tenebrae service, I felt the need to introduce a Good Friday noon service in the Chapel with the support of the Board of Worship. 25 attended. For Easter Sunday I participated in the three services—Sunrise at the Simsbury Cemetery in cooperation with the Simsbury United Methodist Church, a new Uncommon at 8:30 am, and Festival at 10:30 am; all with Communion. Many thanks to Diane Jones, chair, the Board of Worship and volunteers for their earnest and outstanding support and attention to detail. Several of the Easter lilies in the sanctuary have been replaced with jonquils and tulips due to severe allergic reactions among a couple of parishioners. Rabbi Howard Herman from the Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation has rescheduled from the snow storm to guest preach for us on June 7<sup>th</sup>, rekindling a collegial relationship that we have had with that congregation since the period of Rev. Lyman Potter.

I have been privileged to counsel in confidence a number of parishioners. I conducted six Baptisms-- Leonardo Garcia on May 4<sup>th</sup>; Grace Mauke on June 29<sup>th</sup>; Zoe Winters on July 23<sup>rd</sup>; Riley Joncas on November 9<sup>th</sup>; and Gavin and Hunter Mullins on April 12<sup>th</sup>; and was present for all other Baptisms and Confirmations. I have two infant Baptisms scheduled for this summer; and after a period of reflection and study together, Andrew Walter of Simsbury, a friend of the church, has asked to be baptized on April 26<sup>th</sup>. For Weddings I gained certification in the Prepare/Enrich Program, and conducted the Weddings of Christopher Doyle and Amy Tyler last October in our sanctuary and Naomi Leeper and Michael DiRenzo this past April in Plymouth, MA. This spring I look forward to conducting the Weddings of Laura Schuyler and Andrew Walter (mentioned above) as well as Katherine Black and James Fuller.

In addition to assisting with other services, I officiated at sixteen final services-- Memorial for Dawn Little, Eileen Siegel's daughter, last May in our Chapel; Interment for Amy L. Potter last May in our Memorial Garden; Memorial last May in our sanctuary and Interment at Simsbury Cemetery of Alfred M. Schuyler; Funeral last June in our sanctuary and Burial at Simsbury Cemetery of Rollin Schuster, Sr.; Interment for Emily Eisenhauer last July in our Memorial Garden; Interment last All Saints' Day in our Memorial Garden and Memorial in our sanctuary for Marcia Block; Interment for Sappho D. Petrowski on Epiphany in our Memorial Garden; Funeral last January in our sanctuary and Burial at Simsbury Cemetery of William Crosscup III; Interment this past April in our Memorial Garden and Memorial in our sanctuary for Janice A. Johnson; and the private Funeral this April in our sanctuary and Burial in Simsbury Cemetery for Jackson F. Eno; his public Memorial will be held on May 30<sup>th</sup> in our sanctuary. I will also conduct the Interment for Rev. Dr. Daniel Theron this June at Simsbury Cemetery. Clearly, we have had many special services. In this regard I wish to commend the dedicated ministries of our Wedding Coordinator, Penny Roskin, Memorials lead usher, Fran Gauthier, Memorial Receptions chair, Evie Hulme, and her team, and the Chair of our Memorial Garden Committee, Betty Kierstead, and our office staff and Facilities Manager.

With one-half less minister on staff, I began to realize that there were far too many pastoral needs to meet. I have tried my best to be present for critical care, emergencies as well as to make the regular rounds. But these tasks can never be completely met, even with the good support from the Friends/Visitors Team, which has developed a wide network of visitation to our elderly and housebound members and friends. Thanks to Elaine

Meek and Dane Woodberry for working with me to update our telephone tree for town emergencies and to Elaine and Ruth Meyer for coaching necessary skills. I am grateful that our Prayer Shawl Teams, whose gifts are delivered to those in need and to our Baptizees, and to the Prayer Team, which lifts up our special needs to God and holds names in confidence.

Meetings included regular attendance with the Officers, Executive Council, Boards of Worship, Personnel and Search and when possible most other Boards, Committees and Teams. I commissioned the new Search Team (consisting of ten voting members and two ex-officio members) in a worship service last June, led an all-day retreat for them at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, have worked closely with them until recently when they began to receive names and profiles. Customarily it is at that point that the Transitional Senior Minister drops off of the team until a candidate is selected. The Board of Mission and Outreach, under Dave Wadhams' leadership, has done a consistently strong job with their year-round programs and projects, such as Food Share. It was almost no surprise that they received the Hands on Hartford Award for outstanding volunteer service this past March in Hartford. Thanks to our Grant Writers, Rick Wilde and Dane Woodberry, and Trustees, we have a new roof on our church! I worked with the co-chairs from the Board of Worship, Stephen Cassell and Carol Pollock, as we inducted new members into our congregation last June and November; we will do this again on May 31<sup>st</sup>. This past fall new standards for best practices related to our collections were introduced to Head Usher Bill Clark and lead ushers, which seem to be working out well. I have alternated offering Graces at the monthly Retired Men's Lunches; and have attended the gatherings of the Supper Club, which celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on April 17<sup>th</sup>, including three members who were at the very first meeting—Jim Block, Bill and Leonore Davis. Thanks also to the Trustees and volunteers for doing a late summer yard clean-up, to Kathy Wildman, the Boy Scouts and volunteers for doing a pre-Holy Week indoor clean-up. It is my impression that generally our leaders have the best interests of this congregation in front of them. Sometimes seemingly hard but thoughtful decisions had to be rendered for the good of all.

Denominationally, I attended the CT Conference annual meeting last November in Cheshire, CT, at which Gordon and Nancy Crouch were honored with the Living Waters Award for their outstanding service to found and support the Masooli Clinic in Uganda, Africa; the CT Conference/Farmington Valley Association meetings—the annual one last June in Bristol; one on October 5<sup>th</sup> here at which the Rev. Dian Bailey, who had been under care with First Church, was ordained for ministry in an Associate position at the First Church of Christ in Suffield, CT; and one this past March in Southington for authorized ministers to hear about the most up-to-date Best Practices from Don Clark, the UCC Legal Counsel. I plan to attend the Ecclesiastical Council on May 6<sup>th</sup> here to approve our own Erica Nierendorf for Ordination, pending a call, as well as this year's annual meeting on May 19<sup>th</sup> in Farmington at which Joyce Hynes, a member, has agreed to stand as Treasurer of the FVA for a two-year period. I want to thank Susan Babcock White and Marguerite Boslaugh for serving as our Delegates to the UCC, and for helping the Board of Mission and Outreach to bring to us the program on Mass Incarceration. In addition, once a month I continue to attend a meeting of a Clergy Community of Practice for Transitional Ministers, which I have belonged to for about 15 years.

In the community I attended meetings of the Simsbury Clergy Group and hosted one meeting with First Selectwoman, Lisa Heavner. I participated in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service at the Simsbury United Methodist Church. As early as September the program staff and I met with the First Church Planning Team for November's Simsbury Celebrates! including Susie Sabia, Kris Barnett and Kathy Wildman. I helped edit an Advent-Christmas booklet that listed all of our worship, musical and social events during that period for our congregation and the public. Our volunteers took back one-half of Palmer Hall for First Church publicity and food as well as mounted a "Frozen" extravaganza, which drew hundreds from the community into our church.

Once again we hosted the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration at First Church. Last summer I attended a special meeting Foodshare in Bloomfield with a church member. This past winter I attended a meeting of the Muslim Coalition of CT in West Hartford and this past March a gathering at the Muslim Center in Avon; both with a church member. On April 16th at Eno Hall and for the Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation, I served as one of the dozens of readers of the names of those children, who lost their lives during the Holocaust.

Through my lens as a Transitional Minister, it seems to me that we have moved through many of our developmental tasks as outlined the first year. Some of the following might be considered for the future with my remaining time or with the new settled Senior Minister:

- Return to the Strategic Plan so that leadership might begin the merging of Mission & Outreach with Deacons, and Worship with Music, Finance with Stewardship, and Church School with Youth; encouraging quarterly meetings, if possible, coordinated with All Boards meetings. (Presently there is no Board of Youth or lay leadership represented at the Executive Council.)
- Increased intergenerational weekly publicity and opportunities for interaction, not only in worship but also socially; otherwise, the congregation stands the chance of becoming more segregated. Our communication is siloed by generations; to wit-- a Church School email and website; Confirmation and Youth emails and Facebook; and a supposed all-church email, newsletter, website and Facebook.
- Increased welcome and encouragement of newer members and volunteer support for ministry programs and projects.
- Continued work with active listening and direct communication among all members of the staff and congregation to avoid triangulation, heightened misunderstanding and possible conflict.

In closing let me thank the members and friends of the congregation for their dedicated support, respect and kindness shown to me and my ministry during this interim time, which began on September 10, 2013. Special thanks to our lay leaders-- officers Jim Trimble, Cindy Braunlich, Steve Osborn and Ron Patterson, and our chairs of Boards, Committees and Teams; all who have devoted extraordinary amounts of talent, time and energy to strengthen the church. Thanks to our problem-solving and make-it-happen office and facilities support—Eileen Kaczor, Martha Hillemeir, Cathy Behrens, Lisa Reed and Joe Martinez. Thanks to our program staff—Kevin Weikel, Mark Mercier and Cindy Cole, who ever seek to revitalize and bring to life the numerous programs of the church. Finally, let me add that Stephen, Jonathan and I have appreciated living at 6 West during my tenure. The house has been functional, convenient, and well-cared for by Steve Osborn and Joe Martinez, to whom we owe special thanks.

May God continue to bless, protect and guide the congregation of First Church, being that pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, always in front.

**Rev. Dianne E. Arakawa, April 2015**

## **Report of the Associate Minister for Youth and Young Adults**

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Whoever first said this was right on, photos convey messages and meanings that are impossible to put into words. As you read the report below, I ask you to keep this in mind. With every bullet point there is an accompanying image, images of people laughing and crying, learning and growing, singing and praying, serving and sharing. This report will be filed away, but those images will live on forever. I pray that the memory of those images will make a lasting difference. ~Kevin

### **Worship**

- Prepared and preached 16 sermons. Prepared and delivered children's sermons, gave pastoral prayers, and co-presided over Holy Communion on weeks I did not preach.
- Performed 10 baptisms and assisted with several others. Visited with families in advance of each baptism.
- With the help of Mark Mercier and the Worship Committee, organized six Uncommon Worship Services. In addition, Mark and I restructured the roles of the musicians in the band and revamped the planning process for these services. We are utilizing the gifts of professional Doug Maher and Erica Bontatibus, who are both professional musicians, to help Mark and I in the planning process for these services. We are also grateful to have Annie Petitti and Mark Scully as part of the band.
- Organized and led the 11pm Christmas Eve Service, with readings and testimonies given by 13 laypersons, mostly returning college students. The Uncommon Worship Band worked up the music and offered it beautifully. I was quite pleased with the turnout. This service has a special feel, which seems to be appreciated by the growing number of folks that have been attending.
- Organized and led the 8:30am Easter Service, which was created with children in mind. The sermon consisted of a hands on activity and the music was planned and offered by the Uncommon Worship Band.
- Co-led the following special services: Longest Night, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday.
- Planned and led the Commissioning Service for Nate Bailey before he headed off to Amman, Jordan, as a Global Mission Intern.

### **Pastoral Care**

- Visited with ill parishioners at hospitals, nursing facilities, and private residences. Provided follow up as needed.
- Provided a listening ear and council to parishioners upon request or as I sensed need. Followed up as appropriate. Referred to professional therapists as needed.
- Officiated three weddings, organizing service details and conducting marriage preparation sessions for each. The number of weddings I officiated was down this past year, but the upcoming wedding schedule is quite full!
- Officiated seven memorial services and/or interments, conducting visits and service consultations with each family, preparing a homily for each service, and providing follow-up pastoral care to the bereaved. Co-officiated additional memorial services and/or interments with Dianne as needed.

- Worked with church members during times of financial distress. In some cases, pointed them in the direction of the Deacon's Fund. If a young adult, I worked to apply funds from the Youth/Young Adult Reserve Account to provide assistance.
- Worked with the Deacon's Committee to put on the "Car for Cordae" fundraiser. In total, \$13,755 was raised! Cordae is extremely grateful and is right now in the process of purchasing a car. A special thank you is in order to the Deacon's Committee, and especially Susan Mueller and Craig White, for their dedication to this. This was the first time to my knowledge that the Deacon's Committee was utilized to fundraise for a cause. Given the gifted folks on this committee it made sense to do this and it worked out well. Also, a big thank you is in order to Bob Long who worked with Cordae to come up with a budget for the car, taxes, insurance, and future maintenance, and to Hal Sizer, who has been car shopping with Cordae.
- Visited and prayed with folks who dropped by the church office in need of assistance. In most cases, I gave them a gas or grocery card out of the Minister's Discretionary Fund. In other cases, I helped them apply to the Deacon's Fund for help.

### **Children, Youth, and Young Adults**

- Children
  - In my supervisory role with Cindy, she and I meet to discuss the state of the Church School and future plans for the program. Most recently, we've talked together and with the Christian Education Board about ways to get the word out about the good things Church School is doing. Cindy has also implemented weekly emails directly to parents as a way of increasing communication. Finally, we've discussed the possibility of implementing the "Godly Play" curriculum into the rotation, a curriculum that is based on the Montessori model. Cindy continues to do excellent work as Director of Children's Ministries. Her program is organized and well run, and much care and thought has been put into each and every detail. Thanks to Cindy, Erin Naspo (the Chair of the Christian Education Board), and the Christian Education Board, good energy abounds in the Church School!
- Youth
  - Junior Fellowship
    - After much discussion, Penny Roskin (Junior Fellowship Advisor) and I, along with input from the Christian Education Board Chair at the time Patti Scanlon, decided that we would scale back Junior Fellowship from every other week to once per month. We made this decision because, with the elimination of our third minister, it was realized that I had to remove something from my plate. This schedule has worked out okay for the most part, and actually gave us the idea of combining Junior Fellowship and Pilgrim Fellowship for some events, which is something we did not do very often in the past. I believe this schedule will continue next school year.
    - Junior Fellowship hosted their annual Heifer Living Gift Auction through the month of December. JFer's learned about the mission of Heifer International at a regular JF meeting and then worked the Heifer Table before and after worship leading up to Christmas. They raised more than \$3,000.
    - A huge thank you is in order to JF Advisor Penny, as well as to our JF Teen Leaders, Marissa Hedman, Aach Korton, and Carolyn O'Seep.
  - Confirmation
    - Our Confirmation process consists of both large and small group meetings. I would like to thank our adult and teen small group leaders for their tireless dedication to our Confirmation students. Without them, the Confirmation program would be lacking a lot of life! Thank you Meaghan

Barnett, Haley Callahan, Piper Delo, Ann Ritson, Matt Ritson, Patti Scanlon, Mark Scully and Becky Smith. I would also like to thank Tina Osborn and the team she coordinates to help with our Confirmation Soup Kitchens to South Park Inn.

- After having an abnormally low Confirmation Class last year (19 students), I made extra efforts to recruit Confirmands for the 2014-2015 school year. As usual, I mailed out the information and called parents and students, but I also made it clear that friends were invited to participate. The incoming class was a little larger this year to start with, but I believe the recruitment efforts helped. We have 31 students enrolled in Confirmation this year. Please come out and support them on May 17<sup>th</sup>, Confirmation Sunday.
- This year I moved the Confirmation Retreat to the beginning of the school year in the hopes that it would serve as a way to bring the class together to start the year. I believe this change was successful and I am going to go ahead with a retreat in the beginning of the year for next school year as well.
- Pilgrim Fellowship
  - We began this school year with a new event called, “Kidnap the Freshman!” Early in the morning on the Saturday before PF Youth Group began, we piled in the church bus and went around town “kidnapping” the incoming freshmen. I called their parents a few days ahead, but we actually went into their rooms to wake them up, giving them only two minutes to brush their teeth and get the bus. Once everyone was “kidnapped,” we went out to breakfast. It was a great event and it got PF off to a great start. There are some in the group that maybe never would have given PF a chance if they had not been “kidnapped.”
  - As usual, PF went on a Fall Retreat to Silver Lake Conference Center. The theme was, “Get Out of the Boat.” Through the weekend, we focused on Matthew 14:22-33 and Peter’s adventures in getting out of the boat. We talked about our fears, those things that keep us in the boat, and we discussed how we might gain the courage and trust in God to step out in faith. As part of the weekend, Sarah Ackels (organizer of Feeding Children Everywhere), Gordon and Nancy Crouch (Masooli Clinic), and Gabby Cusano (who has a life story of amazing faith and courage), joined us and shared about what it took for each of them to “Get Out of the Boat!” All of the sharing’s were deeply meaningful and moving. The Saturday evening worship service, in which every youth played a part in the planning and leading, was also quite meaningful.
  - Pilgrim Fellowship prepared and served two meals for Immaculate Conception Shelter in Hartford. Thank you to PF Advisors Steve Novy and Bob Sjogren who put a lot of care and effort into planning these meals.
  - Pilgrim Fellowship Christmas Caroled to forty three church members and friends who in the past year had lost a loved one, battled an illness, or had difficulty leaving their home. I called each person in advance to let them know we were coming.
  - On occasion, a parent will call and ask about Pilgrim Fellowship, wondering if his or her child can attend even though they are not members of the church. My response is, “Of course.” I really do view our youth program as outreach to the community. My practice in these cases is to invite this new teen and a few teens from the group to grab a soda at Peaberry’s. We talk and get comfortable and this seems to warm the teen up quite well for the group, making their first meeting comfortable. Sometimes these families have even ended up being a part of the church, which is very exciting when it happens.
  - A special thank you is in order to our PF Advisors who work so hard. Ryan Beach, Amanda Braunlich, Kelsey Gray, Evan Gross, Steve Novy, Annie Petitti, Bob Sjogren, Annemarie Smith. To our Junior Advisors, Gabby Cusano, Cordae Moffat and Kirk Scully. And to our Youth Reps, Mackenzie Dubois, Maddie Earnhardt, Rily Morkan and Kate Ziko.

- Combined Junior Fellowship and Pilgrim Fellowship. This year, JF and PF combined on many events and initiatives including...
  - The All Church Intergenerational BBQ and Square Dance, which continues to grow in enthusiasm and numbers.
  - The Advent Spaghetti Dinner. This was a first, and it went quite well. Thank you to Penny Roskin and Suzy Sabia for making it happen!
  - The Masooli Clinic Fundraiser – JF and PF set a goal of raising \$7,500 to help increase the size of the Faith Mulira Healthcare Center so that they could do more in the area of maternal care. Using the website Razoo.com, we worked to sign up as many youth as we could with a fundraising page, encouraging them to send their individual fundraising pages to their families and friends. It took a lot of encouragement and hard work on behalf of our youth advisor teams, but we were thrilled to surpass our goal by quite a bit. In total, we raised \$12,788! The youth celebrated with a “Decades Dance” (they showed up in the style of their favorite decade) and overnight lock-in at the church. While I am proud of our group, and while they had fun in the process, the best part is that more healthcare will soon be available to the women and children of Masooli, Uganda!
  - The Easter Pancake Breakfast. Thank you to Steve Novy and Bob Sjogren for making the Easter Pancake Breakfast a success. We served 200 people, which is more than years past!
- Young Adults
  - 20 and 30 Something’s Group - Miranda Moeller (Youth and CE Director at West Avon Congregational Church), and I worked together to craft a seven week session for those in their 20’s and 30’s. The goal was to provide an opportunity for those in their 20’s and 30’s, whether single, married, with or without kids, to come together with others in a similar place in life around simple food and conversation. We alternated meeting places between First Church, Simsbury, and West Avon Congregational Church. While those who attended found these gatherings to be enjoyable and meaningful, the turnout left a lot to be desired.
- Youth and Young Adult Mission Pilgrimage
  - Last June, 52, young adults and adult leaders participated in a service-learning trip to Washington, DC. The trip was through YSOP (Youth Service Opportunities Project). The group enjoyed spending time together and grew close. Most importantly, the group gained knowledge, understanding and compassion for the homeless as they served social service agencies throughout the city. In the evening, I used the Poverty USA Curriculum, a resource published by the Catholic Church, to lead discussion on poverty and homelessness from a faith perspective. We also visited the Holocaust Museum during our time in DC, which was an extremely difficult and emotional experience, but very important. After touring the museum, we engaged in an important and meaningful conversation about what we had just experienced. This coming summer we will be traveling to Johnson City, TN, where we will be working with ASP (Appalachia Service Project) to repair homes. At the moment we have 63 people signed up for the trip.
  - Board of Mission and Outreach Chair Dave Wadhams and I worked together on a new financial plan for those attending mission pilgrimages. In the past, M & O supported these trips by giving an amount that was distributed evenly as a way to offset the total cost for each participant. We are trying a different approach this year. This year we are asking participants for the full amount and only supplementing those individuals that request financial support. The hope is that this new method will prevent funds from going to those who really don’t need them, and allowing more for those who really do. It is also possible that this might result in the Mission and Outreach Board having more funds to give elsewhere in 2015.

- Other Youth/Young Adults
  - Kelley and I hosted a Youth Leader Christmas Party at our home for 15 lay volunteers who give so much to the youth program. We do this each year as a way to say thank you for all they do, and we enjoy it very much.

## **Continuing Education**

- As part of my participation in the UCC's Next Generation Leadership Initiative, I attended a leadership in ministry conference in Dayton, Ohio. During the conference I heard lectures and participated in workshops by Adam Hamilton, Mike Slaughter, Diana Butler Bass, and Rachel Held Events. Three of the best lectures and workshops I experienced were as follows...
  - Self-Leadership – From presidents to priests, we see what happens when people fail in self-leadership. Five keys for pastoral leaders were discussed. 1) Devotion to God. 2) Readiness for Lifelong Learning. 3) Investing in Key Relationships. 4) Visioning for the Future. 5) Taking Care of Oneself through Eating Right and Exercise.
  - Church Websites - It was pointed out that the front door of today's church is not the actual front door, but the church website. Nine out of ten people will check the church website before they come and visit, even if they come and visit with a friend. Investing in the church website and making sure it is updated is crucial. Many details were discussed, but the emphasis of the importance of the church website was my main takeaway.
  - Membership Commitments - In this age when people are so busy and we are afraid to ask them to do too much, the question was asked in this workshop if we are actually expecting too little. The pastor who led this requires each member to be part of a small group and since he implemented this policy, the church has grown in spirit and membership by leaps and bounds. This was, and continues to be, worthy of reflection.
- Also as part of my involvement with the UCC's Next Generation Leadership Initiative, I attended a weeklong course with Dr. Jack Stephenson studying Natural Church Development. We focused on the following...
  - The "I," "We," "They," "All" process. We start by focusing on ourselves before we can focus on others...it works the same for local churches.
  - The eight characteristics of Natural Church Development (Empowering Leadership, Gift Oriented Ministry, Passionate Spirituality, Functional Structures, Inspiring Worship Services, Holistic Small Groups, Needs-Oriented Evangelism, Loving Relationships).
  - The six growth forces of the Natural Church Development process (Interdependence, Multiplication, Energy, Transformation, Sustainability, Symbiosis, Fruitfulness).
  - The five steps of the change process (Prepare, Diagnose, Plan, Implement, Evaluate).
- It is important that I lift up the gift that the Next Generation Leadership Initiative continues to be to me as a pastor and to First Church as a congregation. NGLI is fully funded by the UCC Pension Boards (travel, accommodations, meals, courses and resources), and the program has given me valuable tools for ministry. I have just completed year four of the program. While the content of the first four years has been what they call core curriculum and a requirement for everyone, the final six years will be more specific to my personal strength and growth areas. I am currently coming up with a plan for years five and six, which will be due to the leaders of the program in the fall.
- Participated in a Conflict Resolution Workshop put on by The Rev. Stephen Savidis.
- Attended the "It Takes A Sacred Village" event at Canton Center Church, a conversation about how to better include special needs people in our churches.

## **Wider Church Involvement**

- I served another term as a member of the Farmington Valley Association's Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry holds the authority for ministerial standing and authorization within the Farmington Valley Association. We nurture members in discernment as they consider their call to ministry and we oversee the standing of all Licensed, Commissioned, and Ordained Ministers within the Farmington Valley Association. We also help coordinate all Ordination and Installation services. The committee is made up of four ministerial members and four lay members from churches in the Farmington Valley Association. We meet once per month.
- Served as a small group facilitator at the Connecticut Conference Annual Meeting. I facilitated a discussion on Interdependence. I would also like to lift up Susan Babcock White and Marguerite Boslaugh for representing First Church as delegates at this meeting, as well as Margo Kilbon, who attended in her role as spokesperson for Back Bay mission.

## **Community Involvement**

- ABC House
  - I joined the boys at the ABC House for dinner one night to talk about PF Youth Group and the opportunities therein. The visit paid off as one of the boys joined last summer's mission trip and has become heavily involved in PF this past year. Thank you to Susan and Hal Sizer who worked to set this up. I have also developed a nice relationship with the directors of the ABC House, and have served as a resource to them and have on occasion attended their board meetings.
- Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts
  - I was honored to give the Invocation at the Cub Scout Pack 276 Blue and Gold Dinner in Palmer Hall. I worked with leaders Ken Warner and Dan Carr to organize "Scout Sunday," which included a blessing of the relationship between First Church and the Scouts. I met with Ken and Dan to brainstorm ideas around the ways in which First Church and the Scouts might continue to interact. Elaine Meek, member of our Open and Affirming Implementation Team, joined our meeting and discussed First Church's Open and Affirming policy and how it can continue to be worked into the Scouting programs.
- I continue to serve as a "Friend" to the Masooli Clinic Board, attending meetings as I am able, and supporting the efforts of the clinic in any way I can.
- I transported Veterans in the Church Bus to the start of the Memorial Day Parade. A special thank you is in order to Hap Poole and Bob and Fran Gauthier for their enthusiasm around this annual effort.
- Dianne and I rotated in offering the prayer at the monthly retired men's luncheon.

## **Other**

- Last year First Church hosted a CPR and First Aid course. Many of our Church School Teachers, Youth Advisors, and Ushers attended and received certification. Because we believe this to be of utmost importance, we are putting plans in place to host a CPR and First Aid course on an annual basis. Church member Jeff Small and Youth Advisor Ryan Beach are helping with this effort.
- Attended the Covenant to Care Open House at their new offices and facility in Hartford.
- Together with Mark Scully and Haley Callahan, we organized a contingency from First Church to attend the People's Climate March in New York City. 25 First Church members and friends participated (along with 410,000 people from around the world). I think it is important, at some point in the near future, to form an environmental committee of sorts at First Church. We need to discuss the ways in which our church can become more environmentally friendly and then work to implement the ideas. I would

also see this group advocating for environmental justice issues. A committee such as this was in place a few years ago when the censored lights and the LED exit signs were installed. If anyone has this as a passion, let's talk.

- Mark Mercier, Jane Costello, Kathy Wildman, Kris Barnett and I worked to host the band, "Lost And Found" on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. It was a huge undertaking, but well worth it. We held an "Eat 'n Jam" in Palmer Hall before the concert with some First Church musicians and food, including the band, "Bro-Kin," made up of First Church youth. We had 270 people attend the concert. We were satisfied with the turnout, though we thought we would have more.
- As a church, we can be proud of the following members for serving the wider church.
  - Nathaniel Bailey, who is serving as a Global Ministries Intern. He is currently working with the Orthodox Initiative in Amman, Jordan, assisting Syrian Refugees.
  - Marguerite Boslough, who serves on the Board of Directors for the United Church of Christ Pension Boards.
  - Susan Babcock White and Marguerite Boslough who serve as delegates to the CT Conference of the United Church of Christ.
  - Margo Kilbon who continues to serve as a representative and spokesperson for Back Bay Mission.
  - Diann Bailey, who received a call as Associate Minister at First Church in Suffield.
  - Erica Nierendorf, who as we know, has been serving as a chaplain at Hartford Hospital and will have her Ecclesiastical Council here on May 6.
- Lastly, but most importantly, I offer heartfelt gratitude to the following folks:
  - My wife Kelley for her full support and deep understanding of the importance of ministry, and to our two children, Sadie and Asher, for the ways in which they give Kelley and I so much joy.
  - Dianne, Mark and Cindy for their partnership in ministry and for the ways in which I learn from them each day.
  - The office staff – Eileen, Cathie, Martha, Lisa, and Joe - for everything they do to support the ministry of First Church. They are a joy to work with.
  - Erin Naspo, as the Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education.
  - Jim Trimble, Cindy Braunlich, Ron Patterson and Steve Osborn, and the entire Executive Committee, for their tireless work and dedication to First Church.
  - Our board and committee members and chairpersons, for their hard work and dedication.
  - Our Sr. Minister Search Committee, for their dedication and hard work.
  - My Pastoral Relations Committee – Chuck Howard, Carolyn Keily, and Lauren McCombs – for their dedication to First Church and my well-being. This committee will see turnover this year, and I appreciate the time given by these folks.
  - To every friend and member of First Church, thank you for blessing me with the opportunity to serve as one of your ministers. I find our ministry together to be meaningful, fun, challenging, and life-giving - all the things it should be.

Peace to you, Kevin

## **Report of the President and Vice President**

This has been a busy year for us at First Church. Due to financial constraints, we said good-bye to Erica Nierendorf as our acting associate minister. Our thanks go to Dianne and Kevin for absorbing all the work previously done by Erica and keeping our ministries so vibrant. We have also added several new faces to the office staff, a warm welcome to Martha and Lisa, who along with Eileen and Cathie make our jobs as officers and our life here as parishioners run smoothly.

The search for a new senior minister was, of course, high on everyone's mind over the past year. The first task was to identify a Search Team. Jim and Cindy, along with Bruce Powell, interviewed every person who expressed an interest and we formed a slate of members that well represents the diversity of our church family. The Search Team has worked very hard soliciting feedback from the entire congregation, and developing our church profile. They have recently begun receiving profiles from interested candidates. A report from the Search Team is included in this package.

In this transition year, First Church has remained vibrant, active and full of life. On Rally Day over 30 more individuals volunteered their time and talent to serving our church and community in various ways, such as joining a choir, or volunteering on a committee or Board. Diann Bailey was ordained into the Christian Ministry at First Church in October, an important event not only for Diann but also for all of us at First Church who know her so well. Eleven year-old Sarah Ackels organized a Feeding Children Everywhere event at First Church. Over 160 volunteers responded to Sarah's call, and together they assembled over 17,000 meals. What an inspiration! Our roof work is virtually complete, with half of the funding coming through an historic grant secured by our relatively new grants team. Our small groups are taking off, as many of our members are finding special meaning and connections in these forums. We encourage you to explore these opportunities to enhance your faith experiences.

We have named only a few examples of our varied and active ministries. As you read through this package, you will see reports from the various Church leadership about what is going on with them and what exciting things they have going in this past year and coming up in the future. If you are not already on a Board or Committee now is a great time to step up and be an even more active and engaged member as we soon welcome a new senior minister.

Our church is a bit smaller than it was a few years ago, as confirmed by a review of our membership completed this year, and as reflected in our pledge income. Yet, we remain vibrant and focused on God's work, with a very strong commitment to mission and outreach, terrific programs for members and friends of all ages, wonderful choirs, and active Boards and committees. The upcoming church year will be exciting as we search for a new settled Senior Minister as well as work to revitalize our worship service, meet new ministry needs and continue to make a difference in so many lives in our church, our community, and the wider world.

Jim Trimble

Cindy Braunlich

## **Report of the Treasurer**

As Treasurer of First Church, I want to sincerely thank all our 283 members who have, to date, faithfully answered our Stewardship call to support our church's robust programs, mission and outreach projects, superb music choirs, Christian education programs, worship services and many other invaluable efforts we all make to support our members and the larger community. I also want to thank our ministers and office staff for their extra effort during the last year under difficult transitional circumstances.

Our Stewardship campaign has so far raised \$684,000 in pledges from the 283 members who have pledged so far. This compares with 368 pledges in 2012 and 461 pledges in 2008. So as you can see, we face challenges ahead as our member rolls get smaller while wanting to increase our mission and outreach goals and support our fixed costs for our beautiful and historic church grounds.

As we look forward in 2015, we are on fairly firm financial ground. Our budget of \$867,000 will allow us to fully fund our planned programs and is about 97% of our 2011 budget when we were a bigger church with more staff. Our expenses are only 1.13% higher than in 2013. We have evolved as a congregation to our financial realities while committing to continue to support God's workings through First Church. We continue to control expenses despite increased cost pressures and even carried over a slight budget surplus from 2014 into this year. Of course we would love to have more pledge income to expand our programs and outreach. Our endowments continue to do well under Vanguard Funds management and to help support our operating income and capital projects in the absence of a capital campaign and reserve fund. We have about \$2.7M balance in endowments and the Endowment Development Committee of First Church has been successful in obtaining some very generous future donations. We encourage your continued consideration of future gifts and contributions and thank all of those members who have executed a form of "planned giving".

Our Board has instituted several new and improved financial controls during 2014-2015 and will continue to review required steps to assure proper safeguards and measures related to our finances and cash management as well as improved reporting monthly on endowment results. These reports are in the office.

We are near completion on our new church roof. This project will cost about \$87,000 half of which we will be reimbursed through a Historic Grant approved by the state. We will need to repay the endowments for borrowing the other half over the next 10 years. This major capital project along with the upgrading of 6 West Street last year will provide First Church with much needed security and increased value for many years to come. Other grants are being considered for other projects as well. My thanks to our Grant Committee and Trustees for all their hard work on these projects.

Our Board of Finance currently has only 4 members. A full Board would be 8. If you have some financial/accounting background and want to find out what is going on at our church, we would welcome your contribution on the Board. We have fun along the way also!

Ron Patterson, Treasurer

## Board of Mission and Outreach

Before any reporting for the last year your Board of Mission and Outreach (BMO) wants to celebrate the many mission activities of First Church. We also thank the many FC volunteers who have improved the lives of others through their mission and outreach work.

Certainly one of last year's highlights was the addition of Rick Dupree and Debi Ackels to our board. We continue to welcome others to join us and experience the joys and rewards of hands on mission projects.

We continued our film series emphasizing current day social and justice issues. Thanks to our Panel of Delegates we co-sponsored a film on mass incarceration for non-violent crimes focusing on one of the resolutions recently adopted by the UCC Annual Conference. Over 50 people attended and participated in a lively discussion led by The Rev Marilyn Kendrix. More recently we co-sponsored a film on transgender issues with our ONA group.

Throughout the year we donated \$41,000 to 20 agencies serving others locally, nationally and globally.

Highlighted below are many of the mission activities we supported and in some cases managed directly.

- Once again FC volunteers planted, weeded and harvested organic vegetables at the Community Farm for clients of Gifts of Love
- Over \$1,000 was raised for The Walk Against Hunger.
- FC volunteers distribute fresh produce and other food from the Food Share truck every other Monday. On a recent Monday over 100 families were served.
- We provided some much needed furniture to an elderly widow in North Hartford whose house was rehabbed by FC volunteers last year.
- Beyond great food, the Shrimp Boil Evening provided \$740 to the UCC Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS.
- A November Food Drive collected many bags of groceries for the Simsbury Social services Food Pantry.
- One hundred and fifteen White Gifts were given by FC members to the clients of Covenant to Care social workers.
- Once again FC sponsored and volunteered at Hands On Hartford Toy Shoppe and Holiday Party. Twenty seven FC volunteers also prepared and served a New Year's Day meal to 189 Hartford neighbors. FC just received a Hands On Hartford Volunteer Appreciation Award for serving so many of their clients.

The BMO has decided to establish an annual award of \$1,500 called the "Making A Difference Award" to be given to a member of Kevin's youth groups. This is a work in progress and we will work with Kevin on any necessary specifics.

Finally we welcome ideas on new mission projects from FC members...projects about which they are passionate. Once a new activity is approved we may be able to provide financial support.

Dave Wadhams	Dave McElligott	Rick Dupree	Jane Hadley	Fran Gauthier
Maddie Earnhardt	Mary Poppe	Laurie Dupree	David Woods	Debi Ackels

## **Board of Music Ministries**

“We create music that enables people to experience God, life, and our love for each other. Our music is vibrant and alive; it inspires those who hear it and those who create it to rejoice in its power to move the spirit and appreciate the mystery and joy of the Divine.”

Music has been an integral part of our worship and outreach at First Church for as long as any can remember. Nowadays, in addition to traditional hymns and beautiful classical anthems on a Sunday morning, the congregation here is not surprised to hear the driving beat of rock bands, the wail of a jazz saxophone, Irish fiddling, New Orleans Dixieland, African chant and infectious gospel AMENS! echoing from the windows of our historic building. In our music and our worship we continue to be ALIVE!

This has been a very busy and productive year. We have contributed to many moving worship services, held several stimulating and excellent concerts, learned new things, met new people, gone new places, and are getting new equipment.

An exciting feature to the music program began last year with the addition of Hartt students as “support singers” to our Chancel Choir. This is the second year for Baritone Alex Hunt, and soprano Ruby Nightingale has been with us for a few weeks beginning in Lent. These energetic and exceptionally talented young singers continue to inspire our long time members to achieve new musical heights singing together. They are personally wonderful people and have brought a lot of joy to our midst. Musically they are both excellent singers, and they have not only done several beautiful solos here; they have also drawn our choir members to Hartt College to enjoy some productions there in which they have appeared. They have been a tremendous complement to the music here.

The concert season kicked off with the Trinity College Accidentals, which is an a capella men’s student choir. They performed in Palmer Hall in a cabaret style setting. The Hockanum Valley Ringers made a second appearance at First Church to present a Christmastime handbell concert. Our various choirs and several soloists presented a very successful “mini concert” before the 10:00 a.m. in December, not only in celebration of Christmas, but also to have an accessible program with all our soloists and ensembles. The Farmington Valley Chorale once again presented a concert in the sanctuary that sold out two dates – this year singing Handel’s “Messiah.” The internationally renowned group “Anonymous 4” returned to our sanctuary, this time to present a premier concert of Civil War songs from the original manuscripts that they recorded shortly thereafter. This was the first that anyone has heard this incredible program. Violin virtuoso and Simsbury High School graduate Mina Um presented a spectacular concert in the sanctuary in preparation for her college requirements at Julliard School of Music. Finally, the Christian rock group “Lost and Found” presented a concert to a paid audience of approximately 270 patrons. The cost of these concerts are covered in part by ticket sales and in part by a Special Concert Fund which is outside the regular music budget and administered by the Music Ministry.

We continue the ongoing project of improvements to the sanctuary sound system, having received bids from several companies to design a system to fit our needs and acoustical space. We have begun this process by

purchasing a new mixing console. Completion of this project, however, will depend on the availability of funds which at present are not in the annual church budget.

Many great instrumentalists helped us this year, for Sunday worship and more. We thank those in our Chancel Orchestra on Christmas Eve, and our Easter Sunday Cornerstone Brass and Percussion, as well as all who contributed to our summer worship services.

Our dedicated choirs continue to be the Sunday morning support for worship and means by which First Church can reach out into the community. These choirs are open to everyone and are always looking for new members.

The Chancel Choir has done an intrepid job providing much of the beautifully done music for Sunday worship, and the members also participated in the Community Thanksgiving service along with other area choirs. The Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols service was, in many opinions, musically one of the best and most moving of these services in recent memory, and for Easter week worship the choir learned and shared a tremendous amount of challenging music, illuminating the triumph of Christ's Palm Sunday procession, the stirring anguish of Maundy Thursday, and the shining joy that is Easter Sunday.

Women's Praise Choir provided regular contributions to Sunday worship services, and presented two great programs of music during the Christmas season, one to the general public at Simsbury Celebrates, and one to the Supper Club for their annual Christmas event. Their music is always lively and meaningful. In singing, the group conveys the vitality and spiritual energy of each of its members.

A Men's Choir (too new to have been anointed a moniker) is taking shape rather nicely. This group of 8-10 men who already sing in the Chancel Choir prepare and present 4-part classical and gospel music.

The Choral Bells continued to ring beautifully and presented inspiring Sunday anthems several times this year. Longtime leader Jeannie Boehner moved, so Mark Mercier took over as director. With several new bell ringers and a new director, the Choral Bells group has stepped up to plate and continued to provide quality music for worship services approximately once every six weeks.

The Junior Choir, under the leadership of Lori Lemoine, continues to sing regular and spirited Sunday morning presentations. We have increased our numbers by holding rehearsals on Sunday mornings after the 10:00 a.m. service. They have had a great time, have learned much, and are looking forward to their annual end of the year pizza party.

Last and youngest, but certainly not least, the Cherub Choir has energetically presented preludes on several occasions, and, under the directorship of Sue Osborn and with help from others, they continue to be exposed to the Sunday School Songs that are such a large part of everyone's early church life.

The Uncommon Worship Service was held this year on several Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. and this year newly on Easter at 8:30 a.m. and on Christmas Eve. Instrumentation was provided by guitarist Doug Maher, our newest member Erica Bontatibus on vocals along with our spirited Annie Petitti, Mark Mercier on

keyboards, Mark Scully on drums, and with some help from guitarist Tom Polizzi, bassist Pete Blake, and drummer Tommy Durst.

The 8:30 a.m. worship services have been fortunate to be supported by some talented musicians. Mark Mercier and Jim Martocchio provide sensitive and inspirational music for those who attend this intimate service, utilizing styles such as jazz, gospel, popular, and classical music. Also, Craig White has shared his abilities with some Americana-style and gospel vocal pieces.

We thank all who have tirelessly contributed to the music program here at First Church – the many talented instrumentalists and singers; those like Margo Kilbon and Cynthia Yoczik who work behind the scenes to organize our music library; any who impart their gifts to those who want to learn from them; and all who listen and appreciate. Together, all have made music great here at First Church.

The Board of Music Ministries thanks Corliss Marolda and Karen Palotti for their service beyond the normal three year term of office. They will be stepping down this year, making way for three new members, subject of course to congregational vote on April 26, 2015.

Respectfully submitted-

Bruce Powell - Chairman, Board of Music Ministries

Mark Mercier – Director of Music Ministries

Members: Tammy Warner, Corliss Marolda, Karen Palotti, Phil Wilde, Tony Hulme

### **Committee of Deacons**

The Committee of Deacons is responsible for disbursing the investment income produced by two funds, the Deacons Fund and the Hixon-Beals Fund to needy Simsbury residents as well as organizations that provide services to residents of the Farmington Valley.

The Deacons Fund was established by bequests from the wills of Antoinette Eno, George B. McLean and Anson G. Phelps. The Hixon-Beals Fund was established by former First Church members Dorothy and Allen Hixon in honor of their parents.

The Deacons also raised money this year at First Church to help one of its youth members in the purchase of a vehicle to give him transportation to school and work.

Total disbursements for this year were \$7180.65. They included donations to the Veterans Memorial, The Martin Luther King Memorial, Jack Bannan's Turkey Trot, Simsbury Celebrates, Meals on Wheels, a Scholarship to a graduating Simsbury High School senior as well as many donations to individuals in need of assistance.

Faithfully Submitted by: Susan Mueller (chair)

Committee Members: Susan Butler, Eleanor Benson, Bradford Jones, and Craig White

## **Personnel Committee**

For 2014-2015 the Personnel Board had four members: Melinda Westbrook; Cindy Braunlich, Vice-President; Karen Keene and Cathy Gray, Co-Chairwomen. The Board had a busy year and the highlights include:

There was turnover in the office staff this past year and we used this opportunity to consider the changing management, administrative, program support and ministry needs of First Church.

Personnel along with an interview team and our ministers hired Lisa Reed as the new Financial Assistant, Eileen Kaczor as the new Office Administrator, and Martha Hillemeir as the new office assistant during the fall of 2015.

As part of the hiring process, job descriptions for the office staff were reviewed and updated.

During the transition, while new staff was brought on board, Eileen Kaczor and Cathy Behrens did a great job maintaining the office and supporting the congregation, program staff and ministers.

Job descriptions for the Senior and Associate Minister positions have been reviewed and updated, and are in the process of being finalized. Updated job descriptions better reflect the current organization and will support efforts to hire a new Senior Minister

Board members provided guidance to the Church Administrator and Senior Interim Minister on various personnel issues.

Personnel worked with Finance to develop the salary and benefits budget for 2015.

Updates and changes were made to the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual as needed.

The 2015-16 Board has fewer members than required and we are appealing to the congregation for additional members with Human Resources experience to consider joining us.

Karen Keene

Cathy Gray

Board of Personnel Co-Chairmen

## **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for managing and maintaining all real and personal property of the church including renting church facilities, leasing personal property, supervision of custodial staff, and administering the building and grounds section of the operation budget. We currently have four members including Ken Warner, Richard Derr and Don Skinner as well as myself.

The biggest undertaking the Trustees got involved with this year involved the roof replacement through a historical grant from the State of Connecticut, working in conjunction with the Grant Committee consisting of Rick Wilde and Dane Woodbury. I am happy to report that the roof is 98% complete and there are a few punch list items that hopefully are going to be completed by the time this report is read by you. Not only does the new roof look fabulous but we have improved the condition of the church by adding lifetime shingles and will be receiving a 20 year full warranty on any leaks or defects.

In conjunction with the new roof installation, the church's architect Dale Cutler advised new construction of an exit/entrance overhang on the rear sanctuary. This was designed by Dale as a post and beam construction and we were successful in having that addition completed in a timely manner with the roof installation and the finished product came out excellent. This exit/entrance roof extension and overhang has eliminated a serious ice accumulation and hazard area for that exit.

Another significant project that was undertaken by the Trustees in conjunction with Boy Scout Troop 76 and Cameron Ballard, was Cameron's Eagle Scout project involving total demolition of the old dumpster fencing and construction of a new concrete pad with installation of decorative cedar siding enclosure on an aluminum frame. The end product speaks for itself and was completed at a significant savings to the church. Much thanks goes out to Cameron Ballard for his expertise and commitment to the project.

Going later this year, Ken Warner, in conjunction with Boy Scout Troop 76, will be working on a painting merit badge in which he is going to have interested scouts learn how to professionally paint the dumpster facility and our new roof overhang on the rear of the sanctuary. Thanks in advance to Ken for taking on this project and again saving the church substantial funds in the process.

I am happy to report that Boy Scout Troop 174 has partnered with our church for their Christmas tree and wreath selling season. The Troop has agreed to pay us a 10% tithe of their net profits for leasing the outside area in front of Boy Scout Hall. Thanks to their efforts, they have donated \$767.32 to the church as a result of last December's sales.

Trustees were only able to get two other capital improvements funded for 2015. The first of which includes exterior trim painting which is expected to be completed during the summer months and will highlight the brand new roof and should make the church look great. The second funded improvement is replacement of the exterior door and side lights to the outside circular garden adjacent from the office. That project is also expected to be completed by Rally Day.

Our Board has a significant wish list of unfunded projects which we would like to take up immediately if we were given the resources to do so. The wish list includes a notifier system which would tie in all of our smoke, carbon monoxide and fire alarm detectors to a central system fixing a very antiquated system and making it more efficient and cost effective when there is a monitored default where emergency personnel needs to be called in. We also would like to do significant foundation plantings all along the sanctuary from the West Street entrance to around the front of the church. Another area we would like to get working on right away is the outside entrance to Palmer Hall from the back of the church. The entryway has significant drainage problems which need to be corrected and we would like to demolish the entire concrete padding and install pavers with the correct pitch and drainage piping to a catch basin to alleviate the problem going forward. There also are several dead trees on the property which need to be taken down that have been put on hold for quite a while.

Our Board is looking into new historical grant opportunities to be applied for potentially in October of 2015. We are attempting to get preliminary quotes to replace the notifier system referred to above and also to get a complete proposal to totally redo our entire HVAC systems which are very outdated. Once those estimates have been given, we as a Board will turn them over to the Grant Committee who will then move forward to solicit EC support and ultimate congregation vote as was the process with the roof grant.

If anyone knows someone with structural engineering background please contact the church office.

The Board would like to give specific thanks to Steve Osborn who has been volunteering a significant amount of time being the handy man on issues that have arisen over time at the Sexton House. Thank you, Steve, for your hard work.

Lastly, although we are four strong on our board, we are always seeking new members and volunteers to push our agendas forward. If you have an interest, please contact anybody on Trustees and we would love to sit down and talk to you about your involvement.

Peace be with you.

John D. Ritson  
Chairman

**Board of Worship** (formerly known as Board of Elders)

(Report figures represent May 4, 2014 to April 12, 2015)

The Board of Elders, with the ordained ministers, helps lead the spiritual life of the Church, including public worship, and the sacraments of baptism and communion. The Board of Elders is also responsible for Fellowship Hour, Flowers, Usher Scheduling, Membership classes and Special Services (including Publicity).

The Board did a great job of recruiting new members and the Board of Worship was a full 12 members for the 2014-2015 church year. Two members will be leaving in June, including the Chair. Although not board members, Darcy Mauke, Andee Schaedel, and Penni Roskin are providing a major service to the Board of Worship and the church by covering the responsibilities of special service publicity, fellowship hour scheduling, and 8:30 communion, respectively.

Other responsibilities performed by the board:

Assisted in planning and execution of (9) Special Services including: Longest Night Service, 3 Christmas Eve Services, Ash Wednesday Service, Maundy Thursday Service, Good Friday Service and 2 services on Easter Sunday.

Eleven (11) new members were introduced to, and joined our church.

Sixteen (16) baptisms were held; 14 youth and 2 adults.

Scheduled five (5) usher teams to assist our worship services. This is down from 9 teams. The board has actively tried to recruit members to the usher team.

Ordered and placed three hundred (300) lilies, tulips, daffodils, geraniums and poinsettias in the Sanctuary, then the Friends of First Church delivered to shut ins. The board has agreed to use fewer lilies and more tulips and daffodils for the Easter services. The lilies are quite fragrant and pose allergy issues for many.

Arranged for thirty-eight (38) flower arrangements at Sunday morning services, plus Advent Wreath and Thanksgiving arrangement, baptism flowers, John and Mary flowers, and new member bouquets and corsages.

Scheduled Board and Committees, families or individuals to provide food and drink for Fellowship Hour for forty-one (41) Sundays.

About 8,660 individuals attended at least one of 85 services conducted at First Church during this period. This is over 2,000 less than last year! Approximately, 2,342 received Holy Communion served by current and former elders.

The Board and the Church were delighted to host Diane Bailey's ordination on October 5, 2014 and we will be hosting the Ecclesiastical Council for Erica Nierendorf on May 6, 2015.

The Board of Elders participated in the Rally Day festivities in September 2014 and the Volunteer Fair in February 2015. Rally Day proved to be a great venue to recruit members and volunteers. Unfortunately it had snowed the morning of the February volunteer fair so church attendance was low, providing only a few new volunteers into participating in Board of Worship activities.

Diane Jones, Chair

Stephen Cassell

Bill Lawry

Sarah Gaines

Carol Pollack

Ashley Schwitter

Janet Marcum

Katherine Cain

Frank Gould

Bill Clark

Piper Delo (PF)

Cindy Braunlich, ex-officio

## **Memorial Garden Fund**

The Memorial Garden Committee would like to thank Betty Keistead for her years of dedicated service to the Memorial Garden Fund. Betty has taken on other responsibilities and feels the time has come to pass the baton onto others. Fortunately for us, Betty has volunteered to stay on as a member. Thank you Betty for a job well done.

Over the 2014-2015 fiscal year there has been five internments to the Memorial Garden, and one presently pending. With the addition of generous contributions and fees to the Garden, the monies to maintain it have left a small surplus. With this surplus and the approval of our budget request by the Finance Board, the committee can make some of the needed physical as well as internal improvements. This will also eliminate the need to withdraw from the Endowment Fund, or ask for help from the Board of Trustees.

Once again, as in the past, we have hired Designs of Mann to maintain The Garden. Designs of Mann designs gardens and is a professional accredited nursery. Designs of Mann has suggested improvements over the past years which we now feel we can fulfill.

The committee participated in the recruiting fair held by boards and committees earlier this year. Due to inclement weather and light turnout, volunteers were very scarce, resulting in no new members. The Memorial Garden Board has a full complement, but with the possibility of resignations, the committee feels it is important to continue recruitment of new members. We have a very active committee and each individual is doing a great job with their respective responsibility.

We revised our brochure again this year placing emphasis on those wishing to make donations to the Memorial Garden Fund should not get confused with the Memorial Fund, which is a completely different fund.

We wish to thank Rev. Arakawa for her help and support.

Respectfully submitted,

Wally Musick, Chairman

Committee members are: Leili Ora, Donna Hopkins, J. John, Anita McCoy, Shirley Meyer, Carla Wilde, Diana Woodberry and Peg Psarakis

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES 2014-15 ANNUAL REPORT



This year the students had an opportunity to learn about growing their hearts for God! This theme was carried throughout the church school lessons and programs this year, printed on t-shirts, displayed on bulletin boards, and reinforced on the children's ministry website ([www.firstchurchsimsbury.com](http://www.firstchurchsimsbury.com)). The various programs and projects that the students participated in this year are described below:

### Church School:

**Enrollment in church school:** There are one hundred and twenty-two students on the attendance list. We have instituted a policy of requiring registrations of students every year in order to purge the roles of inactive students instead of automatically rolling student into the next year. The policy enables us to more successfully plan for the year. The average attendance in the fall (Sept-Dec) was 56, with a high of 80 children for the rehearsal of the Children's Christmas Service and a low of 40 children on Columbus weekend. The average attendance to date this spring (Jan- today) is 45 students, which is terrific since many of the snow storms landed on a Sunday this session.

**Nursery:** In the Nursery we have two paid teachers, Tara LaFond and Kate Bruno, who provide our youngest children with professional care and Christian Education for the 8:30 (on call) and 10:00 services. In addition, we have one adult volunteer, Kim Tawney, on call to assist in the nursery each week if the attendance required it. We maintain a ratio of 1 adult to every 3 children in the nursery. The Nursery program typically consists of 1) Bible story time, 2) snack & prayer time together at the table; 3) a one-on-one craft activity to take home, and 4) free play time. However, since the average age of the children in the nursery this year has been under one year old, the snack and craft was eliminated. There are currently 13 children registered in the class. The average attendance is 4 kids on any given Sunday with a high of 8 kids and a low of 1. We seek to provide a safe, Christian atmosphere for the smallest members of our church. We hope that our loving care of the children will enable their parents to relax and enjoy the service.

**Pre-K:** Our Pre-K (3 & 4 year olds) students begin Sunday morning in church and then parents escort their students to class after the children's message. The students: 1) hear stories to help them relate the faith concept to their everyday life, 2) play games to help learn the concept each week, 3) participate in music and movement, and 4) create themed crafts. The curriculum teaches faith basics about our church; Family of God, Thanking God, God is Love, Love One Another, Teach Us To Pray; and incorporating our love of God and one another into our everyday lives. There are 17 children registered in the class. The average attendance is 7 students with a high of 13 and a low of 4 students. We have 3 dedicated Pre-School teachers that have been with the class all year: Suzanne Osborne, Jennifer Petron, Jess Buckle; and a dedicated teen aid Sophie Tawney, who helps set up the classroom activities each Sunday.

**Kindergarten:** The kindergarten class uses the Holy Moly curriculum. Each lesson invites kids into the story with a [DVD of animated Bible story retellings](#), reinforces the lesson through the colorful pages of the [Holy Moly Bible Storybooks](#), discussions, and encourages creativity and imagination with [Learner Leaflets](#) that bring the stories to life. There are 8 students registered for the class this year. The average attendance is 4 students with a high of 8 and a low of 1 student. We have two dedicated teachers, who have been teaching the class for years: Patti Scanlon and Theresa Carlson.

### **Grades 1-5 are participating in the Rotation Program.**

In the Rotation Program, the student lessons are based on the same Bible story for six weeks. Each week the students rotate to a different workshop. The basic story stays the same but the students learn different aspects of the story in different ways in each workshop, keeping interest high throughout the unit. The students experience the story through cooking, art, computers, movies, and games. The more different ways students explore a story or concept, the more it is reinforced in their memories. All the materials

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for the lessons are provided to the teachers by the church school director. The rotation units were: The Good Steward, Ruth, King David, Christmas, Elijah, Jesus' Teachings, Easter People, and Pentecost.

Many of our teachers in this program have been teaching for years and quite a few of them no longer have children in the church school program. Our computer room teachers are Sarah Guasta and Dave McElligott. The cooking room teachers for this year are Sarah Leathers, Marcie Sullivan, and Susan Mueller. JoAnn Hogan taught in the art room by herself all year.

This year we combined the first and second grade students together as a result of low attendance and a shortage of adult volunteers. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade shepherd for the year was Erin Naspo (prior to this she was the shepherd to the kids in the fourth grade class for 3 years). She was assisted by two teen aids Alayna Tawney and Teagon Hedman. We had families join during the school year with students in these two grades and are ending the year with 14 registered first graders and 9 registered second graders. The average class attendance was 13 students. The class high was 20 students (rehearsal for the Children's Christmas service) and the low was 6 (a snow storm Sunday).

We also needed to combine the third grade and fifth grade students together to eliminate the need for an additional adult shepherd and two teachers. The class shepherd was Jackie Brook. Jackie has been the shepherd of the students in the fifth grade class for five years. This year there were 7 registered third graders and 11 registered fifth graders. The average class attendance was 10 students. The class high was 14 students and the low was 3 students.

The fall shepherd was Kelly McLeallan and the spring shepherd is Karen Myers for the fourth grade students. There are 15 students registered in the fourth grade. Average class attendance was 10 students with a high of 13 students and a low Sunday of 4 students attending.

**Grades 6 & 7 Pre-Confirmation:** This year, the pre-confirmation class learned about the major stories in the Old Testament. The curriculums being used are called "Ancestors" and "Reform" by Spark House. The curriculum uses animated movies and anti-workbooks of activities. This program will help give students the Biblical background and familiarity with the Bible that they will need for Confirmation. Students continued to participate in the church school mission projects, Church School Christmas Service, and the Palmer Hall large group activities that occur throughout the school year. The teachers are Bryan Tawney and Chris Morkan. There are 28 students registered in the class. The average attendance was 8 students with a high of 12 and a low of 1 on a snow storm Sunday.

**Thank You!** The church school's dedicated volunteers have made this year enjoyable and a great learning experience for the children at First Church of Christ. We have been blessed by dedicated adults and teen volunteers in the program this year. We have had fewer volunteers than positions available and so many of these individuals have volunteered for the entire school year without a co-teacher in Church School to give them the alternating Sunday off. Church School is a cooperative effort between the director, who prepares the materials and the adults who volunteer to teach and shepherd the students. Thank you all for giving your time and talents to the students this year, the program wouldn't be possible without your efforts!

**Missions Projects:** We encourage parents to teach their children to be good stewards of their allowance by dividing it into thirds; one third for saving, one third for giving, and one third for spending. This year we made banks on rally day to help students with this goal. The student offering collected on Sunday mornings is used exclusively for mission projects that the church school engages in to teach the children about caring for others in need.

This year our primary focus was to raise \$600 for a **bicycle ambulance for the Masooli Clinic in Africa.**

- To learn about the clinic, we held a Mosooli Mission Sunday on October 12. Students had the opportunity to learn about the Mosooli clinic and our bicycle ambulance fund raiser by participating in activity station in Palmer Hall. The stations were: Bicycle safety station: we need to ride our bikes safely and so will the bicycle ambulance drivers in Africa; Tricycle obstacle course and relay race: the importance of getting people in rural areas quickly and safely to medical help; Teddy bear/Doll clinic - (What does the clinic do?); Immunizing station; Stethoscope and blood pressure cuff station; First aid station (Band-Aids & bandages); Triage ("Operation" Game); Community outreach (learn to bathe & diaper a baby doll); Pharmacy (counting skittles for their "prescription").
- We will be ending the year with a celebration of meeting our goal and bicycle blessing on May 3, 2015.

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**Christmas Stocking Project:** Offerings collected in November and December were used to purchase items for children's Christmas stockings. Money from our tag sale fund was used to supplement the children's offering to purchase enough supplies for 48 Christmas stockings. The items included toothbrushes, hats, mittens, nutritious snacks, crayons, coloring books, and small toys.

The stockings are assembled on the Sunday after Thanksgiving by the children and donated to area children through social workers.

**Toiletry Kits:** Students offerings' collected in January and February were used to purchase items to assemble toiletry kits on Sunday, February 15, 2015 for South Park Inn. South Park Inn is a family homeless shelter in Hartford which assist families. The kits included: face clothes, socks, shampoo, conditioner, hair brushes, combs, razors, travel size shaving cream, deodorant, etc. The students made 12 for men, 12 for women, 6 for boys and 6 for girls.

**School Supplies:** The students are collecting school supplies for **Smith Elementary School in New Britain**. Towards the end of the year, the teachers run out of supplies for their classroom. The church school will be helping to provide needed supplies. Students will also help make a potted flower gift for the school staff and decorations for their teacher appreciation meeting. Volunteers in the church are making baked goods and providing fruit for the teachers as this low income school has little parent involvement.

**Ghana and Us:** Our final mission project for the year happens at Vacation Bible School. This year's project will be to collect nonperishable food for the Simsbury food bank and monetary offerings will go to feeding lunch to school children in Ghana. The cost of feeding the kids at the school is \$300 per month.

**Children's Ministry Special Events:**

**Blessing of the Backpacks:** At the end of August, families were encourage to attend the worship service to participate in the Blessing of their Backpacks, and gather in Palmer Hall afterwards for continental breakfast provided by the Board of Christian Education.

**Bible Sunday on October 19:** In October parents were provided the opportunity to present Bibles to their children during the service

**Parent Night Out/Special Events for kids:** Two parent's night out events (December and February) were held during this year to give the students an opportunity to gather together in community while their parents had a "date night". These events were paid for out of the church school tag sale funds and free will offering by the parents. Participation is limited to 34 kids for each event.

**Church School Christmas Service:** Students in the Pre-K class through 7<sup>th</sup> grade participated in the Christmas service presented to the congregation on the evening of December 21<sup>st</sup> followed by a pot luck dinner organized by the Board of Christian Education.

**Passport to Holy Week:** Students were invited to participate in 7 different activity stations about Holy week including learning about the Last Supper and Communion today, games, and Easter egg coloring.

**Vacation Bible School, G-force, Monday, June 22 through Thursday, June 25, 9am-noon:** Students have been invited to participate in the vacation Bible school program, done in conjunction with Simsbury United Methodist and St. Albans churches.

**Other Activities:**

**Birthday Post cards:** Birthday posts cards were sent to all students registered in church school. This year the post cards were written by BCE member Dru Breslav.

**Birthday Bulletin Board:** JoAnn Hogan creates and maintains the birthday bulletin board on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to recognize this special day for all the children in church school.

**Teacher/Shepherds Family Breakfast:** Four times a year, the church school director holds a continental breakfast for the church school volunteers and their families to build fellowship and learn about upcoming lessons and children's ministry events.

**Kid's art for the Church Hallways:** The students had 3 opportunities to participate in the creation of new art for the hallways of First Church. Thank you to Kathy Wildman for purchasing the materials and assembling the art work into frames, and mounting it on the walls.

**Tag Sale:** Special thanks to Kim Tawney, who administers the tag sale, to all the volunteers who make this event possible, and to those of you who donate your items to benefit the kids at First Church. The tag sale money provides 40% of the church school budget. This year the tag sale money allowed us to hold the 2 parent night out events, the special Masooli and Palm Sunday workshops, provided for the materials to build a storage unit (thank you Randy and Ashley Cole for its construction), purchase of 4 refurbished generation 1 I pads for the computer room, a computer for the TV audio visual cart, items for the kid's worship bags, 2 bike storage racks, etc.

**Board of Christian Education:** Special thanks to all the Board of Christian Education board members who support the Children's Ministry efforts throughout the year! We meet on the second Monday of the month at 6pm, children in tow, to eat dinner (pizza in the youth room) and make decisions regarding the direction of children's ministry programs. Remaining on the Board this year are JoAnn Hogan, Erin Naspo, Sarah Leathers, Jackie Brooke, Patti Scanlon, Suzanne Osborne, Jennifer Petron. Leaving the board this year are Kim Tawney (although she has agreed to continue to run the tag sale) and Dru Breslav (who has agreed to continue to write the birthday postcards. We are welcoming Anna Harris and to the board and look forward to a fun and faith filled 2015-16 year.

**Yours in Christ,**

**Cindy Cole, Director of Children's Ministries**

## **Ministerial Search Committee**

The Ministerial Search Committee has endeavored to pursue a deliberate, open and consultative approach to the process of finding a new senior minister. After forming the search team, we held a retreat to get to know one another and begin to develop a search strategy. Next, we conducted a detailed membership survey and a range of meetings to solicit views from the congregation. Some of these “cottage meetings” worked through existing church groups (e.g., boards, bible studies), while others were open to all members. In addition, we consulted directly with Associate Minister for Youth and Young Adults Kevin Weikel, Director of Children’s Ministries Cindy Cole and Director of Music Ministries Mark Mercier.

Drawing on all of this input, and after much discussion, we developed a profile of our church and the position we are seeking to fill. This profile is available for all members to read. It is a detailed document, with a wealth of information of interest to potential ministerial candidates. As of mid-March, with our profile complete, we officially posted a brief description of our open position on the UCC website. Since then, we have started to receive profiles of ministers interested in the position. Currently, we are sorting through these profiles and will soon begin to conduct interviews.

We on the search team are deeply appreciative of the open, candid and caring input we received from a wide-ranging audience in the church and we are proud of the church profile that has resulted from this collaboration. We are excited about the next stage of our search, in which we will engage potential candidates in a discussion about our church and their possible role as senior minister. We are humbled by the importance of the task with which you have entrusted us and ask for your continued support and prayers.

First Church Ministerial Search Committee

Francesca Caponetti

Mario Chiappetti

Leonard Clough

Richard Dupree

Louise Gould

Andrew Granger

Karen Palotti

Mark Scully

Barbara Spear

Melinda Westbrook

## **First Church Panel of Delegates**

On behalf of First Church, Panel of Delegates members Marguerite Boslaugh and Susan Babcock White attended the annual meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ in October 2014 at Cheshire High School. At that meeting, the Conference passed two resolutions: 1) a resolution calling upon member churches within the Conference to evidence their solidarity with the Palestinian people suffering from Israeli occupation by boycotting products made in the occupied territories and by divesting investments in companies profiting from the occupation of Palestinian territories, and to support the sovereignty of Palestine as an independent state with secure and recognized borders; and 2) a resolution calling upon member churches to express to their elected officials that mass incarceration of non-violent offenders in the U.S. is unjust and an abuse of human rights, and to educate themselves and others regarding mass incarceration, the criminal justice system, alternative sentencing and treatment, and restorative justice principles.

Also at the Conference's annual meeting, First Church members Gordon and Nancy Crouch were honored for their tireless work in making the Masooli Clinic in Uganda a reality.

In response to the Conference's resolution on mass incarceration, the Panel of Delegates joined with the Board of Mission and Outreach in sponsoring a program on the subject in February 2015. A group of over 50 First Church members and friends attended, viewed the film "The House I Live In", a powerful documentary on mass incarceration, following which Rev. Marilyn Kendrix of the Church of the Redeemer in New Haven led a lively and informative discussion on mass incarceration in America.

There are two openings for delegates from First Church, and Marguerite and Susan welcome any church member who would like to join them as delegates. Delegates typically attend the annual and semi-annual conference meetings as well as the annual meeting of the Farmington Valley Association, representing First Church at each and voting on behalf of the church on resolutions and any other matters brought before the Conference for a vote.

We thank all of you for the opportunity to serve First Church as its representatives at the regional and state levels for the coming year. Should any church member have a question or concern regarding the work of the Connecticut Conference, please feel free to contact Marguerite or Susan.

Susan Babcock White  
on behalf of the Panel of Delegates

## **First Church Friends**

First Church Friends is a lay group that visits members of our church family in their homes, nursing homes, or hospitals who may or may not be able to attend church. We represent First Church and visit in pairs and generally by appointment. The visitations may continue for a short period of time or continue over time. Usually we stay about 20 minutes. After visiting we share our visits with the clergy. In addition we deliver poinsettias at Christmas and lilies at Easter to those who have suffered loss in the past year. This year we delivered 75 plants at Christmas and Easter. We also send cards to those in our congregation who have been mentioned in church concerns.

Our group meets about every 6 weeks to share any concerns we may have or perhaps add or subtract persons to our visitation list. Periodically, we have programs during our meetings and invite outside speakers who address topics such as grief, hospice, how to be better listeners, and other pertinent subjects that help us to be more effective visitors. We always observe confidentiality. We welcome all those who would like to help us keep in touch with those of our church family who need some personal contact in their places of residency. Our visitation is in addition to pastoral visits. No special skills are required.

Our committee has 14 members and at present we visit 44 members of our congregation. The list of those we visit varies with changing needs. At present Rev. Dianne Arakawa advises us, however, other members of the clergy add input as needed. We have no budget to date. Those who speak at our programs are volunteers. First Church Friends has developed an Emergency Call List for members of our congregation. This phone tree is part of a statewide effort to contact those members of the community who might be in need during a disaster such as a snowstorm, hurricane, or extended power outage. We have 63 people on our Emergency Call List. In January 2015 the system was used for the first time during the first blizzard of the season.

Members of our committee include:

Elaine Meek (committee co- chair)

Ruth Meyer (committee co-chair)

Anita McCoy

Tina Osborn

Hap Poole

Jean Sziklas

Dane Woodbury

Ellie Morris

Sue Trimble

Mary Jo Clark

Sara Bachelder

Joie McKennerney

Betty Warner

Patty Howland

## Supper Club

SUPPER CLUB, which was originally known as COUPLES CLUB. is celebrating its 60th Anniversary! As Couples Club members, we were younger and enjoyed more active activities such as square dancing. relay races. scavenger hunts, mystery trips and progressive suppers with about 8 suppers each year. You'll recognize the names of presidents during this period, who are still active: Bob Carlisle, Don & Shirley Meyer, the Kalikas, the Gauthiers, John & Marge Diachenko. and the Brockelmans. Around 1981, we changed our name to Supper Club because we were not all "Couples" anymore. Our 5-6 suppers also turned to Pot Luck except at Christmas time, and we have enjoyed many speakers and musical programs. Supper Club Presidents have been: Jay & Gerry Halverstadt, John & Betty Yocom, John & Margaret Kennedy, Fran & John Robinson, Peter Kalika, Tom Yoczik, Dane Woodberry, Dick Smith, Paul & Judy Bryant, and Bob & Fran Gauthier. We would not have been able to keep going without our Dinner Chairmen: Anna Grupp and Sally Smith and their committees, our Calling Chairmen: Marcia Block, Shirley Meyer, Fran Robinson, and our current chairmen: Cynthia Yoczik and Mim Shepard, our Treasurers: Doris & Wally Musick, and Joyce Kalika for providing our name tags.

This past year has been one of our best. In October, after enjoying a delicious meal catered by Suzie Sabia, we were pleased to have Jack Edwards as our speaker. Jack, the voice of the Boston Bruins Hockey team, has also announced the Olympic Games and basketball, hockey and golf championships. In December, Mark Mercier, and our Women's Praise Choir entertained us and then we joined them in singing Christmas Carols. This followed our Annual Roast Beef dinner prepared by Bob Kane of Kane's Market and served by our Dinner Committee chaired by Marlene & Bruce Powell and Marilyn & Jim Kew. At the time this report is written, we look forward to hearing Nicholas F. Bellantoni, PhD, recently retired Connecticut State Archaeologist and beloved UCONN professor as he presents Secrets from the Soil: Connecticut Archaeology Tales. Our dinner will be prepared by Kim from Harvest Bakery.

Be sure to mark your 2016 calendars: October 15, December 11, and April 15. We'll tell you about the programs in September, but for sure, you can count on delicious meals and great fellowship!

Bob and Fran Gauthier  
Co-Presidents

## Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee maintained a low profile during this past year due in large part to the fact that church Boards and Committees shouldered the major effort in identifying and recruiting new members. A repeat of the particularly successful prior Volunteer Fair, initiated last year to advertise and recruit board and committee members, this year met with less recruitment production. Nonetheless, such activities as a Volunteer Fair do help lift up and publicize the various church activities and opportunities that supplement the church's worship component. A recent observation by Reverend Kevin Weikel merits some considerable thought (and implementation) with regard to church Board and Committee membership and function particularly noted over the last several years. In addition to the over- hanging hesitation to be fully engaged until the new settled minister is brought on board, recruitment of new board/committee members has been a challenge. From a constructive criticism perspective, perhaps a component of the membership and function of our current boards and committees is the atmosphere of it being a job or work. Yes, it is that, but as Reverend Kevin lifts up, it also can be/is part of one's spiritual journey, initiates and cements fellowship among board/committee/congregation members, and should contain a healthy component of fun and joy. This observation is not to diminish the considerable contribution of those who service on the church's various boards and committees, but to suggest that such service can be so much more to those servicing and to those being served.

### Nominations for the 2015 – 2016 Program Year :

(The **bold print** names are new Board/Committee members.)

**Officers:** Jim Trimble, President 2016

Cindy Braunlich, Vice President 2016

Ron Patterson, Treasurer 2016

Steve Osborn, Clerk 2016

### **Mission and Outreach (9):**

Deb Ackels, 2017

Rick Dupree, 2018

Laurie Dupree, 2018

Dave Wadhams, 2016 Chair

Jane Hadley, 2016

Dave McElligott, 2016

Fran Gauthier, 2016

David Woods, 2016

Maddie Earnhardt, 2016

**Sue Trimble, 2018**

**Karen Palotti, 2018**

### **Board of Trustees (9):**

Gary Caponetti, 2016

Richard Derr, 2016

**Don Skinner, 2018**

Ken Warner, 2016

**Mike Hogan, 2018**

John Ritson, 2016

7 \_\_\_\_\_

8 \_\_\_\_\_

9 \_\_\_\_\_

**Music Ministry (7):**

**Randy Cole**, Chairperson 2018  
**Cynthia Yoczik**, 2018  
Bruce Powell, 2016  
Tammy Warner, 2016  
Philip Wilde, 2017  
**Judy Bryant**, 2018  
7 \_\_\_\_\_

**Board of Worship: (12)**

Bill Lawry, 2016  
Ashley Schwitter, 2017  
Katherine Cain, 2017  
Stephen Cassell, 2017  
Bill Clark, 2017  
Frank Gould, 2017  
Janet Marcum, 2017  
Carol Pollack, 2016  
Piper Delo, 2017  
10 \_\_\_\_\_  
11 \_\_\_\_\_  
12 \_\_\_\_\_

**Board of Christian Education: (9)**

Erin Naspo, Chairperson 2016  
Jackie Brooke, 2016  
Suzanne Osborne, 2017  
**Jennifer Petron**, 2016  
JoAnn Hogan, 2016  
Sarah Leathers, 2017  
7 \_\_\_\_\_  
8 \_\_\_\_\_  
9 \_\_\_\_\_

**Board of Personnel: (6 & Vice President)**

Cindy Braunlich, Vice President, 2016  
Cathy Gray, 2016  
Melinda Westbrook, 2016  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
5 \_\_\_\_\_  
6 \_\_\_\_\_

**Board of Finance (9 & Treasurer):**

Ron Patterson, Treasurer/Chairperson 2016  
Linda Peach, 2016  
Erik Barrows, 2016  
Robert Long, 2016  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
5 \_\_\_\_\_  
6 \_\_\_\_\_  
7 \_\_\_\_\_  
8 \_\_\_\_\_  
9 \_\_\_\_\_

**Finance Control Sub Committee:**

Suzanne Sabia, 2016  
Carol Pollack, 2016  
Marguerite Boslaugh, 2016

**Grants Sub Committee:**

Dane Woodberry, 2016  
Rick Wilde, 2016

**Committee of Deacons: (5)**

**Craig White**, Chairperson 2017  
Ellie Benson, 2017  
Susan Butler, 2016  
Brad Jones, 2017  
Anita McCoy, 2017

**Panel of Delegates (4):**

Susan Babcock White, Chairperson 2016  
Marguerite Boslaugh, 2016  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

**Board of Stewardship (6):**

Cathie Behrens  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
5 \_\_\_\_\_  
6 \_\_\_\_\_

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dane Woodberry

**HISTORICAL FINANCIAL RESULTS  
AND  
CURRENT YEAR BUDGET**

<b>2015 Budget Summary Template</b>					
<b>Income/ Revenue</b>	<b>2012 Actuals</b>	<b>2013 Actuals</b>	<b>2014 Budget</b>	<b>2014 Actuals</b>	<b>Recommended Budget 2015</b>
	<b>Income</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Income</b>
Current Year Pledges	\$770,226	\$730,880	\$710,000	\$724,000	<b>715000</b>
Income from Endowments	\$74,450	\$57,322	\$104,644	\$98,687	\$91,763
Prior Year Surplus/ Deficit	(\$448)	\$39,300	(\$28,263)	\$24,500	\$12,337
Transfers from Restricted Funds			\$24,300	(\$28,263)	\$0
Other Income Sources	\$40,181	\$54,101	\$47,149	\$48,097	\$48,097
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$884,409</b>	<b>\$881,603</b>	<b>\$857,830</b>	<b>\$867,021</b>	<b>\$867,197</b>
<b>Expenses by Major Boards</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Expenses</b>
Trustees	\$138,648	\$145,151	\$133,500	\$149,322	\$148,347
Worship	\$6,301	\$7,953	\$9,630	\$7,761	\$8,525
Mission & Outreach	\$81,058	\$83,309	\$72,765	\$69,314	\$86,000
Transfer from Mission Reserve	\$7,100	\$13,707	\$0	\$0	\$0
Children's Ministry	\$10,126	\$10,187	\$5,850	\$6,043	\$5,850
Youth and Young Adults Ministry	\$13,361	\$11,675	\$15,750	\$16,691	\$12,820
Music	\$8,408	\$12,564	\$15,358	\$9,805	\$16,800
Administration	\$43,740	\$51,627	\$31,255	\$38,184	\$33,450
Personnel	\$537,877	\$560,821	\$562,170	\$545,816	\$542,725
Stewardship	\$2,148	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
UCC/CT Conference and FVA Fees	\$10,072	\$10,409	\$10,080	\$10,748	\$7,300
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$858,839</b>	<b>\$908,903</b>	<b>\$857,358</b>	<b>\$854,684</b>	<b>\$862,817</b>
			Net Surplus/Deficit	<b>\$12,337</b>	<b>\$4,380</b>