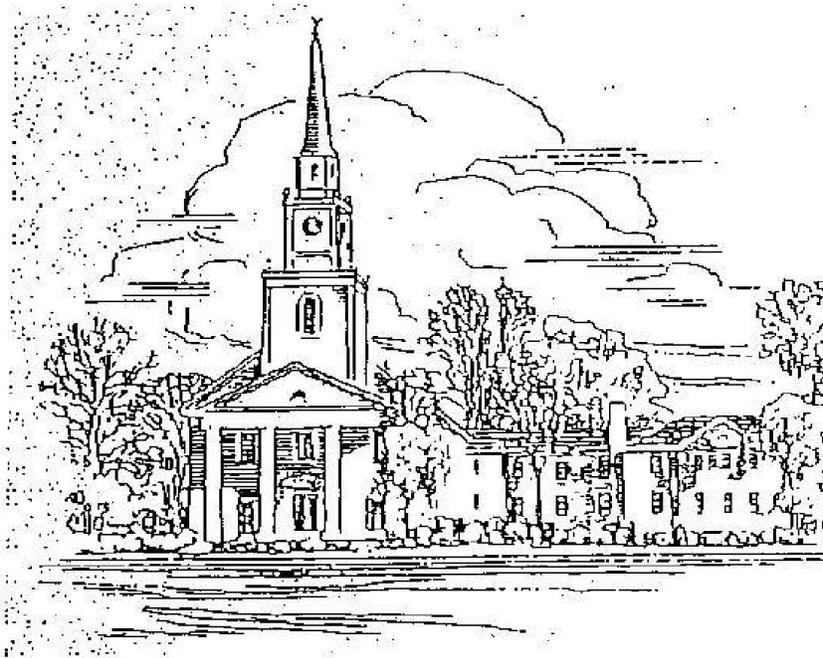


# **The First Church of Christ in Longmeadow, Massachusetts**

*United Church of Christ*

**The Annual Reports for 2018  
To the 303rd Annual Meeting  
February 10, 2019**



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*Embraced by the love of God in Christ, our mission is to love and serve our world.*

*We seek to grow in Christ's family through our journey –*

*inward toward faith and knowledge,*

*outward toward love and justice –*

*always rooted and nurtured in worship.*

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**Officers Elected at the Annual Meeting  
February 11, 2018**

**Election of Officers for one year terms**

**The Leadership Team:**

Moderator	Susan Kennedy	Liaison for Worship	Maribeth White
Clerk	Eleanor Santos	Liaison for Spiritual Life	Diane Peluso
Treasurer	Stewart Creelman	Liaison for Congregational Life	Anne Landry
Past Moderator	Steve Gelling	Liaison for Mission in the World	Mora Geoffrion
Member-at-Large	Rosemarie Jarrett	Co-Liaison for Community Outreach	Mary Friedman
Member-at-Large	Anne Wolpert	Co-Liaison for Community Outreach	Sue Monks
Member-at-Large	Lisa Gore	Liaison for Stewardship of Resources	Marieke Burt
Assistant Treasurer	Whiting Houston		

<b>Stewards (at least 9)</b>	Marieke Burt	Stewart Creelman	Susan Dugan
	Whiting Houston	Stephen Kennedy	Nola Kulig
	Don Murphy	John Ouellette	Ted Steger

(The Property Team, Personnel Team, and Investment and Finance Team shall each include at least 3 Stewards.)

**Assistant Financial Secretaries**                      Stephen Kennedy              Katie Glasgow

**The First Parish of Longmeadow**

Chairperson	Susan Kennedy
Clerk	Eleanor Santos
Treasurer	Stewart Creelman
Assistant Treasurer	Whiting Houston

**302nd Annual Meeting**  
**First Church of Christ in Longmeadow**  
**February 11, 2018**

The 302nd Annual Meeting of the First Church of Christ in Longmeadow was called to order by Moderator Susan Kennedy at 10:08 AM.

The Clerk Eleanor Santos read the call of the meeting.

The service of worship then continued until after the doxology was sung when, a quorum being present, a motion was made and seconded to accept the Annual Report for 2017. As no additions or corrections were made, the motion passed.

Stewart Creelman, treasurer, presented a summary of assets. The total of all cash and invested assets grew from \$4,003,689 as of 12/31/2016 to \$4,471,628 as of 12/31/2017. He called attention to our endowment income funds and explained the process by which they support our program. The treasurer's report was declared received.

Whiting Houston, assistant treasurer, then presented an explanation of the results of his reviewing, reorganizing and consolidating of our assets. He has tried to organize them in a way that each team knows what money is available to them, and what its intent and history is. There is also a manual available to clarify this for each team. Some of the endowments' purposes needed modernizing , which he has done, keeping the spirit of what was intended. We have also redone our bookkeeping system, so that now we always know what the available income balance is for each fund. We have put some of our investments in a carbon-free fund which is doing well. The report of the assistant treasurer was declared received.

Moderator Kennedy then asked for a motion to accept the budget. The motion was made and seconded. A discussion followed where the reasoning of the budget was outlined. A motion was made to amend the budget to increase the allotment for the library from \$100 to \$250, which would come from the Johnson fund. The amendment passed. There was a question about whether we could afford the line item devoting \$8000 for a youth leader. It was explained that although this was a stated goal of the church, the needs are more than the pastors can fill. The budget was unanimously approved as amended.

Whiting Houston presented a report of an increasing set of issues that need addressing. The furnace and water heaters have been having increasingly frequent and expensive problems. We have recently spent \$15,480 on repairs. We've been told the boiler may not last the winter. A Motion was made and seconded to " give the Leadership Team the authority to spend up to \$75,000 from the principal of the Permanent Building and Maintenance fund that in its judgment is required to repair and replace elements of the heating system. It is understood by this vote that three bids shall be obtained as quotes on correcting the current system and that a continuing maintenance contract shall be negotiated, and that the congregation shall be informed frequently through the Church on the Green or other communication of the steps taken and progress being made. "

Further discussion followed clarifying the status of the heating system and ramifications of its repair. Sexton Stan Zdonik clarified the issues with the heating system and the importance of replacing the boiler.

A motion was made and seconded that an additional bid be sought for replacing the system with one using an alternative clean energy source such as geothermal or solar. This motion passed and the amended motion was restated and passed with no dissenting votes.

A ballot was presented for the election of officers. A motion was made to elect all officers as listed on the ballot. As no further nominations were offered, the slate of officers was unanimously elected.

The nominated slate of officers for the First Parish of Longmeadow was also elected.

Susan made a motion to acknowledge and recognize the members of the teams and committees. It was seconded and passed.

On behalf of the congregation, Marieke Burt offered thanks to the moderator for bringing us to the point where we are today: guiding us through new governance, by-laws, labor laws and multiple other areas required to help a church run smoothly. The moderator graciously accepted and acknowledged the support she receives from the efforts of so many parishioners participating in the work of the church.

At 12:15 PM, the motion was made and accepted to end the meeting at the end of the service. The service then concluded with a prayer, the singing of a hymn, and a benediction.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanor Santos, Clerk

## **REPORT OF THE CLERK FOR 2018**

**Members reported in 2018:** 336

**New Members in 2018:** 13

By letter, reaffirmation and confession: 5

Norman Fuller  
Darlene Watson

Frank Smith  
Ann Smith

Elizabeth Scanlon

By Confirmation: 8

Philippa Jane Berry  
Meghan Delaney Kelly  
Kylee Noelle Smith

Marco Eric DiBiasio  
Thomas Clark O'Donnell  
Abigail Emma Stechman

Faye Marringjie Desarro  
Katherine Gold Romoser

**Members lost by death:** 6

Charles Hamlin  
John Russell

Edith Montgomery Kerrigan  
Owen Sutton

Bradford Parker  
Aroxy Zacarian

**Members transferred to inactive status and/or removed:** 16

**Active Membership as of December 31, 2018:** 327

## **REPORT OF THE SENIOR PASTOR FOR 2018: REV. PAMELA MCGRATH**

I have recently completed my first full year as Senior Pastor of First Church of Christ Longmeadow. We have prayed together, worshipped together, marched together, studied together and dreamed together. This year has been a wonderful time of growing and shared community.

As the Senior Pastor of FCC, my call includes serving as your preacher and teacher, being the head of staff overseeing the church's administration and lay leadership, representing FCC in the wider community, and helping us all answer God's call to be the church God wants us to be in Longmeadow and beyond.

### **Preacher and Teacher**

A major role for clergy is as teacher and preacher. This past year at FCC, Pastor Marisa and I have shared multiple opportunities to lead book studies, sermon talk-backs (meetings right after a service to discuss the implications of the sermon), and multi-week series of sermons on specific themes.

I love leading our Thursday morning Bible Study. I love working with our confirmation students.

As part of my continuing education and professional development, the church paid for me to attend a week-long training in worship design. This class has helped me lead our Worship Team to dream of new ways to use our physical senses to experience the presence of God among us. We have expanded the role of music during our services and added an annual Choir Shine service where our choir leads literally every aspect of worship. We brought back a Children's Christmas Pageant and a Children's Flash choir.

### **Administrative and Lay Leadership**

One role of the Senior Pastor is to help lay leaders run the church. As the Senior Pastor, I oversee the administration of the staff and the day-to-day running of the church office.

This past year, we spent a good bit of time working on changes in our staff. Our Youth minister, Liz Woolsey, was only with us for a short time. When she moved out west, we put together a search team to find a new youth leader. FCC was blessed to call Christine Callahan, who was already a member of our church and had long dreamed of leading church youth.

We also said farewell to Deb Garrity, our valued Communications director of 15 years. In response to her resignation, we put together a team to search for a new director. We have been blessed to find Jenna Rutz, a church member, to replace Deb.

Our last staff change is really not a change at all. Pastor Marisa has been serving FCC for several years in the role of "Acting Associate Pastor." This year, a team of us worked with her to create a new covenant so that she could become our "Settled Associate Pastor." We are all blessed to have her remain with us, sharing her many gifts.

As part of the care and maintenance of our building, we purchased and installed a new boiler. We painted and re-decorated Bailey Hall. We also updated our sanctuary's sound system with new wireless microphones (made necessary by the FCC's new frequency allotments) and with needed software updates. The new sound equipment has brought us better control over both volume and sound quality.

This year, with lay leaders and staff, I worked with our longtime partner and tenant, LMI (Longmeadow Montessori International). LMI was required by the state to install a fence to ensure the safety of the children. We went before

the Longmeadow Historical Committee and the Zoning board for approval before we could proceed. This detailed process involved resolving concerns raised by the town as well as by our members. The fence was approved and is now installed. It is attractive, appropriate to our church's historic architecture, and, most importantly, provides needed safety for the school's students and our own children.

We also negotiated a new 10-year lease with LMI. In the past, we have typically signed lease agreements for only five years at a time. LMI and FCC have now made a longer-range commitment to serve our community together for years to come.

Our lay leadership expanded when a new Social Justice Team was formed. The team is well attended and continually leads us as we follow Jesus out into the world. They teach us to take action, to show an important aspect of our Christianity by seeking justice.

I brought another new, lay-led program to FCC in the form of our seasonal Saturday Celebrations. Last year, we celebrated Mardi Gras, Pride and Back to Church—opening our door to the town and providing music and food. Inviting strangers to celebrate with us is a way to show the town who we are and what we care about. Our May Pride Celebration was so successful that we have committed to making it an annual event.

In the fall of 2018, we began the school year with a new focus—storytelling. We have been using storytelling to get to know each other, to learn to listen to and connect with those we might not agree with, and as a way to share our experiences, including our faith journeys. Weekly testimonies during worship have enriched our services and moved us to both laughter and tears. Our monthly 3<sup>rd</sup>-Friday storytelling concerts bring professional storytellers to FCC and give volunteer attendees a chance to tell their own stories. Our concerts are attended by as many visitors from our community as members. This entertaining form of outreach encourages a form of personal sharing that builds community even among strangers.

### **Representing FCC in the Community**

Part of my call is to represent FCC outside our doors in the wider community.

This year I have twice participated in events at our neighboring college, Bay Path University, speaking at their convocation and their Winterfest concert. My goal is to continue to grow our relationship with Bay Path.

This year I joined the board at Emerson Manor. Emerson Manor is a low-income, affordable housing, senior-living facility—which was originally created with the help of FCC. As an FCC minister, then I am glad to renew FCC's institutional support of Emerson Manor.

FCC enjoys an active relationship with local clergy and houses of worship. This past year we joined other Christian churches as well as Jewish synagogues for ecumenical bible study, comparing texts and sharing traditions in a program called "Friends Next Door." This series paired a Jewish and a Christian clergy-person for a fall series of six classes. This spring we will complete the series with six more classes.

After the anti-Semitic murders at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, our clergy community came together to weep and support each other. I represented FCC at the Sunday service of lament, which was held at Temple Beth El and attended by area clergy, the mayor of Springfield, and elected state representatives.

This year I was delighted to see my first “dream project” for our community become a reality. Our town government, Temple Beth El, Glenmeadow senior residence, Baystate Health, and FCC joined together to serve seniors who experience isolation in our community. To fund this program, we applied for and received a grant from Greater Springfield Senior Services. That allowed us to hire a volunteer coordinator. We have already trained volunteers, who are now being matched to seniors. This new program, N2N (Neighbor to Neighbor), is bringing friendship and hope to people who are lonely and isolated.

I also represent FCC by serving in the Massachusetts conference of UCC churches (which I have actively supported since moving to Massachusetts nearly 10 years ago). This past year I also joined the MA UCC’s Hampden Association Committee on Ministry (COM). I am honored to begin 2019 as the new chair of the COM.

### **Thank You!**

I am proud of our many accomplishments together. It is not possible to list *all* the things I have been honored to be a part of: funerals, hospital visits, pastoral care calls, weddings and team meetings. We have laughed, cried, sung, and held onto each other. My first year with you has been a gift from God. I thank God every day for each and every one of you.

*May God bless you and may God bless FCC,  
Pastor Pam*

## **REPORT OF THE ACTING ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR 2018 REV. MARISA BROWN LUDWIG**

Dear First Church Members and Friends –

I celebrate with you that we have now had a full year and more with our settled Senior Pastor Pam McGrath – and this year she and I have spent much time moving into our pastoral work together, discerning what next steps there might be for me as I was serving you in my fifth year as Acting Associate Pastor. We dedicated much time to deepening our relationship to each other, looking at our gifts and strengths together as a pastoral team here at First Church, and also living into the experience of planning worship, education, mission, pastoral care ministries and so much more with all of you.

In fall of 2018, we did a series of meetings including Pam and me, with a dedicated short-term team of Whiting Houston (Personnel Team), John Thomas (my Pastoral Relations team) and Steve Gelling (Pam’s Pastoral Relations team) to explore what a settled Associate Pastor covenant could be for me, and if that ministry fit with the mission and goals of First Church in an ongoing, permanent call. The Finance, Personnel and Leadership Teams also took part in this process and by December 19, the Leadership Team voted to approve a Covenant with me as settled Associate Pastor here at First Church. So although I served most of 2018 as your Acting Associate Pastor, I enter 2019 with you now as your settled Associate Pastor. What an amazing and affirming process this has been – five years with a more interim kind of functioning for me, and now going forward into new ministry life together!

I partner with many of our church teams for growth and expression of Christian values into our world, especially Mission Team, ONA Team, Called to Care, Environmental Justice, Adult Education, and the new Social Justice Team. This has meant much justice and witness work, and so many of you have initiated and joined me in that! In this past year, you and Pam asked me to focus on Adult Formation, Pastoral Care, Youth & Families,

Community Outreach-Interfaith/Ecumenical Relations, and being active as a Worship Leader/Preacher with the Pam throughout the life of our church. Here's how we've lived together in these areas in 2018!

**Worship/Church Life** – I have loved leading worship/preaching 1-2x/month throughout the year for Sunday services, **collaborating with Pam, our Worship Team, Deacons, Choir and Music Director Dan Inglis** on powerful worship regularly but also for special times of the year in the seasons of our lives like Advent/Christmas, Lent/Holy Week, Weddings and Funerals. Pastor Pam and I offered a preaching series called “I Don't Believe That!” June – August! Sept – June, I lead the weekly Contemplative Worship on Wednesdays with many members and friends, and alternate with Pam leading communion worship monthly at Glenmeadow Assisted Living. With Pam, I attended and supported a powerful Deacon Retreat led by Mary Friedman and Beverly Sager in November 2018. I have been working with the Deacons and Marilyn Paul-Lewis on revising our emergency protocol policies fall/winter 2018.

In late Spring, I joined the pastoral team of Church Without Walls produced by St. Andrew's and the Episcopal Diocese of Springfield, offering worship and lunch every Sunday for the people of the streets in Springfield. I partner now every First Sunday of the Month with Rev. Peter Swarr of St. Mark's E. Longmeadow, and increasingly our church teams and youth have been helping with donating/creating snacks, helping with communion and the sharing of supplies/food at the conclusion of the service. I went out with Deacon Eric Elley of St. Andrew's in the CWW van one Tuesday in December to bring needed supplies to homeless along the Connecticut River.

**Wider Church Life:** I remain active both at the Association and Conference levels, including volunteering at and attending Massachusetts Conference Super Saturdays and Annual Meeting and our local Hampden Association programs and annual meeting. This year I stepped down as Chair of the MACUCC Task Force on Ecumenism & Interfaith Relations where I am now a regular member attending meetings bi-monthly and supporting programs, advising our Conference General Minister on interfaith/ecumenical issues. I supported Louis Mitchell as his mentor through his final year of member-in-discernment preparation culminating in his ordination on September 23, 2018 at South Congregational Church. Such a joy for me and the wider church!!

**Pastoral Care** - I worked closely with Pastor Pam and our Called to Care Team to minister to our sick and homebound friends with pastoral visits, phone calls, emails, texts and cards. I have supported our amazing Prayer Shawl team in making prayer-filled shawls and baptismal blankets for our church and wider community as ministries of love and care.

**Adult Formation** – This year I led the Bible in a Year study gathering 11-13 people for monthly dinner and discussions about the bible, which we were reading daily until we finished it on December 31, 2018! The first half of the year was co-led by Rev. Harvey Hill from St. Andrews, and in the second half we had Rabbi James Greene as special guest twice! During Lent in 2018, Pam and I co-led a Monday night series called “Listening for the Still Small Voice and Finding Your Own” on different aspects of contemplative spirituality, which matched the Sunday preaching we did; Pam and I co-led an evening book series called “FCC Preachers Go to Hell!” to examine scripture and church tradition on the nature of Hell in June, and offered movie nights in the cooled-off Buxton Room in the summer; Pastor Pam and I joined with local interfaith clergy to host/lead a 6-week Interfaith Bible Study called “Friends Next Door” here at First Church on Monday nights Fall 2018.

**The Environmental Justice Team** has done amazing work this year collaborating with Longmeadow Transitions and other faith communities to increase awareness, lobby our government leaders on renewable energies and against fossil fuels, and educate us at First Church about what our church can be doing to work for

climate justice. I travelled with Mark Pohlman to the Boston State House in March 2018 for the Climate Justice/Exodus from Fossil Fuels event, a rally and visit to legislators to push for progress on eliminating fossil fuels in our state. We attended a showing of “An Inconvenient Truth Sequel” at E. Longmeadow Library in April and the Longmeadow Transition Team’s showing of “Catching the Sun” at Storrs Library in May; I invited our EJ Team to apply for recognition from the Mass Conference UCC as a “Level One Green Church” for the fine Green policies, practices and educational steps they’ve implemented at First Church. We received our award at the June 2018 Annual Meeting – you can see it downstairs on our EJ Bulletin Board! (See Mark Pohlman’s report for more!)

With the **ONA Team**, I supported the monthly LGBTQIA Support Group we host here at First, and important events in the community such as attending the memorial service for a Trans-activist Krista Steele-Knudsen, who was murdered in January; hosting an ONA movie night featuring “Three Generations” in March; walking with the ONA Team in the PRIDE march in Northampton in May; attending the rededication of the Pride Flag after it was stolen at Feeding Hills Congregational Church in September. We made educational materials and talked with our Leadership to put up Lawn Signs about Ballot Question 3, an initiative to strip Massachusetts law of equal rights in public places for Trans residents in November, and we attended the UNITY (Trans Support Group at Baystate Medical Center) Christmas Party in December.

**Justice/Community Outreach:** With the **Social Justice Team**, I participated in the Women’s March in Northampton in January, March for our Lives (Gun Violence) in March, joined in a Faith Leaders escort at Cooley Dickinson Hospital to help Lucio Perez, (who has been in Sanctuary in a UCC church in Amherst) leave from an emergency hospitalization to return back to Sanctuary at First Congregational without being arrested in May, participated in Jericho Walks at the Federal Building in Springfield with the Pioneer Valley Workers Center in May and October. I participated in the Keeping Syria Alive worship and program at Christ Church Cathedral in April, participated in a Domestic Violence Candlelight Vigil for the Hilltowns in Huntington in May.

While at the Homiletics Festival in May, I participated in a powerful silent walk and vigil “Reclaiming Jesus” at the White House led by progressive Christian leaders like Walter Brueggeman, Bishop Michael Curry, and many more. I attended the Families Belong Together Rally (against immigrant children separated from their parents at our borders) in Northampton in June; attended the July 4<sup>th</sup> Welcoming New Citizens Naturalization Ceremony at the Northampton Courthouse with Carey Larsen; Supported the Eat, Pray Vote table put on by the SJ Team; attended the Critical Connections event “How to be a Muslim in America” in September; participated in/attended with Pastor Pam at both a Vigil October 28 at Temple Beth-El and then a Solidarity Shabbat on Nov 4 at Sinai Temple against Anti-Semitism after the Tree of Life shootings; and joined the pastoral team of Church Without Walls starting in May 2018 providing worship, food and supplies to homeless neighbors in Springfield.

**With the Mission Team**, Steve Gelling, Bob Barkman and I participated in the Habitat for Humanity Celebration Blitz Build, which worked to erect the main structure of a house in one day – Saturday, July 14<sup>th</sup>! The Team discerned together about different causes and ministries in our area to support with budgeted mission dollars throughout the year, and helped a local woman with some much-needed repairs on her home, damaged by the tornados two years ago.

As part of my **interfaith & ecumenism** work, I was elected this year to be Vice President of the Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield, and you can see more about that and all our interfaith presence this year in the separate Ecumenism & Interfaith Ministry report.

**Youth & Families** – I supported the **Family Ministries** Team and Marilyn Paul-Lewis in a year-long series of programs, mission projects and outings organized around our littlest ones (see Marilyn’s report for all they did!)

and attended most of them, delighting in our members of all ages at movie and game nights, field trips, park clean ups, The CROP Walk and ice cream stops! For the first half of 2018, I supported Liz Woolsey as our Youth Director to lead **YUP (Middle School Youth Group)** and **YES (High School Youth Group)** with Wanona Dobbs, Deb DeBiasio and Beth Elam, and we partnered with St. Andrew's Episcopal Church youth group for some events. This included meetings, activities out, mission projects, a cool justice-oriented Scavenger Hunt, an overnight Lock-In Retreat here in the church, game nights, conversations about gun violence and more.

Pastor Pam and I joined our Social Justice Team to support our High School youth by standing outside Longmeadow High School in solidarity when the students did a Youth Walk out over the school shooting in Parkland, FL, and demonstrated together with our youth at the Springfield March for Our Lives on Saturday March 24<sup>th</sup> in Court Square. Pam, Wanona and I partnered to provide a year-long **(Sept 2017 – May 2018) Confirmation class** including monthly classes, trips to local interfaith/ecumenical faith communities for worship, mentoring, cross-making and more culminating in confirming 8 of our youth on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. The youth and families raised money for hunger again with the CROP Walk in Springfield in October.

We had to say good-bye to Liz Woolsey when she moved out West over the summer, and by fall, we welcomed Christine Callahan as our new Youth Director. I supported her in launching a combined Youth Group, bringing together YUP and YES for mission activities, weekly Sunday night meetings, and fun (see Christine's separate report!) I worked with Christine and Diane Peluso in creating a program of Christian education for our middle school age youth, in which they participate fully in Sunday worship on the First Sunday of the month, either at the 10am service or Church Without Walls, and have a class on Christian faith and teaching on the third Sunday of the month.

In the area of **personal/professional growth** - I especially want to thank my Pastor Relations Team who accompanied me with much wisdom and nurture: John Thomas, Anne Landry, Connie Shea, Mary Ellen Flaherty and Katie Glasgow. I attended continuing education programs, including 3 sessions of Tending the Fire II this fall 2018 (and it will continue in 2019) which brings together ecumenical clergy to improve overall leadership skills and understanding of large group process that happens in faith communities. I participate in a monthly Clergy Community of Practice to gain more support and peer supervision provided by the Mass Conference UCC. I attended the weeklong Homiletics Festival in Washington, D.C. in May, a fabulous week of immersion in preaching workshops and worship with dynamic preaching twice/day surrounded by terrific clergy. I can't thank First Church enough for supporting my learning and growth through these wonderful programs.

Finally, I am honored to work with the deeply faithful Leadership Team of this church, and **the dedicated church staff**: Maura, Gay, Stan, Deb, Dan, Carolyn, Marilyn, Liz/Christine and Pastor Pam. I thank them for all the ways they have collaborated with me across this year. I have been excited to companion all of you in this active and energized faith community, First Church of Christ, and I look forward to 2019 together.

Prayerfully, Pastor Marisa

## REPORT OF THE MUSIC DIRECTOR FOR 2018

DAN INGLIS

After two years and three Christmases as Director of Music, I'm happy to be reaching a "flow state." I think of that pithy little saying about the four stages of organizational change: formin', stormin', normin', and performin'. Most of the music ministry is somewhere between the "normin' " and "performin'" stages - I have gotten to know how everything goes, everyone knows how I work, Pam has been here for almost a year and a half, and I spend far less time in crisis mode now than when I was brand-new.

### PEOPLE & PROGRAMS

- Our Chancel Choir and soloists continue to serve as the weekly musical backdrop to worship. Worship planning (combined with my own knowledge) now generates enough ideas that I am beginning to program two special music selections for the choir as often as one. Perhaps this is also because I can learn organ music more quickly than ever (more on that elsewhere). The choir continues to display superb dedication. It feels to me as if I get to work with the backbone of the congregation - not only are many people involved in leadership roles, but also I get to count on a dominant culture that is fiercely devoted to making great church services happen. We've been happy to welcome Al Callahan to our tenor section this year. And we have sadly watched our beloved Wanona Dobbs take a hiatus. We hope and pray she will want to come back to us after she is finished healing. The Chancel Choir can always welcome new people, but at the moment we could especially use more sopranos.

- The Handbell Choir has continued to perform more, including finding more small opportunities to ring during worship. Underscoring the settling music for Pam's Lenten series last year was a meaningful shift for us and for the congregation, as everyone got to experience the Handbells as a sound that can help our brains drop into worship, rather than a performance we can evaluate. Meanwhile, I've written my first two handbell arrangements and premiered the first, Silent Night, during the 9 pm Christmas Eve service.
- I continue to collaborate with guest musicians whenever the opportunity arises. John Turner has patiently waited and played when my own rehearsal time allowed, and now we look forward to presenting a somewhat more regular collaboration starting in February. I once again had the honor of working with a wonderful slate of guest musicians for Christmas Eve, welcoming the Harbisons who generously organized and engaged a string quartet. Arranging for them was a highlight of my year.
- The incredible Pageant Debbie DeBiasio and Gail Fei wrote and directed was a big shot in the arm for our church in terms of children, families, and the Children's Choir. Because so many children were involved, I was able to piggyback a small number that became its own act for Christmas Eve. Now, after talks with the whole Children & Family Ministries team, Marilyn and I have begun creating a year calendar for Children's Choir that will allow us to organize more frequent and regular appearances. And we are already recruiting for the first collaborative Children's Choir project, one for St. Patrick's Day, that comes out of it. We are also looking at more ways to involve the above-mentioned team in the process rather limiting both the recruiting time and the instruction time to my almost-1/2-time position. Finally, watch for a youth choir appearance (not sure if it will also become regular) soon.

### WORSHIP PLANNING

While this team provides its own report, I can add that thanks to Pam's work to get us all planning several Sundays and several seasons ahead, and thanks to the ideas of the team, I have been able to provide a longer average lead

time for most weeks. Having four weeks of choral anthems in the pipeline is the new normal, and I know the Chancel Choir and I are all happier and more sane for it.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

This year, the church collaboratively created the Saturday Celebrations series. We look forward to repeating the Gay Pride event on 5/4, with the PV Gay Men's Chorus and the Chancel Choir but with different other groups. We also look forward to our first collaboration on 6/2 with Mak'hela: the Jewish Chorus of Western Massachusetts (this one on a Sunday due to Shabbat). Finally, we look forward to our second recent (*my* second) Music Sunday on either 5/19 or 5/26.

## **DIRECTOR DEVELOPMENT and WELLNESS**

I took an intensive week of organ study in January and have instantly seen a bump in proficiency as a result. I continue to prepare for my Service Playing Certificate examination with the American Guild of Organists. This involves three varied repertoire selections, two choral anthems, transposition, and more. Meanwhile, due to nearly reaching burnout, this January I briefly considered taking a sabbatical from private lessons. I now have fewer students and will not take a sabbatical from lessons, but must manage my time, energy, and waitlist with extreme discipline. I have enrolled a large spring class in the Hampshire College Chorus, which will present two ambitious programs: Movies & Musicals and Composers of Color.

## **PHYSICAL PLANT**

- Most exciting is the organ pedalboard and bench I received from God's Way Ministries in Chicopee. This is for home practice due to my long commute, even though it will never make sound. One needs to feel the notes, not wait to hear them.
- We liquidated two unwanted pianos last year and now have "only" the four we want. I am concerned about the large temperature shifts the sanctuary piano goes through, which I suspect is why it needs to be tuned so often.
- I learned this year how to service the harpsichord, catching up with the deferred service it has needed since John's retirement. We are investigating a dolly on which to move it rather than continue subjecting it to carrying.
- Our handbells are beginning to show signs of needing maintenance. We moved the bells and tables downstairs in order to minimize weekly setup time, a move of which both the Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir approve.
- Carey Larsen and Ellie Santos have proceeded with the ongoing choral library improvement project and are in the middle of creating a "master perusal notebook" some ten binders in size, so I can program from our existing collection without running around the stacks.
- Finally, the organ console continues to need tinkering, and a large pipe organ maintenance project is still on the horizon, necessitating that we think of three echelons of investment in our organ. The first may be necessary around 2025 (when the organ turns 50), according to our organ technician, and involve replacing the organ console for about \$60K.

## REPORT OF THE MODERATOR FOR 2018

SUSAN KENNEDY

When I became Moderator in February of 2014, many challenges lay ahead of us. We had just taken the bold step of calling Marisa Brown Ludwig, who was not yet ordained, as our Acting Associate Pastor. We were still trying to function under our old structure of Council, Trustees, and Executive Committee. Rev. Jay Terbush was struggling to get us to face some truths about ourselves. We were hesitant about how long a time of transition we should undertake, and not clear about what our goals should be. It is surreal to look back and acknowledge how much has been accomplished during these years. We had been given three questions: Who are we? Who is our neighbor? And what is God calling us uniquely to be and do in this time and place?

During 2014 we began to loosen up. The Environmental Justice Team was formed, the Music Committee was revitalized, and other groups started to look closely at how they did their work. Marisa brought her strong ecumenical and interfaith connections, and we began to connect with the community again. The Behavioral Covenant Team and Restructuring Team began their work, which led to bylaw changes at the 2015 Annual Meeting. No longer did we require 32 Deacons!

As we lived into the new structure in 2015, people found meaningful work in smaller teams. The Liaisons shepherded the ministry teams as people got comfortable with the new structure. Lo and behold, creativity and innovation emerged! Church leaders looked closely at how our finances were being handled, and began an overhaul that continues today. We looked at how our building was used, resulting in security improvements and more welcoming, accessible seating in the Sanctuary. Visioning 2020 was formed to lead us through the Church Assessment Tool and then interpret the results so that we could identify what is important to our congregation and what goals matter to us.

2016 was our 300th Anniversary year, and we made sure the place was spruced up for the party! Painting of the sanctuary and pews was completed, as well as new flooring and carpeting. We prepared for our pastoral search with discussion of what qualities we sought in a pastor, and how we would achieve the identified goals. We reclaimed a storage room for our new Music Director's Office, cleaned out the old computer room, and helped Jay move the Senior Pastor's Office to the first floor. Employment practices were updated and new job descriptions written.

As we moved through 2017, our work bore fruit. The old pastor's office was refurbished for use for small groups, the new Pastor's Office was repaired, painted, and carpeted, and Room 1 was refurbished for rental to TDS Speech. Whiting Houston oversaw the purposeful reorganization of savings and endowment accounts so that all funds participate in market growth and the congregation knows what each fund is for. The Senior Pastor Search Team presented a strong profile of a vital and goal-oriented church. Their faithful work resulted in the calling of Rev. Pamela McGrath in August of 2017. We were delighted to finally have our new Senior Pastor with us!

The biggest challenge of 2018 has been the rebuilding of our heating system. As boiler failure was upon us last winter, we voted to spend up to \$75,000 to replace it. But further examination and professional consultation brought the hard truth that the whole system needed to be upgraded with not only a new steam boiler but also a hydronic system. The grand total was \$132,351.

We saw big changes in worship this year. Pam, Marisa, and Dan, working closely with the Worship Team and the Deacons, led us in services which held deeper meaning. Many of us to give testimony of our faith journeys and God's Love Overflowing, opening up in ways that would have been unheard of in the past.

Our goal of making First Church a second home for young families is getting closer. We have kept the inspiration of Liz Woolsey, our Youth Director who followed her husband to Nevada, as we welcomed the fresh approach of Christine Callahan, our new Youth Director. With the help of Dan, Deb DeBiasio, and Gail Fei, the children of First Church presented a wonderful Christmas pageant. Our Sunday church school keeps growing!

This was a year of reaching out. The new Social Justice Team partnered with many faith communities, Pioneer Valley Project and the Poor People's Campaign. Environmental Justice received awards for leading our church to be a Level 1 Green Congregation and completed Level 2. Adult Ed led us to new awareness of racism, and the Haiti ministry continued with strength. The Open and Affirming Team continued the support group which has become a place of trust for LGBT people. The Open Pantry concert was more successful than ever. We supported a Habitat for Humanity blitz build so that one more family has a home. Three Saturday Celebrations brought the community into the church for music and dinner. Pam connected with town officials, rabbis, and pastors to create Neighbor 2 Neighbor which will tackle the problem of isolation in Longmeadow. Marisa led us to share communion and food with the homeless in Court Square through Church Without Walls.

Having installed Rev. McGrath as our Senior Pastor and Teacher in March of 2018, we now prepare to install Rev. Brown Ludwig as our settled Associate Pastor. What an amazing journey to reach this day! We continue to ask: What is God calling us to be and do in this time and place? Will we know the answer when we see it? Will we speak the truth of God's love to a hurting world? Will we support our friends and neighbors as they meet the challenges of hatred and injustice? Will we minister to our community in Jesus' name? Truly God is still speaking. Are we listening?

## SPIRITUAL LIFE MINISTRY for 2018 DIANE PELUSO , LIAISON

### Team Members as of February 2018

<b>Family Ministries Team</b> Debbie DeBiasio Ted Steger Michelle Steger Christine Callahan Al Callahan Beverly Sager Katy Lee Stephen Kennedy <i>Carolyn McGarr Marilyn Paul-Lewis*</i>	<b>Contemplative Prayer Group</b> Phebe Wallace Julie Pohlman Mary Friedman Rhoda Zettl Beverly Sager Ann Mundy Mora Geoffrion Kyle Ondricek Barbara Kaminsky <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig*</i>	<b>Thursday Morning Bible Study</b> Mary Friedman* Kyle Ondricek Mora Geoffrion Phebe Wallace Ann Mundy Marilynn Sutton Eleanor Santos Gail Fei Pat Jorczak Marilyn Coulomb
<b>Adult Education Team</b> Mark Pohlman* Herb Zettl Bob Barkman Bill Harbison Wanona Dobbs <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig</i>	<b>Youth Ministry Team</b> Christina Carroll Tassie Plankey Shannon Plankey Diane Peluso Sally Schirmer-Smith <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig Pam McGrath</i>	<b>YES!</b> Alan Kulig Tassie Plankey Tim Plankey <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig Pam McGrath</i>
<b>YUP!</b> Deb DeBiasio, Beth Elam <i>Pastors</i>	<b>Confirmation Class Two</b> <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig, Pam McGrath</i> Wanona Dobbs and Mentors	<b>Prayer Chain</b> Katie Glasgow* <i>Maura Stevens*</i> Ruth Sandow and others
<b>Sacred Circle #1</b> Susan Kennedy* Maria Duncan Anne Landry Diane Doherty Liz Woolsey Ann Wolpert Janice Patel Pat Jorczak Carey Larsen Sue Feuerbach	<b>Sacred Circle #2</b> Mary Friedman Wanona Dobbs Kelly Batchelor Shirlee Fassell Marieke Burt Mora Geoffrion	<b>Bible in a Year Project with St. Andrews Jan-Dec 2018</b> Mary Friedman Beth Kronlund Ann Mundy Ann Wolpert Cindy Lincoln Kyle Ondricek Deb Halpin Carolyn McGarr All Callahan Christine Callahan Bev Sager Barbara Kaminsky members of St. Andrews <i>Pastors Harvey Hill and Marisa Brown Ludwig</i>
<b>Sacred Circle # 3</b> Caitlin Cronin* Laura Bird Smith Deb Manning Diane Peluso Ruth O'Donnell	<b>First Church Facebook Page</b> <i>Deb Garrity Marilyn Paul-Lewis</i> <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig Pam McGrath</i>	<b>First Church Library</b> Carole Mazzarino
	<b>First Church Forum</b>	<b>Women's Ministries Team</b>

**ADULT EDUCATION: Herb Zettl:** The Adult Education Team is made up of Mark Pohlman, Bob Barkman, Bill Harbison, Herb Zettl and Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig. The team met on the average of every four or five weeks during 2018. New members are welcome. Early in the year Bob distributed a copy of a survey done a few years ago by the Adult Education Team. In the response, social justice, interfaith issues and contemporary issues were checked off as the most popular topics by the congregation.

First Church and St. Andrews teamed up to participate in a project to "Read the Bible in a Year." Members of each congregation met weekly and over dinner at local restaurants to discuss the assigned readings.

Adult Education teamed up with the newly created Social Justice team to sponsor lectures and book readings which were held after the church service in the Buxton Room. In addition the team sponsored a series of sermon talk-backs with the ministers after the church services. During the months of May and June the AE team led three discussions of the book *Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult. The book was acclaimed as one of the best books on racism. Summer movie nights were held on July 26 and August 9th.

Adult Education launched a “Fifth Sunday Book Club” in September. On September 30th, Mark Pohlman led a book discussion of *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World’s Largest Religion is Seeking a Better Way to be Christian* by Brian MacLaren. On December 30th, Bob Barkman and Herb Zettl led a book discussion on *The Heavens Might Crack: The Death and Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.* by Jason Sokol. On January 13th, 2019, the Adult Education and Social Justice teams jointly sponsored a talk by the author as part of the Martin Luther King Jr. celebration.

Upcoming events will include a presentation by Helene Houston who will speak on her new book *Well-Come to Retirement* and showing the movie *Selma* March 29.

**Youth Group - YES (High School youth group, grades 9 - 12) and YUP (Middle School youth group, grades 6-8) Christine Callahan, Youth Director:** Since becoming the Youth Director at First Church of Christ Longmeadow I have worked to draw a group of youth to weekly Sunday night meetings and the occasional service project or holiday party. By Fall 2018, I combined YES and YUP into one Youth Group, due to participation and attendance. In October 2018 we planned and put on a Halloween Party. Five youth attended this event. In November we had more youth involvement and were able to complete around 15 college care packages to send out. We also created candy cane sleighs to be sold at the craft fair. The average youth group meeting that month was around 7 youth. In December we celebrated the Christmas season with a party. Three youth attended this party.

Liz Woolsey was the youth director in the spring of 2018. She planned several meetings with the youth including a talk with Eric Lesser on Gun Control in our schools, discussions on depression and other various topics. First Church Youth and Families walked in the October 2018 CROP Walk, receiving the Golden Sneaker award at the CROP walk this year for the most raised money of any organization participating in the Greater Springfield CROP walk in 2017. The youth played a huge role in raising a lot of money for this event.

My vision for this coming year is that all youth feel welcome and a part of the greater church community. I pray that they will feel that they belong here. I hope for the youth to form bonds with each other and adults and children in the church. I want the youth to be able to explore and practice their faith in an open and judgement free zone. I want this to be a place and space that will support and strengthen our youth through faith. I hope that youth will be willing to come to youth group and other events so that we may form these connections and lasting relationships with them. To help meet this vision, I’m working to gather a new Youth Ministry Team to help expand ideas, programming, promotion and First Church community support for middle and high school youth!

**CONFIRMATION II CLASSES** - Pastors Pam and Marisa and Wanona Dobbs worked with mentors, Liz Woolsey, and very active parents such as Beth Elam to support 8 youth in a year of monthly classes on faith issues, meeting with their mentors, participating in worship on Sundays, helping at the Christmas Fair and Hanging of the Greens Advent service, participating in the CROP Walk, a Lock-In Retreat in April 2018 at the church, visits to three other faith communities for worship and education including Temple Beth-El with Rabbi Katz, St. George’s

Greek Orthodox Church with Fr. Chris Stamas, and the Islamic Society of Western Mass with Imam Abdal-Baki and Dr. Saleem Bajwa. Confirmation was held on Sunday, June 2, 2018: Marco Eric DeBiasio, Faye Marrigjie Desarro, Meghan Delaney Kelly, Thomas Clark O'Donnell, Katherine Gold Romoser, Kylee Noelle Smith, Abigail Emma Stechmann (Philippa Jane Berry was confirmed on May 30, 2018.) and the Congregation got to hear the statements of faith from all the youth. Pastors Pam and Marisa are not currently holding a Confirmation class Fall 2018 - Spring 2019 due to a gap in numbers of youth at that age, and will revisit holding a Confirmation Class each year as students move forward through church school and youth groups.

**FAMILY MINISTRIES Marilyn Paul-Lewis:** The Family Ministries Team continues its mission to organize activities and education for families and friends of First Church. All activities this past year were designed to be intergenerational. Different events were organized to appeal to different age levels and were held on varying weekend days and times to make it possible for the greatest number of children and families to participate. Some activities were at the church, others were offsite. Most were planned just for fun, but some had a mission and service component.

Last year's activities included movie nights, a games night, Easter egg decorating (with extra eggs donated to Loaves & Fishes and the Community Lunch at Faith UCC), Family Flowers (with children potting bedding plants to give to their families and the Call to Care Ministry), a visit to a water park, trash pickup at a Springfield park (followed by ice cream at Cold Stone Creamery), kickball on the Green, a trip to the New England Air Museum (again followed by ice cream), Randall's Corn Maze, a Family Ministries contingent at the CROP Hunger Walk, pumpkin decorating, Halloween movie night, and an afternoon at Interskate.

This year the Christmas Pageant returned to First Church. Under the able direction of Debbie DeBiasio and Gail Fei with Music Director Dan Inglis, and assisted by a group of enthusiastic volunteers, 23 children sang and acted out the Christmas story on the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

In Church School and the Pre-K/Nursery, the lessons and activities are based on the Spill the Beans curriculum. The children have learned The Lord's Prayer and now lead the congregation in reciting it each month on Communion Sunday. Carolyn McGarr is the Lead Teacher in Church School, and Elaine Booke is the Pre-K/Nursery Teacher.

**CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig:** In 2018 Contemplative Prayer brought together 4-6 weekly participants for Centering Prayer (20 minutes of silent meditation) and Lectio Divina (an ancient practice of reading a portion of scripture multiple times with silence in between and then reflecting on it together.) This is held Wednesdays from 1-2pm in the upstairs Study. For some of the year a Friday 4pm gathering was led by former FCC music director John Gerry-Karajanes. For the new year, Contemplative Prayer is being offered on Mondays at 3pm as a self-led group, also in the upstairs Study, in addition to regular Wednesday 1-2pm gatherings led by Pastor Marisa. No experience necessary, please come if you are interested!

**FIRST CHURCH FORUM** - This site exists for the use of First Church but is currently inactive.

**BIBLE STUDY Rev. Pam McGrath:** Thursday Morning Bible Study meets 10:00-11:00 am, Thursday mornings in the Buxton Room. The class looks at the scripture which will be preached the following Sunday. The class reads the text; reflects on what speaks to us or what we have questions about. We then discuss the context, translations, geography, and commentary written about the text. Finally, we sit with the question, “What do you want to hear more about on Sunday?” The Bible Study is led by Pastor Pam and once a month by, another class member.

Participants: Mary Friedman, Kyle Ondricek, Phebe Wallace, Marilyn Sutton, Mora Gefferion, Ann Wolpert, Sandy Turner, Ann Mundy, Pat Jorczak and Marie Coulomb.

All are invited to attend. No previous reading is necessary. Come with doubts, questions, opinions or hopes. There is room for you!

**BIBLE IN A YEAR 2018 Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig:** A group ranging from 11-13 members met monthly from January - December 2018, sharing dinner together out at a local restaurant, and discussing the month's readings of Eugene Peterson's "The Daily Message" - a devotional that puts together portions of the bible in The Message translation daily to be read so that the reader completes the entire bible at the close of one year. Participants would read on their own daily during the month and then gather to discuss and have bible study more in depth with Pastor Marisa. The first 6 months included leadership by Rev. Harvey Hill from St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, and in the second half of the year, guest leadership by Rabbi James Green from the Jewish Community Center. Places of gathering included Bertucci's, Rinaldi's and finally Center Square Grill in E. Longmeadow. The group met for the last time on January 9, 2019, to look at the whole span of the year's study and celebrate completing the bible in one year!

**LIBRARY Carole Mazzarino:** I have had a fabulous year heading-up the church library...thank you for asking me to do this important job!! Here are some highlights of library updates for 2018-

1. The library is now called First Reads- The Library at First Church
2. Weeded the collection of duplicate books
3. A library update was written each month for the COG
4. The First Reads Children's Corner was developed in Bailey Hall
5. A logo stamper was created and the entire collection stamped
6. The shelf card box system was switched to a book binder system
7. Created an Adopt-A-Book program for birthdays, etc. and general funding for the library
8. Acquired 22 "new" adult books – some bought, some donated
9. Acquired 8 "new" children's books – some bought, some donated

**SACRED CIRCLES Susan Kennedy:** Three Sacred Circles are currently meeting. Circle Sisters share stories and exploring spirituality in a confidential setting. Each circle sets its own meeting times and topics and includes five to eight members. The first Circles were started more than a decade ago and have built lasting friendships. If you are interested in being part of a Circle, contact Susan Kennedy, Caitlin Cronyn, or Mary Friedman.

## CONGREGATIONAL LIFE MINISTRY for 2018 ANNE LANDRY, LIAISON

### Team Members as of February 2018:

<p><b>Called to Care</b>                  John Ouellette    Jean Clark                  Marieke Burt*    Bunny Bewick                  Dennis Coffey    Julie Pohlman                  Mark Garrity    Jack Russell                  Rhoda Zettl  <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig</i>  <i>Gay Wesson</i></p>	<p><b>Rev. Brown Ludwig</b>  <b>Pastor-Parish Relations Team</b>                  John Thomas*    Connie Shea                  Anne Landry    Katie Glasgow                  Mary Ellen Flaherty  <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig</i></p>	<p><b>Prayer Shawl Ministry</b>                  Melissa Mitchell*    Ruth Sandow                  Carole Mazzarino    Gladys Reynolds                  Katie Glasgow    Julie Pohlman                  Mora Geoffrion    Sonia Arakelian                  Candace Rutz    Mary Murphy                  Elizabeth Vartanian    Vicki Kiss                  Eleanor Santos    Sonia Merigian                  Carolyn Snyder    Audrey Rich                  Bev Gray    Marilyn Sutton  <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig</i></p>
<p><b>Food Service Team</b>  <i>Maura Stevens*</i>    Katie Glasgow                  Gladys Reynolds    Charlie McKee                  Ellie Plaus    Don Murphy                  Mary Murphy</p>	<p><b>Rev. McGrath Pastor-Parish Relations Team</b>                  Steve Gelling    Mora Geoffrion                  Wanona Dobbs    Alan Kulig                  Laura Bird Smith    Mary Friedman  <i>Pam McGrath</i></p>	<p><b>Women's Benevolent Society</b>                  Connie Shea    Shirlee Fassell*                  Mary Murphy    Eleanor Santos*  <b>Christmas Fair Team:</b>                  Sandra Turner*                  Mora Geoffrion</p>
<p><b>Cooking for Comfort Meal Train</b>                  Lucy Shepard</p>	<p><b>Friday Evening Fellowship</b>                  Stew Creelman*    Carol Creelman                  Stephen Kennedy</p>	

**CALLED TO CARE Marieke Burt:** The Called to Care team is designed to support members who are ill, need transportation, meals and simply visit those who are unable to come to church. The meals are provided by meal train which continues to be administered by Lucy Shepard. We deliver poinsettias at Christmastime, lilies at Easter time and occasional a bouquet just because. This team meets on a monthly basis for a check in and support.

**MEAL TRAIN Lucy Shepard:** I am blessed to be able to help First Church from afar with those in need. Ten families were helped this year by providing meals using Mealtrain.com as a vehicle to reach those helping to cook and deliver and those being helped.

We have about 15 'faithful cookers', but are always looking for more. It's easy, just contact me and I'll add you to the list.

Without the support of all those willing to prepare homemade meals, this mission would not be successful.

**WOMEN'S BENEVOLENT SOCIETY Connie Shea:** The Women's Benevolent Society of First Church completed another very successful season. In February our first luncheon featured speaker Betsy McKee who presented an interesting program about interpreting tombstone markings for famous people in our area graveyards. In March we had our annual celebration for World Day of Prayer with a luncheon and program written by women from the country of Suriname. This year we were pleased to have many women from St. Mary's and St. Andrews join us. For our April luncheon, Longmeadow's own expert woodcarver, Dene Kimball presented a program about

his amazing wood carvings. In May we invited the Friday Evening Fellowship to join us for an evening Potluck supper. Reverend Pam McGrath and her husband Doug Lipman entertained with a wonderful evening of storytelling. In June we held our annual Pizza Planning Party. Sage Inglis spoke to us about the Tree House Foster Program.

On October 5, our luncheon and program meeting featured Charles Casartello who spoke about Griffen's Friends, an organization which supports children with cancer. On October 21, WBS organized a Silver Tea as part of Heritage Sunday. In November Springfield Garden Club member and master gardener, Suzanne Reed presented a workshop on holiday floral arrangements.

Our Annual Fundraiser, Christmas on the Green Fair, was held on December 1st. Thanks to the hard work of all our WBS members and many, many others of First Church, we raised over \$18,000 which will be distributed to over twenty charitable organizations in our area.

**FRIDAY EVENING FELLOWSHIP Stew Creelman:** Our social group made up largely of senior members of the Congregation had another full year in 2018. We started out with another great meal as about 40 met at John and Dennis' home for the February Fling. During the year four members graciously opened their homes to host our meetings. In March we learned of the work of the CT River Conservancy with Andy Fisk. March subject was our "retired" pastor, Gary DeLong sharing his thoughts about his retirement assignment as Exec Dir. of the Maine Seacoast Ministry. Summer brought two trips to Tanglewood where the group lavished in the sounds of the BSO while feasting on a picnic lunch. At the October meeting CPA John Gannon led a discussion of opioids and addictions and their effects in the workplace, and then in November we met for the first time in the Buxton Room as our previously scheduled host was ill - the subject...Art in the City with Evan Plotkin. The annual Carol Sing in December was again hosted by Phoebe Wallace to kick off the Christmas season.

**FOOD SERVICE TEAM Maura Stevens:** The Food Service Team has continued to plan, cook, and clean up this past year for all events at First Church that involve meal.

**PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY Melissa Mitchell:** For the Year 2018, The Prayer Shawl Ministry is proud to report.....

**Prayer Shawls and Baptism Blankets:**

An impressive 744 shawls have been knitted or crocheted and distributed since the group's inception in 2004. In the year 2018, a total of 31 people received prayer shawls from our group. We donated approximately 1/3 of them to Hospice in Springfield, Massachusetts. This organization continues to thank our kind efforts and thoughtful prayers, telling us how the shawls bring comfort and peace to the recipients.

A total of 17 baptism blankets have been given since this tradition began in 2015. We currently have 5 completed blankets in the "reserves" for future baptisms.

**Prayer Shawl Blessing:**

On June 24, 2018 Pastor Pam blessed our shawls during the worship service. Before the blessing, a church member shared a lovely testimonial about her experience receiving a Prayer Shawl. This annual tradition again provided blessings for the shawls and recognized the women who generously give their time and skill to create them.

### **Knit in Public Day:**

On June 9, 2018 some of the members of the Prayer Shawl Ministry participated in “World Wide Knit in Public Day”. Local knitters met on The Green participating for the first time in this world wide event that began back in 2005. “World Wide Knit in Public Day” celebrates knitters, encouraging the support of knitting communities throughout the world. We posted the picture that was taken that day to the church’s website and Facebook page.

### **Meetings:**

We meet twice a month: 7PM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month and 10AM, 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month.

### **Membership and Key People:**

Our current membership: 23 members

Our coordinated leadership:

- Ruth Sandow mails our reminder postcards.
- Katie Glasgow leads night meetings and Gladys Reynolds leads morning meetings.
- Carole Mazzarino and Melissa Mitchell facilitate group communications and record keeping.

**REV. MCGRATH’S PASTORAL RELATIONS TEAM Laura Bird Smith:** Rev. Pam’s Pastor-Parish Relations Team met several times during the course of 2018. The team consists of the following members: Rev. Pam, Wanona Dobbs, Mora Geoffrion, Mary Friedman, Alan Kulig, Steve Gelling and Laura Bird Smith. We provide a confidential source of support for Rev. Pam and hope to help solve any challenges that might arise with creativity and compassion. Our hope for the upcoming year is to foster more open dialogue between the team and the congregation.

**REV. BROWN LUDWIG’S PASTORAL RELATIONS TEAM Mary Ellen Flaherty:** Our main purpose continues to be providing ongoing support for our Associate Pastor who plays a critical role in faithfully ministering both to our congregation and to the greater community. We do this by serving as a confidential, supportive sounding board encouraging her efforts to maintain optimal spiritual, emotional and physical health. The PRT meets every other month as a group with Pastor Marisa and additionally maintains regular informal contact between scheduled meetings. Throughout this past year, the PRT’s focus included continued review and prioritization of job functions within her call, specifically helping her discern her hopes and goals for a settled Associate Pastor covenant, providing review and feedback throughout the process. John Thomas, PRT member, participated in a small team that worked with both Pastors to define a settled Associate’s Pastor’s call given the visioning goals defined by the 2020 Team. The covenant was approved by the Leadership Team in December 2018 and will be affirmed by the congregation at the annual meeting.

# MISSION IN THE WORLD MINISTRY for 2018 MORA GEOFFRION, LIAISON

## Team Members as of February 2018

Environmental Justice Team	Mission Team	Haiti Ministry Team
Mark Pohlman* Julie Pohlman	Steve Gelling* Tara Howe	Mark Pohlman* Mary Friedman
Eleanor Santos Herb Zettl	Connie Shea	Wanona Dobbs Marilynn Sutton
Stew Creelman Shirlee Fassell	<i>Marisa Brown Ludwig</i>	Len Bertelli Dan Bausch
<i>Maura Stevens Marisa Brown Ludwig</i>		Lucy Cassells Anne Landry

**HAITI MINISTRY Mary Friedman:** Our church’s spring scholarship fund drive for the students at schools supported by the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti ( CONASPEH ) raised approximately \$14,000 to help Haitian students attend school this year. The money was sent to Global Ministries and then on to CONASPEH. A youth pilgrimage was planned for February school vacation week in 2019 but we did not have a sufficient number of interested high school students this year to make that possible. Instead, an adult group will journey to Haiti March 23-28 including Dr. Mark Pohlman, Mary Friedman, Pastor Pam McGrath and several other friends of First Church. A collection of non-prescription medications and vitamins and other medical supplies took the place of the nursing bags as an alternative Christmas gift this year. These supplies will be given to the clinic at CONASPEH by the group going in March 2019. We participated in a Webinar with “House of Hope” – an organization in Haiti supported by Global Ministries which provides education and job training for “Restavecs” – child domestic slaves in that country. We continue to explore ways to improve our communication with CONASPEH to try to understand how we can more effectively support them. We are excited to have Pastor Pam making her first trip to visit our mission partners in Port-au-Prince.

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TEAM Mark Pohlman:** The EJ team, first started in 2014, met eight times in 2018, as part of its mission to educate the congregation about and to encourage active participation in environmental stewardship. Members included Rev. Marisa Ludwig, Maura Stevens, Eleanor Santos, Shirlee Fassell (before annual meeting), Stew Creelman, Herb Zettl, Julie Pohlman, and Mark Pohlman, Chair. Mora Geoffrion serves recently as the liaison from leadership.

Some of the team’s activities in 2018 included:

- Promoted a carbon fast during Lent
- Maintained a “Garden of Eden” bulletin board in Bailey Hall.
- Researched, as requested at the 2018 Annual Church meeting, the feasibility of heat pumps as an alternative for solar panels for church energy source. This is not feasible as there is not enough land for horizontal pipes and vertical drilling would require an estimated twenty five wells, which, going through sandy soil, would be prohibitively expensive.
- On March 26th, Mark Pohlman and Rev. Marisa participated in a interfaith rally, called “Let my People Go: Exodus from Fossil Fuels” at the State House in Boston in a effort to ask Gov. Baker to stop allowing the building of new gas lines.
- During Lent, a series of films about different religious approaches to dealing with climate change, was shown after church services.

- In April, the team co-sponsored with Storrs Library, the film “ Catching the Sun” which dealt with the potential and growth of solar power.
- Publicity about Earth Day observances in the Pioneer Valley was promoted on the church website.
- The team helped support the passage of the plastic bag ban at the Longmeadow Town meeting
- First Church was awarded the Level One Green Congregation Challenge award at the annual MACUCC meeting held in Springfield in June, 2018. The award consisted of a certificate and stole. Twelve specific action steps had to be completed.
- The team worked on documenting the next twelve projects, done by Mora, Stan, and other church teams, necessary to become a Level Two Green Congregation. These included installing low energy LED lights, occupant sensors for lights in common areas, programmable thermostats, adding new insulation, shifting church communication from paper to electronic media, using recycled, sustainably sourced office products and cleaning supplies, banning Styrofoam and plastic water bottles, switching to reusable dishes and utensils, running the dishwasher only when full and letting it air dry, shifting to organic lawn care, and installing bike rack. The team started a composing system and helped adopt an Earth-Centered curriculum for children’s religious education. We worked with Carol Mazzarino in purchasing seven books for children dealing with environmental issues. We are hopeful that all these efforts by many individuals and teams will result in FC being rewarded with a Level Two Green Congregation award at the 2019 annual meeting. Achieving the more difficult Level Three award in 2020 will be a challenge. See [macucc.org/green](http://macucc.org/green) congregations for details.
- Stew Creelman has continued to meet with Steve Kennedy and Steve Gelling (Chair) of the building sub-committee looking at putting solar panels on the church roof. Returning FC member, Frank Smith, who was able to successfully guide the Pilgrim Congregational Church in Harwich Port on the Cape to install solar panels, is working closely with this committee.

The Environmental Justice Team wants to thank the congregation for its efforts to become better stewards of the earth. The team always welcomes new ideas and workers.

**MISSION AND SOCIAL CONCERNS TEAM Stephen Gelling:**

The Mission team continued to guide the church’s allocation of area cause funds to worthy charities. Our team disbursed over \$20,000 to the following organizations:

- Action Center Tutoring
- Christina's House
- CONESPEH (new classroom building roof in Haiti)
- Crop Walk
- Food Bank of Western MA
- Freedom Dogs
- Friends of the Homeless
- Gray House
- The Lighthouse
- Longmeadow Food Pantry
- Minister’s Discretionary Fund
- Open Pantry
- Puerto Rico earthquake relief

- Roca
- Salvation Army Fuel Fund
- Springfield Rescue Mission
- VNA/Hospice of Springfield
- Worcester LGBT Asylum Support
- Area cause funds were also used to fund a hurricane damage repair of a North End-Springfield home for a needy restaurant.

Mission Endowment income was used to fund a Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity “Blitz Build.” First Church donated \$10,000 to become a lead sponsor of this project, in which a home was erected and enclosed in just 10 days and now serves as the new home of a refugee family that have become our area’s newest Habitat homeowners.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY for 2018

### MARY FRIEDMAN AND SUE MONKS, CO-LIAISONS

#### Team Members as of February 2018

<b>Visioning 2020</b> Susan Kennedy Susan Dugan Marieke Burt John Thomas	<b>Open and Affirming Team</b> Mary Friedman* Marieke Burt Thomas Kubick Sandra Turner <i>Marisa Brown-Ludwig</i>	<b>Loaves and Fishes Team</b> Tim Plankey Tassie Plankey Wanona Dobbs Julie Pohlman Candace Rutz Dawn Barkman
<b>Church Delegates</b> Susan Kennedy*, MACUCC Ute Schmidt, MACUCC Marieke Burt, MACUCC	<b>Website</b> <i>Deb Garrity</i>	<b>Ecumenical and Interfaith Partnership</b> Julie Pohlman Marieke Burt <i>Marisa Brown-Ludwig</i>
<b>Social Justice Team</b> Mary Friedman Susan Kennedy Anne Landry Liz Woolsey Herb Zettl Christine Callahan Sue Monks Tara Howe Ann Wolpert	Whiting Houston Helene Houston Bob Barkman Dawn Barkman Mark Pohlman Julie Pohlman Sallie Baldwin Marieke Burt Marilyn Paul-Lewis <i>Pam McGrath</i> <i>and Marisa Brown Ludwig</i>	

**NEW NEIGHBORS Stewart Creelman:** This team has the assignment to reach out to the community to bring our neighbors in to First Church. We have changed our name from Neighbor to Neighbor as we are to be primarily reaching out to new residents. There was precious little to report of our work in 2018 and we expect to get active again this year.

**ECUMENICAL /INTERFAITH PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY** Pastors Pam & Marisa & First Church Members have been involved across the year in attending and participating in interfaith vigils, meetings, programs and worship services. (see some individual programs noted in Pastor Marisa’s AP report.) First Church anchors a weekly gathering at Starbucks in Longmeadow on Tuesdays called “Coffee & Conversations” which is often attended by clergy and community members of the local ecumenical and interfaith community including St. Andrew’s Episcopal, Sinai Temple and Temple Beth El, St. Paul’s Lutheran in E. Longmeadow, a local muslim

leader, and more. First Church brought Confirmands to Temple Beth-El, St. George's Greek Orthodox and the Islamic Society of Western Mass in winter/spring 2018.

Pastors Pam and Marisa participated in vigil services Oct 28 and Nov 4, 2018 in the Jewish Community in the aftermath of the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting, with First Church members standing in solidarity with our Jewish neighbors during such a terrible time. First Church partnered with St. Andrew's Episcopal Church for Good Friday and Easter Vigil services again this year during Holy Week, as well as the Adult formation offering of Bible in a Year from January - June 2018. Pastors Pam and Marisa participate in a local interfaith clergy group that produced and led the fall 2018 interfaith bible study series, "Friends Next Door" which partnered interfaith clergy for study programs on the Pentateuch, the first five books of the bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy - held on 6 Monday nights at First Church in the Buxton Room - a very successful series with 20+ in attendance each week! More will come from this series in March/April 2019 on Thursday nights at Sinai Temple - more details will be in the COG newsletters and First Church eblasts.

Pastor Marisa has been an officer in the Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield, and this year by June was elected Vice President of this group. First Church Longmeadow became a member in the Interfaith Council this year, joining as a larger individual faith community member. Pastor Marisa attends monthly meetings for this group, and Ann Wolpert from Leadership Team attended some of the programs held with Pastor Marisa, including an evening commemorating the outgoing president of ICGS Dr. Martin Pion of the Roman Catholic Diocese, in a program called "Faith: What's Your Story?" held at the Elms College in Chicopee. Pastor Pam was a presenter at the Interfaith Thanksgiving Program/Service held on November 18, 2018 at Springfield College, sponsored by the Interfaith Council.

#### **LOAVES AND FISHES TEAM Tassie and Tim Plankey:**

"Our Loaves & Fishes Community Kitchen has provided prepared meals to people who are disadvantaged in Greater Springfield on a daily basis since it began in 1980. Lunch and supper are available seven days a week. Over 750 volunteers from faith communities, civic groups, area businesses and student organizations are involved in the preparation and serving of nutritious meals. Loaves & Fishes is a life sustaining service and essential to the health of people who are disadvantaged. Providing meals is not only a way to prevent malnutrition and improve health, but also a way to connect people to other essential services." - openpantry.org

We are proud to be a part of those 750 volunteers. We shop monthly at Restaurant Depot and spend about \$275 on food. This outreach program needs a budget of at least \$3,300 dollars per year to serve about 4,200 meals. We buy enough pasta and meatballs to make 10 large casseroles to serve a meal to 150 people. We also purchase enough hotdogs, buns, fruit and vegetables to deliver with our casseroles for an additional meal to feed 150. The food is delivered on the 4th Monday of the month to South Congregational Church. We also make a delivery to Shiloh Seventh Day Adventist Church on the 2nd Sunday of the month. These meals are delivered hot and feed about 50 people. We appreciate the help of Carole and Gary Mazarino, Marieke Burt, Wanona Dobbs, Mora Geoffrian, Mary Friedman, and of course our children Shannon and Connor.

**THE OPEN AND AFFIRMING TEAM** **Mary Friedman:** During this past year the ONA team has continued to support the LGBTQ/Allies Group that meets monthly in our church. Members of the team attend regularly and have found it to be a rich opportunity for personal growth. We believe we are providing a safe space for conversation and validation, especially for our transgender friends. It appears the support group is continuing to grow.

In April we partnered with our sister church in Feeding Hills to sponsor a speaker program with Dr. Elijah Nealy who authored the book *Transgender Children and Youth*. Also in April we held a Movie Night for our congregation and the wider community and showed the movie *3 Generations*.

In May we participated in the Northampton Pride Parade for our seventh year as an Open and Affirming church.

Last year we also supported the “Church in the Rotary” in East Longmeadow as they journeyed to become open and affirming.

Our first event of the new year has already taken place. On January 4th we showed the movie *Normal* with pizza and popcorn and conversation following the film. It is our intention to continue to provide opportunities for engagement and growth within the church and within the community specific to diversity. The ONA Team continues to explore new ways to live into our word of intentional and extravagant welcome for all God’s children. We would welcome more people to join us in this endeavor.

**VISIONING 2020: Susan Kennedy** This team was inactive this year, but will prepare to lead the church in evaluation of our goals for 2020 and setting new goals next year.

**CHURCH DELEGATES: Susan Kennedy:** The Church Delegates represent First Church at installations and ordinations of pastors, and at ecclesiastical councils at which people preparing for ordination are questioned and then approved for ordination. These gatherings keep our church connected to the wider church. We also encourage as many people as possible to attend Hampden Association Annual Meeting, MACUCC Annual Meeting and Super Saturdays, gatherings of hundreds of UCC members from Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. We bring back lots of fresh ideas and solutions to problems, hear inspiring speakers, and connect with friends from other UCC churches. Susan Kennedy and Rev McGrath also serve on the Hampden Association Church and Ministry Committee. Susan is Treasurer and Pam is newly elected as Chair of the committee, which is in charge of maintaining standing of all pastors and also of assisting churches facing difficulties or conflict.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM** **Mary Friedman:** Members of this team have met monthly to share what they are doing and to plan programs and actions that promote justice, always grounded in scripture. A major focus of this new ministry team in its first year was to learn about the work of the Pioneer Valley Project in Springfield. This faith-based coalition works on many different fronts to insure justice for people in the greater Springfield area. Social Justice Team sponsored programs for the congregation throughout the year to acquaint the church with the work of PVP. Speakers included representatives from the Unitarian Universalist Society of Springfield, Sinai Temple, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the Directors of the Pioneer Valley Project. The group recommended to the Leadership Team that our church join PVP, and this was unanimously approved.

In March members participated in actions against gun violence – supporting youth in the “March for Our Lives” and in actions at Smith and Wesson. Some members of the Social Justice Team have been active this year in the Poor People’s Campaign – both in Boston and in Springfield. Three members heard the Reverend Dr. William Barber , leader of the Poor People’s Campaign, speak at UMASS. Two members traveled to Washington, D.C. for a Poor People’s Campaign rally on the National Mall. More than 20 people saw “Disgraced” at Chester Theater and discussed the play afterwards over dinner. Some members have also participated regularly in the monthly “Jericho Walk” at the offices of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Springfield in support of people in sanctuary or being held in detention. On Primary Day the team manned an “Eat, Pray, Vote” booth in front of the church, encouraging people to consider their faith as they headed to the polls. After the massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, members attended Sabbath service at Sinai Temple with representatives of many different faith communities. In November members attended the Transgender Day of Remembrance honoring transgender people who were victims of violence during the past year. Members planned to have a luncheon and author talk with Jason Sokol who wrote “The Heavens Might Crack – the Death and Legacy of Martin Luther King” - on January 13, 2019 for the church. The group also has discussed plans to see “The Mountaintop” – a play at the Majestic Theater about Dr. King (January 3-February 10). Several members of the team are planning to take an interfaith “Civil Rights Journey” in April with friends from the Jewish community. The group, which will be led by Rabbi Emeritus Mark Shapiro, will travel to Atlanta and then on to famous sites in Alabama. It has been an exciting first year for this new team!

## STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES MINISTRY for 2018 MARIEKE BURT, LIAISON

### TEAM MEMBERS AS OF FEB 2018:

<b>Treasurer</b> Stewart Creelman* <b>Assistant Treasurers</b> Whiting Houston <i>Pam McGrath</i>	<b>Budget Team</b> Stewart Creelman Susan Dugan Susan Kennedy* Whiting Houston <i>Pam McGrath</i> <i>Maura Stevens</i>	<b>Financial Secretary:</b> Richard Volk <b>Assistant Financial Secretaries</b> Stephen Kennedy Katie Glasgow
<b>Investment and Finance Team</b> Stew Creelman* Nola Kulig Susan Dugan Whiting Houston <i>Pam McGrath</i>	<b>Buxton Room Decorators</b> Susan Dugan* Joey Rosenthal Nancy Russell Rhoda Zettl	<b>Stewardship Team</b> Carey Larsen* Susan Kennedy Shirlee Fassell Stew Creelman <i>Maura Stevens Pam McGrath</i>
<b>Property Team</b> Stephen Kennedy* Don Murphy John Ouellette <i>Maura Stevens</i> <i>Stan Zdonick</i>	<b>Landscape and Gardening Team</b> Marieke Burt Stew Creelman Mary Murphy Sandra Turner Don Murphy* and Property Team	<b>Leadership Development and Nominations Team</b>
<b>Memorial Fund and Memorial Garden Team</b> S of Resources Rep: Marieke Burt Con Life Rep: Anne Landry Sr Pastor Pam McGrath	<b>Personnel Team</b> Ted Steger Susan Kennedy Whiting Houston <i>Pam McGrath</i>	<b>Montessori Lease Team</b> Susan Kennedy <i>Maura Stevens</i> <i>Pam McGrath</i> _____

**CONSECRATION SUNDAY TEAM Carey Larsen:** One of the most important tasks for the Stewardship team is to conceptualize, create, and manage the Annual Campaign which is the cornerstone of the church's income stream. This year we identified other projects that will also support the church's finances — special additional giving and planned giving.

We created a theme that articulates First Church's mission "God's Love Overflowing — We change lives and serve the world through love and justice." Pastor Pam introduced this theme to the congregation in September. We made the decision to have weekly testimonials so that we can learn how the church has changed lives. On Heritage Sunday we heard stories about First Church benefactors from previous generations. At the "Dream Dinner" we invited people to tell us about their dreams for First Church and think about how we can do even more to change lives in the future. We now have a list of projects and ideas that are ready to be funded by special additional giving from passionate supporters. Now that the Annual Campaign is wrapping up, we are working on an education program for planned giving.

Consecration Sunday was celebrated on October 28 with a special service and a delicious brunch in Bailey Hall. As of this writing we have 144 pledges totaling \$337,488 for 2019. A number of households have yet to pledge.

**FINANCIAL SECRETARIES Stephen Kennedy:** The Financial Secretary, Richard Volk, is responsible for counting and securing service offerings and reporting same to Maura Stevens. The Financial Secretary is assisted by Stephen Kennedy and Katie Glasgow who alternate Sundays to assist with the counting process.

**BUDGET TEAM Susan Kennedy:** The Finance Team meets monthly with Joellen Legrand of Professional Business Services to review the actual income and expenses compared to budget. We continue to refine the process so that an accurate and useful document can be presented to the Leadership Team every month. As budget preparation time approaches, we ask staff and teams to review their expected needs for the coming year. We conduct a Budget Forum a few weeks before Annual Meeting to give everyone an opportunity to review the budget in detail. Susan Kennedy works with our on-site bookkeeper Sue Morse to ensure that funds are credited to the appropriate account. This process gets smoother as we go, resulting in decreased costs for bookkeeping services. Anyone who wants to know the details of their team's account can email Susan who will get them for you asap. This gives teams confidence to make best use of the funds available to them.

**PERSONNEL Susan Kennedy:** The Personnel Team had a light workload this year, as Rev. McGrath settled into her position of Head-of-Staff. She took the lead in developing good working relationships with all our employees. When it was time to hire a new Communications Director, we took part in the interviews. Whiting Houston, Shirlee Fassell, and Marieke Burt have joined the team this year. Whiting served on a team with John Thomas and Steve Gelling to review Marisa's contract as she prepared to move from "Acting" to settled Associate Pastor. Several sections of more modern language were added to her covenant agreement and to Pam's as well. Special thanks are due to Whiting, John, and Steve for their thoughtful work on the covenant agreements.

**LONGMEADOW MONTESSORI LEASE TEAM: Susan Kennedy:** Steve Gelling, Susan Kennedy, and Rev. Pam McGrath met with Montessori Head of School MaryJo McNamara and LMI Board Member Chris Orszulak to negotiate a ten year renewal of the lease. The lease was signed in December. First Church and LMI

have a very healthy working relationship at this time. Stan, Maura, and Marilyn have been very responsive to LMI needs, and the Property Team has also ensured that repairs were completed as necessary. After a state inspection required the construction of a fence separating the First Church courtyard from the street, First Church and LMI worked together to get approvals from the Historic District Commission and the Zoning Board. The fence was installed in 2018 and many people say “it looks like it’s always been there.”

**PROPERTY TEAM Stephen Kennedy:** The Property Team was elected in May of 2016. Members are Stephen Kennedy and John Ouellette. Our mission is to oversee the needs of church buildings, to include the parking lot and garage as well as the Montessori building. We meet with church employees Maura Stevens and Stan Zdonick to identify items of concern, and to identify what can be resolved by volunteers and what requires outside contractors. In the past year, Property supervised:

**Interior items:**

- Removed and replaced one 40 gallon gas fired domestic hot water heater. This is in tandem with a second hot water heater to provide sufficient hot water to all areas.
- Removed and replaced of the church’s main heating system. A single gas fired steam boiler was replaced with two new boilers, one of which can supply hot water heat for individual rooms with dedicated thermostats. Numerous unanticipated trouble areas were identified and rectified.
- Removed and replaced of the ceiling fans in the sanctuary, resulting in greater air circulation for both heating and cooling purposes.
- Bailey Hall east walls and windows painted to match the rest of the hall.
- Bailey Hall stage doors completely renewed.
- Bailey Hall stage walls painted a “flat black”, replacing the old pink, yellow and blue color scheme.
- Replaced damaged flooring area in choir hallway.
- Upgraded Fire Alarm system as old system not working properly.

**Exterior items:**

- Removed and replaced entrance lighting with LED units.
- Exterior windows washed and “spider webbing” removed.
- Montessori building rear porch/steps repaired & painted.
- Parking lot cleared of debris & dumpsters moved closer to fence.

**INVESTMENT AND FINANCE TEAM Stewart Creelman:** The year 2018 was our first full year working with our bookkeeping service of Joellen Legrand and Sue Morse. Sue is here every Wednesday and has been a great help. She is in frequent communication with our Moderator, Susan Kennedy, making sure our new system is working.

The total income from all sources for the year was \$683,822 and total expenses were \$686,050. While that bottom line was slightly in the negative, it was not a concern. A major effect came from furnace repairs which went over budget by \$12,000. We determined that we needed a new furnace. Last year’s annual meeting voted to spend \$75,000 as a draw from the permanent endowment. The job went significantly over that amount and this Annual Meeting will be asked to approve the additional draw of \$62,351, as that is extra cost of the total project.

Our endowment began the year at \$4,322,371. With a significant down market at year end the fund ended the year at \$3,812,278. We have implemented our new more conservative spending rule, drawing 4.75% of the average last

20 quarters. It is our hope to further reduce our percentage draw from the endowment in order to maintain the sustainability of our finances.

We are encouraged by the response of the Congregation with their level of pledging for the current year and as of this writing we see some of the downturn of the markets being reversed.

Many thanks for the participation of our team of Whiting Houston, Assistant Treasurer, Susan Dugan, Shirlee Fassell, Marieke Burt, and Moderator, Susan Kennedy

**BUXTON ROOM DECORATORS Susan Dugan:** This year we began our renovation of the Buxton Room handicap bathroom. The room has been painted and photos have been selected to hang on the walls. We plan to install a new sink and floor this year. Susan Dugan

**LANDSCAPE AND GARDENING TEAM Marieke Burt:** In the spring of 2018 a lot of work was done in the Memorial Garden which had been installed 20 years ago. Some of the mature bushes were removed, others were moved to create a new foundation planting, while another area received entirely new plants. In August the garden was rededicated during the summer outdoor service.

The Memorial Garden is supported by Memorial Fund funds Much of the work is done by volunteers.

We are always looking for more volunteers.

**SOLAR TEAM Steve Gelling:** A team has been formed to explore possibilities to install solar power at our church. There are many technology, financial, and historic district issues to consider; the team hopes to make significant progress in examining all of them in 2019. Team members include: Stew Creelman, Steve Gelling, Steve Kennedy, Frank Smith and Stan Zdonick.

# WORSHIP MINISTRY for 2018

MARIBETH WHITE, LIAISON

## Team Members as of February 2018

<b>Worship Planning Team</b> Carey Larsen* Dan Bausch Gail Fei Mary Friedman Wanona Dobbs Liz Woolsey <i>Dan Inglis Gay Wesson</i> <i>Pastors Marisa Brown Ludwig and Pam McGrath</i> <i>Marilyn Paul-Lewis</i>	<b>Deacons</b> Jennifer Creelman* John Ouellette* Jim Flaherty Mary Friedman Patrick Hildreth Anne Landry Carolyn McGarr Venessa O'Brien Deborah Manning Sue Monks Ruth O'Donnell Bev Sager Ted Steger <i>Gay Wesson</i> <i>Pam McGrath Marisa Brown Ludwig</i>	<b>Altar Flower Team</b> Marieke Burt* <i>Gay Wesson *</i> Candace Rutz Donna Young Kathleen Brindle Douglas Burt Pat Jorczak Mary Murphy Janice Patel
<b>Liturgists</b> Karen Rafferty* Carey Larsen Deb Garrity Wanona Dobbs Eleanor Santos John Ouellette Beverly Sager Peter Ludwig Michelle Steger Pat Jorczak Deb DeBiasio Melinda Cropsey <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig</i>	<b>Chancel Choir</b> Mora Geoffrion Carey Larsen* Maribeth White Gail Fei Susan Kennedy Katie Glasgow Sue Comstock Steve Kennedy Mark Todd Stew Creelman John Thomas Michael Wiseman Wanona Dobbs Eleanor Santos Peter Santos Elizabeth Woolsey <i>Dan Inglis</i>	<b>Audio-Visual Ministry</b> Don Wesson* Marieke Burt Mary Ellen Flaherty Jim Flaherty Mark Garrity John Ouellette Steve Creelman Doug Lipman
<b>Music Committee</b> Eleanor Santos* Carey Larsen Katie Glasgow Debbie DeBiasio <i>Marisa Brown Ludwig</i> <i>Dan Inglis</i>	<b>Handbell Choir</b> <i>Dan Inglis*</i> Carey Larsen Mark Todd Eleanor Santos Mora Geoffrion Stew Creelman Wanona Dobbs Diane Peluso Maribeth White Peter Santos	<b>Musicians</b> Marsha Harbison Bill Harbison John Turner Susan Kennedy Nola Kulig Pippa Berry Marisa Brown Ludwig <i>Dan Inglis*</i>
<b>Ushers</b> Don and Mary Murphy and others		<b>Bell Ringers</b> Don Wesson

### DEACONS Jenn Creelman: Yearly recap from 2018 from Deacon Ministry

- Ongoing weekly role of the deacons in worship:  
 Providing greeting, bulletin handouts and nametags, ushering organizing, support of prayer time.
- As well as, monthly meetings to address worship needs of the church including: Communion Sundays, Funerals, Glenmeadow, monthly worship and Holy Week/Christmas services.
- Narcan and Defibrillator Trainings
- Emergency Protocol/Church Security/Emergency preparedness. Deacons, Family Ministry Director Marilyn Paul-Lewis and Pastor Marisa have begun reworking a 2002 Emergency Preparedness policy and it is in progress - it will address new resources like FCC's Defibrillator and Narcan, dangerous intruders, fire drills, weather emergencies and more.

- Youth Service involvement-trying to incorporate more youth participation into one monthly service. Pastor Marisa and Diane Peluso have worked to bring 6th - 8th grade youth regularly to the first Sunday of the month with participating roles in Sunday Worship, or to help at Church Without Walls.
- Deacon Retreat at the Genesis House trying (to do every two years. 8-10 attendees). The Deacons have now gathered with the pastors for retreat twice in the past three years, the first time back in 2017 and again this past November 2018 led by Bev Sager and Mary Friedman.  
Roles to be continued to be overseen by the following Deacons:  
Mary Friedman: Communion for Glenmeadow  
Deb Manning: Scheduled Baptisms  
Pat Hildreth: Monthly Communion
- Deacons supporting in presence the LMI fence issue at zoning board mtg
- Heritage Sunday involvement.
- Continue to look at outdoor service set-up for summer- now with the fenced in yard- want to do outside service in front of front steps.
- Deacons are now lighting Christ Candle before services and are now involved in communion prayers.
- Homecoming Service- Changed this past year because of the Bluegrass Festival-Saturday Celebration the night before. We changed our traditional “Homecoming” celebration this year with a more elaborate coffee hour on Sunday after worship for the “homecoming.” Outside- we had coffee, lemonade, and a variety of ice cream treats.
- Deacons looking to have more involvement with “Church without Walls” first Sunday of the month 12-1 in downtown Court Square across from City Hall. Next to Old First Church.
- Deacons looking for new ideas to research for upcoming year a “welcome, visitor” card to put in pews to replace friendship pads.

**MUSIC TEAM Eleanor Santos:** Music at First Church is alive and well! The music team’s focus is to support our music director as he provides the congregation with varied genres of music in a creative , high quality manner, performed by choirs and various instruments using the talents of our parishioners of all ages. A highlight was the Christmas Pageant which included beautiful singing by our children. It is also the team’s responsibility to respond to applications, received annually, for the Ruth Perry Award. The intent of the award is to recognize those graduating high school seniors who have participated significantly in the musical life of the church. Special consideration is given to college bound students who plan to pursue a musical career, or a major in music. In 2018 this was awarded to Shannon Plankey in appreciation of her participation in various choirs over the years.

**LITURGISTS Karen Rafferty:** The Liturgists are responsible for supporting the Pastors in the worship service. They usually lead the congregation in the Opening Prayers, and read the Bible verses for the day. Occasionally, the liturgists also work with the Pastors on choral readings and readers’ theater.

The Liturgists do not typically meet on a regular basis. The Team meets “online” for scheduling. However, in 2018, the Team also met with our new Senior Pastor, Pastor Pam to understand her ideas on how the worship services would run, and to practice pacing in our reading. Pastor Marissa also met with the Team regarding readings, and she gave us all a book to help us with tricky pronunciations - Lector’s Guide to Biblical Pronunciations, Updated by Joshelp M. Staudacher.

At the end of 2018, two long-term liturgists retired - Eleanor Santos and Deb Garrity. We thank them for their long and devoted service to the Church. Looking ahead, we are excited to have added three new members to our group; John Thomas, Stuart Jones, and Junior Liturgist Megan McGarr.

**WORSHIP PLANNING TEAM Carey Larsen:** The Worship Planning team meets frequently to brainstorm ideas for worship. The pastors share their choices for liturgy, and we talk about how we can bring the scripture to life in the services. In some cases we choose a theme for a block of services. For example, we chose a “Listen” theme for Lent, “Love” for post-Easter, and “Angels” for Advent and Christmas. We talk about how we can express the theme through prayer, sermons, visuals, activities, video, music, and more. The themes are incorporated into the children’s messages, and the Sunday School Teacher and Family Ministries Director plan curriculum for both the Pre-K room and Sunday School Grades 1-5 to go with the Sunday adult worship themes and scriptures. The team also works on special services like Music Sunday and Heritage Sunday. A very important accomplishment this year was the return of the Christmas Pageant. Many thanks to Deb DeBiasio and Gail Fei for leading this effort.

**ALTAR FLOWER TEAM Marieke Burt:** The altar flower team meets quarterly to discuss and sign up for doing the flowers for that quarter. In between we communicate via email. Each Sunday one of the members of this team is responsible for making the arrangement on the altar. The flowers are paid for by individuals who sponsor the arrangement in memory of, or celebration of, a significant person in their life. They make a donation of \$45. Over the course of the year we are finding that fewer parishioners are sponsoring flowers and we are not sure why this is happening. We would like to welcome new members to this team.

**AUDIO/VIDEO TEAM Don Wesson for the Balcony Believers AV Gang:** I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Balcony Believers Video Gang. Our diligent members Marieke Burt, John Ouellette, Mark and Deb Garrity, Gay Wesson and the lynch pin for all our efforts Stan Zdonick who resolved any recording issues in a “nano second!”

Here’s our year’s summary of the highlights:

- We recorded and videotaped 52 church services and delivered a DVD to LCTV for broadcast each Sunday at 8AM and noon. While we do not know how many viewers we had each week, we estimate at least 12 to 15 individuals, both members and/or interested neighbors. We’re pleased to report that one of our most loyal viewers was Phebe Wallace who ALWAYS listened in to the 8AM service every Sunday morning and then headed to church for the 10AM live service!
- The sermon from each service was edited out by Deb Garrity and posted to the church’s website every Sunday.

- When requested weddings and funerals along with special services were taped and delivered to the families for their memory book. Often two or three DVDs were created so families could send along to members who were not present.
- 4 or 5 special services were taped in Bailey Hall or the Buxton Room.
- Perhaps the most significant 2018 event was a complete rebuild of the audio system for the church, including the Sanctuary, Buxton Room and Bailey Hall.
  - The FCC announced that our frequency was going to be used for government events and were were assigned new frequencies. This meant that we had to replace ALL of our current audio equipment--handhelds, lavaliers and associated gear.
  - Working with our audio supplier, ATC Audio, Stan Zdonick devoted hours and hours to the integration of new equipment with existing audio gear.
  - The result is a significant improvement in the quality of our audio capabilities in all three locations. We have added two digital lavaliers for the pastors and three analog handhelds for members and guests.
  - Finally, ATC spent at least ½ day tweaking our system and individually customizing both pastor's mics.
  - We can now run not only video from all locations but also guitar and laptop presentations can be accomplished in the Sanctuary and halls.
  - One final key capability: We can now control the audio from laptops or even an Iphone. At the moment one laptop is in the balcony and Dan has the capability to access the audio system on his Ipad or cell phone. Amazing technology!

One interesting capability: we have the ability to “live stream” church services for a special occasion or critical service. We are not recommending this service but it is available.

The future: While we now have a superior audio system, the team thinks it is important to research current speaker setup with an eye toward adding several speakers in the balcony and perhaps two vertical speakers for the front of the Sanctuary (left and right). Those people sitting in the first 5 rows often do not get an acceptable audio presentation. One final thought for 2019: While we have a solid core of video/audio volunteers we do need several trained camera/audio operators to backup existing team members.