

2019 Annual Report



First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

385th Annual Meeting

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2019 Annual Report
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational

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Report of the Senior Minister

2019 was in many ways a year of unprecedented turmoil on national, international and even planetary stages. And yet as the following pages will show, through it all, First Church continued to be a space of

Grounding in God, our hope and healing,
Growing in Community with Jesus our center,
and Acting in Love, made bold by the spirit.

With the renovation of our building complete, in February our trusted friend and congregational consultant Rev. Larry Peers led 35 First Church leaders in a retreat to help us discern our leadership priorities and a vision of how to live out our Grounding, Growing and Acting mission in a sustainable way. Together, we enumerated three priorities to guide our ministry in the years ahead. We were inspired to think of these not as categories for an ambitious new to-do list. There was a clear sense that we are already doing plenty, if not too much, given our resources. The priorities should be seen more as points on a compass that can inform all of our doing and being as we move forward together. Having listened deeply to one another and the Spirit, these compass points are inviting us to continue our work in 1. “creating a more radically inclusive and diverse faith community,” 2. “fostering deeper spiritual formation in our faith community” and 3. “renewing our processes for making decisions and stewarding our resources.” I hope you see these priorities reflected, whether boldly or subtly, in what follows. But first, a report on some big and unexpected changes that occurred this year at First Church.

Staffing Updates

Shortly after the retreat with Larry Peers, and after five years of faithful service as our Minister, Karin Case announced that she had discerned a call away from parish ministry for a new and as yet unknown chapter in her professional life. She completed her ministry with us in June. We miss her strong administrative, worship and leadership skills, her gifts for meditation and faith formation, her knack for newcomers ministry and her passion for justice. Karin also gave us the gift of a truly graceful pastoral transition with time to share heartfelt farewells and to plan ahead. Blessedly, our 2018-2019 ministerial interns, Lexi Boudreaux and Carlyle Stewart, agreed to step in and step up to cover many of Karin’s responsibilities for the 2019-2020 program year. By September, we were delighted to welcome Lexi and Carlyle into their new half-time roles as Pastoral Associates. Abundant thanks for the blessings of their growing ministries in our midst, not to mention for the stability, continuity and time they have offered us as we ponder next steps. In June, Executive Council appointed a Staff Model Working Group comprised of Leslie Pelton-Cairns, Dave Kidder, Joanne Paul, Rachel Carlson, Gaylen Morgan, Laurie Williams, Mary Robinson and myself, to examine our current staff configuration. We are a different church than we were five years ago when we created Karin's job description. With attention to our church priorities and financial resources, and FCC's vision for the future, the committee will have a full report on our research and scenario planning very soon!

Other staff notes include Peter’s well-deserved sabbatical from June to September and our saying farewell to sexton, Tina Jenner, and administrative assistant, Lang Haynes, both much beloved members of our staff. In the fall, we welcomed the gifts and graces of our new sexton, Rebecca LaFrance and new Office Assistant, Bruce Dillenbeck. To top it off, our ever-wonderful Parish Administrator, Kirsten Manville now has a new title of Director of Operations which better describes her growing job description and indispensable staff leadership and skills.

Report of the Senior Minister (continued)

Stewarding our Resources

Building and staff are among our greatest tools and resources for ministry and both were well cared for this year, all with attention to a sustainable future. When Nate Jones agreed to be Chair of Buildings and Grounds, we thought it would be a quieter stretch at 11 Garden Street, post-renovation. Not so! Building projects have included planting the front lawn, transplanting a beloved yellowwood, prep and financing for new solar panels and high-efficiency boilers coming in 2020, and prep for a roof and masonry project that will be partially funded by a Cambridge Historical Commission Community Preservation grant. In addition, thanks to a gift from the Riker family and an anonymous donor, we installed a new and much improved sound system in the sanctuary with the capacity to livestream and record our services. Our services can now be viewed live by members who are sick or otherwise unable to attend. Thank you Nate and team, and thanks to our highly skilled and dedicated Facilities Manager Kris McQuage-Loukas for overseeing it all. Special thanks also to our hard-working team of sextons, George, Kimel, Douglas and Rebecca, whose responsibilities have increased given an uptick in demand for our spaces since our recent renovations. Our sextons are the first to arrive at 6:45 am and the last to leave, often after 11 pm. For their work, both seen and unseen, we do not thank them enough so please be sure to help me in thanking each of them the next time you see them!

With our building humming more efficiently and effectively, we also turned our attention this year to several projects that have helped us be better stewards of our finances, congregation and staff. These projects include a bylaws revision that among other things designates a Finance Team for improved financial oversight and planning; a revised multigenerational Covenant for a Welcoming & Safe Community; new safety and security emergency procedures including protocols in case of a disruptive person or, God forbid, an 'active shooter' scenario; a job description and salary audit; and new and more streamlined employee performance review procedures. Over the summer, our entire staff received trainings in First Aid/CPR/AED, sexual harassment awareness, Narcan use in case of opioid overdose, and "run, hide, fight" protocols. Special thanks to our unflappable Treasurer Jason Whaley, to our Investments Committee chair Laurie Burt, and to our Stewardship Chair Steve Weller and to Karen McArthur for their hard work in ensuring that we are indeed on the road to a sustainable financial future. All of this largely behind the scenes work ensures our organizational and financial health, without which our ministries could not continue to thrive!

Renewing our Spiritual Formation and Worship

We also began to try some new things in our worship and formation life, albeit during a time of more limited staffing. 2019 worship highlights include several gospel-inspired visits from our friends Issa Bibbins and Nola Hood, a memorable Sunday of Samoan preaching, singing, and lunch thanks to Moana Bentin and her extended family, and a soul- and body-stretching offering of Capoeitica by Lion Sekou and Azmera Hammouri-Davis. In addition, our worship was as ever elevated by the exceptional music we enjoy week after week under the direction of Peter Sykes and our First Church Choir, as well as special music at Easter Sunday, during Advent and on other occasions. Special thanks also to Susie Longfield and our Bell Choir that performed throughout the year. Also, a big shoutout to Susie Longfield for her stellar stewardship testimony which pulled in an additional \$11k in pledges due to her asking people to "pull out their pencils" on Pledge Sunday! Of course I'd be remiss to mention virtually any of our worship services without offering profound thanks to Sarah Higginbotham, whose creativity and professionalism shines through every Sunday morning, both in and outside of worship, and with our kids of every age! Her gifts with our children, families and

Report of the Senior Minister (continued)

committed church school teachers are exquisite and the proof is in the numbers. Over 60 children on Regathering Sunday! Sarah has taken on the additional role of preparing the bulletin so extra kudos to her for keeping straight (and mostly typo-free!) the myriad details that appear there!

In addition to ongoing Faith and Life groups, book studies and weekly meditation, our Adult formation highlights included, (by popular demand,) more Bible study, with a Lenten Study on the Parables, our fall Bible Study on Spiritual Resilience and, with heartfelt thanks to Brent Coffin, a weekly Thursday morning offering of Praying with the Psalms offering. In addition, Lexi and I offered a well-received weekly Aging with Grace group last spring. Meanwhile, our Young Adults group continued to be led by Phil Jones; and our monthly Men's Breakfast and Men's Retreat, led by the three wise guys, Peter, Perry and Dave. In place of a fall retreat we offered a super-fun all church Regathering Potluck and Community Dance. Thanks in large part to Lexi Boudreaux, our Women's Retreat was another hit. We also offered a very well-attended Advent Women's Community Dinner. We are a community that values making deep connections and are looking for yet more ways to deepen our relationship with God and one another. And since we so often do this around food, deep gratitude as well to outgoing fellowship co-chair, Marian Smith, and to our fabulous quarterly Fellowship captains for keeping us well nourished in more ways than one.

Creating a More Radically Inclusive and Diverse Community

Several ministries have been key to this effort. Leading the charge, in part, is our Beloved Community group who, with the help of their endlessly energetic chair, Peggy Stevens, coordinated various racial justice and equality activities throughout the year. From our Public Remembrance Project, initial ideas for which are currently being shared with communities of color in 6 focus groups in and around Cambridge, to our fall Road to Freedom Pilgrimage to DC with 34 travelers and preparatory classes passionately led by Mike Stevens, to our 400 Years of Inequality program this fall, it was a full year of learning, growth and even transformation for individuals and for First Church as a whole. Heartfelt kudos to Susan Redlich for leading a team of Deb Cunningham, Sally O'Brien, Alice and Dave Kidder, and Peggy Stevens to plan the 400 Years exhibit in Margaret Jewett Hall and surrounding programming. I'm also so very grateful for the tireless effort of Chris Reynold and Lindsay Miller who, after a zillion edits, created a tri-fold table top exhibit that powerfully and respectfully shares some of the story of our own slaveholding history.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Friday Cafe, First Church Shelter, Outdoor Church and Saturday Sandwiches began to coordinate and integrate our Homeless Ministries, a necessary step for all particularly when it comes to external funding. We are profoundly indebted not only to Jim Stewart and Kate Layzer for their tireless and faithful staffing and dedication, but also to members of the Friday Cafe leadership team, and the Shelter Oversight Committee, especially outgoing chairs Marc O'Brien and Sarah Fujiwara who brought their hearts, souls and decades of financial and non-profit leadership experience to ensure that the Shelter's mission, guests and staff are all well-cared for. These ministries are as much gifts to us as they are to those we "serve" in that they allow us the often transformative experience of following Jesus to the margins, of bearing witness and of being in genuine relationship with others.

Our other outreach ministries similarly allow us to walk with our neighbors. In 2020, we continued to work with the Cambridge Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition to accompany and support Ana and her two girls, Erika and Briana, who are living at University Lutheran Church as Ana continues to work with immigration law-

Report of the Senior Minister (continued)

yers. Thanks to outgoing Missions and Social Justice Co-Chair Claire CoCroft, Bappu Antony and Sarah Higginbotham for representing us at CISC, for arranging volunteer shifts and for so often caring for that family as if it was your own! Our engagement in Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, and in the fight for improved healthcare and other issues of common concern, continued to grow with several large core team meetings and large turnouts to major actions. Thank you, Will Erickson and Phil Jones, for keeping us connected to GBIO's vital work for the common good. At or near the heart of almost every justice effort has been outgoing Missions and Social Justice Committee Co-Chair, Alice Kidder. God bless you, Alice, for showing us all how to be more like Jesus when it comes to showing a prophetic witness and loving our neighbors near and far. One more very important note here: the second and last round of our "For Such As Time As This" campaign grants were announced in June. If you haven't already, please read the report (page 48) of how our Grants team, beautifully led by Caitlin Anderson and Beth Spaulding, did yeoman's work of carefully researching and building consensus about the best way to distribute over \$115k to ten diverse and worthy organizational applicants with whom we are eager to be in ongoing relationship.

I remain grateful to God everyday for the gift it is to serve with such a deeply committed congregation and staff. In a year of such external turmoil and internal transition, I'm especially grateful for the wisdom, discretion, grace and Spirit filled leadership of our Moderator Mary Robinson, outgoing Vice Moderator Laurie Williams, outgoing Deacon Chair Meredith Quinn and all of our Deacons and Executive Council. We could not have come through this year without their enormous generosity of time and talent. I also continue to marvel that so much truly good work and ministry takes place here, for First Church and the world around us, when so much is already happening in our very full individual and family lives. Through new loves, new jobs, illness and death of loved ones, spiritual crises and mental health struggles, all of which is a privilege to hear and hold after healing services or 1:1 pastoral conversations, we come together each week, giving and receiving, sometimes weeping, often rejoicing. Of course, pastoral care is a team effort and so thanks, too, to Susie Neubauer and the care teams for 'showing up' and 'being there' for so many throughout the year!

One of the true saints of God, who died this year, was Ruth Hsaio. In the words of one of her favorite hymns and mine: "and when this cup you give is filled to brimming with bitter suffering hard to understand, we take it thankfully and without trembling out of so good and beloved hand!" The hymn is *By Gracious Powers*. Yes, by God's gracious powers indeed, and may that good and beloved hand of God that has given us so much life in 2019 continue to lift us and move us from strength to strength for 2020 and beyond!

Dan Smith

Report of Pastoral Associate Lexi Boudreaux

At the beginning of 2019 from January-May I was serving as one of First Church's Ministerial Interns, learning so much about this beautiful community of faith. Being in worship and community with you all at First Church is truly a blessing. In addition to worship leadership, I have been involved with the following this past year:

During my internship year, I was participating in the community of the Friday Café weekly and had the joy of working closely with Kate Layzer. Every other week I had the pleasure of spending time with some of our young people teaching a comprehensive sexuality curriculum called *Our Whole Lives*. I was team teaching *Our Whole Lives* with leaders from Old South and First Church in Somerville for our 7th and 8th graders on Sunday afternoons from 1:30-3:30pm. It was a privilege to see our young people grow in acceptance of their own bodies, in respect for others' bodies, and in understanding of how their faith relates to it all.

During Lent, Carlyle and I planned and led a new early morning Ash Wednesday service at the back of the sanctuary. After the short service we offered ashes to go to people stopping by during their morning commutes. An intimate group of 10 or so people gathered together for the morning service, some from the wider community of Cambridge and some from First Church. It was special to be able to serve the wider community in this way, however small.

Alongside a couple of First Church women (Kryisia Burnham and Julie Pridham) I helped plan and lead the Women's retreat the first Saturday in Lent at the Congregational Church of Weston. We focused on the questions, "Who am I? Who is God? What is God's Message? How Do I Live into This Message?" and joined in some movement, fellowship, and worship together. I also led two small groups in the first part of the year. The first was a group for parents of small children in Lent focusing on Henri Nouwen's book, *Discernment*. I then co-led a faith and life group with Dan Smith called *Aging with Grace and Dying Well* in the spring after Easter.

During the summer I was completing a program called Clinical Pastoral Education at Massachusetts General Hospital and was not actively involved at First Church, with the exception of preaching one Sunday in late July.

I returned in September in a new role as a pastoral associate, a part-time program staff position. It was exciting to return to a community I had grown to see as a spiritual home in this new capacity. I have been the staff liaison for the Gifts Discernment Committee where we have been intentionally asking big picture questions about the spiritual groundings of the practical task of ministry recruitment. Our church once again reaped the fruits of the talents and interests of members through our fall faith and life groups: *Women Building Relationships* (Susan Reynolds, Alex Steinert-Evoy, and Joanne Paul), *Mindfulness Meditation* (Hilary Hopkins), *The Art of Drawing: Creativity and Aging for Women* (Nancy Webber and Audrey Bellinger), and *Telling Our Stories: Honoring the Experiences that Shape Us* (Lexi Boudreaux). The women of First Church also had their first community dinner on the second Sunday of Advent (organized by Nancy Webber, Susan Reynolds, Alex Steinert-Evoy, and Joanne Paul). The evening was filled with good food, fellowship, and time for prayer. I am looking forward to how we can continue to deepen relationships with women at First Church in the spring during our retreat and through other gatherings like this.

Report of Pastoral Associate Lexi Boudreaux (continued)

In addition, I continued to work with our young people (a group of eight 8th and 9th graders) through co-teaching our yearlong confirmation class with Sarah Higginbotham on Sunday afternoons from 4-6pm. I continue to be amazed at the joy of helping our kind, wise, and thoughtful youth figure out what they think about major theological concepts and how their faith relates to their lives.

I have so deeply enjoyed becoming even more embedded in the life-giving and imaginative work we do in this vibrant, intergenerational congregation, but most of all, I have loved being with you all in the little moments in between all of our “doings”. I look forward to the spring and the new ways we can grow in faith together with God’s help.

In Gratitude for Our Ministry Together,
Lexi Boudreaux

Report of the Pastoral Associate Carlyle Stewart

Throughout this 2019-2020 Liturgical year, I have been thrilled to officially be a part of the First Church Staff. As First Church recently said goodbye to Minister Karin Case. Pastoral Associate Lexi Boudreaux and I have taken on various ministries at the church.

One of my primary responsibilities has been participating in leading worship and preaching approximately once a month. It has been a privilege and a blessing to have the opportunity to explore the richness of God's Word with the congregation. As I am very new to parish ministry, this has given me the opportunity to build preaching skills, and confidence from the pulpit. Connecting with the congregation through the preached Word is a gift. Leading 10 O'clock hour sessions throughout the fall season, has given me the opportunity to explore different topics of faith and the Christian tradition in a more intimate setting. I love topics regarding spiritual formation; as well as understanding how God calls us to live out our faith in Church and in the world at large. We are looking forward to kicking off a weekly Bible study in the month of February. The congregation is eager to have regular session where we can study the Word!

The first ministry for which I have been responsible is hospitality and Welcome of Newcomers. Newcomers often remark on how welcome they feel when they come into worship at First Church. One of our primary goals has been to increase the sense of radical welcome that visitors feel on Sunday Mornings. I have thoroughly enjoyed building relationships with the newcomers at First Church. Deacons have always played a large role in greeting and welcoming. We have explored new models of welcoming such as experimenting with a welcome table, and asking visitors to identify themselves. There are members of the congregation who have expressed interest in welcoming people on Sunday mornings. People like Dave and Alice Kidder, Hilary Hopkins, and Phil Jones always exude such a warm welcome to newcomers. We have also hosted monthly Newcomers luncheons which gives people the opportunity to explore First Church, ask questions, and also have discussion with other members of the congregation. This is a great time to discover what makes First Church unique, and to discover more about this vibrant faith community! It is also an opportunity for new members and newcomers to meet each other and make connections. In November we were blessed to have four new members join the community. Gandhi Solanki, Nancy Webber, Heather Stewart, and Yawa Attisso. In addition to welcoming. We have also kicked off a Mentorship program which is a way for New Members to build relationships and establish connections with people in the congregation. We recognize the nourishing phase of membership is vital. In this season, we are striving to discover new ways to nourish new members so they can grow in this community. The mentorship program will give people an opportunity to explore their spiritual gifts, leadership strengths, and ways in which they could directly integrate themselves in the community. It will also help them to find what ministry they feel called to be a part of.

Working with the Beloved Community has also been a privilege. Our work with Sadada Jackson and Karlene Griffiths Sekou has been insightful. First Church members have achieved deeper insight into our own understanding about race, reconciliation, and remembrance, as well as how our identity influences our mindset. We have several major racial justice initiatives, including: The Remembrance Project, Road to Freedom Pilgrimage; and other Racial Justice priorities and programs (workshops, film series, organizational partnerships, etc.) In the month of November, Senior Minister Dan Smith and I, and more than 30 members of the congregation went on our second Road to Freedom Pilgrimage to Washington D.C. It was a transformative experience to say the least. We visited the Museum of African American History, the Museum of the American Indian, as well as Metropolitan A.M.E Church, the Frederick Douglass House, and the Martin Luther King

Report of Pastoral Associate Carlyle Stewart (continued)

Jr. Memorial. We hosted reflection sessions that gave groups the opportunity to process their experiences and understand how God was present during this pilgrimage, and how God was calling us to transform.

One of the most rewarding experiences has been building deeper relationships with the First Church community through meetings, pastoral care sessions, and other interactions. Being apart of this community has inspired me to expand my mind, ideas, and strive to discover new and innovative ways of ministering to, and being with Gods people.

To God be the Glory,

Carlyle Stewart

Report of the Minister of Street Outreach

We've had another vibrant year of community building and community deepening at the Friday Café. Each week at least 8 off-site cooks and more than 30 on-site volunteers host an average of 160 guests, serving delicious, nutritious food, giving out clothing, blankets, hygiene products, and resource booklets, and offering rest in our quiet nap room (a.k.a. the MacKenzie Library).

Who do we serve?

According to a recent survey with 54 respondents, 60 percent of our guests are homeless and 40 percent low-income. 22 percent qualify as disabled; 13 percent are U.S. veterans. 74 percent are between the ages of 18 and 65 years old. Based on most conversations with guests, it seems that most receive benefits in the form of SNAP funds or social security. Many have a history of incarceration, trauma, and mental health or substance use disorders; some are just poor or suffering a spate of bad luck. A significant percentage of our unhoused guests are chronically homeless—i.e., homeless for at least 2 years.

Who are our cooks?

Home and professional cooks from Cambridge and surrounding towns prepare a variety of casseroles, side dishes, sandwiches, and desserts each week. Many are members of Community Cooks, our wonderful non-profit partner, who organizes individuals and groups to cook for agencies like ours once a month. Tony Maws of Craigie on Main continues to supply us with a large pot of nourishing soup every Friday, while St. Peter's Church on Concord Ave., Christ Church at O Garden, and the Harvard Square Churches Meal Program all supply a vegetarian soup option on a monthly rotation. Food for Free, a local food rescue organization, brings us several cases of fresh produce and ready-to-serve foods each week. The whole beautiful smorgasborg is prepped, heated, and cleaned up after by our amazing weekly Kitchen Crew.

Who are our volunteers?

Volunteers are Friday Café guests and First Church members and neighbors from Cambridge and surrounding towns. They include church members from Harvard Epworth, St. Peter's, and Hillside in Medford; parents from the Newtowne community, first-graders and teachers from a nearby Montessori class, and middle-schoolers from Fayerweather. Many volunteer at least once a month, and some come every week. Private companies like Hubspot (now a close partner) and Alliance Bernstein, and local educational institutions such as Partners Healthcare, BU Law, Suffolk University, and Harvard, send groups for a Day of Service once or twice a year.

Community enrichment

We are grateful for developing relationships with various local musicians and artists. This year, the Harvard Glee Club, students and faculty from the Longy School, and the Seraphim Singers all offered short concerts at the Café and/or held coat drives at their concerts. A local homeless artist has instituted a weekly Friday Café art table, where artists can create and share what they're working on. And over the summer, a brother from the nearby Episcopal monastery, the Society of St. John the Evangelist, reached out to us to initiate a long-term relationship between the monastery and the Café. He had been offering centering prayer in the Chapel several times a month at 3:00, and has built up a core prayer group.

We are also grateful to have strong relationships with the City of Cambridge, through their multiservice center and the Department of Public Health. Social workers visit regularly to connect guests to available services, and health workers have visited several times to hold pop-up flu and meningitis clinics.

Report of the Minister of Street Outreach (continued)

Homeless Ministries

The Friday Café and First Church Shelter continue to work together on creating a coherent narrative about these First Church ministries to assist us in reaching out to the community for support. We held our first joint fundraising event, a concert, in April 2018, and have a gala scheduled for January 25, 2020. Kirsten Manville is bringing her music business expertise to bear in helping us plan future concert events. As always, pledges to First Church represent the Café's most significant source of support, through an annual grant from Missions and Social Justice, as well as use of space, utilities, and staff support.

Even with this generous help, fundraising remains a key challenge for this ministry. We are grateful to have received a *for such a time as this* Capital Campaign mission grant to hire a short-term consultant, who has been helping us develop our grant narrative and clarify how best to direct our fundraising energies. It's been a steep learning curve for this pastor, but I am determined to continue building my networking skills to ensure the longterm sustainability of our vital ministries.

Leadership Team transitions

One of our strongest assets is our wise, experienced, and committed group of leaders, drawn both from inside and outside First Church. A special thanks to Mary Robinson, Raphaela Mueller, and Aaron Hume, who were called to other work this year, and a grateful welcome to Sue Reynolds, Alex Steinert-Evoy, and Neil Peterson, who have stepped in and stepped up to help in all kinds of different ways. Thanks to these dedicated folks, Don and I were even able to take a Friday off in December!

Boundless gratitude to the whole staff, as always, and in particular, Kimel, George, Kris, and Kirsten, without whom the Café could not function.

The Friday Café is a place of warmth and welcome for the whole community. If you haven't had a chance to yet, please drop by some time and check it out!

Kate Layzer, Director

Report of the Minister of Stewardship & Finance

Year after year, the generosity of our members and friends makes our collective ministry possible!

✦ For the eighth year in a row, we have increased our annual pledges, to another all-time high, as we conclude our three-year campaign *The Way Forward*, which has sought to deepen our annual giving.

✦ Our Capital Campaign is nearly complete; we have received we have received 97% of \$1.95 million pledged *for such a time as this*.

✦ During 2019, we received 2,113 contributions totaling \$795,921 from our congregation and the wider community. The gifts ranged from \$1 to twelve gifts over \$10,000. They were given by cash, check, stock, via our website, and by the Give+ app and by text message (instructions are in the worship bulletin).

✦ We received 10 stock gifts, along with gifts from Donor-Advised Funds, and required minimum distributions from IRAs. Please let me know if you'd like instructions about how to make such gifts, which have the potential for tax savings for donors.

✦ We remain committed to giving 10% of our Operating income to mission and social justice through our own local and global initiatives and through our United Church of Christ. As our income rises, so does our support of local missions and social justice initiatives.

✦ The Friday Café has been raising funds in support of its ongoing and thriving mission. During 2019, \$22,076 has been raised from gifts primarily from the community beyond First Church. The January Gala will raise additional funds for our Homeless Ministries.

✦ The Shelter has also increased its focus on financial resources, and has rebuilt its necessary reserves. The program is funded primarily by a \$250,951 state contract, but requires additional funding in order to operate. During 2019, the Shelter received \$16,821 in donations and grants. Thanks to Jim Stewart for attention to all of the legislative and regulatory details.

✦ We switched to Intuit's TSheets app to track hours for our 32 First Church employees, including accrued sick time, vacation time, and occasional overtime. We are waiting for information about opting in to the new Massachusetts Paid Family & Medical leave, which will provide a valuable benefit to our employees if they experience a time of personal or family need.

✦ We continue to provide generous staff benefits: for all employees, paid sick leave and access to vision care; for half-time employees, paid holidays, vacation, pension and life/disability, and access to a dental plan; for our full-time staff, coverage in our high-deductible health plan, combined with a large contribution to each employee's Health Savings Account. Thanks to the Staff Policy Committee for their good work supporting fair employment practices, and to Julie Pridham for her professional expertise.

✦ Deep appreciation to Treasurers Jason Whaley, Rich Goode, Connie Pyle, and Margaret Gooch, to Controller Rachel Carlson, and to Office Assistants Lang Haynes and Bruce Dillenbeck, who each do their part to keep the details recorded from week to week, helping us to see the big picture.

✦ Thanks to the Stewardship Committee, chaired by Steve Weller, we are seeing the results of our multi-faceted approach to stewardship: supporting our Capital Campaign, expanding our annual giving, and beginning to build a Planned Giving program.

Report of the Minister of Stewardship & Finance (continued)

Laurie Burt has been a knowledgeable and visionary chair of the Investment Committee, balancing the oversight of our endowment and investments with our commitment to the sustainable growth of our current and future ministry and mission.

Since 2004, much has changed and much has stayed the same. I continue to be grateful for the privilege of working with such a wonderful congregation and staff. Many thanks for your faithful generosity and visionary leadership, without which First Church would not be the thriving Christian witness that it is today!

With gratitude,
Karen McArthur

Report of the Director of Music

After almost 35 years one might think there's nothing new to say in an annual report. To be sure, the faithfulness of the First Church Choir creates a constant that is easy to take for granted – but each Thursday night rehearsal and each Sunday morning service has its own individual story with its own dramatic arc. As is usual in such an academic location, we said hello to some and goodbye to other singers – the list of “Choir alumni” continues to grow, people who are always warmly welcomed and included whenever they may visit no matter how long it had been or how far away they had moved. Sadly, we had to say a final goodbye to a very special one this year, a singer/poet/disabilities rights activist turned minister named Denise Karuth. Denise was a member of the Choir when I arrived here in October 1985. I was truly impressed by her openness and warmth, also her poetic talent in re-setting texts from the 1640 Bay Psalms which had just been created before I arrived. I'll always remember her saying to me a few weeks after I started, “You're not only nice, you're also quite competent!” (That was heartening to a twenty-something just starting out.)

Who knows how long any of us will be here – but Denise made every moment count.

In terms of repertoire, the Choir drew a broad brush, singing not only the great canon of sacred choral music, but spirituals, newly composed music (by our Staff Composer Patricia Van Ness among others), folk music and ethnic music (most notably, Samoan hymns for World Communion Sunday joined by members of Moana Bentin's extended family and Samoan community.) We gave what must be the Cambridge premiere of a Magnificat by Baldassare Galuppi, a Venetian composer famous in his day and today, well, not. A beautiful gift has allowed us to purchase multiple copies of both “The Oxford Book of Anthems” and “An African-American Hymnal.” And the Choral Public Domain Library, the Internet Music Score Library Project, and the St. James Music Press continue to provide new and new-to-us scores of choral music for us to learn and savor.

The First Church Bell Choir under Susie Longfield's direction continues to grow in strength and numbers, providing spirited music both alone and in collaboration with the First Church Choir for a healthy number of services. We have been blessed by the musical talents of Issa Bibbins and his guests for a number of services throughout the year. Our Night Song services continue with their very special blend of musical styles and mystical atmosphere. The musical personality of Sarah Higginbotham creates a bonded community of singers every time she leads us in song.

What's more to say? Well, there're just two more things. First, I took a sabbatical from Memorial Day to Labor Day. I'm grateful for collaboration with the Staff, the goodwill of the Choir, and the leadership of my substitutes – Yoo-Kyung Kim, Suzanne Cartreine, Patrick Walker, and Louise Munding. Over the summer, after my usual round of teaching and concerts in California, Connecticut and the Berkshires, Henry and I took a wonderful trip to the UK filled with wonderful visits, vistas, and single-malt Scotch. Second, the Frobenius organ continues to beguile and inspire as it approaches its fiftieth 'birthday' in 2022. That said, it's time to start thinking about planning for some maintenance and tuning in anticipation of that anniversary, since the last time it received major attention was in 1995. That's an amazing track record!

So another year goes. We continue to sing of God's praises. Alleluia!

Peter Sykes

Report of the Director of Creative Worship & Arts

In some ways, 2019 was an unremarkable year in my tenure at First Church. To be sure, LOTS happened - church school classes; creative arts projects; Outdoor Church sandwich-making; Our Whole Lives; Confirmation sessions; Youth Group gatherings; and plenty of multigenerational worship, learning, potlucking, picnicking, playing, singing, dancing, and fellowship - but these weren't necessarily new things. Rather, 2019 sustained the active schedule of programming for children, youth, and families that we've built together as a church community over many years.

The smooth delivery of programming and other offerings was a credit to all of those who volunteer to teach, to assist, to cook, to set out supplies, to clean up supplies, or to lend a hand in the moment when it's needed. I am especially grateful to the adults of all ages who take on the role of Church School Teacher for the program year (and often longer!). In the 2018/19 and 2019/20 program years, we've been blessed to have a handful of young adults join our teaching teams, alongside many parents and grandparents of First Church's children. I celebrate the age and gender diversity in our Church School leadership; this is an uncommon occurrence in church school programs. Yay, First Church in Cambridge!

With the productive hum of all this activity in the background, I was able to tackle some projects in 2019 that may be less visible on a week-to-week basis, but are nonetheless important to strengthening and supporting our life together.

Specifically:

- I worked with the Christian Formation Committee to renew and revise our Multigenerational Covenant for a Welcoming & Safe Community. We started with a covenant created almost a generation ago, bringing the focus to our community as a whole, rather than just on our children. The Executive Council endorsed the new Covenant at their June meeting and we shared it more widely within the congregation beginning on Regathering Sunday.

- I collaborated with staff and lay leaders on the development and introduction of First Church's new Emergency Policies & Procedures. The congregation ratified this work at the Fall Congregational Meeting, and in November, we all got to experience our first fire drill in a while. Additionally, I was glad to have the opportunity, alongside all staff, to be trained in CPR/First Aid, Narcan use, and sexual harassment awareness.

- I supervised the performance reviews of our six Nursery staff members, including a process of self-evaluation and goal-setting. These individual conversations with Nursery staff provided a helpful structure for hearing feedback from these very part-time employees and for discussing goals for continual improvement in our child care offerings.

And in my adjunct administrative position in which I produce the weekly worship bulletin, I continued to streamline the process for compilation of information, design, and layout. We share a lot of information each week in 12 to 16 pages, requiring a significant amount of attention paid to detail, and I'm proud of the work we accomplished as a staff in communicating with the congregation in this medium.

Report of the Director of Creative Worship & Arts (continued)

As always, it's a joy to work with my colleagues at First Church, a truly fun and exceedingly collaborative group of co-workers. Saying goodbye to Karin Case in June was hard; I definitely miss her gifts for ministry in this place. It's been a pleasure working alongside Lexi and Carlyle in their role as Pastoral Associates; First Church continues to hit the jackpot with talented staff who enrich our community in ways great and small. I feel such gratitude and appreciation for my role within this workplace and church community.

Faithfully,
Sarah Higginbotham

Report of the Director of Operations

This is the first year the annual report features a submission from the Director of Operations. I received a new title this year, which more accurately describes how my job has been evolving. I no longer do as much of the week to week administrative work (for example Sarah has taken over the tasks of collecting information for and laying out and printing the weekly Sunday bulletin), but instead thinking more about the church's overarching administrative systems and how to improve them.

One of the first systems I focused on was internal staff communications. We needed a central place we could all easily access the information we use on a regular basis. To that end I conceived the idea of a staff intra-net (we call it the staff hub). With much help from Dan Smith regarding content and design, and then with feedback from the staff on content and ease of use, I am happy to report we have had a working staff hub since the start of the fall 2019 program year. This is a site we can all go to and find everything from HR information to staff meeting notes to the current liturgy, and where we can submit a work order or check the building calendar. I am sure we will continue to make improvements to it as we all use it more and more.

I also thought a lot about Fellowship, and specifically Sunday lunches. One of the most difficult pieces of putting on a lunch is recruiting folks to help with set up and cleanup, and then making sure they know what those things entail. We have a plan that we hope to implement in 2020 to reach out to specific committees and groups about "hosting" a lunch – not making or serving the food, but to be the crew. And as a precursor step, we have created task cards for set up and break down, so volunteers can simply grab a card with a certain task listed and go ahead and complete it. We hope this makes people more confident in their choice to volunteer, knowing exactly what it is they're supposed to do!

I am always thinking about building use! As usual, the building continues to be very busy, with classes, 12-step meetings, concerts, dances, and the like. And this still brings in a large sum in donations to the church. I was asked this year to brainstorm ways to increase this income. I came up with a number of ideas that ranged from simple to more complex. Executive Council reviewed the ideas, and decided to start with one of the most simple of these. This is to open up the building to Sunday afternoon concerts in the sanctuary on specific Sundays. Each concert brings in approximately \$500, so even only adding two per month, that is an extra \$12,000 per year.

The Administrative/Facilities department did see some staff changes this year. We said goodbye to two well-loved members of our staff – Administrative Assistant Lang Haynes and sexton Tina Jenner. They both left for full-time positions elsewhere. And though we were sad to see them go, we are very excited about their new opportunities.

We welcomed Bruce Dillenbeck as the new Office Assistant. He is a steady presence at the front desk and already has his administrative tasks well in hand. I am grateful we found another person who is a good fit for the position. We also welcomed Rebecca LaFrance as a new sexton. She, too, has been a quick learner and is already feeling comfortable enough to take over the Sunday morning shift! Please do say hi and welcome to both of the new staff members when you see them.

Report of the Director of Operations (continued)

I continue to be thankful for the presence of long-term sextons George Williams, Kimel Williams, and Douglas Casey. They have a knowledge of the building and its users born of years of experience, and their wisdom around problem solving and suggestions for improvements are invaluable. Our Facilities Manager Kris McQuage-Loukas continues to expand his responsibilities. This year he took on the role of IT person in addition to his facilities role. He is an excellent partner when comes to thinking though issues regarding building maintenance and sexton supervision.

Speaking of building maintenance, we continued to make improvements this year. Most notably we installed a new sound system in the sanctuary, which also included live-streaming to Hastings Common and Margaret Jewett, as well as online. We also had a yellowwood tree replaced in the front of the church, and started on a project to replace the church's boilers. And as usual, we had a few minor building issues that come with inhabiting a building that is almost 150 years old.

I look forward to continuing my tenure here at First Church, in this new role of Director of Operations. I hope I can continue to work with staff and lay leaders to implement new ideas and strategies in the overarching systems of the church that make easier and more efficient the important work we do in the spiritual life of this community and in the world beyond.

Respectfully submitted,
Kirsten Manville

Report of the Facilities Manager

We started off the year with water leaks in three of our five boilers. This has led us to begin the process of replacing all five boilers with four more energy efficient boilers. This will not only continue our efforts to be more environmentally conscious, but also save the church money in the long run, approx. 24% of our boiler energy cost. During this time, we noticed an abnormally large water bill, even after the leaking boilers had been turned off. We discovered this was caused by several leaking toilets. Once the toilets had been repaired, the water bill dropped back down to normal.

Also, on the environmentally conscious front, we have partnered with 621 Energy to have solar panels installed on the flat roof of the church building. We hope this will be completed near the end of the winter. This will provide us with an average of 25% of the power we use in a year.

More efforts were made to clean up the front lawn that suffered during the last renovation. Parts of the Garden St lawn were refilled and seeded, and part of the lawn near the Sanctuary entrance was sodded as part of a project to move a yellow wood tree, which unfortunately ended up being replaced when the tree died shortly after it was moved.

We upgraded the AV system in Margaret Jewett Hall, adding in a projector and screen. We have upgraded the sound system in the Sanctuary and added the ability to stream the service out live over the internet as well as into the Hastings Common and Margaret Jewett Hall.

Finally, we said goodbye to our Sexton Tina Jenner, who was offered a full-time position elsewhere. As a result, Sexton Kimel Williams has agreed to join us full-time and we hired Rebecca LaFrance as a part-time sexton on the weekends.

Kris McQuage-Loukas

Report of the Shelter Director

During 2019 the men seeking assistance from the First Church Shelter were provided with, not only a safe place to sleep but assisted in making the move from homelessness into a more stable living situation.

The women and men-core staff and work study-who are employed by the shelter do all they can to make sure that the shelter's guests not only have a safe place to stay but support and encouragement when, all too often, they feel like they are on a treadmill to nowhere.

Even for the most motivated and conscientious of the shelter's guests, the path out of homelessness and into transitional or permanent housing is long and demoralizing. While the number of homeless individuals continues rise in Massachusetts the resources committed by the Commonwealth to assist them remains, at best, flat.

Even when guests are informed that they are qualified, and approved for a subsidized housing unit or a housing support voucher, they usually wait MONTHS before they can actually occupy the unit or find a land lord willing to accept the voucher.

So those of us who respond to the needs of our homeless neighbors in the name of First Church Cambridge do all we can to help ensure that shelter guests don't lose hope, that they keep moving forward towards the better life that we all know they are entitled to.

Those of us who work at the shelter are grateful for the opportunity to be engaged in such rewarding work and appreciate the support provided by the Shelter Oversight Committee and the other-lay and ordained-staff of First Church.

Sincerely,
Jim Stewart

Report of the Moderator

From time to time, we recite the earliest First Church Covenant in which we seek to *"walk in all our ways according to the rule of the Gospel... in mutual love and respect to each other, so near as God shall give us grace."* That is no small nor insignificant undertaking!

But from my outlook as your moderator, I am inspired by the many faithful efforts of our community. As you read through this annual report, you will discover many ways in which we seek to live out that covenant: protecting the immigrant, sheltering the homeless, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, nurturing the spiritual wonderings of our young children, providing safe but challenging events for our teens, advocating for justice in health care and housing, supporting our Jewish brothers and sisters in the face of anti-semitism. There's even more: diving more deeply into our spiritual practices through small groups and 10 o'clock hours, and surveying our congregation at large as we plan the next staffing model. Seeking opportunities to offer a wider welcome to our Cambridge neighbors, we are working toward becoming a church family with greater cultural, economic and racial diversity. We are learning more about our church's complicity in slavery, and seeking ways to repair the cruelties it inflicted.

Thank you! May God's Spirit continue to move among us, to inspire and nudge us in compelling ways during the coming year.

Mary Robinson

Report of the Board of Deacons

In this report of the year 2019, a year of growing geopolitical tensions, we found ourselves deepening our connections with one another and the spirit in the service the missions of the congregation. After thanking last year's outgoing Deacons and chairs, we joyously welcomed Taj Smith, Joanne Paul, Davis Dyer and Moana Bentin to join our 2019 team.

One of the notable events for the congregation and the deacons was saying goodbye to minister Karen Case as she stepped into a new phase of her professional life. We were privileged to work with her and thankful for the thoughtful way she said goodbye to our congregation.

Showing that when one door closes another truly opens, we have been blessed as deacons and members of the congregation to benefit from Lexi and Carlyle joining the ministry of first church. The deacons and the congregation have benefited from their wisdom and considerable gifts as we give thanks for their continued leadership.

One of the benefits of serving in the role of deacon is the additional perspective on the thoughtfulness and generous way Dan leads the deacons and the congregation as a whole. Dan understands our congregation as individuals and as a community and is sensitive to all of these needs. The deacons have deep gratitude for Dan's steady leadership in this time of transition.

In addition to his spiritual tending, Dan spearheaded a charge to revise and update our emergency preparedness procedures. Special thanks to Moana Bentin for being part of the team that drafted the protocol. Deacons were very much included in this process and trained in the new procedures that will be part of deacon's training moving forward.

Again with Dan's leadership, we were pleased to support the four way covenants of First Church members and clergy, Jenny Stuart and Emmanuel Akyeampong. A four way covenant is between an ordained minister, the Metropolitan Boston Association of the UCC, the local church (First Church!) and another ministry setting. In Jenny's case, that setting is the Danielsen Institute at BU. In Emmanuel's case, that setting is the Memorial Church at Harvard. Our congregation benefits immensely from the presence of these individuals and the relationships that they bring.

This year we followed up on the "compass points" identified by the congregation to guide our ministry and focus our energy. As leaders we reflected on these congregation-wide priorities and tried to go deeper as a group to serve the congregation. There are two priority areas in which we thought we had a particular role to play.

One of these priorities is creating a more radically inclusive and diverse faith community. We were appreciative of the different ways the congregation welcomed tradition bearers and met them with open hearts and open minds. Additionally, building on Karin's work with the welcoming community, we have been experimenting with offering a welcome table and are grateful to Carlyle for taking up the torch to help the deacons and the congregation as a whole to offer an inclusive welcome. Lexi has been very active in enacting values of inclusivity in her work in our congregational life, especially supporting spaces for women's spirituality to flourish and also youth spirituality in her with our Confirmation Class. We also want to

Report of the Board of Deacons (continued)

acknowledge one of our deacons, Bruce Hoppe, who has continued First Church's tradition of being inclusive of people with all different kinds of mental health needs by raising awareness and offering support to male survivors.

Another "compass point" identified by the congregation is fostering deeper spiritual formation in our faith community. The deacons worked to enact a ministry of presence by reflecting on how deacons could embody a ministry of presence with one other and with members of the congregation. We learned that even monthly church work meetings can be profoundly nourishing when you create time and space for deeper connections and the spirit.

With the change in leadership structure, a new undertaking of the deacons is to lead an entire worship service. The deacons are working to lead the service on February 2 2020. This decision was a culmination of this group of deacons considering how to share the leadership of the church with Dan, Carlyle and Lexi. As deacons we appreciate the opportunity. Even as we seek to find meaning and connection in the tasks that support worship, such as communion preparation, greeting and arranging liturgists, we welcome the opportunity to stretch ourselves to offer a worship service on behalf of the congregation.

Respectfully submitted, Meredith Quinn (chair), Bruce Hoppe, Amy Matias, Julie Palmer, Beth Spaulding, Joanne Paul, Taj Smith, Moana Bentin and David Dyer.

Report of the Christian Formation Committee for Children & Youth

In 2019, the work of the Christian Formation Committee was heavily influenced by three factors during the year – the leadership priorities identified in the February 2019 leadership retreat, particularly “deepening our spiritual formation as a community;” the transition in staffing; and official confirmation that the committee’s mandate should include formation programming across multiple generations.

As a result, the committee spent a good deal of time looking at emerging ideas and opportunities for how to take on a fuller range of the formation programming for the church, while also trying to work within constraints of staff and members’ capacity.

We developed a set of underlying principles that can guide decisions about programs in the future, including:

- Utilizing the existing gathering times in a more intentional and potentially integrated way rather than adding new things -- looking at the 10:00 and 12:30 time slots on Sundays, Tuesday evenings, and potentially Thursday evenings before choir practice.

- Balancing more integrated and multi-generational programming around 1-2 priority topics/ commitments we have as a congregation (e.g. racial justice, homelessness, environmental stewardship) with the value offered by smaller groups that organize around specific interests and respond to energy of individual members

- Reviewing the duration of programming - the value of shorter blocks of time where people are able to go deeper with each other but not have to make long term commitments (e.g. Faith and Life Groups, Lenten and Advent groups/programs)

- Exploring ideas to promote shared “spiritual accountability” – making commitment of real action in relation to others (e.g. the Lenten prayer partners in 2019) that includes accountability; purpose; individual journeys and transformation; as well as potential for social transformation.

In other actions, the committee finalized a revised and updated “Multigenerational Covenant for a Welcoming and Safe Community” that took into account physical changes in the building and broadened the commitment from just children and families to how all generations can interact with each other. The updated covenant was formally endorsed by Executive Council in June. The committee took on organizing the Fall 2019 Faith & Life groups, and we continued to collaborate closely with Sarah and Lexi in thinking about ongoing and new formation programming.

As I complete my three years as chair of the committee, I want to express tremendous appreciation for Sarah’s creative and steadfast leadership of our wonderfully vibrant ministries for children and families and for all the people who volunteer to teach classes, help lead activities, and share in our common work of formation as we continue to “grow in community with Jesus our center.”

In faith,
James Cairns, Chair

Christian Formation Committee: Nancy Cyr, Rachele LaMaster, Karolyn Feeks, Hilary Hopkins, and Sarah Higginbotham, *ex officio*

Report of the Building & Grounds Committee

2019 didn't go as we planned. Historic preservation work, including replacement of the masonry roof and repairs to the Sanctuary slate roof and masonry, were put on hold due to unexpected issues with the Church boilers and substantial squirrel damage at the Parsonage. Three of the five boilers are leaking and need to be replaced. Squirrels made a home for themselves in the attic of the Parsonage. Not only were attempts to remove them unsuccessful, but a panicked mother squirrel managed to destroy significant portions of the Parsonage's wood gutters. Happily, the squirrels have since been successfully evicted, unharmed.

Both replacing the Church boilers and replacing the Parsonage's gutters were on the long-term capital improvements plan. We are just doing the work sooner than expected. This also provides us with an opportunity to replace our outdated boilers with new, efficient boilers that will significantly reduce our annual operating costs and our carbon footprint. Design of the new boiler system is currently underway, and replacement of the parsonage wood gutters with copper gutters is scheduled for January 2020. Importantly, deferring the planned historic preservation work will not jeopardize the matching grant money received from the Cambridge Historical Commission. The historic preservation grant will still fund half of the cost of the planned renovations.

Sadly, after attempts to move it away from the brick path to the Sanctuary failed, the yellowwood tree in front of the Sanctuary died. Barrett Tree services, the contractor that moved the yellowwood, replaced the dead tree at cost. A spruce tree in the playground area also died and was removed by Barrett.

On the positive side, the church installed a new sanctuary sound recording system thanks to two very generous donations. With these improvements, worship services and other events can be viewed from Hastings Commons, Margaret Jewett Hall, and online. I'm also happy to report that after lots of evaluation, discussions with vendors, negotiations, design, and permitting – solar panels will be installed on the Parish House Roof this spring! This will offset 25% of our power purchases with clean renewable energy, resulting in significant savings to our annual budget. Needed electrical work to support the solar installation will start soon.

Thanks to the help of many volunteers, and especially Joanne Paul, the front lawn has been rejuvenated. And thanks to the Kris McQuage-Loukas, every toilet in the building has been retrofitted or replaced, which has substantially reduced our water usage. This has contributed to us greatly reducing our operating costs from 2018.

Many thanks to the contributions of Kirsten Manville; Kris McQuage-Loukas; our veteran sextons George Williams, Kimel Williams, and Douglas Casey; our new sexton Rebecca LaFrance; former sexton Tina Jenner who left us in 2019 to pursue other opportunities; and Buildings and Grounds Committee members Cathy Garnett and Kindle Williams. And special thanks to Peter Ambler who stepped down from the Committee after many years of devoted service.

Respectfully submitted,
Nathan Jones, Chair

Report of Shelter Oversight Committee

The First Church Shelter Oversight Committee (SOC) worked extremely hard and effectively in 2019 and laid significant groundwork for the possibility of a brighter Shelter future.

Life in the Shelter: Our mission is to serve 14 men experiencing homelessness by providing a safe space, home-cooked meals, and counseling/coaching. While in Shelter care, our guests strive to find housing, work, health services and any other qualities of a good life they may need to get back on their feet. We aim to provide guests with a safe, dignified, and home-like space along with hospitality and support as they make steps to rebuild their lives. Many guests are struggling with mental health issues, job loss, long-term poverty, substance use disorders, lack of education or challenges faced as a result of recent release from incarceration. Guests are only admitted via referrals from qualified professionals and must not be dependent upon alcohol or drugs at the time of admission.

Circumstances for our 14 guests has become more difficult in recent years as housing availability, bureaucracy and costs in the greater Boston area became barriers that are ever more difficult to surmount. As a result, the average stay of our guests lengthened during the year and now is about 7 months. The shelter opens at 6 PM every evening and guests must depart by 7 AM in the morning. Most evenings, Jim Stewart, Shelter Director, cooks a meal as he has for the last 30 years, spelled by members and friends of our First Church Congregation. As a happy example, Kahal B'Raira, a Jewish congregation has made breakfast and supper at Christmas, supplementing our staff on that special day.

Funding: After ending 2018 with few discretionary financial resources, the SOC worked in 2019 to increase the flow of information to the Congregation and the broader community about the daily work performed by the shelter staff and the SOC and the shortfall. The Shelter is not fully funded by state monies. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts funds about 70% of the shelter budget and, by contract, First Church matches 20% of the state contract's value in-kind by providing free rent space, leaving a last and impactful 10% or more to be raised by the SOC. As part of these efforts, grants were applied for and gratefully received from the First Church "Such a Time as This" Fund (\$15,000) to support needed repairs and renovations, Citizens Energy (\$5,400) and Cambridge Savings Bank (\$2,500). The Citizens Energy grant is only applied to heating costs and proceeds were transferred to the Church to reduce energy costs. Jim Stewart arranged for \$15,000 in Federal work-study support that subsidizes supplemental student staffing. Donations in 2019 from the Congregation and broader community were \$6,760. As a result, Shelter net assets ended 2019 about \$8,000 higher than in 2018, bringing Shelter cash balances to a level just sufficient to fund daily operations (working capital). We have worked this year toward an improved "operating general fund" (budget) to fund the necessary annual expenses beyond those covered by the Commonwealth and we have hopes for the establishment of a "sustainability fund" that could support long term projects and programming, e.g., "senior staff development and succession" and facility improvements.

Frankly, we are currently under-staffed for unforeseen emergencies and a long-term future. Two of our employees have served us well for more than 30 years. After many years of nearly flat funding, the state budget for 2020 includes a 9% increase that will allow us to raise staff salaries toward \$15/hour and add a part-time Administrative Coordinator position.

Report of the Shelter Oversight Committee (continued)

Organization: In addition to Jim Stewart, Director, we employ one full-time staff member -- Dennis Kaveney – and two half-time staff -- Joe Freitas and Steve Brown -- along with seven work-study students from Harvard, MIT and the Harvard Divinity School. Also involved are a growing number of wonderful volunteers and a dedicated six-member Shelter Oversight Committee that serves much like a board of directors and receives administrative support from First Church Staff, notably in 2019 from Dan Smith, Karen Case, Karen McArthur and Kirsten Manville. It has been an SOC goal in 2019 to begin building out its own administrative support and a “real two-days away from the shelter per week” for Jim Stewart. To this end, the new part-time position mentioned above was designed by the SOC and approved for posting by the Staff Review and Executive Committees of the Church. Summer work-intern Emma Brewer-Wallin produced an excellent and extensive, two-part Operations Manual, filling a very substantial need. Sarah Fujiwara teamed with Jim Stewart to polish job descriptions for all staff positions and then followed through with job reviews with each employee. In 2019, the Shelter began participation in the City of Cambridge’s Clarity Data Demographic Study from which we receive regular reporting. A suggested goal for the coming year is the design of our own report offering a picture of guest attributes and progress that also protects guest privacy. Its purpose would be to support grant applications, build awareness for the church congregation and community and, finally help meet state contract and food bank requirements.

Perhaps one of the most important, if not the most important, organizational change put in place as a result of consultant Steven Stulck’s recommendations for improvements in relations between the Church and Shelter was the addition of a member of the senior ministerial staff, in this case Karin Case, as an ex-officio member of the SOC. Karin Case did a magnificent job in 2019 improving good feeling, understanding and timely communication between Church staff and our shelter committee and staff. Her departure leaves a gaping hole that we hope will be soon recognized and filled. Happily, Dan Smith, to our delight, has agreed to attend future SOC meetings on a “semi-regular” basis until a longer-term solution is decided.

We thank Dave Kidder and Nora Wilcutts of the Gifts Discernment Committee for the gift of finding Don Johnson and Jan Jeffers Lo to serve as our replacements for 2020. We offer Don and Jan our on-going support and wish them many rewarding experiences in 2020.

By-Law Changes: The new By-Laws change the formal name of the committee from the “Shelter Committee” to the “Shelter Oversight Committee;” they provide for an expanded number of committee members and they now state the SOC mission as follows:

“The Shelter Oversight Committee reviews and approves the Shelter budget and monitors the Shelter operations. The Committee participates in the hiring and evaluation of the Shelter Director and coordinates fundraising activities and grant proposals with the Executive council. It also coordinates shelter activities with other committees and groups of the Church.”

Capital Expenditures and Improvements: In addition to major air conditioner replacements for the failed equipment in the bunkroom and living room, the Shelter living room and kitchen are receiving their first face-lift in 18 years. Sarah Fujiwara arranged for new fabric upholstery cushions to grace the living room benches. Jane Matthews donated bookcases and a new mat and chair to spruce up Jim Stewart’s office. Church-member and architect, David Torrey, created a design proposal for brighter, energy-efficient up-lighting for both rooms, along with suggestions for new coverings for the baseboards throughout. If future

Report of the Shelter Oversight Committee (continued)

funds allow, we hope to eventually replace some or all of the present plastic sheeting on the windows with a more effective solution that will be energy efficient and closer to home-like. It is recommended that a Shelter “Capital Plan” be prepared in the near future. We also recommend the establishment of an ad hoc committee to foster timely discussion of Church overhead expenses charged to the Shelter and the most appropriate ways to fund unforeseen Shelter capital expenses as they arise, for example, the failure of the air conditioners during last summer’s heat wave.

Homeless Ministries: In 2019, Dan Smith challenged the Friday Café and the Shelter to join forces to become leading partners in a “First Church Homeless Ministries.” After considerable discussion by the parties, the following statement was approved in February 2019:

“The mission of First Church Homeless Ministries is to offer a respectful welcome to persons experiencing homelessness and hunger; to address universal human needs by providing safe shelter, sustenance, and community; and to raise our collective voices through advocacy about the devastating impact of homelessness addiction and persistent poverty.”

“The homeless ministry of First Church in Cambridge Congregational, includes two key programs: a 14-bed men’s shelter and the Friday Café. These programs dovetail in operation at two very different and vital scales: 1) a small shelter with long-term investment in individuals, including a full spectrum of support services to assist in residents’ specific needs as they seek stable housing and 2) a large weekly meals program, serving hundreds of individuals every month offering food, hygiene supplies, and drop-in community on Friday afternoons. With these efforts in tandem, First Church offers a unique two-part model, united in mission and with distinctive provisions, addressing both acute daily needs and the slower patient work of solid shelter and counsel. Both programs provide hospitality to the community without religious content or solicitation.”

Among Jim Stewart’s initiatives around which the Café and Shelter are exploring common ground is the establishment of a “navigator project.” The aim would be to identify a professional member of our community to train congregants and other volunteers in how to assist struggling guests with navigating the bureaucracies they must deal with to obtain the assistance they need.

A “Homeless Ministries” website is being developed with consulting help from Sara Hendren and her team of experts from Olin College. The purpose is to clarify our joint mission, share our stories and streamline ways to attract donations from the community beyond First Church.

Events & Hospitality: The SOC put on a number of events to (1) cheer the guests and staff during 2019, (2) better inform the Congregation and community about the issues faced by our guests and (3) raise funds to support operations and possible future programs. Events included:

Shelter Workday – Jan. 20

Neave Concert (in conjunction with The Friday Café) – April 28

Spring Breakfast – May 5

Volunteer and Staff Appreciation – June 18

Red Sox Benefit for Homeless Ministries and Solutions at Work – Sept. 4

Report of the Shelter Oversight Committee (continued)

Doris Beauvais Luncheon (in conjunction with the Friday Café) – Oct. 27

Alternative Fair – Dec. 8

Christmas Breakfast – Dec. 15

Brian Funck – who along with Sara Hendren and their children, has selflessly and creatively provided organization and decoration for the meals sponsored by the SOC -- now proposes to add a once-a-month “social cooking” occasion, a “Saturday Supper,” for the guests. Dan Smith further suggested offering an additional monthly meal for needy parishioners. The 2019 SOC concluded that cooking for our guests would benefit from being a more social experience for our cooks as well, perhaps involving volunteer cooking teams using the upstairs kitchen. We urge that this concept of “social cooking” experiences be explored in 2020.

2019 Volunteers:

Jan Jeffers Lo

Hilary Hopkins

Steph Weston Katz

Hyun Kyung Kim

Marianne Jensen

(We apologize to anyone we may have left out.)

Respectfully submitted for the Shelter Oversight Committee:

Marc O’Brien and Sarah Fujiwara, Co-Chairs

Jean Carr

Karin Case, Ex-Officio

Brian Funck

Jim Leone

Jane Matthews

Jim Stewart, Ex-Officio

Report of Beloved Community/First Church Public Remembrance Project

Racial Justice conversations and efforts have been ongoing at First Church since 2008. The Beloved Community group focused on three strands of work in 2019:

Creating a more radically inclusive and diverse faith community (a leadership priority of First Church identified in February, 2019)

Understanding our individual and collective involvement in a *system* of white supremacy and racism

Public Remembrance Project (an effort begun in 2018 to repair the damage caused by First Church by its slave-holding past and its complicity in White Supremacy)

Beloved Community did not engage in this work in isolation. Rather we collaborated with other committees such as Deacons and the Missions and Social Justice Committee, with the efforts of First Church staff members, and with individuals and small groups in the congregation who initiated and participated in Racial Justice and related work such as the group who organized the “400 Years of Inequality” display and programming.

Creating a more radically inclusive and diverse faith community. In particular, the Beloved Community group led or collaborated with others to accomplish the following:

Issa Bibbins and Nola Hood brought their gifts of gospel and jazz music four times in 2019.

Juneteenth observance was held for the third year.

Deacons introduced “Tradition Bearer” Sundays to the congregation to highlight the cultures of people in the congregation, including Samoan Christian traditions and Brazilian capoeira.

Efforts to design a more robust welcome at First Church services that will be inviting for people of a diverse range of ages, races and ethnicities, incomes, sexual orientations and gender identities, and abilities is being led by Carlyle Stewart.

A Heritage Potluck was held after church with an activity to share our pasts with one another (“Where I’m From...)

Understanding our individual and collective involvement in a *system* of white supremacy and racism

“400 Years of Inequality” timeline was displayed in Margaret Jewett Hall at First Church, commemorating 400 years since the first slaves arrived on the shores of what is now the Eastern United States. This exhibit was developed by the New School in New York City. An accompanying exhibit was developed about people who were enslaved by members of First Church in the 17th and 18th centuries and who were members of our church. The observance was led by Susan Redlich and Deb Cunningham, consisted of individuals from the church community as well as the Missions and Social Justice Committee and the Beloved Community group

A series of workshops, dramatic readings, and discussions were held before and after church related to the “400 Years of Inequality theme” throughout September and October. These included Indigenous speaker Elizabeth Solomon; viewing the film *Dawnland* about recent exploitation of indigenous children in Maine; and dramatic readings from Howard Zinn’s book, *A People’s History of the United States*.

The theme of “400 Years of Inequality” was highlighted in different ways throughout worship services in September and October.

Report of Beloved Community/First Church Public Remembrance Project (continued)

3-day “Road to Freedom 2.0” pilgrimage to Washington D.C. had 34 participants. We visited the African American History Museum and National Indian Museum, an AME church, Frederick Douglas house, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. 20 people participated in a course in preparation for the trip and 30 people participated in reflection sessions after the trip.

In addition, participants in the first “Road to Freedom” trip to Memphis, Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery at the end of 2018, continued to meet for reflection and learning during the first half of 2019. They also attended educational programming such as a speaker from the Equal Justice Initiative and a display at Harvard Divinity School about the role of Christianity in the Slave Trade. Small group sessions read and discussed books like *White Fragility*.

Public Remembrance Project.

In 2012, First Church in Cambridge, one of the oldest churches in the United States, learned that, in the 17th and 18th centuries, First Church families, including two senior ministers, a Harvard President, a Lieutenant Governor and other town and colony leaders, enslaved both African and Indigenous persons. Thirty-nine of these enslaved persons were admitted to a second-class version of membership in the church (“owning the covenant and being baptized”), that excluded them from participation in church leadership. First Church was silent before and after the abolition of slavery, during Jim Crow segregation and, until recently, mass incarceration. First Church remained silent during government-sponsored programs of physical and cultural genocide carried out against Indigenous peoples, through wars and forced removal of Indigenous children to boarding schools. And, like most White institutions at that time, First Church profited economically and culturally from the enslavement of Black and Indigenous peoples.

This research opened for us a window into the violence that First Church and its members inflicted on other human beings. Our immediate reaction was to seek some way to remember and honor those enslaved persons who were part of our faith community. However, it has become clear that an act of remembrance by itself is inadequate. In 2018, First Church voted to “explore a project of public remembrance related to our history of complicity with Northern slavery.” This vote led to the *Public Remembrance Project* and discussions of linking remembrance to the need for reparations.

First Church’s history is also our wider communities’ history. For this reason, the *Public Remembrance Project* proposes to engage persons in the congregation of First Church and community members in the wider Cambridge and Greater Boston communities, across racial, class, and economic lines, in conversations that we hope will involve our communities in discussion of two linked outcomes:

- A project of public remembrance, if agreed and acceptable to communities in the wider Cambridge and Greater Boston areas, that honors enslaved persons and reflects the historical legacy of slavery at First Church, Cambridge and Greater Boston and

- A form of reparations determined in conversation with and leadership from communities that have been historically harmed by our past actions and continues to be oppressed and marginalized by our White Supremacy.

In 2019, our theme for the Public Remembrance Project was “From Memory to Action.”

3 sessions (10:00 hours) on reparations as a spiritual practice were attended by approximately 50 people.

Report of of Beloved Community/First Church Public Remembrance Project (continued)

We received a grant from First Church (with money raised as part of the recent capital campaign), as well as additional donations from church members to begin a process of designing a form of reparations for the harm caused by our church's past actions. We drafted a "Request for Proposal" to hire a designer or design firm to assist us. However, some members of the Beloved Community group and other church members helped us to understand that before continuing with this process, we should ask for input from black and other people of color in the community who have been harmed by our past actions and continue to be harmed by our White Supremacy. We delayed the "Request for Proposal" until we could get input from these groups.

Focus groups were held (and will continue into February, 2020) with church and community groups to get input on the next steps to repair the harm done by our church's past involvement in enslaving people and in white supremacy. Groups include those most harmed by white supremacy. These Focus groups are being facilitated by Rev. Karlene Griffiths Sekou who is a member of First Church.

The Beloved Community group and other interested church leaders worked with consultant Sadada Jackson, a person of both African and indigenous descent, on the goal of Identifying, clarifying and finetuning the desired process, outcomes and approach to framing the Public Remembrance Project to the wider Cambridge community.

Participants in the Beloved Community group this year included Peggy Stevens, Chair, David Kidder, secretary, Dan Smith, Carlyle Stewart, Alice Kidder, Linda Ziebell, Karlene Griffiths Sekou, Abby Shuman, and Audrey Bellinger. The scope of the work was also made possible by the many volunteer hours of those who helped organize the "Road to Freedom 2.0" trip, the many aspects of the "400 Years of Inequality" observance, and the other programs of the Beloved Community.

Report of Discernment & Formation Task Team

The work of the team is reflective of what is occurring in many denominations -- a decrease in the number of candidates entering the ministry. When i first joined the team 15 years ago we had, one time, 7 candidates in the Ministry in Discernment process. Today, we have two, with another possible candidate interviewing with us later this month.

Katie Omberg has one more meeting with the Association's Committee on Ministry before she is eligible to have an Ecclesiastical Council. It is likely that that Council will take place in February or in March. If the Council, made up of lay and ordained members of the Metropolitan Association, accept Katie's theological paper and deem her qualified for ordained ministry, she will then be able to put out a profile and await a call from a church. Katie has been a joy to work with -- her keen mind, deep theology, humor and ability to inject playfulness in her work will be missed by the team.

Karlene Sekou Griffiths will enter the 4th and final stage of the MID process at some point in the future. Karlene has been very busy working on her doctorate at Harvard, as well as working in the area of racial justice education. Her speaking engagements, and leadership in leading workshops have kept her very busy, in addition to being a mother to her son, Lion.

I want to thank the members of the Team -- Dan Smith, Susie Neubauer, Ken Ziebell, Lindsay Miller, Jonathan New, and Alex Steinert Evoy for their commitment and support of the candidates, their individual skills and knowledge which assist the candidates in a variety of ways, and their time to do this important work for the Church.

Linda Ziebell
Team Chairperson

Report of the Archives Committee

In late spring of 2019, Dan Smith asked the Archives Group to "dip into" the Archives to see what information -- if any -- was available about how First Church dealt with issues of race and racial justice in the early 20th century. This was in preparation for programming in the fall related to the "400 Years of Injustice" timeline.

It is not so easy to "dip into" the historical records of First Church. Kate Judd and Jacqui Gates spent hours going through church bulletins and annual reports, but found little to report. Then they turned to the records of the Women's Home Missionary Society from 1891 to 1919. At almost every monthly meeting were reports on black schools, churches and clinics, in the South and North, that these women supported with gifts of their time and money or clothing and supplies. In 1900, one of their speakers was Ida B. Wells, the black journalist who devoted her career to campaigning against lynching. Alexander McKenzie, minister of First Church from 1867 to 1914, also served for many years on the board of Hampton Institute, the historically-black college in Hampton, Virginia.

In 2019, the Archives Group continued to work on organizing and cataloguing the books, records and manuscripts we have inherited from the past. This year, we also devoted time to sharing information from the archives with the church and wider world.

Building on research by Dan Smith and David Kidder, Chris Reynolds and Lindsay Miller developed an exhibit called "Enslaved Africans and Indians at First Church in Cambridge." It lists the names and what little is known of 36 enslaved individuals who were admitted to full or partial membership in First Church between 1698 and 1783, when slavery was ruled unconstitutional in Massachusetts. There were 33 men and women identified as "negroes" and three men identified as "Indians." All were described as "servants," but they were not free. Among the enslavers were two ministers of First Church -- William Brattle and Nathaniel Appleton -- and a president of Harvard, Benjamin Wadsworth. Our primary source was records of First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian, which are at the Harvard Divinity School library.

The Congregational Library Bulletin (Vol. 14, No. 2, 2019) published an article called "How a Theft Brought an Historic Archives Back to Life" by Lindsay Miller with editorial contributions from Kate Judd and Chris Reynolds. The First Church newsletter EVENT published two articles in our occasional series, "From the Archives." One was about 19th century membership records, the other the history of the current First Church parsonage at 44 Garden Street.

In 2019, the Archives Group visited the Cambridge Room at Cambridge Public Library, where archivist Alysia Pacy advised us on best practices. She also visited our Archives Room and praised what we have accomplished. She also agreed we are ready for a professional archivist to guide us on the next steps of preserving and sharing this treasure we have from the past. In 2020, our goal is to secure a grant to hire a consultant and purchase much needed archival supplies. We welcome volunteers to join us.

Kate Judd, Lindsay Miller, Chris Reynolds, co-chairs
Art Anger, Cathy Garnett, Jacqui Gates, Hilary Hopkins, Susie Neubauer

Report of the Fellowship Committee

The close of 2019 finds First Church Fellowship in a good place. Two full years have passed since the building renovation and expansion of the kitchen, and our systems and practices are settling down into a steady state. The present moment seems right to take stock against some of the “kitchen values” that congregational kitchen users proposed several years ago as ones that we want to live into as part of our feeding practices at First Church:

- **Inclusive.** We strive to eliminate barriers to all being fed at our church meals and from our kitchen
- **Participatory.** The joys and responsibilities of feeding one another are shared
- **Sustainable.** We strive to be good stewards of our resources, both congregational resources - the time and money shared by First Church members - and the limited resources of our planet

Inclusive

Feeding Sundays are popular with our congregation, and the Fellowship Committee continues to feed a lot of people. In 2019, there were 9 all-church meals following worship, and attendance has remained fairly stable at those with between 105 and 140 plates used. Congregational meetings represent the lower end of the range, and Regathering Sunday and the Christmas Party at the upper extreme. These meals, as well as a smaller number of evening meals and before-worship breakfasts, now follow one of four templates intended to make it simpler to coordinate everything from bulletin blurbs to sexton set-up to soliciting volunteers:

- **Full potluck** (Fall/heritage potluck, Epiphany)
- **Partial potluck** (Christmas Party, Mardi Gras Pancake Supper)
- **Soup and bread** (2-3 Lenten meals, Advent Crafts Workshop)
- **Full sit-down** (Regathering Sunday, Fall Meeting, Annual Meeting, Church Picnic)

Meal planners are learning how to plan an inclusive menu, taking into account as many of the below dietary needs/sensitivities as feasible. A few single-ingredient offerings (such as a tray of plain rice or plain pasta, or a bowl of undressed salad) with a choice of sauce and/or a few single-ingredient toppings have been well-received as a way to ensure that as many people as possible can eat.

- Vegetarian/vegan
- Gluten-free
- Dairy-free
- Common allergens (nuts, peanuts, shellfish, eggs)
- Known sensitivities/needs from particular members (low-potassium diet, alliums)

Participatory

A Feeding Sunday is now a bigger job than it was before the building renovation. Cooking takes more time than catering, and the shift from compostables to reusable dishware extends the time required for clean-up. Given these expansions in our committee’s role, we are extremely grateful for the many hands that allow us to take full use of our kitchen facilities.

Report of the Fellowship Committee (continued)

To accommodate the increased work on a Feeding Sunday, some roles have shifted. For the second year running, the church staff has taken on the responsibility (formerly residing with Fellowship) of ordering the “Grab and Go” catering for small-group church lunches, such as the Newcomers’ Luncheons. We recognize this is an extra responsibility for a small and already overloaded staff, and the Quarterly Fellowship Chairs are grateful for the opportunity to focus on the large all-church meals.

The structure of Fellowship leadership remains as in past years. A **Chair** or **Co-Chair** (in 2019, this was Caitlin Anderson and Marian Smith), who inventory the fellowship supplies, write annual reports and manage the budget, work with the Discernment Committee to identify Quarterly Fellowship Coordinators, and serve as a resource and support for Fellowship Coordinators. **Quarterly Fellowship Coordinators** provide the food for Feeding Sundays (either catered, cooked, or some combination of both) and Pauline Fennel is **Cookie Queen** from September to June. Quarterly Fellowship Coordinators have suggested that they would prefer to have their meals spread more evenly throughout the year, but we have so far been able to manage these requests by means of swaps without altering the system itself.

The low turnover in Quarterly Fellowship Coordinators - the families listed below are beginning their third year running in these roles - suggests that there is much that is working well in the current system. At the same time, the Fellowship Chair and the Discernment Committee should be thinking about potential prospects for replacements, to ensure that we spread the knowledge of how to use our wonderful kitchen. Finally, we wish a fond farewell to **Marian Smith**, who is stepping down as co-chair at the end of 2019.

- Winter (Dec. -Feb.) Caitlin Anderson, with Will, Hannah, and Lorraine Erickson
- Spring (March – May) Martha Dyer, with George, Claudia, Alice, and Jack
- Summer (June – August) Brian Funck and Sara Hendron, with Malcolm, Graham, and Freddy
- Fall (September-November) Scott, Lauren, and Lily Yockel

Soliciting and coordination of volunteers is both a bright spot and an area for improvement. Many, many members of our congregation give generously of their time to set up and clean up from our church meals. Recent volunteers at the prewash tubs and stacking plates include Dave Kidder, Stephen Weller, Stefanie Haug, Katie Omberg, Art Anger, Laurie Friedman, Barbara Hume, Linda Ziebell, Joanne Paul, Joe James, Amy Matias. At the same time, it is increasingly difficult to get commitments in advance. This may be hardest for soliciting cookie donations for coffee hour, as set-up and clean-up can be staffed by on-the-spot volunteers.

Fellowship also thanks the other committees and subgroups in the church that have taken ownership of various meals or clean-up. Special events led from outside Fellowship include the Stewardship Luncheon, Shelter Breakfast, Doris Beauvais Luncheon, Capital Campaign Grantee Lunches. The Deacons, led by Amy Matias, coordinated Karin Case’s farewell lunch last spring; the BBC led the Heritage Potluck and the Samoan banana soup event; and the youth group has on occasion taken over clean-up.

Sustainable

There is good news on the sustainability front. After rising briefly in 2017 during the renovation, overall costs are down in both 2018 and 2019 as we are able to cook more and cater less. On average a catered meal for the

Report of the Fellowship Committee (continued)

congregation costs from \$600 (for soup) to \$1200 (for a full sit-down meal with dessert). Cooking a low-meat, healthy meal ourselves reduces those costs by 60-75%.

Our reusable dishware and dishwasher also enables us to be more planet-friendly. The volume of and expenditure on compostable dishware is also much reduced as compostable use is almost exclusively now limited to coffee cups.

There are a number of innovations in progress for improving operations and communications to enable us to feed our congregation without burning out our volunteers. **Kirsten Manville** and others are spearheading the creation of a number of tools, such as job cards or a job list, to coordinate roles and responsibilities amongst volunteers. The information in the remarkable Fellowship Manual created before the renovation by Joanne Paul and Leslie Pelton is slowly being updated and migrating to the FCC Fellowship Files on Google Drive. Upcoming projects include drafting a short article for occasional posting in EVENT and/or the email blasts to spread information more widely about how to get involved with Fellowship.

Report of the Gifts Discernment/Nominating Committee

The Gifts Discernment/Nominating Committee recruits persons to fill positions as officers, and chairs and members of standing boards and committees, as required by the First Church bylaws. At the request of the Moderator and/or Executive Council, we are also available to help recruit special task teams, work groups and other entities not named in the bylaws that are usually gathered for specific, short-term purposes.

Our principal task, as always, was to recruit for the following year a slate of nominees for First Church officer, committee and board members (see below). We have been particularly fortunate to have Lexi Boudreaux, Pastoral Associate, working with us this past year. Lexi brings both a deep understanding of the spiritual foundations of church organization and leadership, which she shares each meeting in opening devotions, but also an engaged, practical approach to recruitment based on her experience with the Nominating Committee at United Parish in Brookline.

We also spent some time addressing broader questions.

What do our members and friends need from First Church, and how does this affect Gifts Discernment?

Are changes in the governance structure of First Church needed to accommodate the complex lives of our members?

What do I want from First Church? In conversations with First Church folks, some have let us know that they are tired of always being asked to do something. Some feel “used” by FCC. Put another way, people want to be known for who they are, not just what they are doing for the church.

Many people are also more drawn to “projects” rather than to what is perceived as the “process” focus of committee work. Friday Café, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) and Sanctuary are excellent examples of ministries that attract committed volunteers from within and outside First Church. Individuals can commit to extensive or limited involvement with these ministries, as they wish.

The implications of these observations for Gifts Discernment are not entirely clear, but they do point to a need for a new perspective. If we develop more personal relationships with folks at First Church, understanding what moves them to ministry, we might create a better context for “asks” about willingness to serve.

We discussed Welcoming as a way to engage newcomers and visitors in conversations about what they need from the church. Carlyle Stewart is leading the charge with newcomers, and he is also planning for training a core group of welcomers. Beloved Community plans to work with Deacons and Carlyle to plan and implement a welcoming program.

We discussed the value of a congregational canvass, to ask key questions and develop relationships. The GBIO one-on-one method of mutual story-telling and relationship building was offered as a possible model. Questions to be addressed could include:

When have you felt most at home, most engaged and most cared for at First Church?

What endeavors in your life have given you the most satisfaction?

Are there new opportunities arising in your life now? New challenges emerging?

Is there a spiritual question, image, or practice you feel focused on lately?

We agreed that a canvass would be 1) more than what Gifts Discernment could handle on its own and 2) best planned and implemented next year.

Report of the Gifts Discernment/Nominating Committee (continued)

Committee structure and process: We discussed several related questions. Is the demand for slots we need to fill always going to be greater than the supply of willing recruits? Should board and committee structures and processes be re-configured to take account of FCC members' time constraints and tastes for committee work? Do we want to make a specific proposal to Executive Council?

Shelter and Friday Café may be moving toward a broad umbrella of Homeless Ministries at First Church (which could also include the Saturday and Sunday monthly meals programs). This might lead to some committee re-structuring.

A general model that might apply to several committees might involve a small core of committee members who call on others for specific, time-limited "projects" when the need arises. Examples where this has been tried are Fellowship and Stewardship.

The 2020 slate that follows includes vacant slots that need to be filled. The Committee will continue working to fill these vacancies. If you have an interest in any board or committee with a 2020 vacancy, please contact any member of the Gifts Discernment Committee. Long term, we also encourage you to express your interest in (or curiosity about) a future position on any of the boards or committees listed in the slate. Let us know, and we'll be happy to follow up with you.

Respectfully submitted

Dave Kidder, Chair, Art Anger, Beth Loomis, Nora Willcutts, Jim Rissling, Lexi Boudreaux, Pastoral Associate

Report of the Gifts Discernment & Nominating Committee (continued)

2020 Slate of Officers, Boards and Standing Committees *indicates new to position

OFFICERS

Moderator	Mary Robinson
*Vice Moderator	Julie Pridham
Clerk	_____
Treasurer	Jason Whaley
Associate Treasurer	Rich Goode
*Assistant Treasurer	Art Anger
Assistant Treasurer	Connie Pyle
Controller	Rachel Carlson
Member at Large	Lisa Dinardo

DEACONS

*Moana Bentin, Co-Chair
*Beth Spaulding, Co-Chair
Amy Matias
Taj Smith
Davis Dyer
Joanne Paul
*Dean Eaton

Two new Deacons needed

FELLOWSHIP

Caitlin Anderson, Chair
Fellowship Coordinators: Martha Dyer, Sara Hendren, Brian Funck
Cookie Solicitors: Sara Hendren, Brian Funck and Pauline Fennel

MISSIONS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

*Deb Cunningham, Co-Chair
*Sally O'Brien, Co-Chair
Jim Brown
Alice Kidder
Molly Baker
Phil Jones

Report of the Gifts Discernment & Nominating Committee (continued)

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

*Hilary Hopkins, Chair
Nancy Cyr
Karolyn Feeks Maws
*Faith Ross
*Ariel Ackermann
*Audrey Bellinger

FIRST CHURCH SHELTER COMMITTEE

*Jan Lo, Co-Chair
*Don Johnson, Co-Chair
Jean Carr
Brian Funck
Jim Leone
Jane Matthews

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Nate Jones, Chair
Cathy Garnett
Kindle Williams
*Chris Blanc
*Peter Byerly

One new member needed

STEWARDSHIP

*Stephen Weller, Chair
Susie Longfield
*Jonathan New

Three new members needed

INVESTMENTS

*Laurie Burt, Chair
Marc O'Brien
Jason Whaley, Treasurer
*Rich Goode, Associate Treasurer
*Stephen Weller, Chair of Stewardship
*Elizabeth Lovance

Report of the Gifts Discernment & Nominating Committee (continued)

GIFTS DISCERNMENT/NOMINATING

Dave Kidder, Chair

Beth Loomis

Nora Willcutts

Jim Rissling

Two new members needed

The following are not subject to election at the Annual Meeting:

FINANCE TEAM

*Laurie Burt, Co-Chair of Investments

Jason Whaley, Treasurer

Rachel Carlson, Controller

*Stephen Weller, Chair of Stewardship

*Rich Goode, Associate Treasurer

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY GROUP

Kate Judd, Co-Chair

Lindsay Miller, Co-Chair

Chris Reynolds, Co-Chair

EVENT EDITOR

Ken Ziebell

2020 Nominating Slate respectfully submitted by:

Dave Kidder, Chair, Art Anger, Beth Loomis, Nora Willcutts, Jim Rissling, Lexi Boudreaux, Pastoral Associate

Report of the Missions Committee

Let your light shine before mankind, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven... Matthew 5:16

I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came unto me...

Matthew 25: 35 -36

In 2019, Missions and Social Justice supported numerous efforts to follow Jesus into the world.

Hungry and you gave me to eat: The Committee contributed to the Friday Café, which served meals to more than 200 guests each week, extending hospitality to those living on the edge.

The Committee gave support to the Thursday night Harvard Square Meals Program at Christ Church, which is a ministry to those experiencing homelessness.

A Stranger and you took me in: The church as a whole provided many volunteers to accompany at University Lutheran Church a family needing protection. The Committee contributed funds to support this effort of the Cambridge Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition, and to enable our guest to attend immigration proceedings.

The Committee gave a donation to the First Church Shelter, which houses fourteen men experiencing homelessness.

Naked and you clothed me: The Committee gave funding to Solutions at Work, to augment the many material donations of clothing given by members of the congregation. The Friday Café distributed clothing donated, some of which came from Solutions at Work.

Sick and you visited me: In addition to the work of the Pastoral Care Teams, the Committee contributed to Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, which is engaging more than fifty faith communities, including ours, in a widespread lobbying effort to improve health care access in Massachusetts.

Other outreach: First Church supports through the Committee the important work of the federal, state and local arms of the United Church of Christ, including emergency aid in places of great need throughout the world. We support the City Mission- Boston in its advocacy and direct services in urban areas. We gave funding to the Harambee Students of African Descent at Harvard University, and provided free office space at the church for the Movement for Black Lives, Cambridge. We contributed to the Boston Foundation's plan for the Boston King Memorial, and supported the anti-violence efforts of the Louis D. Brown Institute. Volunteers from First Church participated in creating affordable housing, through the Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries' (CMM) program called "Clergy and Laity for Affordable Housing (CLAH)." The Committee gave funding to CMM and CLAH. We contributed to the Cambridge Community Foundation's Gun buy-back program.

The Committee decided on a Social Justice liturgical calendar, as follows:

September - October: Racial Justice

November - December: Immigrant Rights

January - February: Addressing Housing and Homelessness

Report of the Missions Committee (continued)

March - April: Environmental Justice

May - June: Advocacy around issues of Gun control, and Antiviolence; and protecting the rights of the LGBTQ community. Peace issues are addressed.

The Committee gave support for the 400 Years of Inequality Display in Margaret Jewett Hall, and encouraged many to attend the sessions related to it. The congregation was invited to hear about policy concerns of Indigenous People, discuss the history of racism, entwined with First Church history, and consider approaches to reparations.

The Committee presented a speaker, Rabbi Michael Lerner, to discuss his new book *Revolutionary Love*, which calls for a rethinking of social policy with an imperative to loving, rather than a conventional bottom line. The Committee purchased a suggestion box, for use by the congregation, to explore new approaches to Environmental Stewardship.

Persons wishing to suggest needs for social justice activities may contact the Co-chairs. See information in church bulletins.

Report of the Stewardship Committee

Thank you all for the pledges you have made and the gifts you have given.

We will report the results of the final year of our three-year campaign "The Way Forward" at the annual meeting. At the time of printing we appear to be 90% of the way towards a goal of \$545,000 in pledges to support our 2020 ministry. Reaching this goal will truly help us to sustain the future of our ministry.

The majority of our work this year has been spent focusing on executing this final year of the three year campaign which included the introduction of Legacy Giving at First Church. In 2020 we look forward to continuing this conversation.

This year we focused our attention on what the wondrous ministries that have been accomplished through the use of the gifts we have received as a means to reinvigorating the practice of giving within our faith community. We have also focused on clearly communicating to the congregation what our ministries need in order to be sustained in the years to come.

Looking forward to 2021, the Stewardship Committee will create a campaign centered around a return to a 3% increase of pledges (down from 5%) and a continued discussion of the practice of giving and receiving. We will also partner with the staff and ministry committees to identify additional ways of funding our ministries to sustain our future.

Respectfully submitted:

Barbara Hume, Susie Longfield, Jonathan New, Robb Morgan, Stephen Weller (Chair), Rev. Karen McArthur, Rev. Dan Smith

For Such a Time As This Grants Awarded

As a component of the Capital Campaign, First Church committed to provide a tithe of 10% of the congregation's pledges to be devoted to mission grants. The Grants Committee of First Church's Capital Campaign has made awards to ten projects that will help us to extend our mission beyond our Garden Street home. The Executive Council voted on June 3 to accept the recommendations of the Grants Committee, and we are very excited now to announce the grantees and their projects!

Black and Pink is a family of LGBTQ prisoners and outside allies dedicated to the abolition of the prison industrial complex. Founded in Boston in 2005, it has grown to serving nearly 17,000 prisoners via 14 chapters across the US. Grant funds will augment a bail fund and cover incidental expenses for transportation and meals for members facing court dates.

Building the Beloved Community is a First Church group that engages the congregation in racial justice work. Grant funds will be combined with two private donations to engage a design firm or public artist to facilitate local community engagement in the design of a public remembrance project. This project will help us commemorate the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century enslaved members of First Church and take steps to address ongoing racial inequality in Cambridge.

Community Resources for Justice (CRJ) helps to support adults transitioning from incarceration, young adults transitioning from foster care, and individuals with developmental disabilities. CRJ received a grant from First Church last year to fund a demonstration project for extending the time that formerly incarcerated individuals may be housed by CRJ's step-down program, helping them to find independent housing and begin employment. Funds from the second grant cycle will provide additional case management support and help the program move to sustainability and attract longer-term funding by evaluating and creating communications materials.

The Congregational Library is a center for academic historians, church members, and other researchers that works to advance the study and deeper understanding of the Congregational story. Grant funds will support long-overdue renovations to the physical facility, including a welcome area and a manuscript processing space.

Empowering People for Inclusive Communities (EPIC) provides community service and leadership development programs for youth with disabilities in the Boston area as part of its mission to challenge ableism. Grant funds will provide seed money to expand the successful Service Warriors program to the Worcester area.

The First Church Shelter serves a group of fourteen men experiencing homelessness by providing a safe space, home-cooked meals, and counseling/coaching. Grant funds will go toward lighting, painting, and other refurbishments to the Shelter's physical space in the First Church basement, last renovated and improved in 2002.

FoodLink is an Arlington-based food rescue group that picks up food from large cafeterias, grocery stores, and restaurants, redistributing it to food pantries, weekend backpack programs, and others. As part of a recent expansion of their mission and operations, FoodLink has moved from a cramped shared space to a larger dedicated facility. Grant funds will help the organization improve accessibility to this space for the volunteers who process the donations for distribution.

For Such a Time As This Grants Awarded (continued)

First Church's Friday Café hosts homeless guests and volunteers each Friday during the program year in a safe and spirit-filled place, providing food, toiletries, clothing, and other resources. This grant will go toward a fund-raising consultant who will support Friday Café's efforts to secure sustainable external funding.

Kids4Peace Boston operates residential summer camp and school-year programs to educate, train, and inspire Christian, Jewish, and Muslim youth from diverse backgrounds to become interfaith peace leaders. Grant funds will support a pilot of a 3-day, immersive, overnight program for a diverse group of teens who have not been involved previously in on-going activities.

The Cory Johnson Program for Post-Traumatic Healing at Roxbury Presbyterian Church's Social Impact Center pioneers a community-based approach to supporting individuals and families impacted by urban violence. This grant will fund clinical services, peer leader stipends, and food for weekly and monthly support groups for individuals impacted by gun violence, homelessness, and racism.

We are so grateful to be a part of the work these organizations are doing. In the coming months the Grants Committee hopes to provide opportunities for First Church to become better acquainted with these organizations and projects. It was an extraordinary field of applicants, and we thank all the organizations that applied.

The Grants Committee, Aaron Hume, Caitlin Anderson, Jean Carr, Jean-Dany Joachim, Beth Spaulding

Report of the Investment Committee

First Church began the year 2019 with \$3,038,926 in its investment accounts at Charles Schwab with investment management provided by O'Brien Wealth Partners (OWP). At the end of 2019, the value at Schwab was \$3,305,202, an increase of \$266,276. The change in the investment account balance reflects inflows of \$146,900 in gifts, \$65,395 in income from investments net of fees, and net gains of \$439,981 in investments, offset by distributions of \$386,000 to the Church treasury. Distributions to the treasury included \$168,000 in normally recurring contributions, currently approximately 5% of the Investment balance. The additional \$218,000 in distributions is attributable to transfer of cash for stock gifts (\$100,000), and the scheduled shortfall in the annual budget, including capital and interest payments on the Capital Campaign loan. Please see the Treasurer's report for specific numbers on 2019 Church expenditures.

First Church investment returns were generally in line with benchmarks established for each asset class. Based on investment activities alone, investments increased by 17.19% on a time-weighted basis with a net investment gain of \$439,981. The asset allocation at year end was 63.8% in a globally diversified portfolio of stock funds, 19.4% in fixed-income or bond funds, 6.8% in alternative assets and 10.1% in cash, within the ranges established in our Investment Policy guidelines except for cash on hand which was higher due to anticipated capital expenditures in 2020, including boiler replacement. The diversified stock portfolio increased by 26.17% in 2019. Returns on indices for comparable categories of stocks were gains of 26.60% for the MSCI AC World Index, 31.49% for the S&P 500 (large cap stocks), 25.52% for the Russell 2000 (US small cap stocks), 22.01% for the MSCI EAFE (international stocks) and 18.44% for the MSCI Emerging Market stocks. The fixed income portfolio increased in value by 6.13% compared to a gain of 8.72% in the Bloomberg Barclays US Agg Bond index. Alternatives, in our case consisting primarily of funds invested in mortgages and reinsurance products, increased by 3.39% compared to a 7.58% gain in the Credit Suisse Hedge Fund Index.

During the year, the Investment Committee took several further steps to align the portfolio with investments in corporations judged to be leaders in positive Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practices as determined by fund managers specializing in ESG investments, without sacrificing investment performance. The ESG equity portfolio, initiated in the third quarter of 2016, has achieved returns generally equal to or better than the standard portfolio. For the calendar year 2019, the ESG equity portfolio slightly outperformed the standard portfolio returning 26.67% versus 26.04% (gross of fees).

The Committee has gradually increased its portion of the equity portfolio from 10% to a targeted level of 40% in 2019. In contrast, the diversification offered at this time in ESG fixed income investments is more limited and in 2018 the Committee elected to reallocate the 10% initially invested in this area to the standard funds until the ESG and sustainability markets mature in this asset category. In support of the Church's and Earth Stewardship commitment to combat global warming, the Committee continues to screen holdings for carbon related assets in line with the Sustainability Investment Policy Guidelines as measured by Carbon-Tracker and is able to report that the percent of the portfolio invested in companies on the list remains less than 2% (actual, 1.15%).

The Committee is in the process of evaluating the overall performance and asset allocation of the Church's portfolio in ESG equity investments since inception of the Sustainability Investment Policy guidelines and will report any revised asset allocation and updates to the guidelines to Executive Council in early 2020.

Report of the Investment Committee (continued)

The Investment Committee is committed to achieving investment returns that will enable First Church to maintain and extend its mission and to do so with a commitment to responsible investment practices. The Committee notes the very positive step taken this past year to formalize the Finance working group into a standing Finance Committee, on which the Investment Committee participates. The Committee notes the improved coordination the Finance Committee provides regarding budgets, stewardship, cash flow and capital needs replacements and long-term financial plans to project revenues needed to support sustainably support the operations and capital needs of the church consistent with its mission.

The Committee also notes the positive learning we have undergone over the past three years with the church members, leaders, clergy and our investment managers, O'Brien Wealth Partners, on socially and sustainably responsible investing, including considerations of climate change. The investment outcomes have been encouraging, and we are committed to continue a course of disciplined learning and improvement in these sustainable investment practices.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Burt, Co-Chair, Investment Committee

Jason Whaley Member and Treasurer

Jill Fopiano, O'Brien Wealth Partners LLC (Investment Managers)

Report of the Treasurer

First Church has run unsustainable budget deficits for a number of years. If in 2019 we had continued our historical pattern of 3% increases in expenses and 3% increases in giving, we would have been on track to exhaust our available funds by 2030.

Instead we took steps to “bend the curve,” changing our long-term patterns to put us on a path to sustainability. In 2019 our deficit decreased, going from \$243,000 in 2018 to approximately \$133,000 in 2019 (final figures are not yet available as of the time of writing).

There were two important factors that created this reduction in the deficit. First, pledge income increased by over 10% from 2018 to 2019. This generosity from the congregation is a critical source of support for our ministry. Second, expenses did not increase at all.

This pattern is the critical factor in getting onto and staying on a sustainable financial path: our income needs to increase more than our expenses indefinitely. If income growth outpaces expense growth by 1.5% for the next 10 years, our assets will begin to grow to keep pace with inflation. Accordingly, the 2020 budget approved by the congregation at the November meeting provides for a slight *decrease* in expenses, along with an increase in pledges of 7.5%. Based on pledges made to date, we are on track to meet or exceed that target.

In 2020 we also expect to make capital investments that contribute to long-term expense reductions or at least prevent long-term expense increases. First, our solar project is moving ahead and will go into operation in 2020. This locks in a large portion of our electricity costs for several decades, with increases of only 2%. Second, the Buildings and Grounds Committee is exploring a boiler replacement project that would meaningfully reduce our heating expense. Not coincidentally, these projects will also reduce our carbon footprint and contribute to environmental sustainability.

Ultimately, financial sustainability depends on the vitality of our community. The most encouraging trend from a sustainability point of view is the long-term commitment of members to the congregation, and the new members who continue to join our covenant and participate in our shared life.

Report of the Treasurer (continued)

2020 Budget Summary

Income

Pledge	549,000	Way Forward goal
Draw	154,000	Sustainable use of past gifts
Other	201,600	Building use, etc

Total Income **904,600**

Expense

Missions	100,810	
Ministry	516,072	4% decrease from 2019 estimate
B&G	288,940	0.4% increase from 2019 est.
Capital Reserve	72,000	Building preservation
Loan Interest	21,000	Capital campaign loan
Other	5,000	

Total Expense **1,003,822** 2% decrease from 2019 estimate

Surplus / (Deficit) **(99,222)**

Congregational Roll 2019

Active Roll Reported for 31 December 2018: 389

Additions to resident membership:

New Members: 14

Ariel Ackermann
Domenik Ackermann
Emmanuel Akyeamong
Ayawavi "Yawa" Attisso
Tina Chen
Ingeborg Haug
Marilyn Mellows
Edward Nyarko
Gabrielle Ana-Maria Rameriz
Susan Reynolds
Gandhi Solanki
Heather Stewart
Max van Over
Nancy Webber

Baptisms in the Church Universal: 3

Angelo Culpeppe
Silas McNamara
Devin Narayan

Marriages:

Abigail Cyr and Josh Kolash

Removals, by death: 3

Hunter Dupree
Ruth Hsiao
Walter Jennings

Removals, by letter of transfer: 9

Tim Aureden
Karin Case
Emily Van Brunt Carduff
Barbara Kroft
Adam Kroft
Julie Mavity Madalena
Mike Madalena
Carolyn Thompson
Victoria Wagner

Active Roll on 31 December 2019: 391

Communion of Saints

During 2019, the following persons completed their lives among us

Louise Arsenault
Paul Atkins
Paul Baker
Ann Boehm
Christina Carlucci
Joanne Colson
Natasha Davis
Hunter Dupree
James Smith Ellis
Jocelyn "Ma" Ford
Jean Howell Gates
Sharon Hamer
Bill Higginbotham

Ruth Hsiao
Walter Jennings
Denise Karuth
Robert Love
Jed Mannis
Bill Newton
Tom O'Brien
Kendric Price
Harland Riker
Carlyle Stewart, Jr.
Mark Sykes
Kim Warne
Rev. Robert Andrew Wendelin

O Lord, you are my light and my salvation
the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

One thing I ask of you, Lord, this I seek:
to live in your house all the days of my life...

For you will hide me in your shelter
in the day of trouble,
you will conceal me in your tent
and set me high on a rock...

I believe that I shall see
the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.

-Psalm 27, par.

*First Church member



First Church in Cambridge, Congregational

United Church of Christ

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