



## **CELEBRATING PAST AND PRESENT**

**April 28, 2024 and May 5, 2024**

**A 20 Plus Year Look-Back at our Shared Ministry**

### **I. Welcome and Opening Prayer**

### **II. Themes and Highlights 2004-2024**

### **III. Discussion**

- *What do you most remember?*
- *What were the most challenging or the most Spirit-filled moments for you?*
- *What's changed and what has stayed the same?*

### **IV. Closing**

#### **Themes and Observations 2004-2024**

- Vision and Visioning
- Becoming a more welcoming and multigenerational church
- Staff and lay leader transitions, staff and lay stability & collaboration
- Major Milestones and Ritualizing
- For Such A Time As This Capital Campaign
- GBIO and other justice partnerships
- Expanding Homeless Ministries
- Racial Reckoning and Repair work
- Surviving and Thriving through Covid
- Some Personal Highlights
- Others

## **CALLED MINISTERS (2000-2024)**

- Rev. Dr. Mary Luti, Senior Minister, 2000-2008
- Rev. Daniel Smith, Minister of Christian Discipleship, 2004-2008, Senior Minister, 2008-
- Rev. Dr. Ute Molitor, Minister of Spiritual Formation, 2010-2011
- Rev. Dr. Karin Case, Minister, 2014-2019
- Rev. Lexi Boudreaux, Transitional Minister, 2021-2023

## **ORDAINED INTERIM & STAFF MINISTERS**

- Rev. Karen McArthur
- Rev. Kate Layzer
- Rev. Terry McKinney
- Rev. Ron Evans, “Interlude” Minister, 2008
- Rev. Dr. Karin Case, Interim Minister, 2009-2010
- Rev. Dr. Reebee Girash, Sabbatical Minister, 2012

## **INTERNS AND PASTORAL ASSOCIATES**

- Ann Plumley
- Terry McKinney
- Sheehan Scarborough
- Jen Bloesh
- Caleb Williams
- Taj Smith
- Katie Omberg
- Alexa Kutler
- Tony Almoury-Alkhoury
- Denson Staples
- James Ramsey
- Carlyle Stewart
- Lexi Boudreaux
- Jaz Buchanan
- Ebony West
- Ahmaad Edmund
- Carla Arevalo
- Emma Thomas

## **COMMUNITY MINISTERS**

- Rev. Norm Bendroth
- Rev. Krysia Burnham
- Rev. Brent Coffin

- Rev. Henry Gates
- Rev. Philip LaFollette
- Rev. Beth Loomis
- Rev. Mónica Maher
- Rev. Kerry Maloney
- Rev. Mary Robinson
- Rev. Renate Rose
- Rev. Henry Schoenfield
- Rev. Liz Simons
- Rev. Heather Stanford
- Rev. Alex Steinert-Evoy
- Rev. Beth Spaulding
- Rev. Jennifer Wilkes Stuart
- Rev. Mary Martha Thiel
- Rev. Ken Ziebell

## **ORDINATIONS**

- Rev. Matt Laney 2005
- Rev. Marian Williams 2006
- Rev. Amy Sens 2006
- Rev. Kate Layzer 2007
- Rev. Anna Kriesle Humble 2007
- Rev. Gary Brinn 2010
- Rev. Summer Finnell Shaud 2010
- Rev. Ann Plumley 2011
- Rev. Joceylen Gardner Spencer 2011
- Rev. Terry McKinney 2012
- Rev. Monica Maher 2014
- Rev. Julie Rogers 2014
- Rev. Ellen Rohan Ball 2016
- Rev. Jennifer Stuart 2016
- Rev. Krysia Burnham 2016
- Rev. Domenic Ackerman 2021
- Rev. Katie Omberg 2022

## 2004-2024 HIGHLIGHTS BY THEME

- **Vision and Visioning**
  - 2003 God Vision for Us, a four-fold Way of Hospitality - Open Door, Open Road, Open Spirit, Open Table
  - 2011 God's Invitation to Us -Gentle and Deep
  - 2015 Grounded in God, Growing in Community and Acting in Love
  - 2021 Becoming an AntiRacist Church
  - Stewardship visions and financial visions, too!
- **More Welcoming and Multigenerational Church**
  - Sarah Higginbotham, Director of Creative Worship and Arts (and now Communications, too)
  - September 2010 - first family retreat at Craigville, by September 2013 - 80 FCC'ers at an all-ages, all-church retreat
  - Tuesday evening family dinners, family choir
  - Small group life, often centered around a "time for a soulful check-in," guided by 'covenants for a safer community' Dan introduced in 200, opened space for more vulnerability and sharing
  - 2011 Brent Coffin introduced Havruta, a rabbinic form of text study.
  - Many other small group leaders who have deepened our spiritual life and community
  - Changes to building in 2001 and 2016 also a big part of our warmth and welcoming
- **Staffing Transitions, Staffing Stability & Collaboration, Lay Leadership transitions**
  - 2008 - Mary's leaving and Dan's being called
  - 2011-12 Ute's being called and leaving
  - Karin Case (2014-2019) and Lexi Boudreaux(2021-2023) being called and leaving
  - Ongoing work with students and Candidates in Discernment for Ministry
  - Generational shift in deeply committed lay leaders
  - Asset of longevity and dedication of Kirsten Manville (since 2008), Karen McArthur, Peter Sykes, Jim Stewart
  - Lots of behind the scenes work on financial sustainability, bylaws revisions, safety protocols, ongoing building projects, and more, all sustained by an increasing generous congregation!
- **Celebrating and Ritualizing Major Milestones**
  - Our 375th Anniversary in 2011
  - Removing the Yellowwood Trees in 2014
  - Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Duke Ellington's "Concert of Sacred Music" 2017
  - Removing the Cockerel in 2023
  - Creating ritual and holding space for lamentation around national and local tragedies
    - After school and mass shootings, and with red and white flag lawn installation
    - After 2013 marathon bombing
    - After 2016 election, After January 6, After Roe V Wade fell
    - Juneteenth services
- **For Such A Time As This Capital Campaign**
  - 2015 - Began our capital campaign explorations, and received survey from 198 members who affirmed that we are a "high energy" and "high satisfaction"

- congregation, poised to take bold new steps into our future.
  - Discerned a vision and leaders - Dick and Leslie, and Don Johnson on B and G
  - Raised \$1,950,802 from 257 people! Embarked on a bold project 2.7 million renovation!
  - Signaled the shift and a baton passing from Dick Harter's generation to Leslie Pelton-Cairns
  - Made our space all the more of a center for our and the wider community
- **Joining GBIO in 2005 and CISC in 2017**
  - Through GBIO, wearned the power of relationships and story, and taking large scale action for the common good
  - This raised FCC's profile in the wider interfaith community, City Halls and the Statehouse
  - Gave us chances to be relevant to front page headlines and to be part of real and lasting change - healthcare reform, gun violence prevention bill, criminal justice reform and housing
  - Got us out of Cambridge regularly into Roxbury, into mosques and synagogues
  - Co-founding Cambridge Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition in 2017
  - Dan joined Strategy Team in 2007 and became VP from 2011-2018
- **Expanding our Homeless Ministries**
  - Since 1987, the Shelter has faithfully provided for 14 men, combined with a ton of advocacy, including most recently for safe injection facilities, thanks to Jim Stewart
  - From Dan's 2014 Annual Report "Kate Layzer launched a beautiful new outreach ministry that is nourishing the homeless of Harvard Square as well as a faithful cadre of volunteers."
  - By 2015, the Friday Café came into full force, having served 142 people on Christmas Day.
  - During COVID-19, it was an MVP split between Jim and Kate. They and their co-laborers risked their lives to save others, shifting the shelter to a 24-7 operation, providing over 500 meals/week, and pressing the city for temporary showers in a parking lot on Church Street.
  - In a separate but related feat of advocacy, often from her dialysis armchair, Alice Kidder pressed the city and state to sponsor a new, desperately needed 75-bed shelter in an unused school building on Green Street.
- **Conversations on Race/Beloved Community/Remembrance and Repair Work**
  - Began in 2008 as a UCC initiative - Sacred Conversations on Race
  - Deepened over time into "Beloved Community" ministry
  - In 2011, as prep for 375th, Dan discovered names of enslaved persons on our records
  - Ongoing learning w BC, including front lawn flags and witness against gun violence
  - 2017 youth group Civil Rights tour to the South
  - 2018 Dan's "Remembrance and Reparations at First Church" sabbatical
  - 2018-2019 "Road to Freedom" Pilgrimages for almost 30 FCC adults
  - 2019 consideration of 21 page RFP for public remembrance, but pivoted instead to focus groups, more listening, less urgency
  - 2021 EC creates First Church Reparations Fund, naming reparations as a spiritual practice of relinquishment
  - 2021 EC affirms Vision for Becoming an Anti-Racist Church

- 2022 Congregation-wide Land Acknowledgement
- Ongoing work of building relationships with Cambridge NAACP, King Boston, the Lloyd Family, Dan's participation on Faculty Committee guiding Presidential Initiative on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery, ongoing work with national and local reparations groups
- **Surviving and Thriving through Covid**
  - Covid changed everything!
  - On the first Sunday of March, former CDC exec Ed Baker pulled Dan aside after church and said 'call me if you wanted to talk about the news reports of a virus spreading.'
  - We closed the building on March 12, just a day after the NBA's groundbreaking shutdown.
  - By March 16, after a crash course in the wondrous ways of Zoom, and with dizzying efficiency, we shifted our chancel, arranging table diagonally for the camera and moved services online, along with our small group offerings, committee meetings and even our well-attended *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* Lenten series.
  - "*Making a Way Out of No Way*" became an almost prescient theme for the remainder of Lent and well beyond!
  - Easter 2020, we had almost 800 people tuning into a service led in an empty sanctuary.
  - Recall Sarah's beautiful "Times with Children" during those many services
  - Our increased worship "attendance" and a burgeoning capacity for community building online, even across state lines and time zones, were unexpected blessings of this time. In the early days, we offered daily Zoom check-in and prayer calls, and Deacons did two all-church canvases calling every member in the Parist List to check in.
  - First Worship on the Lawn, Epiphany prayer walks, Palm Sunday processions around the Common, and a robust 100-person Christmas Eve afternoon Carol Sing on the Lawn. And soon, two large screens in the sanctuary.
  - In 2021, after 18 months of live-streaming, we flung wide doors for a poignant "Come All You Thirsty" Regathering Sunday, and we shift for good to hybrid worship
  - Major strides in digital ministry and communications, including a new website we built (in 2020!) and digital ministry!!
  - Steady hard and faithful work of committees throughout (B and G, Finance, Investments, Gifts Discernment, Staff Policy, Deacons, Fellowship offered a meal plan for it all, so many meetings!

## SOME OF DAN'S PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- My two installations in 2004 and 2008
- My wedding at First Church in 2006
- My two sabbaticals in 2012 and 2018, including the lovely send-offs
- Every memorial service, wedding, and baptism I've done here.
- Being invited in 2007 to co-teach Preaching with Peter Gomes, and befriending him
- Being a co-founder and co-chair of the Mass Coalition to Prevention Gun Violence and receiving a ceremonial pen from Governor Deval Patrick at the signing ceremony for the landmark 2015 gun violence prevention legislation we helped pass giving MA some of the safest gun laws in the nation
- "Pinning" Gov. Charlie Baker on stage to answer a question about the implementation of those at a 1600 person GBIO action
- Going to the White House with two other regional organizers for a small group meeting with Obama's staff about our Do Not Stand Idly By gun violence prevention campaign
- Being invited to first attend and then co-chair a Jewish Community Relations Council Christian Clergy Study to Israel in 2012, and 2014, and returning to the Holy Land in 2015 for more time on my own, especially in the West Bank and with Palestinians.
- Following the Marathon bombings, planning the 2013 Interfaith Remembrance service with President Obama at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross
- Companionship many members in their last days and sometimes their last breaths.
- Small group planning for, sharing the stage with and introducing Senator Warren (and others) at a 2700-person action at the Mosque in the wake of Trump's election and Muslim ban
- Walking arm in arm with then AG Maura Healey and Liz Walker at the 20,000 person march in Roxbury following the white supremacist rallies in Charleston in 2017.
- Being invited by President Bacow in 2019 to be on the Faculty Committee for the Presidential Initiative on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery. The privilege of serving on that team with some of my heroes like Paul Farmer, Martha Minow, and Tiya Miles
- My first conversation with Egypt Lloyd. The Juneteenth services with the Lloyd family since
- Receiving, with FCC, the 2023 Cambridge NAACP, Drum Major for Justice award
- The unveiling of Harriet Jacobs portrait and hosting Robert Shetterly and his portraits
- Working with our amazing staff and lay leaders
- This past and my last Easter w FCC!

