



First Presbyterian Church
of New Canaan



2018
Annual Report

**The First Presbyterian Church
of New Canaan**

Annual Report/Yearbook 2018

The Rev. Dr. Michael S. Piazza
Interim Pastor

The Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird
Associate Pastor

Victoria Shields
Director of Music

Sherry Tate
Cherub Choir Director

Tina St. Armand
Office Manager

Erika Hagan
*Administrative Assistant to
Children's and Youth Ministries*

Jon Roos and Kate Stringfellow
Operations Managers

Edgar Torres
Day Sexton

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Photos provided by Staff and Church Members

Rev. Dr. Michael S. Piazza
Interim Pastor/Head of Staff



We began this adventure nine months ago. David, Brix, and I have enjoyed our time here, learned a lot, and fallen in love with this congregation. There are so many amazing, warm, and kind people that we already are grieving that this is a temporary assignment.

The struggle an interim pastor faces, if s/he wants to be effective, is to work quickly because time is limited. Many interims seem to see their role to be as a caretaker, simply to keep the pulpit warm until the real pastor shows up. That is one of the reasons interims can be so bad for a church. A long period of stagnation without challenge can be fatal. In those cases, the new permanent pastor must spend the first two years getting a church ready to move boldly into the future. That results in three or four years of decline, so, by the time everyone is ready to grow, it too often is too late.

There really is only one goal for an interim pastor: ensure that the permanent pastor's ministry can be as strong and effective as possible. Unless the interim is assertive in making needed changes and dealing with issues, it is very possible that the new pastor will be what we call an "unintentional interim." One way or another, the work, which isn't always fun, must get done, and the person who does the work of change and challenge probably will need to leave because, let's be honest, almost no one likes change. That is why it is important for this season to be challenging, if not always fun. (The fun is on the way; I promise!)

Together, we have tried to begin this process of transition and transformation. Truthfully, were I your permanent pastor, this work could have been done much more slowly and gently. My original contract was for one year, with an option to renew, so all I was certain of was that I needed to do as much as I could in one year. We aren't nearly finished, but we are off to a strong start. Of course, that is a bit like returning to the gym and feeling like you are dying; the fact that you are getting in shape can be of small comfort.

These nine months have gone by quickly. During it:

1. We have made amazing progress on the building: a new slate, 100-year roof and copper guttering have been installed; the exterior has been repainted; dead trees and limbs have been removed; Wi-Fi has been installed throughout the building, including in the sanctuary; and multimedia has been added to the sanctuary. We are getting ready to work on the columbarium and memorial garden. Thanks to the Building Team for working tirelessly to put our home in order. There still is a good bit to do, but now is the time to celebrate what already has been done.
2. We have gotten acquainted. We've had lunches, dinners, drinks, coffee, and a few more drinks. I've read the history and the files, and I have looked at old bulletins. I've listened to hundreds of stories and been amazed, inspired, and, a few times, a little horrified. In the old days, we were taught to be opaque in the pulpit, but that is not what we teach now about effective communication. So, I have tried to be personal and transparent in my preaching and conversations. Perhaps the greatest gift I have shared with many of our members is the journey of grief taken after losing a spouse or loved one. Not everyone has enjoyed when I talk about Bill, but, in the event your next pastor happens to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, we hopefully have laid the groundwork for that to be more than just accepted. Most of you have warmly embraced me and the ghost of sweet Bill, and I've been blessed to hear your stories of love and loss.
3. We have changed worship ... several times. It no doubt seems that some of the changes were unnecessary. Perhaps you are correct, but none was done without thought, prayer, and the experience of what has been effective in other places. Change itself can bring a spiritual awakening, causing us to pay attention to words and rituals that have grown threadbare. The goals of the changes are to:

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- a. Keep the services traditional while also making them more contemporary, relevant, and attractive to young people, particularly families with children;
- b. Make the services more inter-generational;
- c. Make the services more inclusive, multi-cultural, warm, and welcoming; and
- d. Enliven, energize, and “caffeinate” worship so that it is a source of joy and hope for all who attend.

The changes, including new music and the addition of multimedia, weren't universally loved, but the overwhelming majority of responses to the recent survey were quite positive. Frankly, even those who don't like the changes confirmed my purpose. If people are going to be unhappy with changes, then it is important that the interim is the focus of their unhappiness, not the new pastor. S/he no doubt will make changes, too. By then, we will be used to worship being different with each liturgical season, so the changes the new pastor makes will be less jarring, more normative, and met with less resistance. or at least less anger.

Despite some folks taking an “interim sabbatical,” overall attendance is up slightly, and I am hopeful that trend will continue in the months to come. You can help by making worship a priority and inviting others to join you.

4. The ***Jeremiah Project*** is helping us clarify our values, vision, and mission. The small groups were well-supported, and the Vision Summit was well-attended. Now the Vision Team is hard at work. When they have a proposal for us, we will live with it and test-drive it for a bit, and then vote on it as a congregation. That is when the real work begins. A new vision and mission will simply be an irrelevant bunch of beautiful words if we don't resolve to live into them. Once they are adopted, the Communication Team and the Implementation Team will begin their work to make them a reality in our congregation. The document we create from them will be the next step in seeking a permanent pastor. It will guide us as we decide what kind of pastor we need, and it, hopefully, will draw potential candidates to us.
5. The ***Micah Project*** is the next phase in our journey. Last Fall, we looked intensely at who we are and who we are called to be as a congregation. Now, we will spend Lent examining our individual spiritual lives. This is another major step on the way to congregational renewal. Who will we be spiritually when a new pastor considers us? How we engage the ***Micah Project*** will be a testimony to our spiritual devotion, or it will say that we are a “spectator congregation” who just wants a nice service on Sunday. Either statement is valid and will help determine who we choose as a pastor.
6. The Session has met with the Presbytery and has a list of tasks to do before calling a new pastor. We need to finish the visioning process successfully, resolve the issue of housing for the next pastor, ensure our staffing and structure are aligned to our future vision, and resolve any lingering conflicts or tensions. To be frank, the dynamics of being a New Canaan congregation is a great asset and, sometimes, a bit of a challenge. This is a wonderful community with great schools and other assets that will make us attractive to a future pastor. The other side of that, however, is that this is a community of “type-A” people. We have a church full of smart, successful, driven, capable people. This is an amazing asset, but it also can be a bit of a challenge. I've been to the dentist my entire life, but I'm not about to start pulling and filling my own teeth. Because people have attended church their entire lives, some seem to believe they are completely educated about what is needed and how a church works. Clergy, with at least seven years of education and years of experience, can be disregarded, second-guessed, or bypassed by those who are accustomed to being successful in their field. A younger pastor with great passion will be crippled by second-guessing, constant critiques, or being bypassed. If we might want a younger pastor, we will need to make room for them, their ideas, and even their mistakes. Churches should REQUIRE their pastor to make at least 12 mistakes a year, or they will be too afraid to make decisions and too timid in their leadership. In a driven, success-oriented community, that is tough because it feels like mistakes can be fatal. How do we address this reality honestly? If we do not, your next pastor will need to be an older, white man who is not going to make waves, changes, or progress.

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7. Speaking of changes, I have been accused of making changes for the sake of change. What I have tried to do is get people accustomed to being a church that lives in the 21st century. Many churches pretend they are immune to what is going on in the world, but that only makes them irrelevant, aging, and hidebound. The truth is change is taking place so rapidly that the very nature of change has changed. If we wish only to be a church of retired folks and not a part of this rapidly changing culture, we might be able to stay as we are or have been. When I arrived, however, one goal was to position this church to attract and retain younger people, in particular families with children. In my experience as a consultant, the churches that are successful doing this:
- a. Make worship multi-cultural, energetic, inclusive, relevant, visual, and interactive.
 - b. Make mission the highest priority.
 - c. Create a place worth choosing over all the multitude of competing activities.
 - d. Embrace the time in which they live, retaining ancient traditions like organ music and classical songs, while embracing with equal enthusiasm the styles, values, and traditions of the people they are trying to attract.
 - e. Take off their bibs and puts on their aprons. That is, they consciously, deliberately, and joyfully stop insisting that the church be and do what THEY want, and seek, in every area and in every way, to become a church that serves the needs of those who need a community of faith, hope, and love.

Conclusion: You could have chosen a safer, more passive, caretaker as your interim pastor. After a decade of decline, however, the search committee and Session took a chance. They called a church growth consultant, professor, and long-term pastor. I know it hasn't always been easy during the past nine months, and I'll confess that, at times, the changes have come too fast and too furious. The truth is we will not know if this has been a successful interim until your new pastor has been here a couple of years. Although we certainly wish it was different, interim periods are never times when church attendance grows dramatically, when giving increases, or when everyone is comfortable and happy. That is like expecting that our doctor will make us happy and comfortable during our physical. We are re-examining everything in the hope that your future pastor will be welcomed, beloved, and successful. There is a part of me that wishes I could have been that person because this is a wonderful congregation of amazing people with whom I have fallen in love.

Thank you for letting me take this part of the journey with you.

Blessings,

Michael



Brix, the church dog!



Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird, Associate Pastor

“Children are a gift from God.” --Psalm 127:3
 “God is at work in you.” Phil 2:13

2018 was a year of change and transition in our church. Our pastor, Rev. Paul Gilmore, took a call in the Chicago area, I stepped into the role of Acting Head of Staff, and Rev. Mary Thies and Rev. Chris Tate and I split the duties and responsibilities of ministry until our interim minister, Rev. Dr. Michael Piazza arrived at the end of May. I am grateful that during those six months, Rev. Chris Tate took over our Children’s Ministries, Rev. Mary Thies helped with pastoral care and the deacons, and I was able to continue working with the youth groups and confirmation, which is my first and greatest love. In the end, when Michael arrived, Chris continued to minister to our children and Mary has continued to do pastoral care. We are very blessed to have four ordained ministers with many decades of experience serving our church.

Even after eight years of ministry here together, I feel God’s presence in this sacred place and with this congregation. Whether I am in worship preaching, celebrating the joys and milestones of everyday life, in the kitchen making meals for mission, or teaching confirmation with Scott Beyer, I always feel God’s presence in my ministry here at FPC. I rejoice that we continue to do new and exciting things together to the glory of God. Our youth committee does great work to plan and support our ministries, which shows that our parents are committed to creating meaningful programs for our children and youth in all ages and stages of their faith development.

Confirmation

Each year in May we confirm our confirmation class. We have very high standards for our confirmands, and that is intentional. We are teaching them to be loyal and good members of the church. They go through rigorous demands to become full members of FPC. They attend 1/2 of the worship services (18 over the school year), 10 youth groups, 23 confirmation classes, and attend the mission trip or complete the equivalent of 40 hours of community service over the summer.

Youth Ministry

Under the guidance of Elder Laurel Carlson and a wonderful youth committee, we plan and implement a rich and rewarding program for our youth. We have two active youth groups which meet several times per month. Our MSYG (6th-8th grade) averages 10-12 youth and meets 2-3 times per month for fellowship, and mission. And our HSYG (9th-12th grade) averages 8-10 youth, and they also meet 2-3 monthly for fellowship, Barn Time about real-life issues (a youth led initiative) and mission activities. HSYG has finally gelled into a core group, and we have good attendance. We do, however, still struggle with excellent attendance in all of our youth programs as homework, sports and other extra-curricular activities compete for the attention of our youth. While I have found New Canaan a difficult place to do youth ministry, I also find it very rewarding. I believe we are molding and shaping life-long Christians. We are molding them to be kind and compassionate and loving people. Young adults who see the other people they meet as children of God, people who choose to respond with love and who radiate God’s light in the world.

Youth Mission Trips

Boston Mission Trip—In June, 2 of our girls from MSYG joined Victoria Shields and me for a week in Boston doing mission work. Our work was varied. We prepared the manse for a UMC so that a new minister could move in. We sorted clothes at a clothing shelter. We handed out water bottles and granola bars to homeless people in Harvard Square, and we talked about the reality of homelessness and ways we can help. It was a powerful and eye-opening week. **Sarapiqui and Alajuela, Costa Rica**—In July of 2018, HSYG (5 adults and 7 youth) traveled to the rainforest region of Costa Rica for our summer mission trip to do children’s ministry (crafts, books, a sports camp and mentoring the

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children of the town in a big/brother, big/sister way). We helped a team from South Carolina put in a concrete driveway in front of the church, install walls to an outdoor eating space, and we did lots and lots of children's ministry. We created a children's library, and gave out bags and bags of sports jerseys, which were wildly popular. It felt like most of the week, we had children following us everywhere we went.

Mission

Youth Mission (locally) Filling in the Blanks—Closer to home, our ministries with the New Canaan Food Pantry, New Covenant House, Open Door Shelter, and Domus have taken off. While I love our mission trips to other places, I think it is also very valuable to show our youth that kids and families in need exist right here, close to where we live. Each month, we make **Dinners for Domus** in our own kitchen for 10 high school boys who live in a residential facility in Stamford. We have cooked twice for the soup kitchen New Covenant house, and we have delivered over 120 bags of groceries to the New Canaan Food Pantry from food drives we have done this year. We also delivered 60 presents for children to the Domus Christmas mall so children in need might have toys for Christmas.

Highlights of the year:

- Filling in the Blanks, stuffing food bags,
- Winter ski retreat weekend to the Berkshires to ski at Butternut
- Souperbowl Sunday—collecting \$600 through our Souperbowl café for the NC Food Pantry
- Youth Sunday—our youth did a spectacular job articulating what the church means to them
- Stations of the Cross—confirmands led for children of the church
- Confirmation class and confirmation Sunday
- Welcome Home Sunday— old fashioned carnival games, ice cream sundae station
- Youth Kick Off the Year Dinner
- Glow in the Dark Trampoline Park
- Laser Tag and Bowling Night
- Ropes Course in the Trees
- Cooking and serving at New Covenant House soup kitchen in Stamford 2x
- Cooking Monthly Meals for Domus House in Stamford (10 boys who live in a residential home)
- 30 Hour Famine—including shopping cart wars for NC Food Pantry, Sandwiches and emergency bags for the homeless for Open Door Shelter
- Advent Fair: Gingerbread houses, craft tables
- Toys for Domus shopping mall, Valentines for our own senior members
- Christmas Eve pageant

Who are we? What do we believe? While we differ greatly in backgrounds and our beliefs run the gamut, we are unified in our vision to be the body of Christ in this place. We embody a spirit of abundant welcome. We thrive in fellowship, mission, and spirituality. We have a strong sense that FPC is a safe and sacred place. We believe FPC is our spiritual home. We believe that God has called us to “be the light of the world” (MT 5:14) and we will do that by being “doers and not hearers only.” (James 1:22).



2018 Confirmation Class

Alexander James Almeida
 Peter Shea Benington
 Grace Hadley Crowell
 Cameron James Forte
 Douglas Stewart Gillespie, Jr.
 Elizabeth Barclay Hanson
 Layla Ama Magnusen
 Diana Grace McIntire
 Cecily Ballentine Peter
 Anna Elizabeth Sheridan
 Calvin Burns Stuart
 Nikolas Alexander Sulkowski, Jr.
 Maeson Hope Wagner
 Molly Anne Wunderlich



Music Ministry

Victoria Shields, Director of Music



2018 was a busy year for the Music Ministry at FPC! Given recent changes in our church, we outdid ourselves to present excellent music for worship and outstanding special programs. There was something for everyone in our church and community. I am always grateful to the members of the Music Ministry who put the time and energy into gathering twice a week to provide music for Sunday worship, and for extra services and programs throughout the year. Thank you to our clergy and staff who support us in our ministry and have a collaborative spirit. Many thanks are also due to Sherry Tate for

leading and guiding our Cherub Choir after many years, and to Chris Tate who supports this ministry by directing the Christmas Pageant, the spring play, and so many other roles to be listed here. I am grateful for support of Session and the Music, Worship, and Arts Committee. Finally, thank you to Carole Clarkson, Chair of the MW&A Committee who has endless energy and enthusiasm in this important role.

Following are the special services and events we supported or led in 2018:

Valentine's Day Coffee Concert

We started off 2018 with our second Valentine's Day Coffee Concert featuring the FPC Choir, Carol Choir, plus adult and youth soloists. Fun music and something for everyone! Singing Valentines were also available for purchase and sung to loved ones throughout the concert. Later in the week on Valentine's Day, a group of singers called in phone Singing Valentines to our shut-ins. Valentine's Day was fun and meaningful and this project was a great success!

Vespers Service featuring Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*

The FPC Choir combined with the choir of Round Hill Community Church, Greenwich, CT, and included members of Charis Chamber Voices from Westchester to present Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*. A combined 50 voices and accompanied by a chamber ensemble, the *Requiem* was presented in a service of Vespers here at FPC. The clergy of FPC and Round Hill led the readings and prayers. This service was well attended and included many congregants from Round Hill. A reception followed this special gathering of two congregations.

Easter

Easter is one of the biggest highlights of the year for the music ministry. The FPC Choir, Carol Choir, and Cherub Choir helped to lead both services. Thank you to Sherry Tate for pulling together a great group of young singers this year! Returning once again, our Brass Quintet made up of musicians from the MET and West Point provided an extended prelude and postlude for both brass and organ, as well as provided exciting leadership on the hymns. The FPC Choir sang the majestic "Light's Glittering Morn" by Horatio Parker and "Alleluia! Christ is Risen" by William Mathias. It was a majestic Sunday!

Scottish Sunday



Scottish Sunday once again featured the FPC Choir, the Mount Kisco Scottish Pipes and Drums Band, as well as harpist, Kristi Shade. People entered to celtic harp music, something that was well received and new in 2017. The band processed in to "Scotland the Brave" and the ever-moving "Highland Cathedral," led by Pipe Major Jonathan Henken. This was the 45th anniversary of the Mount Kisco Pipes and Drums Band playing for this service! The choir's repertoire featured entirely 20th century works with Celtic texts to connect our past with the church today. The cèlidh afterwards featured group singing led by Ron Duncan. It was a good day for Presbyterian Scottish Heritage!

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Children's Play

Chris Tate directed the play, "When God Comes for Breakfast, You Don't Burn the Toast" by Gary Apple. The play starred Danielle Asare, Carter Lightburn, and Henry Tate. This entertaining play featured Danielle and Carter as the Katzmans who are expecting God (Henry Tate) to drop in for breakfast. What does God look like? What to serve for breakfast when there are no eggs....but are there eggs in the refrigerator? Why does Beatrice Katzman insist on using a metal object to retrieve toast from the toaster, even at God's caution? This was a delightful play to share with the congregation and fun for us as well. Thank you to the families and Chris Tate for helping make this play possible!

Charis Chamber Voices

On May 13, Charis Chamber Voices directed by Art Sjögren presented their spring concert, *Serenade to Music*. Music featured beloved favorites and lesser-known choral gems of the mid-17th to 20th centuries from around the world. The program also featured the world premiere "Welcome!" by local composer Michael Minard, which was later shared in worship in June. Charis' famous wine and cheese reception was held in the common room afterwards. This choir returns for their Baroque concert with period instruments on Sunday, March 3rd at 4:00 p.m.

Father's Day Men's Choir

An annual tradition, the men of the church provided special music for worship. This year, guests from the Gentlemen Songsters participated as well! We rehearse only one Thursday to sing for this service, so it's an easy commitment for those who would like to participate with little free time. Fellowship with treats and libations are always part of the fun in bringing singers together. We hope you'll consider singing with us this year!

Summer Music

This is always a special time in our church year where our volunteers primarily provide music for worship. Special thanks to those who contributed this year – Allison Gray, Ellen Sisson, the Tate Family, Nick Depuy, Peter Flournoy, and the KelliWoods quartet who later provided the accompaniment for the choir and service music in the fall. The highlight of this summer's music was Michael Piazza's *Beatitudes of Broadway* sermon series. Special thanks to Allison Gray, Chris Tate, Ellen Sisson, and Harper Stevenson for contributing to this fun series!

Welcome Home Choir Rehearsal

George Post once again opened his home for a fun first rehearsal of the year. Choir brought nibbles to share and fellowship abounded. This is becoming an annual event to get the choir year off to a great start!

Silent Movie Night- *Nosferatu*



Jackson Borges, organist from Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, returned once again to bring the original Dracula movie to life with a live improvised organ soundtrack. The sanctuary was turned into a movie theater and the organ glowed red! We had many first time visitors for this fun program. Drinks, popcorn, and snacks were provided for all attending. Thanks to Tindley Gilbert, the Elder for Congregational Life who helped to organize the reception and Jeff Barbour for serving beer and wine. Thank you also to the FPC Bell Choir who helped decorate the outside of the church and the reception area to help us get in the Halloween mood!

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FPC Christmas Concert:

The FPC Choir presented a program which featured Camille Saint-Saens' *Christmas Oratorio*, accompanied by a superb chamber ensemble (our violinist has recently been appointed on faculty at the Manhattan School of Music!). Music by modern composers was also featured as well as old classics. Interspersed throughout the program were opportunities for the congregation to sing Christmas Carols. The program ended with all singing "Silent Night" by candlelight wrapped around the congregation. It was a lovely program that was well received with attendance that was higher than recent years.

Christmas Eve & Pageant

Chris Tate did a fantastic job directing the pageant this year. Peter Flournoy returned on trumpet playing on the opening hymn. Christine Mangone played the pageant portion of the service and Sarah Pescosolido accompanied on flute. Ty Kelliher provided music for the prelude. The FPC Choir presented music from their Christmas Concert at this service, which this year began at 11:00 p.m. There was a nice choir turnout for this late service. Many thanks to the many hands to provide a meaningful Christmas for our congregation and community!

2018 was a wonderful year for making and sharing music with FPC and our community. It is my prayer that we continue to grow (we always welcome new members!), and to be a center for music in the New Canaan community. Thank you for your continued support in helping to make this happen!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Victoria Shields



Cherub Choir

Sherry Tate, Director

The Cherub Choir at FPC is designed for children ages 4 through 7 (pre-K through Grade 2) and offers these children a first opportunity to experience service as worship leaders. There is currently one weekly rehearsal, on Sundays after worship, 11:15 - 11:45 (end time approximate, may go until noon if the worship service extends past 11:15). The Cherub Choir usually sings in Sunday worship several times per year between September and the following June. The children participate in the Christmas Eve Nativity Pageant as the Angel Choir and have in the past joined with older children to present a spring musical. They usually sing in the early service on Easter Sunday.

The anthems and songs learned in Cherub Choir are most often simple unison melodies which teach Bible stories, reinforce faith concepts, or mark events in the liturgical calendar. The choir's musical goals are to learn to match pitch, keep a steady beat, and explore different rhythm patterns. Most rehearsals include movement to music and often include the use of rhythm sticks, melody balls, chime bars, tambourines, drums and other percussion instruments, and lightweight scarves. Energy and enthusiasm are abundant as the children sing and play.

Christine Mangone has been the Cherub Choir's wonderful rehearsal and worship accompanist for many years, and much-appreciated support from parents has been essential for "wrangling" help, supervision during rehearsals, robing, costuming, and room organization.

Singing in Cherub Choir helps children learn how to serve God and their church using their natural talents. They can experience pleasure and satisfaction from cooperating with their peers to create a beautiful sound which enriches worship and brings joy to the congregation as they "make music for the Lord."

Cherub Choir 2018

Ella Dooley
Owens Gilbert
Johnny Laird
Brooks Loner
Courtney Rumilly
John Spilker
Kate Spilker
Charlie Tate
Oliver Thomson
Alexa Thomson



Summary of Monthly Attendance for 2018

Month	Sunday Worship	Special Services	Total
January	532		532
February	301	Youth Sunday 173 Ash Wednesday 28	474
March			465
April		Tenebrae 55 Good Friday 10 Easter Services 9:00 AM 169 11:00 AM 239 Scottish Sunday 260	1085
May			501
June			490
July			464
August			405
September			606
October			530
November			458
December		Christmas Eve 5:00 PM 245 Christmas Eve 11:00 PM 101	1002
Total			7012

Necrology and 2018 Memorial Services

Deaths:

March 25 Chester Billings, Jr.
 April 5 Ann B. Depuy
 April 11 Rae W. Ackerly
 May 18 Dr. David S. Brown
 June 6 Arlington Bliss McCrum, Jr.
 June 16 Patricia R. Stillman
 October 2 Grace Un Hi Chung
 October 3 Arthur Sultan
 December 2 Robin Kaye Lewis
 December 22 Joan Livingston Tweedy
 December 31 Kathryn S. Cunningham

Funeral Service:

January 16 Carole E. Wollenweber, with Rev. Mary Marple Thies officiating in church sanctuary followed by an interment at Pound Ridge Cemetery, Pound Ridge, NY

Columbarium Interments and Memorial Services:

April 27 Peter Goodrich Murphy
 May 18 Rae Wickes Ackerly
 June 2 Eleanor Pratt West
 October 12 Grace Un Hi Chung
 October 20 Chester and Ann Billings

Sanctuary Memorial Services:

June 2 Ann B. Depuy
 June 30 Dr. David S. Brown
 September 28 Arlington Bliss McCrum, Jr.

Memorial Garden Services:

August 11 Agatha Rennie with Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird officiating
 December 22 Robert Thayer Heald, Jr. with Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird officiating

Memorial Service at Stephen Mather Cemetery, Norwalk, CT.

September 22 William Boyd Kegg, III with Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird officiating

Memorial Service at Hopcroft Funeral Home, Madison Heights, MI

December 10 Robin Kaye Lewis, with Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird officiating



Clerk of Session

Scott Beyer

In last year's letter I discussed the transition ahead for our church. The first leg of that was to search for our interim minister. The interim search team had candidates that ranged from the "safe" to the "bold". Assuming you've been in the pews, or listened to the sermons online, or read some of Rev Piazza's daily devotionals, you have a good sense of where the Holy Spirit guided the team.

Interim transitions are difficult for every church. Fear, uncertainty and doubt are powerful emotional forces that discourage engagement and encourage a "wait and see" mentality. While attendance and membership (as measured by transfer letters) are down only slightly versus the prior two years, pledging has dropped materially. Session and staff have chosen not to make significant programming cuts near term as we have reserves sufficient to cover a couple of years of modest operating deficits as detailed by the Finance elder's report.

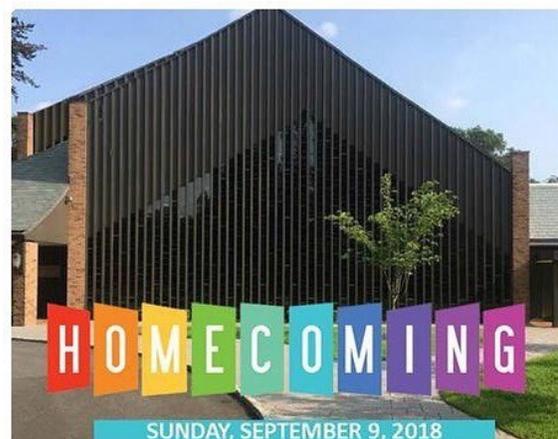
Rev. Piazza continually encourages session to be bold with change—change that enhances our relevance toward people and families that do not have a church home. He challenges us to always act as hosts versus guests. He challenges us to think about every element of our service in this (new?) context. The Broadway series, the projector screen, lyrics from the new Presbyterian hymnal with the inclusive language, the modern lessons, adding contemporary elements to our worship service. Yes, several members have expressed the feeling "I don't like this/that change..." We must remind ourselves first about the goal of any change: include elements to our worship service that appeal to those that don't have (but need) a church home. Secondly, while we worship under eternal ideas, tools and methods expand at least experimentally.

Meanwhile, the Jeremiah Project process continues apace. The vision team is now synthesizing congregational input produced within the 36 small group conversations. This may well drive changes to our core value, vision and mission statements. Those statements will require approval by congregational vote this spring.

This process is the precursor to calling our next installed pastor. The session is determined to keep our processes moving toward the formation of our pastor nominating committee, and any subcommittees we deem prudent for enhancing or expediting our search process. The Presbytery team is assisting and guiding us through this process. It is their experience that in "typical" transitions, the new pastor is in place 18 to 24 months after the interim was called. Session is advocating efforts to expedite our process. If you have an interest in participating in the pastor nominating process, please let me or any member of session know.

Lastly, my annual reminder: you are the Ministers in this church – it says so on the back of every Sunday's bulletin. You are called to serve in the mission of this church. There are countless ways to serve, but begin by introducing this church to friends, neighbors, colleagues, other parents or new acquaintances. When you see someone unfamiliar in the pews please welcome them. Check in on members you have not seen in a while. Go out and make disciples.

Peace be with you,
Scott Beyer



Adult Education Committee

Lisa Gifford, Chair

Members: Rev. Michael Piazza, Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird

Led by Rev. Michael Piazza and Rev. Kibbie Laird this year's programming solely focused on The Jeremiah Project curriculum provided by Agile Church Programming: The Jeremiah Project intent was renewal through Vision. Seven small groups were formed. The small groups met once a week for 6 weeks. Approximately 90 church members participated in these small groups. Each week selected scripture was provided and read. Following the scripture readings, discussion questions facilitated thoughtful conversation. The purpose of the small groups was two-fold. The first objective was to understand what members believe FPCNC to be currently and to help shape what FPCNC will be in the future. The second objective was to provide community for members to renew and strengthen member relationships with each other. The small group work culminated in a Vision Summit. Once again, small groups had thoughtful dialogue through provided discussion questions. All information was gathered and entrusted to a selected Vision Team. The Vision team will sift through all the collected input from The Jeremiah Project and the Vision Summit and present the congregation with a mission statement to be voted on by the FPCNC congregation. Future (2019) Programming: The Micah Project will be offered during Lent. Members of FPCNC have asked to have casual book club gatherings. The committee welcomes ideas for speakers and topics. The committee also happily welcomes and will support active leadership and participation by any FPCNC church member, who has an idea for Adult Education and an action plan.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Gifford



Buildings and Grounds

Charles Robinson and Rose Scott Rothbart, co-chairs
Members: Jim Beall, Patty von Jena, Stephan von Jena

2018 was busy and noteworthy year for our FPCNC Building and Grounds Committee.

Roofing Projects - A new Granville, VT, sourced slate tile roof, including copper flashing, gutters and downspouts on FPCNC's sanctuary and connecting hallway, begun in late 2017, was completed in May 2018.

Tate Barn - A new propane-fueled, high efficiency furnace and electric water heater were successfully installed in the Tate Youth Barn.

Upgrades to Internet and Phone Service – Long overdue improvements to our church's internet and cell phone coverage services on our larger church campus was successfully completed during 2018.

Doors and Door Hardware - Closing mechanisms on the office exterior entrance doors and north choir room exterior entrance doors were refurbished and reinstalled. We have also received estimates for renovation and improvement of our Sanctuary lobby's main entrance doors.

Landscaping and Storm Clean Up - A few Nor'easters caused significant damage to the church campus landscaping. Clean up was provided by Theodore Landscaping, which did an exemplary and price effective job of removing fallen branches, cutting severely damaged trees, grinding stumps, and general cleanup from the storm.

Campuswide Tree Assessment - As there have been a number of losses of special trees on our campus, especially during the last few years, we have begun a preliminary analysis to identify, map and assess the health of our remaining trees, in order to better maintain our landscape.

Landscape Design – Paving, Walkways and Patio – Our Landscape Designer is developing plans to improve the area south of and between the Sanctuary and Bliss House.

Columbarium –The Columbarium wall is in need of re-pointing and repair. These and other improvements in the Memorial Garden are to be incorporated into the Landscape planning.

Interior and Exterior Painting - The Sanctuary, the connector hallway and the South elevations of Bliss House were painted during the summer. The restored paint has given a new life to our buildings, and together with the new slate roof, has brought the exterior appearance back to the original intent of the architect.

Sanctuary Rest Rooms - The Design Team implemented improvements to the appearance of the Sanctuary restrooms, including painting, installation of new, donated accessories and new light fixtures. In the Ladies' Toilet, the stall was removed, and a lock put on the door making the entire room single use.

Building and Grounds Committees - On FPCNC Sign Up Day, a number of people signed up for either general B&G or specific sub-committees. Committees include Design, Landscaping, Columbarium & Memorial Garden, and Church Signage. We thank all of those who signed up and all who have assisted over the past year in keeping our church home a pleasant, safe and watertight environment.



Children's Ministries Committee

Rev. Christopher G. Tate

Members: Due to staff and membership changes, for the latter half of 2018, the Children's Ministry Committee was, and is currently, inactive. For much of 2018, the active committee members were Lauren Tate and Jenny Volanakis.

The mission of the First Presbyterian Children's Ministries Committee is to create and maintain a spiritual home for the children of the congregation. Areas of focus for the committee typically include a Sunday morning program for pre-K-7th grade, mission work, spiritual education, and fellowship through special events.

FPC3D: FPC3D is our spiritual program for elementary-and middle school aged children (pre-K-7th grade) on Sunday mornings, which was put into place beginning in the fall of 2018. Typically, after the "Gloria," the children are invited to leave worship to go to the Common Room for their program. In addition, on at least one Sunday per month, children are invited to remain in worship for the entire service (special activities and "worship bags" filled with age-appropriate diversions are usually provided, as young minds sometimes wander— although, if we're honest, so do some older ones, too!). Our church strongly believes that an essential component of helping our young people understand and learn how to worship is to give them opportunities to do it, which is why we are committed to creating an environment where young people are both welcome and encouraged to participate in "real" worship, along with the adults.

The 3 "Ds" of FPC 3D stand for "Discover, Dig-In, and Dream." Every Sunday, a member of the congregation is invited to present something about which they are passionate (the group "discovers" this member's passion). The church member's passion is then related to Scripture in some fashion, so that our young people can begin to see that faith and the Bible are not just things that belong on "Sunday" but are truly interwoven with our daily lives. Typically, there is then an activity in which the group engages and, occasionally, older youth in grades 5-7 depart for the Tate youth barn with that week's "Special Guest," to engage in some additional discussion (this is the "dig in" portion of the morning program). *Having a dedicated leader for our 5th-7th grade young people would greatly strengthen our ability to minister to this age group within our church.* In some instances, FPC3D also meets off campus, such as this past October when we visited the Wolf Conservancy in South Salem, NY with church member and special guest Cindy Graziano. Finally, at the close of the morning program, young people receive a "Dream" card which invites discussion at home, or ways to think about how what was "discovered" that morning might be acted on in the days, weeks, and months ahead. So far this year, passions we have "discovered" with church members have included: architecture, the brain/neurological insights, the Model UN, Danish Christmas Traditions, "Prayer hands," physical fitness, making music, the flute, physical fitness, the trumpet, Nepal, the aforementioned "wolf trip," refugees and the work FPC does to support them, and more!

Children's mission work: Due to the departure of our lay leadership, much of this aspect of our programming for children is on hiatus, however, we have engaged in some activities in the early part of 2018 (prior to the summer), as well as one project during the holidays. These projects have included:

Horizons: The youth and their families collected new and gently used coats, mittens, snow pants, hats, etc. for our "mitten tree," created by FPC friend Tim Spilker. These items were delivered to Horizons, a non-profit that serves underprivileged youth in local communities.

Adopt-a-Platoon: The kids made Valentine's cards for deployed troops that were included in care packages.

Continued on the next page

Family Fellowship events:

Throughout the year, we invite all families to attend events designed around fellowship and fun. These activities are a great way for parents to get to know one another and for the children to further the friendship bonds they are making on Sundays.

We started in March with our inaugural March Madness/PJ's & Pizza event. Adults gathered in the Common Room to watch the NCAA tournament and kids hung out in the Tate Youth Barn in their PJs for pizza and a movie.

We then moved into the Easter season with our annual Easter Craft Fair. The kids have the opportunity to create various Easter crafts followed by the annual Easter Eggstravaganza Egg Hunt.

A few of our children presented a special play to the congregation at the Spring dramatic production. This year, the play was "When God Comes for Breakfast, You Don't Burn the Toast," which explored what it means to have faith in a humorous (and pyrotechnic) manner!

Our fall events included "rally day," a special event following church that welcomes families back after the summer. It features games, hot dogs and an ice cream bar. We then moved into Halloween with an evening of pumpkin carving, a spooky treasure hunt, Chipotle and s'mores, and a highly popular game of kickball on the church lawn.

The hallmark of our holiday season is the Christmas pageant – a gift that the children continue to give to the congregation on Christmas Eve, under the direction, as a volunteer, of the Rev. Christopher Tate. From the infant animals to the high school Joseph, there was a role for every age.

In 2019, although pastoral leadership has been obtained specifically for the Sunday morning program, ***other aspects of our children's ministry will not be able to continue without support and leadership from the church community.*** In particular, help is needed to plan and coordinate our children's fellowship and mission activities, which will likely remain dormant unless help is found. We are extremely grateful for the exceptional leadership provided, for so many years, by Jenny Volanakis— we will sorely miss her energy, talent, and dedication. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the church members who have volunteered as special guests with FPC3D— this Fall, more non-parents have engaged with our children's ministry than at virtually any time in our church's recent history, which is something of which we can all be proud. We are also very thankful for the parents who have volunteered to assist with our Sunday morning program, without whom it would be difficult to make FPC3D function. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Christopher Tate

(Parish Associate, [currently there is no elder for Children's Ministry])

Communications Committee

Sue Benko, Chair

Members: Julie Hoffman, Julie Reeves

The Communications Committee is the public relations liaison between the church's many other committees and the congregation, as well as the public at large. This year the committee had three main focuses: continuing to communicate church events to the congregation in a clear and timely manner; getting news of our church into the local papers and online news sites for publication; and using social media to promote the good work of the church.

The Communications Committee worked with the Music, Children's and Youth Ministries, Membership, Adult Education and Mission/Outreach Committees to get press releases about events and mission opportunities into the local papers and various websites on a regular basis. The Communications Committee helped the Congregational Life Committee with advertising and announcements for their various events. We also continued to expand our reach outside of New Canaan with submissions to online websites and calendars throughout the area.

The Communications Committee is always grateful for the ongoing assistance of Tina St. Armand, who helps coordinate communications through the weekly bulletin, Thursday's Tidings to the congregation. Thanks also to committee member Julie Hoffman who, with Tina's help, keeps our website current and who creates the beautiful graphics for various events. Erika Hagan deserves a round of thanks for her expertise in utilizing social media to communicate and promote youth and other programs. We also thank the ministers and the members of the congregation who submit articles and photos and provide tips about the myriad events going on in the life of our busy church.

The church website serves as a place for members, visitors, and prospective members alike to learn more about our church's wonderful ministries. Each week, an audio version of the sermon is online, as well as the Thursday's Tidings. The website communicates the 4 "L's" of our church – Live Spiritually, Love Inclusively, Learn Continuously, Leave a Legacy – and does so in a way that is visually appealing, informative, and easy to navigate.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Benko



Communion Committee

Denise Riehl, Chair

Members: Barbara Beall, Erica Bergmans, Lis Ely, Kip Farrell, Mary Lee Lesko, Linda Martin, Julie Reeves, Rose Scott Rothbart, Sue Sherwood

Matthew 26:26-28 *"Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took a cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant which is to be shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins.'"*

The communion committee is in charge of preparing the communion table, bread and wine on the first Sunday of each month, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Easter, and Advent and Christmas Eve. Each member serves approximately two times per year, once purchasing the bread, and once as a helper.

Finance Committee

Jim Beall, Chair

Members: Jim Beall, Mike Farrell, Peter Flourney, John Lanaway, Jim Ely, Scott Beyer

The church had an operating deficit of \$80,450 in 2018 largely due to a revenue decrease of \$117,157. While expenses decreased by \$31,564, this did not offset the decrease in revenue. The overall financial picture was aided by careful expense management and lower personnel expenses. During 2018, the lower personnel expense were due to the lack of a Pastor for five months and to absence of a paid Church Administrator for over a year.

As was reported in the 2017 Annual Report, the Church received a very generous gift from anonymous donors for a new sanctuary roof. The new roof was installed during the winter and spring of 2018. This replaced the 47-year-old roof and flashing which were badly in need of replacement. To enable further work on deferred maintenance on our facilities, the church obtained a loan and credit line of \$400,000 from the Presbyterian Church USA. Some of these funds were used to paint the exterior of the Sanctuary, the Choir Room/Hallway connector and portions of the Bliss House and for other deferred maintenance projects. The funds will continue to be used for additional deferred maintenance and improvement project throughout 2019.

Overall church staff and volunteers continue to prudently manage the church's financial position.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Beall

First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan										
2010 - 2018 Operating Financials										
Unaudited										
<i>(\$, actual, unless noted)</i>										
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>								
Pledges	775,321	765,158	817,826	826,098	924,261	844,372	861,499	931,613	756,681	
Plate	52,150	30,755	30,162	27,411	29,357	30,305	31,723	21,692	17,970	
Gifts	18,207	47,881	78,636	153,848	122,666	58,637	98,847	59,014	80,505	
Facility Rental	46,408	44,143	45,626	52,698	53,937	54,325	67,760	62,075	101,686	
Other	0	5,040	7,563	3,868	3,375	24,998	3,506	478	285	
Total revenues	892,086	892,977	979,813	1,063,923	1,133,596	1,012,637	1,063,335	1,074,872	957,127	
Buildings & Grounds	179,541	187,433	172,251	190,331	214,017	189,568	162,591	267,987	273,630	
Children's Ministries	3,307	8,729	7,979	7,188	8,143	7,344	16,513	32,514	12,356	
Outreach	89,233	69,559	44,650	46,882	46,143	32,021	4,812	43,866	30,528	
Administration	127,065	144,745	173,150	167,001	163,294	166,486	163,192	89,281	100,035	
Congregational Life	2,255	1,269	2,042	6,501	3,855	1,689	2,559	1,127	2,063	
Membership	162	52	138	532	534	539	1,120	1,596	3,232	
Personnel	647,518	669,505	656,314	662,892	618,674	612,252	595,408	549,078	537,145	
Youth	6,178	4,913	8,520	9,706	13,501	9,159	11,990	20,101	13,725	
Worship, Music and Arts	42,893	47,917	45,137	54,464	59,468	66,710	53,004	63,591	64,863	
Operating expenses	1,098,152	1,134,122	1,110,181	1,145,497	1,127,629	1,085,768	1,011,189	1,069,141	1,037,577	
Operating Surplus (Deficit)	(206,066)	(241,145)	(130,368)	(81,574)	5,967	(73,131)	52,146	5,731	(80,450)	
Transfer from Reserves	200,000	250,000	150,000	75,000	0	73,000	0	60,000	0	

Investment Committee

Jim Ely Chair

Members: Jim Beall, Mike Farrell, Peter Flourney, John Lanaway

In March 2018 the Investment Committee decided to divide the Church reserves into three distinct portfolios; a Reserves Portfolio holding our long term reserves invested in a conservative balance of equities, investment grade bond funds and cash, a Manse portfolio holding the proceeds from the sale of the Manse in late 2017 invested solely in short term bond funds and cash, and an Operating account used to hold cash balances and the receipt and sale of donated stock received over the course of the year.

Following very strong investment markets for the first eleven months of 2018, December saw meaningful declines in the equity and credit markets in the US. For the full year ended 12/31/18, the FPCNC investment portfolios returned a combined -0.65% (net of inflows from gifts and outflows of capital expenditures). However, given our conservative investment profile, the Church portfolios outperformed both the S&P 500 Index (-4.4%) and investment grade fixed income (-2.2%) for the year.

**First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan
Investment Portfolios
For the Year Ended December 31, 2018**

Balance 1/1/18	2,651,195
Shares In	115,410
Wires In	162,421
Wires Out	(525,081)
Gain/Loss	(15,710)
Balance 12/31/18	2,388,235

Returns:

FPC Reserves	-0.65%
S&P 500	-4.39%
JPM Investment Grade Index	-2.16%

Investment Holdings:

	<u>Reserves</u>		<u>Manse</u>		<u>Operating</u>		<u>Combined</u>	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	138,902	11%	114,682	12%	173,511	100%	427,095	18%
Fixed Income	454,996	35%	807,748	88%	-	0%	1,262,745	53%
Equities	698,395	54%	-	0%	-	0%	698,396	29%
Total	1,292,293	100%	922,430	100%	173,511	100%	2,388,236	100%

So far in 2019, the markets have shown a significant rebound from the December selloff, and as of January 28, the Church portfolios have returned a combined 2.12% year to date. Given the continued uncertainty in the U.S and global economies, the Investment Committee will continue to take a conservative posture with Church reserves.

Respectfully,
Jim Ely, Chair



If you have remembered FPCNC in your estate plans, and would like to be included on the list of members of the Bell Tower Society, please let the church office know.

Thank you for making plans to leave a legacy.

Membership Involvement Committee

Julie Reeves, Chair

Members: Linda Ferguson, Tindley Gilbert, Serena Gillespie, Anne Wagner

The Membership Involvement Committee of First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan welcomes and reaches out to visitors on Sunday mornings, arranges semi-annual New Member Information classes with the clergy, and helps integrate new members into the life of the church.

This year, our church welcomed fourteen confirmands (see page 6 for list of names). Three families transferred their membership to other churches. Sadly, eleven of our members died during the year. Our 2018 final membership number stands at 568.

Baptisms:

January 7, 2018

Grant Michael Wingate, son of Katherine Finerty and Justin Robert Wingate, with Rev. Paul E. Gilmore officiating.

May 6, 2018

Cameron James Forte, son of Michael and Jane Forte, with Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird officiating.

May 13, 2018

Maddox Leo Palmer, son of Ian Howard Palmer and Chelsea Walker Palmer, grandson of Howard and Anne Palmer, with Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird officiating.

July 22, 2018

Gwendolyn Laure Altchek, daughter of Cynthia Cameron Reed and Charles Wilson Altchek, with Rev. Dr. Michael S. Piazza officiating.

July 22, 2018

Lola Grace Spadaccini, daughter of Maclean Katherine Pilsbury and Mark Nicholas Spadaccini, with Rev. Dr. Michael S. Piazza officiating.

October 21, 2018

Sadie Elizabeth Norton, daughter of Molly Elizabeth Bush Swanberg and Daniel Kevin Norton, great granddaughter of Ruth Swanberg, with Rev. Dr. Michael S. Piazza officiating.

**Marriages:**

April 28, 2018

Kristen Marianne Englund and James Lewis Prah, here in New Canaan, CT, with Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird officiating.

June 9, 2018

Lindsay Benko and Christopher Gardner, here in New Canaan, CT, with Rev. Joan W. Priest officiating.

June 16, 2018

Michelle Scavarda and Justin Principe, in West Point, NY, with Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird officiating.

Transfers:

Samuel Lavieri to The Congregational Church, New Canaan, CT

Jillian Kutner to The Georgetown Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC

Elizabeth Tolla to The Stanwich Congregational Church, Greenwich, CT

Mission and Outreach Committee

Glenn Mierendorf, Chair

Abo Noktah Update 2018

This past year was full of exciting changes for the Abo Noktahs— car ownership, a new home, and new schools-- while they tackled some challenges too. The First Presbyterian Churches in Stamford and New Canaan continue to work with dad Khaldoun Abo Noktah and mom Khwala Alzobi, and children Hanin, Yaman, Ahmed, and Zain, as they further adapt to American family life, improve their language skills, and strive for self-sufficiency. Khaldoun continues working two part-time jobs which both require evening or overnight hours: cashier at the Mobil Mini Mart in Cos Cob and maintenance at the Sheraton in Stamford. John Lanaway and Kay Pfaff of the Stamford church continue to seek contacts that might provide better paying, full-time opportunities for him, possibly in construction.

Khaldoun did pass his driver's test and received his license this past spring. Dedicated volunteers who gave him driving lessons, donated funds to pay DMV fees, and even loaned him a car for his test made this possible. John Lanaway and others worked with Khaldoun to find a used Mazda CX-9, with room for the entire family. Funds for the car and the first year of insurance were donated by several individuals. Special thanks to Karl Chevrolet here in New Canaan for their generous assistance which made this all possible. Khaldoun now has an important sense of independence, and having a car will hopefully open up better job opportunities now that he is no longer is dependent on mass transit or the kindness of volunteer drivers.

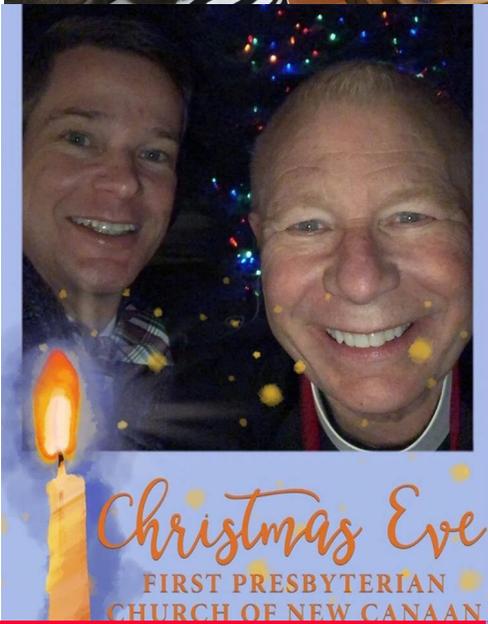
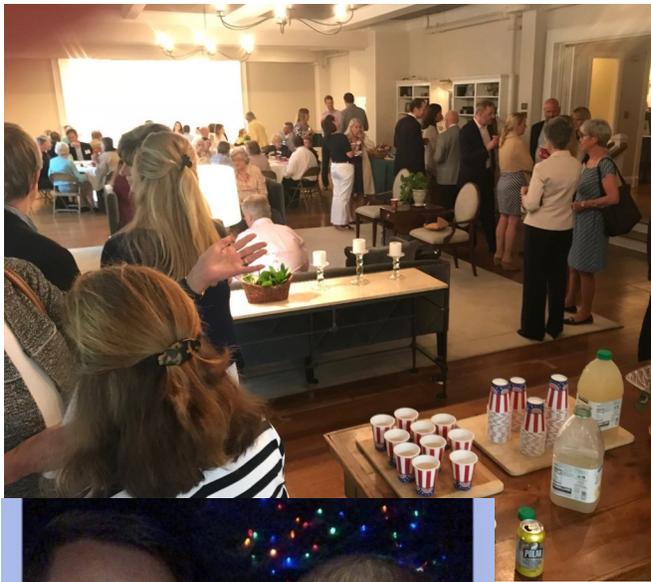
In August the two-year lease on the family's first apartment in the Glenbrook neighborhood of Stamford ran out, and the renewal offered was at even more unaffordable terms. Christine Negroni of the Stamford church stepped forward as the new owner of a fixer-upper in The Cove, which she had purchased with the family in mind. Members of both churches helped with clean up and repairs, as well as the move itself to this more spacious townhouse, including Scott Beyer and other FPCNC friends and family who served on paint crew. Given the high cost of housing in Fairfield County, the family's rent continues to be subsidized by the Stamford church.

Since the move, the children have settled into new schools and continued with extracurricular interests. Hanin's eighth grade goal was to move from honors to high honors, which she did with her spring term report card. She is now a high school freshman at Westhill and already thinking about what lies ahead after graduation. Brothers Yaman and Ahmed have transferred to the Turn of River Middle School as eighth and seventh graders respectively; last year at Dolan they were enrolled in an afterschool program for homework help and athletics. Through the generosity of FPCNC members, both boys recently joined Stamford's winter indoor soccer league, and they are often the high scorers on their teams. Younger sister Zain loves to read and has made a very successful transition as a second grader to her new neighborhood elementary school, KT Murphy. The Abo Noktahs' new home is steps away from the Chelsea Piers complex, and through a Stamford church connection both sisters have just begun dancing lessons there, Hanin in hip-hop and Zain in ballet.

All four children continue to take part in the year-round offerings provided by the Horizons Enrichment Program at New Canaan Country School-- and as of this past summer all have learned to swim! Zain and the boys will return after this school year, but Hanin has now "graduated" from the anchor summer program. She was recognized as one of the top students and had the honor of presenting at the organization's fall board meeting, poised and full of enthusiasm. Hanin is now part of the Horizons High School program which focuses on academic support and college prep, she is now looking for summer opportunities as an intern or seasonal worker. FPCNC has been instrumental in sustaining this comprehensive programming for all the children.

This fall the Abo Noktahs joined us at FPCNC for a Sunday Service, and shared some of Khwala's delicious cooking afterwards. They remain very appreciative for the generosity and kindness shown to them by both sponsoring churches. As the family becomes better known in the greater community, others are inspired by their story and charmed by Khaldoun, Khwala and their darling children. FPCNC is grateful for the support of the First Presbyterian Church of Stamford which continues to spearhead this life-changing outreach, and the warm relationships between all involved and with this wonderful family is a blessing.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn Jackson Quinn





Nominating Committee

Jan Sulkowski

Chair and Session Representative

Members:

Linda Ferguson, Deacon Rep.

Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird (ex-officio)

Lynn Quinn

The Nominating Committee is elected by the congregation and meets formally several times per year. The committee is charged with finding suitable and willing candidates from the congregation to assume lay leadership positions of the church. The committee presents to the congregation a slate of candidates for open Elder, Deacon, Youth Elder, Youth Deacon and Nominating Committee positions for election at the annual congregational meeting. In addition, the committee identifies people who would like to take a more active role in specific areas of the church and refers them to the relevant committee chairperson.

Offertory Committee

Ed Elbert, Chair

Monthly Counters:

Jim Beall

Margaret Cooper

Jim Ely

Mike Farrell

Peggy Hooker

Tracey Mackle

Marlene Powers

Tom Quinn

Bob Spangler

Personnel Committee

Lynn Quinn, Chair

Members: Peter Bayer, Howard Greene, Jennifer Gulden, Julie Hoffman, Constanze Sheridan, Barbara Wentzel

The session . . . has the responsibility . . . to provide for the administration of the program of the church, including employment of nonordained staff, with concern for equal employment opportunity, fair employment practices, personnel policies, and the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for all staff, including all employees. – Book of Order G-10.0102.

Working with the Head of Staff and as an advisory to the Session, the Personnel Committee is charged with helping to develop, implement, and administer policies and procedures in all matters pertaining to staff personnel, with the exception of recruitment and selection of ordained pastors for pastoral positions. The committee's primary responsibilities include:

Staffing

Work with the Interim Pastor as Head of Staff to review and approve staff position descriptions, oversee performance reviews, and administer 360 degree feedback from congregation annually, help monitor staff performance and manage performance issues as necessary. Take a role in the recruitment of new staff members. Develop employment packages for prospective staff, and conduct exit interviews.

Compensation

Establish salary rates based on both similar positions elsewhere and Presbyterian guidelines. Work with the Finance Committee to establish annual salary increase percentages based on an assessment of job performance, cost of living changes, and the ability of the church to provide. Monitor total compensation levels. Help oversee vacation and leave time, with the assistance of Head of Staff.

Policies and Procedures

Review the church's Personnel Manual to revise as appropriate. Ensure that personnel practices comply with laws and established guidelines.

Maintain compliance with the Book of Order and FPCNC by-laws.

In Summary

The FPCNC Personnel Committee operates in an advisory capacity to the Interim and Associate Pastors and to the Session, and as a support team to the church staff. We help design, define, recommend, and monitor personnel policies and practices with the objective of rewarding performance, addressing grievances, and ensuring that the church's staff and personnel organization operates with equity and at a high level to meet the needs of our church.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn Jackson Quinn

Stewardship Committee

John Lanaway, chair and Jim Riehl, co-chair

We would first like to recognize the stewardship captains who were so diligent and hard working in the Stewardship Program this year:

Jim Beall	Andrew Gifford	Lynn Quinn
Peg Bull	Tindley Gilbert	Bob Spangler
Sherman Bull	Adam Howarth	Kevin Thomson
Bob Caird	Tracey Mackle	Dede Trefts
George Conner	Paul Martin	Stephan von Jena
Linda Ferguson	Glenn Mierendorf	

As of February 17, 2019, pledges have been received from 175 pledging units (2018 – 190) totaling \$675K (2018 - \$766K). These numbers include a couple of late – and much appreciated - increases to 2019 pledges already received.

We continue to have a number of people on our contact lists who do not respond at all, despite repeated efforts. We have been through a trying couple of years, so it is not surprising that pledging has taken a hit from 2017 levels of 211 pledges totaling \$850K. That said, we have to hope – and work hard to ensure – that it's uphill from here!

Of the reduction from 2017, \$67K is accounted for by 9 families who have (we hope temporarily) moved to another church home, \$43K from 5 older members suffering from declining health and \$73K from 10 members who have adopted a wait and see posture with reductions in their pledges. These three categories account for the significant hit over the last two years; the rest of us made up the rest of the difference. A troubling factor is that the proportion of pledging coming from the over-65 crowd is up from 55% in 2017 to 60% in 2019. The top 13 pledges account for 44% of the total pledged.

Our church has sufficient reserves to operate for the coming two years at this constrained level of funding – but not forever.

Three things remain true:

1. Whatever motivates members currently, or whatever means they use to determine their pledge, the totals pledged are less than the amount needed to sustain FPCNC, as it presently functions.
2. Long-term viability for our revived church will depend upon addressing the motivation for giving, and the methods used by individuals to determine their offerings.
3. The church is financially dependent upon a limited number of donors.

For the future, it is clear that:

- We need to reimagine the way we raise money. Fortunately, our interim pastor has a lot of experience in doing just that.
- The new Session needs to recruit new blood and new ideas, starting with Coming Home Sunday.
- Revenue raising needs to be a year-round effort, not completely reliant on a formal “Stewardship” program late in the year.

Respectfully submitted,

John Lanaway
Stewardship Elder

Jim Riehl
Stewardship Co-Chair

Worship, Music and Arts Committee

Carole Clarkson, Chair

Members: Lynn Quinn (Greeters), Peggy Hooker (Ushers), Ruth Laird (Lay Readers), Jeannie Hart (Communion Servers), Roger Smith (Treasurer), Nell Smith (Hospitality), Armin Thies (Secretary), George Post, Ellen Sisson, Joan Dionne and Victoria Shields (Director of Music).

The Music, Worship and Arts Committee is charged by Session to administer programs and events which aid in worship and to oversee all aspects of the regular worship each Sunday as planned by our ministers. The WM&A committee advises Session and supports the ministerial staff in providing meaningful worship for the congregation and throughout the church year — through regular and special services, musical performances and related arts programs. The WM&A is not in charge of youth programs but is available to help whenever possible. Our committee often hears that music is one of the most cherished attributes of our church, and we in turn strive to fortify our choirs and musical programming to enhance this aspect of worship for our congregation and community.

The Director of Music, Victoria Shields, in her third year with us as Music Director, has brought real energy and imagination to our musical programs (see report from Victoria which lists the many imaginative and highly successful musical events she has orchestrated). She has been a real joy to work with! Our section leaders, Michele McBride, John Downey, Harper Stevenson and Boyd Schlaefer are with us again this year and have been indispensable, particularly during those months when attendance in the choir is low (usually during winter when many of the "snowbirds" in our choir head South).

Our committee (formed in September of 2017) has found that the best time to hold our monthly meetings is the first Sunday of each month directly after coffee hour. Attendance at these meetings has been consistently high. I want to thank all the members of my committee for their commitment to their different tasks and their willingness to 'pitch in' and take on extra duties when needed. I could not function without them!

Respectfully Submitted,
Carole Clarkson



The Chancel Guild is responsible for the maintenance, design and placement of textiles in the Sanctuary including banners and antependia in accordance with the church calendar and at the request of the Pastors. The Guild falls under the aegis of the Worship, Music and Arts Committee.

Youth Ministries Committee

Laurel Carlson, Chair

Members: Chris Dooley, Nancy LaBadie, Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird, Glenn Mierendorf, Julie Reeves, Constanze Sheridan, Jan Sulkowski, Kristina Woods

The Youth Ministries Committee is dedicated to creating opportunities for our 6-12th grade youth to live spiritually, love inclusively, learn continuously and leave a legacy. The committee assists Rev. Kibbie Laird in planning fellowship activities, mission trips, retreats and pilgrimages. FPC provides a safe and sacred space for our youth to participate in fellowship and mission activities. We encourage them to bring friends and have fun while learning about how to live and grow in their faith.

FPCNC has two aged-based youth groups that form the foundation of our program. Our MSYG program serves our middle school children in grades 6th, 7th and 8th grade. The children are invited and encouraged to attend the fellowship and mission activities that we have planned for each month. This part of our program also includes our Confirmation class, totaling 12 8th grade students. They meet every week from September through May for dinner and class, and are required to attend various fellowship and mission activities throughout the year as well. They are always encouraged to participate in our annual mission trip, which happens to be in Appalachia, WV in July of this year. MSYG helped to run the games during Coming Home Sunday, cooked dinner for the boys who live at Domus House in Stamford, participated in the 30-hr Famine Weekend, and enjoyed the White Elephant Gift Swap during their Christmas dinner among many other activities.

HSYG serves our 9th-12th grade students. While it is always hard to find the ideal time to gather this group of very busy teens, HSYG is scheduled to meet at least twice a month on Sunday evenings. While some activities, like cooking for Domus, shopping for Filling in the Blanks are joint activities with MSYG, others are planned solely for the high school students. This was our third year for Barn Night. This is a time when our 9th-12th graders meet for dinner and thoughtful conversation led by Rev. Kibbie in the Tate Barn. This has proven to be a special time for our teens to discuss current events and other social, religious and political issues that are on their minds. Barn time creates a safe space to discuss hard topics and talk about controversial topics, something that is rare for this age group. The culminating event for HSYG this year will be a mission trip to Appalachia, WV from July 20-27, 2019.

Some of the wonderful activities planned for the rest of the year include Souperbowl of Caring Café, Youth Sunday, Butternut Ski Trip, Bowling at Bowlmor, March Madness, and our Habitat for Iglesia Service Day.

Thanks to the Youth Ministries Committee members who gave their time, energy and ideas to help promote FPC youth programs. The committee is grateful to all who participated in our activities. We thank parents and other members of the congregation who gave of their time, talents and treasures to support FPC youth.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurel Carlson



Board of Deacons

Sarah Robinson and Steve Van de Graaf
Co-Moderators

Members	Ministries
Erica Bergmans	Meals-on-Wheels
Peg Bull	Visitation
Barbara Dahill	Member-at-large
Reid Dahill	Co-Youth
Linda Ferguson	Cards and Letters
Tripp Ferguson	Co-Youth
Max Forte	Co-Youth
Cindy Hagopian	Inspirica, Memorial Services and Receptions
Karen Hanson	Memorial Service and Receptions
Linda Martin	Baptisms, Cards and Letters
Sarah Robinson	Co-Moderator, Visitation Pastoral Care Team
Kristen Rodgers	Youth Coordinator
Elizabeth Stuart	Flowers, Treasurer
Steve Van de Graaf	Co-Moderator, Driving, Visitation

The Board of Deacons is comprised of 14 active church members who have been called by the congregation to dedicate three years of service assisting fellow parishioners as well as the community-at-large. As set forth in the Book of Order, a Deacon’s duty is “to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, the friendless, and to any who may be in distress.”

The Board of Deacons offers care and support to our church community through many activities:

- Representing the church during Memorial services and receptions providing support and assistance to bereaved families.
- Sending cards and letters of encouragement or sympathy to church members during difficult times or times of celebration.
- Visiting sick or elderly church members.
- Preparing and serving dinners at INSPIRICA, a women’s shelter in Stamford.
- Providing confidential financial emergency assistance to church members in need through the Deacon Fund.

- Assisting families in preparation for the baptism of their children during Sunday Services.
- Providing outreach to the greater community by coordinating our church volunteers for Meals-On-Wheels of New Canaan and lunches for the Lapham Center.
- Participating on the Pastoral Care Team, working with our pastors to support those in difficult circumstances.
- Transporting those who cannot drive to and from church events.
- Delivering Christmas and Easter flowers to the homebound or families who are sick or have recently lost loved ones.
- Serving breakfast to the congregation for our Summer Sunday Services.
- Participating in the Prayer Chain, adding our prayers to those of the church community for members and friends with special needs.
- Providing/coordinating meals to members who are in temporary need of assistance.

The Deacons are grateful to all who support our efforts. The Scottish Committee and everyone from the congregation who contributed to the Deacon Fund enable us to assist those who come to us in need.

Additionally, we are most appreciative for “past” Deacons who prove that “once a Deacon, always a Deacon” when they help at Memorial receptions and other activities. Their continued service enables us to carry out our ministry of compassion.

As we look forward to the exciting challenges of 2019, we continue to seek ways to increase our ability to care for our church family and the greater community. We welcome individuals from our congregation who wish to share the treasure of their time and talents by serving as a Deacon.

Dorcas Group

Members: Marion Blose, Gloria Bridgman, Joan Caird, Charlotte Conner, Connie Musa, Carolyn Scott, and Ruth Witt.

The Dorcas Group is a group of women who use their hands, yarn, and knitting needles to bring comfort to others. The church members began more than fifteen years ago by knitting caps for "Hats with Hugs" and then provided the caps to cancer patients. Today, Dorcas Group makes blankets for babies with AIDS, prayer shawls for church members and friends of the community, and hats for cancer patients. Some of the organizations that have received the items are Greenwich Hospital, Whittingham Cancer Center of Norwalk and Inspirica of Stamford. The items are also utilized by the clergy, deacons, and pastoral care team. These organizations and people then gift them to people in need of comfort due to life situations such as illness or loss.

Dorcas meets on the third Wednesday of each month from April through November from 10 AM to noon. Membership is open to anyone interested in knitting projects and sharing some fellowship. The ladies of Dorcas Group purchase their own yarn, so financial contributions are welcome. The ladies of the Dorcas Group don't meet the recipients of the items they make, but take joy in knowing they are providing comfort to those in need.

Flower Committee

Peg Bull and Patty von Jena, co-chairs



Members of the Flower Committee are responsible for decorating the Sanctuary with flowers for Christmas, Palm Sunday, Easter, and other church events. The committee also maintains the sanctuary planter, the "Brave Little Garden" located by the office entrance, and the outdoor planters at the church entrance. Anyone wishing to share their time and talent is most welcome.



Special Church

Nancy Reichart

Special Church, a program for adults and teenagers with Special Needs, is a part of FPCNC's Outreach. The group gathers for fellowship and spiritual growth on Thursdays from 3:30 - 5:00 PM in the Common Room at FPCNC.

Special Church is a place of faith, friendships and love that was created in 1987 to provide a meaningful church experience for the special needs community. Our wonderful seventeen member church is a community outreach of FPC.

The past year was filled with so many good things that it would be impossible to squeeze it all into one report! Through our Words of the Week segment we heard God's word and talked about His love and our many blessings. We performed acts of kindness including our annual Valentine mailing to the homebound and to others that just might need a hug. Ryan, a United States Marine, has been adopted by us and is enjoying receiving our cards and notes. New this year was thank you notes for veterans. Our cards were delivered to a local VFW Hall and distributed on Veterans Day. Other activities include creating art, celebrating holidays and birthdays and simply enjoying time shared with each other. 2018 also brought us our third annual visit from the Inn Notes, a choral group/kazoo band comprised of residents of The Inn which is part of the Waveny Life Care Network. What fun it is to join them in singing and playing our own kazoos! Each week our time together ends with music, singing and even dancing with Matt Hennessy our friend from Arts for Healing. Music speaks to every soul and our time with Matt is always joyful!

On behalf of everyone at Special Church I extend our sincere thanks to the congregation and staff of FPC for welcoming us every Thursday, providing a beautiful meeting place and for contributing to our annual funding. Special thanks to Rev. Kibble and the Confirmation Class for making us delicious Monster Brownies for Halloween. We are blessed with volunteers who bring their hearts and helping hands to church every week. We are most grateful for our members whose lights shine brightly and light up every gathering.

To those who have supported us in any way bless you.

Nancy Reichart

