

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN NEW CANAAN

Where Faith, Families & Friends Connect



2021 Annual Report

**The First Presbyterian Church
of New Canaan**

Annual Report/Yearbook 2021

The Rev. Dr. R. Scott Herr
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff

Rev. Mary Marple Thies
Parish Associate

Jan Lucie
Interim Director of Music & Arts

Sherry Tate
Cherub Choir Director

Jim Riehl
Interim Business Administrator

Wendy Starr
Office Manager

Kate Stringfellow & Matt
Ziance
Operations Managers

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Photos provided by Staff and Church Members

Rev. Dr. R. Scott Herr
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff



Dear Members and Friends of the FPCNC,

As our Annual Congregation Meeting is being held on Transfiguration Sunday, I looked at the lectionary texts for this Sunday and was touched by Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, where he writes, *"Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart."*¹ In looking back on the year together of 2021, I'm deeply grateful for the mercy of God which has sustained us through another challenging year of isolating pandemic and polarizing politics.

Typical metrics for the church are the ABCs: Attendance, Building and Cash. We saw steady growth in attendance, but nowhere close to what I hope for our future when we are "done with" the pandemic (and free from masks). Our Building and Grounds Committee, led ably by Stephan von Jena, has done some excellent work in keeping our beautiful building and grounds well maintained, especially with some unexpected and expensive lead remediation work required to keep our children safe. And finally, our financial situation is surprisingly healthy, all things considered, and our Session will be presenting some of the ways we plan to move forward by investing in the future through our Music Ministry, being a Green Church, revitalizing our children's and youth ministries, and increasing our Missions and Outreach activities, to name a few. I also pray that our metric for how healthy we are as a congregation would be Micah 6:8, that because of our worship and life together, we would be stronger to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God."

My thanks to the terrific Session, Deacons, and staff teams with whom I meet and work with regularly. They all have persevered through difficult discernment and decisions related to meeting in person or meeting virtually, masking or not masking, etc. We continue to "be the church" and I commend them for their patience and love, their faithfulness and steadfastness, during some of the most challenging times for leaders in recent history. I am particularly grateful to John Lanaway and Jen Van de Graaf, our co-clerks, to Steve Van de Graaf who moderates the Deacons, to Jim Riehl, our Business Administrator and Rev. Mary Thies who is our Parish Associate and who assists regularly in worship and oversees the work of the Pastoral Care Team. Special thanks to Jan Lucie for her music leadership and initiative during our transitional months from Victoria Shields' departure to Terry Flanagan's arrival. We are all indebted to the *Director of Music and Fine Arts Search Committee* (Armin Thies, chair; Ellen Sisson, Charlie Robinson, Linda Martin, Jan Lucie, and Serena Gillespie) that selected Terry. He and his family are a gift.

Behind the scenes, Randy Ferguson engineered the HR work throughout the search processes for both Terry and Wendy Starr, our new Office Manager who also is doing a terrific job! Wendy took over for Tina St. Armand, who retired after 33 years of faithful service to our congregation. I was amazed and deeply grateful for your generosity in blessing Tina St. Armand, and I am deeply grateful for Wendy, as she is a gift to our staff team.

Thanks to Jen Gulden who with Barbara Wentzel provided dinners for all our Session meetings and who organizes the First Sunday of the Month Brunches at Gates, and Bob Spangler who leads a stellar finance team. Thanks to Linda Ferguson, who seems to have a *charism* for inviting people into "right fit" ministry

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¹ II Corinthians 4:1, NRSV.

positions as the chair of Nominations. Angela Johnson has done a wonderful job on communications, and Mark Magnusen has been fun to work with on Christian Education and the Men's Ministry. He also faithfully moderates our "virtual fellowship coffee hour" every Sunday. Our Youth Elders, Layla Magnusen and Douglas Gillespie, are keeping us connected with the work of the Youth Leadership Committee, led by Megan Wunderlich and Kristen Rodgers.

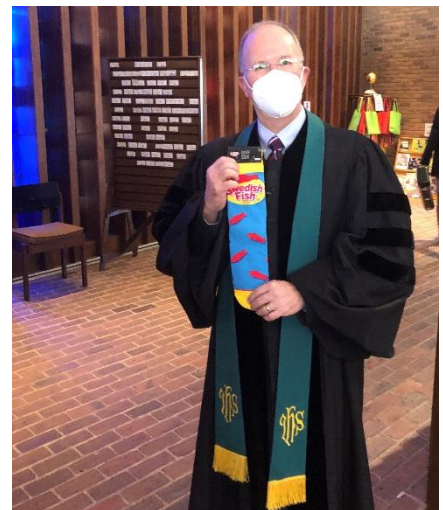
We are deeply grateful to both of these women for keeping our youth ministry alive in these challenging times. Also, special thanks to Kristie Godina for organizing the children's ministry through Advent! Kate Stringfellow and Matthew Ziance have done a great job with Coffee Fellowship and as they live on-site, have provided great help making sure the building is open for outside groups like AA and various music classes.

While we started the year after a robust search by filling the important position of Director of Youth and Children's Ministries, our candidate turned out to be an unintended interim. We wish Courtney Steininger all the best as she offered some help when we most needed it and gave some creative ideas for Vacation Bible School "Fun Fridays" during the summer. We are restarting the search process for an Associate Pastor for Youth and Children's Ministries, or a Director, whoever God calls first! This is a key priority for the coming months.

I continue to thank God for the call to serve in your midst, and enjoy our weekly confirmation classes, bi-monthly men's gatherings, Sunday morning Bible studies, and monthly couples' Bible studies. I remain active in the Rotary Club, the Exchange Club, enjoy the fellowship of our New Canaan clergy association, and currently serve on the *American Foreign Christian Union* board and the *Princeton Theological Seminary Alumni Reunion Committee*. As one of my sons is deeply involved in refugee resettlement work in Portland, Oregon, I am hoping that we can be more active in that work here in Connecticut and am deeply grateful for the outward focus of Cindy Graziano and our commitment as a congregation to Mission and Outreach in various ways.

My challenge to you as a congregation is that we all will renew our commitment to worshipping together and becoming a congregation that is "internally strong and externally focused." Recent polls have cited a staggering *drop* in worship attendance from before the pandemic.² As great as the "metaverse" may be(!), in-person, live worship is transformational *and how we will not lose heart*. It's when we are together when God's mercy becomes real in our lives and life together and, through us, into our world. My prayer as we move into God's future for our congregation is that God's mercy will continue to grow in and through us. Thank you for being a part of this church family. I look forward to another year of growing friendship and service together. Grace, mercy and peace to you.

In Christ, Scott



² Referenced January 29, 2022: <https://careynieuwhof.com/3-statistics-that-show-how-quickly-radically-and-permanently-church-is-changing-in-2020/>

Parish Associate
Rev. Mary Marple Thies

Like many of you, over these two years of pandemic restrictions and alterations to how we live, I have found it difficult to remember when events occurred. Without unique events—the birth of a child, a trip to a foreign land, the celebration of a significant birthday—the days seem to just run together. I find myself asking, “Did that happen in 2020 or 2021? When was it exactly that we had the house painted or risked a trip to see friends on Cape Cod?”

So, my thanks to you, for forcing me to sort through those days and weeks and reflect for you, as well as myself, on what has happened over this past year.

For me, the life of the church is grounded in worship. It is the regular practice of coming before God with one another that nourishes our faith and creates a community that is unique, one in which we share one another’s burdens under the Word of God, one in which we humble ourselves before our Creator and one another in confession, one in which we can freely and exuberantly express our gratitude for the gift of God’s grace. To put it succinctly, worship is vital. Over this past year, we have worshiped in front of our computers, in person outdoors and in person inside. We have worshiped using Zoom and Local Live. We have worshiped wearing masks and, for a brief time, without them. We have been experimental and flexible. We have been so hungry for communal worship that we have been willing to try most anything to hear the Word read, preached and sung, and to see familiar faces.



When Courtney Steininger arrived early in 2021, I stepped back from worship leadership and enjoyed being able to sit with my husband for worship. Upon Courtney’s departure, I once again took on liturgical responsibilities. It has been my deep privilege to be among you in all of this, to pray for and with you, to occasionally, humbly take on the mantle of preaching, and to work with other members of the staff to prepare, as best we could, services of worship that give glory and honor, praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God. I am grateful for your willingness to participate in those services and to support us who plan and lead them.

It was a joy to welcome new colleagues to the ministry at FPCNC. Wendy Starr, Office Manager, joined the team in late 2021 as did Jan Lucie, Interim Music Director. Wendy has helped us discover new possibilities in communications and office organization. Jan brought great spirit to the team while introducing us to new music. In her I also found a likeminded person who likes orderliness. Jim Riehl was not new to the position of Interim Church Administrator, but, under Scott’s leadership, he joined us at weekly staff meetings and brought much levity to our conversations, but also incredible organization to the upkeep of the buildings and grounds. Jim also arranged for a wonderful experience for staff—a thorough tour of the church facilities, from creepy basement to overflowing attic!

The main charge that the Session has given to me is pastoral care and it has been a joy to carry out that ministry. This time last year, it was a phone ministry. With vaccines still to come and hospitals and congregate living facilities closed to visitors, it was not safe or possible for me to visit in person. So, thanks to Mr. Bell, there were hours spent on the phone reaching out to members, in addition to notes written and emails sent. Eventually, with shots in arms and warmer days, it was possible again to visit in person. What a difference that has made! I have been graciously received by so many of you and am grateful for your hospitality and your trust.

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I give thanks to God that the holy responsibility of pastoral care is not mine alone. And I give thanks to God for the group of dedicated persons with whom I share that responsibility, the Pastoral Care Team. The members of the PCT are Evelyn Bergstrom, Kay Brix, Peg Bull, Linda Martin, and Anne Palmer. Kay and Linda are new to the group, but not new to offering support and prayer to those in need. I am grateful for all they bring to our ministry. I am also grateful to Ted Foster and Sarah Robinson, who decided to step down from the Team, for their years of faithful service. They both offered excellent insights and faithfulness to our work.

In the fall, the PCT endorsed my suggestion that we ask the Session to approve the training of folks beyond the team to take extended communion to members unable to be present during in-person worship. In extended communion, elders and deacons take the bread and cup from the Sunday morning communion service to those who could not be present. With Session's approval, I conducted a training session in October for 6 church members who were ordained as elders or deacons. Following worship on the first Sunday in November, communion was taken to a shut-in member by two of those trainees. With the rise in Covid cases in December, that proved to be the only extended communion held in 2021, but we look forward to bringing this sacrament more frequently going forward and to offering the training again for others who feel called to this ministry.

In addition to the PCT, I am grateful to share the pastoral care of the congregation with Scott. He brings the love of Christ to the ill and grieving with tenderness and grace.

I thank you for entrusting this ministry to me and pray God's blessing and guidance in this new year.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Mary Marple Thies

Music Ministry

Jan Lucie, Interim Director of Music and Fine Arts

Upon the unexpected resignation of Victoria Shields, it was an honor to be asked to serve as Interim Director of Music and Fine Arts for FPCNC, beginning in late August. Upon consultation with the Rev. Scott Herr and Randy Ferguson, chair of Personnel, I was challenged to achieve the following goals:

- Reconstitute the First Presbyterian Choir by personal contact and hiring paid supplemental singers, using CDC protocols for safe singing
- Encourage and revitalize the English Handbell Ensemble
- Prepare and rehearse music offerings that reflected various genres and levels of difficulty, matched with the worship scriptures and emphases of each service
- Help the congregation learn new hymns from the GLORY TO GOD hymnal
- Present special music during Advent, including guest instrumentalists
- Utilize the comprehensive music library of FPCNC and refile music
- Work on a collegiate level with the Rev. Scott Herr and the Rev. Mary Marple Thies by attending weekly staff meetings and collaborating with Scott at least once a week
- Invigorate and build upon the current camaraderie found among FPCNC's musicians
- Oversee and encourage outside ensembles and musicians to make use of the fine acoustics of the Philip Ives sanctuary and use of the choir room

As detailed in the Worship, Music and Fine Arts report, I feel I was able to meet these objectives in my four months' tenure. Serving alongside Interim Organist Virginia Leeman, I filled in as organist at least once a month per her contract. Although I am a beginner organist, I feel I supplied what was needed. It was sometimes challenging, directing from the organ, and simultaneously running the sound system, but one can always learn new tricks of the trade!

Various contacts were made throughout the community to broaden our musical outreach, including expanding collaboration with New Canaan Chamber Music, the Classic Whiffenpoofs of Yale, St. Luke's Music Department, New Canaan High School Vocal Music department, and the Stamford Symphony and private music teachers needing an instructional space.

Using the information obtained from a church-wide poll, a broader offering of music styles and range of difficulty was presented. Drawing upon our own congregation, I invited those with special musical talents to share them during worship.



I oversaw the refurbishment and redecoration of the office of the Director of Music and Fine Arts, working with Stephan von Jena of Building and Grounds.

One personal goal that I was unable to achieve was to begin a free community Children's Choir open to elementary and middle school age children from New Canaan. With the incidence of COVID and its

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subsequent variations, I felt this was not in my nor the best interests of FPCNC at this time. This could certainly help rebuild our youth programming. Sherry Tate and others have provided us with a great history of children's music in FPCNC upon which to build. We have the instruments, the music, and the resources. Now we need a healthier environment for weekly rehearsals to achieve this!

Having visited this congregation several times before moving here in 2019, I would never have imagined I would have been given an opportunity to share my music skills.

With my sincere appreciation,
Jan Lucie



Cherub Choir

Sherry Tate, Director

After a second year of worldwide pandemic and no in-person children's choir rehearsals in 2021, I present below the concept behind and plan for what the Cherub Choir at FPC should be. I hope that in the months to come, before the end of 2022, we may once again have the opportunity for children's choirs' rehearsals and can enjoy the blessing of children's singing in our worship services.

Cherub Choir at FPC is designed for children ages 4-7 (pre-K through grade 2) and offers these children a first opportunity to participate as worship leaders in our services. A weekly rehearsal is held after worship on Sunday mornings, from approximately 11:15-11:45 am. The choir sings in worship several times during the school year (September-June), including in a Nativity Pageant on Christmas Eve. In the past, the Cherubs have participated with older children in a biblical-themed musical, as well as in an Easter Sunday worship service anthem.

Cherub Choir songs and anthems are unison melodies which teach Bible stories, reinforce faith concepts, or celebrate events in the liturgical calendar. Musical goals include learning to match pitch, keeping a steady beat, and exploring various rhythm patterns. Rehearsals are enlivened with songs and activities using movement and the use of rhythm sticks, melody bells, chime bars, tambourines, drums, and other percussion instruments.

Singing in Cherub Choir allows children to experience serving God and church using natural talents, and they learn to cooperate with their peers to create beautiful sounds to express joy and enthusiasm in worshipping God, who guides their lives.

Co-Clerks of Session

John Lanaway and Jen Van de Graaf

2021 was yet again a very difficult year in so many ways for our country, for our town and for our families. That said, we are grateful for how much progress we have made here at the First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan. We spent our first full year under the dynamic leadership of Rev. Dr. R. Scott Herr. Rev. Mary Marple Thies generously assisted in worship and with pastoral care. Sadly, we said goodbye to our Director of Youth and Family Ministries, Courtney Steininger, and our Minister of Music, Victoria Shields. We celebrated the many years of service of Tina St. Armand, Church Secretary, and welcomed Wendy Starr as our wonderful new Office Manager. Terry Flanagan accepted the position of Director of Music starting in January of 2022.

We reconvened in person for a joyous outdoor Easter service and thanks to the efforts of members of Session and many volunteers we were able to worship in person (with the option of LocalLive streaming) for most of the year. The Choir regathered under the interim leadership of Jan Lucie and brought so much joy to our worship experience. New members continue to swell our ranks and our core group of faithful members continue to support each other and our larger community.

We have been able to make some important upgrades to our Memorial Garden and to the playground shared by the Church and the First Presbyterian Nursery School.

Once again, we ended the year with a dark, Covid winter. The year 2021 will be known as a year of plague, but we found light and warmth within our loving community.

There are so many people we could thank for their service to our church this year that we prefer not to take the chance of missing someone.

Onwards and upwards!

John Lanaway and Jennifer van de Graaf, Co-Clerks of Session

Adult Education

Chair: Mark Magnusen

As the Covid pandemic continued into 2021, several Adult Education initiatives were started via Zoom and in-person to provide opportunities for FPCNC members and friends to learn and grow and fellowship with each other.

Adult Education Class

FPCNC held a series of classes via Zoom called The Enneagram Journey – a curriculum designed to help participants learn about the Enneagram, a powerful ancient tool for understanding motivation, behavior, and experience. It followed a video-based curriculum and was led by Suzanne Stabile, a master teacher and guide and founder of “Life in the Trinity Ministry”. The goal of the class was to help participants experience new self-awareness and spiritual transformation as a community.

Events and Guest Speakers

March 14th (via Zoom): **Dr. Max Klau – Book Talk**, “Race and Social Change: A Quest, A Study, A Call to Action.”

We hosted a Zoom presentation and discussion on March 14th after church with Dr. Max Klau, an author, coach, speaker, and leadership development consultant living in Boston. He is currently the Chief Program Officer at the New Politics Leadership Academy, a non-profit dedicated to recruiting and developing alumni of national service programs and military veterans to seek political office.

Dr. Klau talked about his book, “Race and Social Change: A Quest, A Study, A Call to Action”, and the personal experiences that inspired him to write the book. This was followed by a discussion about the book and action steps we can take as a community to contribute positively to race and social justice.

April 23rd: Faith and Ecology: An Outdoor Movie and Conversation

We hosted an outdoor screening of Islands of Faith, a movie about seven faith communities of different traditions in Indonesia and how they are responding to climate change in their community. This was followed by a discussion with **Anna Thurston**, UN Environmental Project liaison to the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, on how we can respond locally in our faith community to the global environmental crisis.

Intergenerational Learning Time

Early in the year, Rev. Scott Herr began leading members in Adult Education lessons via Zoom on Sundays at 11:30am, after online Coffee Hour, in conjunction with Sunday School lessons held separately via Zoom at the same time by Courtney Steininger.

In September, once we were able to meet in person again, Rev. Herr began hosting an Intergenerational Learning Time from 8:30–9:30 am on Sundays. The class uses the PCUSA Curriculum “Follow Me: Biblical Practices for Faithful Living.”

Men’s Gatherings

Starting in January 2021, FPCNC men and friends have been meeting from 7:00–8:00am on either the first and third Wednesdays or on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. The first meetings of each month are Bible study and meditations led by Rev. Scott Herr, and the second meetings are led by members who share their family history, career and life experiences and faith journeys. The following meetings were held:

January 6th: **Scott Herr** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

January 20th: **John Lanaway** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

February 3rd: Bible Study and Meditations

February 17th: **Sheman Bull** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

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March 3rd: Bible Study and Meditations

March 17th: **Tom Nissley** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

April 7th: Bible Study and Meditations

April 21st: **Jim Beall** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

May 5th: Bible Study and Meditations

May 19th: **Michael Reeves** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

June 2nd: Bible Study and Meditations

June 16th: **Armin Thies** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

July and August: *Meetings not held*

September 15th: Bible Study and Meditations

September 29th: **Julian Brix** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

October 13th: Bible Study and Meditations

October 27th: **Jim Riehl** – Book Talk, “Chasing Down a Dream”.

November 10th: Bible Study and Meditations

November 17th: **Doug Gillespie** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

December 1st: Bible Study and Meditations

December 15th: **Bob Spangler** – Family History, Life Experiences and Faith Journey.

Women’s Fellowship: The Women’s Fellowship continued to meet monthly on Wednesday afternoons to hear about the faith journeys of members and for other inspirational discussion and fellowship.

January 6th: **Julie Reeves** – Epiphany and Epiphanies!

February 3rd: **Lisa Gifford** – talked about her faith journey -- "The Full Flowering of Love"

March 14th: **Rev. Scott Herr** – virtual talk about his faith journey

April 7th: **Cindy Graziano** – talked about the word “Faith.”

May 5th: **Nancy Garnett** – talked about “Women to Women Prison Ministry.”

June 2nd: **Courtney Steininger** – Faith Journey.

July and August: *Meetings not held*

September 8th: Discussion and Fellowship.

October 6th: **Cindy Graziano & Rev. Mary Thies** – Book Discussion, “In Defense of Kindness” by Bruce Reyes-Chow.

November 3rd: **Rev. Susan Power Trucksess**, who describes her presentation in these words: “A funny thing happened on my way ... up Prospect Street in New Haven back in 1979, and I wound up enrolling at Yale Divinity School headed toward ordained ministry.”

December: *Meeting not held*

Buildings and Grounds

Chair: Stephan von Jena

Members: Jen Gulden, Jim Riehl, Denise Riehl, Jim Beall

Memorial Garden - In the fall of 2021, we completed a renovation of the Memorial Garden that included expanded paver walkways and new landscaping including shrubs and ground cover. We also transplanted several existing plants and grasses, and we celebrated the completion of this project on All Saints Day.

For 2022, there is a “garden” beautification plan in place to further enhance the renovation work that occurred this past fall. This will include planting annual and perennial flowers in the center of the “garden”. If anyone has interest in assisting in this beautification plan and its implementation, please contact Stephan at 203-434-8472.



Church Grounds - In 2021, we said goodbye to the last 100-year-old Copper Beech tree on our grounds. It was the latest victim of a microscopic worm called a nematode that feeds on the inside of the tree’s leaves. This tree was planted when the Bliss House was built back in the 1890’s and stood majestically at the front entrance to our Sanctuary since the Church was built in 1970.

For 2022, we will continue with our ongoing tree-care and trimming program, including a new initiative to remove the invasive vines now covering much of the 100-year-old rhododendrons located between the Church’s main entrance driveway and parking lot to the north. Once these vines are removed, we will prune and fertilize, enabling these beautiful rhododendron shrubs to flourish once again.

Columbarium Expansion -

In early spring of 2022, we plan to start a project to increase the Columbarium capacity by roughly 40% with two new fieldstone walls running parallel to the existing rear parking lot. Additional landscaping, tree-work, lighting, irrigation & parking lot expansion/asphalt work are also included in this project.

Nursery School -

In the summer of 2021, we were informed by the state and local Health Departments that interior and exterior work was required on the Bliss House to comply with our ongoing lead paint abatement plan. Some of the work involved interior painting while the majority of the work was exterior repair and abatement on playground side of the Bliss House. In addition, a major section of the playground was rebuilt to provide an area for Nursery School participants’ use of tricycles and other equipment.

Now in 2022, as part of an approved ongoing maintenance plan of the lead paint abatement plan, we will perform additional work on both the interior and exterior space of the Nursery School. The interior work is planned for the February break at the school, and the exterior work will be done over the summer. The main purpose of the interior work is to improve, simplify and reduce the costs of our ongoing maintenance plan, which will benefit both organizations moving forward.

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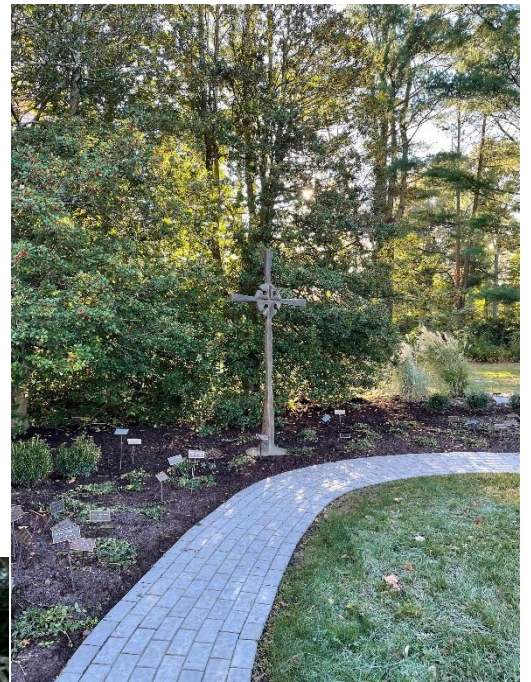
Bliss House Exterior Repair & Painting -

In addition to the Nursery School work described above, we plan to paint the exterior of the Bliss House in the summer of 2022. This project will include the removal of some rotten wood, replacing the front door of the Nursery School and other miscellaneous items, and will complete the exterior work of the church started a few years ago.

The Tate Youth Barn -

In 2021, we replaced one window on the upper level, repaired the exterior staircase to the second floor and installed new carpet in both lower and upper levels. At this point, the Barn is well prepared for Youth activities in 2022.

Note: The Buildings & Grounds Committee is always looking for members to assist in whatever capacity deemed possible for the care of our church properties. If you, or someone you know might have an interest (not a big or long commitment!), please reach out to Stephan at 203-434-8472.



Communications Committee

Members: Angela Johnson, Linda Ferguson, Julie Hoffman, and Sue Benko

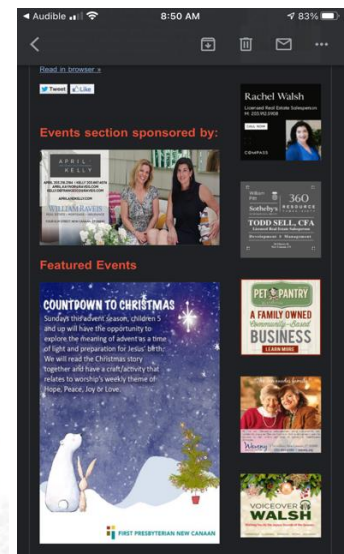
Acting on our new communications strategy, including new branding and slogan, we continued in 2021 to roll out our new look. On Oenoke alongside the road, the old brown recessive board was replaced with a new white sign, with our colorful branding that is more visible and impactful. The new branding appeared in all our literature. The colored blocks in the design were chosen to reflect the mid-century modern glass in our sanctuary, and they come together to form a cross. Our new slogan, *“Where Faith, Families and Friends Connect,”* acts as a great summation of how we as a church pull together, whatever the situation and especially during the challenges brought on by COVID.



Communications to the wider community focused on both press relations and social media. The committee posted to Facebook and Instagram on average every three days throughout the year. All significant events were highlighted, and members of the church were featured.

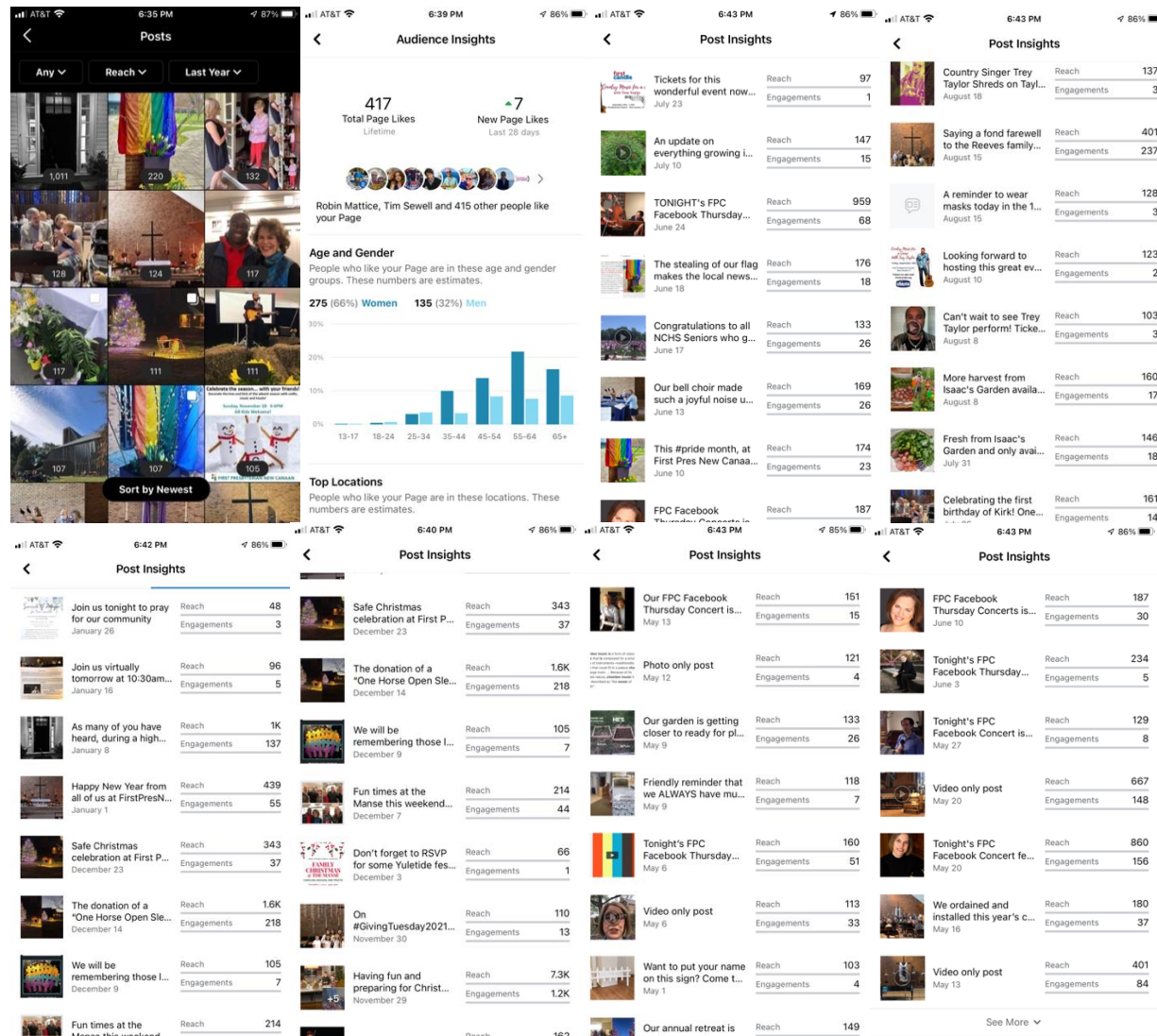
We embarked on a contract with the New Canaanite to run advertisements on their main page, mentions throughout the paper in their events section and obtained coverage for interviews with Rev. Scott. We change out the ad copy regularly to amplify the events at church. An example of our Children's Christmas Schedule appearing in the Featured Events section of the New Canaanite is shown.

Example of the ad space we have next to the name banner on the Home page.



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Our Facebook posts regularly reach between 1000-2000 people in the local area and get between 100 -200 page views. On Instagram we have 273 followers and regularly see engagement from 100 accounts. See below for a sample of the posts from 2021 and their reach/engagement.



In 2022, the Communications Committee will continue to support all activities in the Church, ensuring we spread the word as widely as possible about all the good things happening at FPCNC!

Respectfully submitted,
Angela Johnson, Linda Ferguson, Julie Hoffman, and Sue Benko

Congregational Life Committee

Jennifer Gulden, Elder

Members: Julie Hoffman, Cindy Hagopian, Sarah Robinson, Lisa Gifford, Laurel Carlson

Our committee objective this year was to do as much as possible given our limitations on gatherings due to Covid still coming and going. Our congregation so very much needs to gather and enjoy each other after these last few isolating years.

Our first event was on Sunday, September 26th at the Manse, graciously hosted by Rev Scott and Kim. It was a Congregational House Party with “Franks, Friends & Football” from 4 – 6pm. Scott grilled delicious bratwurst and hot dogs and everyone brought either a side dish or dessert as well as what they would like to drink. There was music outside on the deck and the Jets football game on in the family room. We had a great turn-out and fun was had by all! It was a gathering that we all appreciated after not being able to gather like this for some time.



On Sunday, October 3rd we had our first Brunch After Church at Gates Restaurant. We had 3 tables of church friends, and it was a lovely event. We had a second brunch on November 7th with about 12 people. We hope to have a monthly brunch following church on the first Sunday of each month.



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We held a Family Christmas Party at the manse on Sunday, December 5th from 4-7pm. There was festive caroling by the piano with our soon-to-be Director of Music, Terry Flanagan, as well as Kim's (now) Famous Eggnog. Guests brought a holiday treat to share as well as a drink.



On December 12th, Serena and Doug Gillespie kindly opened their beautiful, festively decorated home for a Holiday Cocktail Party. We had a great turn-out and everyone enjoyed sharing a wonderful spread of food and Christmas cheer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Gulden

Flower Committee

Peg Bull, Jan Lucie, Patty von Jena

Members of the committee are responsible for decorating the Sanctuary with flowers for Christmas, Palm Sunday, Easter, and other church events. We would love to have flowers weekly in the sanctuary but need some additional volunteers to help arrange them.



In 2022 we will be enhancing the beautifully renovated memorial garden with additional flowers. We also plant, water, and care for the outside planters at the front door and on the back terrace of the building.

Now that we are back together in the sanctuary, we need a larger committee and would LOVE to have you join us!! No talent required! This committee is not a lot of work, but it is lots of fun and very rewarding. Please contact Patty if you are interested in helping.

Finance Committee

Bob Spangler, Chair

Members: Jim Beall, Jim Ely, Janet Lanaway, John Lanaway, Jim Riehl, Jen Van de Graaf, Stephan von Jena

In 2021, FPCNC enjoyed a strong rebound in operating financial performance with total receipts increasing by \$142,472 to \$894,125 (+19%). Leading the way were stronger pledge dollars of \$735,600 (+15%) and financial gifts of \$66,589 (+100%).

Total operating expenses increased by \$145,398 to \$993,208 (+17%). Nearly all of that increase was in buildings and grounds as the Church addressed extraordinary maintenance and repair issues related to the Bliss House (exterior and interior lead paint remediation), Nursery School playground, and improvements at the manse. All other operating expenses increased by only \$11,719 (1.7%) and were in line with budget. Offsetting our increased operating expenditures was a transfer of \$69,978 from the Youth and Children's Fund to offset the costs of youth ministry (consistent with the intent of the Youth and Children's Fund). Taking into account that transfer, the Church's operations had excess expenditures over receipts of \$29,105. Importantly, that number does not include depreciation expenses which were roughly \$75,000. Our higher maintenance and depreciation costs were more than offset by the investment returns of the General Fund which totaled an impressive \$184,940. Taking into account those investment dollars, the General Fund grew by roughly \$155,000 in 2021 from general operations and investments.

Lastly, with incredible blessing and gratitude, the Church received \$374,604 in bequests in 2021. These amazing gifts were deposited into the Church's General Fund and will strengthen the Church's future financial health, ministry and mission.

Operating Financials 2014 – 2021General Fund - Unaudited Financials

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Pledges	924,261	844,372	861,499	931,613	756,681	620,194	641,712	735,600
Plate	29,357	30,305	31,723	21,692	17,970	13,879	5,415	10,762
Gifts	122,666	58,637	98,847	59,014	80,505	191,716	33,197	66,589
Facility Rental	53,937	54,325	67,760	62,075	101,686	98,591	71,329	81,449
Other	<u>3,375</u>	<u>24,998</u>	<u>3,506</u>	<u>478</u>	<u>285</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total receipts	1,133,596	1,012,637	1,063,335	1,074,872	957,127	924,380	751,653	894,400
Buildings & Grounds	214,017	189,568	162,591	267,987	273,630	227,398	165,038	294,370
Children's Ministries	8,143	7,344	16,513	32,514	12,356	9,862	2,634	2,820
Outreach	46,143	32,021	4,812	43,866	30,528	34,893	31,797	40,952
Administration	163,294	166,486	163,192	89,281	100,035	129,731	98,345	114,395
Congregational Life	3,855	1,689	2,559	1,127	2,063	4,353	4,369	6,607
Membership	534	539	1,120	1,596	3,232	2,032	450	214
Personnel	618,674	612,252	595,408	549,078	537,145	611,998	492,523	489,532
Youth	13,501	9,159	11,990	20,101	13,725	15,699	9,119	2,770
Worship, Music and Arts	<u>59,468</u>	<u>66,710</u>	<u>53,004</u>	<u>63,591</u>	<u>64,863</u>	<u>63,555</u>	<u>43,535</u>	<u>41,548</u>
Operating expenses	1,127,629	1,085,768	1,011,189	1,069,141	1,037,577	1,099,521	847,810	993,208
Receipts less Operating Expenses	5,967	(73,131)	52,146	5,731	(80,450)	(175,141)	(96,157)	(98,808)
Transfer from Other Funds	0	73,000	0	60,000	0	250,000	90,130 (*)	69,978 (**)
Major Gifts (Bequests) to General Fund								374,604
Investment Earnings							<u>86,718</u>	<u>184,940</u>
Net Gain (Loss) to General Fund							80,691	530,714

(*) Represents receipt of US Federal Paycheck Protection Plan grant. (**) Transfer from Fund for Youth and Children in 2021

Investment Committee

For the Year Ended December 31, 2021

Jim Ely, Chair

Members: Jim Beall, Janet Lanaway, John Lanaway

The FPCNC investment portfolios generated solid performance for 2021 despite a highly conservative investment strategy. As has been the case for a number of years, our Reserves account was invested in a conservative portfolio of investment grade fixed income and equity index funds during the year. The Reserves account had a balance (net of contributions from gifts and withdrawals for capital projects) of \$1,665,943 at 12/31/21, and returned 13.1%% for the year, versus 6.8% for the year ended 12/31/20. In addition to the Reserves account, FPCNC also maintains a Youth and Family Fund, which is used to hold the proceeds from donations received in support of our Youth and Children's Ministries. The Fund's year-end balance after withdrawals for our former Youth minister salary was \$210,724 at 12/31/21. Finally, our Operating account is used to hold excess cash and to receive/sale donated stock received over the course of the year. The Operating Account had a balance of \$10,584 at 12/31/21.

The Investment Committee continues to believe the Church is best served by maintaining a conservative investment strategy, with the primary goal of capital preservation, while generating positive returns on our funds. We believe our portfolios are well positioned for increased volatility as we head into 2022.

Respectively,

Jim Ely, Jim Beall, Janet and John Lanaway

Continued on next page

**First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan
Reserves Account
For The Quarter and Year To Date Ended December 31, 2021**

		<u>12/31/2021</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Holdings as of 12/31/2021:	Cash	\$0.00	
	Bank Sweep	\$145,695.33	
	Money Market	<u>212,210.73</u>	
	Total Cash & Cash Equivalent	357,906.06	21.5%
	PIMCO Enhanced Short Term ETF	129,996.80	
	Doubleline Low Duration Bond Fund	162,688.68	
	Doubleline Total Return Bond Fund	<u>162,778.30</u>	
	Total Fixed Income	455,463.78	27.3%
	Schwab S&P 500 Index Fund	428,288.58	
	Schwab Total Stock Market Index Fund	<u>424,284.47</u>	
	Total Equities	<u>852,573.05</u>	<u>51.2%</u>
	Total Investments	\$1,665,942.89	100.0%
Investment Performance:	Balance September 30, 2021:	\$1,739,013.22	
	Contributions	\$0.00	
	Withdrawals	(\$150,000.00)	
	<u>Gains (Losses)</u>	<u>\$76,929.67</u>	
	Balance December 31, 2021:	\$1,665,942.89	
	Pro Forma 4Q Return:	4.5%	
	Balance December 31, 2020:	\$1,356,461.46	
	Contributions	349,541.52	
	Withdrawals	(225,000.00)	
	<u>Gains (Losses)</u>	<u>\$184,939.91</u>	
	Balance December 31, 2021:	\$1,665,942.89	
	Pro Forma YTD Return:	13.1%	

Membership Involvement Committee

Barbara Wentzel, Chair

Members: Scott Beyer and Allison Gray, Ed and Melody Libonati, Paul and Linda Martin

The Membership Involvement Committee of First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan welcomes and reaches out to visitors on Sunday mornings, arranges New Member Orientation Classes with the Clergy and helps integrate new members into the life of the church.

In May of 2021 with the help of many members of our church we distributed for the second year 100 Welcome Bags to new neighbors in New Canaan. These cellophane bags included a letter from Scott with a brochure about the church, a bag of seeds for spring flowers and a gift certificate from Gates Restaurant. Twenty members of our church stuffed and distributed them.

New Members: Scott Herr held two new member orientation classes, one in February and another in November. The following people joined the church in 2021: By Certificate of Transfer: Julian Brix, Kay Brix and Kim Herr. By Affirmation (Baptism) and Reaffirmation of Faith: Charles Altchek, Cynthia Reed (wife of Charles Altchek), Chelsea Fleming (wife of Wynne Holden), Laura Holden (wife of Taylor Holden), David Bentley, Judy Bentley, Libby Butterworth, Thomas Butterworth (Adult Baptism), and Darlene Harmon.

Confirmands: Veronica Campbell and Norman “Trey” Stewart Walker, III

Baptisms: Baptisms for infants: David Louis Altchek, Taylor Kidman Holden, Jr., Everly Elizabeth Libonati Alters and Georgina Wells Spadaccini. Baptism for Confirmand: Norman “Trey” Stewart Walker, III

With the preponderance of Covid precautions we were not able to have several of our Membership programs, but we did have one...

DO YOU NEED A FAITH LIFT? Women’s Ministry

Barbara Wentzel, Chair.

Committee Members: Evelyn Bergstrom, Lisa Gifford, Serena Gillespie, Cindy Graziano, Jeanne Hart, Lynn Quinn, Sarah Robinson, and Nell Smith

Mission Statement:

The First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan Women’s Ministry seeks to be a progressive Christ-Centered gathering of women, encouraging one another in our faith journey through activities that offer spiritual formation and education, companionship, and community service.



I. Build a Faith Based Community

- A. Welcome all women regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, economic and social background.
- B. Create a safe, trusting environment where we can be our authentic selves
- C. Encourage listening without judgment
- D. Provide opportunities for each woman to contribute as she feels led

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II. Embrace Three Pillars

- A. Spiritual Formation and Education
- B. Companionship and Hospitality
- C. Community Service

III. Offer Mission-driven Activities

- A. Monthly Gatherings
- B. Bible Study
- C. Annual Retreat
- D. Service Projects
 - 1. First Presbyterian Church Community
 - 2. New Canaan Community and Beyond

We met the second Wednesday of the month nine times in 2021...sometimes outside in good weather, sometimes by Zoom and sometimes in the Common Room. We are looking forward to meeting even more often in 2022!

Summary of Monthly Worship Attendance for 2021

Month	Special Services		Sunday Worship Totals
January:			392
February:			422
	Ash Wednesday	28	
March:			486
	Palm Sunday	67	
	Easter Sunday	64	
	Maundy Thursday	32	
	Good Friday	35	
April:			587
May:			561
June:			402
July:			320
August:			456
September:			406
	Rally Day	117	
October:			468
November:			475
December:			466
	Christmas Eve Caroling outside 5:30pm	40	
	Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion 10:00pm	69	
		Total:	5,441

Deaths: *Non-Members

January 7	Winifred Johnson
February 4	Charlotte Brown
February 18	*John Whitaker James Sr.
March 1	*Anne Scudder Bennett
March 21	Norma Collier
March 22	*Steven O'Connell
March 29	*John M. DeLucia
April 11	*Albert Richard "Dick" Murphy
April 30	*Janet Thatcher Phypers
April 30	*Molly Wells Anderson
May 1	*Ruth Harding
May 8	*Thelma Rand Bruesch
May 24	*Robert Skeelee
June 20	Hazel Hobbs
August 31	Darren Dionne
September 15	John Voorhies
September 28	*Ruth Richardson Montgomery
October 16	*Elizabeth "Ebit" Thacher Speers
November 7	*Robert K. "Bobby" White
December 28	Charlotte Conner

**Memorial Service**

February 23	John Whitaker James Sr.
April 6	John M. DeLucia
May 8	Molly Wells Anderson
July 26	Albert Richard "Dick" Murphy
September 11	Bettyann Henry Murphy
September 25	Charles Daniel "Dan" Bergfeld
October 2	John Voorhies
October 2	Ruth Richardson Montgomery
October 9	Sylvia and Walter Button

Memorial Garden Interment and Service:

January 14	George Henry Megrue
April 10	Norma Collier
June 19	Dr. Charlotte Brown
June 26	Janet Phypers
June 26	Anne Scudder Bennett
July 11	Robert Skeelee
July 22	Ruth Harding
July 30	Thelma Rand Bruesch
August 21	Thomas Adams
October 2	John Voorhies
October 20	Ann Mountcastle Gamble Blechta
December 21	*Robert K. "Bobby" White

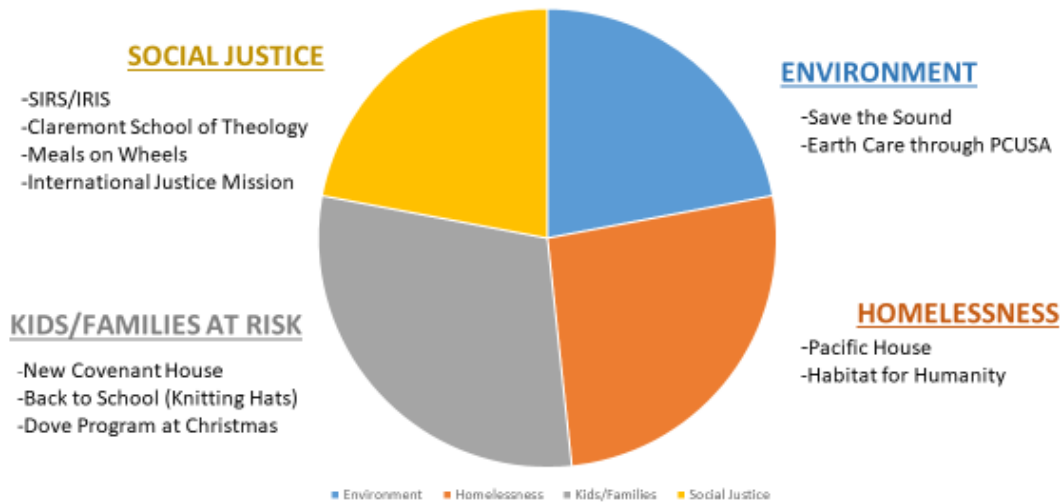
Columbarium Interment and Service:

September 4	Darren Dionne
August 7	Steven O'Connell

Mission and Outreach Annual Report 2022

Active Outreach Focus Areas

(FPC New Canaan 2022)



We are called by God to be servants—a noble purpose and sometimes a difficult request. In 2021, Mission & Outreach conducted a survey to assess how our members wanted to serve. The survey, conducted in the fall of 2021 indicated four primary areas: **Social Justice, Environment, Homelessness, and Families & Children at Risk**. This will guide our efforts in 2022. We also have vetted and will vet organizations before financial or volunteer support is provided.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

There is much need in the area of **Social Justice**. We focused on working with the Afghan Families arriving in the United States first, partnering with Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS) to do fundraising as well as volunteer to help as needed. International Justice Mission, Meals on Wheels, and the Claremont School of Theology are organizations that are receiving financial support. These organizations represent the best of giving in targeted ways that benefit those in great need.

ENVIRONMENT

In September, we teamed up with Save the Sound to clean beaches in Stamford. But, there is much more work to do in the area of **Environmental Care**. We will be partnering with several other charities to find ways to care for our planet. This area prompts us to think more seriously about how we can become a Green Church, meaning we are committed to doing all we can to take care of the planet. This includes simple things like recycling and using LED bulbs throughout the church property as well as more complex programs like dedicating a day for volunteering on Earth Day and inviting speakers to help us understand what we can do every day to care for our environment.

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HOMELESSNESS



The **Homelessness** challenge in the state of Connecticut is growing. Today, there are over 3000 families that are homeless every single day, and over 20,000 children that are food insecure every night. Homelessness can have a tremendous impact on children. Ending Homelessness is not easy but we are involved with the following charities: Habitat for Humanity, where last year we helped clean up their Restore site for the annual holiday store used as a major fundraiser, and Pacific House, a men's shelter in need of beds and sheets.



KIDS/FAMILIES AT RISK

We are currently supporting three efforts:

- New Covenant House where we prepare 100 meals the first Saturday of the months of March, April, May and Sept, October and November
- Back to School Knitting Project in which several of our members knit hats for children
- Annual Dove Program through Person to Person at Christmas, where in 2021 we raised enough money for 70 grocery gift cards; a tremendous moment of giving from our church



Mission and Outreach is also working to partner with other church committees to provide a joint effort for Mission and Outreach. This might include working with Youth on a specific outreach trip to Kentucky for clean up efforts, or with Education to have a speaker on gun control, coupled with an outreach program on this issue. The challenges are endless and we are so appreciative of all those who want to serve to make an impact, no matter how small, to improve the world.

We will continue to assess diligently where and how to serve, with LOVE as our guiding principle.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cindy Graziano | Elder of Mission and Outreach

Janet Lanaway and Barbara Beall, 2022 committee members

And the dozens of volunteers that have led, contributed and participated in these efforts.

Mission Ministry - Abo Noktah Family Update 2021

2021: A very good year for the Abo Noktah Family!

In August Khawla Alzobi and Khaldoun Abo Noktah and their family celebrated their Fifth Anniversary in the United States. This was an especially significant milestone as it allowed them to apply for US Citizenship. They worked with the same immigration lawyer who facilitated their Green Card application. And in the first few weeks of 2022 first Khawla then Khaldoun became Citizens!

Now that the parents have gained citizenship, the four younger children will automatically become citizens as well – except for the eldest, Hanin. As she has now turned 18 she will need to be interviewed and answer a few questions, but for those of you who have met Hanin you can imagine she should sail right through this process!

Hanin is now a senior at Westhill High School in Stamford and spent the summer writing college essays. She has been interviewing over the past several months and has already been accepted at some in-state schools. Eldest son Yaman, now a junior, spent several days in late June at West Point with his Westhill High School JROTC. Younger brother and sophomore Ahmed still enjoys playing soccer! Sister Zain, now 10, attended Horizons at New Canaan Country School again this past summer. But when she is home, she is her baby sister Hayat's favorite playmate. Hayat, who will be 3 in April, is a delightful and active toddler who brings joy to her four older siblings and her parents.

Khaldoun has a full-time job which he likes, and Khawla obtained her driver's learning permit in June. We are grateful for our partners and friends at IRIS-Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services in New Haven, and locally at the First Presbyterian Church of Stamford which acted as the lead sponsor. Thank you FPCNC for the support you have given all the Abo Noktah family, whether it was at the start of their journey here or is ongoing even today. You have been a blessing to them, and they have been a blessing to us.



Great news from our Syrian refugees, Khaldoun Abo Noktah and his family obtained their US citizenship! Congratulations to all of them for this great achievement. We are so happy for them and proud of them.



Nominating Committee

Linda Ferguson
Chair and Session Representative

Members:

Rev. Scott Herr, George Benington, Serena Gillespie, John Lanaway, Lynn Quinn, Nell Smith, Jennifer Van de Graaf, Patty von Jena, Barbara Wentzel

Director of Music and Fine Arts Search Committee

Rev. Scott Herr, Jan Lucie (ex officio consultant), Armin Thies (Chair), Serena Gillespie, Linda Martin, Charlie Robinson, Ellen Sisson

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 in 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.

Personnel Committee

Randy Ferguson, Chair

The FPCNC Personnel Committee operates in an advisory capacity to the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor 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.

OUR PASTORS

The Rev. Dr. R. Scott Herr, Senior Pastor • The Rev. Mary Marple Thies, Parish Associate

OUR STAFF

Terence J. Flanagan, Director of Music and Arts • Sherry Tate, Cherub Choir Director • Jim Riehl, Interim Church Administrator • Wendy Starr, Office Manager • Kate Stringfellow and Matt Ziance, Operations Managers

It was a busy year in terms of personnel that included some sorrowful goodbyes and joyous new additions. We said goodbye to our Director of Youth and Children's Ministries, Courtney Steininger and Director of Music and Arts, Victoria Shields, who left for other callings. We wish them well and hope they find fulfillment in their new churches.

We also bid farewell to our beloved Tina St. Armand with a celebration of her retirement after 33 years of faithful service to FPCNC. Through those many years, with many changes, Tina was the heartbeat of our congregation and steadying force in keeping the ship afloat. Her dedication and love for our church was evident in the extensive effort she placed in ensuring a smooth transition upon her departure. She is dearly missed, but we wish Tina, her husband Art and their son Artie peace and joy in their new adventure and new home in Oriental, North Carolina.

Wendy Starr, Office Manager

We welcomed Wendy at the end of October and with impossible shoes to fill, she has brought her enthusiasm, energy, and dedication, and is a terrific addition to the team! Wendy's background is in Corporate Events Planning and Management. She spent the last 12 years working at Oracle Corporation, where she and her team put on Oracle's largest user event, OpenWorld, among other international events.

Wendy was born and raised in New Canaan along with her 3 older brothers. She's lived in various towns within Fairfield County, currently resides in Trumbull and is very excited to be back in New Canaan working for and supporting the First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan. She loves her family, close posse of girlfriends, and is a huge dog lover. Fall is her favorite season, and she likes to visit ME, NH, and Long Beach Island. Favorite quote: "I strive to be the person my dogs think I am!"

Terence (Terry) J. Flanagan, Director of Music and Fine Arts

Terry joined FPCNC early this January, and our wonderful organ has never been so happy and loved! Previously, he served as Music Director at the Presbyterian Church of Mount Kisco since 2010 and served for over 18 years at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City working alongside Dr. Richard Westenburg. Terry studied organ under the instruction of Dr. John Weaver at both the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and the Juilliard School in NYC. Terry is a past Dean and current member of the

Continued on next page

Westchester Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. In addition, he is a member of the New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and the St. Wilfrid's Club. He sings with and accompanies Charis Chamber Voices and serves as Organist for Columbia Preparatory and Grammar School's annual Commencement Ceremony, held in New York City's Alice Tully Hall. Terry occasionally plays continuo and organ works for performances of the New Baroque Soloists. He enjoys teaching organ, piano and voice.

In his free time, Terry enjoys being with his family and gardening at his home in Mount Kisco, where he continues to design and plant beds, as well as cares for his collection of perennials and conifers.

Terry's wife Lisa is a soprano. She sings in Charis and cantors at St. Francis of Assisi in Mount Kisco. She is the Office Manager at the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown. Their son, Terence Duncan, is a 7th grader at Fox Lane Middle School in Bedford, NY. He sings in the New York City Children's Chorus and plays viola in the Greater Westchester Youth Orchestra Association. The entire Flanagan family is excited to be joining the FPCNC church family!

We are extremely grateful to Jan Lucie for stepping in as a fantastic interim Choir Director and for Virginia Leeman as our Interim Organist until Terry was welcomed in January.

Our work continues as we renew our search for a new Director of Youth and Children's Ministries and also for a Church Business Administrator so that we can finally allow Jim Riehl, who has faithfully served as interim (since seemingly forever), to resume his retirement.

I would like to thank all of those who have given their effort and support throughout the year, and I think we can all agree, we are transitioning toward a very bright future.

Respectfully submitted,
Randy Ferguson

Stewardship Committee

John Lanaway and Jim Ely, Co-chairs

ONWARD AND UPWARD!

Thanks to everyone for a wonderful show of support for the future of FPCNC.

As of February 2, pledges for 2022 have been received from 120 pledging units for \$771,000 versus \$740,000 for 2021. Despite the continuing impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on all our lives, the commitment to our church is gratifying to all of us. As we said last year, the most important message we can take from this result is that FPCNC is back - alive, well and ready for the future. Your generosity with your time and with your treasure will make all of this possible. The level of enthusiasm that we heard from all of you was energizing to see and hear.

I would like to recognize a wonderful group of pledge captains who were so diligent and hard-working for this year's effort.

Jim Beall
George Benington
Jim Ely
Randy & Linda Ferguson
Andrew Gifford

Doug Gillespie
John Lanaway
Ruth Laird
Jan Lucie
Paul Martin

Lynn Quinn
Jim Riehl
Bob Spangler
Jennifer Van de Graaf

Thanks to all of you for your continued commitment to the future of FPCNC.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
**BELL TOWER
SOCIETY**

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.

Worship, Music and Fine Arts Committee

Jan Lucie, Chair

Adapting, inspiring, praising! Definitely these words have driven our worship experiences in 2021. Relying upon LocalLive to transmit our services for the months January through March, we invited the congregation to worship on the circle drive and east lawn for Easter Sunday, April 4th. Our largest congregation of the last two years responded and filled the area with Easter hats and beautiful flower arrangements surrounding the smaller but heavy communion table moved from the sanctuary to the circle drive. Brass and contracted singers led by Victoria Shields, Director of Music and Fine Arts, led us in festive worship from the portico. Finally, we were able to return to socially distanced worship in late July that extended almost through Advent until we relied upon transmission solely for the Christmas Eve 10pm communion service. An abbreviated family service with some of our young people serving as readers was held around the outdoor Christmas tree and fire pits at 5:30pm and was well attended.

In person or relying upon visual transmission of our worship services, we were inspired by the Lenten drape of the cross with the path through the wilderness that morphed into flower decorations designed by Peg Bull and Patty von Jena for Easter and the Sundays following. In the fall Peg and Sherman Bull supplied festive gourds. Advent and Christmas decorations brought color and light into our beautiful Philip Ives sanctuary as the days' light diminished.

Our choir returned to lead worship on Labor Day Sunday and continued through the fall, growing slowly from five to seventeen. Dedication and talent are evident every Sunday through their anthems that underscore the scriptures and day's emphasis. Guest artists including Melissa Victor from New York City and Summer Theatre of New Canaan, our own Ty Kelliher on the fiddle, and Rhianna Ring-Howell using Taekwondo moves to "My Lord, What a Morning" were some additions to our corporate worship experience. Our special music offerings during Advent included a string quartet and flutist and the FPCNC choir on a rousing Magnificat and on another Sunday the harpist, Wendy Kerner. Nick DePuy of our congregation shared his guitar skills with guest flutist Mary Larson for our Christmas Eve communion service, joining Peter Flournoy on trumpet and Nancy Flournoy on the orchestra chimes. Beginning in September we welcomed our Interim Organist, Virginia Leeman, who served us until January 2, 2022. Our English Handbell ensemble grew from four to nine and rang for us in October, November and December. Their enthusiasm and care for each other shines through their music.

The new GLORY TO GOD hymnals were given dedicatory nameplates and placed in the sanctuary chair racks in late August. We are grateful to all who donated to their procurement. Used hymnals in good condition were placed in the Common Room for any persons interested in adding them to their libraries.

Due to COVID we served communion using the pre-filled chalices of bread and wine on the first Sundays of each month and Easter and Christmas Eve. Hopefully, we can return to real bread and wine for intinction in 2022. Linda Martin helped with the communion set-up and serving.

We are exploring additional paraments/antependia to help supplement and perhaps replace worn ones for the lectern and pulpit. Adding vibrancy to our mid-century modern sanctuary is another goal of our committee.

New members of this committee are always welcome to join Judy Schurman, Nancy Flournoy, and Linda Martin. We value the input of the congregation!

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Lucie

Youth Leadership Committee (YLC)

Seeds for this year's Youth Leadership Committee (YLC) were planted in the Spring of 2021 when parent volunteers Kristen Rodgers and Megan Wunderlich met with Youth Elders and incoming FPCNC high school students to discuss the need for everyone to be a leader right now.

"Someday, take some time - it could be today - to look at the photos in the bookshelves of the Common Room. Our leaders are there. And they are people like all of us. They came together and built a Presbyterian church here. They built a community. And they need us to be the caretakers of it. And to lead efforts for the youth community here at FPCNC this year."

The discussion continued to explore, "So, how do we do that?"

We spoke about Presbyterians being very organized and how they had their own Book of Order outlining how our church is supposed to run. It is similar to a large company and to our government. The book explained that our church had Elders and Elders can have committees.

And so, 12 high schoolers in the Spring of 2021 became our Youth Leadership Committee (YLC) with Douglas Gillespie and Layla Magnusen as Youth Elders and Mrs. Rodgers and Mrs. Wunderlich as parent volunteers.

In the Fall of 2021, the YLC met for the first time and brainstormed ideas for church projects to run and lead for the year. These projects would leave a legacy for next year's leaders.

Goals for the YLC included adding new participants and providing a schedule of activities. An initiative to achieve these goals was outlined as "Building Relationships and Connections." This initiative established *the purpose of the YLC - Building Relationships and Connections with Active Project Leadership for our 2021-2022 church year.*

In our first meeting, our high school youth reflected on events at the church and new things to try. Project ideas were written down, and a sticky note exercise produced a schedule of events and project winners. This fall, monthly meetings, Holiday and Shopping Cart War events brought us together in fellowship as a church family and at times, also with our friends at St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

Quotes and lessons about leadership, management and devotionals were included at our meetings in the Tate Barn. Basic leadership styles, principles of management, project charting, and how to work together to run an event, were all discussed.

Families of youth and children were made aware of YLC events open to all ages with communications throughout the fall including press in our local papers and news blasts.

For upcoming fall and winter youth news, look for information and updates in the weekly Tidings emails and updates on www.fpcnc.org.

In 2021 and upcoming in 2022, many events are inclusive of all ages with the hope that families and children will explore faith and attend in fellowship with our wonderful inter-generational church family.

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The YLC is excited to meet this spring and to continue our event planning in 2022. In the months to come we will host a Bake Sale and Nature Trail Walk, and more activities with the youth of our church and our community.

We are very much looking forward to these events, fellowship through meetings, and successful Spring semesters at school.

Respectfully submitted,

Your 2021-2022 Youth Leadership Committee (YLC)

Elders: Douglas Gillespie and Layla Magnusen

Leaders: Pia Bausman, Cameron Forte, Alexis Rodgers, Ashley Rodgers, Emily Rodgers, Cal Stewart, Gordie Stewart, Trey Walker, Brooks Wunderlich and Molly Wunderlich

Parents: Kristen Rodgers and Megan Wunderlich





Board of Deacons

Steve Van de Graaf - Moderator

Members

Peg Bull, Carole Clarkson, Donna Hill, Nancy LaBadie, Janet Lanaway, Linda Martin, Nell Smith, Jim Lucie, JoAnn Nerenburg, Alexis Rodgers, Cameron Forte

Ministries

Pastoral Care, Flowers and Gifts, New Member Liaison, Baptisms, Cards and Letters, Deacon Fund, Driving, and Memorial Services.

The Board of Deacons is comprised of 12 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.
- Reaching out to sick or elderly church members.
- Providing confidential emergency financial assistance to church members in need through the Deacon Fund.
- Assisting families in preparation for the baptism of their children during Sunday Services.
- 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 for members who are in temporary need of assistance.

The Deacons are grateful to all who support their efforts, especially volunteers who assist on specific events or all those who contribute to the Deacon Fund. Your continued generosity enables us to carry out our ministries of compassion.

As we look forward to an exciting 2022 we continue to seek ways to increase our ability to care for our church family and the greater community.

Respectfully submitted,
Steve Van de Graaf - Moderator

Special Church

Nancy Reichart

Special Church, a program for adults and teenagers with Special Needs, is a part of FPCNC's Outreach and has been a part of the FPCNC for over 35 years. The group gathers for fellowship and spiritual growth on Thursdays from 3:30-5:00 pm in the Common Room at FPCNC.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!

What do you do when you can't gather together at Special Church? Once again, we were flexible and we improvised. January through June found us gathering weekly on Zoom to see and greet each other and sing together. Our volunteers went back on the road occasionally to visit our members in their yards, singing together and sometimes having neighbors join us in singing. It was great for all of us, including the neighbors! We also did craft project drop offs and were even able to continue our annual Valentine Act of Kindness by making Valentine cards at home that were mailed to everyone on our mailing list. We parted for our summer break hoping and praying that by September the COVID situation would improve and we would be able to gather in person at FPC.



During 2021 we commended two of our members, Darren Dionne and Christopher Lule, to God. Darren was a charter member of Special Church. He was a gentle soul who loved to sing and knew the words to every song. Chris had a mischievous streak, he loved bringing his guitar to church and enjoyed strumming along during our music sessions. We miss our dear friends but are comforted to know that they are in heaven.

The day we waited for finally arrived on September 9th when we returned to Special Church in person masked, vaccinated and observing strict COVID precautions. Joyful noise filled the Common Room with hearing God's Word, creating art and singing together, all in person! During the fall season we had a party to celebrate Halloween, a Groom's party in honor of our music therapist Matt Hennessy and we took time to remember how much we have to be thankful for. We also welcomed our wonderful new friend Rev. Scott Herr. He embraced us from day one and we treasure his friendship. December was filled with Advent activities and Christmas preparation, and we almost made it to Special Church

Christmas on December 23rd when Covid numbers spiked and in-person church was cancelled. Once again, we were back on the road for caroling and a visit from Santa.

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On behalf of everyone at Special Church I extend sincere thanks to the members of FPC, to Scott, Tina and Wendy and all who support us. With grateful hearts we look forward to 2022 when we will celebrate 35 years of Special Church!



