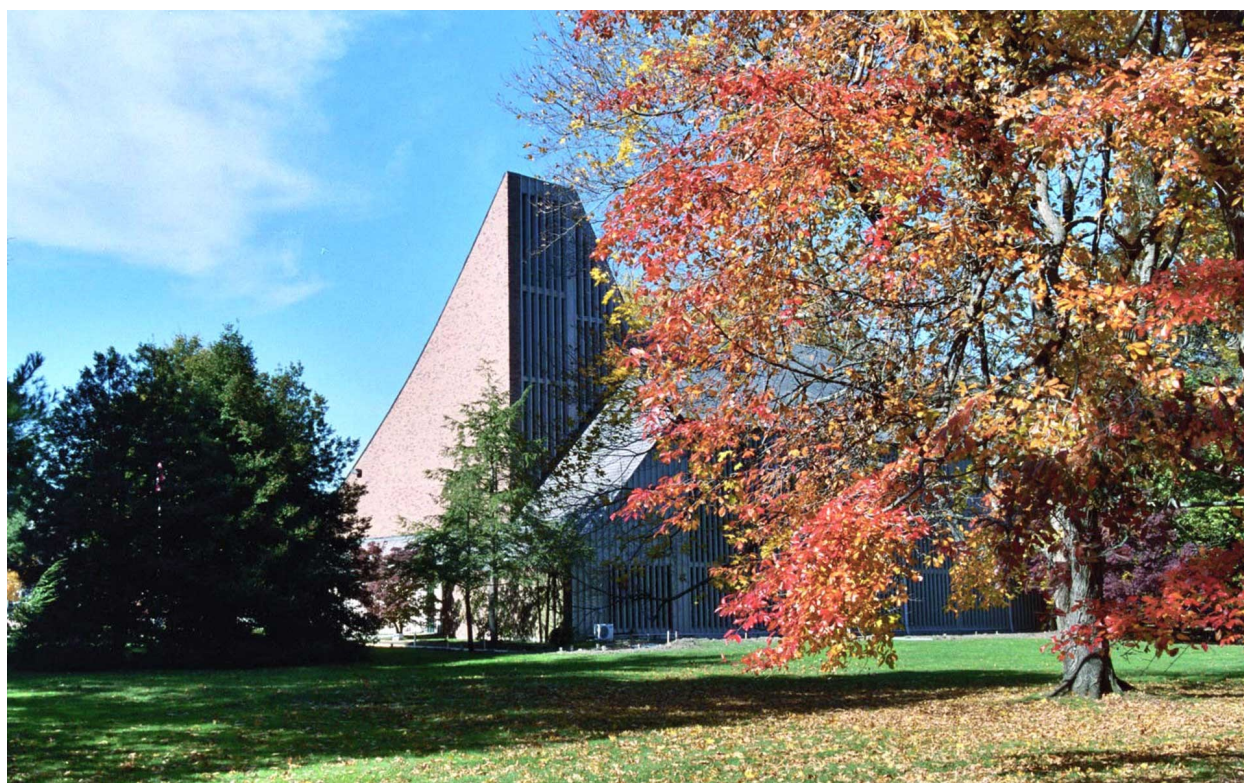




First Presbyterian Church  
*of* New Canaan



# 2016

## Annual Report

**The First Presbyterian Church  
of New Canaan**

**Annual Report/Yearbook 2016**

The Rev. Paul E. Gilmore  
*Pastor*

The Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird  
*Associate Pastor for Children,  
Youth and Families*

Victoria Shields  
*Director of Music*

Sherry Tate  
*Cherub Choir Director*

Michelle Olsen  
*Church Administrator*

Tina St. Armand  
*Office Manager*

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

Andres and Kuky Pereira  
*Operations Managers*

Edgar Torres  
*Day Sexton*

**CONTENTS**

**Clergy and Staff**

Pastor/Head of Staff: Rev. Paul E. Gilmore	3
Associate Pastor for Children, Youth and Families:	
Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird	4
Director of Music: Victoria Shields	7
Cherub Choir: Sherry Tate	9
Monthly Attendance	10
Necrology	10
Church Administrator: Michelle Olsen	11

**The Session**

**Session Chairs:**

Adult Education: Lynn Quinn	12
Children's Ministries Committee: Jenny Volanakis	13
Communications Committee: Sue Benko	15
Communion Committee: Denise Riehl	15
Pictorial Year in Review	16
Congregational Life Committee: Barbara Wentzel	17
Finance Committee: Andy Petitjean	18
Investment Committee: Jim Beall	19
Clerk's Report: Scott Beyer	19
Membership Involvement Committee: Julie Reeves	20
New Members List	20
Mission and Outreach Committee: Glenn Mierendorf	21
Nominating Committee: Linda Ferguson	23
Offertory Committee: Ed Elbert	23
Personnel Committee: Jennifer Gulden	23
Stewardship Committee: John Lanaway	24
Worship, Music & Arts Committee: Peter Flournoy	25
Chancel Guild	25
Youth Committee: Jan Sulkowski	26

The Board of Deacons	27
Moderator: John Servidea	

**Special Committees:**

CaTS: Jim Riehl	28
Dorcas Sewing Group: Valerie Erichs	29
Flower Committee: Judy Hopkins	29
Meditation Group: Elaine Foster	29
Scottish Heritage Service Committee: Rab Ker	30
Special Church: Nancy Reichart	31

*Photos provided by Staff and Church Members*

**Pastor/Head of Staff**  
The Rev. Paul E. Gilmore



*"You are the light of the world."* - Matthew 5:14

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that we are the light of the world. He doesn't say to us: *you may be light*, or *someday you will be light*. No this is in the indicative form – *You **are** the light of the world*. Jesus is telling us that not only is the gospel *for* us, but it also depends upon the likes of us to be made real in the world. If there is to be light, we are it, so shine as best you can. We don't have to save the world – Jesus has already done that. But we are called to be the witnesses to the light, to let the light of Christ illumine our hearts and then to let it flow through us and radiate out of us in order to shed light on the world's darkness.

I am grateful for the many ways that you continue to be the church of Jesus Christ, for the many ways that you let your light shine. As a church we are blessed with vibrant worship, with beautiful music, and strong programs – youth and children's ministries, the choir school, mission and outreach. Along with our ongoing mission partners, we developed a new partnership with Future Five, a Stamford-based organization that works with at-risk youth. We have furthered our partnership with Domus, a youth shelter, with our youth regularly preparing meals for its residents. Our youth are regularly raising money and packing meals for hungry children. Our Cents-ability program brought in over \$2300 in 2016 – all from collecting our coins and sharing them once a month – a wonderful way to fight hunger locally and internationally, and to continually raise our awareness of the need. Our youth made a spiritual pilgrimage to the Sacred Isle of Iona and to Edinburgh, celebrating the Scottish roots of our faith and our Celtic Christian heritage. One of our bright-shining moments came in August when the Syrian refugee family, which we are cosponsoring with First Presbyterian Church of Stamford, arrived at JFK. An act of faith – choosing hope over fear – knowing that our Lord was once a refugee and standing in the long Biblical tradition of providing hospitality and doing what is just – the session prayerfully approved the co-sponsorship. Countless hours of work went into preparing for their arrival. The church has been generous in furnishing an apartment in Stamford, and seeing to it that the family got enrolled in schools, ESL classes, medical care, work, etc. The family is deeply grateful to the church, to IRIS, to this nation, to have escaped the horror in Syria in order to start a new life here.

I am grateful to the people who let their light shine by giving countless hours serving on the session, the board of deacons, the committees of the church, or who find other ways to serve. And I am grateful to be working with a fine staff, whose lights shine individually and collectively as those who help enable all of us to be faithful together as this particular church of Jesus Christ – Tina, Andres and Kuky, Edgar (custodian), Michelle, Victoria, Erika, Sherry, Kibbie. And I am especially grateful this year to the Rev. Chris Tate and the Rev. Mary Thies, who stepped in admirably (and continue to do so) when Kibbie went on disability leave due to her head injury.

As in other years, we said good-bye to many dearly beloved – some who moved away, and others to whom we entrusted to God's ever-lasting care – the tears and laughter we shed in celebration of their lives, offerings of gratitude for their faithfulness, and the assurance of our faith that God does indeed bring life out of death. But just as we said good-bye to some, God brought others to our door. Late in 2016 we received six new families into membership – 11 adults and 14 children, with additional families who have indicated a desire to join. That is good news, indeed!

There are many challenges and opportunities ahead in 2017. We still have some major physical plant needs to address – a new roof for the sanctuary being the preeminent one. We will continue in our efforts with the First Presbyterian Nursery School to recreate a partnership that is mutually beneficial. We will continue to seek ways to grow the church – in faith first, in the ways that we provide the love and care of Christ for one another, through our educational opportunities, and also numerically. To do these things, we will need the whole church engaged – your hopes and dreams for the church, your time, talents and gifts – in order that together we might be the light of the world.

And on a personal note, 2016 was a very good year – the woman I love, Jeannick Minet, agreed to marry me. We look forward to the church celebrating with us in 2017 as we begin our new life together as husband and wife (wedding date TBD).

It is a privilege to be in ministry with you.

Grace & Peace,

The Rev. Paul E. Gilmore





**Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird, Associate Pastor for Children, Youth and Families**

“Children are a gift from God.” --Psalm 127:3

“Train a child in the way he should go,  
and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6

2015-2016 has been wonderful years of ministry for children and youth at FPCNC. Both our children and youth committees continue to do great work 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. I am so very proud of the work and ministry that we are doing together at FPCNC. Please take a minute and read about the exciting ministries we have accomplished in 2015-2016. Our Youth Motto is “God is at work in you.” Phil 2:3. As you read this report, I hope you will see God at work in our kids.

### **Youth Ministry**

As most of you know, youth ministries is one of my main focuses at FPCNC. Under the guidance of Elder Jan Sulkowski and a wonderful youth committee of ten very committed parents, we plan and implement a rich and rewarding program for our youth. We now have three active youth groups which meet. Our ESYG (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade) meets once a month and averages 8-10 in attendance. Our MSYG (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) averages 15-20 youth and meets 2-3 times per month for fellowship and mission. And our HSYG (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) averages 10-12 youth and meets two to three times monthly for fellowship, Barn Time about real life issues (a youth led initiative) and mission activities. We also have a new joint venture with St. Mark's called YPG (youth philanthropic guild) which meets monthly to decide upon and distribute \$5000 in mission funds to local charities. In August of 2016, four adult chaperones took 14 HSYG youth on their spiritual pilgrimage to Iona, Scotland for the International Youth Festival. It was an incredible week, where we learned about “speaking the truth to power,” and how we are different and how we are similar to other Christians from around the world. In August of 2017, HSYG is excited to go several hours from Anchorage, Alaska for their summer mission trip to do children's ministry (sports camp and VBS for a week) and work one on one with children whose parents have been incarcerated. Our youth will mentor other youth who have, through no fault of their own, had a very difficult life. Our MSYG and HSYG will also have the opportunity to do a summer mission trip closer to home in Providence, Rhode Island, where we will work at the Providence Rescue Mission, laying tile and helping refurbish their sanctuary.

Some of the highlights of the last year include:

- ◆ Mission work with Filling in the Blanks, stuffing food bags, Christmas presents
- ◆ Our winter ski retreat weekend to the Berkshires to ski at Butternut
- ◆ Souperbowl Sunday—collecting \$587 through our Souperbowl café to go to the NC Food Pantry
- ◆ Youth Sunday—our youth do a terrific job talking about their faith, their struggles,  
and where the church has helped support them along the journey
- ◆ Confirmation Day
- ◆ Rally Day tables—face painting, crafts, old fashioned carnival games
- ◆ An All Youth and their Families Kick Off the Year Dinner
- ◆ Super Messy Games Night—an ESYG favorite
- ◆ Baskin Robbins scavenger hunt
- ◆ Cooking and Serving at New Covenant House soup kitchen in Stamford
- ◆ Cooking 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, laser tag,  
Feed My Starving Children
- ◆ Musicals at Saxe and NCHS and dinner on the town
- ◆ Ropes course to Bridgeport Adventure Park
- ◆ Advent Fair—youth were responsible for Gingerbread houses, the devotion readings,  
advent wreath making workshop, and a variety of craft tables
- ◆ Toys for Filling in the Blanks and stocking stuffers for 265 children in Bedford Hills  
who receive food assistance through that organization
- ◆ Christmas Eve pageant
- ◆ Regular fellowship events in the barn and talking about our faith, our struggles,  
and what matters most to us

*Continued on the next page*



In March of 2016, I suffered a serious concussion on our youth winter retreat, which put me out of commission for 5 months while I recovered at home. I am very grateful not only to all who brought me meals, but very much also to those who stepped in, kept the ball rolling, and went the extra mile in my absence.

### **Youth Mission Trips**

**Union Beach, NJ.** In the summers of 2014, 2015, 2016 our MSYG and HSYG have served locally to rebuild homes after Superstorm Sandy. This is a one-week mission trip which involves painting, building, construction, and bonding with home owners.

**Caledonia, Belize.** In 2014 and 2015, our HSYG travelled to Caledonia, Belize for their summer mission trip. We put on a VBS camp, led a sports camp, taught bible stories, built a library by bringing over 1000 books, and delivered staple food items (coffee, sugar, corn flour, salt, oil, etc.) to families in dire need. The need is so compelling in Caledonia that mission trips (despite the oppressing heat) are a true joy. The people are gracious and welcoming.

**Iona, Scotland.** In 2016, 14 HSYG went on a spiritual pilgrimage to Iona, Scotland where they met other youth from around the world and spent the week dialoguing about how to “speak the truth to power.”

**Alaska 2017.** Because of the Zika virus, the youth committee, voted that our youth take a year off from Zika infested territories, and go somewhere north. After much prayer and research, we have chosen a site two hours from Anchorage, Alaska.

**Youth Mission (locally) Filling in the Blanks**—Closer to home, our ministry with Filling in the Blanks has taken off. We have formed a partnership of sorts with them and love to stuff backpacks of food, and provide care packages for Valentine’s day and Christmas toys for our neighbors. While I love our mission trip to a third world country, I think it is also very valuable to show our youth that kids in need exist right here close to where we live. It is an eye opener we all need. And we are answering God’s call to serve through our mission and ministry to these local families. We have also begun to make **Dinners for Domus** right here in our own kitchen for 10 high school boys who live in a residential facility in Stamford. This year we will make and deliver a full meal 5 times for these boys, and seek other ways to support them (we bought \$975 in gifts cards for Christmas to buy toiletries, etc.).

### **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 (16 over the school year), 10 youth groups, 23 confirmation classes, and join the mission trip or complete the equivalent of 40 hours of community service over the summer.

### **Children’s Ministry**

The programs at FPC are dynamic, interactive, and multisensory, following the Rotation model. The best part is that we are constantly rethinking ways to present the material in a fresh and exciting way. In the past two years, since we have redesigned the common room, we redesigned and updated children’s chapel as well. We now use a PowerPoint presentation each week, which keeps the kids focused and learning. Our chapels feature a welcome, a celebration of birthdays and announcements, a fun game called “A Minute to Win It,” selecting an animal from World Vision’s 28 farm animals, collecting our Bucks and Cans for mission and ministry, and basic Bible stories from the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. We strive for a take home message, so the kids can walk away knowing the story and what it means to them. Then they head off to various rotations to reinforce the lesson. Some of the highlights of the year for me include: weekly children’s chapels and monthly celebrations of the Lord’s Supper, Stations of the Cross, the blessing tree where we collected winter coats and hats for the children of Horizons, the beloved Christmas pageant, the children’s musical, the advent wreath making workshop and craft fair, Isaac’s Garden, and the list goes on and on and on. We have a wonderful children’s committee and each parent teaches 4 times per year. Together, we are the church, helping, growing, and fostering a warm and inclusive environment.

*Continued on the next page*

Our 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> graders follow the Feasting on the Word curriculum in the Barn. This PCUSA curriculum follows the lectionary and provides them with a strong foundation of bible knowledge and critical thinking to prepare them for confirmation.

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. There is a strong sense of connection, here among our children, youth, and families. 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.

### 2016 Confirmation Class

Alex Beth Carlson  
Benjamin Edward Dooley  
Andrew Maxwell Gifford  
Charles Richard Knight  
Michelle Lestage LaBadie  
Liam Justin McCarthy  
Olivia Catherine Sheridan  
Eva Elizabeth Jae-Sung Spangler  
Julia Katherine Sulkowski



Our Confirmation Class



Highland Cow



Donna Hill, Rev. Kibbie and Jess Dooley



Lunch on Iona



MSYG: Yard work at Union Beach, NJ



MSYG at Union Beach, NJ

## Music Ministry

### Victoria Shields, Director of Music



It has been quite a year for the FPC Music Ministry! As the third Director of Music in FPC's 60 years of ministry, I am humbled by the stories and experiences through the years that have been shared with me. FPC has a great history of music in this community, the Music, Worship and Arts Committee and I are working hard in continuing this great history.

Sunday, January 31, 2016 began my journey with all of you at FPC. I came in the middle of the program year, with little preparation before starting, and Lent began a week later. Lent is a time of reflection, preparation and revelation. The journey of Lent coinciding with a time of change may not have been coincidental! Needless to say, God's hand is in everything we do and our journey together has been a wonderful whirlwind this past year.

Worship, whether on a Sunday morning, a Wednesday evening contemplative service in Lent, a brief service to send our youth on their way to Iona, or a memorial service for a beloved congregation member, is at the heart of what we do in the music ministry. Worshipping through music is what connects us with each other and God. Our adult volunteers know and feel this, and we are together guiding our young ones in the importance of serving through music.

Sunday mornings have been filled with moving, spirit-filled music from all different styles and time periods. In March, the FPC choir presented the powerful anthem "Idumea" arranged by Richard Djella. This Kentucky Harmony tune (1816) featured the FPC choir and was accompanied by violin and cello. With a text by Charles Wesley, this tune was featured in the opening scene of the movie *Cold Mountain*. Other music that day included repertoire for solo violin and solo cello. On Youth Sunday, the youth led worship with the theme "Our Youth's Journey of Faith." The service focused on the history and people of First Presbyterian Church and who we are now. There was much musical involvement from our youth this Sunday! I am proud to say that most of those involved that Sunday are part of the FPC Choir School. Julia Sulkowski led the congregation in singing, Will Dooley sang "Go the Distance," Augie Kelliher and his father, Damon, played a violin and guitar duet, the Chimes Choir played, the Carol and Cherubs Choirs sang, and the FPC Choir combined with the Carol Choir on the moving anthem, "Go Down, Moses." Soloist for this anthem was George Post, who was highlighted in the dialogue by the confirmation class as one of our formative members who participated in the march at Selma. Youth Sunday this year connected all of us and I am proud to have been part of this great service.

Holy Week and Easter was a busy time this year! Our choirs presented music for 6 services in the span of a week from Palm Sunday, through Holy Week and Easter. Whew! To help provide music for so many services, a small ensemble of our more experienced singers was formed. This group, the Schola Cantorum, has become an opportunity to add an extra sound to our worship services and to give our more experienced singers the opportunity to sing more challenging music in a small, intimate setting. The Schola lead our Good Friday Tenebrae service, providing music after seven readings, four of which were anthems. Since then, the Schola quartet has shared special music throughout our services and has been a highlight during communion.

My first Easter here was glorious, featuring all of the FPC choirs and brass quintet. All of our children sang and rang, the FPC Choir presented William Mathias' "Let all the World in Every Corner Sing" and Charles Stanford's "Ye Choirs of New Jerusalem," plus there was an extended prelude for brass quintet and organ. Christ was risen indeed on this Sunday!

Scottish Heritage Sunday was full of the pomp and circumstance according to the FPC tradition, and as always the playing of *Highland Cathedral*. As it was my first Scottish Heritage Sunday, it was truly inspirational. Choir sang a setting of the Cornish Carol "Jesus Christ the Apple Tree" by Elizabeth Poston. In addition, they sang the celtic tune "Be Thou My Vision" in a fresh new setting by English composer, Bob Chilcott. I am looking forward to Scottish Sunday this year where we will be doing music for choir and harp!

*Continued on the next page*



The FPC Choir School presented their annual musical on Sunday, June 12. Directed by Allison Gray, the children presented “David and the Giants,” the story of David and Goliath, but with a twist at the end. The show featured Henry Tate as David, Audrey Magnusen as King Saul, the Carol Choir as the Israelites, the Cherub Choir as the adorable, evil little Philistines, and Ashley Rodgers, Armin Thies, Mark Magnusen, Damon Kelliher and Layla Magnusen as the modern-day Giants - war, poverty and hunger. Chris Tate built the set and designed the Giant with interactive technology! It was a great show with wonderful support from choir parents and staff.

The program year, beginning in the fall of 2016, had all of our choirs and ensembles participating regularly in worship. The English Handbell ensemble, as well as the newly established Orff ensemble as part of the Carol Choir curriculum, has enhanced worship and our Christmas Concert. These ensembles not only add more opportunities for varied talents, but add another dimension of sound to our worship. It has been great fun for us too!

On Christmas Eve, the Christmas Pageant was directed this year by Chris Tate, after many years of leadership under Allison Gray. Traditions were kept with some new additions to add to the telling of the Christmas story. One of the highlights this year was a duet between Will Dooley and Freia Mierendorf who sang, bringing in the pageant procession. Spencer Reeves was cast as Joseph, and Julia Sulkowski was Mary. There was exciting participation from all, and we left service rejoicing in the birth of the Christ child. The 10:00 PM intimate, candlelight service featured music by Nick Depuy, elegant repertoire for oboe and organ, as well as Christmas favorites by the choir. It was a beautiful first Christmas here at FPCNC.

Concerts this year include the spring and fall Pro Arte concerts, a fundraiser concert by Nick Depuy in July; the Charis Chamber Voices in a combined concert with the Camerata Vocale of Hannover, the Arsenal Duo organ and piano virtuosos in September, the annual FPCNC Christmas Concert featuring Stephen Paulus’ Nativity Carols, and a Valentine’s Day “Flowers and Chocolate” Coffee Concert featuring the FPC Choir professionals, Michele McBride, Boyd Schlaefer, John Downey and Harper Stevenson. On March 17, at 7:30 pm, I will give my first concert here at First Presbyterian. Music will feature Mendelssohn, Vierne, Bach, Mozart, Cocker, and will include organ duets with Robert Kwan, Director of Music at Trinity Episcopal Church, Southport. Come, wear green and join us for a festive reception after!

As the third Director of Music at FPCNC, I am honored to serve a church with such a noble history, both in social justice and in presenting fine music. This year has been only a beginning, and I pray that we will continue to grow together in the spirit of the founders of First Presbyterian Church.

Soli Deo Gloria,  
(To God Be the Glory)

Victoria Shields,  
Director of Music



Carol Choir singers



Our Carol Choir and First Presbyterian Church Choir

## **Cherub Choir**

Sherry Tate, Director

The Cherub Choir is designed for children from age 4 through 7 (pre-K through Grade 2). There are two weekly rehearsal opportunities: Wednesdays from 5 - 5:45, and Sundays after worship, 11:15 - 11:45 (time approximate, depends on when worship service ends -- we need at least a half-hour for rehearsal). Children may attend either rehearsal -- or both!

The choir sings in Sunday worship services about 7 times during the school year, including in the Nativity Pageant on Christmas Eve and on Easter Sunday. They usually participate in the FPC Choir School's spring musical; in 2016, the musical was "David and the Giant," and the Cherubs were a fierce Philistine Army!!

Cherub Choir introduces young children to preparation for and practice of service as worship leaders. The anthems chosen are simple unison melodies with texts devoted to Bible stories, faith concepts, or important events in the liturgical calendar. Pitch matching and keeping a steady beat are skills the children practice as they learn rhythm patterns in their songs. They use a variety of instruments such as rhythm sticks, melody bells, tambourines, drums, and other percussion instruments, and most rehearsals include movement-to-music activities. The children are lively, energetic, and especially enthusiastic as they sing and play.

Our rehearsals and performances are enhanced with piano accompaniment by Christine Mangone, and the Rev. Mary Thies has provided invaluable rehearsal support. Parents have been generous in helping with robing, costuming, room preparation, and group supervision. With many activity choices available to children these days, I am very grateful when Cherub Choir attendance is made a priority.

Children in choir learn the art of cooperating with others to make a beautiful sound; their music enriches the worship of the congregation, and the children experience pleasure and satisfaction as they use their talents to serve God and their church.

Sherry Tate



### Summary of Monthly Attendance for 2016

Month	Sunday Worship	Special Services	Total
January	579		579
February	503	Ash Wednesday 25	528
March	474	Tenebrae 43 Good Friday 26 Easter Services 9:00 AM 196 11:00 AM 218	957
April	472		472
May	519	Scottish Sunday 242	761
June	335		335
July	367		367
August	341		341
September	523		523
October	712		712
November	570		570
December	569	Christmas Eve 5:00 PM 322  Christmas Eve 103	994
		Total	7139

### Necrology and 2016 Memorial Services

#### Death:

Roger E. Clark  
Philip L.R. Du Val  
Evelyn Freeman Francis  
Marjorie Riddell Wilson

#### Memorial Services:

Roger E. Clark  
Philip L.R. Du Val  
John L. Farmakis  
Evelyn Freeman Francis  
Patricia McIntire  
Joan Semsel Theiss  
Marjorie Riddell Wilson

#### Interment in Columbarium:

Evelyn Freeman Francis  
Marjorie Riddell Wilson

#### Interment in Memorial Garden:

Philip L.R. Du Val  
John L. Farmakis  
Thomas Wooters



#### Interment at Spring Grove Cemetery Darien, CT

Patricia McIntire

#### Interment at Stephen Mather Cemetery Darien, CT

Jean Marie Lowman



**Church Administrator**

Michelle Olsen

2016 has been a very special year for me to serve in this body of The Church. I worked with the FPCNC congregation on the many diverse opportunities to enhance and oversee facilities, fiscal awareness/efficiency and fellowship events. At the same time, I have been able to serve the New Canaan community by supporting the Stephen Ministry needs in the town, as well as have the opportunity to connect and learn about other church networks.

Many projects and opportunities were impactful on multiple goals of leadership which included, but not limited to:

**Finances** - In addition to tracking and reporting various donations and Stewardship progress, there were dinner events that were enjoyable to organize, along with collecting the funds to support them. The many active youth and fellowship events to financially monitor. Also, in hopes of future community exposure and to help increase income, we accepted an additional toddler music class in the Tate Barn. Across the board, there were increases and/or consistent collections of rental use income. Disappointingly, as of January 1, 2017 there is no longer a monthly parking arrangement the Roger Sherman Inn. There were additional office staff hours, by the talented Erika Hagen, to support the new weekly E-Tidings. Updated staff health, dental, death/disability benefits, that are more cost effective and are now streamlined in with pastoral Board of Pensions program. Addressed and implemented current and up-to-date pricing for Nursery School use of church printer costs and room use. A big thank you to the Finance Committee members, who have been immensely supportive and responsive to making these updates possible, as well as the Chair Andy Petitjean, who has given an abundance of time to oversee the weekly details.

**Facilities** - As this year was full of getting to know the intricate nuances of the church buildings, there was a replacement of the Bliss house roof, safety improvements (electrical, sprinkler pump, lighting, internal signage, etc.), which also helped lower insurance premiums upon review. The implementation and oversight from outside cleaning service to internal talents, and personal attention of our own Sextons/Safety/Handymen (Andres & Kuky Pereira, Edgar Torres). Their daily flexibility and gracious attention to the congregational requests have been a pleasure to work among. There have been additional external landscaping improvements and services provided by Pivot Ministry. Implemented and improved internet Wi-Fi accessibility and security. Collaborative updates of the Music Room with Victoria Shields and youth basketball activities with Pastors Paul Gilmore and Kibbie Laird. All executed by the handyman work of the new Sexton Edgar Torres. The Bliss House roof repairs and manse improvements, under the direction of our Facilities Elder Stephan von Jena, has given tireless support to the church and continues to give much time and attention to the upcoming Special Ask projects. The year ended in a big way with major IT structure updates to include a cloud-based phone system, storage, Microsoft Office updates and 3 new computers that had the ability to keep up with the new IT structures. We are very thankful to Chuck Gulden, who led the project and who worked swiftly with the staff to get the church ready for a new era in 2017.

**Fellowship & Community** – There was the organization of the Bell Tower Society seminar on Planned Giving to support church legacy, as well as future program pre-set on the calendar for April of 2017. On this note, I would like to thank Tina in her efforts to keep the congregation informed and communicating the needs of members, past and present. Lastly, it was my great pleasure to have been able to offer support to the New Canaan Stephen Ministry community by providing care from Ridgefield, as well as get the chance to connect and learn about other church networks.

Respectfully submitted,  
Michelle Olsen

### **Adult Education Committee**

Lynn Jackson Quinn, Chair

Members: The Rev. Paul Gilmore, The Rev. Mary Marple Thies, and Mary Jane Bolin

With the guidance and counsel of our Pastor/Head of Staff, the Rev. Paul Gilmore, and the ministerial staff, the Adult Education Committee considers and develops programming to provide relevant learning to meet our members' personal spiritual needs as well as to further Christ's mission in the world, using biblical and contemporary resources. We have continued with three primary formats:

#### Morning Programming:

Two Bible studies were offered this fall on Tuesday mornings. Paul led a series based on the Rev. Adam Hamilton's "Making Sense of the Bible" including video segments of the author discussing his work. And the Rev. Mary Thies taught a series on "The Old Testament Bible stories you didn't learn in Sunday School."

#### Evening Programming:

In 2016 our Wednesday evening Midweek Ministries provided a full schedule of life transforming musical, spiritual and lifelong learning programs for our entire faith community. A series entitled "Conversations on Race" included talks by New Canaan Chief of Police Leon M. Krolkowski. Looking ahead to 2017 we plan to offer a "Book Club" on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 pm based on "Listening for God: Contemporary Literature and the Life of Faith" with short works by noted modern authors.

#### Sunday Programming:

There is a long-standing FPCNC tradition of Pastors' Forum's, bringing in guest speakers to present to the congregation following Sunday worship services. Speakers in the spring of 2016 included two Muslim members of our New Canaan community who spoke about their faith, followed by Chris George, Executive Director of IRIS, Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services, all of which supported FPCNC's successful co-sponsorship of the Abo Notkah family, who we welcomed to Stamford in August 2016 with our partners from First Presbyterian Church of Stamford. The Rev. Tommie Jackson, Pastor of Faith Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, spoke on race relations and Ron Pinciario, Executive Director of CAGV (CT Against Gun Violence), spoke on the current status of gun legislation and gun violence.

Our committee warmly welcomes suggestion of books, topics, or speakers to consider for future programming.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn Jackson Quinn



The Abo Notkah family

## Children's Ministries Committee

Jenny Volanakis, Chair

Advisor: Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird; Working committee: Stefanie Howarth, Meredith Petitjean, Kathleen Servidea, Lauren Tate

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 include Sunday school for pre-K-7<sup>th</sup> grade, mission work, spiritual education, and fellowship through special events.

**Sunday's Cool:** Sunday's Cool is our educational program for elementary-aged children (pre-K-4). Children are invited to leave worship each Sunday around 10:15 to attend a special children's chapel with a Bible story, interactive interpretation of the story and then a special rotation. Our theme for this year is "Feed my Sheep" (Jesus' command in the Gospel of John), and kids are asked to bring a "buck and a can" each week to support two of our children's mission projects: the New Canaan Food Pantry and World Vision.

After leaving worship, the children gather in the common room, greet one another and are given an overview of the lesson by Rev. Kibbie. We open with the lighting of the candles, followed by a prayer. Birthdays are recognized and celebrated and we then move into the bible lesson. Following the lesson, the children engage with the story in an interactive way. This can include acting it out with different kids playing the different parts, a trivia game, or a short video. Chapel is then closed and the kids move into their rotation.

This is the third year of our Spark curriculum. Spark is an online comprehensive, Bible-based study program that includes special rotations that tie into the church calendar. Various rotations include movies & popcorn, the marketplace for making crafts, Art Thou, Mission Possible, Kids Kitchen, and a special prayer room. We have also introduced monthly community mission activities into our rotations.

Our 5-7<sup>th</sup> grade children meet each week in the Tate Youth Barn for discussion using the Presbyterian curriculum, Feasting on the Word. These lessons are designed to prepare them for their 8<sup>th</sup> grade confirmation year. Adult volunteers lead discussions each week around these biblical and theological concepts. Once a month, we combine all the groups for focus on our mission activities.

**Children's Mission work:** This year, we have increased our focus on community service and mission work by selecting seasonal mission projects. We are teaching the children that mission work doesn't have to be done on a grand scale to make an impact – they can make an impact in seemingly small ways. The children work together to select our mission projects, giving them a sense of ownership and awareness of how they can help. Because of the ages of the children, we look for projects that can be completed during Sunday school.

Projects to date include:

**Waveny Life Center** (senior center): the kids decorated pumpkins and we delivered them to the senior center to bring smiles to the residents faces for Halloween

**Operation Gratitude:** the kids donated extra Halloween candy to send to our troops serving overseas.

**Filling in the Blanks:** through a donation, we purchased \$1000 worth of books for the Filling in the Blanks holiday backpack program. Filling in the Blanks provides weekend meals for low income children in neighboring communities and each holiday season, the children in the program receive a special backpack with goodies, including a new book. The FPC kids filled out bookplates with special messages to place in the books.

**DOMUS:** The kids collected new and gently used coats, mittens, snowpants, hats, etc. for our giving tree. These items were delivered to DOMUS, a non-profit that serves underprivileged youth in local communities.

**World Vision:** our weekly "buck" collection goes toward the purchase of farm animals for needy families around the world. The kids have been saving their weekly collection to purchase larger animals for these communities. This year, we've purchased a goat and a cow, as well as smaller animals such as ducks, chickens, and fish.

**New Canaan Food Pantry:** Our weekly can collection goes toward the congregation's donations to the New Canaan Food pantry. We spent one Sunday sorting all the food before it was delivered.

*Continued on the next page*



**Family Fellowship events:**

Throughout the year, we invite all families to attend periodic fun 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.

Our year kicked off with our 4<sup>th</sup> annual PJs and Pancakes movie night. This beloved event brings the kids together on a weekend evening for pancakes, bacon and a movie – this year “The Lego 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 Eggstragavanza Egg Hunt.

Together with the youth choirs, the children presented a biblical story to the congregation at the Spring Musical, this year “David and the Goliath.” The kids celebrated their hard work with a picnic lunch on the FPC playground following the production.

This past summer, we debuted “The Oasis”- a special summer Sunday school program. Each week, the kids received a brief bible story, followed by water play on a giant water slide and popsicles. This was a great way to keep families engaged with FPC during the summer. We had record attendance and the kids formed a special bond.

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.

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

In 2017, we will continue our mission work and explore new themes for Sunday’s Cool, including more opportunities to integrate our older youth as spiritual role models. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the parents who make our programs a success. From leading the rotations at Sunday’s Cool to generating deep discussions in the Tate Youth barn to assisting with costumes at the pageant and everything in-between, we are so thankful for your dedication to our program and the youth of our church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jenny Volanakis



Rev. Kibbie Laird at Children’s Chapel



2016 Children’s Christmas Pageant

### **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 helped the Congregational Life Committee with advertising and announcements for their various events, including the "Celebrate 60" event which kicked off the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church. The Committee also 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. We also expanded 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, Tidings, and email blasts 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 a copy of the bulletin and the 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



#### **First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan**

Check out our email newsletter that keeps you up to date on everything that's going on or coming up at FPCNC.  
<https://www.facebook.com/First-Presbyterian-Church-of-New-Canaan>

### **Communion Committee**

Denise Riehl, Chair

Members: Barbara Beall, Erica Bergmans, Kip Farrell, Linda Martin, Julie Reeves, Denise Riehl, Rose Scott Rothbart, Sue Sherwood, Bev Thomas, and Norma von Jena

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 altar, bread and wine on the first Sunday of each month, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Easter, and Christmas Eve. Each member serves approximately two times per year, once purchasing the bread, and once as a helper.





Please welcome our new church Officers!



Church Ladies at Coming Home Sunday picnic



Kids enjoying a "Night Out" with Rev. Kibbie



Bill and Audrey Knobloch enjoying themselves at the 60th Anniversary Party



Victoria Shields and Jen Gulden at Senior Tea



Children making wreaths and Family Advent Fair



Where's Ru?



Christmas Pageant Animals



Loading up the Dove Boxes



Santa's Helper



FPC Mission and Outreach Dove Program



### **Congregational Life Committee**

Barbara Wentzel, Chair

Members: Lisa Gifford, Jeanne Hart, Nancy Helle, Linda Martin, Allison Mennitt, Nell Smith, Lauren Tate

The Congregational Life Committee works together to plan events that will provide fellowship and fun for the entire church family.

The first Icebreaker of the year was held on October 8th from 6:30 - 8:30 at the home of Jennifer and Chuck Gulden. These small parties welcome all members of the congregation, especially new members, to get to know each other better. Everyone brings a favorite appetizer to share and what they would like to drink. Icebreakers are held 3 or 4 times a year.

Our Fall Tea was held at 3:00 pm on Tuesday, October 18th, in the Common Room. Members of the committee served tea, sandwiches and cookies to the many people who attended. Victoria Shields entertained us by playing the piano.

We celebrated the 60th year of ministry at First Presbyterian Church on November 5th.

All members of the church were invited to hear about the history and future of the church. Over 200 people attended. Victoria Shields, Director of Music, and Sherry Tate, Cherub Choir Director, arranged to have wonderful music sung by the Cherub Choir, Youth Choir and the Chancel Choir. Delicious food was prepared by Chris and Anna Mae Bondor with Jeff Barbour helping to provide the wine. The amazing history of First Presbyterian Church was seen at the 60th Year Celebration through a video prepared by Chris Tate. The video showed pictures of events that took place during the last sixty years. Much of the material was found in the Archives of the church and many people learned about our early interest in Social Justice. One part of the video showed the Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, instrumental in the founding of First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan, marching with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the 1963 March on Washington. This video will be shown at various times, especially at New Member Classes.

An Historic House Tour took place on November 20th at the Hoyt-Burwell-Morse House at 8 Ferris Hill Road. The event was held after church and everyone was invited to see the house and enjoy warm cider and donuts. Tom Nissley, owner, guided guests through this fascinating house that was built in 1731.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Wentzel



**Senior Tea photos**

On the Left: Peg Bull, Mary Jane Bolin, and Lisa Gifford.

On the Right: Jeannie Hart, Gretchen Watkins,  
and Barbara Wentzel.



**Finance Committee**  
Andy Petitjean, Chair

Financial information is not available online.

**Investment Committee**

Jim Beall, Chair

Investment information is not available online

**Clerk of Session**

Scott Beyer

I am grateful for the trust placed in me to assume this role. Five months into my term, I understand how many people, hours, treasure, blood, sweat and even tears went into building this Church. I can report that I am humbled, awed and thankful.

This church is blessed with a rich historical blend of progressive theology, music, and children's programming for those who wish to be "thinking" Christians. I feel strongly that this is a very attractive feature set for a church in this community.

As with most churches, we are not without challenges. While our congregation continues to give generously, the size of our congregation has trended down over the past several years. This is the norm for all mainline churches, and our pastor transition period only compounded the challenge. We must confront this reality with deliberate action.

We must accelerate the number of new families joining the church and we must increase the engagement levels of our "middle-aged" families. While we are enjoying our third consecutive year of balanced budgeting, we must continue making our operations more efficient.

Members of Session, Deacons and Advisory are actively working to prioritize the effort and investment needed to accomplish the above goals. Making informed decisions is one thing. Executing them over time is quite another.

And this is where you come in, because 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 approach them. Check in on members you have not seen in a while. Go out and make disciples.

Peace be with you,  
Scott Beyer

### Membership Involvement Committee

Julie Reeves, Chair

Members: Jennifer Gulden, Barbara Wentzel

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

This year, our church welcomed twenty-four new members, including nine Confirmands, over the course of the year. Four families moved away from New Canaan and four families transferred their membership to other churches. Sadly, four of our members died during the year. Our 2016 final membership number stands at 586.

Our committee looks forward to continuing to help make First Presbyterian Church a warm and welcoming spiritual home for both visitors and members.

### New Members Presented on June 19, 2016

#### New Members:

Susan Hunter Bailey  
Daska Campbell  
Huw Gilbert  
Tindley Gilbert  
Andrew Gifford  
Lisa Gifford  
Doug Gillespie  
Serena Gillespie  
Jennifer Madrid  
Diana Ruszkowski  
Joseph Ruszkowski  
James Tucker  
Lindsay Tucker  
Justin Wingate  
Kate Wingate

#### Membership Transfers:

Jamie and Steve Corkran  
Williamsburg, VA

Harry and Tuckie Hitch  
Amelia Island, FL

Melinda Thomsen  
Greensville, NC

Allan and Janet Williams  
Dover, NH



Max, Andrew and  
Lisa Gifford



Susan Hunter Bailey



Randall, Veronika,  
and Daska Campbell



### New Members Presented on October 16, 2016

Lindsay and Bill, Charlie and William Tucker; Tindley and Huw, Pryor, Emerson, Owens, and Hope Gilbert; Serena and Doug, Alexandra and Douglas Gillespie; Jennifer Madrid, and Alexa and Isabella (not in picture); Diana and Joseph, and Amelia Ruszkowski; Kate and Justin, Everett, Brooks and Grant Wingate



## **Mission and Outreach Committee**

Glenn Mierendorf, Chair

Members: Lynn Jackson Quinn (Syrian Refugee Relief), Robin Lewis (New Canaan Food Pantry, Cents-abilities), John Lanaway (Future5.org), Scott Beyer (Arts for Healing, Family ReEntry), Glenn Mierendorf (Filling in the Blanks)

Mission: To identify and support programs directed to hungry, under-sheltered, or otherwise disadvantaged people in our region.

Objectives for 2016: Focus our financial donations to organizations that provide the opportunity for "hands-on" involvement of our congregation. This year, over \$24,000 of cash and materials were distributed to our Outreach Partners and there were hundred's of volunteer hours levered across various programs and projects.

Outreach Partner Criteria: There are several thousand excellent service organizations that our committee could consider for support. We apply the following selection criteria to arrive at the roughly 16 charities today:

- Congregation involvement and financial support must be impactful
- Partners should have presented their mission to the congregation (Minute for Mission)
- Partner should offer service opportunities to the congregation
- Any new partner must have a member/sponsor who sits on the Outreach Committee

Selected Outreach Partnership Updates:

### Syrian Refugee Relief (2016 new partner--Lynn Jackson Quinn)

In partnership with the Fish Presbyterian Church of Stamford, we have been on the front lines of one of our world's greatest humanitarian crises--the refugees of the Syrian civil war. Last August, the Abo Noktah family arrived in Connecticut after years in a refugee camp. FPCNC members helped furnish the family's apartment, drove them to doctors and dentist appointments, and helped with interpreters and employers. We have been richly rewarded by seeing this family blossom as future Americans. I look forward to more of our congregation meeting Khaldoun, Khawla, Hanin, Yaman, Ahmed and Zain.

### Future5.org (John Lanaway)

This group helps disadvantaged Stamford youth navigate high school, post-high school and the college enrollment process by developing the five "Cs"--Community, Character, Coaches, College, Careers.

### Filling in the Blanks (Glenn Mierendorf)

This New Canaan based charity combats hunger, by sending 750 local children home with bags of basic foods for each weekend. Shockingly, many students on the subsidized school lunch plan go hungry over the weekend in challenged homes. Several adult members and our youth groups have often volunteered to pack these hunger relief care packages, as well as providing treats and gifts for the holidays.

### New Covenant House (Scott Beyer)

We assist this program by shopping for food, preparing and serving meals once a month at the New Covenant House in Stamford. Typically, we serve 100+ meals the first Saturday of each month. Many adult members, full families and our youth groups have participated.

### Cents-ability (Robin Lewis)

The total for our 2016 "noisy" Sunday Cents-ability collections totaled \$2,314 (up 19,900 pennies from 2015!) Our Cents-ability objective is to provide hunger relief locally, regionally, nationally and globally. In December 2016, our "coins" were disbursed: \$1,157 was distributed to the Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County which supplies food to area food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, and other initiatives fighting hunger. \$579 was donated to the Presbyterian Church USA Hunger Relief Programs to be used to combat hunger nationally and internationally. \$578 was provided to our First Presbyterian Youth; the money will be used as part of Youth Group activities to purchase food for the New Canaan Food Pantry. Your generosity raised hunger awareness and provided nourishment for our neighbors. It's amazing what we can do collectively with our coins when we act intentionally. Thank you, and let's strive to respond to relieving hunger in 2017!

*Continued on the next page*

### Dove Program (Karen Hanson)

Dove boxes provide holiday food to families in need. Direct financial donations are also collected with our "Green Doves." Led by Karen Hanson, "the Dove Lady," this Outreach program has had long-standing support from the congregation.

2016 Outreach and Mission Distributions are not available online.

The Outreach Committee thanks all FPCNC members and friends for their generous support of time, talents and financial resources. We encourage all to find one or more of these programs to participate in. Help our Church make a difference in the lives of our community.

Respectfully submitted,  
Glenn Mierendorf



**Nominating Committee**

Linda Ferguson

Chair and Session Representative

**Members:**

George Conner

Rev. Paul Gilmore (ex-officio)

Jeanne Hart

Paul Hartley

Lynn Quinn

Sue Sherwood

Jen Van de Graaf

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

**5th Sunday Counter:**

Ted Foster

**Substitutes:**

Ed Elbert

**Personnel Committee**

Jennifer Gulden, Chair

Members: Peter Bayer, Howard Greene, Julie Hoffman, Constanze Sheridan, Kathleen Servidea

The Personnel Committee is charged with developing, implementing and administering 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**

Review and approve staff position descriptions

Work with the Head of Staff to oversee performance reviews, and administer 360 degree feedback from congregation annually

Regularly 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

Conduct exit interviews

**Compensation**

Establish salary rates based on 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 pay

Oversee vacation and leave time, along with the assistance of Head of Staff

Monitor total compensation levels

**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 FPC by-laws

In summary, the Personnel Committee operates in an advisory capacity to the Senior and Associate Pastors, and as a support team to the church staff. We design, define, recommend, and monitor personnel policies and practices with the objective of rewarding performance, addressing grievances, and ensuring that the church's staff organization operates at high levels of performance.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jennifer Gulden



## Stewardship Committee

(“Together We Can.....Transform Lives”)

John Lanaway, Stewardship Elder, served as this year's Campaign Chairman, with the early assistance of Jim Riehl (aka “Sensei”), Jim Beall, Dede Trefts McEvoy, Tracey Mackle, Jim Ely and Armin Thies.

Last year’s campaign (i.e. for 2016) ultimately resulted in 215 pledges totaling \$891 thousand. Of these pledges, 7 families (totaling \$72 thousand) have since relocated from New Canaan. The campaign objective for 2017 was, nevertheless, set at \$900 thousand by your exuberant Chairman (and 8 new arrivals in 2017 with total pledges to date of \$17 thousand have, as it turns out, helped!).

This year we had 21 Pledge Captains - many of whom did not have to be coerced! Serving FPCNC in this capacity were Jim Beall, Scott Beyer, Bob Caird, George Conner, Peter and Nancy Flournoy, John Laird, John Lanaway, Tracey Mackle, Glenn Mierendorf Homer Parkhill, Andy Petitjean, Lynn Quinn, Jim Riehl, Charlie Robinson, Bob Spangler, Armin Thies, Kevin Thomson, Dede Trefts, Jennifer Van de Graaf, Stephan von Jena and Barbara Wentzel.

The pledge captains' work started with a Captains breakfast and briefing on October 23rd, 2016, followed by a minute speech to the congregation from the Campaign Chairman - all in preparation for Paul's Stewardship sermon ("Ten Theses: With Apologies to Luther & Letterman") the following week.

As at the date of writing (2/01/17), the 2017 campaign has gratefully received 198 pledges totaling \$848 thousand. A final push is underway that we hope will yield another \$15 thousand (perhaps more?). This amount is sufficient to allow that the operations of the church can continue without drastic changes - but not enough that we can afford the many maintenance and improvement activities that our wonderful facilities require. A final accounting at the formal cessation of this exercise will be published at the end of February.

The 2016 Campaign also had a “Special Ask” component, to fund additional facilities improvements in the wake of the wonderful 2015 summer improvements. An amount of \$67 thousand was ultimately raised from these efforts!

The Stewardship Team wants to thank all members of the congregation who have pledged their financial resources, and their time, as a result of the campaign.

Respectfully submitted,

John Lanaway  
Stewardship Elder



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 Michelle Olsen in the church office know.

Thank you for making plans to leave a legacy.

## **Worship, Music and Arts Committee**

Peter Flournoy, Chair

Members: Victoria Shields, Rev. Paul Gilmore, Carol Barbour, Joan Dionne, Peggy Hooker, Tom Nissley, George Post, Marlene Powers, Lynn Quinn, Ellen Sisson and Armin Thies, Secretary.

The Worship, Music and Arts Committee (“WM&A”) is charged by Session to administer programs and events which aid in worship, and to oversee all aspects of the regular worship services each Sunday as planned by our ministers. The WM&A 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. 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.

This was a year of positive change as we welcomed Victoria Shields as our new Director of Music. She transitioned into her new role with great enthusiasm and has devoted her energy to fellowship and growth with the various music ensembles and programs. We look forward to upcoming events that Victoria has planned. We gratefully thank Victoria Shields, Allison Gray Beyer, Sherry Tate and Chris Tate for the wonderful children’s musical production, “David and the Giants.” We give warm thanks to Chris Tate, the new Director of our Sunday School’s Christmas Pageant; Sherry Tate, our patient and gifted Cherub Choir Director, who works with our youngest worship participants (and their families) with delightful results; and to Michele McBride, John Downey, Harper Stevenson and Boyd Schlaefer, our enthusiastic and skilled choir section leaders and professional soloists, who faithfully attend our practices and services, inspiring our wonderful choir and in turn uplifting each of us as we experience their contributions to our worship services. Thanks also to all who participated in the “Music for a King” Advent concert– it was a great performance, and raised funds to support Syrian refugee efforts.

In addition to music, our committee works diligently to help organize and schedule ushers, greeters, lay readers, cross bearers, communion set-up, communion servers, flowers, banners/antependia, special duties for Advent services and sound. In this, we thank so many members and friends of our congregation who volunteer throughout the year in one or more of these meaningful activities (with special thanks to Reverend Kathryn Kibbie Laird for helping to involve our youth in our Sunday church services).

Continued thanks to Joan Dionne, who works with the church administrator to ensure the maintenance and care of our Memorial Garden with columbarium and fountain. Thanks also to Jim Ely and his dedicated team of worship coordinators to provide a steady presence in the narthex, overseeing each worship service throughout the year. A special thank you to our Pastor Rev. Paul Gilmore for his time, interest and ongoing partnership with our committee and its work.

This year has seen continued transition as Ellen Sisson and Carol Barbour joined the committee and have provided welcome input with their significant musical and church experience. Our committee has continued to use the signup.com website for most of our scheduling with continued success. I would like to thank each of our devoted committee members for their long service to our varied tasks, and our church clergy and administrative staff who help support these interrelated functions on a weekly basis. In closing, the WMA committee welcomes new members to our committee, and invites all church members and friends to recommit themselves to faithful attendance on Sunday mornings to rediscover how rewarding fellowship can be.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peter W. Flournoy

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**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

Jan Sulkowski, Chair

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

The Youth Ministries Committee is dedicated to creating opportunities for our youth, from grades 3 through 12, to explore their faith, live spiritually, love inclusively, learn continuously and leave a legacy. The committee plans fellowship activities and mission trips with the Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird, FPC's Minister for Children, Youth and Families.

FPCNC has three aged-based youth groups that form the foundation of our program. ESYG is designed for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders and it is scheduled to meet once a month for fellowship and/or mission activities. Some activities this year included an end of summer pool party, attending a Saxe musical, a shopping event at the local toy store to purchase toys at Christmas for underserved children, participating in Filling in the Blanks' food stuffing event and many others. ESYG is a growing group in our church.

Our middle school children are served by our MSYG program. All 6th, 7th and 8th grade 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. This year there are 15 8th graders participating in the program. They meet on two Wednesday afternoons each month for a pizza dinner and class, and they are required to attend various fellowship and mission activities throughout the year as well. This group of 8th graders are encouraged to participate in our annual June mission trip. This year we will be going to Providence, Rhode Island to participate in a program run by Praying Pelican.

MSYG started the school year off with a pizza dinner in the Tate Barn and a trip to the town of Fairfield for an ice cream social at Milkcraft. This group of children also helped run games at Welcome Home Sunday and, on a school holiday, enjoyed a trip to a ropes course in Bridgeport. The MSYG kids have enjoyed rolling up their sleeves every other month to help cook dinner for the ten boys who live at Domus in Stamford. This is a new mission activity for our youth and it has been very popular with them and their parents. We have had up to 21 youth come to the church on a given Sunday night to help cook a full meal for this group of teen boys.

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 the trip to Milkcraft and cooking for Domus, are joint activities with MSYG, others are planned solely for the high school students. New to our program this year is Barn Night. This is a time when our 9th-12th graders meet for dinner and thoughtful conversation led by one of their peers. This has proven to be a popular and special time for our teens to discuss current events and other social, religious and political issues that are on their minds. The culminating event for HSYG this year is a mission trip to Alaska scheduled for the end of July/early August.

Great thanks to the Youth Ministries Committee members who give their time and thoughtful care to help our youth and the FPC youth programs. We are also very grateful to all those who volunteer at and attend our events and help support our programs.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jan Sulkowski



Victoria doing Selfie with kids  
during Ropes Course, Bridgeport



MSYG and HSYG Cooking for Domus



## Board of Deacons

John Servidea  
Moderator

### Members

Erica Bergmans  
Mary Jane Bolin  
Peg Bull  
Catherine Clark  
Emma Dahill  
Jack Dahill  
Cindy Hagopian  
Karen Hanson  
Beth Hersam  
Chris Kniffin  
Linda Martin  
Elizabeth Stuart  
Sarah Robinson  
Kristen Rodgers  
Jen Van de Graaf  
Steve Van de Graaf  
Patty von Jena

### Ministries

Inspirica  
Lunch at Lapham Center  
Flock Program  
Treasurer  
Co-Youth  
Co-Youth  
Inspirica  
Memorial Services/Receptions  
Flowers and Cards  
Member-At-Large  
Baptisms  
Flowers and Cards  
Pastoral Care Team  
Member-At-Large  
Secretary  
Member-At-Large  
Meals-On-Wheels

The Board of Deacons is comprised of 17 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:

- Reaching out to our members through the Flock-Shepherd program.
- Providing confidential financial emergency assistance to church members in need through the Deacon Fund.
- 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.
- Preparing and serving dinners at INSPIRICA, a women's shelter in Stamford.

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 and Stephen Ministers to support those in difficult circumstances.

Participating in the Prayer Chain, adding our prayers to those of the church community for members and friends with special needs.

Assisting families in preparation for the baptism of their children during Sunday Services.

Driving people to and from church and around the area when needed.

Delivering Christmas and Easter flowers to the homebound or families who are sick or have recently lost loved ones.

Providing meals to members who are in temporary need of assistance.

Serving breakfast to the congregation for our Summer Sunday Services.

Supporting and participating in the Task Force, donating time and talents to the future of our Church.

Supporting the Bereavement Group, providing a book to each attendee.

The Deacons are grateful to all who support our efforts. Our pastoral team provides leadership, inspiration and guidance. 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 2017, 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.

**CaTS**

Jim Riehl



New Canaan **CaTS** (Career Transition Support) is a volunteer, not-for-profit resource which has been jointly funded for the past 25 years by the First Presbyterian and St. Mark's Episcopal Churches. **CaTS** was a merger of two separate efforts which were founded in 1989 respectively by FPCNC's Mac Walker and St. Mark's Jim Lisher.

The **CaTS** mission is to encourage those in career transition to develop a personal job search plan. **CaTS** supports its participants in this effort by providing:

Free bi-weekly career-oriented workshops facilitated by qualified career transition experts. Workshops are held the first and third Thursday of every month, from 7–9 PM. The location alternates between FPCNC and St. Mark's.

A comprehensive web site ([www.newcanaancats.org](http://www.newcanaancats.org)) which contains a broad array of materials to help job seekers develop and implement their job search plans, along with the bi-weekly workshop schedule and links to a host of other valuable information.

Networking opportunities, both at the bi-weekly workshops and by referral from the members of the **CaTS** team.

Access to free, one-on-one help. Members of the **CaTS** management team have extensive experience in career transition, and offer their help free of charge to those in search who are challenged, mystified, or just plain "stuck."

The **New Canaan CaTS** brand is known and respected regionally and beyond, and over the years it has provided free assistance to thousands of people in transition. However, the program was in serious danger of being discontinued in 2016 because of a lack of volunteers to schedule workshop speakers, publicize meetings and maintain the **CaTS** web site.

The program went on hiatus for the first half of 2016 while the **CaTS** Team Board searched for a way to maintain its services. Several possible solutions had been identified when the Board was approached by Nick Mitrakis, himself in transition. Nick expressed an interest in the group's charter and in managing the group going forward. After meeting with Nick, the Board recommended to the clergy and outreach of FPCNC and St. Mark's that Nick assume leadership of **CaTS**.

Under Nick's tutelage, **CaTS** began meeting again in the summer of 2016. In the fall, as Nick secured new employment, volunteer professionals Kristen Mitrakis and Dr. Leona Rhodes became the driving forces behind group.

The mission and format of **New Canaan CaTS** remains fundamentally unchanged, with each church hosting one workshop per month. **CaTS** currently receives virtually no other financial support from FPCNC or St. Mark's, a situation which will be re-visited in early 2017. The content continues to be of the high caliber of previous **CaTS** programs that participants have come to expect. Workshop attendance has ranged between 8 and 25 attendees, which matches pre-hiatus levels, despite the fact that the CT state unemployment rate has dipped below 5% in the fourth quarter of 2016. Participant feedback under the new administration has also been extremely positive.

We are very grateful to Nick, Kristen and Leona Rhodes for stepping forward to maintain a New Canaan institution, and we look forward to continuing to work with them in 2017 and beyond.

Respectfully,

Jim Riehl, Jill Ernst, Jim Hedges and Ed Willett

CaTS Team Board Members

### **Dorcas Sewing Circle**

Members: Marion Blose, Gloria Bridgman, Joan Caird, Charlotte Conner, Valerie Erichs (Chair), Barbara McDonald, Connie Musa, Carolyn Scott, Lynne Villarreal and Ruth Witt.

The Dorcas Sewing Circle is a group of women who use their hands, yarn, and knitting needles to bring comfort to others. The church members began more than ten years ago by knitting caps for "Hats with Hugs" and then provided the caps to cancer patients. Today, Dorcas Sewing Circle makes blankets for babies with AIDS, comfort pillows for Necessities Inc. for mastectomy patients, 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; Bread and Roses of Stamford; and Necessities Inc. of Ridgefield. The items are also utilized by the clergy, deacons, and Stephen Ministers. 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 September through November and April through June from 10 AM to noon. Membership is open to anyone interested in making sewing or knitting projects and sharing some fellowship. The ladies of Dorcas Sewing Circle purchase their own yarn, so financial contributions are welcome. The ladies of the Dorcas Sewing Circle 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**

Judy Hopkins



Members Barbara Beall, Peg Bull, Catherine Clark, Joan Dionne, Valerie Erichs, Lisa Gifford, Jeanne Hart, Judy Hopkins, Ruth Laird, Judy Schurman, Kajsia Sheibley, Caroline Turpin, Norma von Jena, Patty von Jena, Andrietta Weber

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.

Respectfully submitted by Judy Hopkins

### **Meditation Group**

Elaine Foster

The group continues to meet on Mondays from 2:00 - 4:00 PM. The intention of the group has remained the same over its lifetime; namely, to create a safe place for people of all spiritual persuasions to learn and to grow through contemplation and meditation.

Each meeting begins with meditation, which is followed by a presentation of material of some spiritual nature. The exploration and discussion of these materials are important. Through them we find inspiration for new ways of being. We find support for our faith as we chart our journeys through our individual lives.

Our time together always ends with a circle of prayer. We use this time to share with each other and with God our joys and concerns, and to express our gratitude for all that is. We welcome newcomers.



**Scottish Heritage  
Service Committee**  
Robert W. Ker III



The 43th Annual Scottish Sunday was celebrated at FPCNC on May 1, 2016. Parishioners and guests enjoyed the pageantry of the Mt. Kisco Pipes and Drums, the Ceilidh that followed the service, as well as shortbread made in the FPCNC kitchen. A buffet lunch was served inside due to inclement weather, although many braved it to sit outside under the tent. The traditional "Address to a Haggis" was offered up by Dougal Munro. What was new this year was that the entire day's activities took place at FPCNC, allowing for greater participation by parishioners. Donations received went to the Deacons Fund.

Plans are underway for Scottish Sunday 2017, to be held April 30. In the week leading up to April 30, parishioners will be invited to assist with shortbread baking and haggis making, both integral aspects of our Scottish Sunday celebration.



**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.

I am very happy to report to you that 2016 was another wonderful year at Special Church. This year we welcomed Jimmy and Alan into our family. Our membership now totals sixteen, a record high. We enjoy perfect attendance most weeks. For those who do not know us, we are a church program designed for the special needs community.

After greeting each other we begin with Words of the Week. We hear God's word and talk about our faith and God's love for us. After that we might be creating art, performing an act of kindness or celebrating an event or holiday. We sing, play instruments and even dance along with Matt Hennessy who comes to us from Arts for Healing. Music touches every soul and is a very beautiful part of our gathering. Our time together is always about our friendships, smiles, laughter, hugs and enjoying everything that special friendships bring. One of the highlights of the past year was a performance by the Inn Notes, a choral group/kazoo band comprised of residents of The Inn, a part of Waveny Lifecare Network. We were invited to join them in song and also played along on our own kazoos. We truly lived the words of Psalm 98 "Make a joyful noise"!

It was my pleasure to speak to the FPC congregation about Special Church during the church service on Reformation Sunday. We are a community outreach program of FPC and, since our little church family takes up such a big space in my heart, I appreciated being able to share with everyone who we are and what we do. This gem of a program would not be possible without the support of the members, the Deacons, The Rev. Paul Gilmore, Tina St. Armand and Michelle Olsen. I sincerely thank each and every one of you for this wonderful gift. It is also exciting to tell you that October 2017 will mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Special Church and we look forward to a celebration to commemorate this milestone year.

It takes many hands to support this program every week. I am ever grateful to our amazing volunteers Joan Dionne, Deb Evensen, Marlene Powers, Mary Runestad, Kate Sullivan, John Mastracchio and Bob Reichart, who bring helping hands and loving hearts to our gatherings.

Most importantly I would like to acknowledge our Special Church members. It is not their disabilities that define them. What makes them truly special is the people that they are. Some of our upcoming words of the week are "shine where you are." Our members are the shining lights of Special Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Reichart



Julia M. and Santa Claus



Special Church's Christmas Party

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