

United Church of Christ 2020/2021 Annual Report



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Newton Highlands Congregational Church, UCC Annual Meeting June 7, 2020 Via Zoom

Meeting called to order by Sally Brickell at 11:00am

Ken lead prayer and scripture

A Service of Remembrance and Hope

Guidelines for the meeting, annual report and agenda distributed by email prior to meeting

Minutes from last year as written were accepted

Old Business:

Annual Reports, part one:

Pastor:

We made plans (senior housing, refugees, kitchen renovation) earlier this year and then everything changed. Our priority became caring for each other. Refugees are vulnerable to Coronavirus. Ken expresses concern about missing seeing us. What is certain is that God is in the future. Ken also refers to his written report in the Annual Report.

See annual report for order

Kitchen Committee

Photos shared of new kitchen. Kitty thanked Ann Hulsing for all of her work.

Moderator/Church Council Report

See full annual report

Christian Education Annual report and Director of Children's and Youth Ministry:

Need parents to email Wendy to help figure out how to keep connections going. CE has been working hard and they appreciate feedback.

Anna McMahan: Church Council voted that Wendy will be working during the summer at reduced hours to keep the connections going. It reflects the good work that has been going on.

Webmaster:

This is now a collective effort. We owe Steve Wilner and Carol Jensen a debt of gratitude for 15+ years of work getting the web site going.

Clerk:

See written report.

Worship and Spiritual Life:

See written report. Misha and Rich have become central to worship

Mission:

See written report. Maintained traditional commitment but have found new ways to do things.

Motion to accept first groups of reports approved

Angels:

It will come as no surprise that this year's angels are Rich Bryden and Misha Hill. They pulled us together and created a process very quickly. They also refined the process over time. We had higher attendance the week after Easter which is unique. Neil Johnson created photos shown in the Powerpoint of Rich and Misha in their angel wings. If it were not for them, we would not be together this way. God brings forth those with gifts at a time when it is needed.

Annual Reports, part two:

Treasurer, part 1

Summarizing year end FY20. Bottom line. We are expecting income of \$50,000 when we had first budgeted a loss PPP loan of \$50,000 and individual gifts are up The building is closed now and the dancer's rent was reduced Building costs were lower because of less activity Teachers, who are students from BU went home mid semester Great Hall rental is down On line donations have increased and we have piloted the use of the VANCO app Ken complimented Jim Harper for acting quickly and pursuing the PPP program. If we had not pursued this, but we would otherwise be looking at an approximate \$3,000 loss Does this money free up other money for missions? This money has to be used for payroll.

Music

Lynd and his musicians have missed everyone greatly. The future of choral singing is unclear. Thank everyone for supporting them

Buildings and Grounds See written report

Stewardship See written report

Historian See written report

Senior Housing/Pastor housing See written report

Auditor

Report will be made in September

Motion to accept the second group of reports approved.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

New Business:

Report of the Nominating Committee and Election of Officers and Committee Members See nominating report

Thanked members of the nominating committee for getting the ballot prepared Thanked people coming off committees and those who have agreed to join committees. We thank Hope for her service as Vice Moderator and we thank Rich Bryden for being the incoming Vice Moderator Corrections: Melissa Dietrich and Susan Allen are continuing on Worship and Spiritual Life Motion to accept the slate approved.

Approval of the 2020-21 Budget

Starting to receive pledges Budget was approved ignoring Covid. Endowment value is still higher than it was a year ago. The longer the building takes to reopen, the greater the impact on the budget will be Budget had a best case of the building opening in July. We expect to address the pastor salaries at the fall meeting Trying to sustain Christian Education efforts through the summer They are looking at new regulation for PVP in hopes of re-opening. Fan coil for air circulation Income from Great Hall and dancers could be difficult Jung has been working remotely and hoping to be back by fall Amendment proposed to add cost of living adjustments for all salaried employees as of July 1. Motion was approved

Motion to include Wendy working through the summer and two teachers. Authorization to spend up to \$3100 approved

Motion to accept the treasurer's report approved with the two amendments approved

Other Business, including COVID conversation

Re-entry team established and has meet once so far. Areas of responsibilities, house of workshop, landlord, education, employer We need to stay unified in community They have identified areas that may need to be adjusted

Benediction

Motion to adjourn accepted 12:45pm

Newton Highlands Congregational Church, UCC Annual Meeting October 4, 2020 Zoom

Meeting called to order at 10:50 am

Copies of treasurer's report and auditor's report distributed electronically prior to the meeting

Report of the Treasurer

In June, the preliminary report for FY2020 presented. The final report was distributed electronically. There was an approximately \$68,000 surplus which is higher than what was presented at the annual meeting. We had full forgiveness of the PPE loan Motion to accept the 2020 Treasurer's report approved.

Report of the Auditor

Peter Moore presented the auditor's report. Jim's work is an accurate reflection of what transpired Motion to accept the Auditor's report approved.

Budget modifications to the FY2021 Budget

Minor modifications to the FY21 budget retroactive to July 1. Changes to the Pastor's equity allowance was discussed. Medical coverage for more than ³/₄ time employees. They have currently opted out of NHCC coverage but funding for coverage has been discussed. Further study is needed in the next few months. 2% salary increase for the CE Director and the Pastor has been added to the FY2021 budget There will be a deficit for the current year Motion to accept these modifications to the FY2021 budget approved.

Sally Brickell expressed thanks for Ken and Wendy for their significant contributions to the Church.

Motion to authorize the treasurer to draw from the endowment in accordance with the budget approved.

Report of the Clerk

Final report has some changed from the report distributed in early June. Motion to accept the Clerk's report approved.

Senior Housing Committee Update

Update provided by Joy Huber

The Dover Amendment should allow us to move forward as long as there is some religious purpose which is planned.

We will submit something to City Hall in mid-October to transition the main house to senior housing.

Proposal to name the main house the Hulsing Newall House was approved

Adult Education

There is an aging well series coming up in four parts Participants will need to register on the NHCC web site

There was a request to add the bread run to the web site since more volunteers are needed.

Motion to adjourn approved at 11:32am

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan S. Gilbert

Senior Pastor

"Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" — Esther 4:14

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are a church. We're called to worship, grow and serve, in our bylaws. Plus it's the right way to follow scripture. But this year the bylaws, texts and needs have all taken new form, so — thank God — we've adapted, yet now desire two things: to restore some normalcy, and to follow God's new thing, as in Isaiah. We endeavor and pray to do both.

But, which text describes what we've been through this last year? "Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees?" (Isaiah 35:3) "Do not be worried about your life?" (Matthew 6:25) Or maybe, "Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39) All of them are relevant. But also Esther 4, calling us to the conditions of the moment and the work of faith. Because it has been a year of heavy lifting, mental health challenges, terrible global events but continuing faith — thank God.

For posterity: our Coronavirus pandemic blossomed on Friday the 13th of March, 2020, continued through our first zoom (virtual) Annual Meeting in June, 2020 and as we approach our 2021 Meeting many of our members are being vaccinated so that we can return to in-person, communal, congregational events, ideally this June. In all our lay leaders served to bring us through such a time as this.

We took care of our worship, our members, our buildings and our staff and while last year's All Saints memorial worship had many more names than average, no official member of NHCC died of covid, although many extended family members and many beloved did lose their lives. We mourn this. While believing that nothing in all creation separates us from God's eternal love.

As Pastor I thank all of the individuals, committees, groups and colleagues who brought us from where we were to where we are. I honor your faith, stewardship, wisdom and hope. I love the word "together" and this is what carries our parish: community. I praise God for this community.

Our bylaws say many things about our call together. This is what they say about my office: IV. 1. 1. The primary responsibility of the Pastor is providing leadership that enables the church to be a servant people. The pastoral leadership should encourage creativity within the fellowship.

Have we done that: been a creative, servant people? Even in a pandemic?

Our Deacons' commitment to live worship, as opposed to pre-recorded, allowed us to see each other, "chat" with each other, offer prayer petitions and hold conversations after the benediction. Our staff and choir have found ways to prepare music, present children's messages and offer inperson, on-site organ concerts during Advent, Lent, springtime and more. This took creativity. As did our Mission Committee outreach with treat bags for children and serving forty-five meals for Thanksgiving through the Newton Food Pantry. Our Deacons' Fund and our Mission Discretionary Budget did extra outreach. On your behalf I served as co-president of the Newton Interfaith Clergy Assn, and as a counselor to area clergy.

We had silly songs live in the sanctuary, spooky music for Halloween, *Silent Night* in the original form — with a guitar, outdoors on Christmas Eve, and drive-by, walk-by visits on the lawn several times. We had a traditional Egg Hunt for Easter and established a new tradition with Sunrise Worship at Crystal Lake with 28 in attendance.

But, while we can't easily count attendance on zoom, it is down. Christmas and Easter have about 90+ screens, and we can't see how many are on youtube, but these are not our former numbers. Along with the Holy Spirit, we'll need to rebuild our community when safety returns. Rebuild, restore, repair, renovate and resurrect: this is our mission call.

Looking back, our parish asked our CE Director, Wendy Donnell, to add extra weeks in summer worship, compensated, and she did. We asked our Sexton to clean extra and he did. Our Deacons asked the pastor to nudge four weeks of vacation and sabbatical into a future year and I did. Our musicians learned new technology and we were, again, creative servants. Thank you.

In the fall our Moderator guided a program on facing our mortality that ran four weeks. We had an unusually large "blessing of the animals" in October. Given the outbreak of police killings of Blacks we took on the topic of Anti-Racist Christianity for Lent and beyond, aided by the Rev. June Cooper and others. The group now meets monthly. Just before Christmas we organized a filmed, edited *Pandemic Pageant*, with over forty participants. All through the year a Moderator's Committee on Re-Entry met; we never closed, but studied for the safety of reunion that appears possible this summer and fall. Our delayed Confirmation class met on zoom and intends The Rite of Confirmation in June, 2021.

To state one obvious element of all this, without Misha Hill and Rich Bryden running technology, none of this would have been possible. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Another element of our by-laws guiding the pastor is this: IV. 1. 2. f *Preparing an annual evaluation of the condition and the spiritual well being of the church.*

Well, people are amazing. And they are tired. Some say they don't have the bandwidth for too much volunteer work. Sometimes bandwidth is a synonym for spirit. Many members are caring for children, parents, partners and office work at home, all at the same time. Some are anxious. Some have had their faith sorely tested. Others have seen it grow. And many have made it possible to get through this hard year and bring the church to the other side of the storm. Many pray for each other, look out for each other and see beyond the moment to the mission. So our spiritual health is strained but solid, and it has sustained us through these seasons.

Sustenance also came in the unprecedented paycheck grant of over \$100,000. It has helped us this past year and it will help us dedicate to ministry and staff expenses in the years to come.

All year, in many meetings (as well as sermons...) I have said that a high value here is not to split the congregation. Not to split it into those who can come and those who can't, those who have technology and those who don't, those who are cautious and those who are fearless. As the Body of Christ, we seek to unify, not divide. This challenge will be ours in the time to come, too. Infants and children may not be vaccinated. Some seniors may be vulnerable. So I've said this, also, in those meetings: we will adapt. We can make space to model how God has space for all of us. We are a flexible parish, and that is a blessing.

This year has been blessed by real-time worship. It has been burdened by the pressures on our members. It has been hard on our staff. It has been hard on me. But we are making it and we will restore, together. We are inclusive in faith, loving in prayer, generous with finances and adapting not only to the present but the future. We have a God teaching us from the past but drawing us to the future.

Of course there were and are many more details to celebrate. There is God's future to pursue. And always there is Spirit to celebrate, neighbors to love and food to share. Always, at least at NHCC, there is enough. Enough for such a time as this. Indeed, the list of words from above describing rebuild, restore, repair and renovate ends with our most important word: resurrection. This is the way of God in Christ and this is our way. And we are blessed by God in Christ, always.

Kenneth Baily

PS In case anyone didn't notice, our parish could not have had better leadership than our almostnew Moderator. She has been so good that her name gets the last word: Sally Brickell.

Christian Education

I believe that teaching Church school is a Holy calling. I have been blessed to be a part of NHCC's Religious Education programming since the summer of 2010. Anna McMahan, Yvette Ruffin (Co-Chairs), Jacy Bird, Theresa Hajer, Kessely Hong, and Trudy Lanman, as members of the Christian Education Committee, have been available through the challenges in a positive, helpful, and faithful way.

In mid-March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NHCC began to offer worship on Zoom. With Rev. Ken's encouragement the CE Committee members agreed to offer an educational children's message for our church friends and families during the worship segment.

At first, I was not sure how to offer a program that would take place on a computer screen! But like Jesus, I reflected on the love and character of God as we guided our children in experiences that brought them closer to God. Our mission, like other disciples of Jesus, is to tell the good news to the whole world. My hope is to engage children of all ages in exploring what it means to be children of God and how to live in a community as disciples no matter what happens in the world around us!

So what did I do?

- Delivered gallons of ice cream to families who were around in the summer of 2020
- Learned how to use several new computer systems with the help of Neil Johnson and Sally Brickell
- Sent letters, packages, and emails to keep in touch with church families and members
- Connected with Rev. Baily and Sarah Eberly on a weekly basis to facilitate action plans
- Worked in partnership with the Christian Education members on programming
- Held Thursday and Saturday zoom gatherings for children with Megan Dillon
- Added Zoom summer camp segment for the months of July and August during worship
- Contributed to weekly CE segments during worship with Matt and Rachel Donnell
- Launched a Zoom children's time during Communion Sunday with Megan Dillon
- Stuffed and hid 500 Easter Eggs with the help of the Hong and Gilbert families
- Assisted with Christmas and other preparations for church events
- Connected frequently for church workshops, meetings, and events on Zoom

I acknowledge as we prepare to embark on a new church year there is simply so much I do not know. I can say that we are in God's hands, we are loved, we are committed to renew and rebuild our church school program when NHCC is ready to safely open. I am thankful to be part of NHCC's team. I cannot wait to see all our children back with their teachers in church school.

Respectfully submitted, Wendy Donnell

Report of the Clerk

New Members Confirmands-pending

Baptisms

None

Funerals & Memorials Helen Hoffman James Sullivan

Deaths

Helen Hoffman James Sullivan

Deaths in our extended NHCC Family

Joan Andrus Rich Huber Amy Ullrich Edith Leonardis Linda Nevin Cheryl Oncken

Weddings

None

Full Active Members 175

Associate Members 2

Inactive Members 55

TOTAL 2021 membership: 232

2020 total membership: 235

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan S. Gilbert

Kitchen Committee

The renovated basement kitchen and multi-use space has been completed! Actually, it was finished last April, 2020 with the installation of the final set of cabinets and second sink. Now it is missing only one major piece--YOU! We look forward to a time when the church reopens safely, and everyone can actually enjoy the new space. Thank you again to all who worked hard and contributed to making this newly renovated space a place of welcome and look forward to sharing it with everyone! This report marks the end of our committee. It is time for its use to be directed by those who have ideas and uses to put the kitchen into operation.

Respectfully submitted, Ann Hulsing Kitty Rieske

Worship and Spiritual Life

Our church year runs from July 1 to June 30, but we should look at what has happened since our last annual meeting in June of 2020.

- Summer worship for 2020 relied on our staff more heavily than usual.
 - Wendy Donnell extended her work-year by 5 weeks, and was also our worship leader once during the summer
 - Ken Baily postponed 2 weeks of vacation so he could lead worship more often over the summer, and he organized summer worship, where usually this is done by a committee member.
 - Lynd Matt led a worship service in addition to his usual responsibilities.
 - We had 2 lay-led services instead of the usual 5 or 6.
- Throughout the year, we continued our commitment to hold services live, in real time. Misha Hill, with backup from Rich Bryden, was our technological worship leader. He connected us so that, as Ken said, the holy spirit could see and seize us all at once. Our technology continues to improve, and the technology committee, led by Rich Bryden, has more improvements ready when we begin to transition from on-line worship to in-person worship with a live on-line feed.
- Music is especially challenging on Zoom, and so our music director and choir worked especially hard to find better and better ways to lead hymns and anthems in our worship services.
- Ken Baily postponed 2 weeks of sabbatical in addition to the postponed vacation over the summer. We organized 2 lay-led services during the year, both with testimony from 3 different members. One of these was on Martin Luther King, jr. Sunday, and its success was part of the inspiration for our Lenten theme. Meanwhile we continued with Lay testimony during Advent and Lent.
- During Lent, a group met weekly during lent to discuss the topic of anti-racism. One of our meetings was led by the reverend June Cooper, and it was a great pleasure to be with her again, even if only online. The group is continuing to meet on a monthly basis.
- We cherished opportunities to gather in person where it was possible:
 - Yevgenia Semeina offered 3 series of organ concerts in Advent, Lent and Spring
 - Our blessing of the animals had better than usual attendance
 - We had 2 brief outdoor offerings on Christmas Eve, and one on Ash Wednesday
 - On Easter morning, we gathered at Crystal Lake at sunrise, in a well attended service that we plan to continue next year. We also held an outdoor Easter egg hunt later that morning.
- We managed to hold on-line versions of pretty much all of our usual special events, including the Christmas pageant, Christmas eve, Good Friday, and the main service for Easter Sunday.
- Confirmation class was extended from last year and will be complete by the time you read this.
- The Deacons fund (funded by your contributions) provided support as usual for members and neighbors in need, and also sent funds to The Newton Food Pantry, The Newton Centre Street Food Pantry, The Day Center of Waltham Food service and the Pilgrim Congregational Church Food Service in Dorchester. We also supplemented the Thanksgiving dinner delivery with grocery gift cards.

In the fall, Ken asked us to consider **Why are we a church and what are we called to do together? Why do we worship?** And in the spring, he asked us to remember where we were in March, 2020. It has been a long year, and we look forward to rebuilding and reconnecting.

Our members this year:

Susan Allen Melissa Dietrich Isabelle Draper Joy Huber Carol Jensen Mark Johnson Amanda Kecthpaw Hugh Reynolds Kitty Rieske Tony Rudié Jeffery Small

Moderator

As moderator, I prepare for and run monthly Council meetings and work with the senior pastor, director of Christian Education, and office administrator as requested. In June 2020, in response to changes necessitated by Covid-19, I was asked to organize a re-entry team. This team met eight times over the past year (see Re-entry Team report).

Here are a few other highlights from the year.

Council

Council consists of the senior pastor, treasurer, moderator, assistant moderator, clerk, and representatives from NHCC's standing committees. Director of Christian Education Wendy Donnell also attends. The committee representatives attend the monthly meetings on top of their regular committee work in order to exchange information and ideas. We held all Council meetings on Zoom this year due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Thank you to Rich Bryden (assistant moderator), Melissa Dietrich (Worship & Spiritual Life), Randy Ellis (Buildings & Grounds), Susan Gilbert (clerk), Jim Harper (treasurer), Erica Hodes (mission), Anna McMahan (Christian Education), and Marian Reynolds (at large) for your service this year!

Leadership

"Church involvement, as a context within which a person learns to live in relationship with God, humanity and the world, has the potential to positively transform the lives of young people" (Michaelson et al., 2015). We are always working to encourage more members and friends to get involved in whatever ways they can, including in leadership positions. All are welcome!

This year, when we went looking for new leadership for the Mission Committee, new member Erica Hodes graciously took up the charge. Committee members are delighted to have her! As Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, the committee will be looking for hands-on service opportunities for the congregation. Thank you, Erica!

Website and Communication

In the past year, I have posted about 90 stories, often with photos, on the new <u>NHCC.net</u> (see Website and Social Media report). My favorite post this year was probably <u>NHCC runs on</u> <u>Zoom!</u> because I had the chance to illustrate how much work and fellowship were taking place in the NHCC community despite Covid-19 limitations.

One of my goals for this year was to convert all-church emails, including the Pulse (monthly newsletter), to Mail Chimp, with links to <u>NHCC.net</u>. I felt very strongly that the Pulse should be easily accessible (not as an email attachment), with short, easy-to-skim blurbs, giving readers the option to read more on the website if desired.

With help from Neil Johnson (tech guru) and the willing participation of Sarah Eberly (office administrator), we made the switch to Mail Chimp. NHCC emails have become more inviting and user-friendly. Reverend Ken Baily, Sarah, and I continue to work together to standardize and

streamline NHCC communication. Wendy Donnell (DCE) and I also collaborated to set up a CEspecific email subgroup in Mail Chimp so she can communicate more professionally with parents. I look forward to continuing these improvements in the coming year.

Randy Ellis and I wanted to make it easy for NHCC to contact young adults who might be interested in participating in Zoom services. I gathered email addresses from parents, added them to Mail Chimp, tagged them, and helped Ken send Advent and Easter invitations to this group.

I also used Mail Chimp for emails to Council and the Re-entry Team this year, and I hope to inspire other NHCC leaders to do the same.

Learning

For several years, I had been contemplating developing an adult education series at NHCC focused on concerns of aging. As moderator, working with Ken, I was finally able to pull this off. Forty-two people registered for one or more sessions, and thanks to excellent presenters and engaged participants, we were able to enjoy thought-provoking discussions. The last session was connected with NHCC's traditional Blue Christmas service. Using Mail Chimp tags, Ken sent a targeted follow-up email to everyone who signed up. The four sessions were as follows:

- "Life Care Planning: Making Choices as We Grow Older and Live Longer" (Karen Wasserman, LICSW, Aging Life Care Professional, and director of Your Elder Experts, a division of Jewish Family & Children's Services)
- "Lest We Forget: Essential Conversations in the Coronavirus Era" (Ted Hong, physician specializing in radiation oncology at Massachusetts General Hospital, and Arlene Lowney, expert in hospice and palliative care and Alzheimer's; nurse, administrator, and educator)
- "Creating a Legacy from Everyday Life" (Claire Willis, LICSW, author of *Lasting Words: A Guide to Finding Meaning Toward the Close of Life*)
- "First Thanksgiving/Blue Christmas" (Claire Willis, LICSW, author of *Lasting Words: A Guide to Finding Meaning Toward the Close of Life* and Reverend Ken Baily)

Thank you to all who participated! For this year, we are thinking about bringing some anti-bias training to NHCC. More to come.

Processes and Documentation

I have discovered in this position that an abundance of NHCC knowledge resides in the brains of the senior pastor and several long-time leaders, but we seem to need more documentation that can help new people get involved and figure out what to do. I have begun working to address this issue, and I recently met with Sarah Eberly so we can identify a way to make the material we develop more accessible.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally Brickell, Moderator May 2021

Website and Social Media

One of the silver linings of NHCC's experience with Covid-19 is that it has been a catalyst for improvements in technology that will stand the church in good stead when restrictions are lifted and people return to using the building.

Having a user-friendly, visually rich website has been a lifeline for staying connected with members and friends during the Covid-19 pandemic, when in-person worship has been suspended and people have not been able to gather. The upgraded church website, <u>NHCC.net</u>, has been operating since April 2020. The site was designed by Neil Johnson using WordPress, and Neil hosts the site on his servers (cadent.com). Emails are hosted by Google. The domain registration at Directnic.com is valid until 2023 March. Free nameservers at Cloudflare.com are working well.

Neil provided initial training in WordPress, which is a fairly easy to use program. NHCC staff and committee members have the option to post new material, although few have done so this year. Neil also responded to the rapid changes caused by Covid-19 by keeping the home page of the website current so people could easily find the link to Zoom worship services.

In the past year, I have posted more than 90 new stories (with photos when possible), and Office Administrator Sarah Eberly has posted 20+ events. Director of Christian Education Wendy Donnell has been learning to post stories on the website as well. Several members have taken advantage of the ability to leave comments on the website, demonstrating their engagement.

In another adaptation brought on by Covid-19, Misha Hill established a YouTube channel (NHCC Worship) to broadcast from the NHCC sanctuary. This allows people to view the weekly Zoom worship services and other special events like organ concerts either when they are taking place or afterwards. Misha can also post videos such as the one that was created in December 2020 in place of the traditional live Christmas pageant.

The NHCC Facebook page has not been kept up to date, but Amanda Ketchpaw has agreed to take this on as of June 2021. Amanda should be able to easily post links from NHCC.net on the Facebook page to make the church more visible to Facebook users, keep members and friends who use Facebook informed, and increase traffic to the website.

Respectfully submitted, Sally Brickell, moderator

May 2021

Website Analytics

From Neil Johnson: "The monthly stats show all the traffic from last April, when we launched the site. The weekly stats show traffic from the end of October. Not surprisingly, Christmas and Easter are the top performers. The darker (inner) bars are visitors (basically, different people who visit the site) and the outer, lighter bars are page views. There are more page views than visitors because the typical visitor looks at several pages."

Monthly



Weekly



Re-entry Team

In response to Covid-19, NHCC leadership suspended in-person worship and other gatherings and meetings and converted to virtual services beginning Sunday, March 15, 2020.

Members Rich Bryden and Misha Hill oversaw the conversion to Zoom worship services, Marian Reynolds flexibly switched to weekly Zoom yoga classes, and Director of Christian Education (DCE) Wendy Donnell brought a new dimension to children's messages for all ages during Zoom worship.

I was asked to organize a re-entry team to consider when, how, and it what ways people might return to the church building and how to keep the congregation connected until such time. Team members are Reverend Ken Baily, Sally Brickell (moderator), Wendy Donnell (DCE), Sarah Eberly (office administrator), Randy Ellis (chair, Buildings & Grounds Committee), Jim Harper (treasurer), Jeff Small (co-chair, Worship & Spiritual Life), Kessely Hong (member, Christian Education Committee), and Anna McMahan (chair, Christian Education Committee).

On June 7, 2020, the re-entry team agreed on the following values:

- Preserve the health of staff, members, friends, visitors, tenants
- Return to services in sanctuary
- Engage adults, teens, children
- Maintain community even while offering diverse ways to connect
- Don't split the congregation; serve the segments

On June 25, 2020, the team established the following guidelines for indoor worship based on health information available at that time:

- Start organ music at 9:40 a.m. (for 10:00 a.m. service)
- Encourage early arrivals to undertake gradual, spaced entry
- Ask congregants to enter through main entrance if physically able; advise all to leave through one exit (not the same as entrance)
- Have deacons take attendance at all entrances, asking for names of any visitors/unknown guests (for possible contact tracing)
- Hold attendance at 40 percent of sanctuary capacity, generally closing every other pew
- Have household groups sit together, but ask others to sit physically distant
- Require masks (for attendees age 5 and up); give disposable masks to anyone who doesn't bring one
- Suspend passing of the peace
- Suspend passing of offering plates
- Delay communion until further guidance
- Adjust some singing until further notice
- When restoring fellowship time, have attendees wear masks and stand at least six feet apart; no personal beverages/snacks
- Use technology to allow those not in the sanctuary to be part of the same worship time

The re-entry team has met a total of eight time to assess current health information and discuss building use (including cleaning, tenants, and office hours), worship (including technology upgrades, Christmas lighting, and organ concerts), and education (including public school plans, vaccines, and Zoom activities for children). The re-entry team also helped develop a member survey in December 2020 and provided occasional updates through the NHCC website.

At its most recent meeting, on May 17, 2021, the re-entry team was joined by Lynd Matt (music director), Rich Bryden (assistant moderator), and Melissa Dietrich and Carol Jensen (Worship & Spiritual Life). After a detailed discussion of current health guidelines and the Covid-19 vaccine rollout, the group agreed to return to in-person worship in the NHCC sanctuary on Sunday, June 20, 2021. Representatives from the Worship & Spiritual Life and Christian Education Committees said they would continue working out the specifics of re-entry. Lynd Matt agreed to continue staying informed about guidelines for singing.

Thank you to Ken Baily, Sally Brickell, Wendy Donnell, Sarah Eberly, Randy Ellis, Jim Harper, Jeff Small, Kessely Hong, and Anna McMahan for your service since June 2020!

Respectfully submitted, Sally Brickell, Moderator

May 2021

Mission Committee

Feed the Hungry - House the Homeless - Keep the Creation

The Mission Committee addresses these needs, both locally and beyond, through handson projects and monetary donations. With the pandemic ongoing, in-kind and "hands-on" projects remained halted, as did regular meetings of the committee, but we regained traction in the Spring and were able to contribute to some immediate needs in our community and abroad.

- 1) Adjusting to our covid world we were still active in outreach. In preparation for the start of school we prepared over 30 Treat Bags for children with many healthy snacks; these were distributed by the Newton Food Pantry. We partnered with the NFP to provide 45 Thanksgiving meals as well, thanks to seven cooks. Without an Advent Market we still sent significant support to The Heifer Project, Church World Service and The UCC Christmas Fund, in part from donations and in part from our discretionary fund. All the detail is in the Treasurer's Report. We were hands on, reaching out, and sharing with those in need.
- 2) In February, Ken and Sally asked Erica Hodes to step in and temporarily chair the Mission Committee for the remainder of the fiscal year. The committee reconvened for regular, monthly meetings via Zoom to distribute discretionary funds where it was most needed--In our Spring Meetings, we earmarked and made the following donations that we feel speak to our call to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and keep the creation. It was important to us to support organizations both local and global:
 - We gave \$1,000 to New Life Furniture in Walpole, a non-profit that supplies household furniture for families that are transitioning into stable housing.
 - \$1,000 to Family Promise Metrowest, specifically their Life Program which provides immediate rent relief to local families in danger of default
 - \$500 each to the Newton Food Pantry and the Center Street Food Pantry, both serving our neighborhoods in vital ways.
 - In May, we agreed that rather than dedicating an additional \$ amount to our various organizations (see annual budget), we decided on a % so that we could accommodate potential extra funds made available due to financial adjustments through our PPP loans.
 - We voted to provide 35% of remaining monies to our Sister City, San Juan del Sur, to be split evenly between funding the local high school, and the eco-stove initiative to provide clean methods of food preparation in the city (a task that falls mainly to women and deeply impacts their health).
 - We also voted to provide 25% of remaining monies to the Charles River Watershed Association, in honor of Helen Hynes, a former church member who helped found the organization, and that continues to make great strides in environmental preservation in Massachusetts.
 - We finally voted to provide 20% of remaining monies to <u>Church World Service</u>, which we have served in various capacities, including health kits during advent.

3) As we move toward a new normal, we have tasked ourselves with a mission to think boldly about missions, and to work creatively to make an impact--acknowledging that there are many immediate needs for those we serve that will take longer to address. We will continue to work with Christian Education on ways to return to hands on service as we step into summer and fall.

Our Mission Committee members this year:

Erica Hodes (interim Chair) Elaine Bascom Anita Fisher Marianne Louderback Peter Moore Lynn Scheller Marianne Talis

Music Director

Now in this moment, as our worship life has evolved, so have our musical offerings during the COVID-19 shutdown. The NHCC Choir suspended our usual activities, but we meet via electronic means at our regular Wednesday rehearsal time for fellowship and support of one another, especially during this time when we're unable to do that which comes so naturally for all of us: sing.

None of us could have imagined that those words from my 2020 report would be accurate and descriptive of where we find ourselves one year later. Unfortunately, we still can't sing as a group, but we continue to build community. We continue to provide worship leadership. We continue to explore alternative means of being choir. And we continue to praise God.

Throughout this last year, paid section leaders have provided the backbone to our vocal musical life. Occasional solos and duets have been shared, but primarily, our leadership quartet has faithfully recorded music for the season to be shared on Sunday mornings. The full choir twice gathered outdoors last fall, safely distanced and masked, and accompanied by the sounds of the city: sirens and children's park laughter. We recorded several anthems that were less than perfect. God didn't care about that, and neither did we. We were together, singing and laughing. While less than ideal, it tided us over. We are eager to do it again soon, with hopes it will carry us until fall.

And on several occasions, including Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday, we produced "virtual choir" offerings. Each choir member learned their own part, recorded audio and video, and submitted their files, which were then edited together. All of this was done from the safety of our own homes—no small feat.

Yevgenia Semeina faithfully shows up in so many ways. She dazzles us and lifts us, through worship and the occasional organ concert that gives us a foretaste of the normalcy to come.

And none of our offerings this last year would be possible without the faithful, creative, and inspired (and inspiring) work of Misha Hill, who has accompanied us in the truest sense of the word. He is unflappable, collaborative, and consistently cheerful—always responding with "yes, I can do that." I offer the most resounding of thank yous to our friend and companion.

God gives the song and God gives the voice. And with God's guidance, our voices will sing together again—very soon.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:1-2)

Lynd Matt Music Director

Building and Grounds Committee

Building Tenants

- The Buildings and Grounds Committee is grateful to have retained all of our tenants during Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.
- Pine Village Preschool (PVP) re-opened to students in August 2020 with stringent distancing, testing, and sanitizing. Attendance is returning to close to pre-pandemic levels.
- Rich Bryden has continued negotiating with T-Mobile over its lease terms and is still exploring significant changes which require approval from the city.
- The Jung Institute is using its space on an occasional basis but is primarily working remotely.
- Dancestream resumed using our Great Hall for individual lessons and small groups in September 2020, eliminated Saturday usage with a reduction in rent, is ramping up its ongoing use, and is aiming for a January return to a full schedule.

Projects

- There were no major new construction projects initiated during 2020-21, although several existing projects, including improvements on the organ, continued with funding from the capital campaign funds.
- With leadership from Dennis Rieske, we changed all of the locks and keys used for entry into and access within the building, which now serve the needs of the fire department, various tenants, and our own uses.
- In May 2021 we installed a stronger signal/higher-speed wireless network in the entire church building, which will facilitate the quality of broadcasts of our services and also enable broadcasting from the front steps and garden outside the church.
- We recently purchased and tested, but have not yet finished the installation of, the video surveillance equipment to be placed near each entry door, which can now be completed in light of the new wireless network.
- We are still seeking acceptable bids for a vendor to install protective covering for chancel and balcony windows in the main sanctuary.
- We have not yet selected a vendor to install new storm windows in the parlor and great hall, although that is on our list of desired projects for this summer.
- The church purchased significant new microphones, video equipment, computers, and improved internet capability to support our excellent broadcast services and musical performances.

Maintenance, Repair, and Usage

- We installed new steps and an improved railing in the front of the parsonage. We also removed asbestos covering the furnace and pipes throughout the basement.
- Roof repairs and a chimney cap are still planned for the oversize chimney near the organ pipe chamber.
- We patched and painted walls in the Great Hall and Sanctuary, although there is no simple cure for the gradual settling of buttresses that appears to be ongoing.

- There were no major new leaks or other damage reported within PVP or Jung rental space, suggesting that previous efforts may have eliminated much of the seepage problem. There remains water damage in the Great Hall near the stage.
- Interior repairs on the parsonage were done to deal with water damage.
- Tree professionals removed a large tree near the parsonage carriage house at the suggestion of an arborist.
- We continued to liaise with the Senior Housing Committee as they work toward the renovation of the parsonage Carriage House and Hulsing-Newhall main house, with hopes for more action in the next program year.
- The church organized a churchyard cleaning effort in April that raked the entire property and prepared for spring cleaning.
- The church continued to benefit from the high-quality lawn care services of Ethan and Isabelle Baily and the excellent gardening of Carol Hausner.
- Christmas lights were seasonally installed near the handicapped ramp, courtesy of Sally Brickell and Jeff Kaplan.
- Our spectacular new kitchen was used for filling 50 "Kids Club" food bags for Newton families, distributing turkey dinners to needy families for Thanksgiving, and preparing occasional lunch sandwiches.

COVID-19 issues

- Church services continue to be largely remote, broadcast on Zoom since March 2020, with the addition of recordings posted on YouTube.
- We continue to be blessed by Rich Bryden and Misha Hill who provide weekly video, audio, and wireless technical support to enable our worship, music, meetings, and administration. We cannot say enough about the centrality of their work.
- A temporary barrier near the church organ was installed to help protect our organist for multiple organ concerts this year.
- The sexton continues to clean and sterilize the NHCC shared space consistent with guidelines for COVID-risks. PVP and Jung contract for their own cleaning services.

Oversight

The Building and Grounds committee is grateful for the effective building management of Sarah Eberly our church administrator, and the reliable cleaning and repair services of Oscar Vasquez, our sexton.

Current committee: Les Barnstone, Randy Ellis (chair), Paul Gilbert, Misha Hill, Jim Harper (ex officio), and Terry Louderback.

Randy Ellis, May 12, 2021

Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee is responsible for running the stewardship campaign in the Spring, monitoring Capital Campaign pledges, assisting with the development of the proposed budget for the following year and working to ensure the financial health of the church. The Stewardship Committee talked informally and exchanged regular emails but met only irregularly during the year.

The Stewardship Committee has begun the current stewardship campaign whose theme is Sowing Seeds of Hope. The Preliminary Treasurer's Report documents the financial health of NHCC through April 2021.

Pledge income for FY 2021 is projected to reach \$206,880, about the same as FY 2020. Pledge receipts through April 2021 were \$175,274. Actual results through June 2021 could fall well short of the projection. The proposed FY 2022 budget includes Pledge income of \$200,000, somewhat less than the amount pledged for FY 2021, which included a special appeal to help the church through the uncertainties of the Covid shutdown.

Pledges for the 2017 Celebrate and Serve Capital Campaign are \$549,104. Receipts through April 30, 2020 were \$528,620, or 96%. We believe most of the remaining balance will be received.

Thanks to Sarah Eberly for her support in tracking pledges and donations.

Stewardship Committee Members, 2021: Ken Baily (ex officio), Steve Willner (acting chair), Jim Harper (ex officio), Randy Ellis, Tony Rudié

Jim Harper May 11, 2021

Historian

Last year's report described the period as "the year of the Zoom", but Zoom only began on 3/15/20 with the commencement of remote worship. Little did we realize that the next year would be conducted entirely on Zoom. We hope to resume in-person worship in the fall of 2021, while continuing to stream services for the convenience of those not able to attend in person. At our annual All Saints list of memorials the numbers were up notably, although no official members of NHCC died of Covid, though a dozen or more did suffer from it.

After our first Zoom Annual Meeting on June 6, 2020, we departed from our tradition of lay-led summer worship as we continued to use Zoom to come together to worship. The magic of the Internet enabled people to participate from remote locations, with Ken Baily frequently leading services from Maine. Deacons led prayers and read scripture from their homes. Wendy, Matt and Rachel Donnell played many characters as they created children's messages. Our musicians recorded preludes, hymns, anthems and postludes for integration with the Zoom services. Some anthems involved choir members as well. We added simultaneous transmission over a YouTube channel as an alternative to Zoom. None of this would have been possible without the expertise and dedication of Misha Hill and Rich Bryden. Flexibility helped us succeed. Zoom worship, like Zoom meetings in general, were not free of glitches, but the spontaneity of services helped us feel together in this time of isolation.

Like worship, many church activities moved to Zoom. Coffee Hours were replaced by Zoom chats after Sunday worship. It was good that Jean Miller was able to attend these meetings from her residence in Waltham. Committees still met. The pre-recorded Pageant involved more than forty participants. We had a series on Aging Well. Other activities, like the Blessing of Animals, moved outdoors. We held an Easter sunrise service by Crystal Lake. We cautiously met in the Sanctuary for organ concerts.

The Senior Housing initiative, involving the renovation and development of the Parsonage property moved forward. At the end of March we submitted for the City's approval a plan to renovate the Main House to provide two senior housing units on the first floor and space for a new pastor above and to replace the Carriage House with a residence for Ken Baily.

The church has received two loans under the Paycheck Protection Program. The first loan, for \$53,190, was received in April 2020 and completely forgiven in November 2020. The second loan, for \$54,333, was received in February 2021. We anticipate full forgiveness of that loan as well. These funds have more than offset the financial impact of Covid, as the church helped impacted tenants by reducing their rents. The net impact of Covid, taking account of these loans, is expected to be \$54,733, as described in the Preliminary Treasurer's Report. At the intersection of Council's commitment and our budget we neither lost nor released any staff, which was a blessing.

Jim Harper May 13, 2021

Senior/Pastor Housing-The Hulsing Newhall House

We are making progress on our proposed plan to replace the Carriage house and re-orient the Parsonage at 39 Forrest St. For those not familiar, the church has voted several times to go forward with a proposal to convert the current Carriage house/barn to housing for the current senior pastor, and convert the Parsonage to a combination of senior housing on the first floor, and additional housing for a pastor on the second floor.

- We are working with David Nauss (design/builder), Dave Morton (architect), and Karen Sebastian (landscape architect), to develop a design for both buildings and the property. We are working with Hugh Starkey, member, on the legal issues associated with zoning and financing.
- The application and design were submitted to city hall on approximately March 31, 2021. We have yet to hear from them but we hope to hear some feedback shortly.
- Once we get approval, we assume that this process will start with the Carriage House, then the Main House, then landscaping and will take several years, but then again, we're here for the long run. The renovation of the Carriage house will be financed by the Bailys. When the Bailys move into the new carriage house, we will start the renovation on the Parsonage. Renovation of the parsonage can be financed by pre-sale of the senior units or building loan or combination.

The main alterations to the property are as follows:

1. We will replace the Carriage house with a new structure on almost the same footprint in a complementary design — it looks a bit like a barn

It will still be three floors, about the same dimensions ($\sim 21' \times 42'$) with the notable exterior improvement being no garage doors, and a porch/entrance to the East. As it is now, it will still be lower than the house; it will be the dwelling for our current pastor

2. We'll repair and renovate the Parsonage (new porch, better accessibility, energy efficiency...) and modify the upstairs to house a second pastor, as needed; we'll modify the main floor to serve 2 senior citizens from our fold with an accessible ramp at the rear

3. The street view will be almost identical; the only exterior change will be for accessibility planned (between the house and barn)

4. We'll move the parking away from the center of the lawn, up against the house, and we have a plan for a meditation garden and more plants creating privacy on the East side

Committee members: Joy Huber, Ann Hulsing, Jim Harper, Ken Baily, Hugh Starkey, Mildred Hutchison. Advisors: Nyal McDonough, Paul Gilbert

Parsonage and Carriage House- Pastors and

Congregant Housing Revitalization

Project Scope

Rework existing Parsonage and Carriage House to serve church mission of adding a second pastors residence and providing two efficiency dwellings to assist in retaining senior congregants who would otherwise be forced to leave our community. The parsonage structure will remain largely unchanged from the exterior. The carriage house

will be replace with a new structure in the same location and in the same scale and of a style in keeping with the original.





Preliminary Treasurer's Report

As our year will not close until the end of June, the report for the June 6, 2021 Annual Meeting is necessarily on a preliminary basis. Once the year is closed we will prepare a detailed report on the actual results for the twelve months ended June 30, 2021 (FY21), plus a report for Endowment activity. These reports will be audited as well.

Accompanying this report are spreadsheets, on a Summary and Detail basis, of the Proposed Budget for July 2021-June 2022 (FY22). These spreadsheets show actual results for the twelve months ended June 30, 2020 (FY19), Budgeted and Projected results for FY21 and a Proposed Budget for the twelve months ended June 30, 2022 (FY22). Proposed FY22 budget figures are compared to the FY21 budget. The FY21 budget reflects payroll increases authorized at the October 2020 congregational meeting.

The actual result for FY 20 was income of \$65,867, or \$83,542 better than budgeted and \$15,468 better than was projected at last year's Annual Meeting. The FY 2020 variance from budget reflected higher Income (\$62,841) and lower Expenses (\$20,691). Income variances primarily reflected Paycheck Protection loan forgiveness (\$53,190), higher Individual Gifts (\$9,036), Pledges (\$7,577), Passthrough Gifts (\$5,741) and a Mark to Market adjustment (\$5,893), partially offset by lower Organization Gifts (\$16,551). Expense variances included lower Building, Administration and Education expenses, largely attributable to Covid, partially offset by higher Passthrough Gifts, as above.

Projected figures for FY21 reflect actual results through April 2021 and budget for May and June, with adjustments. The FY21 projected net income is \$44,904 or about \$54,400 better than the budget, primarily due to anticipated forgiveness of the second Paycheck Protection loan (\$54,333). Various Offerings are expected to be about \$15,000 lower than budget, largely due to lower Passthrough Gifts and the absence of Plate Collections. As noted above, Organization Gifts are expected to be about \$27,000 below budget, which had assumed normal operations of the building and its tenants at the end of December.

FY21 expenses reflect lower Building expenses (\$18,000) due to lower Repairs (\$8,000) and lower Heat, Electricity and Water (\$8,000) largely due to the building shutdown. Lower Education expense (\$12,000) reflects the shutdown's impact on expense for Teachers and Childcare.

We have tried to measure the impact of Covid on NHCC, as reflected on the attached schedule showing a net benefit of about \$54,700, or slightly more than half the loans of \$107,500 received under the Paycheck Protection Program. The first half was forgiven last November and we anticipate forgiveness of the balance during the summer. (The income has been recognized as we have met the conditions for forgiveness of the loans.) Covid reduced rents from Dancers, PVP and Jung by about \$38,500. The impact on Other Hall and miscellaneous Rentals and Plate Collections reduced income by another \$30,500. Partially offsetting were reductions in Building and Education Costs of \$15,000 and \$14,000, respectively. We incurred an additional \$7,000 in Covid cleaning costs. The analysis also accounts for proposed staff bonuses related to Covid

challenges and the expected donation to the UCC of approximately \$3,200, reflecting 3% of the Paycheck Protection forgiveness income, under the UCC's model of Proportional Giving.

The Proposed FY22 budget shows a deficit of \$38,703 reflecting a proposed 1.3% Cost of Living but no Merit adjustments as yet. The COLA is based on the increase in the CPI for Boston/Cambridge/Newton, March to March, consistent with prior years.

The budget will be updated as figures for Pledges, Compensation and actual FY21 results become available.

Decreased income for FY22 of about \$17,000, as compared to the FY21 budget, reflects a \$10,000 decrease in Pledge income and the absence of a Mark to Market adjustment. (The budget approved in October 2020 already reflected a \$7,000 Mark to Market adjustment recognized in September 2020.) An increase in Endowment support is offset by a decrease in Various Offerings. It is hard to forecast Pledge income when the Stewardship campaign is just getting underway. The \$12,000 increase in expenses reflects \$4,000 for Insurance, \$3,500 for the COLA, \$3,300 toward the CE Director/s healthcare and about \$2,000 for telephone and internet service. Building expenses have generally been based on budgeted expenses for FY 21.

Pledges for FY22 are forecast at \$200,000. We anticipate a \$10,000 decrease from the FY21 budget figure of \$210,000, which reflected a special appeal to carry the church through the challenge of the pandemic. Endowment income is based on market values through March 2021 and projected income and deficit for 2021 and 2022. Individual Gifts are budgeted at \$12,000, in line with projected FY 2021 gifts.

We have budgeted rents from Dancers, Jung and Pine Village Preschool to hold constant for July and August, then ramp up during September through December, reaching amounts specified in leases in January 2022. The budget for T-Mobile reflects current rents, down from the FY21 budget amount. We had been talking to T-Mobile about a rent increase for additional antennas on the tower and included that increase in the FY21 budget, but that increase did not happen.

Mission Expense has been budgeted at 10% of total income, as in prior years. The decrease of \$1,700 reflects the decrease in expected income.

FY22 Education expense reflects a proposed increase in NHCC's contribution to the CE Director's Annuity. Formerly at 6% of compensation, it is budgeted at 8%, reflecting the CE committee's recommendation. The committee also recommended the percentage to be increased to 9% in 2023 and 10% the following year. The FY 22 budget also includes an extra 40 hours for the CE Director to continue children's messages during the summer of 2021.

NHCC received \$53,190 on April 21, 2020 as a loan under the Paycheck Protection Program. This loan was forgiven in full in November 2020 based on documented expenses for payroll costs and utilities during the twenty four weeks following the loan date. The forgiveness was recognized in income as the costs were incurred. NHCC received \$54,332.50 on February 11, 2021 as its second loan under the Paycheck Protection Program. We expect this loan to be forgiven in full based on expenses for payroll costs and utilities in February, March and April

2022 and have recognized the forgiveness income in FY21. We expect the loan to be formally forgiven later in the calendar year and will remove the loan from the balance sheet at that time.

Capital Fund receipts through April 30 reflect Pledges of \$8,474 toward the 2017 Celebrate and Serve Capital Campaign and \$31,648 in cell tower rentals. Expenditures include \$4,400 for rekeying all locks in the church, \$4,000 for work on the website, \$3,500 for HVAC work, \$3,500 for removing asbestos from the Parsonage and \$2,500 for video and WiFi equipment.

Refugee Fund expenses include \$1,250 to St Paul Lutheran to support a refugee family, \$1,000 to Kataluma and \$1,000 to the Metrowest Worker Center.

Senior Housing Fund activity reflects Mark to Market adjustments of \$24,630, partially offset by \$14,156 of design fees.

Thanks to Sarah Eberly, who is processing cash receipts.

James Harper May 11, 2021