

# Friends

**CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH — UCC**  
AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION



**2018-2019 Program Year**

**Annual Reports**

**Presented at the Annual Congregational Meeting, June 9, 2019**

## **2018-2019 PROGRAM YEAR ANNUAL REPORT**

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## Annual Meeting 2019 Report from the Senior Pastor

Submitted by the Reverend Dr. Dan De Leon

**Mission Trip:** In July I participated in the youth group's mission trip to Austin, where they learned and served through Reach Beyond Mission. The week-long experience of working with local organizations, such as Mobile Loaves and Fishes, Sustainability Food Center, and the Capitol Area Food Bank, energized our young people and adult chaperones alike to be about Jesus' proclamation of bringing good news to the poor. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July was a particular blessing for us, as we spent it at Community First!, "a 51-acre master planned community that provides affordable, permanent housing and a supportive community for men and women coming out of chronic homelessness," playing Bingo and making new friends with the residents, all of whom received us with humbling hospitality.

**Youth Group:** After the mission trip and the dynamic youth-led worship service in August, when the group shared their testimonies from their experiences in Austin, I felt that a more consistent ministry was needed to nurture the faith lives of our youth at Friends Church. So, in the fall we started a Sunday evening youth ministry with group games, large and small group discussions, Bible studies, prayer, and, of course, food. I say "we" started this ministry because it was a group effort. Kristin Harper coordinated meal provisions by contacting youth parents to help. I reached out to a handful of adults in our congregation who assisted on a rotating basis with the programming. At the most, the evening youth fellowship found nearly 30 kids crammed in the double classroom, and at the least about 15 attended every Sunday night. We continue to develop relationships, have fun, and learn about our walk with Christ together through this fruitful ministry. I can't thank the adult volunteers enough for helping me carry out the program from week to week: Justin Acton, Tami Dudo, Andrew Glazener, Kristin Harper, Kate Kiernat, Kathy Langlotz, Ryan Jackson. Additionally, the Sunday night gatherings energized the youth to volunteer with Brazos Valley Food Bank and Habitat for Humanity. We'll be volunteering at BVFB again next month. The Sunday night youth ministry is taking a summer break.

**Confirmation:** From January to Confirmation Sunday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, I coordinated Confirmation for 13 youth ranging from grades 5 to 12. This involved constant communication with the confirmands, their parents, and adult mentors; planning and co-teaching monthly classes; preparing weekly assignments; organizing field trips to various faith communities in B-CS; plugging confirmands into different worship leadership roles on Sunday mornings; preparing the Confirmation Sunday service; one-on-one meetings with confirmands; and hours of prayer. I'm grateful to Trent for co-teaching a couple of the monthly classes with me, as well as to all of the mentors and parents for their supportive labor in making this process work.

**Midweek Spiritual Development:** Pastor Trent and I co-led the Wednesday night services, 6-7:15pm, known as Midweek Spiritual Development (MSD) from September through June. The intimate gatherings of anywhere from three at the least to more than 20 at the most has combined worship and education to yield a midweek experience that nurtures our spirituality and informs our discipleship with Christ. MSD will take a break from June 19 through August before resuming for the fall with a hopeful series of testimonies from our church members based on Rachel Held Evans' book *Searching for Sunday*.

**Inquiry Classes and Coffee with the Clergy:** With help from Linda Fitzwater and Kevin Graham, Pastor Trent and I were able to offer two options for new/frequent guests to learn more about Friends Church and joining our congregation: Coffee with the Clergy and session 1 of 3 Inquiry Classes. Both were offered on November 11<sup>th</sup> with nearly 20 attending each of them. Trent and I have also worked to train "shepherds" in our congregation who've graciously held small group meetings in their home, wherein those Coffee with the Clergy and Inquiry Class participants engaged in two more opportunities to learn more about Friends Church and the United Church of Christ.

**Memorial Services:** Sunday Larson. Landon Svatek. Robin Griffiths. Sandi Smith. We lost these dear church members in less than three months. For each of the services celebrating their lives and comforting their loved ones, I met with the partners and families for planning, counseling and prayer. The grief, however, has ripple effects that continue to affect our congregation in ways that are too numerous and, in many cases, too discretionary

for me to list here. Suffice it to say that this shocking season of loss for our community has called Trent and me to step up in immeasurable ways. I'm grateful for our fellowship, nurture, and worship committees, our webmasters, and our entire church family for rising to Jesus' communal instruction, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Mourning is an intentional process that, in seasons like ours, requires all hands on deck.

**Strategic Planning:** Although the ministerial staff and congregation were tired after an exciting Easter at Friends Church, we dug deep the very next weekend for strategic planning sessions on Friday evening and Saturday morning. I met with our consultant, Elizabeth Resnick, prior to and immediately following our Friday evening session to go over details and assess. Her outside perspective of our congregation and my role as Senior Pastor were helpful. With her insight, I was better equipped to engage the congregation on Saturday morning with a "state of the union" of sorts, sharing my view of our church's mission statement over the last 13 years, and offering my vision for moving forward: for Friends Church to have a higher profile in the community; for Friends Church to be more about social justice in terms of policy changes, not just charity work; for our congregation to engage in more inter-faith relationships in our community; more programs for children and youth, including the hire of a Minister for Children & Youth; engaging ministries for our aging/retiring church members; overhaul of our governance/committee structure; expansion of our space; heightened outreach; etc. Since then, I've worked with Church Council to identify church members to carry out the work of forming a mission statement based on the collaborative work that came out of those sessions, and to find other church members for the purpose of solidifying pathways to carry out that mission in a five-year plan.

**Hosting Dr. Jayme Reaves:** From April 3<sup>rd</sup> to April 7<sup>th</sup>, I helped host our guest speaker/teacher/preacher, Dr. Jayme Reaves. Jayme, Trent and I planned the April 4<sup>th</sup> evening event, Sanctuary: Exploring Protective Hospitality. I introduced her when she preached in our services, and when she taught the combined Social Justice and Morning Manna classes on Apr. 7<sup>th</sup>. In between these events, I met with Jayme to share more about our church, our community and context to help her get acclimated to her audiences; showed her around Bryan-College Station; met with her and the TAMU Religion Department for an informal lunch; and took her to the SCOLA (Student Conference on Latinx Affairs) Gala at TAMU, where Dolores Huerta was the keynote speaker.

**Administrative Assistant Search:** In the fall, our then administrative assistant, Kim Beasley, stepped down just shy of serving Friends Church for five years in order to focus on caring for her mother, whose health has declined to the point of needing 24-hour care. This activated the Personnel Committee and the ministerial staff to begin the search for a replacement. I worked with Personnel Committee Chair Sue Ambrus to resurrect and update a search process to adequately reflect the current and evolving needs of Friends Church. Trent and I conducted interviews with finalists for the position. Edmond Nikiema was hired in mid-December and began training for the position. While Edmond was a promising hire, his skills did not progress quickly enough to meet our needs. I had the unfortunate task of letting Edmond go, but we parted ways with mutual respect—Edmond for our congregation and we for his service—and with his appreciation for the opportunity he had to work for Friends Church. The search process resumed, the Personnel Committee interviewed viable candidates and narrowed the pool down to two, Trent and I interviewed them, and we were able to extend the offer to who we believed to be the one best-suited for the job. I'm overjoyed that Jessica Little accepted the offer to be our administrative assistant, and that she has started working in that position as of June 3<sup>rd</sup>. I can't thank Sue Ambrus, the Personnel Committee, and Treasurer Theresa Walker enough for all of the dutiful, tiring work they put into finding Jessica. Additionally, words cannot express how grateful not only I am, but how deeply grateful our church family is, for the volunteerism of Glenn Thurman, Cecelia Hawkins, and all of the church members who sacrificed their time to filling the duties of the administrative assistant in the long months when that position was vacant. Our congregation has no idea how truly fortunate we are for their efforts.

**Early Service:** After a seven-week summer break, the 8am service resumed in late August and has carried through to June 9<sup>th</sup>. It is on another summer hiatus through mid-August. For several months I had not only been leading and preaching for the Early Service, but also providing music leadership with guitar and voice. Thankfully, Chris Mabe stepped up to provide piano accompaniment for the Early Service in recent months. Whoever preaches the 10:30am service also leads/preaches for the 8am service on that Sunday. Therefore, most Sundays from September

to June, I've led the Early Service and co-led the 10:30am service, spending the time in between the two services either attending a class or resting. I'm grateful to the dutiful volunteers who make the Early Service possible by setting it up and taking it down, serving as lay leaders, greeters and communion stewards, and consistently showing up with genuine devotion to and interest in this contemplative service with an average of 20 attendees. (Note: My hope for January of 2020 is that we shift the two services to be at 9am and 11am in order to make the Early Service more accessible and viable for growth. The 10:30am service has been at an unsustainable capacity numbers-wise for a year now. Something has to give.)

**Church Retreat to Slumber Falls Camp, New Braunfels:** Both Pastor Trent and I were able to attend the church retreat this year. Two years ago, he attended, and I stayed back to lead worship at Friends. Last year we swapped those tasks. Thankfully, Friends Church has the resources to allow for both of its pastors to attend the retreat, which Trent and I did this month with our families. Trent led a spectacular Saturday morning program, and I planned and mostly led the Sunday morning worship service at Vesper Point, and the baptism service for Grace Moore in the Guadalupe River after that.

**Faith Leaders Justice Group:** In the wake of the 2016 election, border security ramped up with a Muslim ban and increased ICE raids. This brought a concerned group of faith leaders from different Christian denominations and other religions together to determine how we could respond to this alarming situation that was affecting children, youth, and families in our community. That collaboration led to such actions as meeting with our State reps to discuss our concerns regarding punitive immigration policies, and assembling a press conference in response to the current administration's announcement that DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) would be terminated. Initially this group, unofficially named the Faith Leaders Justice Group (FLJG), was coordinated by the Rev. Mary Lenn Dixon, an Episcopal Priest serving St. Andrew's, St. Francis, and St. Thomas Episcopal churches in B-CS. However, Rev. Dixon moved to Austin several months ago to prioritize being a grandmother, helping her family there. Since then, I have been coordinating and leading the FLJG, trying to keep cohesion and gain traction as our shared understanding of justice issues in our community evolves. The FLJG meets monthly in the fall and spring. They will be participating in Texas Impact's Courts and Ports program this summer so that we might find ways to take what we have learned at the border regarding the experience of asylum-seeking people and bear witness to it locally. We're also putting together a community organizing workshop, made possible by the Episcopal Health Foundation's Austin Interfaith, to kick off the fall.

**Vigil Honoring Tree of Life Synagogue:** The vigil, held on November 1<sup>st</sup> in response to the shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, started with a prayer voiced in the 10:30am worship service on October 28<sup>th</sup> at Friends Church. That week, I received a phone call from the interim minister for the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Brazos Valley, the Rev. Donna Renfro, asking "what do we do as a community" when events like this rear their ugly head. From there, I proposed the idea of a communitywide candlelight vigil at Friends Church to leaders in the Jewish community and the Faith Leaders Justice Group. Support and willingness to participate were strong. From there, the details came together. The congregation was activated with an outpour of volunteerism (setting up chairs and tables, making postcards, preparing the candles, donating bottled water, making hot coffee available, etc.). Through the sentiments expressed on the postcards and other comments we received at the church in the days following the vigil, it was clear that it was an urgently needed balm for many and a hopeful opportunity for people to build relationships and find hope. I cannot express enough gratitude for our church family in making this happen for the wider community, and for consistently being the beacon that steps up to shine a light of peace, hope, and love in witness to Christ Jesus in the face of anxiousness, fear, and despair in the Brazos Valley.

**Courts and Ports:** After the Sunday services on March 24<sup>th</sup>, I drove to Brownsville, where I took part in Texas Impact's Courts and Ports trip through March 27<sup>th</sup>. Our Heart of Texas Association Minister, the Rev. Liz Nash, and another United Church of Christ pastor whose congregation is in Leander, the Rev. Ryan Hart, also attended. The purpose of the trip is for attendees to : 1) give witness to the experiences of our neighbors at the Texas-Mexico border who have presented themselves for asylum and are trying to navigate how to proceed with their case in the U.S.; those waiting to present themselves for asylum; and those appearing before a federal court judge



after being apprehended for attempting to enter the U.S. illegally; and 2) to share that witness with our respective communities and legislators for the purpose of recrafting the narrative around immigration and asylum seekers that tends to demonize these neighbors, and to encourage immigration reform. Two of our church members, Cecelia Hawkins and Anne Wehrly, as well as a member of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Bryan, Janet Dudding, have also attended this trip. (Cecelia has attended a few times, serving Texas Impact as a volunteer facilitator for Courts and Ports.) This trip, which continues to trouble and energize me, connects with the vision of Friends Church to offer God's extravagant welcome to all, and with our ministry in support of the sanctuary movement. In the weeks after the Courts and Ports trip, I met with Anne, Cecelia, and Janet to plan steps for moving forward with local action items (meeting with our representatives, sharing our Courts and Ports experience with the wider community, encouraging others to help our neighbors at the border in tangible ways); I wrote about what I witnessed on that trip in devotionals for Friends Church and in our local paper; I shared testimonies from Courts and Ports in sermons; I presented on Courts and Ports to the Social Justice Class; I shared my Courts and Ports experience with the Faith Leaders Justice Group in an effort to encourage them to attend the trip themselves and give larger voice in our community to this witness; and I co-led a workshop on Courts and Ports at the South Central Conference Annual Meeting in New Orleans. My involvement with this ministry is ongoing.

**Brazos Valley Common Good:** In the wake of Charlottesville in August of 2017, three local clergy and I began meeting monthly to plan a series of small group gatherings across racial lines to proactively address segregation and racism in our community. We planned a six-week series of meetings titled, "Sharing our Stories: Faith, Race, & Life." In order to assure as much equality across racial differences as possible, one of our clergy peers and I made direct solicitations to congregations of color in our community, inviting their members to sign up for the small group gatherings. By God's grace, we culminated a diverse range of perspectives across racial differences to share our stories in response to the biblical ones that guide our faith. Attendance exceeded our expectations with more than 20 consistently showing up for the 1.5-hr sessions. With the conclusion of the six-session "Telling Our Stories" ministry in late February came the question, "What now?" The clergy facilitators and I hosted a dinner for participants who expressed interest in becoming facilitators themselves of future small group sessions. Additionally, we hosted a "supper club" meeting of the small group participants to keep our relationships going, and to discuss future plans for this ministry in our community. Momentum stalled at that point, causing the three clergy coordinators and I to reconfigure the mission of this ministry moving forward. After one of us four clergy left our community, we three remaining coordinators asked a handful of local pastors and laity, black and white, to form a steering committee, united in our desire to seek and carry out racial justice. This steering committee, including two members of Friends Church, Susan Heath and Kenny Wiley, met biweekly to form relationships, determine priorities, and develop a mission and name for the group. I'm pleased to share that the group is now named Brazos Valley Common Good (BVCG). The BVCG is planning a series of community conversations for the fall around the topics of housing, education and racial profiling. We will share this info with our respective faith communities and other networks in hopes of bring a multiracial swath of our community together to reflect the justice-seeking mission of Friends Church: "transforming God's world one act of love at a time."

#### Other pastoral tasks

Facilitated 20s & 30s of Friends lunch, Sept. 16

Worship planning, bulletin prep

Wrote reference letters for employment opportunities, college and seminary admissions, and for grant assistance for church members

Weekly meetings with ministerial staff and scheduled meetings with Associate Pastor

Communication and providing support with various committee chairs and committees

Meetings on- and offsite with frequent guests re: learning more about Friends Church involvement, pastoral care and counseling

Meetings with couples re: wedding ceremony planning and counseling

Hospital, rehabilitation facility, and home visits to church members

Fall meeting of the Heart of Texas Association, United Christian Church, Austin, Oct. 20

Continuation of Leadership Retreat, Oct. 21

Pastoral hosting of Midday Advent Recital, Dec. 5

Co-leading music rehearsal for Longest Night Service, Dec. 16

Attended naturalization ceremony in support of Edmond Nikiema, Admin Assistant, Dec. 20

Officiant for weddings of church members

Strategic planning meeting w/Conference Minister, Moderator and Assoc Pastor, Jan. 2

Handling church security issue involving extensive communication with various community members and CSPD

Submitted Annual Review (required for all Heart of Texas Association clergy) to Committee on Ministry, Jan. 17

South Central Conference clergy retreat, Slumber Falls Camp, New Braunfels, Feb. 6-7

Ash Wednesday services

Rise Against Hunger event

Attended youth groups of Friends Church and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church meeting at the Queen Theater for movie

Participated in ordination service for Ludy Manthei

#### Evangelism, Outreach, Community Involvement Highlights

Attended monthly Pastors' Coalition meetings

Wrote third Saturday columns for *The Eagle's* "Faith & Values" section

Served as Clergy Liaison for CROP Hunger Walk, Oct. 14

Offered prayer at Pastors' Coalition Communitywide Prayer Meeting, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, CS, Dec. 4

Led communitywide Bible study focusing on MLK's legacy of "peace, unity & love," Lincoln Center, Jan. 9

Spoke in representation of Friends Church re: racial justice efforts (effort to acquire Brazos County's steel monument from the National Memorial for Peace & Justice) at Grassroots Organizing 101 meeting, Bryan Public Library, Jan. 17

Participated in MLK Day march, Jan. 21

Interviewed on KBTX promoting Community Bible Study emphasizing MLK's legacy of "peace, unity, and love," Jan. 21

Represented Friends Church and Brazos County with Pastors for Texas Children in meetings with State Reps at the Capitol re: funding public education, Jan. 24

Participated in Centro de Derechos Laborales' protest of maltreatment of workers re: injuries sustained on the

job at Sanderson Farms, Feb. 18

Delivered benediction at Brazos Valley African American Museum Appreciation Banquet, Feb. 22

Attended quarterly BISD faith-based leadership meetings

Christian rep at table for World Religions Fair at TAMU, Mar 19

Marched in Hands Across Aggieland on TAMU campus, Apr. 3

Spoke at public hearing re: manufactured homes ordinance at Bryan City Council meeting, Apr. 9

Attended Islamic Community of B-CS open house, Apr. 13

Delivered invocation for NAACP Banquet, June 1



## Associate Pastor's Report

### The Reverend Trent Williams

2018-2019 has been a pivotal year in the life of Friends Congregational Church, and I am privileged to be a part of what God is doing among us. In late 2018, we marked our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a congregation, and this fall I will mark three years as your Associate Pastor. In this year, I officially moved to full-time status, and we are experiencing continued growth in our membership, mission, and ministries. I am thankful for the opportunity to continue serving alongside you as we listen for the still-speaking God. In the past year, I have helped to lead our congregation in several new ministries, and I want to share some of my perspective on those developments.

In early 2018, as you may remember, we were awarded a Neighbors in Need grant from the national setting of the United Church of Christ, to begin the process of launching a sanctuary network in the Brazos Valley to meet the needs of undocumented immigrants in our community. As part of that process, we began to study and consider our own sanctuary resolution. An ad hoc committee was formed to talk with other congregations that have been through this process and study their resolutions; we spoke with our insurance company, with folks in the national setting, considered legal opinions, and explored logistical issues. We crafted a resolution using a sister UCC congregation's template, and presented that to the congregation in the fall. In January at our annual congregational meeting, we voted unanimously to approve that resolution and declare ourselves an immigrant welcoming congregation. Since January, we have been engaged in a process led by a sanctuary steering team to implement the resolution; that team has formed three sub-committees on housing, food & hospitality, and communications. They are working hard to prepare our space and make sure that we are ready should the need arise to offer housing to an immigrant in need. We give thanks for the bold witness of Friends Church and the hard work of all our volunteers who are helping to make this happen.

Another new initiative for us this year has been the launch of our small group ministry, Soul Friends. As we have experienced growth as a congregation, we recognize that it can be harder to form connections and relationships with others in our community, and worship alone is not always the most effective way to meet people. Small groups give us an opportunity to deepen relationships and to nurture spiritual growth in a safe and supportive setting. In the fall, I began with a pilot group made up of folks from our 20's & 30's ministry, and this spring we launched groups for the full congregation. Six groups with around 60 people have participated in this initial round, and it has proved a wonderful success so far. We have studied Diana Butler Bass' book *Grounded: Finding God in the World* for this initial round, and have enjoyed rich and meaningful conversations growing out of that study. As we wrap up this series, our groups will be on a short hiatus over the summer, and we will resume with a new opportunity to join a group in the fall, so stay tuned.

Along that same line, our Inquiry Class took a different form this program year, as we sought to incorporate the best of small group approaches into that program. Rather than three sessions at church after worship, which often ended up being an "information dump," we offered an initial session with a panel after church, then broke into small groups for the two following sessions, held in the homes of "shepherds," church members who were able to guide the groups in forming relationships and learning more about Friends Church. So far, we have had two rounds of Inquiry sessions using this model, and it has proved to be very successful at helping new people to fully integrate into the life of Friends Church and form relationships with one another.

In this pivotal 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we also launched a long-range strategic planning process to help us discern together where God is leading us into the future and what we want Friends to look like in the coming 5-10 years, so that we can lay a strong foundation for the next 40 and beyond. I was privileged to join with Pastor Dan and moderator Dwight Baker in planning for this process and working with our consultant, Elizabeth Resnick. She led us through a wonderful initial session on remembering and celebrating our history, and we are moving into the next phase of laying out our vision and mission. I look forward to where this process will take us and to our dreaming together about what that will look like in the years to come.

As always, I close with the words of 20<sup>th</sup> century political leader and Christian mystic Dag Hammarskjöld, who said these words in the form of a prayer: "For all that has been, thanks. To all that shall be, yes."

## **Moderator's Report**

### **Church Council 2018-2019**

During this year, the Congregation's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Council has addressed major issues that will define the Congregation's next decade. The Congregation successfully completed a major construction project in the summer of 2018 to replace the upper sanctuary windows and install new siding to eliminate wood rot and prevent further water damage in the future. Not long after this project was completed, a comprehensive assessment by the Property Committee recommended that additional building renewal projects should be undertaken over the next decade to improve the condition of the building and be better stewards of our capital resources. With support from the Congregation in the 2019 budget, another portion of the building has recently been resided, and new windows installed on the north side of the sanctuary.

The Council undertook an all-Congregation survey about communication in early 2019. We received a great response to the survey, with many thoughtful comments. At the April Council meeting we voted to revise the methods by which the Congregation receives weekly and monthly information with the hope of streamlining the process, and reducing overlap. We look forward to the continued feedback we get on the changes that have implemented.

This past April Council began a formal process of strategic planning for our Congregation to envision where we hope to be in five or ten years. With advice from South Central Conference Minister Don Longbottom, Council engaged Elizabeth Resnick, a professional facilitator with experience in assisting faith communities in long term planning. Elizabeth led us through two meetings open to members and friends of the Congregation. Our first meeting celebrated the history of the Congregation and the many poignant memories that have impacted our members, our community, and the wider world during this history. The second meeting encouraged participants to identify ideas, words, traits or activities of the Congregation which we would want to see memorialized at the 45<sup>th</sup> or 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. I was impressed to see the participants choose ideas like being bolder, or being braver, and building a higher profile for the Congregation in the greater community. Over the next several months a small working committee will try to capture the essence of a vision for Friends for the next five or so years. Then in October another church wide meeting with Elizabeth will allow us to collectively discuss this in greater depth and commit to a longer term vision.

As my term as Moderator comes to a close, I remember with fondness and gratitude all of the people who have worked by my side and helped to accomplish the tasks we set before us. In particular, I want to thank the members of the Congregation who have so graciously given of your time, talents and resources to make this faith community a welcoming home, as well as the leadership team that have worked especially hard this year. I am grateful to Pastors Dan and Trent for their willingness to look at changes as the Congregation grows and diversifies. I know that with God's continuing grace, Friends will be an even more inviting and special place in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted

Dwight Baker, Moderator

## **Nominating Committee Report**

**Lisa Welch, Chair; Jackie Womack, Vice-Chair;**

**Bill Harper; and Linda Fitzwater**

**Vice Moderator-Cathy Hansen**

**Deputy Moderator Programs-Angela Jackson**

**Secretary-Ann Wehrly**

**Congregational Representative-Jill Fouch**

**Property Chair-Bardin Nelson**

**Financial Secretary-Loretta Mendez**

**Spiritual Growth-Jodie Robinson**

**Christian Education-Justin Acton & Kamille Kirkendoll**

**Pastoral Relations-Oscar Guardiola (Dan), Kenny Wiley (Trent)**

**Fellowship**

**Youth Representative**

## Director of Music Ministries Report

### Chris Hoffman, Choir Director

The 2018/2019 church year marked my thirteenth year as serving as your Director of Music Ministries. This year we have been blessed by continued growth in terms of musical offerings and participants.

The Chancel Choir, the flagship ensemble of the Music Ministries Department, has enjoyed a very busy year. In addition to providing Choral Introits and Choral Anthems for almost every Sunday service, they have been very active in singing for special services, such as memorial services and ordinations. The Choir will be enjoying their well-earned summer hiatus from July until mid-August!

In December, Friends Church celebrated its 40th anniversary. In honor of that milestone, I composed a special anthem for the Chancel Choir to sing - a work entitled "Upon This Rock." This work speaks to our faith in Christ being the sure foundation on which the Church can be built, and how if we have faith in Christ, then we will be able to add to the things that made our sure foundation. As of the writing of this report, my piece is under publication consideration, and I am learning just how much of a time-consuming process that can be!

The Chancel Choir had two special services that required extra time and attention. The Advent season brought about a return of a previous Masterwork that the Choir had performed in 2011 - John Rutter's *Magnificat*. When we first performed this work, I arranged the accompaniment to accommodate an ensemble consisting of piano, flute, and string quartet. This year, we rented the Chamber Orchestra parts, and had a seventeen-piece orchestra perform alongside the Choir. We also had two outstanding soloists from the Choir sing the very taxing solos - Christine Gravelle and Cathy Hansen. It was a beautiful evening. This was a very fun and exciting event for the Christmas season. It is also because of this performance that Friends Church's Chancel Choir received a special invitation - more on that later.

Good Friday's worship service was centered on a work that we had performed in 2009, Pepper Choplin's moving Cantata *Once Upon a Tree*. It was a beautiful and moving service that made the celebration of Easter even more special. Even though we had performed this work before, new life was brought into this service by including the acting talents of David Manuel and Andrew Roblyer, portraying the roles of Jesus and Luke, respectively. Their superb acting gifts brought these characters to life, as Luke set out to write the story of Jesus' crucifixion. A number of soloists from the Choir also brought their formidable vocal gifts to the retelling of this story: Tom Vogel (Jesus), Anne Nichols (Mary), Chris Gibson (Pilate), and Tami Dudo (Narrator).

On to Easter: many wonderful musical elements combined to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. The Chancel Choir performed the Introit, *Christ the Lord is Risen From the Dead*, which took an Easter text and combined it with the music of a movement from a different *Magnificat* - that of Johann Sebastian Bach's. The Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir combined to perform *Easter Hymn of Praise*, which also included Kathy Robbins behind the piano and Cristina Ramirez behind the organ. Needless to say, we had a massive wall of sound on Easter Sunday. The Handbell Choir also played a difficult arrangement of Händel's *Messiah* for the Offertory. Kathy Robbins and Jess Wade led the Hymns with piano and organ duets, while Abraham Guillen and I played trumpet descants. All in all, it was a very joyful day. Music is a big part of what we do at Friends Congregational Church, and God was definitely glorified through music on that day!

Due to the years of hard work from the Chancel Choir, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came knocking. An organization from New York, Distinguished Concerts in New York (DCINY), creates a series of concerts every year at the world-famous Carnegie Hall. They read online that the Friends Chancel Choir performed the Rutter *Magnificat* in December, and invited us to audition for a chance to perform Rutter's *Requiem* at Carnegie Hall in february of

2020. After compiling some performance recordings and videos for our formal audition, we were accepted to perform! A generous donor wrote a check to cover the expenses of actually rehearsing and performing for this concert at Carnegie (Carnegie is definitely not an inexpensive venue to perform at!), and we started fundraising for our travel costs (flights, hotel, meals, etc.) with a Benefit Concert on May 2nd. The weather was awful that evening, with severe weather hitting Bryan/College Station, so numbers in the audience were lower than anticipated, but for those who could attend, a fantastic and fun evening was had by all. At the time of this article's writing, we have raised around \$7,000, which is an amazing blessing! We have a ways to go to raise the total funds (around \$50,000), but we are off to a great start! If you are interested in donating, please contact me, or go to the church webpage, and click on the "Giving" tab, which has a category devoted to the Choir's trip. We are also exploring other ways to raise the funds, so stay tuned. Since we are a church choir, and also part of the UCC denomination, we are also going to worship with and/or sing for other UCC churches in NYC, allowing us to worship through music in a variety of ways. We anticipate this to be a very memorable trip, one that gives us a chance to worship with our brothers and sisters from other UCC churches, experience musical worship on a large scale with other musicians from around the world at Carnegie Hall, and also lets the people of New York hear what a small choir from a small city in Texas can do!

The Chancel Choir always has room for more singers, from high schoolers on up. If you enjoy singing in Choirs, come sing with us! We rehearse Wednesday evenings, beginning at 7:30 pm.

Choral singing isn't just for adults and high school students. We still have A Joyful Noise, our Children's Choir. With a much lighter load, this group sings for Children's Sabbath Sunday, and almost any time that there is a fifth Sunday in the month. Rehearsals happen Sunday mornings during Sunday school time, from 9:15-9:45, beginning just a few weeks before the Sunday they are scheduled to sing. Special thanks goes to Tami Dudo for helping lead these rehearsals. What we did notice this year was that the numbers for A Joyful Noise were getting smaller and smaller. We were wondering what was happening until we realized...

...the singers of A Joyful Noise have been growing up! As a result, a very necessary need to start a Youth Choir emerged. With Tami's help, we created a Youth Choir (sometimes jokingly referred to as the "Voluntolds"). They have already sung twice this year. They debuted with an arrangement of "Joyful, Joyful" from "Sister Act 2" (complete with the rap), and knocked it out of the park! Most recently, Pastor Dan joined them on guitar in a great rendition of "Lean On Me."

The Children's Christmas Pageant provided a great way to have the children and congregation come together in song. The Children's Pageant went through a little bit of tweaking, combining some new ideas with traditional themes and stories that we know and love.

We still have the rainbow bells, which are designed for the children of Friends to use. After some initial training on the rainbow bells, it only takes a few years to "graduate" to the four-octave handbells. The Handbell Choir has experienced a lot of interest and growth during these past few years of its existence. The group rehearses Monday nights at 7:30 pm. In addition to any special services, the Handbells ring one Sunday a month. The Handbell ringing season lasts from September to June. We have our own beautiful four-octave set, but increased interest has led us to borrow a fifth octave from First Presbyterian Church in Bryan from time to time. For more information about handbell ringing, please chat with me!

This Advent season also brought on a new worship idea: Wednesday noon brown bag Recitals. Every Wednesday during the Advent season, the congregation was invited to bring their lunch to the church and engage in fellowship. After folks had a chance to eat and visit, they were able to stick around and hear a series of mini-recitals (twenty to thirty minutes in length) of Advent and Christmas music performed by Friends Church musicians, as

well as some guest performers. These were well-received (in fact, it was suggested that we do even more promoting next year), and as a result, they will more than likely happen again next year.

Wednesday night worship focuses largely on contemporary musical offerings. Any interested musicians should contact Pastor Dan for more information on how they can contribute their gifts to this particular worship service.

Other special musical offerings have been provided throughout the church year. When the choir has a Sunday off, we are still able to have worship through music, thanks to the musical gifts and offerings of others. We have been blessed with vocal solos, duets, trios, and quartets during this church year. We have had instrumental collaboration that included flute, clarinet, trumpet, violin, piano, guitar, and percussion (I certainly hope I haven't left anything out!). Because of these gifts, we have been able to cover all sorts of musical styles, from traditional to contemporary, from classical to folk, from opera to Taizé, and everything in between! Friends Church is proud to celebrate its diversity, and I am thrilled that we get to be blessed by so much diversity in our music. To God be the glory!

Lastly, I would like to thank our wonderful pianist Kathy Robbins for her service. Still one of my personal favorites: when she modulates to different keys during Congregational Hymns. We are indeed blessed.

With all the growth we have been experiencing around the church, it is no surprise that the Music Ministry has also been affected positively by all of the growth. As a result, we have a full-time volunteer Music Librarian (Cathy Hansen), who is a huge help to me in making sure all music is returned and organized (it is quite the big task). Through the help of Anne Wehrly, Susan Fontaine, and Bardin Nelson, the handbells now have a more secure storage location. Thanks to the amazing carpentry skills of Chuck Rhea, the Music Library now has even more shelving for our ever-growing music collection - beautifully made and very secure. This Director is grateful to have the gifts of all musicians and appreciators of the musicians help us grow in the ways that we need, in order to effectively serve our church family and community with our worship music.

So what lies ahead for the next year or even the next few years? Time will tell, but my wish list includes:

- A series of short musical performances/services that will happen during the lunch hour, on Wednesdays during and Lent (similar to the Advent midday brown bag recitals)
- Hosting recitals and small concerts (similar to what First Presbyterian Church in Bryan does with their Concerts on Carter Creek series, but done our way)
- Raising funds to purchase a fifth octave set of handbells
- Creating a beginner adult Handbell Choir
- Creating a youth Handbell Choir

It has been a huge honor and a blessing to serve as your Director of Music Ministries for these past thirteen years. I thank you for your love, support, and prayers as we have grown and evolved over time, trying to create musical experiences that reach out and touch everyone. If you are feeling a nudge to contribute to the musical life of this church, please talk to me! I would love to be able to help you find the right place(s) for you to be plugged into. I am excited to see how we can continue to serve our congregation and our community through our diverse musical offerings at Friends Church, so here's to the future!



# TRUSTEES REPORT

## Sally Manthei, Deputy Moderator of Trustees

We have had an amazing group of chairpersons on the Trustees Committee this year and their hard work has been phenomenal. The Property, Stewardship and Personnel Committees have been busier than usual this year and much appreciation goes to the hard work of Susan Fontaine, Jon Maxwell and Sue Ambrus. Below are their annual reports.

### PROPERTY

Submitted by Susan Fontaine

The year started with the Hurricane Harvey repair project on the front face of the church. That project was started in May 2018 and successfully completed in August 2018 and I am happy that with all the recent rain, we have had no signs of leakage. We had a great committee supporting the work on this project. Those folks included: Jess Wade, Cady Engler, Chuck Rhea and Sally Manthei. We also had many of the folks in the congregation constantly help with moving chairs in the sanctuary and putting them back each week. I really appreciate everyone's participation and work on this project.

We ended the year with the first of our Building Renewal Projects by replacing the siding, fascia, windows and soffits on the north side of the building. I have noticed that the sanctuary is much quieter with the new windows and the church's appearance towards Harvey Mitchell is more attractive. Unlike the face of the building, there was not much rot behind the old siding. The only rot found was in the two upper corners, so this project was completed without any surprises. Over the next 3 years, I hope we continue our Building Renewal work to replace all the old siding, fascia's, soffits and windows. I would suggest that we continue with Bart White as the contractor because he did an excellent job.

We did not participate in Big Event this year because I was out of town. Instead, we had a group from the church (Bill Harper, Chuck Rhea, Ronnie Holz, and Wayne Hammond) trim the hedges. In addition, Bill and Chuck did a lot of work to gently trim the trees. Also, Kevin Graham power-washed the front porch and front of the sanctuary. We also had one of our regular renters (The Council for Student Minority Affairs) do a service project for us. They washed the windows, spot cleaned the sanctuary carpet and scrubbed the baseboards.

In conjunction with the Accessibility Committee, we added a new exterior light on the outer sidewalk. We also added edge stripes on the stairs leading into the sanctuary and are continuing to try to get the automatic door opener installed for the outer doors by the office.

HVAC - we have had ongoing issues with the HVAC system. Chuck has now marked each HVAC unit with a number so that we and the contractor can maintain better record continuity. Malek has been our contractor all year and we believe that one issue has been that there seems to be a constant change in technicians that come to do the service work. We are getting a bid from another contractor and will report back. That contractor is working with us on a new pipe covering for the HVAC piping outside of the kitchen area.

Doors - we replaced the exterior door by the kitchen. We also re-hung it so that it swings out on the other side to make it easier to exit for anyone that is disabled or in case of an emergency mass exit. We are continuing to work on bids for programmable locks and the latest information on that will be submitted separately.

Rentals - We have several regular "ongoing renters". Those include: Alcoholics Anonymous (One Step) every Saturday Morning from 9 to 12 (non profit Double Classroom); Candy Morris - Profit, every Wednesday from 11 until 5, double classroom; Lions Club - Third Tuesday - Double Classroom - Non Profit (no longer using the church); and Texas Inmate Families Associations ( 1st Tuesday - Double Classroom - Non Profit). In addition, we have had weddings, recitals, parties, funerals and an ordination during the year.

Janitorial - We are continuing to save quite a bit of money by buying our own paper products and cleaning supplies. Howell had charged us \$125 per month and I think we have averaged \$65 per month by buying this ourselves. I would suggest that this be continued.

Chuck has almost completed the new music shelf which will be in the current music room. It needs the final coats of paint and then needs to be mounted to the wall. That will be done in the next few weeks and Bill Harper will be helping to get this painted.

Future Projects - As soon as we have a stretch of nice weather, we will authorize the fire lane markings to be repainted. The bid for this is \$500. In addition, for next year, we should consider having the church carpets other than the sanctuary professionally cleaned by Boller's.

Fountain Cleaning - We have a great group that takes turns cleaning the fountain each week. This group consists of: the Nichols family, the Dudo family, the Guillen family, the Lacefield family, Justin and Kamille, Diane Simpson and Sally Manthei, David Manuel, and me. We can always use more volunteers so that it spreads the work around.

I have very much enjoyed my two years of service as Property Chairperson. I look forward to continuing to be on the committee to support the new chairperson.

## **PERSONNEL**

Submitted by Sue Ambrus

This year for Personnel has been a roller coaster ride. I agreed to be Personnel Chair in July. At the end of July as I was in a van with my daughter on the way to Colorado, I received a call from Dan, who told me that Kim had to resign, effective August 31st. Oh my, here we go. So after several meetings with various committees and Pastor Dan, the Personnel Committee (Linda Fitzwater, Diane Simpson and Sally Manthei) and I decided to go with a job search engine called Indeed. During the BBQ I received notice that we had an application and by the end of the day, we had received 45 applications. I was thrilled. After going through the soon to be 150 +/- applications, I met with the committee. We then narrowed down our search and got back with the candidates we had narrowed it down to. This was not a quick process and we really weren't sure what to do. Needless to say, that round was a learning process. We reopened the search and again received almost 100 applications. This time we were able to narrow things down more quickly and set up phone interviews with five of the candidates. We then narrowed it down to three and set up in-person interviews with Pastors Dan and Trent. By this time, it was November. The pastors interviewed all three candidates and a decision was made to hire Edmond. Edmond began the first of the year. By February we became aware that Edmond was not going to work out. By mutual agreement, his last day was March 31st and the search was on again. As of this writing, we are setting up phone interviews with three candidates and now have even more knowledge of what to look for and what we need in an Administrative Assistant. Here's hoping!!!

Our other personnel positions have been stable and wonderful. Thank you so much to Morgan and Elizabeth for their faithful service as childcare workers.

We ask for continued prayers for our search for the perfect candidate and that things will be back to "normal" soon. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

Submitted by Jon Maxwell

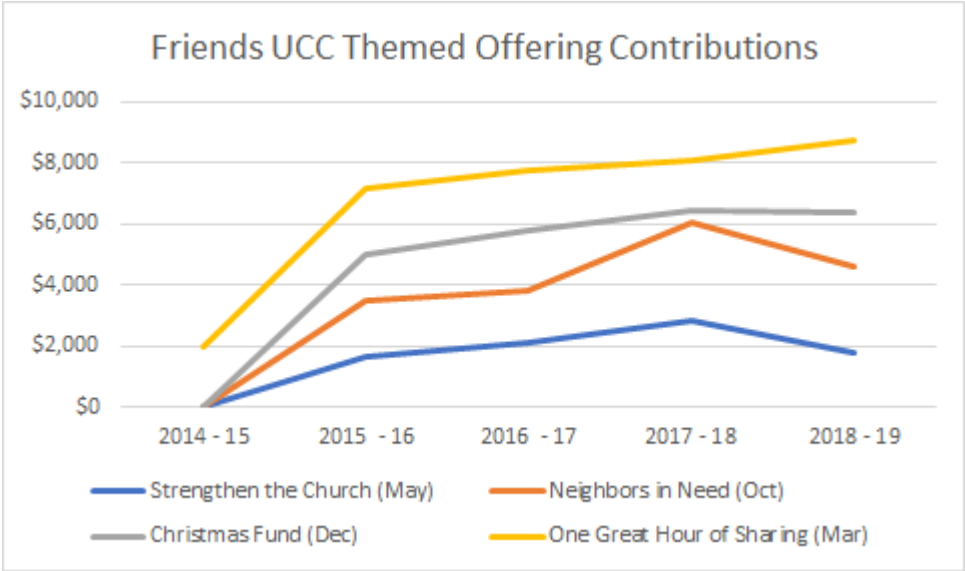
**Annual Statement of Giving.** Friends collected pledges in a greater amount than any prior year, which of course is great news. Pledges increased 11% and \$28,000 over the prior highest year, 2017-18. See the Treasurer's report

for details. While wonderful, it is worth noting that church growth is not the reason. The number of pledging units only increased from 66 to 67, and was well short of our peak of 72 two years ago.

The total pledge per unit explains the increased total. During the annual pledge drive, new conveyed information included illustrative giving amounts as a percentage of income and an anonymized distribution of giving per family in histogram form. It is possible this outreach induced some of the increased giving per unit. Another possible contributing factor is further time lapse from the end of our Capital Campaign. Last year’s “mini” fund drive for building improvements mitigates this latter explanation.

The lack of growth in giving units and an actual decline in number of members compared to our peak in the face of steady growth in weekly church attendance points to a recommended point of emphasis for next year for both Stewardship and Evangelism: Increase the number of members and pledge giving units. Different giving habits do not explain the disparity or temper the goal, as non-pledge donations have not increased over the last four years.

**UCC Themed Events.** As has been the case in recent years, donations were collected for all four UCC-wide initiatives. Total contributions also reached a new high, with an increase of 8% and \$600 over the next highest year, 2017-18. Figure \_\_ shows the trend. We are helping those in need.



**Other:** The church can now receive donations through traditional cash and checks, online (Vanco), text-to-give, Paypal (in process), and possibly coming soon, Venmo. The vast majority of donations remain traditional but on-line giving is growing and other churches have reported significant giving increases through mobile platforms, especially by younger members.

## **Treasurer's Report**

### **Theresa Walker, Treasurer**

In July 2018, Debbie Webb completed her two-year term as Treasurer. Debbie brought her expertise and dedication to this position. Thank you, Debbie for all of your hard work.

#### General Operating

In 2018, collections and miscellaneous income for the operating budget totaled \$314,381.78. This was 105% of the 2018 projected budgeted amount of \$298,000.00. In 2018, operating expenses totaled \$290,513.63, which was 97% of the 2018 projected budgeted amount of \$297,852.03.

2018 ended with a net balance of \$23,868.15. This was due in part to the congregation's increased giving and the lapsed salary funds from the vacant Administrative Assistant position. With the passage of the 2019 Operating Budget, \$20,000 of the 2018 surplus funds were carried over into 2019 as a funding source for the 2019 Operating Budget.

#### Operating Reserves

The Reserves Account is Friend's Emergency Fund. The Reserve balance remained steady during 2018, ending the year with \$50,041.29. The balance as of April 30, 2019 is \$50,147.88 which represents 2.2 operating months' expenses.

#### Capital Funds

The official capital campaign for the enlargement of the church building ended in February 2018. Beginning in March 2018 the required mortgage payment was paid through the operating budget. The minimum required payment is \$1,684.22. Contributions designated for the mortgage payment are added to the required minimum payment.

As of April 30, 2019, the mortgage balance is \$185,267.18, a reduction of more than \$37,000 in the principal balance since Dec 2017.

#### Other Restricted Funds

Throughout 2018, the congregation has financially supported many charities. This support came through Crop Walk, Annual Dues, BBQ fund raiser, Love collections as well as other efforts.

Below is a list of those charities and our financial support:

Back Bay Mission	\$85.00
Brazos Church Pantry	\$660.00
Brazos Interfaith Immigration Network	\$2,677.70
Brazos Valley Food Bank	\$1,736.77
Crisis Fund	\$500.00
Family Promise of College Station	\$250.00
Feast of Caring	\$100.00
First Mennonite Church of Iowa City	\$550.00
Heart of Texas Association	\$1,609.98
Heifer International	\$621.50
Rise Against Hunger	\$1,830.00
Slumber Falls Camp	\$75.00
UCC Theological Education Fund	\$25.00
United Campus Ministry	\$2,784.27

We also maintained our 5 for 5 status with the SCC. Our giving for 2018 was as follows:

Christmas Fund	\$ 2,953.77
Neighbors in Need	\$ 6,029.14
One Great Hour Sharing	\$ 1,653.77
Strengthen the Church	\$ 1,794.11
OCWM	\$ 5,250.00

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me by  
e-mail at [treasurer@friends-ucc.org](mailto:treasurer@friends-ucc.org).

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### **Church Snapshot**

As of April 30, 2019

### **Outstanding Loans**

Mortgage	\$185,267.18
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### **Available Funds**

General Operating	\$ 37,069.20
Other Restricted	\$ 60,247.99
Savings	\$ 50,147.88
Jubilee Fund	<u>\$ 12,363.92</u>
Total	<u>\$159,828.99</u>

Note: The Jubilee Fund was invested in The UCC Cornerstone Fund in April 2017. These funds will earn interest, which will be given to a charitable cause every 7 years. At the end of year 49, the fund principal will

be distributed to a charitable cause. Interest earned through the end of 2018 was \$363.92.

Note: There are also two promissory notes held by the Local Church Ministries of the UCC. The amounts are approximately \$20,000.00 and \$86,293.00. We will only be required to repay these notes if we sell our land and building, leave the UCC, or no longer use the facility for our ministry. In 2018, we did not make a payment toward this commitment.



# PROGRAMS REPORT

Wayne Hamman, Deputy Moderator for Programs

## Spiritual Growth and Development

### Overview

The Spiritual Growth and Development in cooperation with the Associate Pastor, assists and co-coordinates spiritual growth opportunities for individuals, small groups, families, communal settings, and with the Wider Church.

### Individual Devotional opportunities

**Daily and Seasonal Devotionals** – Opportunities for individual and small group study are facilitated with suggested readings, online devotionals, and Friends Church devotionals written by our own congregation.

**Labyrinth** - located behind the church, open daily - The Friends Church labyrinth is open to all. We honor this space as "holy space." Our labyrinth was constructed by members and friends of our church and dedicated and consecrated to the glory of God on September 20, 2003 as part of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ministry in the Brazos Valley. It is based on the Santa Rosa labyrinth pattern developed by Lea Goode-Harris. It is a 7-circuit labyrinth with modifications that include the natural terrain of the location and is constructed from bark mulch, crushed granite and limestone. There are informational brochures about this very meaningful and life-giving practice near the labyrinth. There are several groups and individuals who have been maintaining the labyrinth area for safe and meaningful use for all.

### Small Group Opportunities

**Soul Friends:** Small groups called Soul Friends allow us to form deeper connections and friendships with the people we see on Sunday mornings. They provide us with a supportive and safe place to share the joys and concerns in our lives. Soul Friends normally meet in a host home during the week.

**Social Justice Class:** This adult Sunday School class aims to explore how spiritual beliefs inform our daily life and our interactions with the world. Various speakers plus class-led volunteers prepare for the Sunday morning discussions.

**Morning Manna Class:** This class explores scripture-based and lectionary studies.

**Friends Church Online Resources** - The Friends Church website offers resources and information about our church. Spiritual resources include **weekly blogs** written by our pastors, Dan and Trent as well as an incredible library of the sermons given in our church every Sunday.

### Communal Opportunities

**Real Life Theology:** This periodic gathering is scheduled and hosted by individual members of Friends Church with an invited speaker and subsequent discussion about their personal spiritual journeys.

**Inquiry classes.** The Inquiry Class is designed to help people that are interested in knowing more about Friends Congregational Church and the larger United Church of Christ. It is a place where they can both learn from current members and ask their questions in a welcoming environment. The first meeting is held at the church with subsequent meetings in the homes of facilitators. Participants are invited to share their individual faith journeys, to learn about and discuss the UCC Statement of Faith and explore the concept of Spiritual Locations.

## Family Opportunities:

**Slumber Falls Camp Family Weekend (May) Slumber Falls:** The All Church Retreat to Slumber Falls in New Braunfels takes place each May and all members, friends, and family are encouraged to attend this very special time of fellowship, meals, games, worship, and activities centered around the camp and adjacent rivers.

## Wider Church Opportunities

**The Journey (October):** The Journey is held annually in October. It is sponsored and hosted by the North Texas Journey Community at Camp Crucis just outside of Granbury, Texas. The Journey is a spiritual renewal program intended to strengthen the local church through the development of Christian disciples and leaders. The Journey experience is a 72-hour short course in Christianity, comprised of talks and activities led by clergy and lay persons.

## Year in Review 2018-2019

**Morning Manna** – Hebrew scriptures with the stories from Genesis and Exodus, the rebellious women and men who challenged injustice and sought liberation for all of God's people

**Social Justice** - an example of topics discussed this year

a multipart podcast about an anthropologist who has been searching the Sonoran Desert for objects left behind by migrants.

The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein.

Scott Atnip from Texas Impact – "Advocacy 101

Protective Hospitality - Elizabeth

**Theology Unplugged** - focused on workings of a project set to provide a lifeline for low-income Americans who are at risk of pretrial incarceration and how this is tied to a cash bail system. This activity is being re-evaluated.

**Journey 14** was held October 25-28 at Camp Crucis. It is suggested at this time that the Journey be encouraged and supported but perhaps be removed as an active part of our Spiritual Growth Ministry.

**Devotionals:** The Advent devotionals for 2018 were written and published by and for the congregation. Spiritual Life provided the book Grounded for small group study for Lent.

**Real Life Theology** was introduced with very positive response. There were two activities that were held in a private home setting with standing room only response!

**Inquiry Class** began in a new format. Three meetings were held in the fall and again in early spring semester. The first meeting occurred at the church after the 10:30 worship service and the second and third meetings in a small group setting in a private home hosted by church members.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ronnie Holz, Trent Williams, Jodie Robinson, and Cathy Hansen

May 10, 2019

## Nuture Committee

Cady and Pam Engler, Co-Chairs

**Committee Members:** Brian Blake, Jenny Bollom, Linda Coats, Kevin Graham, Wayne Hamman, Kristin Harper, Barbara Heath, Alison Holder, Ronnie Holz, Mary Lin Howell, Kathy Langlotz, Shelly McGee, Robin Miller, Nancy Plankey-Videla, Kate Powell, Shane De Los Santos, Olivia Simonich, Diane Simpson, Doris Simpson, Paula Verdegaal, Linda Vukovich, Kathleen Witte, Debbie and Debby York

The Nurture Committee reaches out to members of the congregation to provide love and support in times of need, to express the joy of the congregation in times of celebration and to say thank you to those who serve the church. Members of the committee choose to serve on the committee as a whole, on one or more of the teams within the committee (meals, transportation, visitation) or on one particular task.

During this past year we:

**Provided meals** to a number of families and individuals in the congregation with a variety of circumstances – dealing with serious illness, recovering from surgery or illness, following the death of a loved one or following the birth of a baby.

**Provided transportation** to those who needed it to get to church or other locations. We were pleased to discover the Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living (BVCIL) van that now provides transportation on weekends and has helped us be able to provide transportation for one of our members who needs a ride to worship every Sunday.

Assisted in the **visitation ministry** of the church both in hospitals and care facilities. Initial investigations were made into the possibility of having the Stephen Ministry be part of Friends Church outreach to members who are hurting and needing support.

**Provided or assisted with receptions following memorial services.**

**Celebrated the birth of babies** by presenting families with a hand-painted cross made by the FAA (Fabulous at Any Age) group of the congregation.

**Celebrated baptisms** by presenting small wooden crosses to all who were baptized in the congregation and sending a children's book to a baby who was baptized in our church that lives out of town on the first anniversary of his baptism.

**Provided gifts and notes for our high school graduates.**

**Took flowers and a card signed by the congregation to a member for her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

**Presented red candles** to represent the love of the congregation to be taken with those who moved from the community.

**Will be sending care packages and notes to those going on the Youth Mission Trip.**

**Sent numerous cards, notes and letters** to those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries (most of them were ecards), to those who were ill, to those on our special care list, to new members, to worship visitors, to those celebrating accomplishments and milestones in their lives, to those who were grieving and to those who had served the congregation in various ways.

**Three groups are included in the Nurture Ministry: FAA, Families with Young Children and Parents of Teens.** FAA meets monthly for lunch, events and service coordinated by Linda Coats. Both of the parent's groups have had events this year but are currently searching for new leadership.

Thanks to Debbie and Debby York and to Kristin Harper for their past leadership with these groups.

## Worship Committee

Chairs: Dinah Anderson, Jess Wade

Members: Justin Acton, Andy Ambrus, Maggie Gartner, Jennifer Hester, Thom Lemmons, Anne Nichols, Senior Pastor Dan De Leon (ex-officio), Associate Pastor Trent Williams (ex-officio), and Chris Hoffman (ex-officio)

The Worship Committee is responsible for coordinating with the ministerial staff in preparing all the details for regular and special worship services. The committee is tasked with making all the elements available for communion (including baking the bread); scheduling Greeters, Lay Leaders, and Communion Stewards for services; changing out liturgical cloths and banners appropriate for each season; keeping the altar candles ready for services; preparing the baptismal font and/or baptistry for services; providing special decorations for Advent, Christmas, and Easter; making sure the sanctuary or other worship spaces are prepared and welcoming for each service, including placement of chairs; and making sure that Welcome, Pray, Give envelopes, Note Cards, pens, and hymnals are easily accessible for our church family and guests. They also assist with arrangements for funerals, vigils, ordinations, and other special services.

Attendance records for 2018 - 2019:

Average attendances:

Sunday, 10:30 am service - 153  
Sunday, 8:00 am service - 17  
Midweek service - 9  
Peacemeal service - 5-10

Attendance for special services:

Longest Night - 48  
Christmas Eve - 175  
Ash Wednesday (morning) - 16  
Ash Wednesday (evening) - 64  
Palm Sunday (8:00) - 22  
Palm Sunday (10:30) - 211  
Maundy Thursday - 45  
Good Friday - 117  
Easter (8:00) - 78  
Easter (10:30) - 196

The Worship Committee is grateful that several new people have joined them this past year, but are always looking for members of our church family who are interested in helping to make the worship experience even more welcoming and meaningful, and are willing to make the commitment to help make that possible.

Special thanks go to the coordinators of specific areas: Anne Nichols - Communion and Lay Leader Coordinator; Rhoda Bertsch - Greeter Coordinator; Andy Ambrus - candles, baptisms, and new members; Maggie Gartner - communion bread; Justin Acton and Kevin Graham - upper banners.

## Financial Secretary's Report

### Tom Vogel, Financial Secretary

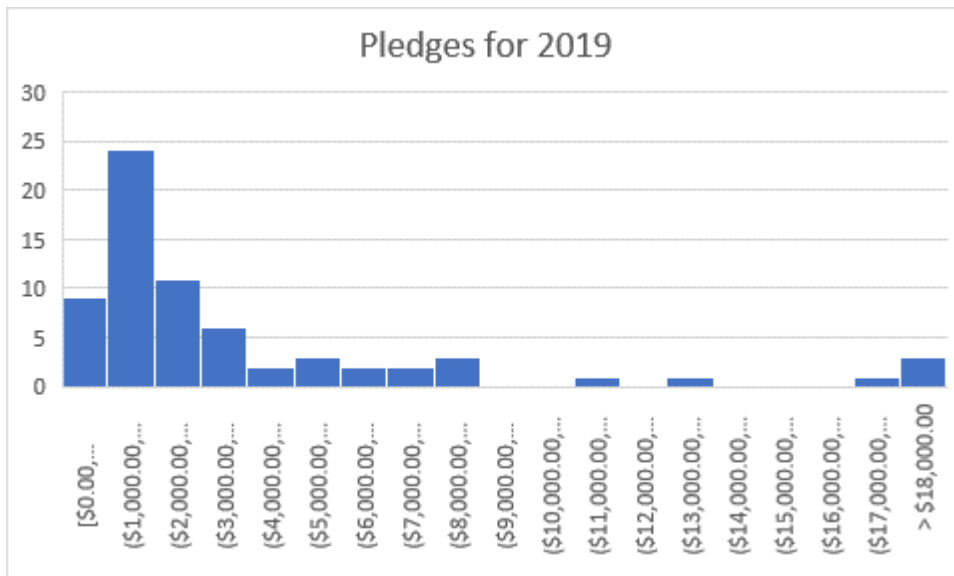
The Financial Secretary's duties are to collect, categorize, and deposit all income to the church, excluding transactions involving the capital campaign, to communicate this information weekly to the Treasurer, and to prepare annual giving reports and semi-annual pledge reports for individual congregation members. The Financial Secretary also shares information to assist with the annual stewardship campaign.

Below are historical data for unrestricted donations (pledges and unpledged offerings) for the past five years. Restricted donations, e.g., donations to the Heifer Project, special offerings, donations to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, etc., are not included in these numbers.

Year	Unrestricted donations
2014	\$230,352.64
2015	\$259,904.56
2016	\$237,963.42
2017	\$270,320.00
2018	\$310,372.47

The budget for 2018 anticipated expenses of \$298,000, based on my best estimate of what we could expect in unrestricted donations. Since our donations exceeded that amount, we were in the black for 2018.

The pledge drive for the 2019 budget raised pledges of \$279,224, from 67 pledges received, for an average annual pledge of \$4167.52. Below is a histogram of annual pledge amounts, showing 9 pledges of less than \$1000, 24 pledges between \$1000 and \$2000, and so on.



Using the pledge drive and my projection of the unpledged giving we can expect, the budget for 2019 (which the budget committee put together in December, 2018) was based on total anticipated unrestricted donations of \$352,000. As of 5/12/19, we had received \$158,645.50 in unrestricted offerings during 2019. Assuming a fairly uniform stream of donations (a very simplistic assumption), we're ahead, since we've received 45% of what we need for the budget in about 36% of the year.