

Friends

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



2016-2017 Program Year Annual Reports

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PASTOR'S REPORT

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon, Senior Pastor

What a year it's been for the pastorate of Friends Congregational Church! With the calling of the first Associate Pastor in the history of our 38-year-old congregation in October 2016 came a change in title for this minister, from "Pastor" to "Senior Pastor." However, title changes are hollow without changes in the work those titles invite. Rev. Trent Williams and I continue working and visioning together as to how the pastorate, shepherded by our shared leadership as your Senior and Associate Pastors, can best live out Friends' mission of seeking a deeper spirituality and transforming God's world one act of love at a time, as well as its vision of offering God's extravagant welcome to all. This report offers an overview of that still-changing work from July 1, 2016 to mid-June of 2017.

Churches often say, "The youth are our future." However, our friends at United Christian Church, Austin, have a t-shirt their youth group wears that says, "Youth are not the future of the Church. We are the Church today." I couldn't agree more, and I've tried to foster that in several ways this year with our congregation's young people.

In the last week of July, I attended the United Church of Christ's National Youth Event with our youth, grades 7-12, in Orlando. NYE, which only takes places every four years, was a great experience for the nine youth and four adults that attended from Friends Church, along with nearly 100 youth and adults from the entire South Central Conference, and more than 3,000 youth and adults from the UCC and Disciples of Christ nationwide. I'm grateful to Kristin Harper and Michelle Williamson for coordinating the details of NYE, and to Elizabeth Vasquez and Ruth and Dave Nelson for serving as adult chaperones with me on the trip. Without their help and enthusiastic cooperation from the youth and their parents, NYE would not have been possible. Back at Friends Church, the youth group and I put together a youth-led worship service on August 21st where the youth shared testimonies from their experiences from the mission trip to Waco (last week of June 2016) and NYE.

In the fall, I taught the high school Sunday School class, meeting every week at 9:15am. I continued to do so in the spring when their class changed its meeting time to right after the worship services, but with help from a rotation of volunteer teachers: Robin Miller, Mary Lin Howell, and Kevin Graham.

In February, I put together a Souper Bowl of Caring lock-in for the youth group with help from several adult volunteers in our congregation. The excited group, Grades 6-12, fasted for 20-30 hours, all the while learning about hunger-related diseases and their effects on individuals and families in our community and around the world. The youth were able to connect their discipleship with Christ to the joyful, costly requirement upon them to work for the eradication of the injustices of poverty, hunger, and inadequate healthcare.

In late March, I co-coordinated a retreat to Slumber Falls, New Braunfels, for the youth groups of our church and United Christian Church, Austin, alongside their Youth Group Coordinator Meghan Trout. With the focus Scripture of Matthew 12:46-50, the youth affirmed different family make-ups, and learned about their bond as a family of choice through their shared discipleship with Christ: "Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother."

However, the largest youth group effort was in my coordination and co-leadership of Confirmation for the 16 youth, Grades 6-11, who participated. From mid-January to June 4, 2017, the confirmands attended Confirmation classes on Sundays at 9:15am, field trips to local

PASTOR'S REPORT (cont.)

communities of faith, and youth group activities and retreats. They also found adult mentors in the congregation, with whom they went over weekly assignments on a variety of topics, such as God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, prayer, the sacraments, the Church, etc. I put together the assignments, field trips, activities and retreats, and most of the classes.

Thankfully, Pastor Trent taught four of the classes throughout the five-month process, and David Manuel co-led most of those classes with us. Additionally, I plugged the confirmands into leadership roles in Sunday services (lay leader, bread runner for communion, greeter, children's message) from March 26th through June 4th.

Toward the end of last year, Director of Music Ministries Chris Hoffman, Associate Pastor Trent Williams, and I began meeting for weekly staff meetings. The intentional hour-plus each week has helped us get to know each other better as we assess and plan worship services, explore possibilities for our church's future, and lead each other in different devotional and spiritual exercises, such as lectio divina.

Part of my service to our church's pastorate has extended to the Conference and National levels of the United Church of Christ. At the South Central Conference's Annual Meeting, June 9-10, I completed my duties as President of the SCC. My time on the SCC Board of Directors as Vice President, 2013-15, and then President, 2015-17, oversaw a great deal of transition. During my tenure, our Conference Minister, Rev. Douglas Anders, retired somewhat suddenly; we called an Interim Conference Minister, Rev. Anna Humble; our Director of Outdoor Ministry, Rev. Charles Stark, retired; we called a Designated Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Don Longbottom; we hired an Acting Director of Outdoor Ministry, Rev. Jeremy Albers; we made amendments to the SCC's Constitution and Bylaws; we rekindled the working relationship between the Board of Directors and the Slumber Falls Camp Council; we sold a property in Houma, Louisiana to the mutual benefit of a Pentecostal congregation there and the SCC; we reactivated the SCC Nominating and Personnel Committees; and we hired Rev. Albers as the SCC's settled Director of Outdoor Ministry.

Over the last four years, I have attended quarterly business meetings of the SCC Board in Houston, an annual retreat for the Board at Slumber Falls in New Braunfels, and Annual Meeting for the entire Conference in different cities each year. At the Annual Meeting this year, held at Cathedral of Hope, Dallas, our Conference voted for the approval of amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws; the call of our settled Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Don Longbottom; the approval of a slate of nominees presented to the Board by the Nominating Committee, chaired by our own Anne Wehrly; and the adoption of a resolution in response to passage of S. B. 4, titled, "Creating a Better Nation for All: A Call to Sacred Resistance and Extravagant Welcome." I'm pleased to have completed my responsibilities as our Conference's President, but I'm also fulfilled knowing that we are on more stable footing now and better poised to be a prophetic voice of justice, righteousness, and love throughout Texas and Louisiana.

At the UCC's General Synod later this month in Baltimore, I will complete my tasks as Chair of the Nominating Committee for our denomination. As Chair of the GS Nom Com, I was in Cleveland, Jan. 19-21, for our biannual meeting. We successfully came up with a slate of 12 nominees to present at GS for a vote to serve on the UCC's Board of Directors, one of whom is our own Kevin Graham, and another of whom is Friends Church member Aishia Brown, who moved to Louisville a year ago. At GS, I will address the entire UCC with remarks and the official presentation of our slate of nominees; and later I will facilitate an open meeting for anyone interested in asking the GS Nom Com questions about how we arrived at our slate. From there I head to D.C., where I will meet up with our youth group on their mission trip.

PASTOR'S REPORT (cont.)

A few other pastoral highlights beyond the various weekly tasks of pastoral care, worship planning, study, and administrative work have included:

- working with members of the Sustainability Team toward securing the solar panels that are now successfully installed on the church roof;
- collaborating with Associate Pastor Trent Williams to create Midweek Faith Formation services on Wednesday nights at 6pm for a group of 15-20+ attendees;
- working with Spiritual Development Chair Linda Fitzwater, Pastor Trent, and other volunteers to revamp Inquiry Classes, which were offered in the fall and spring, and will be offered again in the fall of this year for anyone interested in learning more about Friends Congregational Church and the United Church of Christ; and
- working with Angela and Ryan Jackson to revamp the Living the Questions ministry for young adults, and to then kick start the 20s & 30s of Friends ministry, beginning with a well-attended potluck in February brainstorming ideas for the group.

Striving to lead our church beyond the walls of our sanctuary, I carried out the following tasks of evangelism, outreach, and social justice ministries in our community and beyond:

- Wrote open letter on behalf of Brazos Valley clergy to Islamic Community of B-CS Board after gunfire vandalism of their mosque, July 7
- Organized and led "Standing With our Muslim Neighbors" rally outside the Islamic Community of B-CS mosque, July 8
- Brought bottled water in support of vigil held outside Waller County Jail in remembrance of Sandra Bland, July 12
- Offered prayer and participated in #HateIsBadBull demonstration, organized by Texas A&M University NAACP Collegiate Chapter, July 14
- Served on a "Spirituality & Medicine" Panel, Sept. 20, TAMU Health Science Building – speaking to 1st year medical school students about sensitivities of treating patients bearing in mind their faith traditions
- Participated in TAMU Blackout, TAMU Rudder Plaza, Sept. 28 – students, faculty, staff, and community members wore black in solidarity to protest against racially-motivated violence
- Participated in "Two Ministers & a Rabbi," Oct. 6, Sweet Eugene's Coffee House – an open interfaith listening station with Rabbi Matt Rosenberg of Texas A&M Hillel and Rev. Aaron Stockwell of Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Brazos Valley
- CROP Hunger Walk, Veterans Park, Oct. 9 – served as clergy liaison for the CROP Hunger Walk leadership team
- Attended 60th anniversary service and reception for Unitarian Universalist Church of the Brazos Valley
- Provided rides to the polls for NAACP of Brazos County at North Bryan Community Center
- Organized/coordinated photo shoot with interfaith clergy leaders in response to elections, which launched on social media 11/14
- Attended "State of Race and Policing in America - Reflections on Pulled Over: How Police Stops Define Race and Citizenship" at Bush Library
- On camera interview with KAGS TV re: interfaith clergy photo in response to elections
- Attended Anti-Defamation League briefing at TAMU Hillel, 11/30, in preparation for white supremacist speaking at Texas A&M
- Co-organized & participated in gathering at TAMU Hillel to march onto campus and stand with the Silent Protest outside Rudder Tower in resistance to hate speech from white supremacist speaker, Dec. 6
- Offered remarks and prayer at Brazos County Community Night of Prayer, sponsored by the Brazos County Pastor's Coalition, Dec. 7

PASTOR'S REPORT (cont.)

- Participated in MLK Day "Walk for Justice" in Bryan, Jan. 16
- Wrote third Saturday columns for The Eagle's "Faith & Values" section
- Represented Friends Church at the Brazos County NAACP's Jubilee Day at Galilee Baptist Church, Bryan, Jan. 22
- After the Texas Impact event the evening of Jan. 29, I joined a caravan of people to the Islamic Community of B-CS Mosque for a show of solidarity with our Muslim neighbors. Coverage of the outpour of support appeared on the cover of The Eagle the next day.
- Brazos Interfaith Immigration Network Clergy Meeting with Sheriff Kirk (Brazos Co.), Chief Buske (Bryan), and Chief McCollum (College Station) at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Bryan, re: escalation of ICE raids, Feb. 2
- Met with "select group" of concerned citizens (clergy, community members, students) re: ICE raids in our community and how we can respond in defense of our immigrant neighbors, Feb. 6. From that meeting I became the "convener" of a subgroup of clergy and laity in charge of forming a coalition of churches for the Haven/Sanctuary Movement.
- Participated in press conference, "Texas Faith Leaders for Equality," in opposition to S.B. 6 (the "bathroom bill") at First UMC, Austin, Feb. 9. Several UCC clergy from the SCC attended, including our Designated Conference Minister.
- Attended "Meet Your Muslim Neighbors" event at the Islamic Community of B-CS Mosque, Feb. 11. Several Friends Church members and frequent guests were in attendance, and the Imam publicly thanked our congregation and me for being there.
- Attended meeting of the Austin Sanctuary Network at First Unitarian Church, Austin, re: ICE raids and how we can respond in defense of our immigrant neighbors, Feb. 16
- Spoke on panel for National Association for Chicano/Chicana Studies "Foco Conference" at Texas A&M, Feb. 23
- Participated in bilingual, ecumenical prayer vigil for immigrants and refugees at Santa Teresa Catholic Church, March 5
- Interview with The Eagle re: Friends Church's potential involvement in Sanctuary Movement, March 13 (story appeared March 19)
- Community Leadership Luncheon with local clergy and civic leaders at Islamic Community of B-CS Mosque, April 26
- "Texas Clergy Against Discrimination" protest at Capitol, organized by Texas Freedom Network; interview with Religious Institute re: Friends Church's participation in Transgender Weekend of Justice, May 3
- Planning meeting with concerned citizens in support of sanctuary movement at BIIN office, May 8
- Meeting of NAACP Pastor's Coalition at North Bryan Community Center, May 9
- Phone interview with Freedom for All Americans re: discriminatory legislation against LGBTQ people, May 10
- Community Leadership Luncheon with local clergy and civic leaders at Islamic Community of B-CS Mosque, April 26
- "Texas Clergy Against Discrimination" protest at Capitol, organized by Texas Freedom Network; interview with Religious Institute re: Friends Church's participation in Transgender Weekend of Justice, May 3
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PASTOR'S REPORT (cont.)

On a personal note, my family and I enjoyed probably the best vacation we've ever had in August when we traveled to Puerto Vallarta. My Smartphone remained turned off and out of sight almost all the time. I didn't check email and stayed off of social media entirely. Stacy and I watched Ruthie and Mac "jump waves" and bury their feet in the sand under the tide hitting the shore. I witnessed more than one incredible sunset without interruptions of any kind. None of us got sick. Our travel went smoothly. Oh, and did I mention that we danced with a dolphin?

I share all of this to not only share my family's joy, but to express my gratitude for the healthy, supportive Friends Church family that made that getaway possible. It's a particular relief to know that whether I was overseeing a Conference Board meeting, chairing a General Synod Nominating Committee conference call, or walking on the beach with my spouse and children, our congregation was okay and always moving forward with the vision and mission of our church. God is good all the time, and all the time God is good.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR'S REPORT

Rev. Trent Williams, Associate Pastor

Friends:

I've been with you as Associate Pastor for a little over 8 months now, and I want to offer you my deepest thanks for the welcome that you have extended to me and to John. I have been made to feel at home here in a way that I have rarely experienced, and I'm grateful to be in ministry with you in this place and time. Of course, we're not complete strangers to one another, since I had the opportunity to get to know this community of faith as a seminary student. It has been a great joy to get to "come home" and rejoin you on this journey of seeking a deeper spirituality and transforming God's world, one act of love at a time.

In this time since I joined you last fall, we have had the opportunity to get to know one another better and to discern how I can best work along with Dan, Chris, and the lay leadership to help Friends fulfill its mission and vision. I have had the opportunity to preach about monthly on average, and to work with Dan and Chris in the planning and leading of Sunday worship. In addition, I have helped to lead the Midweek Faith Formation Service on Wednesdays. Earlier this year, I initiated and led a six-week series on LGBT perspectives on the Bible, which was a great success. One of my goals is to continue offering short-term studies such as this on a regular basis. In addition, I have had the opportunity to lead the Morning Manna class on a few occasions, and will be providing regular leadership to that group when Sunday school resumes in August.

I have assisted our Senior Pastor with pastoral care and administrative tasks, helped with our Inquiry Classes, provided spiritual leadership for the annual all-church retreat, led sessions of Theology on Tap/Theology Unplugged, begun exploration of a potential small group ministry, and worked with the staff on envisioning potential additional worship services to serve our growing community.

Church Council appointed an Associate Pastoral Relations Committee for me late last year, and we have been meeting regularly for conversation, discernment, and support. Dan and I have worked on and created an ideal job description for me, which my PRC and I have discussed and refined together. This calls for my work to be focused in six primary areas: Worship Planning & Leadership, Pastoral Care, Faith Formation & Intentional Fellowship, Fostering Community & Deepening Spirituality, Alternative Worship, and Administrative. I anticipate that this will continue to be refined and revised as we work together, and in response to our long-range planning retreat.

I am excited about the coming year and all that we will do together as Friends Church. May we continue to welcome, love, and care for all who come through our doors and may we seek to grow more deeply as followers of the risen Christ, for the sake of the world that God so loves.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Katie Higgins, Nominating Committee Chair & Congregational Representative
Eli Vasquez, Nominating Committee Member

It was a pleasure to work with Rhoda Bertsch, Ronnie Holz, Katie Higgins, Dan De Leon (ex officio) and Mark Thomas on the Odd Year Nominating Committee. We are very thankful to everyone who considered serving, to those who contributed to the nomination process, and to each individual who accepted a leadership position.

The officers below serve two-year terms, with the exception of the Youth Representative, who serves a one-year term. Our nominated church leaders are as follows:

Moderator: Dwight Baker
 Vice Moderator: Kelly Wellman
 Deputy Moderator of Programs: Diane Simpson
 Church Council Secretary: Raney Whitwell
 Property Chair: Susan Fontaine
 Financial Secretary: Tom Vogel
 Spiritual Development Chairs: Cathy Hansen & Ronnie Holz
 Christian Education Chair: Robin Miller
 Fellowship Chairs: Allison Holder & Kate Powell
 Congregational Representative: Lisa Welch
 Pastoral Relations: Trina Davis
 Associate Pastoral Relations: Dustin Kemp
 Youth Representative to Programs (1 year term): Lucy Harper

The positions to be filled next year by the outgoing Congregational Representative and Nominating Committee are:

Deputy Moderator of Trustees
 Treasurer
 Personnel Chair
 Stewardship Chair
 Justice and Missions Chair
 Worship Chair
 Evangelism Chair
 Nurture Chair
 Congregational Representative
 Pastoral Relations
 Associate Pastoral Relations
 Youth Representative to Programs (1 year term)

Sincerely,

Eli Vasquez, on behalf of the Odd Year Nominating Committee (Rhoda Bertsch, Ronnie Holz, Katie Higgins, Dan De Leon, and Mark Thomas)

MUSIC MINISTRIES REPORT

Chris Hoffman, Director of Music Ministries

The 2016/2017 church year marked my eleventh 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. This year has also been a year of firsts.

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, including, but not limited to: Pastor Trent's Installation service, weddings, Confirmation, baptisms, and New Member Sundays. The Choir will be enjoying their well-earned summer hiatus from July until mid-August.

The Chancel Choir had two other special services that required extra time and attention. The Advent season brought about a Service of Lessons and Carols, which was modeled after the traditional Lessons and Carols services given at King's College Chapel in Cambridge. Specific readings from both the Old and New Testaments were presented, with musical reflections provided by the Chancel Choir, the Handbell Choir, combining at the end of the service. There were also several Hymns in the service that allowed for congregational singing.

Good Friday's worship service was centered on Théodore Dubois' Masterwork, *The Seven Last Words of Christ*. This work was a complete musical portrayal of the Good Friday story. The Chancel Choir was accompanied by organ (played by Kathy Robbins) and flute (played by frequent guest flautist Jessica Borski). There were three soloists who did a magnificent job tackling the extremely challenging solo work: Cathy Hansen, soprano; Matt Hoffman, tenor; and Tom Vogel, baritone. It was a beautiful and moving service that made the celebration of Easter even more special.

Speaking of Easter, many wonderful musical elements combined to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Dustin Kemp started the service off by singing "Here Comes the Sun," accompanied by Dan De Leon on guitar, while our children passed out carnations. The Handbell Choir and Chancel Choir worked together to perform the special Introit and Anthem. Kathy Robbins and Jess Wade led the Hymns with piano and organ duets, while 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!

Since the Chancel Choir (and Handbell Choir) perform a LOT of music during the church year, there is one task that few people think of: organizing and filing new and old music. Thanks to Cathy Hansen for stepping up as the official volunteer Music Librarian. It takes a lot of time to go through music, especially when things are not handed in on time, and her help has been very valuable to me.

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. Thanks also goes to Lucy Harper, for lending her vocal leadership when numbers were just a little bit on the low side.

The Children's Christmas Pageant provided a great way to have the children and adults 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.

MUSIC MINISTRIES REPORT (cont.)

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 (occasionally Sunday nights at 7:30 pm, when I am involved in theatre rehearsals). In addition to the special services mentioned above, the Handbells ring one Sunday a month. The Handbell ringing season lasts from September to May. 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 (thanks to Cady Engler for bringing those bells to rehearsals). If interest continues to be this great, it is very possible that I will need to start a fundraising endeavor to purchase our own fifth octave set. For more information about handbell ringing, please chat with me!

One of the newer offerings provided this year are Beginner Bells, geared toward teaching children how to ring. Thanks goes to a wonderful anonymous donor for donating the funds to purchase two Kristal Bell sets. These are rainbow-colored bells that our children get to ring. Music is played through the church speakers, and I stand in front of the group holding up cards with specific colors on it. When the kids see their color, they ring their bell until I change cards. It is definitely a fun way to make even more joyful noises to God!

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, English horn (another first for us), trumpet, violin, piano, guitar, mandolin, 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!

Another first for our church relates not to a church-specific activity, but to how we have offered an extravagant welcome. The Brazos Civic Orchestra, a community orchestra that is new this year, was founded by our own Wolfgang Verdegaaal. Providing an outlet for community members who still play, but do not do so professionally, this ensemble allows people to work with others in performing staples of orchestral repertoire. I am happy that Friends Church has become their home, and that we are able to welcome them every Thursday night for their rehearsals.

Lastly, I would like to thank our wonderful pianist Kathy Robbins for her service. What this brief (yes, brief) report outlines is just a small snapshot of what we do, and Kathy has always been gracious in giving of her time and talents. Still one of my personal favorites: when she modulates to different keys during Congregational Hymns. We are indeed blessed.

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

1. A choral ensemble for middle school/junior high singers
2. 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)
3. Raising funds to purchase a fifth octave set of handbells
4. Creating a beginner adult Handbell Choir
5. Creating a youth Handbell Choir

MUSIC MINISTRIES REPORT (cont.)

It has been a huge honor and a blessing to serve as your Director of Music Ministries for these past eleven 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!

CHURCH RECORDS

Membership

272	Active Members
22	Members not active
<u>56</u>	Out of town members
350	Members as of June 12, 2016

New Members	<u>2014-15</u>	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2016-17</u>
	27	41	31

Sacraments and Rites

7	Infant/child Baptisms
0	Adult Baptisms
5	Marriages/Holy Unions at Friends Church

Average Attendance	<u>2014-15</u>	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2016-17</u>
Sunday Worship	122	129	141
Wednesday Worship	13	13	14

Attendance at Special Services

	<u>2014-15</u>	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2016-17</u>
Ash Wednesday	75	13	85
Maundy Thursday	16	23	37
Good Friday	80	157	108
Easter Early Service	69	55	75
Easter Worship	202	200	223
Christmas Eve	150	137	191

CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

Mark L. Thomas, Moderator

The past church year has been another whirlwind of activity in the life of Friends Congregational Church. At times it seemed that we were trying to set a new record for the number of congregational meetings in a single year! The point, though, is that we have tried to live out our mission in a myriad of ways, “to transform our world, one act of love at a time.” We opened our space for an interfaith gathering of hundreds, both inside and outside our building, as we grieved with our LGBT neighbors in Orlando after the Pulse Nightclub massacre. We went into our local community to stand with our Muslim neighbors. Thanks to many generous donations, large and small, we have now installed solar panels on our church, further enabling us to follow the ideals of our Earth Stewardship Covenant. We approved a congregational statement of support for refugees, immigrants, and the sanctuary movement. We are completing the capital campaign in good stead. And perhaps our most significant decision was to call Rev. Trent Williams as our Associate Pastor!

It has been exciting to not only welcome Trent, but to see the continued creative leadership of our Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon, and our Director of Music Ministries, Chris Hoffman. They inspire us in so many ways, as does our entire staff. Our Administrative Assistant, Kim Beasley, our Pianist, Kathy Robbins, and our childcare workers, Morgan Leopold, Elizabeth Tag, and Abbey Bronson, give much to our church.

In a recent message for Sunday worship, Dan emphasized that one of the senses of the New Testament Greek term for the Holy Spirit is “dynamite.” This jolting power of Christ’s spirit has been evident in many ways over the past year: the addition of numerous new members, the development of new ministries and activities, and the generous stewardship of this congregation, in sharing time, talents, and finances in service of others. As is typical for our church, there have also been some good-byes. Though there is sadness in parting, we celebrate the new growth as well.

Even in this process God calls us to a bigger view. The seeds of transformative love are scattered widely. I have been blessed to serve alongside a creative and dedicated Church Council. I continue to be amazed by those committee chairs, committee members, and leaders that have given of their time for years, as well as new volunteers, and those who grace us with the simple and profound gift of their presence. As I prepare to step down from my leadership role and become an observer from afar, I am excited to consider the new directions in which God will continue to lead this community of faith called Friends!

TRUSTEES REPORT

Kate Kiernat, Deputy Moderator

PERSONNEL—Debbie Ridgeway

We have maintained a full staff of child care workers this year. We provided a 3% raise for the child care staff this year. We continue to offer child care for Sunday and Wednesday services, Choir rehearsal and other all-church events. We have seen an increase in the number of times child care is desired. Personnel Chair Debbie worked with Pastor Dan and Moderator Mark Thomas to rewrite the job description for the Director of Music Ministry.

PROPERTY—Sally Manthei

This has been an exceptionally busy year for Property. To name a few projects that were undertaken: We had numerous AC issues throughout the year, including a leak in the kitchen ceiling, repair of AC units, along with replacement of the thermostat in the office. Issues with various doors in the building were also addressed and rectified.

Contact was made with the insurance adjustor about the upper roof leak in the front. Security light issues were also addressed and 2 ballasts were replaced in classrooms. A new kitchen faucet was purchased and installed.

Outside, the lustrum bushes appeared to have issues and those were researched. The fountain pump burned out and was replaced with a more powerful one. The sprinkler system was adjusted and monitored so as not to continue to run during the heavy rains. Trees were trimmed in the back. A new mowing service was hired. Signs were recently placed in front of the building to direct people to entrances. We continue to work on ways of lighting the pathway at night.

The large window behind the altar was repaired. A ramp was built in the altar area.

Spencer Williamson took the labyrinth on as an Eagle Scout project and did an amazing job in revamping it.

Property Chair Sally Manthei began work with the Accessibility Committee to create signage for the church bathrooms and accessible entrance.

The associate pastor's office was cleared of all stored items in anticipation of the associate pastor's arrival. Closets were cleared out and reorganized and it was requested that all nonperishable items be stored in the wooden shed outside.

There were also various events in the building throughout the year, so as you can see, it has been an extremely busy time for Property and Friends Church. Thank you everyone who helped put out Property fires this past year.

STEWARDSHIP—Anne Wehrly

Our stewardship campaign theme this year ***Go and Do the Same*** was taken from the parable of the Good Samaritan. It gets to the heart of the issue. God calls us to go and do the same as the Samaritan with our resources—financial, time and talent. There was an emphasis this year to expand the view of stewardship beyond JUST a financial pledge. This message was communicated via a monthly Stewardship Corner in the e-news. The importance of Time and Talent was emphasized by the three Friends' members who were asked to give Stewardship Moments during the fall campaign. Also, once the pledged Time and Talent information was available, it was passed on to the relevant committee chairs who could work to bring these folks into service with their time or talent. Friends has for years had many folks who give financially, but who do not actually make a pledge. We celebrate this giving; however, such giving makes planning for church life a challenge. This year the number of pledging units increased in the current year by 19% from 59 pledging units to 72. The importance of Stewardship Sunday was celebrated with a special Fall Reception with caramel apples and piano accompaniment.

TRUSTEES REPORT (cont.)

Beyond the stewardship campaign, Friends remained a 5 for 5 church meaning that Friends gave to the four national offerings that are suggested by the national church as well as Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM). Efforts were made to communicate back to Friends members the amount that was donated as well as provide an opportunity to give thanks for the generous giving. This year the following amounts were taken in special offerings.

Strengthen the Church-\$1,487 (June 2016)

Neighbors in Need-\$1,207.00 (Oct 2016)

Christmas Fund-\$1,924 (Dec 2016)

OGHS-\$2,142.14 (March 2017)

A final effort that was in place this year was to engage the people who are new members so that they may become a part of the giving. Their contact information is immediately shared with the Stewardship Chair so that a letter may be sent welcoming them to Friends and informing them of ways that they may engage both through time and talent and through financial giving.

PROGRAMS REPORT

Jess Wade, Deputy Moderator

Programs Areas: Christian Education, Evangelism, Fellowship, Justice and Mission, Nurture, Spiritual Growth and Development, Worship

It continues to astound me just how active our congregation is. In addition to coordinating the many areas included under Programs, as Deputy Moderator of Programs, I was also in charge of keeping the church calendar up to date. Even for a “programs driven” congregation, it is amazing just how involved our people are, especially when you consider the size of our congregation. It takes many dedicated volunteers to make this possible and a number of extremely dedicated leaders to make these opportunities a reality. These tireless leaders have included a summary of their area’s activities from the past year in the articles below. In addition to these nine wonderful adults, Elizabeth Tag served as our very active Youth Representative this year.

While it may seem to some that “church” is a few hours on Sunday, the truth is that our building and our people stay busy for much of the week, every week. In the past twelve months there were 580 events listed on our calendar that involved people at our church building in worship, educational classes, various committee meetings, choir and handbell rehearsals, special congregational events (BBQ, Easter and Thanksgiving potlucks, special/seasonal worship services, youth projects and fund raisers, etc.) and hosting Family Promise families. It also included events by those not necessarily associated with Friends who use our space. These included weddings, memorial services, recitals, community organizations topical presentations, Girl Scout meetings, and Transgender support group meetings. Also included are the many times our members were “in the community” working at the Church Pantry, at FAA outings, Theology on Tap/Unplugged, representing the church at various community social justice events, attending the Independence Day picnic, and Women’s Outings. In addition to all the recorded events, there are daily office hours from 9:00-1:00 and all the time that our pastors are available and engaged both in and outside of our church building. Plus, there are all the various committee meetings that happen extemporaneously and don’t even get recorded! All this involves untold hours and an enormous number of people.

Of course, none of this just happens. It takes a great deal of planning and preparation. So, a very big “Thank You” to the wonderful and tireless Chairs listed below and the many volunteers who help keep us aware of and make possible the worship, education, nurture, fellowship, evangelism, and service events to meet the needs of the thriving congregation that is Friends Congregational Church. Please know that it has been an honor and privilege for me to serve as your Deputy Moderator of Programs the past two years and serve on our Church Council. Thank you.

Christian Education

Tami Dudo, Chair

Sunday School and Confirmation Classes:

We started out the year (with the assistance of Fellowship Committee) with the Annual Pancake Breakfast and Sunday School registration on August 21st. Classes for Children and youth started August 28th.

Confirmation classes began in January 2017 with 14 confirmands. Due to the number of confirmands, the high school Sunday School classes met after church until 1:15 pm. All other Sunday School classes and the Confirmation class met from 9:15-10:15 and utilized

PROGRAMS REPORT (cont.)

Seasons of the Spirit curriculum. The last day of Sunday School was May 28th with a celebration of our High School graduates during the 10:30 church service. The youth choosing to be confirmed and baptized occurred the following Sunday, June 4th..

Our dedicated teachers for the year were:

K-Grade 2: Anne Wehrly

Grades 3-5: Kate Powell

Grades 6-8 & Confirmands: David Manuel, Dan DeLeon and Trent Williams

Grades 9-12: Dan DeLeon, and various volunteers including Grace Stanford, Robin Miller, Kevin Graham, and Mary Howell,

The high school Sunday School class collaborated and entered a contest, submitting a video about Syrian Refugees. Our high school class won second place and \$1000 they chose to put toward their 2017 Mission Trip.

Christian Education will be looking for Sunday School teachers for Grades 6-8 and Grades 9-12. We would like to thank David Manuel for his sharing his gifts with our youth for the past four years.

Joyful Noise and Joyful Ringers:

The children's choir was led by music director Chris Hoffman and Tami Dudo. Joyful Noise sang periodically throughout the church year and delighted the congregation with each performance! Additionally, we purchased a set of children's handbells and the Joyful Ringers made a joyful noise with handbells!

Special Services/Activities for Children/Youth:

November – Ornament making for Angel tree

December - Christmas Pageant

February – 30 Hour Famine, Souper Bowl of Caring

April - Palm Sunday Parade; Easter egg hunt

Special thanks to the youth for all their assistance in egg stuffing, furniture moving, flag stationing, trash dumping, sign changing, fountain cleaning, and general good will in whatever is asked of them. We also want to recognize Andrew Roblyer for updating our Christmas Pageant script, to allow more children and youth to be able to participate in the annual event.

Parents of the youth have stepped up and organized themselves for fundraising for the Youth Mission Trip to Washington DC, in July 2-9, 2017. Many thanks also goes to our parents for providing lunches for the High School Sunday School classes that were held after church services.

UNICEF and Heifer International:

All of the children and youth Sunday School classes are still on board with raising money funds for animals for Heifer International and UNICEF. We continue let our change make a change.

Summer Events:

Thirteen youth and four adults will be attending the Reach Beyond Mission trip in Washington DC from July 2nd to July 9th. Plans are also in the works for some family friendly activities during the summer months to keep us all connected until we meet again on August 27th for the NEXT Pancake breakfast and Sunday School registration.

PROGRAMS REPORT (cont.)

Evangelism

Carlos Figueora, Chair

Committee Members: Andy Tag, Rachel Boenigk, Miranda Cordts, and Glenn Thurman

The Evangelism Team focuses on getting the word out about Friends Church and welcoming all who find our doorway. This year we focused on advertising events occurring in the church. Along with the Social Justice Committee we helped in purchasing and distributing even flyers.

- We still have about 500 door hangers to invite our friends and neighbors to worship with us on Sundays.
- We no longer have baked cookies in welcome to friends baggies, now using Hershey's chocolate.
- Our Friends Congregational Audio Podcast continues to reach thousands of listeners via iTunes, our Sermons webpage and the Facebook Status updates.
- Our presence on Facebook continues to grow and reach new folks as well as engage our own folks in current happenings as well as sharing the links to the weekly sermon webpage and Pastor Dan's "Mid-Week Thoughts".
- We have been trying to keep up with the Eagle postings for weekly faith calendar events as well as keeping the paid Worship Guide listing current. We also advertised in the Christmas and Holy Week special sections again this year.
- Working with other committees to advertise various events happening in the church. Such as working with the Social Justice committee to distribute flyers on events, as well as media press releases.
- Attended Rainbow Resource fair in order to create more community presence.

Fellowship

Cady and Pam Engler, Co-Chairs

Committee Members: Rhoda Bertsch, Brian Blake, Jim Burke, Linda Coats, Stacy De Leon, Susan Fontaine, Kevin Graham, Wayne Hamman, Cathy Hansen, Ronnie Holz, Kate Kiernat, Sally Manthei, Robin Miller, Anne Nichols, Olivia Simonich, Diane Simpson, Bart Taylor, Lucy Thomas, Elijah Vasquez, Pete and Linda Vukovich, Kelly Wellman, Michelle Williamson, Curt York

Coffee Crew Members: Kristin Harper, Dave Nelson and Mary Howell

The Fellowship Committee sees their work as a ministry of hospitality with their goal being to help offer an extravagant welcome to all and build relationships in the congregation. This begins with the offer of coffee, tea and hot chocolate every Sunday morning as adults, youth and children come through the doors of the church for classes and/or worship. In addition, the committee has used their many talents to sponsor numerous events which are listed

PROGRAMS REPORT (cont.)

below with approximate attendance numbers in parentheses if known:

- Independence Day picnic at Aerofit (70)
- Leadership Retreat meal in cooperation with the Church Council (30)
- Back-to-School pancake breakfast (70)
- Coordination of meals for UCM Aggie Suppers in September and October before they moved their meeting place to an on-campus location (12-15)
- Ice cream social for committee recruitment event (50)
- BBQ to raise funds for United Campus Ministry and the Pride Community Center (220 dine-in and take-out meals) and pre-BBQ fellowship on the evening before BBQ (35)
- Receptions to welcome Trent Williams as our Associate Pastor (65) and following Trent's Installation service (72) in cooperation with the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee
- Inquiry class meal coordination - breakfast and lunch for the November class (12) and lunch for classes in March (15), April (20), May (21) and June
- Thanksgiving dinner (186)
- Receptions following Christmas cantata (80) and Longest Night service (40)
- Ash Wednesday breakfast (15) and soup supper (71)
- Easter brunch (142)
- Hospitality rooms for families prior to worship service where high school graduates were honored (9) and when the Confirmation Class was received
- Provided light refreshments for new member pre-worship meetings on the day they joined
- Profit share meals on the Wednesdays when Family Promise families were living in our building
- After worship receptions to welcome new members, to honor our high school graduates and to honor the Confirmation Class (50)
- Women's Night Out – gatherings in October, January and June (3 – 20)
- An after worship fellowship time with food and coffee was started in November

Thanks to the members of the Fellowship Committee and the many others from the congregation who contributed in so many ways this year. Your servant hearts have helped to make our church a truly welcoming place.

Justice and Missions

Cecelia Hawkins, Chair

Committee Members: Theresa Walker, Linda Coats, Robin Miller, Olivia Simonich, Mary Howell, Barbara Heath, Joe Hartsoe, Barb Loraine, Anne Wehrly, Tyler Adams, Kelly Wellman and Pam Engler.

The Justice and Mission committee extends the work of the church to the community and the world through education on social justice issues, service projects, and offerings. Ongoing ministries include volunteering monthly at Brazos Church Pantry, delivering bread donations from Blue Baker to the Brazos Church Pantry once a week, serving as a host church for Family Promise of the Brazos Valley, an organization that provides food, housing, training, and transportation to homeless families while helping them secure permanent housing, and providing funding and volunteers for the Brazos Interfaith Immigration Network (BIIN). The Justice and Mission committee also includes the congregation's Mass Incarceration and

PROGRAMS REPORT (cont.)

Criminal Justice Task Force (currently inactive), Sustainability Team (see report below, and Faith Inclusion and Disability Awareness Team (see report below).

In addition to these ongoing ministries, Justice and Mission events and activities this year have included the following:

Participating in the Bryan College Station CROP Walk with nine walkers and \$315 in pledges. CROP WALK raised over \$11,571 to fight hunger this year, a little down from last year's total.

Raising \$3,660 from 15 congregation households through the annual Festival of Giving to benefit Back Bay Mission, Brazos Church Pantry, Brazos Interfaith Immigration Network, the Friends Church Crisis Fund, Hospice Brazos Valley, My Long Way Home, Voices for Children, and the congregation's Slumber Falls Scholarship Fund.

Providing Christmas gifts for three local families, gas and grocery gift cards for the Pastors' emergency fund and \$1200 in donations for the UCC/Church World Service Haiti relief through our annual Angel Tree.

Supporting the youth group's participation in 30 Hour Famine and Souper Bowl of Caring.

Participating in Family Promise's Comfort Food Cook Off Fundraiser which raised over \$20,000.

Participating in the Food Bank Feast of Caring with a \$100 contribution to secure our place as a recognized donor.

Participating in the Brazos Church Pantry "Thirty for Thirty" anniversary celebration and fundraiser with \$215 in donations plus proceeds from the Thanksgiving meal offering.

Beginning an "Item of the Quarter" donation drive and instituting a new on-line sign-up system for the Pantry.

Recommending Friends Church become an organizational member of Texas Impact.

Submitting a Neighbors in Need grant proposal (unsuccessful) with BIIN for ESL classes for immigrant construction workers.

Participating in Health Justice Sunday.

Collecting 129 school kits for Church World Service (up from 70 last year).

Collecting over 83 hygiene kits for Back Bay Mission (up from 70 last year).

Instituting a Community Conversations series, sponsoring public events on immigration, accessibility/disability and earth care.

Participating in Rise Against Hunger meal packaging event.

PROGRAMS REPORT (cont.)

Sustainability Team 2016-17 Report

Solar Array Installation: Developed a proposal to install a 20 kilowatt solar array on the church. Presented the solar proposal at the August 28, 2016 congregational meeting. To proceed with the proposal, Friends needed to raise ~35% (\$17,000) of the cost. An anonymous donor was willing to establish an LLC with up to 35% matching funds and the federal government would offer a 30% discount for the energy efficiency solar initiative. With a positive vote from the congregational meeting, Friends selected Texas Green Energy as the solar installer. Solar installation was completed in May 2017.

Single Stream Curbside Recycling: The sustainability team also brought single stream curbside recycling to Friends Church. There are now several recycling bins located throughout the church. The Sustainability Team empties these bins into the curbside container and sets the can at the street every other week for collection by Brazos Valley Recycling.

The Faith Inclusion and Disability Awareness Team Report

The FIDA team began the process of receiving an A2A (Accessible to All) certification from the United Church of Christ. The Initial Church Building and Program Accessibility Audit has been completed. Plans are in progress for completing the application. Joe Hartsoe led a conversation at Theology Unplugged on disability awareness and Dan De Leon led one on mental health and faith. The team organized Access Sunday to raise awareness of how our congregation can be more welcoming and inclusive for members and visitors with disabilities.

Nurture

Jenny Bollom and Loretta Mendez, Co-Chairs

Committee Members: Linda Coats (FAA Leader), Debbie Ridgeway, Debby York (PIT Leaders), Kristen Harper (POT Leader), Wayne Hamman, Ronnie Holz, Joe Hartsoe, Andrew Roblyer, Kate Kiernat, Cheri Marston, Lori Cagle, Mark and Lucy Thomas, Olivia Simonich, Diane Simpson.

Nurture Committee works to reach out to church members in times of need and celebration. We have strong care teams: those on call to prepare food, provide transportation on a regular and as-needed basis, make hospital or home visits, post the prayer list, prepare celebration presentations, etc.

Goals fulfilled this year included:

- **Providing meals**—this year, we provided approximately 12 meals following births and surgeries. (*Offered meal assistance to others, who declined it at the time.)
- **Providing transportation** for members to attend service and special events or for other reasons, including doctor visits—this year, we provided rides on a weekly basis for one member of our congregation and provided a few rides otherwise for those who did not have a ride to service or doctor's appointments.
- **Providing crosses for newborns**—this year, through FAA, we provided four ceramic crosses.

PROGRAMS REPORT (cont.)

- **Providing red candles** for those leaving the community—we distributed a handful of candles upon notice.
- **Providing graduation gifts**—this year, through FAA, we provided three graduation gifts.
- **Sending birthday and anniversary cards**—this year, we sent 162 birthday and 27 anniversary cards.
- **Sending notes**—additionally, we provided many notes of encouragement and celebration, as well as a handful of bereavement letters.
- **Distributing prayer concerns**—prayer concerns from each Sunday are sent to the membership each week.

Additionally, we have two parent support groups: Parents of Infants and Toddlers (PIT) and Parents of Teens (POT). Members within these groups support one another in various get-together activities.

Also, in addition to helping with many aspects of the Nurture Committee, Fabulous at Any Age (FAA) continues with monthly excursions to explore our area, learn about other cultures/religions, or assist with mission projects from our congregation. They also host special events, such as the Christmas caroling and holiday-light viewing in Central Park.

In addition to the many committee members who continually support our mission we are also thankful for those who are "on call" when we need meals or visitations, or who have just been there to give love and nurture to someone in need. We are also thankful to those who attend FAA or PIT/POT gatherings (regularly or as they are able) and the support they share with one another or their participation in nurturing events.

Spiritual Development

Linda Fitzwater, Chair

Committee Members: Sally Manthei , Anne Wehrly, Theresa Walker, Linda Coats

- The Spiritual Growth and Development committee supports a number of ministries at Friends Congregational Church. In each area there are many servants that make these ministries possible. Thanks go out to each of them.
- The Slumber Falls retreat was held again this year on Mothers Day weekend, May 12-14. We had a group of 33 friends that attended. This year our camp pastor was Trent Williams. Pastor Trent lead our morning workshop with the adults while the young folks, lead by Anne Wehrly, helped around the camp.
- This year we worked on a way to structure our Inquiry Class that would best meet the needs of those wanting to know more about Friends Congregational Church. At this time we are scheduling the classes on a three month cycle. Our first try at this plan was completed during March, April, and May of the current year. We had 12-15 in attendance each session with many people helping make our new friends feel welcome.

PROGRAMS REPORT (cont.)

- Two Adult Study Classes continue to meet on Sunday Mornings. The Social Justice Class has an emphasis on the social issues of our time. The Morning Manna class focused this year on the lectionary scriptures for each Sunday. We look forward to Pastor Trent leading this class in the Fall.
- Theology Unplugged is the new name for the previous Theology on Tap group. This group meets once a month on the third Tuesday of each month to discuss a topic of interest to the group and to share fellowship. We continue to be in the process of finding a new place to meet. We appreciated all of the time we were able to gather at Perrine Winery this past year.
- The Friends 20-30's group is the new group formed out of the Living the Questions group. They are now meeting each Sunday to enjoy lunch together and then once a month to hang out together for fun and fellowship.

Worship

Anne Nichols, Chair

Committee Members: Andy Ambrus, Maggie Gartner, Cathy Hansen, Jess Wade, Chris Hoffman (ex officio), Associate Pastor Trent Williams (ex officio), Senior Pastor Dan De Leon (ex officio)

The primary responsibility of the worship committee is to arrange and adorn the sanctuary and to facilitate the activities of worship for all participants. The worship committee is tasked with supporting the usual operations of Sunday and Wednesday night worship services including communion, greeting, ushering and acolytes, seasonal liturgical colors, sacramental candles, as well as helping with baptisms, receiving new member, and worship services for Christmas Eve, Lent and Holy Week. In addition to scheduling the worship volunteers (stewards, greeters, and lay leaders), the committee tends to the supplies for communion, pads, pens and envelopes for the sanctuary, and bulletin covers for worship, among other things.

This year, we welcomed the addition of the Rev. Trent Williams, with his formal recognition as associate pastor at an installation service in March. Pastor Trent assisted or led both Wednesday night and Sunday services. The worship committee was responsible for assisting him during Pastor De Leon's medical leave and recovery from vocal node surgery. Pastors Trent and Dan have had weekly planning meetings with Chris Hoffman, director of music, and include the worship committee's participation with special requests, such as the inclusion of the confirmands in the services.

The average attendance at the Wednesday worship service has been 14, with the average attendance at the Sunday worship service of 140. (More chairs have been put in the sanctuary in what was the "back aisle".)

The special service attendance is as follows:

Longest Night	52
Christmas Eve	191
Ash Wednesday (morning)	15
Ash Wednesday (evening)	70
Installation service	100
Maundy Thursday	37
Good Friday	108
Easter (8:15 am)	54
Easter (10:30 am)	229

PROGRAMS REPORT (cont.)

Goals for the following year are to standardize and document the ordering of and updating for pads, envelopes and pens, construct new ordinary-time banners (liturgical color of green), train additional people to change the clerestory banners in the sanctuary, secure additional communion bread bakers, and accommodate worship changes that require additional support.

This committee is critically short of member participation. Participation with the worship committee was promoted at the ice cream social in September, but we still would welcome anyone with an interest in design, baking, (pastor wrangling), arranging, and organizing.

Worship coordinators: Andy Ambrus – Candles, Rhoda Bertch – Greeters, Cathy Hansen – Lay Leaders, Anne Nichols – Communion, Jess Wade – Sanctuary

Special thanks to Kevin Graham (flowers, decoration and banners), Sue Ambrus (decoration), Kelly Wellman (Easter processional coordinator), and Kim Beasley (volunteer notifications, bulletins, and administration.)

FRIENDS IN FAITH CAPITAL CAMPAIGN REPORT

Kathy Langlotz, Coordinator

Just over 6 years ago we were in the midst of one of the most exciting times in the life of Friends Church... the Friends in Faith Capital Campaign pledge drive! Our Vision and Mission needed more and differently defined space to most effectively impact the people we have been called to serve. Throughout these 6 years, people have committed to supporting our vision of God's inclusion and hospitality by pledging over \$900,000 to move this vision forward. As a result, our sanctuary has been expanded, our kitchen facilities upgraded, our building and its access has become more accessible, our parking lot expanded and an entire education and office wing added.

One of my favorite memories of worship at Friends Church was our official ground breaking ceremony for the Friends in Faith building project. During that service, held outside in the area soon to become the education wing, those present placed a rock, upon which they had written their name, into a treasure chest. These rocks, representing the people of this church, were buried in the foundation of the new wing. That treasure chest is a reminder that we are the church's foundation. It's not the building, but the people who bring our vision and mission closer to reality.

During the time we've had in our 'new' space we have hosted too many Family Promise families to count, as well as prayer vigils for the community after national tragedies at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando and the Mother Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston. Further, true to our Earth Stewardship Covenant, we have just installed solar panels on the roof of the new wing. We are indeed living into our vision and mission. Thank you!

Here is a current financial update of the Friends in Faith Capital Campaign:

Through May 31, 2017:

Total pledged	\$930,041.72
Total given	\$829,860.35
Shortfall of expected giving	\$82,497.05 (-9.04%)

Building loan information:

Original loan amount:	\$867,178
Interest rate guaranteed through Feb 21, 2018:	5.00%
Amortization term:	20 years
Principal balance after June 2017 loan payment:	\$272,000.00 (estimate)

June 2017 is the official final month of the giving period, so these numbers are still preliminary. Many pledges have already been fulfilled, many others have been extended or modified from the original pledge upon request due to shifting life circumstances. Some individuals with fulfilled pledges have either rolled over a portion of their capital campaign giving into their giving to the church's general operating budget, or are continuing to give specifically to the Friends in Faith Capital Campaign to help retire the remaining loan balance.

We are in the process of planning how to best satisfy the remaining balance of the project loan while still honoring the vision and mission of the church. We have enough money from the campaign giving put aside to pay the \$5900 monthly loan payment through Feb 2018, when the loan is due for its first 5-year interest rate adjustment. The rate will be adjusted to the Wall Street Journal prime lending rate or 5% whichever is higher, but will not vary more than 2% of the current rate. Our expectation is that our interest rate will remain at 5%. The principal balance at that time will be amortized over the remaining 15-years of the loan, which will result in a required monthly loan payment of about \$2,000.00.

It is my recommendation that we continue our habit of accelerating this debt payoff as we are able so that the interest paid on the principal is minimized.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY REPORT

Ruth Nelson, Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary's duties are to collect, categorize, and deposit all income belonging to Friends Congregational 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 disperses information to assist with the annual stewardship campaign. Below are the pledges and offerings received in the past two years.

The category created for those who give on a regular basis, but did not fill out a "Friends Pledge" card has now had a full yearly cycle on which the budget committee may use for planning. The labelled category is 2030 Pledge-NPC (Non-pledge card). Previously, any amount that was donated that had a name attached, was treated as a pledge.

Offerings are considered to be cash donations (excluding coins which go to the children's choice) that cannot be attributed to any one person, or to donations made by one-time visitors. Table 2 shows the annual giving amounts (January 1 to December 31).

Table 1 Giving Amounts

Category	June 2015-May 2016	June 2016-May 2017
2010 Pledge	\$205,352.30	\$214,382.22
2020 Offering	\$ 16,343.30	\$ 8,514.00
2030 Pledge-NPC	\$ 31,320.00	\$ 42,409.00
Grand Totals Of All Categories	\$311,918.49	\$322,620.57

2016 is the first year to gauge what is "Pledged" to what is actually received from those pledges and what Church Membership Online expects to receive.

Total Pledged Amount: \$187,105.00
 Total Amount Collected: \$201,130.15
 Target Amount: \$179,316.00
 Start date: December 6, 2015
 End date: December 31, 2016

FINANCIAL SECRETARY REPORT (cont.)**Table 2 Annual Giving Amounts for the Calendar Year**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>
2008	\$163,027.00
2009	\$159,225.00
2010	\$163,399.00
2011	\$161,900.00
2012	\$187,886.00
2013	\$192,985.00
2014	\$230,352.64
2015	\$259,904.56
2016	\$237,963.42

Sincerely and faithfully yours,

Ruth Nelson

Please use www.churchmembershiponline.com to view your contributions. Your e-mail address that you have given the church may be required.

TREASURER REPORT

Debbie Webb, Treasurer

Thank you to outgoing Treasurer Theresa Walker

Theresa served the congregation for 4 years as Treasurer. Here's a big 'Thank You' to you, Theresa, for all of your work over the years and for all of your help in smoothing the transition over to the new treasurer.

General Operating

In 2016, collections and miscellaneous income totaled \$239,774.8. This was 14.7% below the 2016 projected budgeted amount of \$280,812.00. \$14,578.61 was transferred from Surplus to cover operating expenses. 2016 operating expenses totaled \$251,838.01, which were less than the 2016 projected budgeted amount of \$289,759.00 in large part due to the lapsed funds for the position of Associate Pastor, which was not filled until October 2016.

2016 ended with a Net Operating Income of \$2,515.37, counting the transferred funds as income.

Giving for 2017, through April, shows a strong commitment to the growth of our church and the support of our ministers and staff. Giving is 17% above budget projects.

Operating Surplus and Reserves

2016 began with a Net Operating Surplus of \$27,181.52. These funds were excess funds set aside at the end of 2014 and 2015 to fund future projects and ministries. At year-end there was a zero balance.

Major uses of the Surplus Fund include:

Interim Pastor Fill	5,460.30
Sunshade Window Film	1,908.00
Audio Equipment	1,151.89
Associate Pastor Moving Expenses	3,928.80
Transfer to Reserve Account	5,100.00
Sabbatical Seed Money	1,000.00
Youth Mission Trip	1,550.00
National Youth Event	1,500.00
Trent Search committee Expense	556.68
Adult Youth Mission Trip and National Youth Event Expenses	3,490.36
	<u>25,646.03</u>

The Reserve Account is Friend's Savings account. The Reserve balance remained steady during 2016, ending the year with \$50,000.57. The Council has voted to build up the Reserve Account balance to 3 months operating expenses. \$50,000.57 represents 2.2 operating months expenses. Based on 2017 giving to-date, it is expected that there will be considerable progress during 2017 toward reaching the 3 months goal.

Capital Funds

2016 Capital Collections totaled \$133,523.84. Interest and principal payments totaled \$158,061.62. The loan balance at 12/31/15 was \$446,564.40. The loan balance at 12/31/16 was \$306,881.51.

TREASURER'S REPORT (cont.)

In February of 2017, the church's mortgage balance fell below \$300,000, a milestone.

Other Restricted Funds

Throughout the year, the congregation has financially supported many charities. This support came through Festival of Giving, Crop Walk, 30 Hour Famine, Annual Dues, BBQ fund raiser, Love collections as well as other efforts. Our giving in 2016 has made possible the 2017 installation of solar panels for the church!

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

A&M Consolidated High School	\$237.00
Back Bay Mission	\$713.74
Bicycle for Family Promise Client	\$155.00
Brazos County Branch-NAACP	\$450.00
Brazos Interfaith Immigration Network	\$1,459.73
Brazos Valley Food Banks	\$1,626.70
City Square	\$581.67
Crisis Fund	\$1,828.44
Crop Walk	\$425.00
Family Promise of College Station	\$500.00
First Mennonite Church of Iowa City	\$300.00
Haiti Disaster Relief	\$1,280.00
Heart of Texas Association	\$1,385.04
Heifer International	\$552.00
Hospice Brazos Valley	\$1,080.15
My Long Way Home Animal Sanctuary	\$769.76
School Kits	\$272.00
Slumber Falls Camp	\$574.90
Solar Panels	\$16,042.89
Syrian Refugees	\$710.00
UNICEF	\$83.83
United Campus Ministry	\$1,749.96
Voices for Children	\$1,107.58

TREASURER'S REPORT (cont.)

We also maintained our 5 for 5 status with the SCC. Our giving for 2016 was as follows:

Christmas Fund	\$ 1,924.00
Neighbors in Need	\$ 1,594.00
One Great Hour Sharing	\$ 2,142.14
Strengthen the Church	\$ 1,487.00
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.

Church Snapshot As of April 30, 2017

Outstanding Loans

<u>Mortgage</u>	<u>\$281,223.07</u>
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Available Funds

General Operating	\$ 29,934.01
Capital Campaign	\$ 53,106.23
Other Restricted	\$ 33,930.69
Savings	\$ 50,007.85
<u>Jubilee Fund</u>	<u>\$ 12,050.00</u>
Total	\$179,028.78

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.

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 2016, we did not make a payment toward this commitment.