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Annual Report 2017

Submitted for the Annual Meeting on
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Seeking ultimate meaning, moving toward the heart of God, repairing the world.

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Items for Congregational Vote

2017 Slate of Candidates

Leadership Circle: Kathy Bermingham
Kathy Hanlan
Aimee Van Wagenen

Nominating Team: Neil Helme

Candidate Biographies

Leadership Circle

Kathy Bermingham: Kathy is from Jamaica Plain and has lived here all her life. She first came to Hope Church (before its rebirth as Hope Central) in 2004 and has been a Covenant Partner since then. She has served in several ministries through the years including Hospitality and the Called to Care Team and was involved in organizing and worship planning for NightChurch. She set up and designed a ministry bringing a worship service to the Rogerson House, a nursing home in JP.

Recently retired after 40 years working at Beth Israel Deaconess as a respiratory therapist, mostly on the night shift. Most looking forward to (besides sleeping) spending more time with her large extended family here and in Ireland, travel, and continued growth in this new phase of life.

Kathy Hanlan: Kathy is originally from New Jersey, came to Boston for college and stayed, and currently lives in Roslindale. She is the Clinical Supervisor for Psychiatric Occupational Therapy at Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital. Kathy first visited Hope Central for Laura Ruth's installation. She began to worship here regularly several years ago and is a Covenant Partner. She serves on Worship Planning and as team leader for the Discernment for Ordination Team. Kathy is a sacristan and volunteers in the church school. She has also served on the Leadership Circle for this past year to complete the third year of a term that was vacated.

Kathy loves her Irish roots, a cappella music, murder mysteries, kitties, laughter, spirituality, and trying to make a positive difference in the world.

Aimee Van Wagenen: Aimee grew up in rural Connecticut but has lived in the Boston area for 20 years. She has spent most of her years in the Boston area in Jamaica Plain, but last year moved to Hyde Park where she is enjoying her spacious wooded back yard. She lives with her wife, Ann, and her two adorable and demanding dogs, Phoebe and Chester.

Aimee has been coming to Hope Central for a little over a year. A sense of despair and disconnection after the presidential election brought Aimee to Hope Central and she has cherished the beacon that Hope Central's worship service has become in her life. Aimee is the child of a Quaker father and a Methodist mother and spent Sundays between the two. This experience positioned her to become a questioning believer—an identity she has taken on since an early age, though only recently came to have a name for at Hope Central. She has not previously served on Hope Central committees but is eager to start!

Aimee currently teaches English and special education in 11th grade at Boston Green Academy, a Boston Public 6-12 school, where she tries to inspire and guide her students to find and use their voices to express their insights. She came to this career only recently and has had two previous careers (as a non-profit administrator and a college professor). Teaching high school is definitely the most difficult of the three, and she marvels daily that her colleagues handle the pressure and the grind of it all with the grace they do. She doesn't have a lot of free time outside of the summer, but she loves traveling with Ann, cooking, and long walks with the dogs. She's hoping to get back to her Tai Chi and Qigong practice soon.

Nominating Team

Neil Helme: Neil was born in Baltimore, Maryland, to a family with deep roots in the Disciples of Christ. He moved to Boston in 1979 to attend Berklee College of Music, and settled in Medford 25 years ago with his wife, Kathleen Kane, and their daughter, Margaret. For more than 20 years Neil worked in both the garment and footwear industries, and he remains a textile geek and a footwear geek. Currently, he *really* enjoys driving his forklift as receiver at the Northeast Regional Distributor for Carrier Corp, because he gets to say, “I pick things up and put them down.”

Music has played a large part in his life, and Neil continues to be very active in the local roots music community. Music led him to Hope Church in 2003 in Roslindale, and through this reconnection with the Disciples of Christ and with the Table, he found his way to a new, yet familiar home. He has served as a member of the Disciples of Christ Northeast Region Commission on Ministry since 2007.

Neil's ideal day: 12 to 16 hours spent tending the BBQ pit, followed by a feast and backyard hootenanny.

Reports

Moderators' Report

Beloved, it has been our honor and our joy to serve you as your moderators in 2017. We'd say it has been a year marked by change and growth, but it seems like we could say that about every year!

What we can say is that 2017 has been an incredible year. Below is a short overview of the highlights:

- Laura Ruth went on sabbatical (and then returned to us). We learned what we can do when she is not in our midst, and she learned about herself, her ministry, and her calling.
- We welcomed Ben Perkins into the role of Sabbatical Associate Pastor, and supported Courtney as she stepped into the role of Sabbatical Senior Pastor. We heard several good words, learned new things about their gifts for ministry, and had the privilege to witness as their gifts blossomed.
- We said goodbye to our Administrative Manager Joy Auciello and gave thanks for her work for us, and through the good and hard work of our Personnel Team welcomed Sara Dean to our church staff where she already has folks singing her praises.
- We became a Level 2 supporting church in the JP/Roslindale Sanctuary cluster, an outward sign of our commitment to social justice and the dignity of all humans.

To end our report, we would like to offer public thanks to and for our fellow members of the Leadership Circle, Earin Rose our treasurer, our pastors (including Ben), our non-pastoral staff, and the numerous people who did good and hard and holy work on our many teams. We encourage you to read their reports, found further on in this Annual Report—they do their work on behalf of all of us.

Respectfully,

Nina Swift & Sari Mauro
Moderators

Senior Pastor's Report

Dear Beloved People of Hope Central,

The year of 2017 offered to us lots of opportunities for the practice of our spiritual resilience—by keeping our attention on love and on our community life. I believe we experienced a deepening of our community's stability, willingness to lead. We noticed distraction and the invitation to chaos but decided on keeping our eyes on God.

In 2016, Earin Rose asked, "What will we do if . . . is elected?" With Earin's question, we began to prepare our hearts, not to be unaffected by the outcome of the election in November, 2016, but to begin to decide to rely on God's presence in the world and in the persons of our congregation and those we love.

In 2017, we responded with despair, yes, and also with prayer and action. We took a group of beloved ones to the Women's March in January. We did not leave before asking God's blessing on our going. Just after the first iteration of the travel ban was announced, we answered an invitation, and formed a Chain of Peace around the mosque of the Islamic Society of Boston in Roxbury. We shoveled snow and assured people coming in for Friday night services of our concern for their welfare in our country and city. We went to raise our voices in solidarity at the JFK Federal Courthouse where inside, there was a deportation hearing of two detainees. We attended a demonstration to claim the divine goodness of our trans folks, and to claim civil rights for them and all of us—Courtney was one of the two featured speakers.

Because of Hope Central's witness, Jim Antal, our (retiring) Massachusetts Conference, UCC Minister convened clergy of the conference to ask what our congregations need to be witnesses of conscience, to be the binders of the broken hearted, and barriers against racism, homophobia and transphobia.

Supported by our Racial Justice Team, Barbara McQueen continued leading monthly gatherings of White People Talking about Racial Justice. Our book group read *Just Mercy* and *White Trash*. Hope Central people participated monthly in the Vigil in Support of Black Lives Matter, held on the first Thursday on the lawn of the JP Baptist Church. Our sermon series for Lent was "Mercy," and we took up considering the practice of veganism. During Holy Week, to remember what totalitarian states do to Jews and to others, organized by Andrée Zaleska, a group went to the Museum of Fine Arts to see Henryk Ross's photographs from the Lodz Ghetto in Poland, 1940-1945. After Easter, in the light of race, we had a sermon series on "Class," so that we might see each other, have language to speak together. We talked about, then joined congregations in the Jamaica Plain area to learn how to open sanctuary in September for a man threatened with deportation.

In all these things, we practiced living in the kingdom, the dominion of God. We preached the news so to not forget, as Dr. King, Jr. wrote, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

In 2017, we continued to take care of our own people and place. We prayed for each other, fed each other, used our spiritual gifts on behalf of each other, and I include Iglesia Hispana, our sister congregation. Suzanne led our congregation’s first progressive dinner (or first in a decade or more) and it was a lot of fun. Lillian Fuchs produced a Winterfest concert that raised money for our congregation and brought neighbors and friends of Hope Central into our house. On our annual workday, the Saturday before Palm Sunday, Iglesia Hispana gathered together to clean up our house and yard. When our parking lot sign fell down, Lisa Pilat ordered a new one, and Kathy Hanlan, Karen Barnard, Auggie, and I dug and installed a new sign. With an anonymous donation, we replaced a sanctuary window so rotted, a window pane fell out into the yard.

We lost so many of our mothers and fathers in late 2016 and early 2017 that we had a remembrance service for them early in the year, including our own Betty Wiles. We also celebrated the lives of Graham Brown, Walter Collyer, and Mark Burgess. In Concord, MA, at Trinitarian Congregational Church, we celebrated the life of Julia Lanham’s mom, Judith Gaggin.

At Hope Central, with great joy, we married Hilary Allen and Greg Buckland, and Seth Robinson and Laura Shatzer. I also married Jullieanne Doherty and Sul Lee in Waltham, just before I went on Sabbatical.

I represented Hope Central by participating in the life of our communities by preaching the Rev. Anna Flowers installation service in Walpole, by consulting on class and rank with Laura Everett’s staff at the Mass Council of Churches, by participating in the JP Clergy Association. Suzanne Wolk and I went to in a workshop on Stewardship hosted by the Massachusetts Conference, UCC. Invited by the BU School of Theology, I got to participate in two events, a consultation and a panel on the vocation of congregations. Hope Central in the persons of Abbi Holt, Laura Everett, and I participated in Boston’s Blessing of the Bikes on the sidewalk at Old South Church. I got to see my major professor from the Episcopal Divinity School, the Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, at the Women’s Studies in Religion panel at Harvard Divinity School. I continued my monthly service to the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC by leading a clergy community of practice with my mentor Judy Brain.

Getting ready for and going on sabbatical was an amazing experience. The Leadership Circle agreed to call the Rev. Benjamin Perkins as Sabbatical Associate Pastor. With Courtney in the role of Sabbatical Senior Pastor, Vanessa Morris as her usual amazing self, the Leadership Circle at the ready, and Barbara McQueen leading the Called to Care team, the congregation continued to go forward in our work of pastoral care and worship—an average of 55 people in the morning and 8 people in the evening services for 2017—serving, loving, praying—the

things a congregation does. Courtney and Ben were compensated for their time by two anonymous gifts, each gift for \$5,000.

I was on Sabbatical from September 17 through December 17. I started and ended sabbatical with retreats to pray. In between, I visited family and friends in Tennessee and Georgia. With my big sister Cindy, I visited Bryan Stevenson's organization in Montgomery, the Equal Justice Initiative. Meck and I went to the Isle of Iona in Scotland to pray, and had a few days in Tobermory, Scotland. I went with my big sister Becky to see our mom's birth place in Inhamachafo, Inharrime, Mozambique, and to Soweto in South Africa. Besides a couple of other quick days away, Meck and I visited our goddaughter Maia in San Francisco, drove 500 miles up the coastal highway in CA and OR visiting the redwood groves, and spent Thanksgiving with friends in Tacoma.

To be offered this opportunity of sabbatical for prayer and renewal is one of the biggest gifts of my life. I am so grateful to you, Hope Central. I came home to an engaged and functioning congregation led so ably by Courtney and Ben, our Leadership Circle, and all of you. I wish to make a special acknowledgement to our Moderators Nina Swift and Sari Mauro. You are God sent. While I was away, the lights got turned on, the band showed up for worship, the sound system got set up, the altar was set, the worship planning team met, the stewardship campaign went on and you gave.

My dreams for 2018 include these things:

- to continue to make visible to the congregation the strong work of the those in Discernment for Ordination, Clink, Seth, Ash, and Lindsay, and the strong team that supports them led by Kathy Hanlan.
- to reinvigorate the Visitor Ministry. We do not want for visitors for they have heard of us, or they are in our neighborhood. Many of them want and long to be a part of our congregation and only need to be invited back.
- to entice you who've not yet been to Hope Central 101, to come, to learn, to participate in our congregation.
- to continue to reveal God's working in the world by our attention to the Ministry of Justice and Compassion, including our work at Community Servings, the Sanctuary work.
- to spend more time eating together, to raise the children of our congregation, to care for each other's needs as possible.
- to increase the smooth functioning of our Finance Team as we include financial planning for our future, and more and more seeing the financial work as spiritual work
- to pray for and find a group of people committed to the work of our building ministry, to pay attention to our house, to put their hands to small repairs, to involve and inspire the congregation for this work.
- to provide more opportunities to pray together, perhaps traveling together as a way to make time to pray.

Lastly, I want to commend our staff—Courtney Jones, sister pastor; Vanessa Morris and the band; Lisa Pilat, Office and Building Manager; Sara Dean, Administrator—who succeeded Joy Auciello; and very importantly, Leonel Cermeño, who cleans up after us, and keeps the building in order—even with tenants and people of our congregation in and out every day and night—together, they are a pastor’s dream team. Really.

Love,

Laura Ruth
Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor's Report

Dear Church,

What a great year we had! In 2017, our Sunday school program continued to grow. We have children from newborn through 7th grade, the largest age range we have ever had!

During the 2016-2017 year, we had three classrooms divided by age. Jenn Wood, Patti Ryan, Lisa Price and Brienne McLaughlin, and I were our teachers. In May, we took our first field trip, to Andrée Zaleska's JP Green House. I was so impressed and inspired by the way the kids worked across age to design and create their garden that I began to reimagine what our Sunday school might look like. Our kids deserve a safe space to explore spiritual concepts and try out spiritual practices. They love taking ownership of their learning and cooperating to create something together. We want our children to be excited about what we do at church, and so I began imagining an old concept, the one-room schoolhouse, with a new twist: design units around a single theme, culminating in a project that the kids design and implement together (with some help from their adults, of course). Patti Ryan, when she first began our Sunday school program, had a one-room schoolhouse because we had so few children at the time. While we have many children now, thanks to her pioneering efforts and the work of many adults over many years, the model of Sunday school that worked for us years ago can work for us again. We are still tweaking it, but I am proud of the experiment we have undertaken in Sunday school this year. We learned about Sabbath during Laura Ruth's sabbatical, including having Rabbi Becky Silverstein teach us about Jewish Sabbath practices. Abra Mims, Jill Seaman-Chandler, and Christopher Walsh joined Lisa, Brie, Jenn, and Patti this fall, and we have an amazing complement of teachers who offer their gifts for the spiritual growth of our children. Most of you probably saw, either in person or on our Facebook page, the presentation our kids gave about Sabbath; it was incredible. Our kids are learning and growing, and it shows.

In addition to experimenting with the *format* of Sunday school, we have also been experimenting with the *timing* of Sunday school by having it before worship. Because Laura Ruth was going to be away, my Pastor's Support Team and the Children's Spiritual Formation Team began imagining creative ways to invite more adult participation (since I would not be able to continue teaching during the sabbatical). We realized the time commitment, missing most of worship on a regular basis, deterred people from volunteering as teachers and helpers. Simultaneously, we realized that some of our children loved playtime and some children did not; because Sunday school and playtime were combined, children who liked the learning but disliked the playing were becoming less and less interested in Sunday school. To accommodate both the volunteer dilemma and the required playtime dilemma, we not only decided to have Sunday school before worship but also to have playtime as an optional activity during worship. During the prayers of the people and the sermon, children are invited to be downstairs or outside playing. This (ideally) allows children the option of staying in service and also gives volunteers the ability to participate in at least half of the worship service. As a result of this new timing, we have had great success

in recruiting volunteers, and our children have had more opportunities to participate in more aspects of worship. They have offered worship leadership by reading the welcome, ringing the bell, and providing comic relief. Ella Verinder was one of our readers in this year's Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant!

Added to my ministry portfolio in February, with the help of MJC, we began exploring the possibility of joining the Sanctuary Movement as a tangible response to the fears that arose in the wake of the election. Hope Central joined Bethel AME, Nehar Shalom, Theodore Parker Church, Moshe Kavod House, JP First Church UU, First Baptist JP, and Old South Church as official members of the JP Sanctuary cluster. Erica Charis-Molling was on the steering team originally, and Polly Hoppin and I are continuing in that capacity since Erica went back to school this fall. On September 18, a guest went into Sanctuary at Bethel AME and remains there now. Many of us have attended trainings to be part of the work, and several of us have regular weekly or bi-weekly shifts accompanying our guest, including early morning, overnight, and weekend shifts. Iglesia Hispana is also joining in this work with us, and in the midst of the tragic immigration situation in our country, God's light is shining and bringing people of faith and people of conscience together. While I wish this work weren't needed, it has forged friendships across race, class, nationality, gender, sexuality, and religion, reminding us there is more that unites us than divides us.

For years, I have been hoping to gather the many young adults in our congregation for fellowship and spiritual sustenance. In late 2017 we finally instituted a young adult outing the first Sunday of each month. So far, it's brunch at Doyle's so that we can get to know one another, but the hope is that eventually it will grow into social outings and spiritual growth opportunities as our relationships deepen. Already, people are making friends and making plans, spending time together outside of church.

Speaking of making new friends, we've had many new folks—of many ages—coming to worship and to other church events, and that is a joy. In 2018, I plan to revamp the Visitor Ministry, because we continue to have new visitors almost every single week! If you are interested in helping with the Visitor Ministry, please let me know.

During the fall, while Laura Ruth was on sabbatical, I had the privilege of serving as Sabbatical Senior Pastor. We missed Laura Ruth, and also it was a joy working with the Rev. Ben Perkins. Ben brought so much wisdom and perspective in his worship leadership and preaching. He was insightful and pragmatic, a steady companion in the work of ministry with and for our congregation. Our worship was deep and meaningful, in large part due to Ben's presence and the leadership of Vanessa and the band. We had so much fun on Halloween Sunday with our Bloody Sunday worship, and we had the joy of planning Advent and the Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant.

An incredible number of people stepped up during the sabbatical as sacristans, liturgists, Sunday school volunteers, and greeters, and that made worship run smoothly. I'm especially grateful to Yara Gonzalez-Justiniano for recruiting liturgists. The office staff, Lisa

and Sara, were steady and industrious, leading the business side of the church and making it look easy when we know it is not. Sari and Nina worked diligently alongside Ben and me, making difficult decisions and helping us plan for the future; their leadership was invaluable. I want to thank my Pastor's Support Team for the time and creativity they offer me in my role: Ryan Bissi, Candace Chang, Marlo Pedroso, Earin Rose, and Jill Seaman-Chandler have been vital to my ministry, and I am deeply grateful.

Especially during Laura Ruth's sabbatical, but really all year long, the Called to Care team has been instrumental in making sure people's physical and spiritual needs are being taken care of—we had no less than five surgeries in our congregation and several more injuries and illnesses just between August and December. The Called to Care team is central to our pastoral care ministries, but so many hands have made it possible to really be answers to one another's prayers. Hope Central is becoming more and more a people who belong to one another; often as not, you all were the first responders for one another, driving one another to appointments, dropping off meals, sharing the joys and concerns of your lives with each other. You are being church—it's who you are, it's what you do. If 2017 is any indication, God is going to do some amazing things at Hope Central in 2018! I thank God every single day for the gift of being one of your pastors.

Love,

Courtney
Associate Pastor

Music Director's Report

Whenever I prepare an Annual Year-end Report for Hope Central Church, I'm always amazed by the number of calendars we follow: Fiscal Year Calendar, School Calendar, Religious Calendar, Lunar Calendar, and so many more. As we are all inundated by New Year Resolutions and last year's memories, I want to frame this Annual Music Director Report with all that I'm grateful for, in an attempt to make this a more interesting read, as well as provide an overview for 2017.

I am so grateful for the Hope Central Band. Neil, Bobby, and Gillian truly make it possible for me to do my job and I am so lucky to have their support and encouragement. For one thing, it's incredible to have a group of people ready to try anything. Admittedly, all of my musical experiments have not been successes. But we have had some incredible moments. I love what the Hope Central Band brings, especially to the incidental music which is the area in which I have the most freedom. Neil patiently reads my transcriptions and arrangements of pop, jazz, and gospel tunes that just happen to work well for Communion or a Postlude. I continue to be drawn to music with rich harmony and though the imagery of some the older gospel music I love is a challenge, the band gives the traditional repertoire a boost with a signature drum fill from Bobby, a tambourine shake from Gillian, and an insightful bass line from Neil. Thank you, Hope Central Band, for all that you do.

I am so grateful for the Choir. When Senior Pastor Laura Ruth first started talking about her 3-month sabbatical, I honestly didn't think about it much. In the academic world I live in, professors take semesters and even year-long sabbaticals frequently. But Senior Pastor Laura Ruth's sabbatical gave me an opportunity to see the strength of the Hope Central Choir. Every service, we are encouraged by the Church Leader to sing with our mouths wide open... Usually the strongest voice is Senior Pastor Laura Ruth. In her absence, I heard the voices of the Choir and though throughout the year, every Sunday, when folks roll out of bed a little earlier, I feel the Choir's support, during the sabbatical we still stood strong. Our repertoire continues to grow and I am most excited about hearing more part singing during Congregational hymns, for which I definitely give some credit to the Choir members for lending their voices to these hymns that we've sung as anthems as an introduction. I plan on continuing this process in 2018. So thank you Hope Central Choir for showing up and singing with your mouths wide open.

I am so grateful for the Hope Central ministers. I have a closer relationship with Ben and Courtney after the sabbatical. It was fun witnessing a different process of sermon writing. The sabbatical also enabled me to value Senior Pastor Laura Ruth's process: the level of detail and intellectualism is a key to the vibrancy of Hope Central Church. I'm so grateful for the leadership of the ministers of Hope Central.

I am so grateful for Lisa and Sara. Hope Central would not exist without the service of these two individuals. I cannot even fathom all that Lisa does between the accounting, renting and

budgets. And Sara came in right before the sabbatical but eased in so quickly and efficiently. So thank you Hope Central Staff.

Lastly, I am so grateful for the Hope Central Community. I have the unique position of being in close to 50 services a year. So I'm well familiar with the Offertory testimonies during which brave souls share what Hope Central Church means to them. For me, it's an amazing place in that it supports so many different types of people. As Music Director, I try my best to remain accessible to this wide range of congregants. It is exciting to have the freedom to play secular music or re-frame religious favorites. Everyone comes to Church for a different reason and part of my job is to offer a sanctuary and refuge for the Community. I strive to accomplish this task. During meetings, I frequently mention that it is really the congregation that makes the service and I stand by that opinion. Services have been engaging and cathartic during this challenging year. I believe this success has more to do with the people sitting in the pews than to any particular component of the service.

There is so much amazing music in the world. And my intention is to continue to explore this wealth of music and offer musical support and inspiration to an incredible group of people. Thank you, Hope Central Church, for an amazing year!

Peace,

Vanessa
Music Director

Clerk's Report

Some highlights of the year: In March we commissioned the new Leadership Circle. We continued to envision a new relationship to Stewardship and in May held our first Progressive Dinner. We also continued to explore our relationship as a congregation to the work of examining racism in our congregation and society. In the summer, the Leadership Circle voted for Hope Central Church to join in the Sanctuary Movement as a Level 2 support congregation, and we are currently helping to support a guest who is housed at Bethel AME. Laura Ruth began her sabbatical on September 17, and Ben Perkins was commissioned as the Sabbatical Associate Pastor. Through the time of sabbatical, Courtney and Ben did a wonderful job of leading our congregation and our children learned about different forms of sabbatical. We celebrated Laura Ruth's return to our congregation on December 17.

Three New Covenant Partners:

Yara Gonzalez-Justiniano, Sarah Rowley, Aimee Van Wagenen

Three Weddings:

6/17/17	Hilary Allen and Greg Buckland
8/19/17	Laura Shatzer and Seth Robinson
9/16/17	Jullianne Doherty and Sul Lee

One Birth:

4/28/17	Nathan Thomas Singleton
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Three Deaths:

1/11/17	Graham Brown
4/28/17	Walter Collyer
8/1/17	Mark Burgess

Church membership as of December 31, 2017:

Covenant Partners: 101

Active Participants who understand themselves to belong to Hope Central: 40 households

Average service attendance: 55 (morning service); 8 (evening service)

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Leadership Circle,

Ash Temin
Clerk

Team Reports

Called to Care Team Report

The Called to Care Team has continued to deepen its work as a confidence keeping ministry, attending to the pastoral needs and spiritual health of the congregation of Hope Central Church. One of the ways we do this is listening to God calling us to the beloved community, to work for equity and justice, and to extend our church's welcome to all.

As of December 2017, in addition to Laura Ruth and Courtney, the team includes: Danna Gobel, Barbara McQueen, Ben Perkins, Patti Ryan, Jill Seaman-Chandler, and Pam Wylie.

For the last three months of 2017, the Called to Care team has attended to the congregation through the sabbatical of our Senior Pastor, Laura Ruth Jarrett. It has been a joy to witness and support Courtney's leadership during this time, and witness and support Ben's role as interim Associate Pastor. We have also experienced the people of our congregation as actively tending to each other during this time.

Throughout the last year, we have continued to hold our congregation in care through prayer and through concrete actions. We serve on the weekly prayer team and pray individually with folks during communion in the back of the sanctuary. The ministry of our team has also included bringing meals and providing support for folks during times of illness (including accompanying them to doctor's appointments) or stress, providing rides to church for those who couldn't get to church any other way, and visiting new babies and parents with a meal and a small gift. We have also attended funerals and said sad goodbyes to long-term members of our church family. We have lost many of our beloved elders.

There have been challenges in the last year, and we have tried to hold our congregation, supporting our people who have cared for their parents and their children, who have navigated separation, who have had surgery including joint replacements, who are undergoing treatment for cancer, and who have family members affected by hurricanes. Significantly, a number of folks continue to grieve for parents who have died in the last year. In addition, our pastors held funerals/memorial services for Graham Brown, Walter Collyer and Mark Burgess and—at a host church—for Julia Lanham's mother. We welcomed baby Nathan, son of Jeanne and Troy. NightChurch continues to be a sanctuary and contemplative service, open to all. We are grateful for each and every person in our congregation and feel fortunate to celebrate the joys as well as to minister to the concerns of our church family.

Our team meets once a month. During these meetings we pray and are in relationship with one another in ways that help us bring God's love and compassion to the care of our congregation.

We are blessed to be called to serve the Hope Central community and look forward to continuing to do this work in 2018.

Barbara McQueen
Called to Care Team

Discernment for Ordination Team Report

2017 has been an eventful year as we continue to be faithful to Hope Central Church's Charism to accept and accompany those Covenant Partners who are called to ordained ministry.

The Discernment for Ordination Team has accepted two Covenant Partners, Susan Clinkenbeard and Ash Temin, into the In-Care process of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (MACUCC) and have begun to support and journey with them through their ordination processes. Seth Robinson is progressing through the steps required In Phase Four of the MACUCC requirements for ordination. Lindsay Popper is preparing to enter the Phase Four process.

After prayerful consideration, much discussion, and in consultation with the Committee on the Ministry, Sara Holland is no longer in the ordination process of Hope Central Church and the Metropolitan Boston Association of the MACUCC.

All this has been accomplished with the care, dedication, wisdom, prayers, hard and inspired work of our team members: Nancy Azar, Alan Bone, Laura Ruth Jarrett, Courtney Jones, Marylou Steeden, and Terry Steeden.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Hanlan
Chair of the Discernment for Ordination Team

2018 Annual Budget Cover Letter

Dear Beloved of Hope Central Church,

In accordance with our bylaws for the fiscal stewardship of our community, the Leadership Circle (LC) in conjunction with the Finance Team presents the attached copy of the proposed budget for 2018.

The Finance Team and LC worked vigorously to formulate a budget that shows our financial responsibility as our congregation is continuously moving towards the vision of Hope Central Church as a nurturing, sustaining, and growing community. This 2018 budget continues to reflect the “true cost” of operating our growing church as we continue to focus on our Program Centered Congregation in which the pastors set the vision with the Leadership Circle to pass down to the various ministries, and the work of the congregation is done by the pastors, the staff, the lay people, each according to their gifts.

The “true cost” objective involved a critical and detailed review of the following areas: 1) review of our church employees, 2) the cost of maintaining our church including the grounds and our ministries, 3) our renters, and 4) the amount pledged by our congregation and plate offerings. I will explain in detail these areas of review while walking you through the new budget.

We reviewed our employees’ pay with the guidance of our Personnel Team. Currently, we have the following paid staff: Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Building Manager, Church Administrator, Director of Music, 3 Musicians, Custodian, and Audio/Visual. This year, we applied a Cost of Living increase of 2%. The chart below shows a breakout of what our Personnel wages that were increased and excludes fixed rate items.

2018 Personnel Costs			
Staff	From Lisa & Personn	w/ 2% Increase Approved by LC	
Laura Ruth	92,406.00	93,339.00	40hrs
Courtney	52,650.12	53,198.00	30hrs
Lisa	41,617.00	42,450.00	25hrs
Vanessa	23,924.88	24,404.00	Weekly; Sundays
Leonel	22,109.00	22,552.00	20 Hrs
Sara @ 18hrs	18,452.00	18,821.00	18hrs
Musicians @ Weekly; Sundays	11,214.00	11,439.00	Weekly; Sundays
Audio/Visual Staff @ Weekly; Sundays	1,560.00	1,560.00	Gillian @ \$30/ week for 52 weeks
Guest Musicians	400.00	400.00	Subs for Vanessa 4 times a year

The cost of maintaining our church including the grounds and our ministries encompasses the utilities, repairs and maintenance, religious education supplies, worship supplies, hospitality supplies, music ministry expenses, ministry of justice and compassion expenses, and administration expenses. The cost to maintain our grounds and provide our ministries with the tools they need to do the work within the Hope Central Church mission and vision

were budgeted based on last year’s actual costs and new contracts which are detailed in the chart below.

2018 Costs of Maintaining		
		Gas & Water/Sewer is based on 2015-2017 average; Electric based on 2017 budget
Utilities	19,233.33	
Mowing/Snow Removal	10,283.33	Based on 2015-2017 average
Repair & Maintenance	14,000.00	Only approved expenses
Waste Removal	2,000.00	Price increase in 2018
Building Supplies	1,500.00	Based on 2017 budget
Fire Alarm Service	1,150.00	Based on 2017 which includes fire extinguishers, inspections, and quarterly invoices
Building Insurance	8,225.00	\$2056.25 per quarter
Insurance WC	2,489.00	
Ministry of Justice and Compassion	21,449.38	Based on 3-YR average multiplied by 10%
Ordination Expenses	31.00	Based on 2017 budget
Psychological Exam Expense	2,000.00	Hope Central's share of the folks in Discernment for Ordination's psychological fee - 2 times \$1000 (Ash Temin and Susan Clinkenbeard)
Music Supplies/Piano Tuning	800.00	Based on current year's activity
AV Supplies	440.00	
Worship Materials and Supplies	1,150.00	Based on current year activity trend
Hospitality Supplies	1,000.00	Based on 2017 budget
Supplies Religious Ed/Childcare	300.00	Based on current year activity trend
Religious Education/Adult	-	Based on current year's activity
Communication/Expenses	2,008.00	Based on current year's activity
Denominational Dues	2,700.00	Per Lisa Pilat
Misc Dues/Fees	50.00	Based on 2017 budget
Copier Lease	1,676.00	based on contract
Telephone/Internet	3,250.00	Based on current year activity trend
Payroll Expense	2,700.00	Based on current year activity trend
Bank/Processing Fees	1,000.00	Based on current year activity trend
Office Supplies	1,600.00	Based on current year activity trend
Computer Expenses	1,000.00	Due to the recent robberies
Office Equipment Expenses	300.00	Based on 2017 BUDGET Estimate
Postage	250.00	Estimate; we are mostly electronic. Will send documents only at request
External Audit	-	
Software Expenses	1,580.00	Basecamp (\$50*12), \$500 for QuickBooks Annually, Church Office Online (\$40*12)
DOC Loan Expense	38,556.00	Loan Payment to DOC for a total of \$3,213 a month
Total	142,721.05	

The status of renters will decrease in 2018 from 18 long term renters to 16 renters but we hope to make up the loss in revenue by \$10K. Also, we will continue to rent our 40 parking spaces at \$70 per month and look to gain an additional \$1,400 in 24-hour parking. Lisa Pilat, our Building Manager, works robustly to maximize our income for the space we have available. The chart below shows a breakdown of what we believe, firmly, to be possible and what we must anticipate from a conservative viewpoint based on previous pay history.

Rental income past 12 months				
Rentals				
Tenant	Day they Meet	2018	2017	
12 Step Program	Friday	1,300.00	1,250.00	25x50weeks
AA	Wednesday	100.00	1,250.00	donations only
Al_Anon (Womens Group)	Tuesday	720.00	720.00	60x12months
Art of Sobriety	Friday	100.00	-	donations only
Boston City Singers	Saturday	3,400.00	3,200.00	1600/season
Boston Old Path Sangha	Thursday	3,250.00	2,600.00	650/Q
Boston Renegaydes	Sunday	2,180.00	2,670.00	320 averagex9
Freelance Players	Tuesday	3,450.00	2,300.00	1150/season
Friday night Mens Group (AA)	Friday	1,300.00	-	25x50weeks
Hispanic Community Church	Sunday	15,600.00	15,600.00	1300x12
Ingrate	M-S	84,000.00	84,000.00	7000x12
JP Yoga	Wednesday	1,300.00	1,400.00	35 per session
Kileys Porter Play group		-	1,000.00	100x10
ME2		-	2,130.00	1100/session
Mindfulness Meditation	Monday	500.00	800.00	400/session
Pheobe Support Group	Monday	450.00	450.00	45x10
Rebecca Shellenburg		-	1,400.00	700/session
Sunday Night Alanon	Sunday	50.00	185.00	donations only
Super Soccer Stars		-	1,530.00	85 per class
Suzuki Violin	Thursday	1,590.00	-	
Tuesday Night Mens Group		-	1,250.00	25x50weeks
Per Lisa Pilat		10,000.00		
Parking Rents		35,000.00	40,100.00	40 spaces@\$70 per month plus for \$1,400 for 24-hour parking Estimate received from Lisa Pilat based on us leasing the entire front half of the lower level and previous years
One Time Rental		2,000.00	3,500.00	
Total		166,290.00	167,335.00	

The amount pledged by our congregation, this year, was **\$176,548**. We had 55 pledging units compared to last year’s 68 units. We calculated our budgeted pledge income to be **\$169,486** using an average of the past three years’ pledge fulfillment percentages (2015-102%, 2016-92%, 2017-94%) multiplied by our 2018 pledge amount (96% x \$176,548). Our fulfillment rate is based on the remaining balance pledged over the total pledged amount. Plate offerings were budgeted at **\$14,567** based on a 3-YR average (\$14,900-2017, \$14,400-2016, \$14,400-2015). Plate offerings are a best guest estimate as we assume the last year’s plate givers turn into pledging units in the following year.

2018 Pledges		
Pledge Offerings	169,486.08	Stewardship has raised \$176,548 from 55 pledging units as of 1/25/2018 X 96% fulfillment rate which is an average of the past three years’ pledge fulfillment percentages (2015-102%, 2016-92%, 2017-94%) Average based on previous three years (14.9-2017, 14.4-2016,
Plate Offerings	14,566.67	14.4-2015)
Fundraising Income	1,000.00	
Total	185,052.75	

The pledge offerings combined with plate offerings and rental income comes to a total income of \$351,343 projected for 2018. We have budgeted for our expenses based upon the “true cost” of operating our growing church which amounts in \$410,884. This budget presents a net **deficit** of **-\$59,541**.

2018 Budget Summary	
Total Income	351,343
Total Expenses	410,884
Net Income	(59,541)

With the knowledge of this deficit, the Leadership Circle, Finance Team, Stewardship, as well as the congregation must commit to looking towards all available options and avenues such as grants, increasing pledge amounts to be consistent with year-over-year trends, fundraising events, bequests, Asset Sales, and other income generating options.

As you can see, the Leadership Circle and Finance Team worked relentlessly to provide a financially responsible budget that reflected what it truly takes to operate Hope Central Church. We are a strong faith-based congregation that believes the work we are doing is pleasing to God and with your support and commitment, we can achieve great things! So, would you carefully read and pray over this budget?

With warm regards,

Submitted by Earin Rose
Treasurer
earinrose@gmail.com

Finance Team Report and P&L Statement

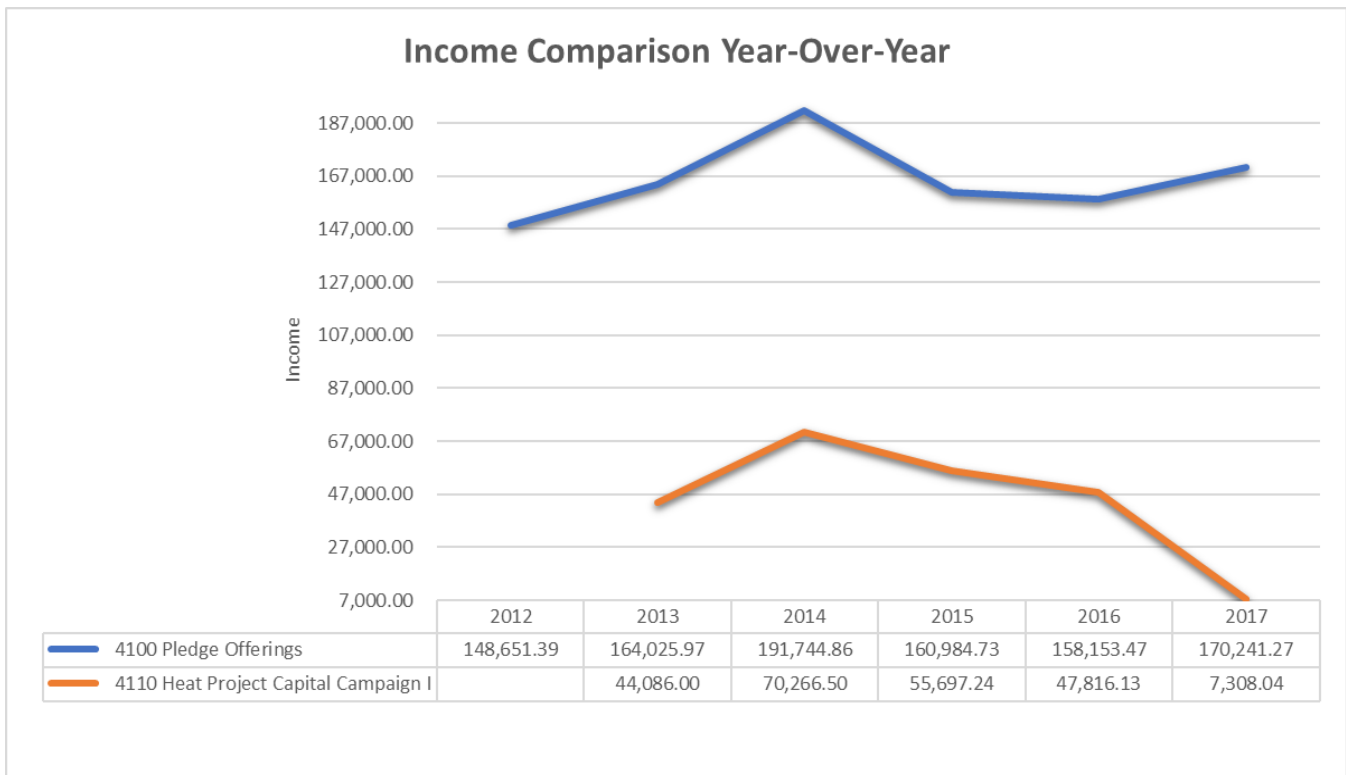
Dear Beloved of Hope Central Church,

In 2017, we had a net loss (**deficit**) of **-\$48,568**.

The 2017 Operating Budget Profit & Loss statement shows our income of \$363,896 against expenses of \$412,463.

Income met budget due to Special Gifts offered for our Sabbatical Coverage, the offerings received related to the Capital Campaign, as well as the additional Fundraising Income received from the Winterfest. However, Pledge Offerings and Rental Income was lower than expected by \$10.6K and \$10.3K, respectively.

Pledge Offerings have drastically decreased and can be attributed to the end of the Capital Campaign. If you review the Income Comparison Year-Over-Year chart, you will see from the Orange line which represents the Capital Campaign decreases from \$4.8K to \$7.3K from 2016 to 2017 due to the end of the Campaign; however, the Blue line representing Pledge Offerings only increases by \$12K from 2016 to 2017 which is an overall loss of \$28.4K. The analysis shows that pledges were not increased enough to support the monthly Disciples of Christ payment that total \$38.6K a year.



On the expense side, we came in under the budgeted amount by 1.03%. This is due, mainly, to the Ministry of Justice and Compassion which was revamped in 2016 via the bylaws to a “use-it -or-lose-it” approach that does not allow for carry-over in Actuals in comparison to the Budgeted amount.

Although it was a deficit year, the take away is that our Pledge Offerings have dipped and if we all can consider how we give, we may be able to address the year of 2018 with more awareness. The Finance Team commits to exploring other revenue streams and will focus the attention to this work beginning in 2018.

Thanks to everyone for your hard work and dedication to this community. As a devoted congregation, you have given your time, talents, and money to further the vision of Hope Central Church.

Submitted by Earin Rose
Treasurer
earinrose@gmail.com

Hope Central Church
2017 Operating Budget: Profit & Loss Statement
 January - December 2017

	Total		
	Actual	Budget	% of Budget
Income			
4100 Pledge Offerings	170,241	180,849	94.13%
4110 Heat Project Capital Campaign I	7,308		
4150 Plate Offerings	14,913	13,567	109.92%
4155 Fundraising Income	3,371	1,000	337.10%
4161 Sexton Income	300		
4200 Special Gifts	12,015		
4300 Rental Income	157,065	167,335	93.86%
4500 Interest Income	57		
Sales	(1,375)		
Total Income	\$363,896	\$362,751	100.32%
Gross Profit	\$363,896	\$362,751	100.32%
Expenses			
5100 Minister Compensation	90,599	91,023	99.53%
5300 Minister discretionary fund	1,923	1,383	139.06%
5400 Associate pastor Compensation	53,904	52,650	102.38%
5500 Sabbatical Coverage	9,700	10,000	97.00%
5800 Church Administration Wages/Ben	18,820	18,452	102.00%
6400 Utilities	19,953	19,400	102.85%
6500 Building and Grounds Expense	101,982	97,483	104.62%
6518 Sexton Fee	375		
7100 Ministry of Justice and Compass	16,056	23,846	67.33%
7140 Seminarian In Care Support	700	1,031	67.90%
7200 Music Ministry	38,029	41,520	91.59%
7250 Worship and Hospitality	1,615	1,808	89.32%
7300 Religious Education/Childcare	270	1,233	21.88%
7400 Fundraising Expense	265		
8200 Church Growth/Marketing	1,877	1,096	171.25%
8500 Dues and Fees	2,438	2,703	90.19%
8900 Administration	12,189	14,684	83.01%
9212 DOC Loan Expense	41,769	38,556	108.33%
Total Expenses	\$412,463	\$416,868	98.94%
Net Operating Income	(\$48,568)	(\$54,117)	89.75%
Net Income	(\$48,568)	(\$54,117)	89.75%

Hospitality Report

In 2017, post-worship hospitality moved to the back of the sanctuary, where we are able to "catch" people on their way out of church. This appears to be a successful way of encouraging folks to pause for conversation and will continue. We made a big jump in planning by assigning a rota of volunteers in advance, in three-month periods, so that less "asking" has to happen in order to fill up Sunday coffee-hours. This has made the job of the coordinator much easier, and volunteers have said they are quite happy to be assigned a week with enough advanced notice. This practice will also likely continue. Potluck hospitality was also provided for Tenebrae, the Annual Meeting, and the Annual Retreat. Church folk always come through on these occasions with wonderful and bountiful offerings. We have eaten well and nourished each other with our kindness. Janet Conlon takes over the role of hospitality coordinator as of January 2018. It has been a pleasure to work with you all these past two years.

Sincerely,

Andrée Zaleska
Hospitality

Ministry of Justice and Compassion Report

The MJC is committed to taking action on Hope Central's mission of seeking ultimate meaning, moving toward the heart of God, and the repair of the world, through service, tithing, and knowledge sharing. We met the second Thursday of every month (taking a break in July-September) from 6-6:45pm in the Church office. The meetings were led by Beth and Erica Charis-Molling. The MJC currently has 20 people committed to this work through the use of Basecamp with between 4-6 people attending each meeting.

2017 saw the continuation of our prior year's commitment to the work of racial justice, justice for transgender and gender non-conforming folks, and attempting to weave ourselves more comprehensively into the fabric of our neighborhood. We continued our monthly volunteering at Community Servings preparing meals for people who are critically ill and are unable to shop or cook food for themselves. Community Servings also provides food for children and helpers of those who are ill, making sure everyone receives healthy and balanced meals. Barbara McQueen continued to lead monthly discussions for white people to talk about race to encourage and inspire action without unduly burdening our congregation's people of color. Since November 2015, representatives from the MJC have attended the monthly Vigil in Support of Black Lives Matter rally on the lawn in front of the JP Baptist Church.

In February, the LGBT Asylum Support Task Force graced us with their presence and recounted stories of how the asylees came to the United States and their difficulties since. Barbara McQueen organized a group from Hope Central to participate in the Mother's Day Walk for Peace in May. Also in May, Beth Chandler, with ties to YW Boston, coordinated our participation in city-wide intention setting for racial equity through a pair of easel boards in Sunday service. In November, Hope Central was represented at the Boston Trans Day of Remembrance. In December, at the request of Marlo Pedroso, the MJC co-sponsored (along with The Meeting Point and St. John's Episcopal Church) a documentary screening of "Whose Streets?," which recounts the Ferguson uprising.

In March, the MJC asked the Leadership Circle, with guidance from the pastors, Covenant Partners, and Iglesia Hispana, to consider becoming a Level Two partner in the Sanctuary Movement in Jamaica Plain. They voted to do so and Hope Central joined Bethel AME, Theodore Parker Unitarian Church, Moshe Kivod House, Nehar Shalom Community Synagogue, Hillel B'nai Torah, and the 77 Intentional Community in this Sanctuary "cluster." (First Baptist JP, Old South Church, and others later joined the efforts in various capacities.) As Erica started graduate school, Polly Hoppin transitioned into a captain role on behalf of Hope Central. The Sanctuary Movement in Jamaica Plain was blessed on September 17, 2017, at Bethel AME Church. The cluster's first guest arrived around that same time and Polly was indispensably involved in coordinating accompaniment for him in the first few weeks as stand in Overnight Captain for Bethel AME. Our pastors represented Hope Central on the steps of the host church for a press conference shortly after the guest arrived. Several of our Covenant Partners have since been trained and have served accompaniment shifts,

developing a relationship with the guest and his children, as well as with the other congregations in our neighborhood.

The MJC is also charged with overseeing the disbursement of Hope Central's tithing, and in 2017 we gave to: #BlackLivesMatter JP Local Chapter, Camp Aranu'tiq, Campaign for Southern Equality, City Mission, Cosecha, Dream Corps, Elizabeth Stone House, GLAD Alliance, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, International Medical Corps, Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, and the Union of Minority Neighborhoods. MJC also provides funding for Fast Track Grants, Pastor's Fast Track Grants, DOC and UCC missions, and the Mass Council of Churches. Fast Track Grants were also approved.

In 2018, the Ministry of Justice and Compassion plans to make disbursement decisions with the recommendations of the few committee members and the Finance Team. We hope to increase communication with the congregation as well as the Fast Track Grant committee through the use of the ThisWeek@HopeCentral newsletter, Basecamp, and Google applications. We hope to work with the teachers of Sunday School to brainstorm activities for their spring semester focusing on volunteering. Other educational and service actions will be organized as needs and passions arise. We hope more generally to engage a larger percentage of the congregation in the actions and giving of this ministry.

Beth and Erica Charis-Molling
Ministry of Justice and Compassion

Nominating Team Report

The 2017 Nominating Team met regularly throughout the year both as a team, and in one-on-one conversations with members of the congregation.

We made calls, exchanged emails, met over coffee, and talked before and after services to help people identify their gifts and match their talents and passions to the needs of the church.

The team continued with the work of searching for members and leaders for teams others than those specified in our by-laws (Leadership Circle and Nominating). We added two people to the Personnel Team; and continue to search to fill needs within the Finance, Stewardship, and Building Teams.

If we did not get an opportunity to meet with you in 2017, we surely will be reaching out in the upcoming year.

The three Leadership Circle vacancies for 2017 were filled by Rowell Levy, Sari Mauro, and Ash Temin. Kathy Hanlan was also added to fill the final year of Terry Steeden's term, making the group complete at nine members.

The Nominating Committee added Nancy Doherty, Sue Harvey, and Christine Storti. Kathy Hanlan stepped down to fill the Leadership Circle role.

The work of the Nominating Committee occurs year-round. In addition to focused searching for open positions, casual conversations about spiritual gifts, leadership opportunities, and our process are always encouraged.

Nominating Team: Nancy Azar, J. Conlon, Nancy Doherty, Sue Harvey, Abbi Holt, Christine Storti, Nina Swift – Leadership Circle Liaison

Personnel Team Report

In 2017, the Personnel Team continued the progress of creating a staff policy manual and compensation guidelines. Our small group of three, J. Conlon, Christie Dustman, and Julia Herzig, recognized the need for additional assistance, and Jae Lohan joined the team mid-year. Sari Mauro is the Leadership Circle liaison to the team.

Our Administrative Manager, Joy Auciello, announced her resignation in the spring and we spent considerable time interviewing for a capable replacement. Ads were placed, interviews conducted, and the most qualified candidate, Sara Dean, joined the church staff in August as Administrative Assistant. The change allowed us to reevaluate the job description and title to accurately reflect the distribution of responsibilities in the office. Sara reports to Lisa Pilat, our Building Manager.

Pastor Laura Ruth Jarrett's planned sabbatical from September through December required that Associate Pastor Courtney Jones step into a temporary senior role as Sabbatical Senior Pastor, and Rev. Benjamin Perkins (not a staff member) take on the function of Sabbatical Associate Pastor. These temporary assignments were assumed graciously, handled exceptionally, and relinquished without issue.

We look forward to 2018 and a schedule of performance evaluations for all staff and completion of the policy manual.

J. Conlon
Personnel Team

Racial Justice Committee Report

The Hope Central Racial Justice Committee was born out of necessity to develop a more comprehensive understanding of racism in the U.S. context and to begin the soulful work of examining how deeply embedded it is in almost every aspect of community life, including our very own faith community. 2017 was another challenging year, with numerous incidences of racial injustice, many of which originated at the highest levels of leadership in our country.

Given this troubling context, one question looms large: how do we maintain our resolve to continue to live out our individual and collective commitments to racial justice? And how we answered it this year included:

- Convening monthly meetings to discuss current events at the congregation, community and national levels, and grapple with all that they mean for our faith journeys.
- Holding regular white people's affinity groups that offer our friends and covenant partners a safe space to journey out of white privilege and into an active role in dismantling white supremacy in all its guises and disguises.

As we look forward to 2018, we do so with a resoluteness that our work must remain grounded in the Galatians vision of church, one in which our particularities, while a part of our identities, give way to a broader reality—that of the unified Body of Christ. Therefore, we continue in this walk, demythologizing whiteness, allowing for space and grace as we lovingly challenge one another in our efforts to dismantle racism, because anything less would fall short of our seeking God's heart.

Benjamin Perkins
Racial Justice Committee

Sacristans' Report

Sacristans have a “behind-the-scenes” role in the weekly liturgy that is very much analogous to a stage manager’s role. The sacristan is the person who prepares the sanctuary for worship each Sunday—replenishes and lights the candles, adorns and sets the worship table, puts out the Communion elements, and then cleans up everything after the service. The sacristan may assist in finding volunteers to help with some aspects of the service, such as reading the welcome. Sacristans are also in charge of organizing the sacristy, ironing and washing linens, and ordering liturgical supplies.

On holy days, holidays, and at the change of liturgical season, the sacristan changes the banner, arranges for any special decorations, distributes any extra elements of the service (such as ashes, palms, and flowers), and sees to many details that help ensure a beautiful and meaningful service of worship.

Nancy Azar, Gina Boisse, DeeDee Hamilton, Kathy Hanlan, Susan Lacefield, Benjamin Perkins, and Suzanne Wolk all served faithfully in 2017. Candace Chang continued to perform the sacred task of baking our delicious round loaves of Communion bread. We are very grateful for her work.

If you are interested in joining our team, please contact Susan Lacefield (sklacefield@hotmail.com).

Susan Lacefield
Sacristans

Stewardship Report

We chose as our stewardship theme this year 2 Corinthians 9:6: *“Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”* Although we had a skeleton team consisting of Ash Temin and Suzanne Wolk, with the pastors and moderators ex officio, as of December 31 we had received 54 stewardship pledges for 2018 totaling \$176,348, and we are working on increasing those numbers. Heartfelt thanks to everyone who pledged this year!

Although we must receive pledges by December 31 in order to count them in our 2018 operating budget, there is no time limit on making a pledge—or increasing an existing pledge—and we encourage everyone to make a 2018 stewardship pledge at any time!

If you have read this far into the annual report, chances are that you’ve already pledged. But if haven’t and would still like to, please contact Lisa Pilat (building@hopecentralchurch.org). To pledge electronically, go to www.hopecentralchurch.org/donate and follow the simple instructions there.

Your annual contributions enable us to pay our pastors and staff a living wage, provide vibrant Sunday worship, uplift our children’s spiritual formation, sustain our ministries of hospitality, compassion, and racial and economic justice, and provide a place of sanctuary, refuge, and community for everyone. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Wolk
grindstone6@verizon.net / 617-327-7083
Stewardship

Worship Planning Team Report

Our worship at Hope Central—the main reason we gather—is the work of the people. For this reason, our worship is planned and led by the people. We meet from 7:30-9pm the fourth Thursday of each month, September through June.

Members of the team are the pastors, Courtney Jones and Laura Ruth Jarrett; Vanessa Morris, Musical Director; Susan Lacefield, Head Sacristan; Terry Steeden for Sound; Gina Boisse for Greeters, Yara Gonzalez-Justiniano, Lindsay Popper, Kathy Hanlan, Benjamin Perkins, Nina Swift, Abbi Holt. Based on a covenant with NightChurch, so that the all the worship of Hope Central is aligned with the mission of the congregation, a member of that worshiping group is required to be present at each meeting. The membership of this team is open.

In these team meetings, we plan logistics - who's doing what. We imagine who we'd like to participate in worship according to their spiritual gifts. We maintain the schedules (rotas) of participants of liturgists, greeters, sound engineers, sacristans, preachers. We speak of the things that went well so we may celebrate. We speak of the things we would do differently next time so that we are always seeking ways to align the needs and worship of our congregation with our collected understanding of how God is leading us.

This is our most important work—to seek to align our worship and praise with the leading of God's spirit on behalf of our congregation. Together in our meetings, we seek to understand our times, our Christian tradition and scripture, so to minister to our people for the strengthening of our hearts and the deepening of our spiritual selves and community. Surpassing the rubric of doing no worship, project or administrative task at which only white people can be successful, we aim to locate our congregation's liturgical work centered in the needs of all our people. To this end, the worship planning team decides on Lenten and Advent themes, preaching series for ordinary Sundays and special occasions. Based on our discernment, using our creativity, we design worship, movement, music, and materials. We believe our next task is to understand what embodied worship might be.

In 2017, our Lenten theme was "Mercy." Advent was "Already, Not Yet." For Lent, 2018, our theme is "Empire."

If you have ideas about our worship, see a need, want to participate, please join our team, or communicate with a member of our team.

Respectfully submitted for the team,

Laura Ruth Jarrett and Courtney Jones
Worship Planning Team

Appendix

By-laws of Hope Central Church

as amended February 5, 2017

I. **Name of Church. Affiliation.**

The name of this corporation shall be “Hope Central Church” and will be referred to hereafter as the “congregation.” Hope Central Church is affiliated with the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Northeast Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

II. **Purpose**

Hope Central Church is a diverse community of hope, learning and growing together in faith, love, and joy. With God's help, we seek to struggle together for God's peace and justice, to explore practices of Christian spirituality, and to serve our neighbors in greater Boston and beyond with open minds, open hands, and open hearts.

III. **Membership / Covenant Partnership**

Membership in this congregation is open to all people. Members, also known as Covenant Partners, are those who unite with Hope Central Church by a public declaration of faith and commitment. Membership may be terminated in the following ways: transfer of membership, request of the covenant partner, death, or inactivity. Members to be terminated due to inactivity will be sent a written notice when possible and given an opportunity to request that their membership be preserved.

A. **Meetings of Covenant Partners**

- i. The congregation of Covenant Partners shall meet at least twice a year: once in an Annual Meeting to do the business of the church, another to be in retreat to dialog and discern on the goals and vision for the future of the church. Special meetings may be called by the Leadership Circle to address emergency situations or opportunities that require congregational vote, and may be called by written petition of any 10 Covenant Partners.

The Annual Meeting shall be held on a Sunday in the first quarter of the year not later than March 31, the purpose of which is to:

- a. Discuss and approve the recommended budget for the upcoming year, brought forth to the congregation by the Leadership Circle, having been drawn up for review by the Finance Committee.
- b. Vote on a slate of candidates for the three (out of nine) rotating Leadership Circle openings and any open terms. A written ballot will be provided to each attending Covenant Partner with space for write-in alternatives.
- c. Any additional business to this meeting must be brought forward to the

Leadership Circle in advance and must be approved by that body by majority vote as a relevant matter of congregational discussion and/or vote, or by a petition of any 10 Covenant Partners.

- ii. Written notice of the Annual Meeting and any special business meeting will be given by email and bulletin announcements not less than 21 days in advance or more than 60 days prior to each Annual Meeting, and will specify the place, day, and hour of the meeting. In an emergency situation, the Leadership Circle may call for a special meeting on at least 10 days' notice.
- iii. Aquorum of 10% or 20 Covenant Partners, whichever is greater, is required to do the business of Annual Meeting and any special business meeting.
- iv. Each Covenant Partner will have one vote.
- v. Decision-making at Hope Central Church will be by consensus, where possible, otherwise a simple majority of the voting members present is required.
- vi. However, any changes to this constitution and by-laws will require a two-thirds affirmative vote. The decision to call or terminate pastoral staff will require a three-quarters affirmative vote.
- vii. The following matters must come before the entire congregation of Covenant Partners at a duly called congregational meeting:
 - a. Calling pastoral staff to serve. Pastoral staff shall mean pastors, associate pastors, or any position that requires ordination.
 - b. Terminating pastoral staff (as defined in a.) except in cases of misconduct.
 - c. The borrowing of money or capital improvements in excess of 10% of the yearly church operating budget
 - d. Any commitment to acquire, lease, or dispose of real property
 - e. Any extra budgetary program or project, excluding repair or replacement, using over \$10,000 of endowed funds or investment income
 - f. Changes to denominational affiliation(s)
 - g. Dissolution of the congregation
- viii. Minutes will be taken of every congregational meeting held, transcribed and saved in the church office.

IV. Leadership Circle

- A. The nine members of the Leadership Circle must be Covenant Partners of Hope Central Church. Hope Central Church pastoral staff serves as ex-officio, non-voting members.
- B. Members are chosen through the vote of the congregation at the Annual Meeting on a rotating basis – three members elected for staggered three-year terms, so that each year 1/3 of the Leadership Circle comes up for a vote by the congregation.
- C. Each member of the Leadership Circle serves a three-year term and can be re-elected once and, after a one year hiatus, can be elected again and re-elected once. This process may

be repeated. In the event of a vacancy on the Leadership Circle, the congregation shall elect someone to serve the balance of the term.

D. The responsibilities of the Leadership Circle are:

- i. To provide general oversight of all the activities of the church and plan for the church's future.
- ii. To provide a forum of communication among the various ministry teams, officers, pastor, and staff of the church and address differences among them.
- iii. To select and remove officers.
- iv. To manage the financial health of the church, borrow money and incur indebtedness for purposes of the church, and to execute and deliver, in the church's name, evidence of such debt.
- v. To oversee and provide direction to pastoral staff.
- vi. To design and facilitate a yearly evaluation of the pastor's and the church's ministry.
 - a. Designing and facilitating a yearly evaluation of the pastor's (s') ministry
 - b. Facilitating and disseminating an evaluation of the church's ministry, including the pastor(s) and ministries
 - c. Presenting findings to the Pastor, PPRC, and Leadership Circle
 - d. Preparing a written report on the summary findings available to all Covenant Partners
- vii. In situations involving allegations or proof of misconduct by pastoral staff, to investigate any allegations, and if appropriate, to suspend or terminate the pastor or staff member, and communicate with the congregation and the denominations as appropriate.
- viii. To hire, oversee, and provide direction to, and terminate the non-pastoral staff.
- ix. To preside over congregational meetings, accept for review petitions from the congregation, evaluate and offer recommendations regarding any changes to by-laws that may come up for congregational review.
- x. Ensure that an Annual Report on the past year is presented to the congregation at the time of the Annual Meeting.

E. Meetings of Leadership Circle:

- i. A simple majority of the total number of the Leadership Circle shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Every act or decision done or made by a majority of the members present at a duly held meeting, which may be in person or teleconference, at which a quorum is present, shall be regarded as the act of the Leadership Circle, unless a greater number is required by law or by the Articles of Incorporation.
- ii. The Leadership Circle will schedule meetings to be held at least ten times per year,

which will be published on the church calendar.

- iii. All Leadership Circle meetings are open to members of the congregation except Executive Sessions which may be closed but which must be posted in the bulletin in advance.
- iv. Minutes will be taken at all Leadership Circle meetings and will be made available to the public within two weeks, except for minutes from Executive Sessions. Minutes from the preceding meeting will be read and approved at the beginning of a Leadership Circle meeting. A file will be kept in the church office of all Leadership Circle meeting minutes as well as minutes from all congregational meetings.

V. Officers

A. From the members of the Leadership circle, the following roles will be filled by a Leadership Circle vote:

- i. **Moderator:** The primary duties include coordinating and facilitating meetings of the Leadership Circle and the congregational meetings.
- ii. **Moderator Alternate:** The primary duties include supporting the moderator and coordinating and facilitating meetings of the Leadership Circle and the congregational meetings in the moderator's absence.
- iii. **Clerk:** Primary duties include recording or delegating the recording of minutes of all Leadership Circle meetings and congregational meetings. Also responsible for making sure minutes other than from Executive Sessions are made available to the congregation.
- iv. **Treasurer:** Primary duties include oversight of financial procedures and collaborating with the staff and Stewardship and Finance Team in the preparation and implementation of a responsible budget. Should no one in the Leadership Circle have the skills or spiritual gifts necessary for the work of the office of treasurer, the Leadership Circle may appoint an appropriate Covenant Partner who is responsible to the Leadership Circle.

B. Officers serve on **one-year terms**, which come up for review and/or renewal yearly by the Leadership Circle.

VI. Standing Committees

- A. The following are the committees required to be active in the congregational life of Hope Central Church. These ministries shall be staffed by members with appropriate gifts and graces, chosen by either the Leadership Circle or the Congregation as specified below, in collaboration with the Pastor(s) and Nominating Committee.
- i. **Nominating Committee:** will be comprised of five covenant partners elected for two-year terms by the Congregation at the annual meeting, and the Leadership Circle moderator as an ex-officio, non-voting member.

- a. The nominating committee develops job descriptions for various volunteer positions as needed, canvasses the congregation in search of volunteers to serve on standing committees and ministries, and brings forward names of Covenant Partner candidates to fill positions on the Leadership Circle, Nominating Committee, and Pastoral Search Committee preceding any elections to these bodies by the congregation.
 - b. Nominating Committee members may serve for more than one term, but each term's nominations for the following year's Nominating Committee must include at least one person not currently serving on the Nominating Committee.
- ii. **Pastoral Search Committee:** Upon request of the Leadership Circle, a Search Committee of six to eight members shall be formed to screen, interview, and recommend individuals to serve as clergy for the congregation.
 - a. The Search Committee shall consist of one member each of the Leadership Circle and the Pastoral Support Committee chosen by those respective bodies, and four to six other Covenant Partners elected by the Congregation to represent the interests and goals of the congregation.
 - b. Committees searching for Associate Pastors shall seek the advice of the Senior Pastor, who shall serve as an ex officio member of the Search Committee.
 - c. The Search Committee will present one candidate to the Leadership Circle, which will then present the candidate to the congregation for approval at a congregational meeting.
- iii. **Pastor Parish Relations Committee:** will be comprised of five Covenant Partners chosen by the Nominating Committee in collaboration with Leadership Circle and the Pastor.
 - a. The Pastor Parish Relations Committee shall seek to achieve and maintain an open, effective, and trusting relationship, and two-way communications between the Pastor(s) and the congregation.
 - b. The deliberations of the PPRC are confidential and meetings are not open to others in the congregation for general participation.
- iv. **Finance Team:** will be comprised of **six** Covenant Partners approved by the Leadership Circle. Duties include:
 - a. Determining the total anticipated revenue each fiscal year and submitting to the Leadership Circle a budget based on anticipated revenues and the priorities of the church as submitted to the Leadership Circle by the various committees, staff, and ministries.
 - b. Taking responsibility for developing sound financial policies and procedures to

be used by the church.

v. **Stewardship Team:** will be comprised of **six** Covenant Partners approved by the Leadership Circle. Duties include:

- a. Organizing and facilitating an annual stewardship drive.
- b. Responsible for promoting year-round stewardship awareness in the congregation.

II. **Ad-Hoc Committees:** Can be created by the Leadership Circle as it deems appropriate.

III. **Ministry Teams:**

A. Ministry Teams may be developed by the pastor, Leadership Circle, or Covenant Partners of the church.

B. Ministry Teams will work in consultation with the Pastor(s) on ministries that further the mission and vision of Hope Central Church.

C. Ministry Team Leader's authority and responsibility includes:

- i. Recommending priorities and goals for programming in that ministry and for the spiritual direction of the congregation as it relates to that ministry.
- ii. Planning, implementing, and evaluating activities and events in the life of the church related to that ministry.

D. Most Ministry Team Leaders will serve an initial one –year term that may be extended by mutual agreement.

E. Ministry Team Leaders will meet monthly one-on-one with the pastoral staff and at least two times a year as a group of Ministry Team Leaders.

IV. **Staff:**

A. **Pastor:**

- i. The pastor(s) will be called as spiritual leader(s) and head administrator(s) of the community, supported and empowered by the congregation to freely lead the community. Pastor(s) should maintain high moral standards, feel commitment to a growing spiritual life, be ordained, hold a Master of Divinity degree, and have sufficient training and experience for the needs of Hope Central Church.
- ii. Dismissal of Clergy. If a member of the pastoral staff loses the support or confidence of the congregation or the Leadership Circle, or if other serious problems arise that may ultimately warrant the dismissal of the pastor or a change in the call agreement, the Leadership Circle shall initiate whatever procedures it deems appropriate to solve the problem or restore support or confidence in the pastor. If such procedures are unsuccessful, the Leadership Circle shall make appropriate recommendations or seek guidance from the congregation. The Leadership Circle may, if appropriate, seek guidance or assistance from the two denominations that support them.
- iii. The pastor shall attend all Leadership Circle meetings as appropriate and shall

prepare a report of his/her activities over the previous month, bring to the church news and issues relating to the wider Church, participate in discussion and planning and provide spiritual direction.

- iv. The Leadership Circle will arrive at an adequate compensation package to offer the pastor on a yearly basis that can adequately be met by the church budget.

V. Finances

A. **Fiscal year** is the same as the calendar year – January through December.

B. Budget process:

- i. The budget process starts by committees and ministries making their monetary requests for the upcoming year to the Stewardship and Finance Team.
- ii. That team then implements a Stewardship campaign, letting congregation know of the vision and requests of ministries and standing committees.
- iii. With the pledge amounts in mind, the Stewardship & Finance Team develop a workable budget and submit it to the Leadership Circle.
- iv. The Leadership Circle reviews the draft budget, makes any changes it may deem necessary and submits it to a congregational vote at the annual meeting.
- v. This then becomes the budget and any changes between line items must be approved by the Leadership Circle. Any line item change amounting to \$5,000 or more must additionally be approved by a congregational vote at a special congregational meeting.
- vi. A minimum of 10% of the average of the prior 3 years income will be tithed to social justice and outreach ministries.

C. Audit & Financial Control:

- i. **Check signing:** At all times, there shall be at least two, but no more than four individuals, who are authorized to sign checks. Those authorized to sign checks shall be designated by the Leadership Circle. For all checks of \$2,000.00 or more, other than salary checks, the signatures of two individuals shall appear on such checks. Similarly, for all withdrawals of \$2,000.00 or more from the savings account, the signatures of two members shall be required.
- ii. **Internal Audit:** An internal audit shall be conducted annually. The audit shall consist of a review of all of the financial records of Hope Central Church. The moderator shall appoint an individual or a committee to conduct the internal audit.
- iii. **External Audit:** An external audit shall be completed every three years. The external audit shall be completed by a Certified Public Accountant or by an otherwise-qualified accountant. The Leadership Circle shall budget appropriate funds to pay for the services of an accountant to conduct the external audit.
- iv. The treasurer shall provide to the Leadership Circle current financial information

for all meetings. The Leadership Circle shall provide current financial information to Covenant Partners at least monthly.

VI. Amending By-laws:

A. By-laws may only be amended by two-thirds vote of the congregation.

Ballots for Team Candidates

Leadership Circle 2018

Kathy Birmingham
 Kathy Hanlan
 Aimee Van Wagenen

I approve the slate
 I do not approve the slate
 I abstain from voting

Nominating Team 2018

Neil Helme

I approve the slate
 I do not approve the slate
 I abstain from voting