



2021-2022 ANNUAL MINISTRY REPORT

**Presented on June 5, 2022
at the Annual Ministry Meeting**



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BRAINTREE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Meeting Agenda	3
Minutes from 2021 Annual Ministry Meeting.....	4
Clerk's Report	5
Pastor's Report.....	6
Photo Review of June 2021-present.....	8
Nominations Slate	9
Prudential Ministry Report.....	10
Music Ministry Report.....	12
Diaconate Report.....	13
Children's Ministry Report.....	14
Youth Group Report.....	15



ANNUAL MINISTRY MEETING

Sunday, June 5, 2022

10:30 AM in the Sanctuary

AGENDA

Call to Order.....Kristen Johnson, Treasurer
Invocation.....Rev. Suzy Aja Burba
Reading of Call.....Barbara Larsen, Clerk
Pastor's Message and Nomination Slate.....Rev. Michael Frady
Financial Update.....Craig Barnes, Prudential Team
Other Business
Benediction.....Rev. Michael Frady
Adjournment.....William Opie

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS ANNUAL MINISTRY MEETING

Annual Ministry Meeting - Sunday, June 6, 2021 First Congregational Church of Braintree

The Annual Ministry Meeting of First Congregational Church was called to order and welcomed by Craig Barnes at 10:55 a.m. in the Sanctuary following the regular morning service. It was also broadcast via Zoom. There was a quorum of 18 members present. Printed Annual Reports had been distributed to everyone, with thanks to Administrator Deb McMartin for its production.

Invocation: was given by Associate Pastor Suzy Aja Burba.

Reading of The Call: was read by the Clerk, Kristen Johnson. The agenda included:

- Voting on nominations for the coming year;
- Update on the financial status of the church;
- Team reports;

Pastor's Message: Pastor Michael began his remarks with a sincere thank you to all those who have served in their various capacities during the year.

Now – how do we grow into the future as a viable church?

For the very life of the Church, Pastor Michael emphasized the need for a recommitment from everyone to serve. We need to develop a momentum going forward with a renewal of energy and vision.

What can be done to increase participation and commitment? Perhaps:

- Reach out to those who are members but do not attend services or meetings.
- Have a “home-coming day” and tell them we miss them.
- Emphasize the need – a commitment - to come to those meetings on which they are members.

We want to improve our physical plant such as: install handicapped bathrooms, repair our roof, restore some of our historic stained glass windows. All of these require money, of course, but also, a commitment of time and energy from our members. Right now, we only have a limited supply of man and woman-power. But with fewer people to do the work, the results are an increase in stress, fatigue and early burnout. Frankly, we cannot sustain our current situation with the same people doing most of the work.

Pastor Michael explained that there are 4 kinds or models of churches:

- Corporate:* membership greater than 800.
- Program:* between 400 – 800 members
- Pastoral:* between 200 – 400 members
- Family:* less than 200.

Although our Church is in the Family category because of the size of our membership, – we actually resemble a more “pastoral” model because of our physical size and history. We are also fortunate that we have a full-time minister and an associate minister – a situation that would not normally exist in a family church. And we have superb musicians as well as an experienced, full-time and skilled front office staff.

We are fortunate to have substantial monetary support from our renters. Monetarily, where would we be without them?

So: How can we grow? Pastor Michael has asked Rev. Don Remick, a well-known consultant and a former MA UCC Conference Minister, to come and provide help to renovate, revitalize, rebuild our mission as a church in the community. He will be working with a “Visioning Team” to develop ideas for the future.

Nominations Slate: At this time, Pastor Michael directed those present to the slate of nominations for the coming year as listed on pages 8 and 9 of the Annual Ministry Report. He emphasized the need for everyone

to jump in and participate in the running of our Church. Some of the teams still have positions currently open. Clerk Kristen Johnson called for and received a unanimous vote by those present to accept the nominations as written.

Financial Update: Craig Barnes updated the Church's financial status through April, 2021. Highlights of this update included our assets and liabilities along with amounts of income and expenses. He projected an annual deficit of \$30,000 which had been budgeted to be about \$55,000. Craig stated that the Prudential Team has been doing a good job in scrutinizing each line-item of the budget in order to get a realistic picture of our financial situation.

Other Business: Recognition of service: Pastor Michael reported that Don and Lorraine Young have officially resigned as Deacons after years of support, wise counsel and guidance to the Church. They were heartily applauded by those present for their outstanding service.

Benediction: Pastor Michael concluded the meeting with the benediction: take time to celebrate our accomplishments while following the will of God – "Show us the way – we are all in your hands."

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Johnson
Church Clerk (2020-21)

CLERK'S ANNUAL REPORT (updated 1/12/22)

Total Active Membership January 1, 2021. 68

Total Active Membership January 1, 2022. 66

BAPTISMS

	<u>DATE OF BIRTH</u>	<u>DATE OF BAPTISM</u>
COOPER LIAM GOULD	January 11, 2021	August 28, 2021
SCARLETT TOLER	January 9, 2021	September 5, 2021
GABRIELLA MEYLANNA MONIZ	March 19, 2021	October 2, 2021
SANTANA CHANEL WEATHERSPOON	September 2, 2021	October 24, 2021

DEDICATION

	<u>DATE OF BIRTH</u>	<u>DATE OF DEDICATION</u>
NOAH FLYNN JEAN GILLES	October 2, 2020	June 6, 2021

IN MEMORIAM 2021

	<u>UNITED WITH FIRST CHURCH</u>	<u>DECEASED</u>
*PRISCILLA BELCHER	November 29, 1964	May 23, 2021
*DIANE WATSON	October 7, 1956	January 21, 2021

Denotes Active Member ~ Only **active members are added to or subtracted from our official UCC reporting numbers.*

Barbara Larsen
Church Clerk (2021-22)

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail."

~ Isaiah 58:9b-12

Good people,

Greetings to you in this season of renewal, and may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

I invite you to read (or re-read) the scripture passage above from the Prophet Isaiah because it has much to do with this annual report on the state of Braintree First Congregational Church. Isaiah was addressing the Nation of Israel with this message to turn to the Lord, refrain from evil, and address the needs of the hungry and afflicted. While our *condition* is not the same (the ancient Israelites had fallen into sin and evil practices) our *need* is the same (to turn to God for guidance).

Quite some time ago, I knew we needed guidance in moving our church forward; I knew *I* needed guidance... so, last autumn our church embarked on a journey of renewal by engaging in a transformational process known as Churches Alive. Led by the very capable Rev. Don Remick, our Churches Alive Leadership Team began our work by first reading books on the subject of church transformation. We met with Don for presentations on transformational process to better understand the concepts we had read about. Then, through sermons, articles, and in-person messaging, we launched the program in our church. It's a very good program, but was one whose structure was overwhelming for our small group of volunteers to undertake all the steps outlined in the program. So, we took a pause to reflect and discern how to move forward in a manageable way that will still produce the results we desire.

What *do* we desire for our church? Initially, our responses included: "We want to grow our church, to get more people to attend, to bring in more money, etc." Your response may very well be the same. Many of you might recall the "good old days" when the church was full and there was a huge choir and lots of programming and clubs and activities, and instead of doing constant damage control, your pastor would come to you homes for visits. Those were good old days, indeed, but this is not the reality of the times we live in for churches like ours. Our team read studies detailing statistics of church (non) involvement for various age groups and the figures are quite discouraging. We learned that following each new trend that comes along and randomly experimenting with new gimmicks to draw people in was, and would continue to produce, minimal results.

The effective, lasting change we desire (for growth) will require more than investing in trends, creative outreach, and broader marketing. The change we seek is not to be found in overhauling our way of conducting worship, although we can update some aspects of the worship experience. True change, from a dying church to a flourishing church, will take much more. I know it's painful to consider ourselves a dying church at this moment; but we need to be very honest about where we are in order to effectively plan for where we want to be. Let me reassure you, GOD IS ALIVE in our church and in our lives. However, acknowledging our present reality of steady decline will motivate us to *all* commit to bringing forth the future we desire for this grand old church.

So, what do we do? Well, we don't give up! Like the frustrated Israelites wandering through the desert, we press on. We are going to re-engage the process of transformation and we will not be discouraged by the hard work it requires. We will continue to work with Don Remick as our "coach;" I use the word coach because it best describes my understanding of his role. We are all "players" on this team; each of us – members *and* friends of the church alike. We can and must all contribute to the effort to arrive at the best outcome. Even if all you are able to do is pray... especially when all of us pray, we will discern who and what God is calling our church to be at this time and into the future.

As we re-engage, the name "Churches Alive" may become something different, we won't be working all the laborious steps, and it may take longer than our original process was designed. But we will commit to the

outlined essential concepts to bring forth change. These include transforming from a maintenance church to a missional church. Yes, we need to continue physical and organizational maintenance; that's not what I'm talking about. What I am saying is that in order to thrive, we need to find ways to transition from an inward, survival practice to a missional focus. And, I'm not referring solely to the church mission programs we engaged in when I say mission. By mission focus, I am posing the question "what is our mission" or more precisely "why do we, First Church Braintree, exist today?" Who are we? What do we do to bring Christ's reign to fruition in this place at this time?

Sunday worship is wonderful and restorative and life giving, correct? I hope your answer is "yes," but there is more. Focusing on maintaining our church solely for our pleasure and personal needs is the maintenance focus we must transition from. In the scripture passage above, Isaiah was helping God's people identify their mission, saying: "If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday." The mission focus we seek to discern may be similar and it may well be rooted in our past and brought to life in new ways. We will be exploring how our past might inform who God is calling us to be. Let's not try to re-create the past; that would be futile. But we will search for important elements of our past so see how particular aspects of identity might inform our emerging vision.

We will be doing an appreciative inquiry, which means we will be asking our members, our tenants, neighbors, area businesses, people town-wide important questions, including: "What is your impression of our church; do you know who we are and what we do/ believe in; what needs of the community can/ should our church be addressing; how can we work together to serve God and others? There's more, but this should give you an idea of how we will discern our relevance in considering who we are and why we exist today. Perhaps we'll discover there is a growing Asian/ Indian Christian population that needs to find a place where they are welcome to worship. Maybe other people who are discriminated against need to know that we offer a *safe, non-judgmental place* to gather and praise God: minorities, people from the LGBTQ community, people who have been mistreated in other churches. There are so many possibilities of who we can reach, (perhaps even people who have yet to learn about Jesus Christ). But in order to reach them, we must be able to articulate who we truly are and why we exist. Why does God need us to continue our long tradition of serving as the hands and feet of Jesus at 12 Elm Street and beyond?

This is a sample of what we will be working to address as we re-engage our church transformation process in the coming year. Before I continue with this lengthy (but important) message, I want to apologize for my attempt to "force the process." Forcing process is that tendency to rush to results, to skip essential steps, and to fail to clearly communicate and "get everyone aboard." Last Thanksgiving, we had a very nice lunch in Upper Parish Hall after worship. I chose to use that gathering to begin our church-wide information session on our process. It didn't go as well as expected. The meal was wonderful and our time together was precious! But, many of you walked away with some confusion about the process and even a sense of discouragement. Process is difficult, and there are always glitches along the way. There will be future information sessions and opportunities for you to provide input. Lesson learned, future events will be offered in a less "forced" manner with the appropriate time and structure allowed for your participation. ...I need you, the transitional leadership team needs you, our church needs you, because you are the church!

Together, we will venture forward in faith, relying on the Holy Spirit to guide us in discerning why we truly exist and what our mission will be. As Isaiah said to God's people so long ago, "The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail." This timeless message is also meant for us today.

Let us now begin our journey into a new year, open to amazing possibilities, united in faith, and joyfully ministering together in love and hope.

Most sincerely, your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Michael". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Pastor Michael



Haiti Relief Concert

Featuring the Bonhomme Family

Sunday, Sept. 19, 2021
2:00 - 3:00 pm

Free Admission

Donations gratefully accepted.

Make checks payable to First Congregational Church of Braintree
Write: "Haiti Relief Fund" on memo

100 % of all donations will go DIRECTLY to the people of rural Haiti via a network of churches in the area.

**12 ELM STREET
BRAINTREE**

www.firstchurchbraintree.com



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BRAINTREE 2022-23 MINISTRY TEAMS

Officers

Moderator	William Opie
Clerk	Barbara Larsen
Treasurer	Kristen Johnson
Assistant Treasurer	Bev Roffo
Collector	Diane Francis

Leadership Team

(Representatives, not necessarily "Chairpersons")	
Senior Pastor	Rev. Michael Frady
Associate Minister	Rev. Suzy Aja Burba
Moderator	William Opie
Clerk	Barbara Larsen
Finance/B&G	Craig Barnes
Deacons	Jean Opie
Children	Mattie Gietman
Visioning	Glenn Holton
Treasurer	Kristen Johnson
Member at Large	Bev Roffo

Prudential Ministry Team

Chair	Craig Barnes
Treasurer	Kristen Johnson
Pastor	Michael Frady
Moderator	Bill Opie
Clerk	Barbara Larsen
At-large	_____ (open)

Worship Ministry Team

Head Deacon	Jean Opie
Deacons	Grace Reinelt
	Carl Francis
	Bev Roffo
	Denise Keaney
	Don Bisset
	Tom King
	Al Giordani
	_____ (open)

Children and Youth Ministry

Children	Mattie Gietman
Youth	Suzy Aja Burba
	Glenn Holton
	Julie Mills
	Mary Iantosca

Stewardship Ministry

Leader	Carl Francis
	Jean Opie
	Don Bisset
	_____ (open)

Music Ministry

Leader	Glenn Holton
Music Director	Keith Ciccone
	Craig Barnes
	Nancy Mills
	Bob Gallagher
	Valerie Johnson
	Marie Opie
	Breanna Hewson

Personnel Ministry

Beverly Roffo
Bill Opie
_____ (open)

Pastoral Relations Team

Carl Francis
Bill Opie
Bev Roffo

Flowers & Decorations

Michael Frady
Kris Johnson
Nancy Mills
Lois O'Brien
Jean Opie
Beverly Roffo

Hospitality

Marcia Barnes
Barbara Larsen
Diane Francis
_____ (open)

Audio Visual

Glenn Holton
Tom King

Scout Representative

Al Giordani

UCC Delegates (need 2)

_____ (open)
_____ (open)

Church Historians

Rick Durham
Lois O'Brien

Thank you for your commitment to serve on ministry teams for the 2022-2023 church year.

PRUDENTIAL MINISTRY REPORT 2021-22

Who would imagine that the country would be still be emerging from a prolonged lockdown due to COVID-19? Our congregation is still navigating the complicated world we find ourselves in with a fair degree of success. While we have not restarted our usual face-to-face social gatherings, we have returned to in-person worship for those who are able and continue to offer a live stream for those who are not. We continue to plan for our financial future while at the same time managing our resources and talents to deal with the present.

The First Congregational Church building, and the classroom extension continues to experience annual wear and tear brought on by weather fluctuations that all structures in the Northeast experience. We have not encountered significant weather-related deterioration issues of the physical plant although recent plumbing, heating and electrical repairs have had an unexpected cost.

The two preschools are back up to student capacity and the Activation Church as well. We do not expect changes to the schools, although the Brazilian congregation will be moving to larger quarters. Finding a replacement tenant for Fellowship Hall is not expected to be an issue.

Regular Sunday services are again conducted in person and through live transmission and YouTube recording, prepared and undertaken by Glenn Holton. The Sunday service music program was continued almost without interruption by Keith Ciccone, our fantastic music director, and supported by Valerie Johnson, FCC's soloist. Slowly, our choir is returning, supported by Keith and Pastor Michael. During this period, our two ministers did not miss a beat and Nancy and Bob did not miss a note.

The Prudential team, consisting of active members Rev. Michael Frady, Kristen Johnson, Bill Opie, Craig Barnes and Barbara Larsen, met regularly using zoom conference that allowed us to adhere to a monthly meeting schedule.

Church members continue to dig deeply and provided funds as outright gifts or increased deficit reduction contributions. A financial pinch expected to result from reduced tenant rentals never materialized to the extent it might have. However, increases in energy and maintenance costs have impacted the bottom line. In terms of our parking lot tenants: the bakery survived the downturn. Crown Pizza was unable to survive but was replaced quickly by Pizza Maria.

A strong wind took down the shade tree that occupied the west lawn in front of the memorial garden. The tree on the east lawn that has been removed will be replaced by a new growth donated by Carl and Diane Francis.

FCC's own Al Giordani continues to care for the lawn and property. Although we needed slightly more intense snow removal than last year, Al G. kept the church property looking great, assisted by Dick Roche as well as the Boy Scouts, under the able leadership of Paul Spinney, Bill Jones and Dan MacDonald.

A review of our beautiful stained-glass windows revealed a historical restoration would be prohibitively expensive. Bill Opie came through again by locating an experienced local contractor who explained that the removal of the plexiglass would improve the weather environment for the windows and extend the service free maintenance of the windows for many years. That \$10,000 effort will commence shortly.

Rounding out this brief report is a different approach to looking at how our budget stands at one third of the year having passed. Essentially, income is lagging, especially due to low investment earnings and unforeseen building maintenance expenses such as higher heating oil costs. Therefore we will make every effort to run a tight budget for the remainder of the year and ask you to prayerfully consider contributing to the budget deficit.

Craig E Barnes

Chairperson, Prudential Ministry Team

CHURCH FINANCES

Data taken from “Statement of Operating Activities vs Budget”

January-April for 2022 and 2021. **Four months of the year or 33%**

Jan.-April 2022

Jan.-April 2021

INCOME - Percentages ideally should be as *high* as possible relative to budget forecast.

Total Contributions: on target: 33%

higher than target: 41%

Total Rentals: on target: 31%

on target: 30%

Total Income: on target: 31%

higher than target: 37%

INVESTMENTS ONLY for 4 months:

Gains or losses: -\$11,000

unrealized: +\$7,000

Jan.-April 2022

Jan.-April 2021

EXPENSES - Percentages ideally should be as *low* as possible relative to budget forecast.

Total Maintenance: higher than target: 78%

higher than target: 73%

Heating oil: higher than target: 91%

higher than target: 56%

Total All expenses: higher: 38%

on target: 34%

As the data will indicate, we have experienced a noticeable increase in our expenses relative to our budget estimates for the first 4 months of 2022.



MUSIC MINISTRY

I am very blessed to be part of a faithful and embracing community. Your cards and emails with your support continue to inspire me through the year.

The past year still holds its challenges as we live through COVID. I am happy we have maintained our music program including vocals, piano, organ, and guest musicians. We were able to embrace all of our talented soloists during Advent, Christmas, Lent and Holy week leading up to Easter. We were able to continue with our Memorial and Christmas Hymn Sings that supports our music program, now going into our 5th year.

Weekly musical selections, prelude, postlude, reflections, and offertory pieces are based on Pastor Frady and Rev Suzy's sermons, lectionary or theme Sundays. I am most appreciative of Pastor Michael and Rev Suzy for their continued support as well as their collaboration in weekly service including themed programs, Lent, Advent, Christmas and Easter

We continue to explore the hymn book and thank the congregation for their willingness to learn and be open to new music. We continue to have a talented professional Soloist and Section Leader, Valerie Johnson. She leads us in song, and adds layers of harmony and years of experience and expertise. The sung Psalms were well received during the Lenten Season in collaboration with Pastor Michael's Lenten Psalm Sermons. Valerie and I rehearse separately as well as together regularly to ensure we enhance the worship service. In addition, Valerie Johnson volunteers as the Director of the White Chapel Bell Ringers. Her passion as she directs and coordinates the music is remarkable. I appreciate her added humor and smile (even under the mask), as she tells us everyone can ring and only God is perfect. We were very pleased to have them play on Christmas Eve, as well as Easter Sunday as they rang in the season. We are very fortunate to own such a beautiful set of bells. Our faithful bell ringers and new volunteers have done an outstanding job, Thank you!

The Choir returned in early spring. We are grateful to Rev. Frady, Bob Gallagher, Craig Barnes, Nancy Mills. We miss seeing Jane Kaatrud and Archie Sanchez. We are grateful to Brianna Hewson, Maria Opie, Glenn Holton, Dave Iantosca, Mary Iantosca, Aubrey Iantosca who join us as guest vocalists as their schedule permits. In addition, we also are grateful to Doug Trudeau as a guest musician.

Our services have been enhanced with the talented violinists, Kiyoshi Hayashi, Ryan Shannon and Sophie Wang. Their classical training adds such beauty to our service and they awe us with their classical music preludes and postludes.

I was happy to see the return of our Children's Pageant as I worked with Mattie Gietman and Rev Burba.

I am grateful to the Pastor and the Prudential Team for their understanding of instrument maintenance needs. Our Steinway piano is tuned regularly, the other pianos will be scheduled for tuning as well as having our donated piano (currently in storage since the Pandemic) scheduled for delivery to our church. The Austin Organ, installed in 1963, has 3 manuals and 47 ranks and was evaluated in March 2022 by Messrs. Czelusniak et Dugal, Inc. (Austin Organ Specialists) They were contacted after we noticed a great treble wind leakage from the left side of organ. We have learned that the instrument will require more extensive evaluation and repair. A written report was given and we have requested a detail estimate cost of further evaluation and a detailed report of the cost of repairs in order of need. The organ has always been tuned and repaired with another company since my arrival. It was in the best interest of FCC that I sought additional expertise due the uniqueness of the Austin instrument. I will continue to keep you informed with more details as they are available. I know the expertise evaluations and repairs are expensive. I will work the Pastor, Prudential and Music Committee.

The Music Library has an extensive music collection from classical to contemporary pieces in multiple harmonies, many no longer in print. There is a stop date by the end of summer to reorganize the room. I will ask assistance from the FCC Music Committee Members for one or two evenings, as many hands make light work. The goal will be to reorganize but not to discard the collection.

Thank you to Glenn Holton, our IT and video go to person and for his help during the summer. Thanks to Bill Opie for always lending a hand with hymn numbers, and assistance with setting up the music during outdoor worship service.

Thank you to Deb McMartin for her hard work, design and patience as well as Val Fink for her help throughout the year.

continued...

Music Ministry Goals for 2022-2023

- Weekly meeting with Pastor Michael, in person, zoom or facetime
- Continue with outdoor Summer Service.
- Continue Sunday Morning Choir rehearsals.
- Continue Caroling in December
- Secure special Musicians for Rally Day, Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Music Sunday
- Instruments Maintenance and Tuning
- Austin Organ Evaluation and Schedule Repairs.
- Parlor Piano to be tuned. Secure new location for our two donations of pianos
- Have a Spinnet pianos placed on wheels
- Work with Show Stoppers in bringing a cabaret performance to our church.
- Continue to explore ways to bring in outside musicians to fill our sanctuary with music

Thinking of joining the choir? Are you an instrumentalist?

We can find a way to help you put your gifts and talents to good use for the glory of God.

Respectfully Submitted.

Keith J. Ciccone

Director of Music

Bless O Lord, your servants who minister in your temple. Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts, we may show forth in our lives!. AMEN!!

WORSHIP MINISTRY (DIACONATE) REPORT

Deacon's Report

This year, our Deacons focused on supporting Pastor Michael in providing pastoral care to our aging members. We now have a "Care List" which tracks the needs of members who are in need of transportation to church, home visits, and phone calls. Each person (or couple) on the list is assigned a Deacon who checks on them and reports to the pastor when particular needs arise.

A challenge that has presented itself is that transportation and care needs are beginning to extend beyond the number of Deacons we have available to help. We have extended our "Care Team" to members who are not Deacons, but who are willing to help us and I am now asking you to please contact me if you are able to help us in any way. Our particular need is to have more people willing to give people rides to church on Sunday morning.

The Deacons continue to assist in preparing the sanctuary for worship and closing the church when everyone leaves. We are looking forward to beginning our outdoor worship services in the coming weeks.

God bless you all and thank you to all our Deacons for their faith and dedication to the church.

Submitted by

Jean Opie

On behalf of your 2022 Worship Ministry Team:

Jean Opie
Denise Keaney

Don Bisset
Tom King

Carl Francis
Grace Reinelt

Al Giordani
Beverly Roffo

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY REPORT

What a year we have had! I would first like to go back and re-thank all of you who participated in our Christmas Pageant! I think we should continue with a Church-wide pageant next year. It was such a joy having multi-generations work together to make a pageant for the memory books!



Christmas Pageant—December 2021

As most of you know, we had a super successful Easter Egg Hunt and Children's Day! Thank you times a million to all of you who contributed time and/or monetarily! Now we know what to expect next year! We wrapped that into our Heifer International "Water For Life" Service Project which we are just awaiting final counts and then I will announce what we were able to do! Our next goal is to do something big on Rally Day to kick-start a new Sunday School year!

Although attendance has been light the past few months, we have still managed to accomplish quite a bit! This year we adopted a "Kindness Initiative Project." The children were given a list at the beginning of the year of small service projects to tackle every month or two. So far we have done a "Random Act of Kindness" week where the kid's went out of their way to do one small gesture for someone else. We also did "Positive-Post-Its" where we brainstormed uplifting messages to leave scattered around public places we frequent. We are currently in the midst of our "Two Colorful Gifts in One" project where the kid's pick a coloring page to complete over a few weeks and then we will take those and then a blank coloring page and send it to someone in need. Once we are finished my goal is to send them to a children's hospital ward! Another project we did was our "Blessing Bags for the Homeless." The kid's brainstormed what they would like to put in these bags (toothbrushes, ponchos, snacks, water bottles, combs, deodorant, emergency blankets, chapstick, etc.) and made cards with uplifting messages. Then we stuffed bags with all the items and I have been slowly distributing them. There are quite a few other projects that I am planning on carrying over to next Sunday School Year where I am hoping to get a new start and aim the lessons towards a younger age group. Our current Sunday Schoolers are a bit older and as they transition to the youth group, I will be anticipating them stepping into more of a helper role! I am super excited to see what next year brings and hope we can start to gain some momentum with the Children's Program! How blessed am I that I get to spend my Sundays watching these kids grow, in both Sunday School and Youth Group? Thank you all for your continued support and contributions to our weekly needs as well as the big events!



Easter Egg Hunt- April 2022

God bless,

Mattie

Mattie Gietman
Director of
Children's Ministry

YOUTH GROUP REPORT

Dear Church,

For youth group this year, we have combined the junior high (grades 6-8) and high school groups. We currently have two junior high kids, and five high school youth. We are fortunate that, for this group, having the two age groups combined is working just fine. It is rare for such a combination to work without losing one side of the age group. This is a wonderful testament to our kids that they are willing and able to work together.

I attended a two-day zoom conference for youth ministers earlier this year where I learned we are all struggling with the same things. There are two primary things that stuck out. First, through the pandemic, many kids have not returned to youth groups in which they were previously involved. Some youth programs have completely dissolved or gone to a monthly meeting with two to four kids. Thankfully, we are among those who are surviving in these unique and challenging circumstances. A second common thread is that we are all questioning what we can change and how we can do things differently to better meet the needs of young people. While all in attendance were hoping to hear some possible answers, we only learned that our questions were the same.

Mattie and I have been very fortunate this year in that we have received some unsolicited, meaningful feedback from a few youth about what the program means to them. Our goal of providing a safe place for young people to be supported as their authentic selves, a place where kids are free to connect with others and learn and grow at their own pace, is being achieved.

My hope for the future is for our group to grow so we can separate the junior high and high school age groups. This will allow us to better meet their needs and address age-appropriate topics. We have had a couple service projects, and I hope to do more to get the youth engaged in activities of serving others and caring for the earth. Our group is a fun and creative group. They are respectful and thoughtful and I consider myself blessed to be able to share God's love with them.

To all of you, I wish you many blessings. May you be filled with God's unwavering love.

Rev. Suzy Aja Burba
Associate Minister



Water Wizz Summer 2021



Trunk or Treat - October 2021



Secret Santa 2021

OUR VISION

First Congregational Church of Braintree, UCC offers a welcoming, friendly, and joyful home to all believers in Jesus Christ, and to all men, women, and children who are true seekers of hope, peace, forgiveness, and spiritual guidance. We encourage a deepening of Christian belief through greater understanding of scripture, and by way of forward-looking approaches to worship.

We also endeavor to be active in the life of our community through loving Christian outreach, and by providing a safe venue for a wide range of worthwhile organizations and groups.



Rev. Michael Frady, Senior Pastor ❖ pastormichael@firstchurchbraintree.com

Rev. Suzy Aja Burba, Associate Minister ❖ suzy@firstchurchbraintree.com

Keith Ciccone, Director of Music ❖ keciccon@aol.com

Mattie Gietman, Director of Children's Ministry ❖ mattie@firstchurchbraintree.com

Deb McMartin, Administrator ❖ office@firstchurchbraintree.com

Valerie Fink, Bookkeeper ❖ finance@firstchurchbraintree.com