

DIACONATE

Edwards Church Diaconate had a year full of spirit-led activity, beginning with the welcome addition of our new associate pastor of faith formation and outreach, Rev. Shane Montoya. On January 1, we celebrated New Year's Day with a brunch-style worship in Susan Dickerman Hall. We then celebrated the Epiphany Service, hosted by Plymouth Church, on January 8, 2017. We welcomed Ruth Carney as our newest member to the board.

January 15 and 22, we were led in worship by second-year mentored pastor, Nena Radtke. On January 19, many of our congregants attended Rev. Shane Montoya's Ecclesiastical Council.

Ash Wednesday was led by Rev. Shane Montoya and the Seeds of Grace Worship team. The service offered participants an interactive deep dive into scripture, meditation and music surrounding the beginning of the season of penitence and spiritual reflection on March 1. The Lenten theme this year was "Sanctuary: Safe Space, Brave Space" and included a daily reflection by various church members and pastoral leaders. The Just Peace Players performed the *Lawyer's Question* during our worship service on March 23. Holy Week began with a lively parade that once again included other congregations that share our campus as well as the return of Joey the donkey. Following the parade, a meal was shared in Edwards Hall. The afternoon festivities continued with the celebration of Rev. Shane Montoya's ordination at Eliot Church in Natick. On Maundy Thursday, April 13, we held our traditional reenactment meal. The ecumenical service was hosted by St. Andrews Church the following day on Good Friday. On April 16, Easter Sunday began with a break of dawn service led by Nena Radtke followed by a light breakfast. Easter Sunday also included a family service at 10:00 a.m. in which attendees were invited to decorate a flowering cross as a colorful representation of transforming an instrument of death into a symbol of new life.

On Sunday, April 23, we gathered in Susan Dickerman Hall for a participatory, non-traditional worship service led by Rev. Shane Montoya and the Seeds of Grace Worship Team. That afternoon we celebrated the commissioning of Rick Seaholm as our minister of music. On Sunday, April 30, we witnessed the confirmation of three extraordinary youth: Amelia Burton, Nolan Buck, and Eleanor Yeomans.

During the month of May, we enjoyed a three part sermon series with Pastor Debbie entitled "Signs of the Times." On May 14, Nena Radtke led worship for the last time as our pastoral mentoring student and Rev. Shane Montoya participated in a pulpit exchange at Plymouth Church. The Diaconate hosted a special Gathering of Friends on May 21 for those interested in learning more about our church. On June 18 we welcomed new members Tonya Bedore, Colin Cashman, Joe Hudock and Debbie Osborn to our congregation. During the month of May we also welcomed our "Thinking about Ministry" student Reid Young.

On June 5, we held a special sending forth for Nena Radtke as she completed her two-year term as our mentored minister.

Other special services held during the summer of 2017 included: June 11 baptism of Avery Ann Johnson. Rev. Fran Bogle led our worship service on June 18. On June 25, we honored our graduates and Rev. Shane Montoya led our worship service. On July 1, we held a memorial service for beloved church member, Don Akin. Additional pulpit coverage during the summer months was provided by Deacon Matt Aufman on July 9. July 23 was our combined outdoor service with Plymouth in the Edible Forest Garden.

On July 30, a "Sacred Meals" brunch worship was held in Susan P. Dickerman Hall. On August 6, we welcomed UCC Mission Partner Rev. Phyllis Byrd from Kenya as our guest preacher. On August 13, we celebrated the baptism of Addison Bennett-Winship. Our August 20 worship service was led by our newly commissioned minister of music, Rick Seaholm. August 27 worship was led by Deacon Dawn Sorenson and the final summer service was an intergenerational service led by Rev. Shane Montoya.

On Sunday, September 10 we welcomed back the choir and began our fall session of church school. Our fall worship focused on the theme "Footsteps of the Faithful," with an emphasis on discipleship. On September 17, we celebrated the 170th anniversary of Edwards Church. We held our outdoor service on September 24 which also included a Blessing of the Animals. World Communion Sunday was held on October 1 and centered on the

Feeding of the Five Thousand. During the month of October we also celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation through special sermon topics as well as through our music.

During the fall, we began our Seeds of Grace worship services on alternate Sunday evenings at 5:30pm. The first series centered on the theme "Amazing Grace," followed by two with an Advent theme.

November was a month focused on stewardship as "The Giving Team" encouraged us to consider our gifts to support Edwards Church. Thanksgiving/Dedication Sunday was celebrated on Nov. 19. A Transgender Service of Remembrance was held on November 20 to remember those who have died because of violence, oppression, and silence.

Advent began on Sunday, December 3. On December 10, our worship service was filled with special music and followed by a group of Edwards folks who went Christmas caroling to three homes and one assisted living facility. Christmas week began on December 17 with a special music performance by our choir. On Sunday, December 24, we held three distinct worship services beginning with a Bluegrass Christmas at 10:00 a.m., our non-traditional Christmas Pageant at 5:00pm, and the candlelight service at 9:00 in the evening. Our final service of the year was a brunch service held on December 31, and was led by Pastor Debbie and Deacon Dawn Sorensen.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelly Cichowlas, Co-Chair