

MUSIC COMMITTEE

It's a joy to summarize the musical activities of the past year! In tandem with Rick Seaholm's report as commissioned minister of music, we hope that all of the important information and musical highlights are duly noted, and we give thanks to all who contributed to a fabulous year of music at Edwards!

The music at Edwards Church continues to thrive and the Music Committee is very grateful for the hard work, creativity, musical talent and direction of our choir director, Rick Seaholm. Now in his ninth year at Edwards, Rick continues to provide skilled leadership for the choir to perform at their best. We are very proud of Rick for his accomplishment of becoming a Commissioned Minister of Music. Congratulations Rick! Edwards Church is indeed blessed by your many gifts to us.

We are grateful to our keyboard team, with Susan Minor handling piano duties about three out of four Sundays a month and organist Cheryl Elkins playing organ on other Sundays. These two musicians are very talented and a great fit for Edwards as we continue to discern the long range needs of our music ministry. We are blessed to have this team enriching our worship.

Our blessings also include the steadfast contributions throughout the year of our choir, including returning members Cindy Booth, Ric Carl, Debbie Clark, Karen Dolliver, Bryan Douros, Jane Ezbicki, Len Ezbicki, Jeannette Loughman, Rick Robinson, Marge Roy, Nicola Seaholm, Kelly Lopez, Ronda Yeomans, Ruth Carney, Frank Carney, Holly Martin, Terri Taylor and Don Akin, along with new member Gabe Marcincavage. On a less happy note, Don Akin's unexpected passing left a big hole in our choir, and we miss his wit and warmth as well as his voice.

Thanks as well to Bruce Cichowlas, Shelly Cichowlas, George Marcincavage, Amy Plackowski, Terri Taylor, Meghan Taylor, Zoë Krohne, Willie Sordillo and Nicola Seaholm for sharing their musical talents to enrich our worship on special occasions. Our house band, "On The Fence" played for the Blessing of the Animals service in September, and at a Christmas service in December. Thanks go to members Ric Carl (mouth harp and ukulele), Len Ezbicki (mandolin), Jane Ezbicki (violin), George Marcincavage (guitar) and Kelly Lopez (bass).

We were also treated to special music for Easter as our choir and musicians were augmented by Chris Heater and Charley Moreau on trumpet, Rohan Elkins on French horn, Tristan Elkins on trombone, and Greg Savino playing timpani.

In addition, Rick Seaholm provided music for our Maundy Thursday dinner service and accompanied the Just Peace Players when they presented their play, *The Lawyer's Question* during worship. In October, Rick led a workshop on Music of the Reformation.

The newly launched Seeds of Grace worship service on alternate Sunday evenings also saw participation from a wide variety of musicians from Edwards members and friends, including Willie Sordillo, Zoë Krohne, Consuelo Candelaria-Barry, Kelly Lopez, George Marcincavage, Terri Taylor, Meghan Taylor, Bruce Cichowlas and Susan Minor.

Edwards Church co-sponsored a multi-faith concert this fall to raise awareness and funds to support our immigrant neighbors in need which was held at Greater Framingham Community Church and featured member Willie Sordillo and his group. The event raised more than \$8000 and created a feeling of unity between a number of Christian churches of varying denominations and ethnicities, a UU church and a Jewish synagogue.

The Music Committee is responsible for maintaining the organ, pianos, and sound system, and there is much to report on for 2017. The Steinway piano we received as a result of our merger with Grace Church was dedicated with appreciation for the many gifts of Grace Congregational Church. This year, work was done by the Andover Organ Company to tune up our Stevens organ and the Piano Doctor tuned up our two upright pianos and the Steinway grand. The music committee purchased new microphones, hearing assistance devices, and a mixing board for the portable P.A. system. A big thank-you goes out to Don Buell for donating his timpani to Edwards Church.

In February, the Music Committee convened a focus group to obtain input from interested church members about what they value about our current music ministry, what they would like to change or add to it, and what their long term vision for the Edwards music ministry is. The intention of gathering this information is to help us better discern our vision and needs as we move forward, particularly as we adjust to the departure of our long term pianist-organist, and as we become a new community shaped by the merger of two pre-existing sister communities. Rather than rush to replace Don and continue business as usual, we saw these two events as an opportunity to think about other possibilities. What will best serve our community into the future as mainstream Christianity increasingly struggles with declining church membership? How do we create transformative worship which meets the needs of younger generations in a way which is faithful to our understanding of what Christianity is and respects traditions and varied tastes? As 2017 comes to a close, the Music Committee has decided to extend our contracts with Susan Minor and Cheryl Elkins on an interim basis for another year as we continue to explore these questions.

The Music Committee also initiated a process for evaluating our choir director in an effort to provide meaningful feedback for the choir director as well as discernment for the church community to help all of us become more effective at providing powerful worship and deepen the impact of our music ministry. A sub-committee of the Music Committee will undertake this process in early 2018, which will include input from the membership as well as the choir and Rick, himself.

Rick Seaholm has recorded choir performances and posts them to a website that he created and maintains: www.edwardschurchmusic.org. This site is a wonderful resource for the choir and another example of the multiple talents he brings to this church—check it out!

We look back in awe at the musical life at Edwards for 2017 and give a heartfelt thanks to everyone for their contributions.

For the Music Committee,
Ric Carl, Co-Chair and Willie Sordillo, Co-Chair