

BOARD OF WIDER MISSION

Wider Missions focuses on social justice issues, in hopes of expanding circles of healing and justice to neighbors near and far. This year provided numerous opportunities to respond in love to the crises of changing climate and increased public hatred. Our committee worked to provide the Edwards community concrete ways to engage in acts of compassion and social change on our campus, in the broader local community, and globally.

Preparing ourselves to care for our wider community

In order to positively impact our community, Wider Missions offered educational opportunities to help us learn about issues of justice and the environment. We aim to learn more about systems of oppression in hopes of creating change, and to discover and implement ways of being more environmentally sustainable.

- White Privilege curriculum and study group: WM reviewed the UCC curriculum on white privilege and decided to coordinate a 6-week study group during Lent. Fourteen people participated, and once completed nearly everyone agreed to meet monthly through the rest of the year to continue learning about systemic racism and thinking of ways to impact change.
- Movie nights: WM continued a series of potluck movie nights focused on issues of race. The January session welcomed members of the Greater Framingham Community Church, including youth, for fruitful fellowship and discussion.
- Green Team: Mary Memmott has spearheaded this effort to make sure that our Edwards community is environmentally responsible. The team initiated leaf and food composting, using mugs at coffee hour, and the building and maintenance of the herb box. They also began the process of holding our community accountable with the UCC green levels, already successfully reaching Level 1.

Supporting and promoting justice in our local community

Wider Missions helps our congregation positively impact the lives of people in our local community. We support local folks who are homeless and/or in need of day to day necessities, and we also look for opportunities to help make our nearby towns more welcoming and just for everyone.

- MLK Conference: Our confirmands attended a day-long retreat organized by the Greater Framingham Community Church focused on the legacy of MLK. They were among very few white attendees and participated fully in interactive workshops.
- Youth game night 3/29: Two of our confirmands and their mentors participated in the game night organized by Greater Framingham Community Church, building relationships through playing UNO, video games and eating pizza!
- Framingham Comes Together: Members attended the March forum on supporting immigrants and making Framingham a more welcoming community.
- Palm Sunday Parade 4/9: WM assisted in organizing the Palm Sunday parade, which included all of the churches who worship on the Edwards campus, to continue building relationships across our communities. WM sponsored the parade's donkey and helped coordinate the music and the food for the reception afterwards. It was a joyful, multilingual and well-attended event.
- A Place to Turn food pantry
 - Valentine's Day Collection 2/12: We had a special collection for A Place to Turn.
- One Less Gift - November – Our community donated Christmas gifts to local families in need through Pathways shelter.
- Worcester Fellowship
 - January and July– Youth packaged brown bag lunches during service, then assisted in handing them out and participated in the outdoor church service with members of the Worcester community.
 - Easter Sunday: We took up a special collection of men's underclothes, hygiene products and wool blankets for Worcester's homeless families.

- Special collection for Neighbors Fund 3/19: The funds went to CASA, the local immigrant workers' organization that is helping families deal with increased ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) presence and more aggressive deportation tactics. In particular, families need legal help and resource assistance when their main breadwinner is detained.
- Metrowest Immigrant Solidarity Network: WM members helped form a coalition of people from various religious communities to help organize community support for local immigrants. A potluck meeting initiated widespread education and definition of the needs of the immigrant community that attended. We were represented on resulting committees for legal support, fundraising and accompaniment. We attended legal trainings, helped gather information on ICE activities at the Framingham court and accompanied immigrants to court appointments and mandatory ICE meetings.
- Letter writing: Edwards Church members wrote letters in support of local community members impacted by new ICE actions. Both people we supported are longtime community members originally from Ecuador, with children here in Framingham who are citizens and struggling with the emotional and financial impact of the sudden absence of their father.
- Signs of support: Members held signs in downtown Framingham weekly with messages of support for immigrants and others targeted by hate speech.
- Singing in Solidarity 11/5: Members helped create and organize a new fundraiser to support local immigrants. Musicians participated from many churches and temples in different musical styles and languages, building solidarity and fellowship. Willie Sordillo played with his group and coordinated the acts for the event, which was widely attended and raised over \$8,000!
- Stearns Farm food to local shelter/food pantry: WM purchased two shares at the local CSA farm. Mary Memmott coordinated volunteers to pick up the produce and deliver it to Hope Food Pantry and Pathways.
- H2H: Home to Homes: WM coordinated a special collection for this organization that collects donations of furniture and home goods for those in shelters or recently starting their own homes.
- Veterans Dinner 11/12: Together with Plymouth Church, we hosted a dinner for area veterans and their family members, with over 100 people in attendance. This is our third annual dinner, and it is growing rapidly.
- Interfaith Thanksgiving service 11/19: Wider Missions supported an effort to work more closely with the other faith communities on our campus, as we co-sponsored the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, together with El Toque del Maestro, Community of St. Luke, and Open Spirit. The service was an expression of our commitment to multi-faith and multi-cultural community.

Supporting and promoting justice in the wider world

Wider Missions also seeks to extend care to people nationally and internationally, both in moments of crisis and for building ongoing, sustainable support.

- Rural Water Ventures 6/4: Bill McQueeney spoke during the service on his effort to provide clean water to communities in Nicaragua, which WM has supported for years.
- Phyllis Byrd visit Aug 5-7: Phyllis spoke at a potluck dinner on Saturday and the following day's service. She talked about the Presbyterian church's efforts in Kenya and how the UCC is supporting independent churches there.
- Special collection for Kenyan environment: After Phyllis's visit, we took up a collection to support Kenyan efforts to plant trees, sending over \$200.
- Gifts that Give Fair 12/3:– Items were sold to raise money for the following organizations: SERVV, Church World Service, Heifer Project, Equal Exchange, A Place to Turn, Worcester Fellowship, NEADS, African Exchange Project and Just Peace Players. Transition Framingham also participated by offering more sustainable gift wrapping.
- Hygiene kits for Hurricane Relief: A special collection of hygiene kit items was assembled and sent to benefit people affected by the recent hurricanes, especially in Puerto Rico, through Church World Service.

- Supporting a Tibetan student– Edwards Church started supporting a new child in Tibet, Tenzin Dayoe, through annual financial contributions of \$360 and mail correspondence.
- Special collection for victims of hurricanes: Our congregation contributed \$4000 to people in Florida, Texas and Puerto Rico who suffered devastating results of the natural disasters this fall.

Seeds of Grace Mission Fund

Grace Church established the Seeds of Grace Mission Fund as part of the process of merging with Edwards Church. The Wider Missions committee has overseen the use of the funds so far and has made a few contributions (details below.) In order to disburse the funds in the spirit intended by Grace Church, we have formed a subcommittee to develop a process for applying for funds and to generate ideas for reaching out to groups who might benefit from them.

New roles on the committee

As Kim Wronski is happily busy with Amelia, the newest addition to her family, Heather Gonzalez has been acting as interim chair. We welcome Beth Persons' transition into the position of treasurer, and are grateful for the years that Karen Dolliver has served in that capacity. We are also glad that Shane Montoya has joined the committee to help coordinate the involvement of youth in the work of Wider Missions, and to keep the committee updated on ways we can support our youth.

Financial Gifts in 2017

Leadership Gifts

As representatives of the members of Edwards Church, the Board of Wider Mission strives to distribute these gifts to local, state, national, and international organizations whose work we especially value and feel align with the mission of Edwards Church. In 2017, Edwards Church gave leadership gifts to the following organizations:

LGBT Asylum Support Task Force \$1,000

The Task Force, based at Hadwen Park United Church of Christ, supports people from around the world seeking asylum in the US because of danger to their lives based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Rural Water Ventures Inc. \$1,000

Rural Water Ventures funds projects that provide rural villages in Nicaragua with access to adequate quantities of safe drinking water.

UCC Syrian Refugee support \$1,000

The UCC aids millions suffering from the Syrian Refugee crisis.

Worcester Fellowship \$1,000

This organization gives food and shelter to the homeless, and also offers fellowship in an outdoor service every Sunday throughout the year.

OUT MetroWest \$500

OUT MetroWest enriches the LGBTQ community in MetroWest Boston and the larger world through programming, education, and advocacy.

A Place to Turn \$500

This food pantry serves people in the Natick area.

- Gifford's Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence \$500

This national organization fights gun violence through advocacy, research, and education.

- MA Bail Fund \$500

This organization posts bail for those in need so they don't lose jobs, disrupt families and suffer in isolation while waiting for their cases to move forward.

Supporting Gifts

Supporting gifts are generally given in the amount of \$200 per organization and usually to agencies located in Massachusetts. As representatives of the members of Edwards Church, the board strives to distribute these gifts to local and state organizations whose work we feel is of value to the community and represents the interests of Edwards Church members. In 2017, Edwards Church gave \$200 supporting gifts to the following organizations:

1. Programs for People (Mental health and medical)
2. UCC – Just Peace Players (Social Justice)
3. Jeff’s Place (Mental health and medical; youth)
4. Framingham Adult ESL Program (Refugees and immigrants)
5. Ecclesia Ministries (Homelessness and hunger)
6. Buddy Dog Humane Society, Inc. (Animals)
7. Holy Joe’s Café (Veterans)
8. ONA Coalition (LGBTQ)
9. NEADS (Mental health and medical)
10. MetroWest Free Medical Program (Mental health and medical)
11. Planned Parenthood (Mental health and medical)
12. Southern Poverty Law Center (Anti-violence)
13. Daniel’s Table (Homelessness and hunger)
14. Black and Pink (Criminal justice and LGBTQ)
15. Families for Justice and Healing (Criminal justice)

Additional donations made throughout this year, responding to specific requests:

Voices against Violence Walk	\$200.00
H2H Homes to Homes	\$200.00
Hoops and Homework	\$200.00
Project Bread Walk for Hunger	\$200.00
Tree of Life	\$200.00
Metrowest Workers Center	\$200.00
MA Interfaith Power and Light	\$200.00

Seeds of Grace Fund Gifts:

Stearns Farm	\$200.00
Stearns Farm produce shares	\$1,185.00
Youth mission trip	\$540.00
Open Spirit grant	\$ 25,000.00