

The Pittsfield Pilgrim

First Congregational Church
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The Pittsfield Pilgrim

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The Rev. David Stasiak, Minister
Nella and Mike Hobson, Publishers

Meet Your Church Family

Karen Brook

Editor: We asked our new friend Karen Brook to share a little about herself.

Although I've been a writer for many years, I find it quite hard to write about myself! For 13 years I wrote a regular column on self-improvement, positive parenting, personal growth and applying Biblical principles for a more fulfilling and happier life for a Christian newspaper. At that time I was the Director of a full-service outpatient mental health clinic which I founded in Manchester, NH as I'd guess you'd say my second career after teaching choral music and music theory in public schools for 12 years. During that time I'd also been Assistant Chairperson for the then NH Commission on the Arts (now NH Arts Council), Choral Chairperson for the NH chapter of the Music Educators National Conference responsible for everything for the Chorus in the annual NH All-State Festival.



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"Tip o' the Hat"

Many thanks and a "tip o' the hat" to our Leaders of Song and Liturgists for the summer months. Thank you! Ω



Rally Day for 2017 is now set for Sunday, **September 17** at the lovely home of Don and Kathy Bergeron (71 S. Main St., Pittsfield). Thank you! In case of inclement weather, the event will be moved to the church. Hot dogs and hamburgers will be provided. Please bring your favorite salad, hors d'oeuvre, side dish or dessert to share. The festivities will begin following our time of worship. Come and join in on the fun, food and fellowship as we kick off a new Sunday School year! Ω

☞ Reminder ☞

The Trustees remind *everyone* not to bring any food, coffee or other beverages except capped water into the sanctuary. This means everyone -- thank you for your cooperation in helping to keep the carpet and sanctuary clean. Ω

*August is the border between summer and autumn.
It is the most beautiful month I know.*

— Tove Jansson

Minister's Minute

A young church goer tells this story. A friend was in front of me coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside.



The pastor said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!"

My friend replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, pastor." The pastor asked, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?"

He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

I think it is safe to say that church attendance in many churches across America is declining. Research continues to show that the majority of churches in our country are not growing. Most of us have our own ideas why. Some suggest that our nation is shifting away from its Christian roots, and thus the churches are declining as a smaller proportion of our country are believers in Christ. Another reason could be the still existent symptoms of postmodernism i.e., pluralism, relativism, and the refusal to accept absolutes. We have already entered what has been termed a "Post Christian" era.

Thom S. Rainer, researcher and author about church growth and trends believes the number one reason for the decline in church attendance is that members attend with less frequency than they did just a few years ago. He concludes that, "If the frequency of attendance changes, then attendance will respond accordingly. For example, if 200 members attend every week the average attendance is, obviously, 200. But if one-half of those members miss only one out of four weeks, the attendance drops to 175. No members left the church. Everyone is still relatively active in the church. But attendance declined over 12 percent because half the members changed their attendance behavior slightly."

The heart of the problem, according to Rainer is not declining numbers but waning commitment. I believe the same is true in many organizations across America. Many people are simply reluctant to commit the time and energy required to be a member of a group.

Unfortunately, in many churches membership has become less and less meaningful. Until we get our churches back to the committed membership the Apostle Paul mandates in 1 Corinthians 12, we will continue to see declining attendance.

When membership becomes truly meaningful, our churches will become an unstoppable force for the Kingdom and glory of God. Ω

I love being your minister,

Rev. Dave

Trustees' Update

From the Board of Trustees



This month Kevin Kennedy offers some options for donating to the church.

Did you know that there are ways to make a gift to a favorite charity/church while enjoying the income from that gift for your lifetime? In most cases, you can make the gift in cash, securities or other property. The amount of the charitable deduction and taxation of the income will vary based on numerous factors including the timing of things, terms and the results. The charity itself initially may not have the vehicle that meets your specific wishes, but may be able to pursue finding something that will ultimately be beneficial for you and the charity. Below is an abbreviated overview of two deferred charitable gifts.

(1) A charitable remainder unitrust (CRUT), a separate fund is set up and handled individually to hold your gift until your death, at which time it will become the charity's property. You address at the outset the annual percentage of the fair market value of the assets that you are to receive as income for life.

(2) A charitable remainder annuity trust (CRAT) is similar to a CRUT in that your gift to the charity is placed in an individual trust. The CRAT provides an annual payment of a fixed dollar amount for your lifetime after which the trust principal passes to the charity.

We encourage you to reach out to your tax advisor to discuss the pros and cons of the various types of deferred giving. If the idea of deferred charitable giving appeals to you, we hope you will consider the church as a benefactor and we encourage you to mention your thoughts to Pastor Dave, Kevin or a church trustee.

As always if you see something in need of repair that you think may have escaped our notice, please don't hesitate to let any of the trustees know; Marilyn Thyng, Gloria O'Connor Biron, Sue Bleckmann, Chris Ward or Harry Vogt. Ω

Brook — Continued from Page 1

For five years, beginning with one summer off from teaching and not wanting my brain to turn to mush, I was also a movie reviewer for a weekly newspaper. But through all my life, this passionate thread for music has continually been woven. Since elementary school I have always been involved in music: either studying it, PRACTICING, accompanying school choirs since the sixth grade, directing a church junior choir at 13, teaching it, performing it (singing, playing the piano or organ) or conducting a choir or choir and orchestra beginning in high school. I played my first service as a substitute organist on Easter Sunday when I was 13. Woven throughout all my life has been this passionate tapestry of music.

It's impossible for me to remember a time when I was not playing something, as I was fortunate to begin serious piano lessons in the second grade. My late sister played the cello but her main love was horses and she was a champion equestrienne, especially at dressage. We lost her in an accident (non-horse related when she was 20). So I grew up with a balance between there always being a horse (as well as dogs and cats) involved in my family as well as studies and music. Both my sister and I were blessed to have parents (who each had music in their backgrounds: father as a trumpet player and mother who played both piano and organ and was also an avid horsewoman, having received her first horse at 3) who supported our interests and found the best instructors for us.

Growing up in Concord, NH, an early and wonderful music teacher/mentor encouraged my parents and facilitated my part-time attendance at St. Paul's School, where I learned the organ from two amazing teachers, one who continues to be a prolific composer in sacred music for organ, choir, bells, and orchestra (Robert J. Powell). I also studied music theory as well as church history, liturgics, and more. I also continued private piano lessons with two wonderful teachers, the second of whom attended classes with Leonard Bernstein as a fellow student under the famous Nadia Boulanger who also taught Aaron Copland and others too lengthy to list.

In high school, I continued on at St. Paul's School in the afternoon while attending Concord High School in the morning. I was encouraged to go on to Union Theological Seminary for a formal degree in church music, but I realized the value of a "liberal education" and wanted to learn as much as I could about as many things I could and major in music education, with my "major" being Voice.

Throughout college (both undergraduate and graduate school at the University of NH) I taught piano as an adjunct instructor, especially to music majors who had no keyboard experience, and to other students and adult learners. I was the assistant conductor of the UNH Concert Choir throughout undergraduate school and had the joy of the late Dr. Cleveland Howard being my mentor. Additionally I was very active in the UNH Outing Club, so my education was more than books and music scores; I also sang or conducted several other performing ensembles and for three years sang several roles in its opera company, "Opera Workshop."

In graduate school I taught private vocal instruction and was the director of the women's choir at the university's Summer Youth Music School.

Because counseling has always interested me, my master's degree is a dual degree in both music education and counseling. Later in life I earned a Ph.D. in counseling psychology as well as a Ph.D. in Christian counseling. I have done many other things, but always have either been a substitute organist and choir director in churches of almost every denomination including Greek Orthodox (my godparents were Greek Orthodox, so I also was able to go to Greek school with my godsister) and for a time was a substitute cantor at a Reform Synagogue (Temple Emanu-El) or privately teaching or later vocal coaching. If anyone is interested in other info of this kind, I have a profile on LinkedIn as well as the Music and Worship Committee having a copy of my résumé. But I have many other interests as well!

I enjoy making jewelry (as a hobbyist not a professional lapidary by any means), watercolor and acrylic painting, reading, technology (for me Staples is as a hardware store is for many guys) and many kinds of music. I have been heavily involved in women's ministry, teaching Bible studies and doing chaplaincy work both at the Elliott Hospital in Manchester, and at Concord Hospital. When at Pease Air Force Base (a civilian) as choir director, I was honored to be commissioned to be a Minister of Music. I very much enjoy travel and experiencing music wherever I am.

I enjoy being your organist and pianist (via the Clavinova) and am looking forward to being your choir director. I enjoy bringing all kinds of music into the worship experience, especially gospel, spirituals, collaborations with other instruments and bells, and traditional choral literature plus "blended worship" with some excellent contemporary Christian music.

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I am excited to also include ensembles such as men's quartet, women's ensembles and including soloists in our offerings. Members of my other choirs will tell you my aim is for choir members to feel better at the end of a rehearsal than when they arrived. As we have limited rehearsal time, they'll also tell you my expectation is that if a rehearsal is scheduled for 6:30, that I'll have been there before then, and anticipate that choir singers will have their music and be basically warmed up and ready to sing at 6:30. They'd also tell you that they always feel they learned something at each rehearsal and were confident because when they wanted it, I gave them additional time and coaching. They were happy about my being organized that once choir is established, everyone had a copy of all the music the choir would be singing throughout each liturgical season. One other thing they will tell you is I am never boring, and that rehearsals move quickly. *My philosophy is that the music we make is our gift to God, and that the singing we do is our gift to ourselves.*

Singing is very healthy for both body and soul. If you are a choir regular, welcome back! If you've been thinking of singing or used to sing in the choir, please come and join us! **Our first rehearsal will be Thursday, Sept. 7 at 6:30 pm.** I can't wait to meet you all and make music together. See you then! Ω

Greetings from the Diaper Pantry!

We are thrilled to be included at Pittsfield's Balloon Rally Saturday, August 5, selling root beer floats. We will also sell raffle tickets for a baby quilt, an award winning hot air balloon framed photograph and other lovely items. Stop by and visit our booth and support the Diaper Pantry!



The raffle drawing will be held at the end of the rally, August 5. If you have an extra hour or two and would like to volunteer on August 5, please contact either Mary Jo Powelson or Rev. Dave. Ω

Dorcas Guild Update

Although the Dorcas Guild is taking the months of July and August as their summer break, the Guild will still provide the Fellowship Hour the third Sunday of each month and will still hold their workgroup meetings each Wednesday from 10-2 in the vestry throughout the summer. They faithfully

meet to prepare for their Christmas Fair in November and welcome any donations of handmade items for their craft tables or gently used items for the "Unique Boutique" table at the fair. If you have any questions, contact Mary Jo Powelson, president.

Their project for this year is providing head/neck scarves for those enduring chemo treatments; "chemo tote bags," which include a variety of items such as a small pillow, hand sanitizer, tissue packs, lip balm, pads, pens, etc.; and children's tote bags with books, crayons, toys, etc. for emergency crews to give young children when there is a family crisis.

If you would like to help in any way, please contact Mary Jo Powelson or Nella Hobson. Ω

Godspeed, Justin!

As we go to print, Justin Presbrey has begun his recruit training at Naval Station Great Lakes, North Chicago. This is the only recruit training station in the Navy. Justin began his eight weeks of basic training at the end of July and we wished him well during a special send-off with a distinctive cake! Ω



Photo: Diane Vaughan

Flowers: If you would like to have flowers placed in church in honor or memory of someone, please contact Jaime Koladish (603 435-0544). Ω



August 2017



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Infant & Toddler Diaper Pantry 9-11 am	2 Dorcas Guild work group 10-2, vestry	3	4	5
				Balloon Rally - Pittsfield		
6 Worship Service 10 am <i>Holy Communion</i> Fellowship Hour 11 am – Potluck	7 “How Jesus Became God” video series 6:30-7:30 pm Pilgrim Room	8 Men’s Breakfast <u>8 am</u> Parker’s Rest.	9 Dorcas Guild work group 10-2, vestry	10	11	12
13 Worship Service 10 am Fellowship Hour 11 am	14 “How Jesus Became God” video series 6:30-7:30 pm Pilgrim Room	15 Infant & Toddler Diaper Pantry 9-11 am	16 Dorcas Guild work group 10-2, vestry	17	18	19
20 Worship Service 10 am Fellowship Hour 11 am <i>Dorcas Guild hosts</i>	21 “How Jesus Became God” video series 6:30-7:30 pm Pilgrim Room	22	23 Dorcas Guild work group 10-2, vestry	24 Rehearsal for JuBellation Ensemble 7 pm, Sanctuary	25	26 Last day for <i>Pittsfield Pilgrim</i> news -- forward to Nella Hobson
27 Worship Service 10 am Fellowship Hour 11 am <i>JuBellation Ensemble plays</i>	28 “How Jesus Became God” video series 6:30-7:30 pm Pilgrim Room	29	30 Dorcas Guild work group 10-2, vestry	31		