



# The Dover Church

*A Welcoming Community of Faith and Service since 1762*

**June 25, 2013**

## *News from Meeting House Hill*

Volume 4, Issue 6

To the Church in Dover: Grace and peace be yours in God our Creator and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Friends:

At long last, the school year has ended, and it seems summer is finally here. Many of us have already opened up beach houses, started camps, and have otherwise begun our enjoyment of warm weather, outdoor activities, and a break from the hectic burdens of our busy lives.

In case you've ever wondered, taking a break is good religion. In the Ten Commandments, God commands us (not advises or recommends) to take one day off a week for rest, contemplation, and the enjoyment of being alive. It's called remembering the Sabbath. During the school year, from late August through late June, some of us don't really follow this commandment, particularly those of us with school-age children, who seem to have scheduled commitments every minute of every day, including Sunday. However, summer offers the opportunity for both adults and children to slow the pace of life, maybe even taking time for rest, contemplation, and the enjoyment of being alive. So consider the summer your opportunity to catch-up on your covenant obedience. Go forth and take the stress out of your lives! Slow down, making time to be decidedly contemplative. Spend quality time with loved ones and friends, and think about how wonderful it is to be alive. Good Sabbath!

The Dover Church rolls on during the summer. We have **Sunday worship at 9 AM in June and July**. However, the Church Council has decided, due to staffing considerations and our experience over the last several years, to **not** have Sunday worship during August. I will be on vacation from July 28 to August 23, and our neighbors across the street at St. Dunstan's have graciously invited anyone interested in Sunday worship to join Rev. Mark McKone-Sweet for 9:00 AM services. (August staffing is discussed below.)

One of my areas of focus until I leave for vacation will be the revitalization of our High School Youth Group. With the support of the Trustees and Church Council, I will be leading the program that will begin in September, assisted by Beth Benjamin, who has been an important contributor to the effort to re-define and invigorate our ministry to teens. Many of us have been troubled by the recent collapse of the High School Youth Group, which has been a core component of The Dover Church's identity for at least thirty years. Moreover, if we believe our church's purpose is to serve the community in which we are located, then we are not serving the many teenagers who live here. While teen life has changed considerably since the group was founded in the 1970s, our teens face challenges that our church is uniquely positioned to address, offering a warm, inclusive, supportive environment to build a community of honest and trusting relationships. We have decided that, rather than hire another youth leader right away when we, honestly, do not have a group to lead, Beth and I will serve as youth leaders to begin the program year.

*- Continued on the next page -*

Our big picture goal is to orient our youth programming towards a great year end Work Camp Trip to Appalachian Service Project, building homes in Appalachia. ([www.asp.org](http://www.asp.org)). To that end, we are reaching out to our teens and their friends to form the nucleus of the new High School Youth Group. This service project idea was put forward at a recent gathering of about ten youth groupers and the response was quite positive.

This month's newsletter represents something of a departure from the customary communication, in that Steve Karlson, Chairman of our Board of Trustees, and Jamie Simms, our Moderator, provide their insights into the progress we are making in defining our church's future and, in that context, an update for the congregation regarding recent personnel changes. I have been working closely with Steve, Jamie, the Trustees, Church Council, the Deacons, and various committees to address the effectiveness of our organization as we address our challenges. I appreciate their energy, creativity and, especially, leadership. Their comments follow below.

Peace be with you, Max — your pastor

Fellow members of The Dover Church:

We have three goals in writing to you. Our first is to offer the views of lay leadership on important, longer-term objectives of The Dover Church, our second is to share with you our perspectives on the recent departures of Emilia Halstead, Joan Whalen, and Christopher Keene, and our third is to address staffing and scheduling considerations.

The Dover Church has progressed over the last year:

- Attendance at worship and participation in Sunday School increased, and stewardship broadened.
- Six new families joined, and we have experienced broader involvement throughout the congregation.
- The Dover Youth Chorale, under the direction of Christopher Keene, was established, singing regularly with upwards of 20 of our children participating, and providing a way, through choir and voice lessons, to engage with youth throughout Dover.
- We raised well over \$50,000 to fund a medical clinic in Villa, Haiti, as well as enough other money to pay for almost 100 children in Fond des Blanc to attend school for a full year. Two group trips were made to Haiti.
- We hosted four families overnight in Kraft Hall for four weeks as part of our Family Promise ministry.
- We made a major statement about resource sustainability with the installation of a full solar system on Kraft Hall — and we have begun selling electricity back to the grid.
- After careful study and with the leadership of Bob Cocks, we have engaged Mills Whitaker Architects LLC, an architectural consultant specializing in historical preservation, to assist us with further improvements to our aging infrastructure. Recall this firm assisted us with the renovations of Kraft Hall.
- We have improved our grounds, with new plantings (and plans for more).

Our lay leadership team and governing bodies have met regularly with Max to refine our mission, with the outcome being the development of our "Passion Points" (i.e., those inter-related, overlapping elements of our mission about which we want to be passionate). We envision our Passion Points becoming a "lens to look through" when considering how we direct our energies and allocate our resources in pursuit of our goals as a congregation, allowing for a focus that should increase effectiveness. Please note this is a work in progress and may be, in fact, a perpetually evolving exercise. However, we agree with Max that we need a defined framework when choosing how to spend our time and money, so that "the whole might be greater than the sum



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Passion Point	Description / Ideas / Comments
<p>Providing for Spiritual Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the UCC’s principle of nourishing both the soul and the mind, establish and sustain activities providing for a rich, rewarding experience for individuals and families, whether in worship, adult education, our service undertakings, or in our activities as a congregation</li> <li>• Develop and deliver liturgical practices meeting the needs of the congregation, while respecting our history and traditions</li> <li>• Recognizing the importance of music in spiritual well-being and in defining the character of our worship, emphasize choral and instrumental music across all of our ministries</li> <li>• Starting with these Passion Points, seek to expand the impact of the church beyond its four walls, allowing for spiritual growth applicable to all aspects of an individual’s life</li> <li>• Meet the personal needs of the individual for comfort or guidance, whether through the pastor or the laity</li> </ul>
<p>Nurturing Our Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and delivering Christian education so that our children may embrace, on their own, but with our guidance and support, the covenants of our faith</li> <li>• Focus on all K-12 ministries, recognizing the importance of providing a continuum of Christian education and youth-focused activities beyond Sunday School, across age groups</li> <li>• Expand our efforts with youth choir and other programs, so that we establish a strong musical foundation to our children as they grow spiritually</li> <li>• Enhance the Confirmation process to create a deeply meaningful experience for participants and their parents, transitioning children to the next phase of their spiritual growth</li> <li>• Expand our role in sharing the leadership and hosting of Our Whole Lives, recognizing our responsibilities for the development and enrichment of the whole child</li> <li>• Develop compelling, service-oriented Youth Group programs to engage participating teens (whether church members or not), with the goal of providing a life-changing experience through a year-long effort culminating in a meaningful mission</li> </ul>

Passion Point	Description / Ideas / Comments
<p>Strengthening Our Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Broaden the conversation” by developing programs and events to enhance interpersonal bonds across generational gaps, recognizing, on the one hand, our shared commitment to The Dover Church and these Passion Points, and, on the other hand, the diversity of perspectives, interests, and tastes within our membership</li> <li>• In our statements and actions, transition the meaning of “congregation” to “community”, with the latter term’s connotations of commitment, unity, and strength, as we seek to expand the significance of our ministry in members’ lives beyond Sunday worship</li> <li>• Provide the broadest possible range of opportunities for participation, so that members, to the best of their respective abilities, may be involved in our programs and events</li> <li>• Through transparency of our governance, our pastor, staff, and lay leadership shall seek open dialog and the exchange of constructive criticism with our membership, maintaining our focus on building community, consistent with Congregational tradition</li> </ul>
<p>Expanding Our Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent with the UCC’s concept of “extravagant welcome”, we will follow the principle of welcoming any and all, no matter where an individual might be on life’s journey</li> <li>• In order to grow our membership and, in turn, enhance effectiveness of our ministry, we will develop new and enhance existing outreach initiatives to identify and engage with potential new members</li> <li>• We will seek to raise the profile of The Dover Church in Dover, surrounding towns, and, when appropriate, across the state and region</li> <li>• We will enhance our relationship with Andover Newton Theological School and the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC</li> </ul>
<p>Serving our Neighbors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing the importance of service ("Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." I Peter 4:10), endeavor to structure and deliver meaningful service programs providing significant benefit to the less fortunate</li> <li>• Recognizing the role of service in spiritual growth for both adults and children and its contribution to building community, focus on service programs that can broadly engage the congregation</li> <li>• While providing goods and material support to those in economic need, demonstrably provide optimism and spiritual support for those who are poor in spirit</li> </ul>

As an example of how we might use the Passion Points as a “checklist” when thinking about how we direct our energies and allocate our resources, consider the proposed revitalization of our High School Youth Group. How would we go about this revitalization in the context of our Passion Points?

<p>Providing for Spiritual Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ As adults and parents, we want to influence the moral and ethical development of our children, so the group should be far more than a social gathering. It should be focused on spiritual growth and directed toward a meaningful service mission, with the challenges far outweighed by the rewards.</li> <li>✓ To nourish both the soul and the mind, we would seek to educate participants about not only the Christian ideals involved in the service mission, but the full background of the social and economic problems we are hoping to address.</li> <li>✓ With Max leading the program, he will be able to engage with participants on a deeper level, establishing rapport and trust.</li> </ul>
<p>Nurturing Our Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We are committing to revitalizing the High School Youth Group because the well-being of our children is of utmost importance to us. We want our children involved in the church and, ultimately, spiritually engaged.</li> <li>✓ Over time, the High School Youth Group should be integrated into the continuum of CE and Confirmation, with shared themes and a compelling progression.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthening Our Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ An important objective of any program should be to build community across The Dover Church, not just within the cohort or constituency directly involved.</li> <li>✓ As such, we should seek to engage parents and adults, whether as teachers/chaperones or on whatever level of engagement is desired (e.g., if we had a speaker leading discussion of the history of Appalachia, adults would be encouraged to attend, both to broaden the impact of the program on our community, but as evidence of support for the participants and their mission).</li> </ul>
<p>Expanding Our Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ As is the case with other youth programs in the area (e.g., those of the Pilgrim Church and the Grace Church), participants need not be members (of children of members) of the sponsoring church.</li> <li>✓ We should consider the High School Youth Group an element of our community outreach and support it as such.</li> </ul>
<p>Serving our Neighbors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We should seek early in the process to define the mission and the nature of the service, assuring the alignment of our goals, interests, and resources.</li> <li>✓ We should avoid the risk of a hollow or less than meaningful process, emphasizing the opportunity of spiritual growth and important, life-long memories.</li> </ul>

We frequently use the term “fabric” when discussing the Passion Points among the lay leadership. The meaning is important, as individual threads, appropriately woven together, create something altogether different from what they might be on their own. Any one Passion Point may not stand alone, at least not for long. Together, however, appropriately woven, we believe they can become the fabric that holds us together, helping us grow in faith, while helping us to sustain and expand our congregation. Additionally, we are hopeful the Passion Points will help us avoid initiatives that do not contribute to the fabric of the church, by assuring our undertakings support all five “passions”.

As the lay leadership reached some degree of cohesion regarding the Passion Points, it became clear there were personnel challenges that needed to be addressed if we were to become more effective in carrying out our mission and ministries. Accordingly, the Moderator, Trustees, Church Council, and the Personnel Committee, working closely and carefully with Max, considered our needs and reached the conclusion we should change our organizational structure.

As a result, after extensive conversations and counseling with Emilia, she decided to resign as Associate Minister. As many may know, Emilia did a great job with her Sunday School responsibilities, increasing participation, involving new teachers, and generally raising the excitement and vitality level. She also was very effective in carrying out her pastoral duties. She also is blessed with a remarkable voice. However, the evolution of her role and the realignment of our priorities led her to conclude, and we agreed, her strengths and interests did not match our needs.

With Emilia’s departure, we all agree that Sunday School leadership is our most immediate priority. To that end, we are advertising for a new Sunday School leader and have interviewed some excellent candidates, a process which is still ongoing. If you would be interested in learning more about this salaried, part-time position, please contact Dawn Fattore of the Personnel Committee (dafattore@comcast.net). Our goal is to have an outstanding leader in place by Labor Day so that our ministry to children continues to thrive and grow.

We also concluded our requirements for operational support were no longer aligned with the secretarial and administrative role Joan Whalen was in. We made the painful decision to terminate her employment, as the responsibilities she had will be only a minor part of the new position we have created.

The traditional church secretary model is not satisfactory or sufficient to support the ministry and mission support needs of the church. We do not need a person merely to serve as clerk/typist, receptionist, and facilities manager. Given our challenges and recent performance, we need a person who (a) supports the lay leadership, and ministry teams so that people throughout the church are engaged and excited about contributing, (b) coordinates the participation and scheduling of activities of the membership, and (c) who communicates effectively through various media so that our members and friends are engaged in our faith and fellowship, all while being in close dialog with Max. We also expect the person in this role to have a significant stake in the management of our Christian Education programs, although, as stated, we do intend to hire someone to coordinate Sunday School.

Essentially, we need someone akin to a Chief Operating Officer, to complement Max as our “Chief Spiritual Officer”. Even with his energy, compassion, and intelligence, Max cannot do it all. He needs a collaborative partner who focuses on the operational aspects of the church, leaving him the time and freedom to lead our congregation, care for our spiritual well-being and drive the Passion Points. We believe one person can satisfy all of our requirements, but we also believe this person should come from within the congregation. Over the past few decades, the most successful people “behind the front desk” have been members of the congregation, who lived nearby, attended services, were aware of the history, culture, and personalities, and were otherwise engaged in the church.

Based on local precedents within the UCC of which Max was aware, we have created the position of "Director of Congregational Life". The Personnel Committee is soliciting candidates for this position, and, as word has spread, three strong candidates have already expressed interest, and more are welcome. We plan to have this position filled by the end of August. If you have interest in this salaried, full time position or would like to see a job description, please contact Dawn Fattore (dafattore@comcast.net) or, in her absence, one of us.

Another recent departure from the staff was Christopher Keene. While we are very happy for his good news, we are saddened to see him leave, especially given the momentum he had created for the Dover Youth Chorale. Christopher is moving to Arizona to accept an attractive teaching position and to be closer to his aging mother. We will miss Christopher's charisma, patience, and pedagogical skill. We are, however, in the process of identifying and meeting candidates to carry on this work, which we believe has brought a new dimension to our fellowship. As the case with the Director of Congregational Life and the Sunday School leadership positions, please contact Dawn Fattore (dafattore@comcast.net) if you are interested or know someone who would be outstanding in this salaried position. We also intend to fill the position by the beginning of the school year.

The reconfiguration of church staff will not affect the church's budget objectives. We intend to re-deploy funds currently allocated to personnel in such a manner that we will remain within our budget constraints as we hire new personnel. The church remains on a firm financial footing, thanks to all of you.

Because we are now a single pastor church, and because we will not fill the Director of Congregational Life position until well into the summer, we will not always have a staff presence in the church this summer. From now until July 28, the very best way to reach the church is to call Max on his cellphone (508-982-0422). The church phone (508-785-0957) is now forwarded to his cell phone, so he is always reachable. Between July 28 and August 23, when Max is on vacation, the church phone will be answered by one of our Deacons. Should you be in crisis and feel the need for a pastor, the Reverend Heike Werder, Associate Minister at the Congregational Church of Needham, UCC, has volunteered to be on call. She can be reached in her office (781-444-2510, ext. 105), her home (781-545-6762), or on her cellphone (617-827-4610). Both of us know Heike quite well, as former members of the Needham church, and are confident she will be a valuable resource to us this summer.

With Emilia's departure, we will be going forward with one minister, Max. We are confident that, with the support of the new Director of Congregational Life, this will not only be feasible but full of new possibilities as we drive the Passion Points. We are very excited about the future.

Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if you have questions or comments.



Steve Karlson  
Chairman, Board of Trustees



Jamie Simms  
Moderator

**FOUND IN KRAFT HALL ABOUT APRIL 28**—Lady's ring, perhaps 100 years old, gold setting with colored center stone surrounded by old-cut diamonds.

**SAVE THE DATE—NOVEMBER 2, 2013**—Michael Kraft's 20th Anniversary as Music Director will be celebrated with a big party, similar to the 250th anniversary party when we gathered at church for a big event and then went off to house parties.

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