



November 14, 2018

### ***A SPECIAL COUPLE***

When you consider the exceptional quality of their leadership, you would have to say this friendly twosome from the Midwest is a special couple. So how were we so lucky that they chose our church?

Years ago when they had just moved to Newton Lower Falls with their infant daughter, while driving by on Washington Street, they noticed a sign on the church lawn: "Cocoa and Cookies with Santa." Great idea! Why not check it out? It was a happy event, with delicious cookies and lots and lots of young children.

So Janeen and Steve Hansen decided to attend the worship service here the next Sunday. It happened to be Special Music Sunday. The sanctuary was packed, and the music was beautiful. They were warmly greeted by many people, some of whom would become lifelong friends. And they were surprised to meet a couple, Greg and Carol Mills, they had known in Washington, DC.

As a law student at Yale, Steve had been inspired by the preaching of William Sloane Coffin, so he had high standards for preaching. They liked the preaching at the WHCC, so they came back again and again – for more than thirty years – making this their church home.

Over the years Janeen and Steve have served the church in many capacities. Most notably were that Steve was chair of the Search Committee that brought Matt Wooster to the Hills Church, and Janeen has served as Moderator. Janeen also served two terms as a Deacon, was on the Prudential Committee, and chaired the Parish Life Committee. Steve was a Deacon for four years, and served on the Christian Education and Prudential Committees. Steve and Janeen loved teaching Sunday School, finding creative ways to make Bible stories come alive.

Janeen's impressive management abilities, gained in graduate study at Harvard, and developed at MassPort, were put to good use recently when she became Chief Operations Manager for the Andover Newton Theological School when it closed its Newton campus and was merged into the Yale Divinity School. She pulled it off with aplomb, becoming known there as a logistical wiz.

Steve and Janeen are from Jackson, Michigan, a mid-size farming/manufacturing town not far from the Ohio border. Jackson is known for two remarkable things. A stone monument in Jackson points out that this is where the Republican Party was founded "under the oaks" in 1854. Jackson is also the home of the largest walled prison in the free world. In fact, the prison is one of the town's largest employers. Even the pastor of Janeen's small, non-denominational country church was employed as a prison chaplain.

Janeen and Steve became friends in high school when both worked on the school newspaper. Janeen went on to Michigan State University, where she graduated from the James Madison College of Social Science. Steve attended Swarthmore College. He went on to law school at Yale University and later worked for the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, D.C. They moved to this area when Steve joined a Boston law firm. And Steve is continuing to practice law part-time.

Janeen and Steve have two daughters: Susannah and Kirsten. Both grew up in this church. Susannah is a school psychologist at the Barbieri School, a bi-lingual grade school in Framingham. She attended Macalester College, the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs, and the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology. She lives in Waltham with her rescue pup, Atlas. Kirsten is working as an economist with the federal government in Washington, D.C. She graduated from Barnard College and the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

Yes, indeed. Cookies and cocoa with Santa was a great idea!

by *Elizabeth Robertson*