The first meeting of the Board of Directors since several new officers and directors were elected at the Annual Meeting was held on November 13, 2021 via Zoom. The meeting opened with the Rev. Jim Thomas leading us in reflection about the toll the pandemic has taken on us as individuals, on our families, on our communities, and on our churches. A “check in” time followed where we welcomed our newest board member, the Rev. Kate Morse, a Chaplain at Concord Hospital and a member of the First Congregational Church of Hopkinton. Rev. Morse was elected to Rev. Michael Denney’s at-large seat on the Board, while Rev. Denney became the new President-Elect. Bruce Kinney led the meeting as the new President.

Following some routine business, Tim Hughes and Tivvi Pare, Executive Director and Summer Director at Horton Center respectively, joined the meeting to give a report on last summer’s camping season along with plans for the summer 2022 season. Plans are underway for a five week camping season (expanded from four in 2021), with special themed camps such as Star Wars, Hogwarts, and Grandparents camps, and a water themed camp for little people. Several of our Directors, and our Conference Minister, served as camp counselors during the 2021 season, and will continue doing so in 2022. Those who have served as camp counselors and deans were effusive about how rewarding it is to mentor these young people in life and faith. Directors were encouraged to sign up as camp counselors, help recruit new campers, and visit the Mountain next summer to experience the excitement and spiritual enrichment of camp for themselves.

Financial results as of the end of October were reviewed, with shortfalls in OCWM Basic Support and Fellowship Dues identified as concerns. While the usual pattern is that these revenue items recover somewhat in December, it is possible that the Conference will end the year with a deficit. The Executive Committee will continue to monitor financial performance, and churches and Associations are encouraged to submit their OCWM and Fellowship dues pledges to the Conference before the end of the year to help us make up this deficit.

Our Conference Minister, the Rev. Gordon Rankin, shared his report. Gordon reports that the Conference office will remain closed into the new year, due to multiple reasons including the continuing high COVID statistics (latest positivity rate 8.4%, with some counties over 10%) and staff illnesses and vacations. Prepared to Serve will be virtual this year, primarily due to uncertainty of the availability of the live venue. Nevertheless, we now have the experience to put on a successful virtual conference, with multiple sessions over multiple days. Stay tuned to the Weekly News for more information about this mid-February event. Finally, Gordon reports that, by request, additional Theological Roundtables are being prepared, including an Advent series and an additional series in the January/February time frame on UCC polity.

The Board, in executive session, received a summary of the Conference Minister’s annual performance evaluation, completed in early October. Gordon was widely praised for his calm,
steady, collaborative and inclusive engagement at all levels of the Conference. The Directors expressed their sincere gratitude to Gordon for his contributions to the Conference.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be on February 19, 2022. We are hopeful that COVID statistics will improve by then to allow us to meet in person for the first time in almost two years. However, if that is not possible we are prepared to continue meeting via Zoom as long as necessary.

Bruce Kinney
President, NH Conference, UCC