Annual Reports - 2021

Conference Officers

Conference Minister .................. Rev. Gordon Rankin
Conference President ................. Rev. Carolyn Keilig
Conference Treasurer ................ Mr. Phil Warren

Ministries of the New Hampshire Conference

Christian Formation Ministry ....... Ms. Merri Carlson
Clergy Support Ministry ............ Rev. Dr. Tim Wildman
Finance Ministry ....................... Mr. Neal Cass
Investment Committee ............... Rev. Michael Bennett
Justice and Witness Ministry ....... Rev. Sara Rossigg
Local Church Support Ministry ...... Rev. Dr. Gordon Crouch
Wider Church Relations Ministry .... Rev. Duane Bailey
"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face." I have found new meaning in these familiar words from 1 Corinthians 13 this year. As we have completed the first year and ventured into the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, I have had to reckon with how dimly I understand how the future will unfold. As I have watched the impact that Covid realities have had on our church, I am clear that Church, how it sustains itself, and its relationship to society is changing rapidly, but I am still in a fog about what it will ultimately look like. I see plenty of signs of grace which provide assurance that God is in the midst of all this. But I have had to make peace with the reality that the day when I have clarity about all of this may yet be a way off.

Covid-19 has remained an ever-present reality for the New Hampshire Conference and all our churches in the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021. Our churches continued to find ways to worship, engage in fellowship, and be church in creative, often virtual, ways. To support our churches, Conference staff and our Ministry Teams worked to resource our churches with virtual worship services (Horton Center Sunday, the Sunday after Annual Meeting, and the Sunday after Christmas) as well as providing Advent and Lenten planning workshops. Our Clergy Check-ins continued through Easter. But the long duration of this has undoubtedly taken a toll. Hardly a week goes by when I am not talking with some clergyperson about leaving, not just a ministry setting, but ministry altogether. I know this is true for lay leadership as well.

I cannot outguess when Covid-19 will stop directly impacting us. But it has become clearer to me that it will take many months, and perhaps years, after that before we are no longer feeling the indirect impacts. During our Clergy Days event this spring, we started talking about the trauma caused by the impacts of the pandemic. I suspect we will be hosting a lot more conversations, for clergy and laity, about trauma and the healing journey. There are also plenty of conversations to be had about what relevant ministry looks like in and to a post-pandemic world (not that I’m suggesting we are there yet). I will admit that it feels as though there is still a steep climb ahead of us. But if we look to the hills, we will know from where our help comes.

One part of the work of the Conference that had been changing prior to the pandemic and had changed at an even more rapid pace during the pandemic, is our support of Search and Call for churches seeking new pastoral leadership. I will be speaking to this during our Annual Meeting. As I write this, we have 42 churches in Search and Call. That is just shy of one-third of our 132 churches. There are more part-time pastoral calls available than full-time calls. There are churches that can’t afford sustainable (or competitive) pastoral compensation even for part-time positions. The market for pastoral candidates (Interim, Designated-Term, or Settled) is significantly thinner than we’ve experienced it in many generations. All this together means that equipping our churches to find new pastoral leadership is a different task than it was even a few years
ago. The good news is we’ve become fairly adept at assisting churches with Search and Call even during these changing times. We are entertaining innovative approaches (though, honestly, they come from our history) such as pastor sharing or even a cohort call (a group of several churches that hire a team of pastors/staff). Search and Call is a piece of our ministry where we are going to have to continue to adapt to be effective. And we will.

In last year’s Annual Report, I introduced you to another component of ministry where we are adapting: the Unified Member-in-Discernment Mentor Team (UMMT). The UMMT is a resource that our Association Committees for Church and Ministry can opt into (all but Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Association have) that provides more consistency and more capacity for guiding our Members-in-Discernment in their preparations for ministry. This has been a year of enormous work both building the foundations of this approach to ministerial preparation while also starting to build relationships with our Members-In-Discernment (MIDs). The UMMT, under the leadership of the Rev. Stacey Kullgren, has made incredible progress. There is still plenty more to do, but we are already starting to see the ways in which this approach is of benefit to our MIDs.

Grace abounded as we welcomed campers back to Horton Center this summer. I would love to say it was camp as normal, but it wasn’t. Many things had to be modified for Covid protocols. Campers had to be tested before they arrived at camp and again immediately once they arrived at camp. Masks had to be worn indoors. There were extra outdoor portable hand washing stations. These things were different. But the type of transformation and empowering community that exists at Horton Center was not. If anything, it only deepened after our year apart from one another. Upon summing Chapel Rock for vespers this summer, I heard one of our High School Camp campers say, “my soul has waited two years for this”. Grace abounded indeed.

There are several thank you’s which should be offered for Horton Center’s success this summer: to Executive Director, Tim Hughes; Assistant Director, Tivvi Pare; and our summer staff who had so many additional things to attend to due to Covid protocols and yet were always attentive to the needs of our campers; to our Deans and Counselors who were wonderfully flexible in their planning even as the state mandated Covid protocols seemed to change on a weekly basis; and to the donors for our Horton Center Annual Appeal and especially for those who donated to this Spring’s special appeal that helped us cover the costs for thousands of dollars of Covid tests.

Another highlight of the summer was the 2021 Special Edition (virtual) General Synod. I want to commend all the members of our New Hampshire Conference Delegation who attended eight days of plenary sessions, worship services, committee meetings, and caucus gatherings all while sitting in front of their computer. And I will add how proud I was that the New Hampshire Conference sponsored three of the eleven resolutions passed by General Synod. Our witness here in New Hampshire is impacting the work of the wider church.
Before ending, I should return to gratitude for a moment. I want to thank our Conference Board for their leadership during these challenging days. I especially want to thank the Reverend Carolyn Keilig, our Conference President, whose entire two-year tenure was shaped by leading our Board through our response to the pandemic. Our Conference Staff: Richard, Ann, Cindy, Lydia, Helen, Tim, Tivvi, and Ruben, have given their whole selves to the work of the Conference and support of our churches. They are a gift to work with and make me proud over and over again. Our thanks cannot be expressed often enough to these amazing servants of God. We will add to our gratitude and prayers for a blessed retirement for Helen McGlashan as she concludes over a decade of service to Conference on September 15th. Finally, special thanks to the Rev. David Felton who stepped in to be our Bridge Association Conference Minister while Richard was on sabbatical in fall of 2020.

The verse that follows the one I started with, reminds us that “faith, hope and love abide.” Even in these days when we may only be seeing what is unfolding dimly, faith, hope and love do indeed abide.

Peace and grace,

Rev. Gordon M. Rankin
Conference Minister
New Hampshire Conference
United Church of Christ
As we gather virtually for the 220th Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire Conference, we can only imagine how much has changed over the centuries since our ancestors in faith first covenanted together. It is perhaps important to remember that the pandemic related disruptions from our routines have also helped us discover just how resilient and adaptable all the parts of our Conference can be. As last year’s Annual Meeting came to a close, none of us expected that for the second year in a row, our Annual Meeting would again be held virtually.

Nevertheless, nothing stopped the Board of Directors from continuing to meet regularly via Zoom, and with one year of pandemic reality behind us, we set the following as our year-long mission statement:

*The Board of Directors is called to be the stewards of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ, and its ministries, while faithfully strengthening the commitment of our churches to the wider church. Our priorities for this year include: being engaged with issues of justice and peace, particularly being mindful of NH Conference Resolutions which impact the work of the board; supporting our ministry settings (Conference, Horton Center, Associations, local churches) in creative and adaptive ways through the continuing pandemic; and remaining mindful of our covenant with local churches.*

The work of the Board of Directors moved forward, regularly hearing reports from our Conference Ministries and learning about the work the various Mission Groups engage in as they relate to those Ministries. The variety of gifts and talents along with passionate vision that so many people bring to the Conference is impressive, and I am grateful for all who volunteer in our Ministries, Mission Groups, and other Conference committees.

The Board of Directors represents the Conference in covenantal relationships with both Havenwood Heritage Heights (HHH) and the New Hampshire Council of Churches, each association going back many decades. The Board of Directors has two important roles in our relationship with HHH, and we fulfilled both this past year – approving some bylaw changes and serving as the Incorporators in electing new members to their Board of Directors. While the full Board was not able to attend due to Covid-19 protocols, the Executive Committee was pleased to be able to join our counterparts at the Heritage Heights campus this summer. We read our covenant together, remembering former Conference Minister Everett Barrows, who first envisioned this ministry of care.

The Board discussed in depth a draft statement by the NH Council of Churches addressing addiction and recovery and asked the NH Council to revise some of the language. The Council heard our concerns and at a later meeting, the Board voted to affirm the *Joint Statement on Substance Use Disorder and Recovery* adding the NH Conference, UCC as a signer. This statement can be used whenever the Council’s leadership is engaged in policy advocacy and in other appropriate ways. We are grateful to our ties to the wider church and for the work of
the Rev. Jim Thomas and Phil Kimball, who along with our Conference Minister and Associate Conference Minister, represent the Conference on the NH Council of Churches.

The Conference Treasurer, Phil Warren, is committed to keeping the Board and the Executive Committee informed and up to date on the day-to-day finances of the Conference and educating the Board on the various trusts we have fiduciary responsibility for. Despite the continuing pandemic, our financial position remains strong. We are grateful for the generous donations from many of our churches through “Our Churches Wider Mission” (OCWM) contributions. OCWM is the major source of revenue to fund the ongoing operations of the Conference. We also give thanks for the support given during the Spring and Fall “Friends of the Conference” appeal and the Horton Center Fund appeal.

The Board continues to be excited to learn of the many and varied programs that were held in-person at our camp, Horton Center, located on Pine Mountain in Gorham and were gratified by the hard work and flexibility of Horton Center Executive Director, Tim Hughes and Assistant Director Tivvi Pare. It is heartening to know that safety protocols were put in place (including staff training, masking requirements and Covid testing) in order to create the safe environment that welcomed campers to our beloved home away from home this past summer and into the Fall.

The Board voted to adopt the following as an Inclusivity Statement for Horton Center and New Hampshire Conference Outdoor Ministries: “At Horton Center we believe every person is a beloved child of God. We are dedicated to building and sustaining a community free of discrimination and harassment. We are committed to avoid bias based on race, color, national origin, age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, outdoor experience, and life experience. We believe this is key to realizing our mission of developing faithful servant leaders within and beyond Christian summer camp.”

The Horton Center website is the best way to learn more about Horton Center and the upcoming 2022 camping season, and it is updated with new information on a regular basis.

The Board also updated the Vision Statement found on our NH Conference website. It now reads:

OUR VISION is a world that seeks compassion, justice, and peace for all people through the love of Jesus Christ, a faith that celebrates the Holy Spirit as the source of joy, growth, and healing, and a church that offers to all a dwelling place with God and for God.

The New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, by act of the gathered Conference, has declared and committed itself to be an Open and Affirming Conference and a Racial Justice Conference. We seek belonging, valuing, and justice for persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, races, ethnicities, nationalities, abilities, and economic classes, in the life and ministries of the church.
Finally, at our June meeting, the Board of Directors received a report and options to consider with regard to some urgent Capital Improvements at the NH Conference building. The HVAC system and sidewalks were fast approaching the time when repairs could no longer maintain them. Examining the options, the Board made decisions to move this work forward in a timely manner, hoping to reduce long-term maintenance costs. The HVAC system has been replaced and the sidewalks will be repaired in the (hopefully) near future.

Over this past year, as President, I have been present at a number of Mission Group and Ministry meetings, regularly attended the Annual Meeting planning committee and the Nominating committee and was responsible for planning and chairing the Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings. I am very aware of all those – both volunteers and staff - who work quietly and dedicatedly behind the scenes, supporting all of us in our mutual mission and ministries throughout the Conference and the world.

As I conclude what I think of as my pandemic presidency, there is still one more Board of Directors meeting to attend to in September. Earlier in 2021 we said goodbye to Rev. Dr. Norma Brettell who is now serving a church in the Southern New England Conference, and we welcomed Kira Morehouse to the Board. Looking forward, I have great confidence in the Board’s leadership and multilevel talents, as I leave the Board after nine years, the last two as President. I give thanks for all the current saints of the church who have remained steadfast in their presence and leadership in the Conference.

Rev. Carolyn Keilig
President
New Hampshire Conference, UCC
2020 saw total operating expenses of $930,553. Income for the same period was $1,112,139. This yielded a budget surplus of $43,708. By board policy 50% of this was shared with the National UCC. Key points include the $117,200 PPL (payroll protection loan) from the Federal Government for payroll during the Covid-19 shutdown. Seeing as approximately 59% of our annual budget is personnel we qualified. This loan was subsequently forgiven in early 2021.

In 2020 Horton Center was unable to open and thus sustained a deficit of $141,883. We were able to reach some young people with a virtual camping program, which was a blessing in itself.

Other expense categories such as travel, and the various ministries were curtailed. We did receive $21,575 in generous support with our appeal for the Horton Center.

Again, WIPFLi conducted an audit. We are in compliance with standard accounting practices.

The board reviewed and is thankful for the various trusts which comprise our endowments. Trusts established nearly 100 years ago continue to benefit the NHUCC and various Churches. Our Conference administers various trusts and distributes income according to the founder’s intent.

The Elisha F. Lane Trust:
Elisha F. Lane died in 1921 leaving a will that provided for his children and grandchildren. Eventually the Trust was placed in the hands of the NHUCC (after benefitting the grandchildren for 20 years) till 1941. And after all children passed, the Trust was transferred to the NHUCC.

Recipients of quarterly support are as follows:
- UCC Local Church Ministries 10%
- UCC Wider Church Ministries 20%
- United Church of Christ, Keene, NH 10%
- NHC Ministerial Relief Fund 10%
- NH Conference UCC 50%

The distribution rate is 4.75% annually. The wonderful thing about this trust is that it has grown to over three million dollars and in 2020 distributed $133,887.08.

Lyford Merrow Trust
Established in 1925 to benefit "needy Churches in Carroll County". Churches must have been in existence in 1925 and held continuous worship services since that date. In 1993 funds from the estate of Lyford Merrow were approved for distribution to the NHUCC Conference. The NHUCC now manages and distributes funds according to the original guidelines. Active Carroll
County Churches submit documentation annually indicating that they are still active. Distribution here is 4.75%. For the year ending 2020 there were 29 qualifying Churches of various denominations (8 UCC), and each received a check for $1,266.41. Trust assets have grown to over $900,000. Churches used these funds for remote worship, local food shelves, heating, Church renovations etc. What a blessing!!

Currently in 2021 as of the end of July we have an operating loss of $67,718. This typically is reduced with OCWM funds from our conference Churches that arrives in the 4th quarter.

The Budget Committee is active this year with nine members (board and staff) working together on the 2022 Conference Budget.

Respectfully,

Phil Warren
Treasurer
Christian Formation Ministry Annual Report

The year 2021 was still challenging for the Christian Formation Ministry team due to COVID19. We are still meeting obstacles and are working to see how we can best connect with our churches, children, youth, and adults.

The National Youth Event scheduled in 2022 has been canceled. However, we have been advised by our Conference Minister that there will be a regional event in 2022. We look forward to supporting this event and igniting excitement for our youth to attend.

We are focusing on resurrecting the New Hampshire Association of United Church Educators (NHAUCE). In 2020, all our churches were charged with doing worship, church school, and many other things in a way not previously done. We felt the need and energy was there to support this group, so that Christian Educators could gather and share resources and ideas and overcome hurdles together. We look forward to our first meeting on November 7th whether virtual or in person.

The team is working on a video for the Annual Conference meeting in October. We are gathering pictures from our churches which show building beloved community. We plan on announcing our first meeting of NHAUCE on the video as well.

Plans are well underway for the fall Confirmation Retreat to be held in early October at Horton Center. Based on expressed interest in this retreat, we anticipate a large group attending with support from several of our local churches. Our Ministry will continue to provide support for this important event.

This summer Horton Center was able to have campers up on Pine Mountain. This was exciting after doing HC@home in the summer of 2020. There were 130 registered campers for the 2021 summer season. Horton Center is a valuable resource and a beautiful place for children, youth, and adults to connect with God’s creation and their faith. We hope that many are able to enjoy this gift for many years to come.

We pray that this coming year will bring unexpected surprises of hope in the midst of COVID19 and that everyone will feel God’s presence and love surrounding them.

Blessings to All!

Respectfully Submitted,

Merri Carlson
Chair – Christian Formation Ministry
The Clergy Support Ministry (CSM) was primarily engaged in tracking and responding to the unique challenges of ministry in these times as best we could over the past year. We posted brief articles in *The Weekly News* during the year articulating and interpreting these challenges and recommending responses local churches could initiate that would support pastors.

Our monthly meetings (all on Zoom) were staffed by Gordon and Richard, our Conference Ministers, and it was always quite moving to hear of their ministries in the midst of our Conference’s parish pastors, chaplains, and pastoral counselors. Monthly online “Check-ins” anchored these ministries, but there were many other ways that Gordon and Richard represented all of us in the Conference in their ministries with clergy - a huge thanks to them!

CSM also sponsored online workshops for clergy this year including: Clergy Day (focused this year on trauma-informed ministry during times of pandemic and racial reckoning), Advent and Christmas worship planning, Lenten worship planning, and two workshops on dealing with conflict in churches and communities. By the time of this year’s Annual Meeting, we may have planned a follow-up workshop to the Clergy Day on trauma, as this is such a relevant and necessary context for doing ministry in these times.

Mission Groups and Committees of CSM also continue to minister in our midst including: Clergy Convocation, Clergy Spouse Group, and the Prudential Committee.

Finally, we continue to disperse Pembroke Funds and other grant monies of our Conference to clergy who make continuing education applications. While Pastoral Counseling Services (PCS) in Manchester, NH, administers and directs the Pastoral Leadership Development Groups around the state for active and retired clergy, the funding of these by the Grace Scott Funds means that CSM and our Conference Ministers maintain the accountability for these important resources in an ongoing relationship with PCS.

Looking ahead, CSM anticipates continued initiatives along the lines of those outlined above, as the challenges of ministry in troubled times continue to grow exponentially. The courage and imagination of our clergy has never been more on display than in these times, but all of us in the Conference need to remain attuned to the toll of these ministries and respond with our own courage and imagination!

Rev. Dr. Tim Wildman
Chairperson, Clergy Support Ministry
Finance Ministry Annual Report

Under the Conference Bylaws, the Finance Ministry “shall develop the means to strengthen generosity through education and advocacy and steward the assets of the Conference; shall interpret Our Church’s Wider Mission (Basic Support) as a means of covenantal faithfulness.”

The Ministry has been meeting monthly throughout the year. We currently have five members, and a majority of our meetings are attended by Conference President Carolyn Keilig, Finance Officer Lydia Frasca, and Conference Minister Gordon Rankin.

Some of our work was put on hold as we determine how best to interact with local congregations during these unusual times. Our hope is to continue to become more engaged in our mission in the coming months.

Here is an outline of the areas we have begun to work in:

- We have had discussions on a Conference Planned Giving program. We are pleased to take part in future planning for philanthropy in a coordinated plan moving forward.
- We created thank you letters that were sent by the Conference staff to those churches that contributed to OCWM in 2020 and those churches that were 5 for 5 churches.
- The yearly Finance Ministry calendar has been updated and will continue to be modified throughout the year.
- We coordinated with Rob Grabill to assure that the timing of the yearly Horton Center appeal and the Friends of the Conference appeal aren’t happening at the same time.
- We plan to have a presence at Prepared to Serve offering at least one workshop and also doing “person on the street” video interviews with attendees to create a video highlighting the ways the Conference has been supportive during the pandemic.

During the last year, the work of the Conference has been even more vital than ever for the local church. This work is only possible because of local church support of OCWM. Your support makes the work of the Conference possible. Please remember this as you are preparing your budgets this year. Your OCWM contributions in 2021 have been greatly appreciated and thank you in advance for your support in 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Cass
Chair, Finance Ministry
The Investment Mission Group (IMG) oversees the Consolidated Investment Fund (CIF), which is a financial ministry of the New Hampshire Conference. It is the vehicle for investing NHCUCC endowment assets and is also open to local churches and affiliated organizations as an investment option.

The overall financial goal of CIF is to maintain the inflation-adjusted market value of invested assets while providing the Conference and participating churches with a relatively predictable, growing stream of annual revenue. As a financial ministry, CIF has non-financial goals as well, including:

- To respect UCC polity by maintaining covenantal relationships with all participants;
- To promote justice by adhering to Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) guidelines for securities selection and proxy voting; and
- To make choices that reflect the mission and values of the NHCUCC, specifically not to compromise the mission and values in return for potential financial gains.

As described in the Investment Policy, the IMG relies on a Partner Organization for investment management and administrative services. As of July 1, 2016, assets are invested in the Consolidated Trust Funds of the Missionary Society of Connecticut (the historic Connecticut Conference.) A member of the Investment Mission Group, currently Chris Guild, also serves as a member of the Consolidated Trust Funds Investment Committee and as a liaison between the two Committees.

Investment performance since the change has been satisfactory. There are two investment options, the Total Return Fund and the Eden Fund. The Total Return Fund is a moderate risk, balanced fund. The Eden Fund is similar but with a reduced fossil fuel “footprint.”

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<th>Rate of Return, net of fees*</th>
<th>1 Year</th>
<th>3-Years</th>
<th>5-Years</th>
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*Average annual rate of return for 3-year and 5-year periods

An ongoing challenge is that many participants are not clear about the distinction between CIF and the Partner Organization. CIF has been a financial ministry of the New Hampshire Conference for over 60 years. For decades, the Conference worked directly with investment advisors to manage the portfolio. In light of the specialized expertise and constant attention required for prudent investment management, limitations on volunteer time, and the necessity...
of keeping investment management expenses reasonable, the Conference decided to outsource the management of CIF to a Partner Organization. United Church Funds, a financial ministry of the United Church of Christ, served as the first Partner Organization from April of 2004 until June of 2016, and the Missionary Society of Connecticut has been the Partner Organization since July of 2016. To suggest an analogy, CIF is an institution, much like a local church. Local churches pursue their ministries by working with pastors. Choosing a Partner Organization is in some ways similar to a congregation choosing a pastor. We believe that we have chosen well and that this will enhance our ministry and benefit CIF’s participants.

One of our goals is to support participants with educational resources and expert guidance. You can find information regarding CIF at [www.sneucc.org/cifnh](http://www.sneucc.org/cifnh) including:

- The NHCUCC Investment Policy
- Quarterly Performance Reports
- “Introduction to the Consolidated Investment Fund”
- “Is the Consolidated Investment Fund Right For You”
- “Do You Have an Effective Investment Committee?”
- “Introduction to Total Return Investing and Spending Policies”
- “Know Your Endowment Classifications”
- “What Does the Bible Say About Endowments”
- Participation Agreements and other information regarding opening accounts.

The Consolidated Trust Funds provide the Investment Mission Group with a support person, Charlie Kuchenbrod. Charlie served on the staff of the Connecticut Conference and Southern New England Conference, and now serves as a consultant to the Consolidated Trust Funds. You can reach Charlie at [ctf@sneucc.org](mailto:ctf@sneucc.org) or 860.490.7332.

Investment Management Group: Mike Bennett, chair, Chris Guild, John Herbert, Stephen Silver, Art Urie
NHCUCC Staff: Gordon Rankin, Richard Slater, Lydia Frasca
CTF Consultant: Charlie Kuchenbrod.
We appreciate this opportunity to communicate the excellent work accomplished by the members of the Justice and Witness Ministry (JWM) mission groups in the past year. The JWM considers our primary role to be finding ways to respond to mission group feedback on what specific support they each need to bolster their efforts, as well as offering them greater visibility to leverage their efforts in the wider church and broader communities. A key aspect of justice work is offering opportunities for increased awareness of injustices experienced by others, and then encouraging needed action to bring about greater justice. We seek to continue to anchor these efforts in God’s Spirit and heart for justice.

This past year we have been actively engaging each of our mission groups by a rotation of check-ins where a representative from one of the groups joins us at our monthly meeting. These check-ins are formatted to catch up on the recent activities of the mission group and to see how JWM members might offer specific support and promote each group’s activities.

A new endeavor of our group this year: we have begun to respond to the reality that justice educational opportunities are often offered within the UCC, but are not always easily pursued due to inequitable access to related resources. This year JWM is helping develop a “Justice Resources Lending Library” at the Conference office to make the most often used justice learning resources more accessible to those who want to increase their awareness, but may not have the means to do so. We are excited about the opportunity to continue to build upon this resources library going forward with others’ help.

We envision our ministry’s work will continue in earnest in a world where so much is still to be done in the cause of bringing about greater justice, and transforming and equipping us for that work. We hope to support our mission groups in tangible ways, and to encourage a spirit of collaboration among churches, and other active non-church affiliated groups with shared justice related endeavors. There are currently seven mission groups under the Justice and Witness Ministry. Below is a report section for each.

Blessings and Gratitude,
Sara Rossigg, Chair; Eliza Tweedy, Deborah Oramolla, Paul Cullity, Nancy Andrews, Richard Slater.

**Immigration and Refugee Support**

The Immigration and Refugee Support Group (IRSG) provides information, education and general consciousness-raising within our NH denominational family (and the broader community where possible) about immigrant and refugee/asylum-seeker personal plight in our state as well as broader immigration and immigrant-focused policy concerns at both the state and federal level.
As part of our programming, the IRSG maintains a robust U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainee and post-detention support program encompassing:

- An ICE detainee visitation program at the Strafford County Jail in Dover carried out collaboratively with the American Friends Service Committee-NH Program.
- Fundraising for and maintaining a dedicated NHCUCC Immigrant Bond and Post Detention Support Fund dedicated to:
  
  (a) assisting asylum-seekers who are jailed in Dover (or are otherwise connected with our geographic region) in posting bonds to secure release from ICE detention;
  (b) providing ICE detainees in Dover with modest funds to make telephone calls and purchase personal care products, etc. from the jail commissary;
  (c) providing modest, short-term, post-detention “benevolent assistance” while asylum seekers pursue their legal cases and seek ICE authorization to work within the U.S.;
  (d) in special circumstances, assisting asylum-seekers in paying for essential legal representation.
- Arranging for a variety of supportive services and networks for those released from ICE detention who continue to live in NH (or nearby) as they strive to achieve financial and housing independence.

This year we have added to these objectives two additional focal points:

- Encouraging and nurturing the development of local congregation-based or community-based host home and support networks committed to journeying with asylum-seekers and refugees as they aspire to economic independence and community stability.
- Building and maintaining ties with both state and national immigrant support and advocacy networks in order to coordinate and collaborate in ways that enhance the effectiveness of our shared work.

Since we established the NHCUCC Immigrant and Refugee Support Fund in July 2018, this small Mission Group has made enough connections and shared enough compelling information and refugee stories to generate close to $145,000 for the Fund. Fourteen people have been bonded out of immigrant detention (bonds can range from $2,500 to $10,000 or more); 19 people have received modest benevolent assistance after being bonded out and while waiting a work authorization; 12 people have received legal assistance in order to pursue efforts to obtain legal asylum in the U.S.; and more than 355 individuals have received modest deposits to their jail commissary accounts to help them meet some basic needs while they were (or are) imprisoned.

The IRSG is working diligently in all priority arenas and has robust 2+ hour monthly meetings followed by substantial action on all fronts described above. Of significant disappointment and concern to the group is that the Covid-19 pandemic caused the Jail Visitation Program to be
temporarily halted by the Stafford County House of Corrections (for valid health and safety reasons) and also caused a far-too-long pause in our in-person trainings, educational activities, and congregation-based presentations. The Mission Group in committed to continuing and enhancing these activities when feasible.

Environmental Justice:
The primary work of the Environmental Justice Mission Group (EJM) is summarized as:

- EJM culminated two years of efforts with the presentation of a Resolution on the Rights of Nature at General Synod 33, “Who Will Speak for the Trees? A Resolution on the Rights of Nature.” The resolution passed with overwhelming support. Other denominations have expressed great interest, inquiring about the resolution language as a potential model and potential collaborative follow-up.
- The New England Youth Environmental Justice Summit two-day event took place via zoom this year featuring keynote speakers, Conference Minister, Rev. Gordon Rankin and Rev. Jim Antal, UCC Advisor on Climate Justice.
- We are bolstering our creation justice outreach program to increase the capacity of our assistance to local churches in becoming UCC Creation Justice Congregations per the related guidelines of the national setting of the UCC.
- EJM has proposed the establishment of a Conference Environmental Justice Award to be given to an individual or group at our Conference annual meetings in recognition of their exemplary efforts in stewardship of the earth. It is our hope that this award will encourage increased and creative efforts to respond to the urgent concerns of our environment.

Economic Justice:
The Economic Justice Mission Group of the NHCUCC Justice and Witness Ministry (NH JWM) is focused on heeding the call of our faith to be a voice for economic justice and to serve as a catalyst for others in UCC congregations statewide (as well as those in other faith communities) to join together as faith witnesses for economic justice.

Despite pandemic-required distancing, we have been able to use Zoom and other e-communications to strengthen our collaborative work with the American Friends Service Committee (with whom we co-lead the NH Voices of Faith public policy initiative); the NH Council of Churches; and with union groups (including the AFL-CIO at the national level) and worker advocacy organizations, and to develop partnerships with “Raise Up NH” and “One Fair Wage.” Both “Raise Up NH” and “One Fair Wage” are focused on addressing the immoral poverty level wages for far too many NH “essential workers” and on addressing NH’s abysmal policies regarding a minimum wage and sub-minimum tipped wage.

In March of 2020, we were in the midst of planning our 3rd annual initiative lifting up the importance of a faith-labor alliance as we also honored Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s
cutting-edge worker rights and economic justice advocacy when the pandemic caused the
cancellation of that event, as well as all post-March *in-person* public policy advocacy events in
Concord and Faith and Labor coalition-building events since that time. The exceptions were an
outdoor (distanced and masked) solidarity event in Plymouth as PSU non-tenure-track faculty
members were attempting to form a union (which they succeeded in doing), and several
outdoor (distanced and masked) vigils as the NH legislature considered minimum wage
legislation. We also hosted Vanderbilt Divinity School professor Joerg Rieger by Zoom and
held multiple Zoom collaborations regarding worker justice and related issues, and we used a
variety of creative means to maintain our NH Voices of Faith efforts. These efforts will remain
our priorities, and we will continue to use on-line platforms for programming as long as health
and safety concerns compel us to do so.

In July 2021, we played a role in planning and speaking at a “NH Women and the Economy”
forum that drew several hundred participants to a St. Anselm College venue and received
significant media coverage. We are also being called both by our national UCC setting and our
justice partners to play a significant role in NH in raising NH faith community consciousness
regarding the critical importance of the Raise the Wage Act and Protecting the Right to
Organize (PRO) Act now pending in the U.S. Senate, both of which face significant obstacles
to passage that faith leaders are trying to help overcome. Such policy initiatives also remain
part of our priorities.

Further, we played a vigorous role this spring, in partnership with the NH Council of Churches,
in raising faith leader awareness of a specific (and perennial) anti-union, anti-collective
bargaining piece of legislation introduced in the NH Legislature that was “certain” to be passed
in 2021. After a strenuous consciousness-raising and advocacy campaign, of which we were
an active part, this bill went down to defeat in the NH House by 20 votes. Because of this work,
we were invited to present (in August, via Zoom) an overview of our activities to a nationally-
convened Inter-Religious Network for Worker Solidarity, and we anticipate participating in this
group’s monthly Zoom meetings hereafter. Our faith-labor collaboration in this particular
instance is a strong building block for Mission Group activities going forward. In addition, when
worker groups in NH face union organizing or collective bargaining challenges, we will stand
poised to support these groups.

We are quite aware that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice,” as
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. observed, and surely there is a long arc to “changing lives”
through our economic justice advocacy as well. However, NHCUCC silence on matters of
injustice is not an option—as numerous General Synod resolutions and our own NHCUCC
2014 resolution calling for living wages for all workers confirm. Therefore, it remains our
Mission Group objective to heed the call of economic justice as we serve on behalf of the
NHCUCC.
Peace with Justice Advocates:
The Peace with Justice Advocates of the NH Conference United Church of Christ is committed to growing into the peace of Christ by:

- Being inwardly contemplative so as to allow God to disarm our hearts and transform us into people of peace and nonviolence.
- Being outwardly active in publicly witnessing/ evangelerizing/ teaching peace, love, and nonviolence in our churches and in the greater society.
- Being in community with and acting in solidarity with other individuals and groups rooted in peace and nonviolence.
- We commit to the kingdom of God as a commonwealth of abundance…and we challenge structural economic injustice.

In 2020-2021 during the pandemic, the Peace with Justice Advocates mission group has continued to meet monthly, via Zoom, and to move forward with work in our focus areas, to the extent possible given the limitation of the pandemic:

- Held a planning Retreat, via Zoom.
- Cosponsored and served on the organizing team for an August 9, 2020 international remembrance of the 75th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings. Our guest speaker was a survivor of the Nagasaki bombing. More than 1000 people from around the world attended via Zoom with hundreds of additional viewings of the web posted video recording.
- Throughout the pandemic the group has continued our active advocacy with our State and Federal legislators, related to our focus areas.
- Offered numerous editorials in various NH newspapers.
- Two joint letters with the NHCUCC Racial Justice Mission Group sent to NH legislators and also published in a number of NH papers.
- Completely overhauled our NHCUCC Peace with Justice Advocates website to provide more information and timely resources related to each of our Focus areas of service. [https://www.nhcucc.org/conference-ministries/justice-witness-ministry/peacewith-justice-advocates](https://www.nhcucc.org/conference-ministries/justice-witness-ministry/peacewith-justice-advocates)
- Provided active support for the Resolution of Witness responding to the Palestinian Kairos movement and its Cry for Hope. This Resolution moved on for a vote at the 2021 UCC Synod.

Open and Affirming:
Our mission is to bring awareness to churches and educate them on acceptance and making a safe place for all of God’s children. We hope that we can increase participation in our mission group so that we might reach a wider range of churches. We are hoping that more congregations will become Open and Affirming (ONA), and are making good progress. There are 40 ONA congregations in the conference (of 132 total). This is far higher than the national average.
The group continues to have its primary focus on supporting congregations walking through the ONA process in New Hampshire. Members of their group who serve as consultants to congregations received training from the UCC national setting. We like to stress that engaging the ONA process is of benefit to congregations regardless of the eventual vote outcome because everyone is able to learn and open a space for conversation. ONA 2.0 webinars created by Andy Lang, from the UCC ONA Coalition at the national setting is a helpful resource for ONA congregations that have interest in tools to help them reaffirm/recommit/continue living into their ONA covenant.

We also typically do an annual gathering, and recently decided to do this every other year instead, while bolstering our yearly offerings at Prepared to Serve.

We did a gathering on Zoom this past year which was a webinar with Andy Lang which was well attended and worthwhile.

Racial Justice:
This year the Racial Justice Mission Group (RJMG) membership grew from 9 to 14— a 56% increase. The ethnic makeup includes 4 members of the Global Majority and 10 members of European descent. We continue our prayers and efforts to balance the demographic makeup of this group. We are committed to amplifying marginalized voices and decentering whiteness. White is neither ethnicity nor norm. Visit the NHCUCC website and find that we illustrate our own diversity by including our ethnic origins in our biographical statements.

In February the RJMG honored a covenant to educate ourselves and the conference when we welcomed 140 participants to a webinar presented by our UCC Racial Justice Minister, Rev. Dr. Velda Love. In our transformative work, the RJMG completed an internal SC2ER (Sacred Conversations to End Racism) facilitated discussion of Dr. Robin D’Angelo’s Nice Racism. We provided a scholarship that enabled one member to enjoy the educational benefits of GS 33. RJMG members also presented at SYNOD in an Implementation Session on the Resolution to Recognize the UN Decade for People of African Descent, hosted an Optional Event and debated a resolution in opening Plenary.

The RJMG had a variety of opportunities to collaborate with other conference ministries. Horton Center leaders sought consultation on strategies to increase camper diversity. Subsequently these outdoor ministry leaders joined our mission group.

In January, along with the Peace with Justice Ministry, we authored a letter in response to the Epiphany Insurrection. The RJMG also co-wrote a letter with Justice and Witness in opposition to HB 544 - the “Divisive Concepts Bill”. We were also grateful to the BOD who signed on to our letter written as an individual committee also opposing this bill.
During February the RJMG worked with a fledgling black owned business and began a project to provide ethnically appropriate hospital personal wellness products for people with African textured hair and melanated skin. We sent 10 sample product boxes to the chaplains at 10 larger hospitals across New Hampshire and explained the need.

In response to public racism in a Brentwood select board meeting, we met with Sen. Jon Morgan. At his invitation, members and our conference minister, Rev. Rankin, showed up for an anti-racism Vigil in Brentwood. As the Spirit does move, this fell unexpectedly at the hour that the Derek Chauvin conviction was announced.

Having endorsed the Sacred Ally Quilt Project (now Ministry) we made a donation to support Rev. Chris Owen’s documentary film production on the project. Although it is still in production we were able to share a version at SYNOD.

We are very excited to increase our visibility throughout the conference as we extend our hand of fellowship and support to local churches entering the journey to become anti-racist.

The major focus and work of the RJMG has been in rewriting of the manual, How to Become a Racial Justice Church. We expect it to be completed by February 2022.

Finally, Congratulations to Hopkinton UCC as they have taken a vote toward becoming a Racial Justice Church. We look forward to meeting with them and debriefing on their process.

We are embraced by Christ.

In Faith,
Rev. Renee Rouse African American/Black co-chair
Dr. Harriet Corean Ward African American/Black co-chair

Sacred Ally Quilt Ministry Group
In the daunting task of dismantling racism: “One way to begin is to prove that racism is not the only reality. There is, for example, a huge demographic of progressive people who feel called by Christ to demonstrate that we are allies for our black and brown brothers and sisters. How can we meaningfully harness this energy?”

The Sacred Ally Quilt Ministry began with ten quilts that memorialized the dying pleas of George Floyd. We envision an active engagement with viewers of the quilt display to the continued importance of efforts to actively dismantle racism. We believe our display has the power to even find traction to be replicated beyond our conference.

We are paving a route that moves toward justice through art; using art as a vehicle for resistance. We have begun discussion of potentially framing our group in a larger context to
invite additional forms of art as offerings to the cause of dismantling racism and other forms of injustice. We are considering potentially renaming our mission group down the road as we find other artists to team with/support beyond our core quilters.

We met with the Justice and Witness Ministries group in 2021 to discuss our desire for this project to become an ongoing mission group of its own. The group enthusiastically supported our request and the creative symbolic work we are doing to bring about greater justice. With prayers in thread we ask for the Conference’s prayers and support in this important and symbolic endeavor upon which we have embarked.

Local Church Support Ministry Annual Report

The Local Church Support Ministry (LCSM) has three Mission Groups that fall under this Ministry: A New Thing Task Force, the Prepared to Serve Planning Committee, and the Stewardship Mission Group. The Stewardship Mission Group was newly formed this year, as described below.

**A New Thing Task Force**, chaired by Rev. Gayle Murphy, helps NH Conference churches confront the reality of ministering in communities which are largely unchurched by helping them listen for how God might be inspiring them to pursue creative responses to their unique settings and circumstances.

Over the past three years, A New Thing Task Force created and led a leadership development training program called “Creating and Leading the 21st Century Church (CL21), which concluded this year. The class was a huge success, with 9 churches participating and evidence of growth and new learning from all the churches. As a result of this program, participating churches will be better suited to face the challenges and opportunities of “being the church” in this time. A New Thing Task Force is discerning their next initiative.

**The Prepared to Serve Planning Committee**, chaired by Rev. Ruth Gallot, canceled the annual one-day Prepared to Serve (PTS) event, scheduled for February 2021, because of the pandemic. They are preparing to offer an in-person PTS on February 26, 2022, at Pembroke Academy, and they are researching possible Covid protocols as stipulated by Pembroke Academy. This event provides training and education in all facets of church life, as well as a time of fellowship and worship. The Planning Committee is looking to recruit new members to help with this crown jewel of an event for our Conference.

**The Stewardship Mission Group** was newly formed this year. A big thank you to Bill Jones and Erin Almeda for all their efforts as co-chairs. The Stewardship Mission Group will work with churches that seek to improve their stewardship results. They also plan to create a resource center of useful stewardship information.
The Administrative Professionals Day was initiated by our Conference support staff in 2017 as a way to thank and recognize administrative professionals for all that they do for our local churches. It also provides an opportunity for administrative professionals to network, learn more about the resources of the Conference, and enjoy fellowship together. Due to the pandemic, the Administrative Professionals Day was canceled for 2021, but there are plans to offer it in 2022.

Conference Scholarships and Grants. The LCSM has been updating the publicity of the Conference scholarships and grants that are posted on the Conference website.

A Future Endeavor. The LCSM is considering offering some form of support and training for Church Moderators. This is a key role in the life of congregations, it can be stressful, and many feel unprepared to do it well.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Dr. Gordon L. Crouch
Chair, Local Church Support Ministry

Wider Church Relations Ministry Annual Report

The Wider Church Relations Ministry (WCRM) “seeks and promotes the means for congregations and persons to engage the needs and opportunities of the world: engages Jesus’ prayer, ‘that they all may be one’ and finds the means for action.” This ministry reaches out to the wider church through its commitment and support of the New Hampshire Council of Churches, the UKAMA partnership, General Synod, Disaster Response, and the New Hampshire State Women’s Fellowship. We encourage our local churches to look beyond the needs of their local churches and communities.

This past year the WCRM spent much time discerning its role within the Conference as well as discerning what mission groups were thriving relative to a couple that had lain dormant for a period.

Below are the summaries from the WCRM’s respective mission groups

2021 General Synod:
The 33rd General Synod of the UCC, with the theme “Rooted in Love” was held virtually due to the pandemic, July 11-18. It included delegates from the New Hampshire Conference and reviewed several resolutions (which can be found on the General Synod website). The next Synod is planned for 2023.
**Ukama Mission Group:**

2021 was a productive year as the Ukama Mission Group facilitated a very successful appeal to New Hampshire congregations to raise funds to enable our partners in the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (UCCZ) to buy food for people associated with UCCZ congregations. We raised over $16,000. In response, receiving expressions of gratitude and pictures of happy, masked people with their food. We also produced a video using Zoom, shown as part of the installation of the Rev. John Matiza as the new president of the UCCZ. You can watch our Blessing Video and see photos of the food distribution on the [Ukama page of the NH Conference website](https://www.uccnhconference.org).

Over the course of the year, the Ukama Mission Group of the NH Conference, the Ukama Committee of UCCZ, and Marco Cable, CGM Area Executive for Africa, have clarified our relationships and responsibilities.

Zimbabwe was profoundly impacted by lockdowns intended to decrease the likelihood of widespread disease. Many churches resorted to audio or video worship. Recently, more people are dying from illness. Zimbabwe’s culture calls for communities to be present at burials, which then increases the risk of more people being infected. Our partners there urge us to pray for them as they find their way through this very difficult time.

We continue to seek to cultivate new church-to-church partnerships. If your church wants to know what’s involved, please contact the Ukama Mission Group through the conference office.

**NHCUCC State Women’s Fellowship (WF):**

This past year has been challenging for all mission groups. NHCUCC WF seeks to unite all women of the UCC churches in NH by cultivating the spirit of Christ and providing guidance and encouragement through worship, study, and action. To that end we had some success in maintaining our previous mission of supporting a Haitian school child, a mission in its seventh year. We provide money for her school uniforms and school breakfasts.

This past year we also embraced a virtual World Day of Prayer (WDP); launched on YouTube at 10 AM, March 5, 2021. Many members of our board were involved, as well as women from the previous year who attended our first in person WDP service in 2020. Being on YouTube connected us with Church Women United, women from the midwestern United States, Canada, Africa, and European countries.

Our Mission group project for the year 2022 involves building a Chartes Labyrinth at Camp Sentinel in Tuftonboro, NH. We will have an overnight retreat in the spring with women from UCC churches around NH. The camp has agreed to give us the land and we are pursuing information from those who have made labyrinths and those who practice the study of labyrinths.
New Hampshire Council of Churches:
Over the past year the New Hampshire Council of Churches (NHCC) was hard at work to connect people and congregations across the state. In the spirit of connecting with our neighbors and our higher moral calling as people of faith, we have. . .

- Connected worshipping communities and leaders to the most up to date Covid-19 information and pandemic resources.
- Convened important and much-needed difficult conversations around race relations.
- Connected other faiths, educators, workers, and houses of worship to the State House and the office of our Governor through various public policy initiatives.
- Organized protests and vigils and served as an advocate for immigrants and the poor.

The NHCC has never stopped seeking to bring people, voices, and actions together, in the spirit of seeking to love our neighbors in the Granite State and beyond.

The NHCC is adapting to changing times, is very grateful for all the support the NHCUCC has provided and is working with a professional fund-raising advisor to help increase their resource base. The Rev. Jason Wells, after faithful service for four years has moved on to ministry in the Seacoast area, and the new Executive Director is UCC pastor Rev. Heidi Carrington Heath and we welcome the Rev. Heath to her new ministry.

NHCUCC Disaster Response:
This was a year of discernment and waiting for someone to take interest in leading the Disaster Response Mission Group, as it has been dormant for about two years. Presently there is renewed interest in some variation on its theme as we move into the last quarter of 2021. The WCRM anticipates more to come, and if anyone is interested, please contact the WCRM through the Conference office.

Global Ministry Missions:
In 2019 and the start of 2020 this very new mission group showed promise though suffered from a lack of consistent leadership and focus. This spring the WCRM began exploring how to jump start or start this mission group afresh including conversations with our national office.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Duane Bailey
Chair, Wider Church Relations Ministry