Gathering Worship
The meeting began with a brief worship experience drawing the gathered deeper into the theme of the week of online events surrounding Annual Meeting. The theme “Repair, Restore, Renew...” was drawn from Isaiah 58:9-12. The gathering worship was led by the Rev. Carolyn Keilig, Mr. Bruce Kinney, the Rev. Gordon Rankin, and the Rev. David Felton.

Call to Order and Welcome
Conference President, Carolyn Keilig called the 219th Annual Meeting of the gathered New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ to order at 9:15am. Although an official report from the registrar was not yet available declared by observation that quorum was present.

Announcements
Given the significant adaptations being experienced over the course of this meeting due to the realities of COVID 19 several announcements, reminders and instructions were shared.

Connecting Sessions: Gratitude was expressed for a phenomenal response to the offered Connecting Session. Attendees learned that these sessions were each attend by 20-80 participants. The larger sessions were shifted to a zoom webinar model. The two Conversations with the Conference Minister were still to come on Sunday afternoon and Wednesday evening following this meeting.

Documents: As this year’s Annual Meeting was conducted entirely online all documents needed for the meeting were made available on the nhcucc.org Conference website, under Conference Ministries, 2020 Annual Meeting. All were provided with information on how to access and/or download them during the registration process

Streaming: In addition to the Zoom Webinar, the Annual Meeting was live streamed on the Conference NHCUCC YouTube Channel.

Evaluations: Attendees were asked to look for and complete a brief evaluation survey via email following the meeting.
**Nominating Report:** A reminder to review the Nominating Committee Report was offered.

**Worship Service:** The Annual Meeting Worship Team prepared a special worship service for use by anyone choosing to access it. All the information about this worship service and the related audio, video, and text files were made available on the nhcucc.org Conference website, under Conference Ministries, 2020 Annual Meeting

**Annual Meeting Offering:** The gathered was asked to consider making a donation to the Annual Meeting Offering by accessing the online donation portal or by mailing contributions to NHCUCC, 140 Sheep Davis Road, Pembroke, NH 03275, with a memo noting “Annual Meeting offering.”

**Voting**
Conference President, Rev. Carolyn Keilig called on the Rev. Gordon Rankin to explain procedures for managing voting to the gathered. Within this presentation was also an exploration of the standing rules for the meeting. Delegates were given the opportunity to practice online voting and then troubleshoot/seek further clarification of process by using the question and answer function or by turning to one of the technology stewards waiting to be of assistance.

**Introductions and Greetings**
The Conference President called the gathered’s attention to their screens as several slides recognizing those who were a part of the preparation process for Annual Meeting. Gratitude was expressed through these slides to the Conference officers, Board of Directors, and staff; consultants for special services; the Annual Meeting Planning Committee; the Annual Meeting Worship Planning Team; and several recognitions of special appreciation.

The Conference President recognized and introduced special guests to the meeting:
- Mr. Harry Pape who served as Parliamentarian.
- The Rev. Michael Caine who offered the keynote presentation later in the day.
- The Rev. Dr. David Felton who had just begun serving as Bridge Associate Conference Minister for the Rev. Richard Slater’s sabbatical.

**Minutes of the 218th Annual Meeting**
The Minutes of last year’s meeting as approved by the Board of Directors, acting on behalf of the Gathered Conference on November 16, 2019, were posted in advance of this meeting on the Conference website along with all other documents for this meeting.

**Standing Rules and Program for Annual Meeting**
The Rev. Carlos Jauhola-Straight then explained to the gathered the concept of a Consent Agenda and how it would be used to simplify process for the meeting. With this, the first business vote of the meeting was presented:

The Rev. Carlos Jauhola-Straight, on behalf of the Annual Meeting Planning Committee, moved the approval of the Consent Agenda:
• Granting clergy serving in a local church of the New Hampshire Conference who do not have ministerial standing in an Association of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, and that special guests be granted voice without vote for this meeting.
• Adopting the Proposed Standing Rules as written
• Establishing the Proposed Agenda for this meeting as written.

As this motion came from committee, it did not require a second. The motion passed unanimously with 129 voting.

The Rev. Gordon Rankin presented an overview of the strategic direction for the Conference Outdoor Ministries program. In this he celebrated the adaptivity of Tim Hughes and Tivvi Paré who, when faced with the necessary cancellation on on-site outdoor ministry programs, developed the most complete and successful virtual camp program of any UCC camp this past summer. HC@Home, Rev. Rankin shared, “literally brought the mission of Horton Center into camper’s home. It created community that felt like Horton Center community even though we were far from Pine Mountain.” Horton Center and the NH Conference Outdoor Ministry Program maintains a focused mission to foster deepening and transforming connections with God and God’s creation.

Despite the fact that little happened in 2020 as expected (for anyone, any program, any organization), several important tasks were accomplished to move the Conference’s Outdoor Ministry program into the future. One key goal for this year was to replace a deteriorating foundation on Hope Cabin. The Conference can finally say that this is complete. The Rev. Rankin shared that this project was made possible by the approval of Capital Funding by the Board of Directors. Additionally, necessary maintenance was completed on the access road to Horton Center with three culverts on the upper part of the road being replaced.

It was then shared with the gathered that while a search for a Director of Horton Center was begun, as was promised during last year’s Annual Meeting, it is now complete in an unexpected way. The pandemic has shifted life and expectations for Outdoor Ministry Programs and the individuals who are called to lead them all across the country. Tim Hughes, who after three year in an interim position was ready to explore new possibilities discerned that he not want his last summer at Horton Center to be one without campers on site. After conversations with Mr. Hughes and the Board of Directors, a new contract has been signed naming him as the Executive Director for Horton Center for the next two years. Tim’s first act as Executive Director was to hire Ms. Tivvi Paré as Assistant Director for the upcoming year. Rev. Rankin highlighted that while this shift in direction was unexpected, it is an absolute blessings to have this dynamic leadership team returning.

2020 Horton Center Report—Tim Hughes and Tivvi Paré
Tivvi Paré spoke to the process that she and Tim engaged in to arrive at the establishment of HC@Home in a way which embodied the core essentials of Horton Center: Outdoors, Community, and Spirit. Caving, tie-die and other traditional camp activities were envisioned in a way that they could be engaged in at home. Campers still experienced the outdoors, leading worship, laughing, singing, and growing in faith together. Programming stretched for five weeks this past summer. Through them 91 unique campers, 69 youth campers and 22 adult campers, experienced a warm welcome and deep community in a time when social distancing has caused emotional distance
from the greater body of God and Christ. The help of 24 Deans and 10 Counselors made for a
diverse offering of programs and activities. $9,350 covered the completely free registration.

This summer, the first ever Horton Center Sunday Service was made available to any and all
churches as well as any and all individuals who chose to participate. The program included: Pre-
recorded worship and open coffee hour. A special music event with Andra Moran was also offered
in July throughout the conference.

Tim Hughes expressed gratitude to be able to continue in leadership of this wonderful, fun, and
spirited program.

2021 plans include:
• In-person camp, taking all the necessary precautions and utilizing all the knowledge of those
camps which managed to open this past summer to make camp possible in a pandemic world.
• Early-bird Registration opens on December 15th with no payments due until January 15th
• A new HC@Church program is being offered for those churches seeking a new way of engaging
  in youth programming.
• The Horton Center Camp Store will be online beginning November 1st.
• Strategic planning will begin this fall
• The Horton Center Annual Appeal letter will be mailed soon. Tim encouraged all in attendance
  (and reading these minutes) to look for this and consider a serious contribution. He
  highlighted that there are still fixed costs for Horton Center which have yet to be addressed and
  will not be with the necessary cancellation of our “off-season” programs and private rentals.

The Horton Center presentation closed with the sharing of a beautiful and inspirational
promotional video now available on YouTube and Facebook for camp. Find it and share it widely.

Official Report of the Conference Registrar:
When the gathered returned from break, Conference President, Carolyn Keilig shared the following
Official Report of the Registrar:

175     In attendance, representing 67 churches.
60      Clergy Delegates (include retired clergy in the count)
81      Lay Delegates
5       Youth Delegates
11     Conference Board of Directors
18     Visitors (include retired clergy spouse/partner)

Presentation of the Resolutions adopted by the Board of Directors
The Conference President, Carolyn Keilig shared with the gathered that two resolutions were
approved by the Board of Directors in accordance with Conference By-Laws over the course of the
past year and will be moved forward for consideration by the General Synod of the United Church
of Christ in 2021. The first, A Resolution Calling on the United Church of Christ to Adopt the
United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent and the second, a Prudential
Resolution Requesting that the Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers be Recognized as a
Formal Group Within the United Church of Christ.

Approved Nov. 21, 2020
Presentation of the Resolution to be approved by the gathered Conference

The Rev. Dr. Robert Shore-Goss, member of the Federated Church of Marlborough and member of the Environmental Justice Mission Group was then invited to present a resolution of Christian Witness, calling for prophetic action by listening to the cries of the Earth and by adopting the “Rights of Nature for consideration by the gathered Conference.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Shore-Goss drew the gathered into our theme scripture for the day in the way that it speaks of God’s people “being repairers of the breach and restorers of streams.” There is a history of conservation advocacy in the United Church of Christ. In fact, the conversation on the rights of nature began in the 1980s and is reflected through the resolutions we have passed. As well, there is precedent established through governmental laws not only in this country, but around the world. In both realms of policy setting collective wisdom is presented that when we create a polluted environment, the health of the people is reflective of it. Rev. Robert Shore-Goss offered from Aldo Leopold, “Father of Conservation” in the United States, to highlight the spirit of this resolution: “We abuse land because we see it as a commodity, a thing belonging to us. When we see it as a community to which we belong we may begin to use it with love and respect.” This resolution stands as a beginning in the church of making a statement that nature has rights in a country whose highest courts have deemed corporations to have rights over nature.

In closing Rev. Robert Shore-Goss made the gathered aware that by passing this resolution, the NH Conference of the United Church of Christ will become the first polity to declare the rights of nature and recognize that nature is integral to our existence. Without biodiversity we cannot survive, prosper and flourish.

The Rev. Dr. Joseph Shore-Goss, Pastor of The Federated Church, Marlborough and co-author of the resolution, on behalf of his congregation, moved the Resolution of Christian Witness as presented for a vote. As the Resolution was referred to the meeting by the Board of Directors, it did not require a second and discussion was invited.

Two questions of clarification were brought before the gathered:

1. The Rev. Gail Kinney raised question about the intentionality in the resolution of raising Environmental Racism. While the resolution names it, it is not strongly present in the therefore be in resolved sections.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Shore-Goss responded that UCC already has an existing resolution with calls for the Nation-wide focus on Environmental Racism from our member churches. He added that the specified intent of this resolution is to address the rights of nature which has never before been recognized by our denomination. The Rev. Gordon Rankin added that Synod requires that a resolution being submitted not address resolutions passed at the most recent Synod. Thus, this resolution cannot include environmental racism objectives within it.

2. David Keller raised a question of who is responsible to take up the action items on the resolution and how they will be pursued.
The Rev. Robert Shore-Goss shared that there is a developed curriculum which he has worked hard on. It has been provided to our Environmental Justice mission group and will be provided to the National church as well. This curriculum lays out a path to understanding, living into, and advocating for the rights of nature.

Without any further debate or raised hands the Conference President and moderator of the meeting called the question on the motion to adopt the Resolution of Christian Witness on the Rights of Nature as presented. The resolution was declared passed and adopted with 135 voting yes and 2 no.

THE FINANCIAL LIFE OF THE CONFERENCE

OCWM Thank You’s and Video

The Rev. Gordon Rankin opened the financial conversation for this Annual meeting by reminding the gathered that it is important to begin any conversation of this nature from a place of gratitude. Gratitude was extended to:

- Churches and individuals who offer continued support of the wider church specifically through Our Churches Wider Mission.
- Faith communities for their support through Fellowship dues
- Individuals who support Friends of the Conference or the Horton Center Annual Appeal
- Churches and individuals who give directed gifts to our four national offerings, to the Immigration Bond Fund, or to assist our Ukama partners improve food security among their people.

The gathered then received a video expression of gratitude from the Rev. John Dorhauer on behalf of the National UCC.

Treasurer’s Report

Mr. Bruce Kinney, Conference President Elect stepped in for the Conference President as Moderator of the meeting and invited Phil Warren, a member of Third Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Alstead and the Conference Treasurer, to present the Treasurer’s Report.

Mr. Warren walked the body through the report he prepared in advance of the meeting, which was made available with all other Annual Meeting documents. At the end of his report, the Conference Treasurer shared that a charitable trust gift was received this year with the passing of Rev. Win and and Beryl Nelson. They left approximately $18,000 through a unitrust, which has now ben disbursed as the Conference’s Unrestricted Charitable Trust Policy outlines. Mr. Warren encouraged others to consider remembering the Conference when establishing end of life plans and/or funds that will support them through retirement years.

Proposed Mission Income & Spending Plan for 2021

Mr. Bruce Kinney, Conference President Elect called for the Rev. Carolyn Keilig, Conference President to present the Proposed Mission Income & Spending Plan (MISP) for 2021 on behalf of the Board of Directors. A copy of the Mission Income & Spending Plan was posted on the Conference website in advance of the meeting.
The Rev. Carolyn Keilig offered several highlights of the budgeting process and MISP:

- Mission and Ministry teams were asked to maintain their budgets at the 2020 levels for the upcoming fiscal year
- Conference staff and leadership are basing the Outdoor ministry component of the budget on in-person camp being held next year and that the Friends of the Horton Center Appeal will remain about the same.
- Accounted for expense savings due to the 2021 synod being held online
- Flat OCWM Revenue Projection
- Fellowship Dues—No change
- The plan projects a slight increase to Cell Tower and Office Rental revenue along with stable investment income.
- Conference leadership is identifying in this plan a goal of a $10,000 increase in income from the Friends of the Conference Appeal
- The plan maintains 65% of the OCWM offering being retained by the conference and 35% being sent to the National setting. $184,450 is projected for OCWM this coming fiscal year. If the Conference ends next year with a surplus, 50% of that surplus will be added to what is sent on to the national setting.
- This year’s MISP includes an accounting change for Horton Center expenses included in the Christian Formation budget for the past several years.
- The budgeting committee decided on a 1.8% COLA for all staff and $1850 of sabbatical coverage needed to be accounted for in the 2021 MISP

Carolyn Keilig made three additional points regarding the financial life of the Conference:

- We have a revitalized finance ministry and they have been meeting monthly, even through the pandemic.
- This plan is a balanced budget, though with some uncertainty regarding how we might be impacted by the pandemic.
- A Narrative Budget, which offers explanation from each of the ministry areas on how they use the funding they receive, is provided in the Annual Meeting Materials on the Conference website.

When her presentation was complete, Conference President, Carolyn Keilig moved the adoption of the Proposed Mission Income & Spending Plan for 2021, as written. As the motion came from Committee, it did not require a second. Discussion was then invited with a few points of clarification sought. Once no additional hands were being raised by the gathered, the questions was called. With unanimous approval the motion was declared passed, and the 2021 Mission Income & Spending Plan is adopted.

**National News: General Synod 33—“Rooted in Love, Special Edition”**

Mr. Bruce Kinney invited the Rev. Gordon Rankin to provide a General Synod update, as the denomination is now preparing for the first ever virtual gathering of a General Synod.

The Rev. Rankin shared that in light of the pandemic, because preparations for a General Synod start almost four years in advance, and potential financial losses the United Church of Christ Board made the decision last June that the 33rd General Synod will be held virtually and take place daily July 11-18, from 5:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. Pre-Synod events will occur July 7-10.

Approved Nov. 21, 2020
The agenda will include worship, keynote speakers, committee and resolution work, and a service of installation for Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson as associate general minister for Wider Church Ministries and Operations. Plans for this event even include the beloved Exhibit Hall (which is going virtual).

The United Church of Christ Board has adopted a number of changes in the General Synod resolutions process. Resolutions are now due on or before October 31, 2020.

The New Hampshire Conference will be presenting three resolutions for consideration (some in partnership with other Conferences): the Resolution of Christian Witness on the Rights of Nature that you passed earlier today; and two which we approved by our Board of Directors in accordance with our By-Laws - A Resolution Calling on the United Church of Christ to Adopt the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent and a Prudential Resolution Requesting that the Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers be Recognized as a Formal Group Within the United Church of Christ.

**National Youth Event**
Mr. Bruce Kinney, Conference President elect then invited Mr. Glenn Vodra, a member of South Congregational Church, Concord, member of the New Hampshire Conference Board of Directors, and a Youth who has participated in previous National Youth Events to provide information about NYE and plans for the next gathering to be held June 27-30, 2022 at Purdue University.

**“CELEBRATING ALL THE SAINTS – VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE”**
Carolyn Keilig invited the gathered into a time of honoring some faith’s saints: those who have gone ahead and those who live and serve among us now.

**The Church Triumphant**
The Rev. David Felton began this celebration by naming and honoring the Church Triumphant:
- The Rev. William “Bill” Salt
- Merle S. Cole, Sr.
- The Rev. Dr. William A. Zeckhausen
- The Rev. Dr. Edward C. Bastille
- The Rev. R. Winthrop Nelson, Jr.
- The Rev. Charles Heslam
- The Rev. Henry Beairsto
- The Rev. Leslie Norman

**Election of Conference Leadership**
The Conference President invited Pat Harris, a member of Congregational Church of Hollis, United Church of Christ, and Chairperson of the Conference’s Nominating Committee, to present the Report of the Nominating Committee.

Pat Harris offered a quick outline of the nomination report and presented corresponding slides of each section of the report. She reminded the body that all current Conference Officers were in elected in 2019 and have one year remaining to their terms. Below is a brief outline of the positions voted on during this meeting:
• 4 individuals are nominated for the Board Members, class of 2023
• Two new members are being elected this year to the Nominating Committee
• Seven individuals are being elected to serve as General Synod delegates, class of 2023.

A reminder was also offered that all Members of the Ministries are appointed positions and are included in the Nominating Report to acknowledge those who have been asked and accepted the invitation to serve.

Because only one person is nominated for each position and Conference Bylaws do not require that a ballot vote be taken, and as no objections were received from the gathered, the Conference President those individuals nominated, to be elected.

**Liturgy of Commissioning**

*The Rev. Gordon Rankin led the gathered in a Liturgy of Commissioning for the elected individuals.*

**Celebration of Clergy with New Calls in NH**

With leadership from the Rev. Dr. David Felton those with new Calls in NH were recognized.

**Celebrations: Significant Ministerial Anniversaries**

A pre-recorded message from the Rev. Richard Slater, our Associate Conference Minister, was then shared with the gathering. This message offered recognition of those with significant anniversaries of Authorized Ministry for those with standing in an Association of our Conference. An additional video was posted on the Annual Meeting webpage with additional information honoring those celebrating their 25th and 50th Anniversaries.

**Adjournment**

Since there was no further business, the 2020 Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ was adjourned at noon. The gathered body was reminded to use the second link sent in the registration instructions to join the keynote address with the Rev. Michael Caine at 1pm.

The Rev. Gordon Rankin offered a benediction as the business meeting was concluded.