Board of Directors
April 17, 2021 Meeting Summary

The NH Conference Board of Directors held their recent meeting via Zoom, as we have done for over a year during this pandemic. Our first order of business was to approve the recommendation of the Nominating Committee of Kira Morehouse to serve as a Director on the NHCUCC BOD, finishing the term of Norma Brettell. We also approved the recommendation of the Nominating Committee of David Grishaw-Jones and Gretchen Smith as NHC delegates to July’s virtual General Synod.

We were very engaged in two separate substantial conversations with invited guests; one with the co-chairs of the Racial Justice Mission Group (Dr. Harriet Ward and Rev. Renee Rouse) and one with the co-chairs of the Open and Affirming Mission Group (Rev. Michael Denney and Mr. John Rowe). The Board is appreciative of their willingness to guide not only the churches of our Conference in the continuing learning and advocacy that our Resolutions call for, but also for giving valuable input to help guide the Board in their decisions, policies and actions.

Covid 19 continues to have an impact on the plans and activities for all of us in the NH Conference. However, the Board was excited to learn of the many and varied programs that will be held in-person at our camp, Horton Center, located on Pine Mountain in Gorham. It was heartening to learn of the safety protocols that are in place (including staff training, masking requirements and Covid testing) to create the safe environment that will welcome campers to our beloved home away from home this summer.

Plans for the 120th Annual Meeting to be held on October 16 were discussed. The Annual Meeting Planning Committee, after many serious discussions recommended that this Annual Meeting be held via remote access, due to continuing concerns about the impact the pandemic will have on the availability and capacity of the Grappone Center. The Board concurred with this recommendation. Resolutions to be considered should be submitted no later than June 1. The Board also set the date of October 15, 2022 for next year’s Annual Meeting, with June 1, 2022 as the final date for submitting Resolutions.

One of the most important parts of the report from our Conference Minister had to do with Covid 19 updates. The most recent update can be found here: https://nhcucc.org/caring-for-congregations/staying-safe-in-the-midst-of-contagious-disease/conference-communications. Rev. Rankin is working on new guidelines which will be shared with the Conference sometime in the next couple of weeks. Unfortunately, because case numbers and 7 day-positivity numbers have been trending worse for much of the state, he is anticipating extending our current recommendation for at least another month. The Board understood the importance of not allowing impatience to “get back to normal” to be the guiding principle behind these critical decisions and thanked Gordon for keeping the safety of all as a priority.

The Board affirmed the Clergy Support Ministry’s emphasis on the need to provide clergy (and other worship leaders) with additional time off due to the stresses of the pandemic. The UCC National Staff and Council of Conference Ministers did provide a service for April 11 to help create space for pastors and worship leaders to engage in necessary rest.

It had been brought to the Board’s attention that the Vision Statement on the Conference website needed to be updated. A subcommittee of the Board worked on a revision that was approved during this past meeting. The new vision statement reads as follows:

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.

During his reports to the Board, the NH Conference Treasurer, Phil Warren has been sharing about some of the Trusts that are managed by the Conference. Our Conference administers various trusts and distributes income according to the founder’s intent. This month we learned about two trusts that were established nearly 100 years ago!

**The Elisha F. Lane Trust:**

Elisha F. Lane died in 1921 leaving a will that provided for his children and grandchildren for nearly 20 years. In 1941, when they all had passed, the Trust was placed in the hands of 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 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 and etc. What a blessing!

We are grateful to learn of the planned giving by our ancestors-in-faith and encourage current members of the NH Conference to express their faith through their own planned giving.

Like many of our churches, the Board had hopes of holding a Board retreat in June at Horton Center, which was changed to simply meeting in person in June. As of this writing, that hope may give way to the reality of the safety need to continue to meet remotely. Our next meeting is scheduled for Friday evening, June 18 with the discussion of the Board’s understanding of our responsibilities as leaders of an Open and Affirming and a Racial Justice Conference. Board business will continue to be addressed on Saturday, June 19.

Carolyn Keilig
President, NH Conference, UCC