Annual Reports - 2019

Conference President .......................... Ms. Marcie Miller
Conference Minister .......................... Rev. Gordon Rankin
Conference Treasurer .......................... Mr. John W. Herbert
Christian Formation Ministry .................. Ms. Lily Nutt
Clergy Support Ministry ...................... Rev. Gayle Whittemore
Finance Ministry ..............................................................
Justice and Witness Ministry .................. Ms. Jessica Price
Local Church Support Ministry .............. Rev. Dr. Gordon Crouch
Wider Church Relations Ministry .......... Rev. Robert Vodra
What a busy and exciting year for the New Hampshire Conference! So much change and new beginnings, while continuing to hold true to the foundations that make our Church vital and relevant! I continue to be amazed by the creativity and passion of the Conference staff and numerous talented volunteers in our Ministries and Mission Groups. They are an inspiration to all and I offer my thanks and gratitude for their commitment and service!

A major highlight of the year occurred in April when we installed the Rev. Gordon Rankin as our Conference Minister. As representatives from many of our local churches and Associations, members of the Board of Directors, Conference staff, Conference Ministers from several other Conferences and our General Minister and President, the Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, gathered in Wolfeboro, we celebrated, in glorious fashion, Gordon’s installation and the beginning of his ministry and leadership here in New Hampshire. It was a beautiful and meaningful service and celebration!

Shortly after last year’s Annual Meeting, the Board of Directors updated their mission/action statement, to clarify their work and identify key priorities for the year ahead:

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: increasing our engagement with issues of justice and peace, particularly as a Racial Justice Conference; exploring transitional possibilities for Horton Center and the Outdoor Ministries programming as it grows; continuing opportunities for collaboration with other neighboring Conferences; facing financial challenges in creative and responsible ways; and remaining mindful of our covenant with local churches.

As stewards of the Conference and our Ministries, the Board embraced and supported several key justice and peace initiatives during the year.

At last year’s Annual Meeting, the gathered Conference, adopted the “Resolution of Christian Witness in Support of New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ Congregations Awakening to Racial Justice” and proclaimed our Conference as the first Racial Justice Conference in the United Church of Christ! This year with the Board’s endorsement, the Racial Justice Mission Group developed an implementation plan and guidance for our local churches which will be highlighted at this year’s Annual Meeting.
The Immigrant and Refugee Support Group continues to passionately pursue their work to welcome and assist refugees in crisis, raise awareness, and help our churches better understand the issues.

In conjunction with a resolution passed at General Synod, the Board recommended and heartily endorsed a resolution to the upcoming Annual Meeting sponsored by the Peace with Justice Advocates Mission Group. Their resolution “Back from the Brink Initiative” addresses the need to end the threat of nuclear war.

Horton Center and Outdoor Ministries operations and programs continue to evolve under Tim Hughes’ experienced leadership. Campership numbers are up for the summer and a modified program model has proven to be viable and exciting while also financially successful. The addition of several Vacation Bible School/Camp weeks at two local churches has also provided another way to bring the Horton Center experience to additional campers while effectively employing our camping staff. It’s been a wonderful Horton Center summer from a number of perspectives.

The collaboration with neighboring Conferences is moving forward, albeit slowly and cautiously. Various options continue to surface and provide opportunities to work together to address areas of mutual need. The Conference Ministers in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire meet regularly to discuss, explore and share ideas and practices.

As it is with many local churches, finances continue to be a concern. So, too, for the New Hampshire Conference. We are grateful for the generous donations from many of our churches, but as membership continues to drop, so do the “Our Churches Wider Mission” (OCWM) contributions. OCWM is the major source of revenue to fund the ongoing operations of the Conference. We continue to receive substantial support through the “Friends of the Conference” and have received over $10,000 in a new campaign to support Horton Center. The lasting legacy from the income earned by invested donor funds continues to provide a variety of grants and support for many of the activities, events, and program offerings by our Ministries and Mission Groups. The Conference Center rental space is fully occupied and generating rental income while the cell tower on Pine Mountain also continues to produce substantial revenue. We are blessed to have a variety of revenue streams.

During these last few years, the New Hampshire Conference has experienced lots of change and transition. But, we have gifted leaders in Gordon and Richard, an amazing and dedicated Conference staff, and Officers and Board members who bring a wealth of talent, skill, experience and enthusiasm. With these resources, and trusting in the Holy
Spirit, I believe the New Hampshire Conference is well-positioned to thrive and sustain the important ministry work needed in our local churches, throughout New Hampshire and across the wider church.

It has been an honor and a privilege to have served as the Conference President these past two years. The work has been challenging but rewarding and the encouragement and care I’ve received from everyone I’ve encountered has truly been inspirational. Thank you, one and all! The Conference and I have been blessed by your many gifts!

Respectfully Submitted,
Marcie Miller
Conference President
True confession. I still feel very much like the new kid on the block I still feel like I have at least as much to learn as I have already learned. But learning about the ministries of the New Hampshire Conference and its 134 congregations has been amazing and I welcome the new learnings that come with each new day.

I feel blessed to do the work that I do every day. But I have said it many times, and it is true, that my favorite day of the week is Sunday. I love being able to visit our churches, worship with you all, and hear stories of the dynamic ministries that you carry out to the glory of God. God is doing amazing things in and through the churches of this Conference. I try to share your stories via social media and speaking engagements as much as possible. The work of our churches inspires me, and I am sure many others throughout the United Church of Christ, each and every day.

Search and Call
As Conference staff, our work is to resource our congregations for the work that you do. Pastoral search and call is one of the key areas in which we seek to resource our churches. Suffice it to say, we have been very busy when it comes to search and call. Some of this is simply the result of numbers. Most of the year we have had over forty churches engaged in various stages of the search and call process at any one time. I would like to thank our search and call consultants (the Revs. Michael Bennett, Dawn Berry, Michael Carrier, Jeff Evans, Andy Gilman and Rebecca Larson) who enable us to be as present and attentive as well as we’d like with this heavy workload.

There are a couple of newer realities to the current day pastoral search and call process that I feel compelled to address. The first is we are generally seeing fewer candidates for any available call. Even five years ago, we often would collect ten or more profiles for churches to review within the first couple weeks of posting their pastoral position. Today, for the vast majority of our positions, it can take several months before ten profiles are received. I raise this for two reasons. First, I want to help set realistic expectations. Secondly, we are having to train search committees to work in a different way. Being able to consider a pool of candidates concurrently is now the exception rather than the rule. Instead, we are teaching search committee to work with candidates each on their own unique timetable.

Several of our churches have initiated with us conversations about sustainability issues and in particular about the scope of pastoral work (full time vs. part time pastorates). While this is not exclusively done during times of transition, with increasing frequency it is an inevitable part of the pastoral transition conversations. My experience has been
that this is intense but deeply faithful work. Such conversations cause us to name our fears and question our assumptions. They also spur amazing creativity and imaginings of new models of ministry. I suspect we are only in the early days of the season when such conversations are necessary. I pray that, both as the Conference and as local churches, we can continue to build resources that will allow these conversations to be faced with courage and faithfulness.

Committees on Church and Ministry (CoCMs)
This past year has been a year of transition for our Committees on Church and Ministry. For the first time in thirty-four years, a new Manual on Ministry has been made available to our CoCMs. While many of our authorization processes received only minor adjustments, there are a couple of major changes (the elimination of licensing and commissioning as form of authorization; exempt status for retired clergy). Of course, in the UCC the responsibility for authorization rests with our associations. So, while the new Manual on Ministry was made available in 2018, each association adopts it as outlined in their own by-laws. In New Hampshire, all seven of our associations have different processes for adoption, some which will take significantly longer than others. In the spring, I recommended to our associations a process that would allow us to move with more consistency toward such adoption. The Hillsborough Association has already engaged this recommendation. Our other associations have agreed to consider it at their fall meetings. Regardless, we are going to work with our CoCMs to step into use of the 2018 Manual on Ministry as smoothly as possible.

In the spring we also made some adjustments to our transfer of standing procedure. In some cases it was taking far too long to complete the administrative parts of the process so that our CoCMs could act on transfer of standing and install our pastors. The new process is allowing us to execute transfers of standing in a much more reasonable time frame.

Horton Center
Without question, Horton Center has been a passion project of mine. In the winter I held five listening session around the state to listen to your passions about Horton Center. This summer I visited Horton Center and lead worship all but one week of our summer season. I served as co-dean/counselor of the Creation Chorus/Funniest Video camp for an entire week. I also was able to visit with one of our Vacation Bible Camp sessions. Yes, I did all this because it is my job. But I also did it because I believe in Horton Center. I believe that Horton Center is a life-changing, transformative place. I believe that Horton Center remains an essential component to our health as a Conference. Now I may be a believer, but I am also a realist. I recognize that there is
hard work ahead to ensure Horton Center’s long-term sustainability and viability. We have worked hard toward that end this year.

First, let me mention the vision we discussed at our 2018 Annual Meeting of a creating a cooperative Outdoor Ministries program between the three Northern New England Conferences. As leaders of the Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire Conferences engaged in these conversations it didn’t take long to realize that we were envisioning moving forward in drastically different time frames. Before long, we decided we needed to reset our conversations and start working on building collaboration more organically. One of the highlights of this was that our Deans and Counselors Training this year was a joint Horton Center-Pilgrim Lodge event. We will continue to try to build organic connections. But I suspect any type of more formal arrangement is an undetermined number of years away.

We did invite Tim Hughes to return for another season as our Interim Executive Director. Tim hired Tivvi Parre to serve as Summer Director and to provide some organizational assistance during the spring. Together they worked to design a 2019 summer camp season with some differences then in previous years. First, our summer program was set up to run three camps simultaneously each week. This would require more deans and more counselors than ever before. However, it would allow for more opportunities for youth of any age group to attend Horton Center each week and offer the potential of having more campers each week. It also allowed the potential that a camper who had a great camp experience early in the summer could return later in the summer.

Another new component to the summer was our Vacation Bible Camps where we would send camp staff out into our churches to provide the programming for a Vacation Bible School type program. I can say that we had mixed results with our first go around of Vacation Bible Camps. One was quite successful and another far less successful. But from our first experiment with this type of programming we have learned a lot and believe we can build a far more consistent program for next year.

We are just beginning our assessments of the summer camping season. There were successes and there were growing pains. That was inevitable. What is essential is that we continue to build upon what we are doing. And we will.

One of our major successes of this past year was our first ever Horton Center annual appeal. We had set a goal of raising $10,000 in 2019. Thanks to the dedicated work of Rob Grabill (and, of course, Tim Hughes) we surpassed that goal by the midpoint of the summer. Clearly, I’m not the only person who believes in Horton Center.
Pembroke Conference Center
In his report last year, Reverend Buck addressed the availability of rental space at the Conference Center. I am pleased to be able to say that as April 2019 we are at capacity with every space rented. Not only that but we are truly blessed because all of our tenants are wonderful neighbors. We hope they will all stay with us for many years to come.

Ministry Teams and Mission Groups
I cannot do justice in describing the amazing work done by the various Ministry Teams and Mission Groups of this Conference. Thankfully they will be providing their own accounts as part of this report. I will say I frequently feel conflicted by my desire to be present at several different ministry events being carried out by our Mission Group all in the same time frame. But believe me, I’m not looking for anyone to slow down. To the contrary, please continue your ministries in the vital, passionate way you do. I am confident that our time together with eventually allow me to engage with all our ministries. Most importantly, please know that I am abundantly proud of all the justice work, outreach, partnership, faith formation, resourcing of clergy and congregations, and every other ministry that is carried out in the name of this Conference.

Wider Church
Let me highlight three items of significant from this past year. First, what a gift of grace it was to start my very first days as your Conference Minister with a visit from our Ukama partners. Not only did it allow me the opportunity to learn far more deeply and personally about these incredible people of faith with whom you are in partnership, but it also provided me the opportunity to see into your hearts. From my first moments in this Conference, I was able to see how foundational the love of all God’s people was to who you are and what you do. A visit this summer from Dr. Kennedy Gondongwa provided me the chance to start to deepen some of my own connection with our partners. I look forward to more opportunities to emulate what you have already done by opening my heart to the people of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe.

We are blessed by all our wider church and interfaith partnerships. But I’d like to make note of the blessing of working with the New Hampshire Council of Churches. The Council of Churches was able to organize many of our communities of faith to bear witness in ways that I believe were very influential in the New Hampshire legislature ultimately abolishing the death penalty.

Finally, in June we had a delegation (and a vast number of visitors) attend the 32\textsuperscript{nd} General Synod of the United Church of Christ in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. During the
Synod, the Reverend Dr. John Dorhauer was re-elected as General Minister and President and the Reverend Karen Georgia Thompson was elected as Associate General Minister and Co-executive for Global Ministries. We said a heartfelt goodbye to the Reverend Jim Moos as he completed his eight years of service as an officer of the church. Dr. Matthew Desmond offered an amazing keynote speech. Over twenty resolutions were considered and most passed. We were inspired by worship, preaching and song. Oh, and I rode a tricycle to help promote next summer’s National Youth Event.

**Conference Staff and Board of Directors**
Okay, here is that part where I give you all the credit. Your Conference Staff and your Board of Directors are exceptional. I truly mean that. And I have had nothing to do with that. You as a Conference have developed a culture that nurtures, hires or elects, and supports exceptionally gifted leaders. The good news for me is that I get to reap the benefit every day of getting to work collegially with these leaders.

Your staff is profoundly good at what they do. They deal with a very full and hectic work load with patience and persistence. They engage fully and demonstrate in each moment how deeply they love the church. I spend most of my days simply hoping that I can work as hard as they do for the betterment of this Conference. Richard, Ann, Lydia, Cindy, Helen, and Tim, thank you for all you do and all that you give!

I will confess that I rave about our Board of Directors when I am together with other Conference Minister colleagues. Our Board “gets it’. They understand their role and responsibilities. I greatly value that they are able to engage in deep conversations without jumping to easy solutions. Yet, at the same time, they are decisive and are willing to step up and be true leaders. I am profoundly grateful to all our Board members and in particular for the leadership of our officers: Secretary Dawn Berry, Treasurer John Herbert, President-Elect Carolyn Keilig, and President Marcie Miller.

I will say it again. God is doing amazing things through the church and ministries of the New Hampshire Conference.

Peace and grace,
Gordon Rankin
Conference Minister
Once again, our financial report is a “good news, bad news” story. The New Hampshire Conference is alive and well and financially sound. For several years we have budgeted for a deficit and for most years we have not been able to end the year with a positive budget result. 2018 was no exception.

We finished 2018 with a budget deficit of $37,252. We had budgeted for a $40,348 deficit so we actually did better than anticipated. The budgeted deficit was made worse with decreased revenue from OCWM donations and Fellowship Dues. Which were worse than 2017. Investment distributions and administrative fees were bright spots, as was Rental Income from rents in the Conference building. Under spending by the Ministries also helped.

Our total Revenue was actually about $5,000 under that budgeted and less than 2017. Our Churches Wider Mission and Our Fellowship Dues incomes were under the budget, and were less than 2017.

On the Expense side, total Conference Expenses were 99% of what was budgeted. The Ministries again did very well in controlling expenses and were almost all under budget. Horton Center, that is Outdoor Ministries, had a $22,730 deficit for the year, which was an improvement over 2017. Horton Center will do better in 2019.

The reductions in prior year budgets for Conference staff, office expenses and the building (budgeted as “General Mission”) helped the bottom line for the 2018 year. 2018 was not great, but certainly could have been much worse.

Year 2019 is following the trend set by the last few years. At the end of July the budget was about $75,000 in the red. That will get better, but we cannot expect to end the year with a positive result. Horton Center will do better than last year, but will still have a significant loss.

As I said the Conference is alive and well and financially sound. But the budget will continue to be a concern.

John W. Herbert
Treasurer
Christian Formation Ministry Annual Report - 2019

It was a slow year for Christian Formation. We are looking forward to the National Youth Event 2020 as well as continuing support to outdoor ministries. All of these out-of-Sunday-sanctuary experiences that NHCUCC provides to youth and adults changes lives in profound ways such as spending a week or weekend on Pine Mountain or meeting other UCC youth from all over the country.

Christian Formation met a total of four times this year. In the beginning of the year, a lot of our meeting time was spent prepping for Horton Center to open for the summer. A few other topics that Christian Formation discussed include:

- Strategies to double the amount of youth attending National Youth Event 2020
- Funding and encouraging a new book study group led by Emilia Halstead
- Maintaining the success of the Waysmeet Center at UNH.
- Continued support for the Earth Stewardship Mission Group.
- Being flexible and open to plans for the future of Horton Center
- Continued support for the Confirmation Retreat held in September each year

Our meetings successfully had all members attend: Merri Carlson, Allen Hoyt, Ken McGarry, and Lindsey Shaklee. The Interim Executive Director of Horton Center also kept us up to date by video conferencing with us during meetings. Ann Desrochers is the ministries Conference liaison.

We look forward to an awesome National Youth Event in 2020 and can’t wait for a year of spiritual growth.

Respectfully submitted,
Lily Nutt
Chair, Christian Formation Ministry Team
Clergy Support Ministry Annual Report - 2019

It was a tough beginning. Four of us were new: Dawn Garret Larson, Jonathan Roach, Verna Ross Hoyt, and me. Gordon Rankin, Conference Minister, was new too. Only Tim Wildman had a history with Clergy Support. Mark Rideout, previous chair, had offered to share his documents from 2018. It would have been smart to take his offer but I forged ahead. To add to the challenge, I began to have difficulties with my computer communicating with Gordon and the Clergy Support Ministry. A new computer was my solution and it has worked.

Nevertheless Clergy Support managed to do its work. Jonathan Roach’s urging to provide support to clergy new to the Conference resulted in efforts to engage newcomers regarding their needs. This led to the mid-year beginning of a professional Leadership Group, as well as discussion about other possible ways to be intentionally welcoming.

Clergy Support also worked with the Chairs of Committees on Church and Ministry to provide Advanced Boundary Awareness Training; and the Mission Group organizing the Annual Clergy Convocation at Marie Joseph Retreat Center.

The Clergy Support Ministry in cooperation with the Finance Ministry organized Clergy Day, an annual event for clergy to learn and engage in a day-long event with our Conference Minister and Associate Conference Minister. This year the event was held at the First Congregational Church of Wolfeboro. The program featured Margaret Marcuson of Portland, Oregon, author of *Money and your Ministry*.

Projects in discussion for the future include: an on-line course for clergy on the uses of technology, and the exploration of ways we can serve the needs of those among us called to Chaplaincy.

Gayle Whittemore  
Chairperson

Finance Ministry Annual Report - 2019

No report available at this time.
There are seven mission groups under the Justice and Witness Ministry (JWM), Below is a brief report on each one.

Immigration and Refugee Support (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 national level.

The IRSG maintains a robust ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) detainee and post-detention support program encompassing

- an ICE detainee visitation program at the Strafford County Jail in Dover
- fundraising for and maintaining a dedicated *NHC UCC Immigrant and Refugee Support Fund* to assist asylum-seekers who are jailed in Dover in posting bonds to secure release from ICE detention; to provide ICE detainees in Dover with modest funds to make telephone calls and purchase personal care products, etc. from the jail commissary; and to provide modest, short-term, post-detention “benevolent assistance” while asylum seekers pursue their legal cases and seek US Citizen and Immigration Services authorization to work within the U.S.
- arranging for a variety of supportive services and networks for those released from ICE detention who continue to live in NH (or nearby) while they strive to achieve financial and housing independence.

The IRSG has developed an information brochure which provides education and can be used in fund raising for the detention bond fund. It should also be noted that, in fewer than 12 months, this small Mission Group has made enough connections and shared enough compelling information and refugee stories to generate close to $50,000 for the *NHC UCC Immigrant and Refugee Support Fund*. That’s life changing for those who receive support from this fund!

The IRSG presently provides post detention support to seven people; has provided detention commissary funds for more than 60 people in detention and has been instrumental in bonding out eleven people.
Environmental Stewardship:
Environmental Stewardship Mission Group (ESMG) is developing a brochure, “Green Congregation Challenge.” It provides information and education about becoming a green congregation. The ESMG has updated their webpage on the Conference website.

ESMG will start the planning for the next New England Youth Environmental Justice Summit over the fall and winter months. A tentative date is March of 2020. We have given five partial sponsorships to Horton Center this summer. We will have a table at the Annual Meeting again this year, and will be promoting how to be a Creation Justice Church per the guidelines of the UCC.

Economic Justice:
The Economic Justice Mission Group of the NHCUCC Justice and Witness Ministry (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.

The NHCUCC Economic Justice Mission Group has established itself as a well-respected leader within the economic justice advocacy community in New Hampshire. Though the dedication of Mission Group members and allies and through an intentional and increasingly effective and expansive partnership with the American Friends Service Committee, the NH Council of Churches, and more recently, leaders within NH Unions such as SEA/SEIU Local 1984, we have worked tirelessly to raise the voice and expand the moral witness of people of faith on matters of economic justice and injustice in the state, while likewise advocating for a fair and moral economy as a core tenet of our religious belief.

Key ways through which we have sought to respond to the voice of our Still Speaking God, which we hear most clearly through the cries of those experiencing economic suffering and injustice, include our continuing leadership in Legislative Advocacy “Faith in Action” trainings, as well as NH Voices of Faith, advocating for restoring and raising NH’s minimum wage, and re-building faith and labor alliances.
Peace with Justice Advocates:
The Peace with Justice Advocates of the NHCUCC 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/ evangelizing/ 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.

Focus Issues include: Challenging Islamaphobia; Challenging Militarism; Challenging US Relationship with Israel and Palestine.

Goals include: peace with Iran; Advocacy for legislation; Israel-Palestine resolutions to General Synod; Nuclear Disarmament.

In the 2018-2019 year so far:

- Presented the sold out Capitol Center for the Arts event addressing Islamaphobia by recognizing through storytelling the Abrahamic roots that Christians, Jews and Muslims share.
- Delivered four presentations at Prepare to Serve: “Islam 101”; “How are the Children” (Israel/Palestine); “The Korean Stand-off” (challenging militarism); “Back from the Brink” (nuclear disarmament).
- Advocacy for legislation in line with our goals involves year round, ongoing actions on both the State and Federal levels.
- Hosted multiple meetings with the Conference Minister, representatives of all NHCUCC mission groups and representatives of the NHCUCC Associations developing an action plan to address “Awareness to Advocacy to Action” for our congregations concerning the urgent issues our mission groups each address.
  - Provided each Association with a list of speakers from the various mission groups who are available to speak in 15 or 30 minute time slots at Association Meetings.
  - The NHCUCC will host Webinars on the Conference Website. The first webinar was posted on 6/12/2019. It’s from the Peace with Justice Advocates addressing the “Back from the Brink” issue and is presented by Noble Peace Prize laureate Dr. Ira Hefland.

- Resolution on “Back from the Brink” to be presented to the Conferees at Annual Meeting.
**Opioid Crisis Mission Group:**
The mission statement of our group is: “Helping churches to become healing communities for all of us who are affected by the opioid crisis.” Our goal is to provide local churches with resources to engage their congregations in programing that works to reduce stigma and expand its potential for healing.

This past year our mission group developed and implemented a successful series on addiction at the UCC Keene that yielded remarkable results. This included liturgical services, congregational presentations, and community partnerships. We followed up with a workshop at the 2019 Prepared to Serve where we gathered ideas on how to bring our template to other congregations throughout the state.

We anticipate in 2019-2020 future event development in other regions, including liturgical resources, creating a template guide for other churches, and offering start-up funding for congregations hoping to set up recovery-based programs.

**Open and Affirming (ONA):**
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. We are making good progress.

We had our semi-annual ONA Gathering in Manchester, NH. People were educated about the Open and Affirming process. Also we celebrated new ONA churches in the NHCUCC. People’s minds were opened concerning Transgender issues.

**Racial Justice Mission Group (RJMG):**
Awakening to Racial Justice in 2019, our goals have been to: Develop a process for churches in NHCUCC to become a Racial Justice Church; provide PTS workshops and Annual Meeting connecting sessions; be available to churches for programs on racial justice; offer educational programs open to the NHCUCC; eg., *Whose Streets*, a documentary about Ferguson, a Reggie Harris workshop with singer/composer and racial equity facilitator, and a bus tour of the Black Heritage Trail, all in 2019; and develop a clergy Racial Equity – Implicit Bias Training for the Spring of 2020 with trained facilitators, as we did in 2018, but the focus will be different; plan a Juneteenth 2020.

The work now is to reach beyond the convinced to the those good people who have a million other things to focus on in their churches in a state that is predominately white.
We do this by: equipping pastors, providing resources for educating laity, and telling stories both of injustices and hope in NH and our country. But, we (us of NHCUCC) can no longer be passive, it is not just the RJMG. We (NHCUCC) are accountable to a resolution that the annual meeting passed. We are accountable to our God who is trusting us to Be the Beloved Community who re-presents God’s love for all people made in the image of God. Invite us to your church for a program or sermon.

**Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM):**
JWM held a fall and spring meeting for all ministry groups to share information about the work of their group and how we can collaborate to more effectively carry out the work of our ministries. Our November 2019 gathering will focus on homelessness and how each ministry can contribute to addressing this problem.

Representative from each of the ministries also met this spring to discuss *Advocacy to Action*. How can we work together to support our clergy and our churches to assist them in achieving Awareness and then move on to Advocacy and Action around the important issues the NHCUCC mission groups are addressing? Potential opportunities to support clergy and congregations in achieving Awareness in order to plant the seeds to move on the Advocacy and Action in the individual’s area of passion are a focus for the ministries.

Some suggestions from this adhoc group include:

- **Presentations at Association meetings**
  Mission groups prepare 15 and 30 minute presentations on the issue(s) they are working on to inform /educate.
  - Have mission group members ready to present and discuss their issue(s) in Q and A.
  - Be ready to provide additional materials, resources and weblinks, etc.
  - Also share opportunities for advocacy and for action for those whose passion is ignited by the presentation.
  - Create a list of those mission group presentations and share that list with the Association moderators. (Ann Desrochers in the NHCUCC office has that email list).
  - Post the list of presentations in an easy to locate area on the NHCUCC website (and keep it updated).

- **“Moment for Missions”** during worship service
  Many churches have a monthly moment for mission speaker for 5 to 10 minutes. This is a possible opportunity to for a Mission Group member to share one issue.
Utilize the **NHCUCC Topical Speakers Bureau**:
- Recruit engaging mission group issues speakers to be added to the Speakers Bureau list.
- Locate the “Speaker Bureau” on the NHCUCC website so it's easier to find.

**Pulpit Exchange.**
A pastor from another congregation could bring a harder message to a congregation than the pastor of that congregation.
- The commenter who shared this suggestion followed up: explaining that to be effective this type of hard message delivery must be carefully pre-planned so the pastor of the congregation receiving the hard message is ready to follow up on that message upon his/her return to that congregation.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Price
Chair, Justice and Witness Ministry
Two Mission Groups that fall under LCSM: A New Thing Task Force and the Prepared to Serve Planning Committee. Previously, the New Church Starts had also been a Mission Group under this Ministry, but it disbanded at the end of last year.

**A New Thing Task Force (ANTTF)**, led by Rev. Gayle Murphy, is helping NH Conference churches confront the reality of ministering in communities which are primarily unchurched by helping them listen for how God might be inspiring them to pursue unique responses to their unique settings and circumstances. This Mission Group added 5 new members this year to bring it to a total of 9 members.

ANTTF experienced great success this past year with the start of its two-year leadership development training program called “Creating and Leading the 21st Century Church.” Nine of the Conference churches are participating, which is the maximum they can accommodate. There have been six all-day seminars on topics such as Deep Vision, Conflict, and Creativity. In the second year, a Church Assessment Tool by Holy Cow will be done for each church, and the year will consist of a series of four 90-day self-selected applications of the concepts learned. As a result of this program, there is excitement to see how the participating churches will be better suited to face the challenges and opportunities of this time.

**The Prepared to Serve Planning Committee (PTS)**, led by Rev. Ruth Gallot, put on another very successful one-day PTS event on February 23. For the past several years, PTS has attracted hundreds of participants attending over 70 workshops that provide learning opportunities for individuals and churches in the areas of worship, justice & witness, faith formation, outreach, youth ministry, and numerous other areas of ministry. Currently, there are only four members on the PTS Planning Committee, plus Ann Desrochers and Rev. Richard Slater, and so there is a desire for more members.

**Administrative Professionals Day.** On May 7, under the leadership of Cindy Bradley, Helen McGlashan, and Ann Desrochers the LCSM offered its annual Administrative Professionals Day at the Conference Office. This event yielded a strong turnout and positive response. As a result of the day of networking and sharing, many who were present requested a Boundary Awareness Training geared specifically for administrative professionals.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Dr. Gordon L. Crouch
Chair, Local Church Support Ministry
Wider Church Relations ministry is a “limb” of the tree of the conference, with several areas of “fruit” hanging from it. As the needs and energy of the conference and those participating in it change, this model allows new fruit to develop and if any fruit is older, not doing what it was intended to do, it can fall off. Officially we are called to “seek and promote 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 find the means for action.” Below are the areas in which we seek to support these means.

**Disaster Response:** Jan Howe, the chair writes “Once again, I attended the annual training for Disaster Response Coordinators which was held in Puerto Rico this year. It was amazing to us at how much work still needed to be even started for their recovery. They were just beginning to have accommodations set up for mission groups to help in recovery. For example, the Christian Camp that the UCC has partnered with had used a generator until days before we arrived, when power was finally restored.

If church groups are looking to help in disaster recovery please check out the Disaster Ministries website to see which areas are ready for volunteer groups. Visit the website: [ucc.org/disaster](http://ucc.org/disaster) and click on volunteers.

In addition on this same page the UCC Disaster Ministries and The Insurance Board have compiled a Disaster Preparedness Manual for churches. Each church should download a copy of this manual to make sure your church is prepared for a natural disaster as well as to be able to help your congregation and community following a disaster.

If anyone is willing to work with our mission group helping our conference and churches to be prepared to respond please contact me at [pnjhowe@comcast.net](mailto:pnjhowe@comcast.net) or 802-376-9115.”

**Ukama Mission Group:** David Keller, chairperson reports: The Ukama Mission Group (UMG), part of the Wider Church Relations Ministry of the NH Conference, has had a busy and productive year. The Ukama Mission Group’s purpose is to guide our conference’s relationship with the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (UCCZ) and to support and encourage the forty-seven church-to-church partnership relationships between congregations of the NH Conference and congregations of the UCCZ
We were honored to host five delegates from UCCZ for two-plus weeks in October of 2018. The delegates were here for three Sundays, affording them opportunities to visit many Ukama Churches. They also visited Horton Center and the ocean at Hampton. They attended and played a role at the conference’s 2018 Annual Meeting, and the delegation leader, the Rev. Dr. Msond Mpofu, brought greetings from the UCCZ to the gathered conference.

We have worked on updating our lists of contact persons and pastors in Ukama churches here in New Hampshire. We initiated regular connections between the Ukama Coordinating Committee of the UCCZ and Richard Slater, our Ukama Coordinator, and David Keller, UMG chairperson, by way of Whatsapp. In conversation with our partners in UCCZ and Common Global Ministries, we reviewed and updated our policies on “Ways to Give” (available on the Ukama pages of the NHCUCC website).

We provided two workshops at the 2019 Prepared to Serve. We offered a webinar on “Ways to Give” in March and a second webinar designed to assist congregations desiring to revive a dormant partnership in August. We offered two regional gatherings for Ukama congregations – one in Keene in May reviewing current events in Zimbabwe, and the second in September at Pilgrim Church, Brentwood-Kingston, designed to assist congregations in planning an “Ukama Sunday,” the Sunday closest to October 19, the day in 1893 when the Congregational Mission was formally established in the country now known as Zimbabwe.

In the summer, we sought telephone contact with as many congregations with an Ukama partnership as we could. Our goal was to ascertain the vitality of the partnership. We learned of a number of relationships where there has been little or no recent contact. The August webinar provided resources for reviving relationships, but we also intend to stay connected with churches whose partnership is struggling.

After ten years as the chairperson of the Ukama Mission Group, and a deeply rewarding relationship with many people in the UCCZ, Kathy Blair concluded her service as chairperson. I am honored and humbled to continue facilitating this most rewarding and inspiring ministry on behalf of the conference. Thanks to Kathy for her extraordinary service, and for her continued guidance and participation in our Ukama.

We welcome congregations which might want to consider initiating an Ukama relationship with a congregation of the UCCZ. Contact Richard Slater if your church would like to learn what’s involved, and how you can benefit.
General Synod happened this year in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and that group is housed within Wider Church Relations ministry. This event happens every other year, so our funding for this event is spread over two years. Many resolutions this year were discussed and voted on, and our national staff were elected. There was a Webinar made shortly after we returned talking about the event. You may read the resolutions that were passed on the UCC website, and if you would like to have someone come to your church or an association meeting to talk about all or specific resolutions, all of the delegates are available to do that. This event is truly a way in which our conference participates in the ministry of the wider church.

Global Ministry Mission was created last year (2018) after we held a very successful event inviting a few who have participated in ministry around the world to share their experience with members of the New Hampshire Conference. The focus of this group is to share the story of what the UCC is doing in the field work of mission around the world, and they are figuring out the best ways to share those wonderful stories.

Volunteer in Mission is a brand new group, just starting in 2019. In addition to learning about our global Missions, there may be opportunities to do hands on mission work either in the US or beyond. Many of our churches do these trips, but many churches feel they are too small to take on a larger mission trip. This group may work to facilitate partnerships between churches, share best practices of mission trips, may even plan a conference sponsored mission trip in the future. The focus for this year will be gathering information about which churches are doing these trips, what they are doing, and starting to hopefully share knowledge.

New Hampshire Council of Churches: Jason Wells, the Executive Director of the New Hampshire Council of Churches writes: The NH Council of Churches voices God’s love in the public square the word, prayer and action. Our membership comprises nine denominations in New Hampshire and across New England: American Baptist, Episcopal, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Quaker, United Church of Christ, United Methodist and Unitarian Universalist. Frequently we engage with interfaith partners in the Jewish Federation and in the Islamic Society of New Hampshire. We also act as a connection point between our many denominations and secular and state partners.

We appreciate not only the volunteer support but also the financial giving that each of the member denominations provides to make this mission possible.
During 2019, we celebrate the ecumenical work being done in our three focus areas:

1. **Death Penalty Repeal**
   
   Twenty years ago, the Council first called together NH’s death penalty repeal leaders. This year, the faith witness was critical to the success of the final May 30 repeal vote. We helped to organize an ecumenical faith witness at every hearing and vigil. We also supported the non-faith-based repeal coalition made up of murder victim family members, law enforcement officers and death row exonerees. Because of your faith witness, New Hampshire is no longer a state with the death penalty!

2. **Immigrant Solidarity**
   
   The Council succeeded in ICE allowing pastoral caregivers to accompany immigrants when they make fear-filled check-ins at the ICE offices. Also, we have been leaders in the second Solidarity Walk for Immigrant Justice from South Church in Concord to the Strafford County jail in Dover. This year, we expanded participation to Vermont, Maine and Massachusetts, making New Hampshire’s faith communities leaders throughout the region!

3. **Addiction Recovery**
   
   In our opioid crisis, the Council convenes and networks diverse recovery ministries and supports churches in taking their first steps in serving people with Substance Use Disorder. We have partnered with church unaffiliated with the Council to form the Good Samaritan Network to train and supported Caring Clergy, a training network for clergy performing funerals following an overdose death.

So far through the year, our Executive Director, Rev. Jason Wells, preached in 14 different congregations on Sunday mornings. He also represented the ecumenical Christian community on April 27 at First Congregational Church of Wolfeboro to celebrate the installation of Rev. Gordon Rankin as your new Conference Minister.

The NH Council of Churches remains grateful for your volunteer and financial support during this season of renewed mission and organization of faith witness in the public square of NH!
Other is something we added to our budget a few years ago which allows new fruit to start to develop before the next budget year. If you think of something that the New Hampshire Conference should be doing in the area of Wider Church Relations, please feel free to contact me or any of the members.

Submitted by Robert Vodra with support and information from the members of Wider Church Relations Ministry, Jan Howe, David Keller, and Jason Wells.