New Hampshire Conference
United Church of Christ

Annual Reports - 2014

Conference President ................. Rev. Gayle Whittemore
Conference Minister .................... Rev. Gary Schulte
Christian Formation Ministry ............ Rev. Ruth Martz
Clergy Support Ministry ............... Rev. Dr. Tim Wildman
Finance Ministry ........................ Rev. Arthur Urie
Local Church Support Ministry ....... Ms. Ann Craxton
Peace & Justice Ministry .............. Rev. Gordon Crouch
Wider Church Relations Ministry ...... Ms. Janet Kohlmorgen
Conference President’s Annual Report - 2014

When the Annual Meeting 2013 was over and my first year as President had begun it felt like a blank slate. Preparations for the new structure had been thoughtful and thorough but the truth was that what now existed posed more questions than answers. The ways we had done the work of the Conference was over and gone and the new was only a sketch on paper.

The new Board of Directors, smaller and more powerful than the old Conference Council, needed to become the heart of governance for the NH Conference. To build community, share history, and make some foundational decisions, the Board (BOD) met first in an overnight retreat. There we worshipped, played, learned and began new relationships. There we began to be the BOD.

At that meeting I set the goal of developing what Don Clark, General Counsel for the United Church of Christ, calls a ‘timely mission statement.’ We needed a one or two sentence description of the focus of a board for the next year or two. Under the direction of President-elect Neal Cass, the BOD developed such a statement. At our April meeting the BOD affirmed the following statement of our purpose:

Called to be stewards of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ, and its Ministries, raising up Horton Center, the new structure, and Our Churches Wider Mission- Basic Support, while building commitment to the whole United Church of Christ.

The BOD set a calendar for meetings in January, April, June, and September. Each meeting was held on a Saturday from 9-3. The June meeting was another overnight this time on the mountain at Horton Center.

In addition to my work with the BOD, I chair the monthly Executive Committee meetings of the BOD. I work closely with the Finance Ministry to support the work to strengthen Our Churches Wider Mission, and I meet with the Nominating Committee to encourage their important work. I meet with the Annual Meeting Planning Committee. I have set a goal for myself to meet with each of the Ministries once this year. (I am two short right now, but maybe I’ll have a better record by the time of Annual Meeting!) Occasionally it has been my pleasure to stand in for our Conference Minister or Associate Conference Minister at a local church event.

People ask me if I am enjoying my work as President. The answer is, “Yes, I do. Much to my surprise I am enjoying it.” After all, I am serving what I love. I love the church of Jesus Christ. I love the United Church of Christ. I love the New Hampshire Conference and its local churches.

In closing, I have a few words of gratitude: For the good, often hard, faithful work of our Conference Minister and Associate Conference Minister. For the deep commitment of the Board of Directors, and their generosity of spirit. For the creative, inventive work of the Ministries. And for the appreciation and engagement of the folk whose lives are touched and enriched. I am particularly grateful for the work of Michael Gfroerer, past Conference Treasurer and member of the BOD as he ends his service. And thanks to Joyce Beairsto, Chair of our Accessibility Committee for many years, for her dedication and leadership in making our churches welcoming places for all God’s children.

And to you all, Grace and Peace.

The Rev. Gayle Whittemore, President
New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ
Much is happening in the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ in these days. In October 2013, our Conference moved into the implementation phase of its new structure. That structure is best symbolized by a tree with six branches (Ministries) which produce fruit (Mission Groups) for the upbuilding of the Church and the healing of the nations. I am truly amazed that our little tree has produced such a bountiful harvest in this initial year. The number of new initiatives and activities is reason for rejoicing. This tree—God’s tree—is a new thing, an exciting model for others to emulate. I look forward to seeing what yet may be.

Church Revitalization is a priority for us. We currently have nine churches participating in a coaching cluster program with the Rev. Paul Nickerson. Many of these churches have received grants from the Conference to assist them in this important work. In July, our Local Church Ministry subscribed to MissionInsight, a demographic tool specifically created to help churches come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of their unique mission field. Every local church in the Conference may have access to this valuable resource without cost. Please contact the Rev. Eric Redard for your church’s login information.

Our Wider Church Relations Ministry has a New Church Start Mission Group that is imagining a new United Church of Christ congregation in our Conference. I look forward in anticipation to the birth of that new church.

Our Finance Ministry has been engaged in raising the awareness—not only of our financial needs—but also of the amazing abundance that God has given us. Ambassadors of Abundance on September 20 was a joyous celebration of what God is doing in our lives. The Gratitude Mission Group and work with the Investment Mission Group are also within the purview of this Ministry. Recently, a resolution was proposed and subsequently ratified by action of the Board of Directors to reinvest $3 million of our invested funds in the new Fossil-Free Fund that is being created by United Church Funds.

The Outdoor Mission Group and many, many others have invested heart and soul into the revitalization of Horton Center. We have a “New” Horton Center on Pine Mountain. The energy around this ministry is contagious. Our relationship with the Maine Conference UCC, particularly with the Rev. Mollie Landers Hatt and the Rev. Bryan Breault, has brought us to a new day. While some changes are evident in the new five-year agreement with the Maine Conference, the concept of partnership and mutual sharing remains constant. God is at work in this; it will not fail. The future for this ministry is bright. Our focus is on ministry and the lives that are being transformed through the mission of the New Hampshire Conference at Horton Center.

The New Hampshire School of Ministry (NHSOM) is launched. Our school is part of the Northeast School of Ministry, a consortium of schools from six United Church of Christ Conferences: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont Conferences. We are exceedingly grateful for the vision of the Rev. Rebecca Werner Maccini, who serves as the Dean of NHSOM and to Wayne Martin who is the Chairperson of NHSOM’s steering committee. NHSOM will be an important educational resource for training licensed ministers to serve in local churches where ordained leadership is not available; for continuing education opportunities for all clergy; and for lay leadership education and enrichment.
Our Christian Formation Ministry has worked collaboratively with Ann Desrochers, NHCUCC Specialist in Christian Education, to host a Vacation Bible School Curriculum day, the Annual Confirmation Retreat at Horton Center, and to prepare for the UCC’s National Youth Event in 2016.

Our Peace & Justice Ministry continues to call us to make our faith real in the culture around us and in the world where we are called to live and love. The Mission Groups: Economic Justice, Peace with Justice Advocates, Spirituality and Earth Stewardship; and the new ONA Concerns Mission Group invite us to be faithful witnesses and provide programs and resources for our local churches. The new monthly e-newsletter, Courage in the Struggle, was launched this year. To subscribe, please contact the Conference Office.

In June, the Board of Directors approved a request to encourage the churches of our Conference to support two major offerings each year for United Campus Ministries. The first offering is being promoted through The Weekly News and on the NHCUCC website. We anticipate a bountiful harvest for the life-changing ministries that are happening on our university campuses in New Hampshire.

I have said little in this report about money for mission—God’s mission that is the New Hampshire Conference and the United Church of Christ. I am not naïve. We do need more money. I am aware, as are the other leaders of this Conference, that every dollar given is “consecrated,” coming to us through local church offering plates and the gifts of disciples now and in generations past, who love Christ and desire to faithfully strengthen the covenant that connects us to one another and propels us to serve in God’s world. We are not obsessed with finances or even anxious about them. God provides abundantly. It’s about God’s ministry and mission. I call on each one of us to be an advocate for generosity in every setting of the Church.

We also need to remain steadfast in our support for the wider settings of the United Church of Christ—for the national setting of the church—in Cleveland and beyond. Our support is crucial now. My vision and fervent hope is that the New Hampshire Conference will be a leader for others in the United Church of Christ.

Oh, there is so much more that I would share with you! But let me close by expressing my deepest gratitude to our staff, as well as to the lay and clergy leaders who give so much of their faith, hope, and love in this setting of the Church. As I reflect on the good gifts so freely shared, it is obvious that this is a calling for so many and not simply another job to be done.

It is a privilege and a great joy to be your Conference Minister.

Mary M. Schulte
This ministry has had a strong start since January 2014. We have identified our key responsibilities as:

1) Overseeing Horton Center Outdoor Ministries
2) Staying informed about the NH Annual Confirmation Retreat; the 2016 National Youth Event; and NH AUCE (Association of Christian Educators);
3) Offering various offerings/workshops on Christian Formation for children, youth and adults;
4) Brainstorming and embarking on new initiatives.

In addition to our Ministry members, Mollie Landers and Ann Desrochers have attended our meeting and provided invaluable information and support. Mollie has helped us understand Horton Center history, activities and finances. Ann Desrochers serves as a liaison between our Ministry and the Conference staff. She has reported on the committees that work on the Confirmation Retreat and promotion for the National Youth Event in 2016. Ann connects us with resources for possible workshops. She made the arrangements for our spring event on Vacation Bible School Curricula, a “drop in” program that was excellent and attended by about 25 people throughout the day.

**Horton Center Outdoor Ministry**
At our September meeting, Mollie Landers reported about the summer programs. There were 279 campers, a 15 percent increase from last summer. The camp sessions went very well, and the staff was phenomenal. Financially, there is still some income to come in from rentals and the Confirmation Retreat in October. Like last summer, there were not enough campers to cover the costs of running the camp. This year there were also unexpected food costs and property repairs.

The exciting news is that Horton Center went through the ACA accreditation process and expects to be given official accreditation soon. In 2015, the partnership with Maine will continue with some changes to be announced.

**The Confirmation Retreat Committee** is meeting regularly and hoping for a good turnout for the October 3-4 retreat at Horton Center.

**The National Youth Event** will take place from July 26-29, 2016.

A group has started meeting to work on PR and recruiting NH youth to attend. This event will take place near Disney/Orlando (FLA). The group is hoping for 150-300 youth!

**NH AUCE**
Carolyn Keilig, a former leader of the NH AUCE meetings, met with us to give us some history about this group. There is currently no one “in charge,” but this is still an entity that belongs to the National AUCE. Carolyn Keilig and others who have participated in NH AUCE are willing to respond to requests from our Ministry and the Conference office. One idea that we discussed with Carolyn was the possibility of finding NH Association representatives who could stay in contact with Christian educators in local churches.
Upcoming Programs
We are planning a program on the Bible for Sat. March 7, 2015. 9 a.m. - 12Noon
This workshop will offer three presentations on the Bible, with people sharing resources and exploring resources in between the presentations. The theme includes: choosing Bibles for children and youth; celebrating the Bible with children; how to run a Bible study.

At one of our meetings this spring, we went through a discernment process called “Mapping Our Assets,” based on the book by Luther K. Snow. We decided on a new initiative, a NH Conference Youth Service Day. We propose this event for the Saturday of Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, January 2016. We hope to offer this Youth Service Day in three locations: Manchester, Somersville, and Nashua or Keene. We will be speaking about possible partnerships with Brookside Congregational Church in Manchester; Somersville Congregational Church; and the UCC churches in Nashua and Keene.

I thank the following people for being an invaluable part of the Christian Formation Ministry: Rev. Dr. Dawn Berry, Merri Carlson, Robert Grabil, Amy Zapp, Ann Desrochers and Mollie Landers.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Ruth Martz, Chair
September 15, 2014
“Ministries” are the term now used in the NH Conference for the working groups that carry out the mission of the organization, and Clergy Support Ministry is one of those new ministries. The enabling by-laws describe our work as “providing opportunities for continuing education and support to augment the work of the Conference Minister and the Association Committees on Church and Ministry.”

As you can see, this is a broad task! We have been meeting monthly this year developing priorities for this “support,” and have been pleased that some directions are emerging. For example, an early meeting included discussion about: the emerging NH School of Ministry, Pastor Parish Relations Committees and their potential for Clergy Support in local church settings, the revision of Clergy Compensation Guidelines for our Conference, and Annual Clergy Day plans for next January.

In the endeavor to provide support to our clergy, we feel we have natural partnerships with existing groups like: Association Committees on Church and Ministry, the Response Team, planners for Clergy Convocation, the Interim Ministry Group, and any other ongoing endeavors that “support” clergy in our Conference in a variety of ways. We also are highly supportive of and interested in the boundary awareness training opportunities for active and retired clergy, other continuing education activities for clergy in our Conference, and the support groups for first call clergy to our Conference and for retired clergy.

In terms of continuing education, we, along with our Conference Ministers, will be overseeing the Grace Scott Fund (that currently subsidizes the Pastoral Leadership Development Groups administered by Pastoral counseling Services throughout our Conference and funds individual requests for chaplaincy training) and the Authorized Ministers Continuing Education Fund (that funds individual clergy requests for continuing education), evaluating requests for the use of these funds.

In general, we are convinced that both the rewards and challenges of ministry fall primarily within the parameters of the covenant between minister and congregation. It is for this reason, for instance, that we are gathering data about current pastor parish relations committees (we are considering a survey of existing PPR’s and the experiences of clergy and laity with these committees using a survey tool with a link in Weekly News) and also greater congregational awareness of documents like the Clergy Compensation Guidelines.

Beginning with our first meeting we set aside time for prayer for the clergy in our Conference and carry that intention between meetings in the belief that this is a central responsibility of our committee.
At the first meeting of our newly created Ministry we brainstormed a staggering 17 possible areas of responsibility and accountability for our committee! Thus, our first year, as indicated above, has been dominated by sorting out these areas with an eye to discerning our core mission. In 2015, we feel prepared to create Mission Groups to take operational responsibility for many of the specific iterations of Clergy Support so that our committee won’t lose track of the “forest” amidst all the “trees!” There is agreement among us that our discussions are rich, generative, constructive, and imbued with the energy of the Holy Spirit. We feel deeply blessed and humbled to be doing this particular work and pray that the Clergy in our Conference will truly benefit from our endeavors.

Members of our committee include: Kris Bowen, Deb Knowlton, Mary James, Rebecca Maccini, and Tim Wildman with Richard Slater representing Conference Ministry.
The work of Finance Ministry has covered several areas.

A. Expressing acknowledgement and gratitude for gifts given by local churches.

1. The Gratitude Mission Group has been at work. 18 different people have been trained and have been making phone calls to local churches to give thanks and appreciation for gifts received or pledges made to Our Church’s Wider Mission. The initial call is made to the Pastor (whenever possible) who is also asked who else should be called. Finance Ministry reviews activity each month and tells the Gratitude Group which churches should receive calls.

2. The Finance Ministry made arrangements to have certificates of thanks and appreciation prepared for each church’s giving to Basic Support of Our Church’s Wider Mission during 2013. These certificates were presented at Association Meetings by members of Finance Ministry.

B. Finance Ministry continues to develop ways of interpreting Our Church’s Wider Mission.

1. A power point presentation of the work supported in New Hampshire by Gifts to our Church’s Wider Mission was prepared by Finance Ministry. The presentation was shared at Association meetings and is on the Web site where it can be accessed and used by local churches.

2. A short video of Our Church’s Wider Mission is in the production stage. The video will have its debut at Annual Meeting. (And will subsequently be available on the Website.)

3. A brochure describing the work of the New Hampshire Conference is now available. Look for the first copies at Annual Meeting. Additional copies will be available at the Conference Center for distribution by local churches.

C. We are initiating a fresh way of inviting giving for the 2015 budget year. We are borrowing ideas from the Consecrating Stewards model for Stewardship Education.

1. A celebration dinner for church leaders (any and all who wished to come) was held on September 20 at Lake Opechee Inn and Conference Center in Laconia to celebrate who and whose we are. 155 people attended.

2. A Video “Stewardship in NH Churches” has been produced. Copies are available on the Website (NHCUCC.org).

3. Delegates to Annual Meeting are invited to make their commitment to encourage each local church to make a dollar commitment to giving to Our Church’s Wider Mission. Those commitments will be dedicated at our opening worship.

4. A letter and commitment form will be sent to each local church.

5. We anticipate that in the future we may invite churches to bring actual pledges/commitments to Annual Meeting.

D. We have supported the continuing work of the Investment Mission Group.

1. We have recruited a new member to add additional experience and skill to the group.

2. We have encouraged their continuing work with Charles Kuchenbrod as a consultant.

3. We have supported their efforts to increase their visibility and availability. (Note their exhibit in the exhibit area and the brochures available there.)

Arthur Urie, Chair; David Chin, Kimberly McHerley, Terry Martin
Local Church Support Ministry in our new structure is designed to continue the work of the Conference supporting congregations as churches seek to work with and serve their members, their community and the world. Our work has been centered in several areas – processing grants, organizing a workshop, and supporting three mission groups and one in formation.

**Processing Grants**
The Conference is blessed with several funds designed to assist congregations. Two were our focus – Lay Leadership Development Grants and Strengthen the Church Youth Ministry Grants. About half of the 19 churches who participated in the Paul Nickerson Seminar in the fall of 2013 applied for grants from the Lay Leadership fund to defray costs for a year (2014) of individual coaching from Nickerson. All were approved.

In addition, several other Lay Leadership grants were approved as were several grants for Strengthen the Church Youth Ministry. We have not spent all the available money for this year. More churches could be taking advantage of this valuable resource.

**Ministry in a Digital Age Workshop**
In response to a need expressed by church leaders at a retreat in January, the LCSM developed a workshop designed to assist congregations with their digital communication needs. We heard that churches needed help upgrading their facilities with 21st century technical equipment and with the use of social media. *Ministry in a Digital Age* will be held, Saturday, October 4th, at Tad’s Place on the campus of Heritage Heights in Concord.

In the morning, Keith Anderson, a Lutheran pastor who speaks and writes on the practice of digital ministry, will focus on the use of social media and its impact on face-to-face ministry. Keith Anderson describes his session this way.

> Social media is a place where millions gather daily to renew relationships, share their lives, and express their faith. It is crucial that ministry leaders have a meaningful presence in this new digital space. Pastor Keith Anderson will share advice on how to develop an authentic ministry presence and voice in social media, while maintaining appropriate boundaries, so that we might meaningfully engage with others and, through our presence, point to God’s own.

In the afternoon, Eric Anderson, the Minister for Communications and Technology in the UCC Connecticut Conference, will help participants think creatively about communication technology. Eric Anderson wrote this description.

> In an age where everything, it seems, has gone digital, how can a local church identify the right tools to carry out its mission? What will carry on the message such that it can be read, or seen, or heard? In addition to surveying the puzzle pieces, we will look into creative ways of using them effectively, so that a new medium becomes an asset to the church’s ministry and not simply an add-on.
We have kept the price low ($25 per person for the day – morning and afternoon workshop sessions, continental breakfast, lunch and coffee breaks) so ministers and members of their congregation can attend. Registration will be limited to the number of people who can fit comfortably in Tad’s Place.

**Mission Groups**
Some of our groups are well established while others are just in formation. We have a ministry member assigned as liaison to each group and ask the group to report to us at least annually.

**Prepared to Serve** is a one day event each February designed to help ministers and congregational members improve their work. It is well known, well attended; a valuable congregational resource. It has its own board which supervises the design of the day. LCSM provides budgetary oversight (when asked), advice and support. The schedule for next year is being prepared now; publicity and more information will be available later this year.

**A New Thing** has been in existence for several years. The goal of this mission group to the help churches who are struggling to find their role when fewer and fewer people are attending church. The members are working on a new definition for their work which talks about equipping church leaders to change gracefully in this age of transformation. It sponsored the Paul Nickerson workshop in 2013. This year it asked for and received financial support so it could make the web-based research tool, MissionInsite, available to all churches.

**The New Hampshire School of Ministry (NHSOM)** is a partner in the newly-formed Northeast School of Ministry (NESOM). It has been formed in response to the growing need for multiple paths to authorized ministry, especially licensure, as well as the identified need for affordable, vital leadership training to all churches, their members and clergy. The immediate mission of NHSOM is to provide a structured program of classes and mentors at a reasonable cost for those seeking and maintaining licensure. This fall NHSOM is offering two courses through its partner in New York. The conference supports the school with $5000. This is seed money related to the establishment of the school.

**For the Love of Children (FLOC)** is in formation. Former UCC conference minister, Sid Lovett, is working to create a mission group whose task is increasing awareness of the needs of children ages zero to five. The goal is for each congregation to have a project helping these very young people.

As you can read our work is varied but all of it focuses on supporting congregations. Initially we spent a few months defining our work; however, now our niche is clearer and should continue unabated. It has been a pleasure getting this ministry launched this year.

Ann Craxton for LCSM
In its inaugural year under the new Conference structure, the Peace & Justice Ministry created the following mission statement for itself: “To inspire and guide our members, churches, and mission groups in doing God’s work for peace, justice, and environmental stewardship.”

The mission groups that carry out this mission under the Peace & Justice Ministry include:

- Economic Justice
- Immigration
- Open & Affirming
- Peace with Justice Advocates
- Spirituality & Earth Stewardship

In an effort to facilitate effective communication, the Peace & Justice Ministry began sending out monthly e-newsletters called “Courage in the Struggle,” outlining and promoting the peace and justice work of our mission groups and local churches. The first issue was sent in June, and all issues are emailed at the beginning of every month to those who subscribe to it.

Below is some of the good work that our mission groups have been undertaking this past year:

Economic Justice, co-chaired by Rev. John Gregory-Davis and Barbara French, has been focused this year on addressing income inequality, especially in their advocacy in support of increasing the minimum wage at both the state and federal levels. Toward this end, they hosted an Interfaith Prayer Breakfast in Concord in February calling for dignity for all workers. They have also promoted the viewing of the film *Inequality for All*, and they submitted a resolution to the Conference Executive Committee in support of increasing the minimum wage. They plan to continue their advocacy around this and other economic justice issues in the year ahead. They also plan to sponsor an event that will invite the UCC’s Minister of Economic Justice to visit New Hampshire for several days of consultation and collaboration.

The Immigration Working Group, chaired by Nancy Pape, launched a jail visitation program this year in which several of their members visit with immigrants who have been detained in the Strafford County Department of Corrections. They have enjoyed some success in recruiting new members to their visitation team, and in recruiting pro bono lawyers to work with detainees. They have also been meeting with NH congressional representatives to discuss numerous immigration issues, and they have continued to provide support to Rev. Sandra Pontoh and the Indonesian community in Madbury. They look forward to continuing their important work in all of these areas.

The Open & Affirming Coalition, chaired by Rev. Michael Denney, is a newly formed group this year. They seek to build up the ONA community by offering support and guidance to churches that are ONA, in the process of becoming ONA, and those thinking about beginning the journey. Toward this end, they have been planning a major Open & Affirming gathering for November 8
in Concord that will feature Andy Lang, Executive Director of the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns. They hope to offer another such gathering in 2015.

The Peace with Justice Advocates, chaired by Rev. Barbara Currie, gave much of their energy this past year to sponsoring a very successful “Building a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence” conference, featuring keynote speaker John Dear, on May 10 in Manchester. They have also been planning and promoting “Campaign Nonviolence,” a national movement to speak out publicly for an end to war, poverty, and environmental destruction. This movement kicked off Sept. 21-27 with numerous local and national events. In addition, the Peace with Justice Advocates have been giving attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They have submitted a resolution to the Executive Committee regarding this conflict, and they hope to launch a series of “Heart to Heart Conversations” with Temple Beth Jacob in Concord around this issue as well.

Spirituality and Earth Stewardship experienced a change in leadership this year. After many years of passionate and faithful guidance of this mission group, Rev. Roger Burkhart stepped down as chair, and Rev. Mary Westfall became the new chair. Under Rev. Burkhart, this group promoted the UCC’s “Mission 4/1 Earth” initiative. Under Rev. Westfall, this group is planning a workshop for churches called “Sustainable House of Worship,” which will be held on Nov. 1 in Concord and Nov. 15 in Plymouth.

The Accessibility Committee, having served the NH Conference since 1991 under the steadfast and inspiring leadership of Joyce Bearisto, voted in July to disband. We extend our deepest gratitude to Joyce and her committee for their many years of service helping congregations become more accessible, and therefore more inclusive, to all people who come to worship and serve.

Peace,  
Rev. Gordon L. Crouch, Chair.
Wider Church Relations Ministry has been blessed with many opportunities to serve this year. We began the year by learning about our mission and service groups. Wider Church Relations Ministry Mission Groups are; General Synod, Ukama, Women’s Fellowship, and New Church Start. The service groups that the Wider Church Relations Ministry maintains connections with are; Church World Service, New Hampshire Council of Churches, and New Hampshire Disaster Relief. We met with our mission leaders and the leaders of our service groups and learned about their passion. We found that our mission and service groups are very active.

**General Synod**—General Synod will be in 2015. Our New Hampshire Conference will have a delegation going to Synod. Wider Church Relations Ministry will meet and support our delegates as they prepare to go to Synod.

**Ukama**—When we gathered for Annual Meeting last year, we experienced the most joyful and meaningful aspect of Ukama: face-to-face visits with our friends from Zimbabwe. Twelve Zimbabweans enjoyed a two-week stay in New Hampshire, participating in the lives of local churches, learning about the culture of the other, sightseeing, making friends – in general, sharing the wonder of Ukama. At this Annual Meeting, we welcome another Zimbabwean guest. Mr. Tellme Madidi is the President of the Christian Youth Fellowship in Zimbabwe, the national youth group in the UCCZ. He is here specifically to meet with youth and young adults. We thank God for such wonderful opportunities to deepen our friendship in Christ.

Throughout the year members of the Ukama Advisory Board promoted the partnership through workshops, visits to local churches, and presence at Conference and Association gatherings. We celebrated the generosity of NHC churches which made possible the drilling of a borehole to bring potable water to a Women’s Training Center in Zimbabwe. We congratulated the Rev. Fungayi Mutsumbei on his graduation from Andover Newton Theological School in May and in September, welcomed the Rev. Edward Matuvhunye, former president of the UCCZ to ANTS.

A major transition has occurred in the leadership of Ukama. On October 1 the Rev. Michele Bagby Allan became the Local Church – Global Ministries Partnership Coordinator for the NH Conference. Rev. Kimberly S. McKerley, ending 10 years of leadership in this role, extends her appreciation to the NH Conference for the gift and privilege of serving in this ministry. It has been a treasure she will long savor, a blessing she will never forget.

**Women’s Fellowship**—In March our Women’s Fellowship supported Celebration IX. This year Celebration IX was held in Portland, Maine. All the meals had Guest Speakers. There were also 36 workshops for our women to enjoy. The Spring Forum was held on May 7, 2014 at Meredith Congregational Church. The theme for the meeting was “Lifting Our Spirits.” There were two speakers. Rev. Nancy Talbot spoke about, “The Language of Relationship.” and Rebecca Rule told humorous stories about New Hampshire, “That Reminds Me of a Story.” We also recognized four outstanding women from our conference. A wonderful coffee hour and lunch were provided by Meredith Congregational Church. The event was well attended and a good
time was had by all. On October 8, 2014 the Women’s Fellowship will host their Fall Field Meeting at the First Congregational Church in Haverhill, New Hampshire. The Theme for the meeting will be “An Attitude of Gratitude.” The morning speaker will be Marty Fuller and the program will be, “We’re Not Getting Older; We’re Getting BETTER”. The afternoon speaker will be Muff Kruse and the program will be “Yoga for All of Us”.

**New Church Start** - Wider Church Relations Ministry has a new mission group called New Church Start. This mission group is going to explore the possibility of starting a new United Church of Christ Church in the New Hampshire Conference. They have begun meeting and look forward to their new mission.

**Church World Service** – The Wider Church Relations Ministry met with Bert Marshall and learned all about Church World Service. The United Church of Christ partners with Church World Service through Crop hunger walk, material aid kits, and other service projects. Wider Church Relations Ministry plans to strengthen their relationship with Church World Service.

**New Hampshire Council of Churches** - New Hampshire Council of Churches has a new executive director. Her name is Claire Chapman. She has been on the National Council of Churches and has extensive ecumenical and interfaith experience. The Wider Church Relations Ministry plans to meet with her in 2015.

**New Hampshire Disaster Relief** - New Hampshire Disaster Relief responds to disasters in New Hampshire and works with the disaster area to support the people through the tragedy. In 2015 Wider Church Relations Ministry in conjunction with Rev. Janice Howe are planning to form a Disaster Relief Mission Group to better serve all of New Hampshire. The mission group will consist of members from different areas around the state so that when a disaster occurs; the member closest to the afflicted area will become the point person and the rest of the people in the mission group will lead a relief team to support the afflicted area. The first task of the mission group will be to develop a master plan so that if a disaster occurs, the mission group will activate the plan.

The Wider Church Relations Ministry prepared a web page on the Conference website to share information about their ministry with others.

As we look toward the future; in 2015 we plan to continue to support the work of our mission and service groups, work with Rev. Janice Howe to start a new mission group for New Hampshire Disaster Relief, and to welcome any new ideas for Wider Church Relations Ministry. If you have a passion that you would like your Wider Church Relations Ministry to look into, please feel free to contact me or any member on the ministry.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janet Kohlmorgen

Wider Church Relations Ministry-Chair