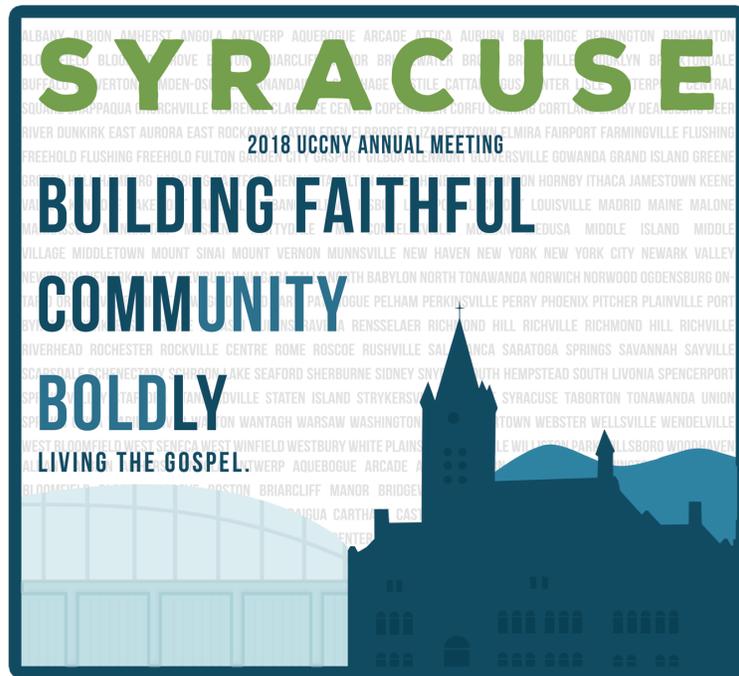


2018 Reports
The New York Conference-UCC
Annual Meeting
(Not included in AM Packet)



55Th Annual Meeting
New York Conference
United Church of Christ
June 8Th-June 9Th, 2018

Officers of the New York Conference:

Moderator.....**Ms. Dona Roll**

Vice-Moderator..... **Rev. Judy Van Kennen**

Secretary**Rev. Barbara Wright**

Treasurer.....**Ms. Yvette Wynn**

Conference Ministry Team:

Conference Minister**Rev. David R Gaewski**

Associate Conference Minister for Congregational
Development.....**Rev. Freeman Palmer**

Associate Conference Minister for Leadership
Development.....**Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine**

Associate Conference Minister for Clergy and Authorized Ministry
Concerns.....**Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams**

Associate Conference Minister for Youth, Young Adults and Emerging
Ministries.....**Rev. Ryan Henderson**

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Metro/Suffolk Search and Call Associate.....**Rev. Noel Vanek**
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Coordinator of Local Church Ministries**Rev. Marraine Kettel**
Coordinator of Justice Ministries.....**Rev. Emily McNeil**

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Administrative Assistant**Ms. Sueli Gaewsky**
Bookkeeper**Ms. Lisa Delgado**
Communications Coordinator.....**Ms. Brea Rarick**
NYSOM Clerk.....**Rev. Leigh McCaffrey**

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Report of the Conference Minister

June 2017-May2018

Rev. David R Gaewski

I encourage all readers to take the time to read the Annual Reports of each of the Associate Conference Ministers and Commission Chairs as these will provide greater detail into the scope of activities of ministry in the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ.

I will divide this year's report into three sections:

- I. Pre-Sabbatical (June-August)
- II. Sabbatical/Vacation (September-December)
- III. Post-Sabbatical (January-May)

I. Pre-Sabbatical

2017 was a General Synod year which meant that as soon as our May Annual Meeting was over, staff and I were in full gear preparing for General Synod in Baltimore. A full list of the Resolutions that were submitted to the General Synod can be found here: <http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/index.html> Some of these Resolutions were referred to other bodies, other than the General Synod, some passed, some did not. Those that *I think* are particularly noteworthy are:

On Recognizing and Studying Gun Violence as a Public Health Emergency, and

On Establishing Procedures for Cultural Diversity Training for Authorized Ministers.

All General Synod Resolutions are of interest, and have constituencies for which each resolution is very important. I point out the Gun Violence resolution since this preceded the Parkland High School incident. Our Frankfort/Wiesbaden German partners asked that I issue a statement regarding the UCC position on escalating gun violence in the USA, and I could mention this resolution. The Cultural Diversity Training resolution is important to me as this is something that I have been advocating for years. I am pleased that Marsha Williams is working on creating a curriculum for this training which I believe will become a resource for our denomination and beyond.

The changes to the UCC Constitution and By-Laws, which had been modified since the 2015 General Synod, passed as presented and are now being sent to the Conferences for ratification. We will vote on these in June.

A staff retreat was held at Camp Fowler in August. The staff enjoys this place of quiet and beauty in Adirondack Park. We truly hope more youth from our churches will take advantage of a summer camp experience here.

It was also a real joy to be a part of the 300th anniversary of Orient Congregational UCC on Long Island. This is a wonderful community with a powerful spirit in a breathtakingly beautiful place.

In mid-August Marsha and I attended the biannual gathering of the EKHN (Frankfurt/Wiesbaden German Partners) international partners. Partner churches come together from Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America to discuss a variety of topics. The EKHN are wonderful hosts and during this "Reformation Anniversary" they brought all their partners to several Martin Luther sites including Wittenberg and Wartburg. What I will remember most, however, from this visit is when the Presbyterian Church delegation from Ghana asked Marsha and I to talk with them about Open and Affirming Theology. We talked for a long time, including a beautiful walk through the forest discussing God's love and what we mean by extravagant welcome. They asked if Marsha and I would come to Ghana and continue this conversation with their churches. How I wished and wish we could. This is an example of how our mission for the UCCNY could expand if we had the resources.

At the World Reformation Exposition in Wittenberg, Marsha and I were asked to lead an open-air worship service. This was a blast! Marsha got all those Germans singing Gospel! I preached, and wasn't too bad at it either. I think we left an impression ("*We done New York proud*").

II. Sabbatical

I am grateful for the granting of this sabbatical time. The first thing I did was go to Maine where I performed the marriage ceremony for my eldest child, Emily and her husband Chris. It was a picture-perfect wedding, quite breathtaking right alongside Boothbay Harbor. Then we left for Berlin for six weeks. While staying in Berlin we took short trips to Warsaw, Poland (my grandparents place of origin), to Prague and to Wittenberg (again).

We returned in time to spend Thanksgiving with our children in Maine. But only days after this, left for southern Brazil for six weeks. What I really want to write about here is how all my sabbatical goals were accomplished between December 4 to 10. Sueli and I took the trip we've been dreaming of for 30 years, back to the Cariri of Northeast Brazil where we met and where I heard the call to ministry while driving in the desert. I wanted to return to the desert where I lived for three years, to once again listen to the silence. And I did. I sat on a friend's porch for hours and days listening and watching the desert wind; the occasional goat with its ringing bell. I listened as deeply as the human soul can. I have a spiritual connection with the Cariri, its people, music, and empty barren landscape. I rented a car and drove the 3-hour dirt road through nowhere, where I heard God say to me "ministry, yes". I asked thirty years later, "Did I hear that right?"

In the town of my spiritual birth, Sao Joao do Tigre, I parked in front of the house where I had lived and walked the empty street. An 85-year old woman met me in the middle of the street, and we looked at each other a long time. Then her eyes melted, and she recognized "Davi" whom she only knew as a 24-year old kid. We talked for a few hours about life and about death. When I left Marizeta, she said, "Now Davi, I can die."

And then there was Dona Maria. She was the biggest cheer leader of the weekly Bible Study that Sueli and I led for several years, every Wednesday night. It grew from about 3 people to over 50 (more than the number that attended the local Catholic mass). Maria also told me of the many deaths she endured in her family over 30 years, husband, daughter, grandson. And then, sort of out of nowhere, she looked into my eyes and said, "Davi, I was able to survive all this because you taught me about Jesus." And that is when I realized, yes, I heard correctly when I listened to the desert wind and God's voice thirty years ago.

I posted a picture of 24-year-old Davi on Facebook (holding the white goat) and my dear friend Japi from southern Brazil responded, "That is the Davi I knew." I responded, "And I still am". When I saw him a couple weeks later we talked for hours about what it means "to be". While the circumstances of our lives change, we carry with us, always, who we have ever been.

This is what I needed most. Thank you for this sabbatical opportunity.

III. Post-Sabbatical

Re-entry was not that hard. I've done sabbaticals before and I know the worst part of coming back is 6000 emails. I started reading all my emails 3 weeks before returning and came back to an empty inbox. Also, I have the best conference staff on the planet. All of them gave 200%. My only complaint is that Freeman did too good of a job. No one missed me. Thank you, Freeman, for carrying the extra load. I appreciate your wisdom and dedication!

In January, I reconnected to staff and was thoroughly updated on all that had happened while I was away. I also taught a UCC Polity course in January/February, which I always enjoy.

In January, an appeal process to a Fitness Review was initiated. This was extremely time consuming as I was the staff member to assist the committee with the appeal. I believe I logged in about 60 hours from late January until early April when the appeal decision was reached.

I developed bursitis late during my sabbatical time, so re-entry was also a time to address the pain I was in. While physical therapy helped, I believe what truly alleviated my pain was my decision to make acupuncture a regular part of my life.

A life-guide once told me, "It looks like a whale, but actually it's a large school of small fish." That best describes most of my ministry during these post-sabbatical months. While I know that addressing all the fish is important and ultimately meaningful, I wish I had time for some of the larger issues. I am glad for what we have accomplished with the New and Right Spirit anti-racism program, but we have a lot more that needs to be done. For nearly three years I worked on the birth of Reformed Association. And now it is up and functioning and going strong. But the bigger picture is the direction of denominationalism. I think that rather than thinking we've arrived somewhere by naming it "post-denominationalism," we need to articulate a bigger vision of the unity of all God's people. Post-denominationalism answers no questions and solves no problems. "United in Spirit, a Just World for All" is a multi-faith vision that can bring people (and denominations?) together to heal human brokenness, the nations and God's

creation. In the year ahead, articulating the unifying vision is where I hope to spend more of my time and energy.

Onward.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reverend David R Gaewski

Conference Minister

New York Conference, *Uniting* Church of Christ

Report of Associate Conference Minister for Authorized Ministry and Clergy Concerns.

Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams

This has been a year of listening and adjusting. I spent a great deal of time listening to hear where the Spirit is leading, and also listening to the voices in the NY Conference about how we get there. This year I conducted a Listening Tour within our Conference, meeting with every Committee on Ministry and holding open gatherings for authorized ministers in each Association. The goal of this six-week tour, was to hear needs that Committees on Ministry might have, and to facilitate open dialogue with authorized ministers on issues that were important to them and their work. Because of everyone's willingness to share, we are looking at making adjustments to our boundary awareness training, and continuing education opportunities across the Conference.

One of these changes took the form of our first Continuing Education Institute. This event replaced our usual Pre-Annual Meeting Minister's Retreat. The Institute offers ministers their time of worship and fellowship, but provided smaller, in-depth course study. With the support of NYSOM, the Institute was also able to offer a laity course as well. Also, in preparation for the Institute, several 5-week, online and in-person book study groups were formed across the state. These groups afforded ministers the opportunity to read and share dialogue on Rev. Emily Heath's book *Courageous Faith*.

My work with Communities of Practice continues. Currently we have three active groups with hopes of starting groups for chaplains and soon-to-be retired ministers. Through our exploration, we have discovered that virtual, online groups seem to work best for a conference of our geographical size. This will likely be the focus in the coming year.

Our work on enhancing continuing education for authorized ministers, took on many different forms this past year. Working alongside Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine, we developed a MID/Mentor manual designed to guide Members in Discernment, their Mentors, and Local Church Discernment Committees through the ministerial authorization process. Additionally, I conducted a 4-week online NYSOM course: *From Management to Leadership 2.0*. I facilitated 3 Congregational Leadership workshops as well as 2 Pastor-Parish Relations Committee trainings. Having created the curriculum for these courses, my hope is to continue to develop material and lead these type learning opportunities. Speaking of curriculum, we have begun to move toward compliance with the 31st General Synod Resolution regarding diversity training for authorized ministers. With the assistance of a focused task force and guidance from faculty from St.

Lawrence University, we have begun developing a Cultural Competency Curriculum for ministers in our Conference. Our goal is to roll out this new training initiative by summer 2019.

This year, I also planned and participated in another successful Consultation on Ministry as well as provided music for the New York Women's annual retreat. Each of these events bring together ministers and laity from around the state for a time of learning, worship, and fellowship. These are both enriching endeavors.

During our Conference Minister's sabbatical, I was blessed to provide as staff support to the Reformed Association. As the Association continue to develop, our RCA brothers and sisters are committed to our covenantal relationship, and it was a delight to work alongside them. We are certainly enriched as a Conference because of their presence among us.

Like my colleagues, pastoral transitions are always a significant part of our work. At one point I had 11 churches in some stage of transition all at the same time. I congratulate those churches that have successfully completed their process and offer encouragement to those who are still on the journey. It is my honor to serve you.

I think the highlight of this past year, was the opportunity to join our Conference Minister on a 10-day excursion to Germany. In addition to celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, we met with our EKHN partners and collaborated on our mutual ministries. What a blessing it was to worship, and exchange ideas with ministers from Tanzania, Nigeria, India, Ireland and various other countries. In between our meeting sessions, there was also plenty of fellowship and sightseeing. I even got to meet the "Blessing Robot". This being my very first trip out of the country, I admit it was an experience of a lifetime, and one I will not soon forget.

Finally, the work that has brought me much pride these past 12 months is our on-going efforts with the New & Right Spirit Anti-Racism initiative. Through your generous financial support, we were able to send 9 facilitators to an emotionally intense 2-day training session. This diverse group has been working diligently to convene conversations and a variety of other events across the state that address racism and white privilege. Our Conference's commitment to this difficult work is to be commended, and we are blessed to have such a solid group of facilitators. Secondly, in July, I was honored to serve as a NY Conference delegate at the 31st UCC General Synod in Baltimore MD. It is always a joy to see our entire denomination at work in all of its fullness and diversity. It was a double honor to be asked to speak from the Synod podium in support of a Resolution regarding the under-representation of people of color serving UCC churches. I like

to think that my witness played a small part in the passage of the Resolution, as well as a related Resolution addressing diversity training for authorized ministers.

In closing, much love to the greatest Ministry Team (*The Herculooids*), and support staff on the planet. David G., Marjorie, Freeman, Ryan, David L., Sueli, Brea, and Lisa. You all make this work a joy. This year, Michele and I had the pleasure of sharing in music and worship with many congregations, and for this, we are extremely grateful. Thank you, Michele for your support, I couldn't do this without you. As always, to the wonderful people of the NY Conference, it continues to be my privilege to serve God, through serving you.

In service and solidarity,

Rev. Dr. Marsha E. Williams

Associate Conference Minister

Report of Associate Conference Minister for Congregational Development Rev. Freeman L. Palmer

The theme of our Conference Annual meeting is “Building Faithful CommUNITY: Boldly Living the Gospel.” This theme, based on the “Unity” Psalm 133 and Paul’s letter to the Philippians, speaks to the importance of Christian unity in times of division. Since our last annual meeting I have had the joy and privilege of seeing our churches build faithful communities and live boldly as witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thanks to the expertise and passion of Dr. Phil Maynard, members of churches in the Western and Metropolitan Associations received through his ‘Connect’ workshop tools to build community both inside and outside their sanctuaries. Congregations in the Western Association also benefited in a Governance and Ministry Workshop from the extensive knowledge of Dan Hotchkiss, arguably the country’s leading expert on the topic. I thoroughly enjoyed leading three Congregational Vitality workshops this February as part of the Western Association’s Winter Learning Extravaganza. The care and passion of those who coordinated the day’s activities, and the enthusiasm of the over hundred persons who attended the event, were an inspiration to me.

I fully believe that churches live a bold witness of the gospel when they make a public declaration to be Open and Affirming (“ONA”) congregations. Lockport UCC became an ONA congregation last year, and I was both thrilled and proud to be the preacher at their celebratory worship in September. This year, the Collegiate Church, including four congregations with a long history of extravagant welcome to all persons, were officially welcomed as Open and Affirming congregations in the United Church of Christ. At this writing there are several congregations in our Conference throughout the state who are in discernment to be ONA congregations. Given the current climate that appears to ‘turn back the clock’ on human rights and dignity, these faithful witnesses provide hope for the Church, and in turn, the world.

With the addition of the seven congregations of the Reformed Association last year as well as Rivers of Living Water, a vibrant congregation affiliated with the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, the New York Conference realized our ‘20/20 Vision’ of New Church Starts and affiliations adopted in 2008. However, we are not ‘resting on our laurels’ with respect to welcoming new communities of faith with a desire to boldly live the gospel. Last November the Metropolitan Association welcomed Abundant Life Church in Brooklyn NY. Located in the Prospect Heights section of the borough, this church, founded in 2009, is

committed to principles of community, diversity, and social justice. We are also engaging in the possibilities of two new church starts in New York City that could be exciting additions to our Conference. Stay both tuned and prayerful...

Faithful communities are not built with stones, but with human hands and hearts. I note with thanksgiving in the Metropolitan Association the retirements of Bonnie Rosborough and Robert Gunn, who retired since our last annual meeting. Bonnie and Bob had long and distinguished careers in ministry, serving in several capacities in the Association. Bonnie most recently served at Briarcliff Congregational Church, and Bob most recently served at the Community Church of Syosset. Fran Grenley served long, faithfully, and well at Scarsdale Congregational Church, and I am appreciative for her ministry there. I also note with sadness the passing of two lay leaders in the Metropolitan Association. Sylvia Vitale of Lemuel Haynes Congregational Church served on the Association's Board of Directors, while Dianne Gaertner was instrumental in the ministry of First Congregational Church of Rockaway Beach and championed its discernment and decision to become an ONA congregation. I miss both these two bold and faithful leaders in the Church.

Since our last annual meeting the Metropolitan Association welcomed several new pastors: Cynthia Jackson at Church of the Evangel, Kelly Hough Rogers at Scarsdale Congregational Church, and Todd Farnsworth at Briarcliff Congregational Church. The Suffolk Association welcomed Raymond Bagnuolo as the pastor of Sayville Congregational UCC. In addition, the congregations of Ridgeview Congregational Church and Corona Congregational Church voted to call Lisa Robinson and Reginald Brantley respectively as settled pastors. With great joy I note here the ordinations of Joya Colon-Berezin to Scarsdale Congregational Church, William Stell to the First Presbyterian Church of Bordentown (U.S. 206, Exit 7 on the NJ Turnpike), as well as Michael Raj Yesudhasan and Mary Larson to calls of chaplaincy. We welcome these new 'builders of faithful communities' and pray God's blessings on their ministries.

It is always an inspiration to see our congregations boldly living the gospel in my travels across the state. Some highlights I experienced include: celebrating with Orient Congregational Church its 300th anniversary, receiving from the United Church of Rockville Centre the largest donation by a single congregation for hurricane relief to the people of Puerto Rico, walking in silent protest from the steps of Judson Memorial Church against our country's immigration policies, hearing a musical rendering of "I Want Jesus to Walk With Me" from the praise team at Zion UCC in Tonawanda that blew me away, seeing representatives of our Conference from across the state present in Binghamton at a Poor People's Campaign Mass Meeting featuring William Barber, and affirming the innovative ministries of Rivers of Living Water UCC and Park Avenue Christian Church, who last year received grants from the UCC's national setting in support of their

groundbreaking work in mental health for LGBTQIA persons and for the development of multilingual and cross-sectional worship respectively. Moments and events such as these bless my soul and inspire my call to ministry.

As some may know, for about four months since the last annual meeting I served the New York Conference as Acting Head of Staff during David Gaewski's sabbatical. This experience reaffirmed my personal appreciation for David's person and ministry among us as well as my colleagues Ryan, Marjorie, and Marsha. It also reaffirmed my appreciation to the office staff in Dewitt, the leadership of Moderator Dona Roll, Vice Moderator Judy Van Kennen, and the members of our Conference Board. It is a real honor to work with such faithful and bold people, and I pray that our Conference will continue to build faithful communities and boldly live the gospel for years to come.

Faithfully yours,

Freeman

Report of the Associate Conference Minister for Leadership Development Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine

As I complete my fifth year as ACM, it is good to bring to mind the blessings of this kind of ministry. I am grateful to be able to be in conversation every day with people who are committed to the work of the church, in its various forms and settings; to be present to celebrate joyful moments in the lives of our congregations and associations; to accompany and guide congregations through the often anxious time of pastoral transition; to sit with Committees on Ministry and discern together how authorized ministers can best be prepared and supported; and to help equip our churches to live ever more deeply into the way of Jesus Christ in this still new century, by nurturing and providing resources for leadership development.

The work of leadership development, which I do through the New York School of Ministry, takes a little more than half of my time, and its direction is shaped by the needs that come to my attention as I am involved with Committees on Ministry and churches in pastoral transition. For example, after becoming increasingly aware of the need for well-prepared people to fill in as worship leaders (the supply lists of some of our associations are shockingly short), I decided to run our Supply Preacher Certificate Program (a 9-month program that educates lay people to serve as Supply Preachers) in 2017-18. It's a time intensive program for participants and for NYSOM but, I believe, worth the effort.

As churches needing part-time pastoral leadership multiply, the education and formation of ministers (licensed and ordained) who can serve in a part-time capacity has become more urgent than ever. These folks need to have the knowledge, skills, and maturity of faith and character to lead congregations in changing and challenging times. Our Christian Leadership and Word & Sacrament Programs provide paths for those who are called to ministry but whose life circumstances prevent them from attending seminary. This fall, we celebrated two graduations: Ned Holderby, from the Christian Leadership Program, and Mary Larson, from the Word & Sacrament Program. Ned ably serves St. Stephen's, East Amherst, as their licensed pastor, and I was blessed to celebrate Mary's ordination to a hospital chaplaincy call with the Suffolk association in February.

Participants in our certificate programs come from eight of our ten associations. They prepare for supply preaching or for authorized ministry, taking web conferenced courses, where they connect in real time with professors and other classmates from Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont. This year we

offered four core courses: Foundations in Pastoral Care and Counseling, New Testament I & II, and Introduction to Christian Ethics. We provided technological support for a web conferenced ½ Basic Boundary Awareness Training, and we offered a continuing education short course, entitled Empowering Vital Ministry: Congregational Leadership 2.0. Our curriculum committee dreams of offering more short courses and expanding the focus from pastoral leadership to other leadership roles in the congregation. Right now, though, the 15 hours that I can allot to administering NYSOM each week are full to brimming. I hope that our face-to-face learning events: on mission planning and assessment in the fall and on self-care for leaders (all congregational leaders) in the spring can continue to serve as leadership development for lay leaders as well as continuing education for authorized ministers.

This year, we embarked on an assessment of NYSOM's preparation of authorized ministers. As a member of the steering committee of the Regional Theological Education Consortium, I helped to create a program assessment tool and process, and NYSOM has been part of the prototype group, using the tool to identify areas needing attention. At this writing, we have held three conversations (with participants, with faculty, and with Committee on Ministry members and ministers serving as mentors and supervisors), and we plan to hold another conversation with members of congregations served by our graduates. It's important, as we're in the midst of forming people for ministry, to check periodically that we are actually doing what we think we are doing.

I am so thankful for my colleagues on the Conference staff who make my work easier and far more enjoyable. I appreciate the hard work of Leigh McCaffrey, our NYSOM Clerk, who publicizes our offerings, helps folks when they run into technological glitches, and tries to keep the infrastructure of NYSOM running smoothly. I am grateful for all those who give of their time and expertise to the work of leadership development: for all the members of our Committees on Ministry, for NYSOM's mentors, supervisors (and the members of the congregations in which our participants do supervised ministry), faculty, and curriculum committee. I deeply appreciate the generosity of those who contributed to the NYSOM scholarship fund in this past year, making the way a little smoother for others who, amid work and family commitments, embark on an educational and formational journey. I am inspired again and again by NYSOM's participants and graduates: their faith, their passion for ministry, and their words of thanks. Finally, it has continually heartened me, as I have traveled this year from Buffalo to the High Peaks of the Adirondacks and the shores of Long Island, to be in conversation with members of our congregations -- to hear their excitement about the ministry in which their churches are engaged and to see in them Christ's love embodied.

Report of the New York Conference Board of Directors Ms. Dona Roll, Moderator

Leading Off the Map was the theme for the 2017 Annual Meeting of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCCNY), May 24-25 in Tarrytown. Your Conference Board continued to lead in this spirit in support of the Rev. David Gaewski and his staff and on behalf of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ. Most exciting was the formation and welcoming of a new association in the New York Conference, Reformed Association, comprised of churches from the Reformed Churches of America who wish to dual-affiliate with UCCNY.

Additionally, we dedicated ourselves to live in to the new Vision and Mission Statements as approved at the meeting. **Vision: United in Christ's love, a just world for all. Mission: United in Spirit, and inspired by God's grace, we move forward boldly to welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.**

Thirty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ (UCC)

Five weeks and two days later, from June 30 to July 4, 2017, some Conference Board members, along with representatives from across New York State joined thousands from across the country (and abroad) for General Synod, 2017 at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, Maryland. Together, we discerned resolutions of witness, church structure, and function. We stood up for issues that demand a faithful witness and we joined together in worship each day to lift up the Stillspeaking God. (<http://synod.uccpages.org/>)

Each delegate had the responsibility to work on an assigned Committee organized around one of the resolutions being proposed and acted on by the Synod. A list of these resolutions can be found at <http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/index.html>. We also attended New York Conference Delegation Caucuses (6:30 a.m.!) to learn about important and developing issues and hear from leaders at the national level.

Some of the highlights of the business of the Thirty-first Synod were: amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ which will be voted on at our UCCNY 2018 Annual Meeting (*"The amendments to the Constitution now await ratification by the Conferences of the United Church of Christ before they are declared in force."* <http://synod.uccpages.org/revised.html>); and discussion/consideration/passage of resolutions as worked on and presented by the aforementioned Committees of delegates.

Delegates had an opportunity to participate in local service projects (General Synod Blood Drive in conjunction with the American Red Cross, Injustice Walks, Blue Water Baltimore, [Central Atlantic Conference General Synod Shelter Project](#)), hear inspirational speakers and participate in enriching and uplifting worship services. Additionally, getting to know our fellow delegates on a deeper level and informal conversations with delegates from around the country made our time in Baltimore rewarding and fulfilling.

First Conference Board Meeting: July 22, 2017, Amistad Center, DeWitt NY

- Within a retreat called for the purpose of crafting a Case Statement, this brief meeting made it a matter of record that we will proceed with the feasibility study for a possible capital campaign.
- Also noted, Western and Reformed Associations need to find representatives for the Conference Board.

Second Conference Board Meeting: August 8, 2017 via Zoom (video conferencing)

- At this meeting we reviewed the first draft of our Case Statement prepared by Ron Buford.

Third Conference Board Meeting September 9, 2017, Amistad Center, DeWitt NY

- Jill Palmeter, from our auditing firm Dermody, Burke and Brown, gave a presentation on the fiduciary responsibilities of members of boards of not-for-profit organizations. This presentation is available for interested churches of UCCNY.
- After much discussion, the New York Conference Board of Directors approved the request of the First Congregational Church in Chappaqua to change the boundaries of the Hudson Mohawk Association to include the village of Chappaqua, contingent on the approval of the Metropolitan Association.
- In response to the above request, the New York Conference Board of Directors, UCC, voted to extend an offer to the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Association to work with them on the issues raised by the First Congregational Church of Chappaqua's request for membership in the Hudson Mohawk Association. The offer was extended and a very productive meeting was held on October 26, 2017.
- Discussion of *Love on a Mission from God: UCCNY Case Statement for Giving*

- Financial Reports - New Terminology: LCBS - Local Church Basic Support (combining OCWM & Reformed assessments). We will send 10% of LCBS to National setting.
- Conference Minister's Report/Sabbatical - the Rev. Freeman Palmer will be acting head of staff during David G.'s sabbatical (September 15-January 8); Dona Roll as Moderator will be acting C.E.O.
- Associate Conference Minister's report: the Rev. Ryan Henderson shared with us some of his successes, struggles and dreams.
- Other business: announcement of Keynote Speaker for UCCNY Annual Meeting 2018: the Rev. Emily Heath, author of *Glorify* and *Courageous Faith: How to Rise and Resist in a Time of Fear*

Fourth Conference Board Meeting: January 13, 2018 via Zoom (video conferencing)

- Financial Reports were received from David Losito who highlighted that year-end investment returns were strong, Reformed Association assessments help greatly, and three properties have either been sold or are in the process of being sold.
- A discussion of plans for Annual Meeting 2018 included an explanation by the Rev. Marsha Williams of the Pre-Meeting Continuing Education Institute for Authorized Ministers.
- The Rev. Freeman Palmer provided his Acting Head of Staff Report which included a description of an amicus brief for the suit being brought to preserve DACA program, information regarding the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in New York City, the first fall meeting of Reformed Association on November 4, the addition of Abundant Life congregation to membership in the Metropolitan Association and the National Council of Churches' plans to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 4, 2018.
- We endorsed the Conference's participation in the National Council of Churches' plans for April 4 in Washington, DC; we will sponsor two buses from New York to the event.
- We approved two items brought forth by the Personnel Committee: an amendment of the Jury Duty policy and an affirmation of the UCCNY's commitment to a Living Wage as per the resolution from the 31st General Synod, UCC
- Paul Fogel, Chair of the National UCC Disabilities Ministries, joined the meeting to fill us in on plans for their annual conference, "Widening the Welcome," to be held in Niagara Falls, November 1-3, 2018. We will help with this.
- Emily McNeil (super volunteer) joined the meeting to explain and discuss plans to recognize the 50th anniversary of the original Poor People's

Campaign and further the work begun by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We agreed to endorse, commit, communicate, support, and assist with this work.

- Associate Conference Minister's report: the Rev. Marsha Williams shared her activities of the past year highlighting her "listening tour" of Associations' Committees on Ministry, four new Communities of Practice, New and Right Spirit, Unified Fitness Review Board, and training for Restorative Justice Circles.
- We decided to allocate the monies collected during the Ash Wednesday one-day GoFundMe appeal to New and Right Spirit and the Poor People's Campaign.
- David Gaewski thanked all for his sabbatical and shared a short PowerPoint.

Fifth Conference Board Meeting: April 21, 2018, Amistad Center and via Zoom

- We approved Karl Shallowhorn (Western Association) and Damaris Whittaker (Reformed Association) as members of the New York Conference, UCC, Board of Directors.
- Financial Reports - the 2019 Proposed Budget was presented and will be recommended to the Conference at the Annual Meeting, and a meeting with the auditors was scheduled for May. There was a brief discussion of the future of clergy housing compensation.
- We discussed the 2018 Annual Meeting - we hope you will read Emily Heath's *Courageous Faith*. The Standing Rules and Draft Agenda for the meeting were approved and an item was approved for addition to the business of the meeting - voting on the proposed changes to the National UCC Constitution and Bylaws.
- We also discussed and approved the dates and venue for the 2019 Annual Meeting to be held May 17-18, 2019, in the Poughkeepsie, New York area as a joint meeting with the Regional Synod of New York (Reformed Churches of America).
- The Personnel Committee presented an amendment to the UCCNY Personnel Policies Manual regarding mandatory drug and background checks for all applicants; we approved same.
- Chuck Hollingsworth of Integrity Energy joined the meeting to discuss a proposal regarding a possible cost savings and income stream for the Conference by working with Integrity Energy. More investigation and follow-up need to occur before we take any action.
- Seven members of UCCNY have willingly been trained as interviewers in our feasibility study as it relates to a possible capital campaign. We invited them to share the results of their interviews and, while only two were available to join our meeting, the information they provided was extremely

valuable to us as we continue to “lead off the map” regarding our financial future. David G.’s leadership and vision of a multi-pronged approach to generating income is inspired and inspiring. The Executive Committee is working to sort through the data and suggestions received from the interviewers.

- In his Conference Minister’s report, David G. illuminated the new website being created for the New York Conference at no cost by Chris Gabriel of the national level.
- A United States Trust - is now maturing and will be received by the Conference this September. We discussed how best to use this money and will continue the conversation at our meeting on June 8.

Personal Note

It has been an eventful year for me as the Moderator of the New York Conference, United Church of Christ, and Chair of the UCCNY Conference Board of Directors. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to our UCCNY leadership, executive committee and members of the board. Each of you, without exception, is gracious and forgiving, Godly and faithful, gifted and fun-loving...I am honored to know you, to work and play and pray with you.

Respectfully submitted,

Dona Roll, Moderator

New York Conference- United Church of Christ

Report of the Personnel Committee

Ms. Susan Gibson

ANNUAL REPORT – 2017

UCCNY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee of the New York Conference provides support, feed back and evaluation for the Conference Minister who in turn is responsible for overseeing and evaluating the conference staff. The Personnel Committee met four times in 2017: Feb 6 (Amistad Center, Dewitt, NY); April 25 and Sept 12 (Electronically); and Nov 14 (Amistad Center, Dewitt, NY). In February and November the committee finds “face to face” time important to committee dynamics as February is a Performance Review with the Conference Minister and November is the Annual Lunch, Dialogue and Sharing time with all Staff, administrative, super volunteers and support. Electronic gatherings, we have found are very adequate for most other regular business matters.

Tasks and topics for 2017 included the following:

- ❖ A very Comprehensive Performance Review of the Conference Minister, David Gaewski, was conducted. We used Survey Monkey to reach folk with whom David works and interacts: National Boards and Committees, Ecumenical and InterFaith partners, and New York Conference colleagues in state, association and local church settings. David also shared his goals and objectives for the coming year. Both David and the Personnel Committee members found this time of dialogue and sharing helpful. David’s general performance was affirmed and any areas for improvement accepted for future reflection and integration by David where possible.
- ❖ The Performance Review with the Conference Minister in February actually precipitated a revision of the Conference Minister’s Job Description to more fully represent the actual duties of the Conference Minister position as it presently stands.
- ❖ A small 1% increase in Salary for all staff was recommended to the Conference Board for the Annual Meeting for 2018. We hope we can do better in the future. We did recommend to the Conference Board that in recognition of David’s extra time and effort in the establishment of the Reformed Association, a designated above and beyond gift be offered from the 2017 Budget toward David’s Sabbatical in 2017.
- ❖ We reviewed with David the reorganization of Support Staff as Gloria Halko and Patti Rodriguez left their positions and Lisa Delgado came on as bookkeeper. Susan Frost, presently on Staff as a Coordinator of Wider Church Ministries, volunteered

to oversee the Annual Yearbook reporting procedure and make recommendations regarding any future need for support staff for this responsibility. Leigh McCaffery was hired in September as NYSOM Clerk. We also stood in witness to Fair Wage Standards as we made new hires.

- ❖ We made a revision to the Personnel Manual of the UCCNY regarding Jury Duty policy under the guidance of David Losito. This change was shared FYI with the UCCNY Conference Board at their Board Meeting in January, 2018.
- ❖ We received in September the last update on David Gaewski's upcoming Sabbatical, Sept 18-Dec 31 and also got a report on the coverage, by Diana Pelletier, of the Administrative Assistant's position while the present Administrative Assistant, Sueli Gaewsky, accompanied her husband during his Sabbatical travels.
- ❖ The entire UCCNY Staff, program, super volunteers and support, met with the Personnel Committee for an Annual Conversation, Worship and Fellowship event in November. We have found these experiences to be very beneficial to all who participate and look forward to this yearly time together for reflection, critiquing and sharing our visions with each other.
- ❖ Finally, we welcomed with great joy Donna Babonnas to our committee to represent Hudson Mohawk Association. We also hope to have a representative on the committee from the Reformed Association - RCA soon.

Current members of the Personnel Committee are: Joanne Nugent-Ward (Black River/St Lawrence); Elizabeth Pixley (Genesee Valley); Donna Babonas (Hudson Mohawk); Martha Jacobs (Metro); Susan Gibson (Oneida); Joanne Ferguson (Susquehanna); Charlaine Apsel (Suffolk) and Brett Hammond (Western). Finally, we appreciate and are honored to have the presence and participation of The Rev. David Gaewski, Conference Minister, as we do our work in God's vineyard.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Gibson, UCCNY Personnel Committee Chair

Report of the New York Conference Secretary Rev. Barbara Wright

MOTIONS MADE NEW YORK CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONFERENCE BOARD – BEGINNING May 25, 2017

**The following action items were approved by the Conference Board
between May 2017 and April 2018.**

CB05252017-1: The New York Conference Board will invite the leadership of the Metro Association to its September 9 meeting for the purpose of discussing its relationship with First Congregational Church of Chappaqua (FCC); the Board further authorizes the Executive Committee to take necessary action to ensure FCC's continued affiliation with the United Church of Christ. (m/s/c)

CB05252017-2A: The Conference Board accepts the recommendation of the UCCNY Personnel Committee that David Gaewski, New York Conference Minister receive a merit bonus of \$10,000 based on positive performance review, as of today, May 25, 2017. (m/s/c)

CB05252017-3 The Conference Board designates that offerings collected at this year's annual meeting be earmarked for "RSNY/UCCNY Ministry Innovation Fund. (m/s/c)

(Motions made at 54th Annual Meeting, 2017)

UAM2017-1: Motion to affirm by acclamation these statements as our Mission and Vision Statements. (m/s/c)

UAM2017-2: Motion to table the proposed By-Laws Revision until written copies of the amendment to the proposal could be distributed. (m/s/c)

UAM2017-3: Motion to take the By-Laws conversation back off the table and discuss them. (m/s/c)

UAM2017-4: Motion to accept the changes to the by-laws as amended (moved and seconded).

After a brief discussion, the motion carried without dissent. (m/s/c)

UAM2017-5 Motion to approve the financial report (came from committee; needs no second.) No discussion; motion carried without dissent.

UAM2017-6: Motion to Approve the 2018 Conference Budget (came from committee, no need for second). After a brief discussion consisting of questions of clarification asked and answered, the motion carried without dissent.

UAM2017-7: Motion to take the resolution to each individual Association for approval. (m/s/c)

UAM2017-8: Motion to Receive the Annual Reports in the Annual Conference booklet (m/s/c)

UMA2017-9: Motion from the Governance Team to cast one ballot for the slate of officers. Motion carried without dissent.

UAM2017-10: Motion to adjourn the Conference Annual Meeting (m/s/c). The meeting adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

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ACTION ITEM 0722017-1: The Conference Board shall proceed with the feasibility study for a potential capital campaign. m/s/c

ACTION ITEM 09092017-1: The New York Conference Board of Directors approves the request of the First Congregational Church in Chappaqua to change the boundaries of the Hudson Mohawk Association to include the village of Chappaqua, contingent on the approval of the Metropolitan Association. (m/s/c)
Note: Pending agreement from Metro, the map will be re-drawn.

ACTION ITEM 09092017-2: The New York Conference Board of Directors, UCC, shall extend an offer to the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Association to work with them on the issues raised by the First Congregational Church of Chappaqua's request for membership in the Hudson Mohawk Association. The Conference Board offers that we use the process of a situational support consultation, but are open to a different process if the Metropolitan Association Board of Directors would prefer. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 09092017-3: The Board approves the following Resolution. (m/s/c)

**RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE BOARD
OF THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST, INC.**

Passed at a meeting on September 9, 2017

WHEREAS, The Conference Board of The New York Conference of the United Church of Christ, Inc. (the “Conference”) has primary fiscal decision making responsibility under the Conference’s By-Laws and,

WHEREAS, in the absence of any officer of the Conference, the Conference Board may reassign an officer’s powers and duties to any other officer or member of the conference and,

WHEREAS, the Conference Minister will be on a sabbatical starting September 15, 2017 ending approximately January 10, 2018

NOW, THEREFORE, upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the following resolution is adopted by the unanimous vote of the Conference Board: During the sabbatical of the Conference Minister the Conference Minister’s duties as chief executive officer of the Conference shall be transferred to the Moderator, who shall have all the powers of the Conference Minister during the Conference Minister’s sabbatical including the authority to sign such deeds or other documents as may be directed or authorized by the Conference Board.

The Conference Board of the New York Conference of The United Church of Christ, Inc. has fifteen (15) members, of whom at least (8) were present at the meeting. A quorum consists of eight (8) members.

Dated: September 9, 2017

Signed by Barbara Wright,
Secretary

ACTION ITEM C12052017-1: Should the New York Conference be selected by the UCC National Disabilities Ministry as the location for its 2018 meeting, the New York Conference agrees to serve as host. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 01132018-01: The Board of Directors of the New York Conference endorses the Conference’s participation in the National Council of Churches plans for April 4 in Washington, DC. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 01132018-2: Per the request of the Personnel Committee, to amend the *Jury Duty Policy* for Conference Employees, adding the sentence: *If the employee chooses to accept the court stipend, the conference will then pay the amount up to but not to exceed the normal full pay amount for the work period inclusive of the court stipend.* (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 01132018-3: To affirm the New York Conference’s commitment to a Living Wage, per the Resolution of Witness “*A More Just Economy: Living Wages*”

and Job Creation” of the 31st General Synod of the United Church of Christ in July, 2017, and to join the call to work toward a more Just Economy and affirm the Board’s commitment to the Vision Statement of the New York Conference: “*United in Christ’s Love, A Just World for All.*” (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 01132018-01: The Board of Directors of the New York Conference endorses the Conference’s participation in the National Council of Churches plans for April 4 in Washington, DC. (m/s/c)

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ACTION ITEM 01132018-3: To affirm the New York Conference’s commitment to a Living Wage, per the Resolution of Witness “*A More Just Economy: Living Wages and Job Creation*” of the 31st General Synod of the United Church of Christ in July, 2017, and to join the call to work toward a more Just Economy and affirm the Board’s commitment to the Vision Statement of the New York Conference: “*United in Christ’s Love, A Just World for All.*” (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 01132018-4: With regard to the Poor People’s Campaign, the Board of Directors of the New York Conference of the UCC will:

- Formally ENDORSE the efforts and mission of the Poor People’s Campaign;
- COMMIT to communicating its goals to our constituency;
- SUPPORT David Gaewski as our leader, our authorized ministers and all of our membership in their personal commitments to the mission, including non-violent civil disobedience;
- OFFER THE expertise of our New and Right Spirit facilitators;
- The Board will bring a resolution to the Conference Annual Meeting seeking full approval and participation of the Conference. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 01132018-5: David L. requested that the Board instruct the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Board to correct the resolution to sell the Evangelical Protestant Church, correcting the language that the New York Conference is not a religious corporation. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 01132018-6: The New York Conference Board designates the recipients for the Ash Wednesday special funding as the New and Right Spirit program (75%) and the anti-racism work of the Poor People’s Campaign (25%). (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 04212018-1: The Conference Board, acting as the Annual Meeting, approves Karl Shallowhorn and Damaris Whittaker as members of the New York Conference, UCC, Board of Directors.

ACTION ITEM CBo4212018-2: The Board approves the motion moved by the Budget and Finance Committee to recommend the proposed budget for 2019 to the Annual meeting. (motion carried)

ACTION ITEM 04212018-3: The Conference Board approves the Stand Rules for the Annual Meeting. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 04212018-4: The Conference Board approves the Draft Agenda for the Annual Meeting. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 04212018-5: The Conference Board approves the addition of a vote on amendments to National UCC Constitution and By-laws to the business of Annual Meeting (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 04212018-6: The Board approves the recommendation that the 2019 annual meeting of the Conference be held May 17-18, 2019, in the Poughkeepsie, New York area as a joint meeting with the Regional Synod of New York (Reformed Churches of America). (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 04212018-7: The Conference Board approves the motion from the Personnel Committee that the UCCNY Personnel Policies Manual be updated under the section entitled Employment Applications by adding the following: ***Applicants for employment by the New York Conference will need to have a Background Check and a Drug Test. The cost for obtaining this information will be the responsibility of the New York Conference.*** (motion carried)

Report of the Commission on Ministry

Rev. Dr. Ann M. Van Cleef, Chair

2017 – 2018 Report of the Commission on Ministry New York Conference

The Commission on Ministry advocates for New York Conference Authorized Ministers and Members in Discernment in all settings. The Commission officially meets four times a year, although occasionally there is an extra meeting to discuss a specific topic. We have a face-to-face meeting the morning of the Consultation for Committees on Church and Ministry. The other meetings are accomplished via “Zoom,” an Internet conference service that allows us to see one another. Here is a summary of our responsibilities, as well as what we have accomplished in the past year:

New York School of Ministry. Known as NYSOM, this program was developed several years ago as an alternative path to ordained ministry, and has proven to be valuable in providing small churches with well-educated clergy leadership. The Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine is Dean of the program, and provides us with a written report at each meeting. New this year: (1) The Supply Preacher program was offered again this year, with eight students enrolled: six from New York and two from Vermont. (2) Marjorie is an active leader in the UCC’s Regional Theological Education Consortium, and worked on a team to design a new peer-review program assessment tool. (3) The Spring Learning Event, on April 20 – 21 at Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua, explored the relationship between leadership and self-care. Several people had been asking for this type of workshop, which was led by The Rev. Wayne Gustafson. (4) The webconferenced Basic Boundary Awareness Training class with Ms. Penny Cannon is working out well. The full NYSOM report can be found elsewhere in this booklet.

Boundary Awareness Training (BAT). This program has two components: training BAT trainers, and developing curriculum for the classes that the trainers teach in their Associations. Ms. Penny Cannon writes the curriculum and normally runs the training classes for BAT trainers once every three years. A class was held in May, 2017. However, in an effort to recruit more trainers, an additional training class for BAT trainers was held on May 16 of this year. Several years ago, we realized the need to differentiate between boundary awareness training for people new to the ministry, and those who only need a refresher course, so Penny developed a class for those taking training for the first time. The class was piloted in April, 2016, and was offered twice in 2017. Future classes will be scheduled as necessary.

Scholarship Program. Formerly called a Scholarship Loan Program, the Commission voted last year eliminate the repayment component. We have

scholarship funds available for Members in Discernment who are attending seminary or who are enrolled in NYSOM. This year, we amended that to also include NYSOM students who are in the Christian Leadership program, as many of them do go on to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament program. In 2017, we awarded one scholarship. The Rev. John Hottenstein chairs this program.

Compensation Guidelines. The guidelines were updated in 2014 so that people who pursue further theological education are compensated accordingly. In 2015, we added columns to accommodate people who had taken seminary classes beyond the M.Div. level, but are not pursuing a doctorate. We plan on raising the suggested compensation by 2%, which is the COLA for this year, when the new guidelines come out this summer. The Rev. Dr. Ann Van Cleef works on the guidelines.

Consultation for Committees on Authorized Ministry. Our 2017 Consultation took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 9 and 10, at the White Eagle Banquet and Conference Center in Hamilton, NY. This annual Consultation gives our Association Committees on Authorized Ministry an opportunity to meet and to work with people from the MESA (Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization) Team from the UCC National Setting. However, the MESA staff members were busy working on the new Manual on Ministry and were unavailable to be with us. We asked our Conference Staff to lead the sessions instead, and it ended up being a fabulous Consultation! Sessions included:

- “Techie Tips for Committees on Authorized Ministry” (Rev. Ryan Henderson)
- “Clergy Killing Churches and How to Stop the Bleeding” (Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams, with Peter Bortz)
- “NYSOM Update” (Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine)
- “A Conversation with the Conference Minister” (Rev. David Gaewski)
- “An Overview of the New Manual on Ministry” (Rev. Freeman Palmer)
- “A Discussion on Mentoring” (Rev. Drs. Marjorie Purnine and Marsha Williams)

The New York Conference is indeed blessed to have talented and dedicated leadership in our Conference Staff. In addition, it gave our Committees on Authorized Ministry an opportunity to get to know our Conference Minister and Associate Conference Ministers even better. The 2018 Consultation will have taken place by the time you read this; it occurred on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 15 and 16, at the Comfort Inn, Carrier Circle, near the Syracuse Airport. Rev. Rachel Hackenberg led most of the sessions, and our Conference Staff led the rest.

Conflict Mediation Team and Training. We have eight people Conference-wide who have undergone an intensive one-week training session at the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, and are ready to be called upon when a congregation is experiencing conflict. (We lost two people due to retirement and relocation.) The

Commission is informed when Conflict Mediators are called to a church, but for reasons of privacy, we are not privy to any of the details. ACM Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams will be undergoing training to become certified as a Conflict Mediation Trainer, thus saving the Conference considerable expense by not having to use the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. Our goal is to have at least one Conflict Mediation Trainer on each Association's Committee on Authorized Ministry.

Response Team and Training. In 2017, we updated our list of people who have been trained to conduct interviews when a Fitness Review is taking place. We also facilitate the training of Response Team members. A training session for new members took place in 2016; we will be scheduling another one either this year or in 2019. ACM Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams oversees this team.

Authorized Ministers' Retreats. We have restructured the Authorized Ministers' Retreats. Formerly, they were held in the spring and the fall, with an additional retreat scheduled the day before the Conference Annual Meeting. This has been replaced with a Pre-Annual Meeting Authorized Ministers' Continuing Education Institute, June 7 - 8, at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Syracuse. Course offerings include: "Stuck on Pause? Live into Your Best Self, Church!" (Facilitated by Rev. Dr. Arlen Vernava); "Insight and Personal Growth for Ministry" (Facilitated by Mr. James Krisher); "Getting Off Book: Preaching from the Heart" (Facilitated by Rev. Kaji Dousa); and "Boundary Awareness Refresher Course" (Facilitated by Ms. Penny Cannon) ACM Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams oversees this program.

Continuing Education. Six of our Associations now have adopted requirements of 25 hours of Continuing Education (CE) per year. One Association has adopted a *recommendation* (rather than a requirement) of 25 hours of CE per year, and one Association requires 75 hours of CE over the course of three years. One Association has not yet adopted any CE requirements. The Commission on Ministry urges the Associations and the Conference to distribute CE certificates that state the number of hours earned at the conclusion of workshops and BAT sessions. Continuing Education opportunities are published each week in *Happenings*, as well as on the drop-down menu under *Ministries* on the NY Conference website.

Unified Fitness Review Board (UFRB). As it is rather difficult for members of an Association Committee on Authorized Ministry to conduct a Fitness Review for a colleague, the Conference-wide UFRB allows for people from other Associations to be trained to conduct a Fitness Review. The Rev. Tom Lawton and The Rev. Scott Thomas worked on this project for several years. Eight of our nine Associations have opted into this program. The Board has met on several occasions, not only to do the task assigned, but also to discuss, review, and amend policy where necessary. Various Conference Staff members are assigned to this Board, depending on the situation.

Guidelines for Pastors Leaving a Call. These written guidelines clarify boundaries for clergy as well as congregations when a Pastor leaves a call. The Rev. John Werley worked on this project for two years, and The Rev. David Gregory formatted them for publication. They are available as a resource on the Conference website. The Commission continues to update and refine this important document; a formal Conference policy is being worked upon.

Communities of Practice. A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of peers sharing a concern or a passion for their work, learning how to do it more effectively through regular interaction with one another. Group members support each other, learn together, and share resources. Several Communities of Practice are now meeting throughout the Conference. A new CoP for retired ministers and those who expect to retire within a year is currently being organized. Communities of Practice function under the guidance of ACM Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams.

Commission on Ministry Personnel:

Thank you to Rev. David Gregory, who served as Secretary to the Commission. David accepted a call to a church in California several months ago.

We welcome Joanne Nugent-Ward as our new Secretary. Joanne has already taken minutes at two meetings and has done a wonderful job keeping us on track.

Again, I would like to thank The Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams for her untiring work for the Conference and for the Commission. She brings leadership, encouragement, and fresh ideas to the table; it is a real pleasure to work with her.

I would also like to thank each and every member of the Commission. It is a joy to work with this outstanding group of people.

The members of the Commission on Ministry include:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| +John Werley | Black River / St. Lawrence Association |
| Penny Cannon | Genesee Valley Association, BAT Trainer |
| +Konrad Raup | Hudson-Mohawk Association |
| +Ronald Wells | Metropolitan Association |
| +Lynn Sullivan | Metropolitan Association |
| +John Hottenstein | Oneida Association |
| +Ann Van Cleef | Suffolk Association, COM Chair |

Susan (Sue) Frost	Susquehanna Association
+Scott Thomas	Western Association
+Marjorie Purnine	NYSOM Dean
+Susan Fast	NYSOM Student
Joanne Nugent-Ward	COM Secretary
+Marsha Williams	Conference Staff

(+ Denotes Authorized Clergy)

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Dr. Ann M. Van Cleef,

Chair, Commission on Ministry

Report of the Wider Church Ministries

Ms. Susan Frost

Wider Church Ministries

“...God has not designed us to live by our own devices: we are bound together with one another and with all of creation, and we are called to work for the well-being of those with whom we share this life – and those who will follow.” *Jan Richardson*

Throughout 2017 the three commissions, under the umbrella of Wider Church Ministries, have kept their focus on the work at hand. **Without your donations to Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM) and your Covenant Share offerings the important work of these commissions would not be possible. Thank you for your generosity, and most importantly, your stewardship.**

The **Disaster Response Team** is still seeking a permanent Chair for the Commission. The Rev. Amos Acree, retired coordinator, continues to keep the team informed of news from the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). Although health issues limit his involvement we are thankful that he continues to do what he can to support the work of the team. As you know, many times disasters are localized, and not widespread. For that reason, we have one or more representatives from each Association serving as First Reporters. A First Reporter is someone who will report when a disaster response may be needed in their Association. We are continuing to seek more First Reporters in the geographically larger Associations.

The **Commission on Global Church** has continued to keep in contact with several missionaries, and with the work of La Mision Christiana in Nicaragua. The Commission arranged and hosted visits from 3 missionaries in 2017. Rev. Loren McGrail (Palestine) in May, Don and Maryjane Westra in June, and Magyolene Rodriquez (Nicaragua) in November. NY Help continues to provide much needed assistance in Honduras, with two trips planned each year. Financial assistance was provided for a group of adults, from across the Conference, who traveled to Nicaragua to help work on the afterschool building, and program run

by La Mision Christiana. We encourage churches to promote this mission trip which takes place each year in February. Rev. Ryan Henderson, and Sueli Gaewsky plan and coordinate these mission trips. This Commission offers some financial assistance. Melva Victorino serves as chairperson.

The **Commission on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations** continues to work closely with our partners in the German Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN), and Evangelische Kirche (Evangelical Church of Berlin) (the Berlin Deanery -EKBO). Our EKHN Intern serving in Massena, Torben Schmidt, finished his time with us in September. Rosalind Gnatt continues to serve in Germany. The Commission had representation for the following events held in Germany; Creating a Welcoming Culture for Refugees, Kirchentag, the International Youth Camp, and the International Partnership Consultation. The joint Gospel Choir Workshop/Concert Series, with the Wisconsin Gospel Choir, came to fruition when the Wisconsin choir arrived during the summer. The NY Gospel Choir looks forward to being in Wisconsin in 2018. The long awaited charter forming the Reformed Association was signed in May. Our work continues with the New York State Council of Churches, as well as ongoing dialogue with the United Church of Canada, and the NY Regional Synod of the Reformed Church of America (RCA). Rev. Martha Koenig-Stone serves as the chairperson of this commission.

Further details can be found in the individual Commission reports elsewhere in this booklet.

Susan Frost, Wider Church Ministry Coordinator (uccnywcm@gmail.com)

Report of NEW YORK/HELP Honduras

Gordon F Comstock MD

NY/HELP – Annual Report for 2017

For 28 years now, NY/HELP has now been working with the indigenous Tolupán people living in the isolated mountain communities around La Laguna, about 20 miles from the town of Yoro, Honduras. Many changes have occurred, but people there are still struggling. (“They are still trying to get boots, so they can pull themselves up by their bootstraps.”) The prayers and support supplied by the people and churches of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ have enabled NY/HELP to continue with this mission.

Among our continuing projects is the **Medical Clinic**, where our nurse, Mirtila Garcia, sees patients regularly when no medical person from New York is visiting. She sees over 200 patients a month; her salary and some of the costs of medicines are supported by donations to NY/HELP.

Education has been a big priority for NY/HELP, as this has been shown to be the most important factor in helping people improve their health, living conditions, and economic potential. Donations to NY/HELP paid for the construction of a *Centro Básico* (grades 7 to 9), and support a scholarship program to pay school expenses (for the required uniform, paper and supplies, etc) for many of the students who attend this school. The students are chosen by a committee including representatives of the teachers and our NY/HELP coordinator, Jorge (“Joel”) Ramirez. We also support Mary Orbelina Castro, who is going to a teacher education college and plans to return to the mountains to teach.

A new project this year has been the **Sewing Academy**. Originated by one of our NY/HELP members, and enthusiastically adopted by women in the communities, classes have been taught by Aracely Garcia, who is a trained seamstress. Women from the 12 communities are learning new skills in weekly classes. NY/HELP has purchased two foot-powered sewing machines for the classes, and plans to purchase more foot-powered sewing machines so that there will be one in each community.

There were two NY/HELP **mission trips** to Honduras in 2017. In **January**, a group led by retired Spanish teacher David Makepeace (Honeoye UCC) worked with local people in putting a floor in a kindergarten, helping a family build a house, and helping families build stoves. In addition, school supplies were distributed by Judy Toner (Salamanca UMCC & Bridgeport). The sewing academy began. All these projects were selected by the Tribal Council and were quickly accomplished because our coordinator Joel Ramirez had everything well organized.

In **July**, Dr Gordon Comstock and Jeff Dorfman (Arcade UCC) made a short trip to La Laguna, to follow up on our projects and work in the medical clinic. We were invited to a Lempira Day celebration at a nearby community's school. (Lempira Day celebrates the famous Indian chief who in 1536 out-generated the Spanish *conquistadores*– who then killed him by treachery). We sat in on the sewing classes, where the women were learning the skills of using a foot-powered sewing machine. We admired the tables and chairs for community-run **kindergartens**, made by the carpentry class at CEVER (the vocational school in Yoro, affiliated with our sister E&R churches in Honduras).

A **January 2018 trip** was planned, but has been delayed due to political unrest in Honduras, following recent Presidential elections. We now plan a mission trip to the mountain communities later in 2018.

All of **NY/HELP's** work is made possible by your prayers and donations.

Muchas gracias!

Gordon F Comstock, MD for NY/HELP.

**Report of New York Conference/Mission Cristiana
Church Partnership - Nicaragua
Sueli Gaewsky – Conference Staff**

**Nicaragua Mission Trip
January 27th-February 4th, 2018**

Trip Participants

Sunny Padiath Aslam - Plymouth Congregational Church -Oneida Assoc.

Ayesha Lefebvre Padiath Aslam -Plymouth Congregational Church -Oneida Assoc.

Linda Tarry-Chard - Riverside Church – Metro Assoc.

Sueli Alves Gaewsky – Conference staff

Kristine Gayle Hanson- Nativity UCC – Western Assoc.

Ryan Henderson- Conference Staff

Christine Marie Hopkins- Plymouth Congregational Church -Oneida Assoc.

Geraldine Howard- Riverside Church – Metro Assoc.

Kirsten Louise Hubel- Plymouth Congregational Church -Oneida Assoc.

Linda Gayle Traynor- Henrietta UCC- Genesee Valley Association

Dawn Marie Smith-Zellar- Bayberry UCC- Oneida Assoc.

Edward John Zellar- Bayberry UCC- Oneida Assoc.

Projects

New – Sewing Project

New – Solar Panels for the First Church After School Program

After School Programs: Continuing work with children and teachers.

New Program for 2019

Lending Library for the children of the After-School Program at the First Church.

Sewing Project

During the 2017 mission trip to Nicaragua the staff from the New York Conference Ryan Henderson and Sueli Gaewsky met with Misión Cristiana President Rev. Felix Henrique Rugama and the Assistant to the President Sonia Cabecas to talk about our partnership's future relationship and ways that we could work together to help with Misión Cristiana projects.

Our Partners identified a Sewing Project that would be beneficial to the After-School Program, the Mision Cristiana churches and the Community. During our meeting we asked them to write a formal Project Proposal and send it to us.

In August 2017 the New York Conference staff Sueli Gaewsky received an email with an excellent detailed Sewing Project Proposal. Copies of the Sewing Project are available in Spanish.

The initial financial commitment from UCCNY was \$1,600.00 dollars.

The New York Conference sent the money through Global Ministry/People to People to Mision Cristiana in January, 2018.

We had a group of seamstresses led by Linda Traynor and Kristine G. Hanson who worked for a week with 3 adults and a teenager on basics of sewing.

The new Sewing Project had an incredible successful start because we had two amazing teachers with us.

Thank you very much Linda Traynor and Kristine G. Hanson for all your work.

Report on the Sewing Program

By Lynda Traynor

Report from the sewing room

Monday through Friday several of us worked with 4 ladies learning to sew some projects and use the sewing machines. They already had a basic knowledge of the machine and how it operated. Our students were amazing, like sponges wanting to learn everything we had to offer. There was a mother daughter pair. Also, a grandmother along with Sonya from the church office. The plan is that these four sewers will practice and make the products we taught and sell them at a craft sale.

After this sale they are planning to turn key train more people to make a bigger workforce. A room at the headquarters is being planned just for the sewing complete with air conditioning and hopefully more machines and equipment.

Several churches here in New York sent donations of fabric and sewing supplies. So much we filled two very large suitcases. Monday morning we spent time organizing the items. At that time we realized that two organizing cabinets we had purchased was not going to be enough so we went back to Walmart and bought more.

Our first project was a tote bag. The ladies were very proud of their bags which we gave them to keep the sewing supplies we shared. They each received scissors, pins, pincushion, needles, thread, and a tape measure, to start their own kit. All were very proud of their bags and made a second and some a third to reinforce their learning. I wish the 7th graders I taught for many years would have been this enthusiastic. Kris Hansen and I thought we had brought more than enough to teach for the 5 days, but these ladies were like sponges and didn't want to take breaks. We finished a pillow case and zipper pouch on Tuesday and were thinking we hadn't brought enough but the ladies had ideas of what they wanted to learn so we got creative. The pouch project we taught simple quilting of two fabrics and how to install a zipper.

One item the ladies wanted to make was a graduation stole. After showing us an example Kris and I created a pattern and directions. Because they were made with satin fabric we had the mantra "pins are your friend". Wednesday morning Kris, Sonya and I went to a fabric market to buy material. Besides the satin we also bought some pretty border print cotton for sundresses and skirts.

We Americans were very happy to be told the fabric was normally \$1 per yard but if we bought 10 yds. it would only be \$.50 so we bought 20 yards. The border print was \$2 per yard. Kris and I are used to paying \$12-\$14 a yard!!

The rest of the week we worked on the stoles, sundresses and skirts. I also instructed the ladies on some of the features of the sewing machines, such as needle threader and decorative stitches along with practicing how to make a buttonhole. On the internet we were able to find the owner's manual in Spanish which Sonya was going to print out and put in a notebook.

A notebook with pictures and step by step directions for each project in Spanish was left to help the students remember what we did and use them when they teach the new people. The conference had purchased 5 machines. I would suggest if we purchase more machine which they will need, we look into a better quality machine. The Brother sewing machines are not well made and will not hold up to constant use. After only 1 week one machine had broken and would only sew in reverse.

One of our teenagers Eddie was able to take it apart and fix it. The money we had left at the end of the week we gave a machine to the Mother daughter pair and one to Maria the other student. They were so touched and said we were the answer to their prayers.

Over all I feel this has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life! I cannot always put into words how it made me feel. When people ask me they often say, "I can see it in your eyes how excited you are to tell everyone about your trip!"

After School Programs

We will continue working with the children and teachers at the First Church, but we are exploring the possibility to branch out to other Mision Cristiana churches that have an After-School Program.

The teachers are very much interested in having more workshops on different topics in the future. In 2018 the topics chosen by the teachers were school bullying, teenager depression and drugs.

Report on the After-School Program

Chris Hopkins

Sunny Aslam, Ayesha Aslam, Chris Hopkins, Dawn Smith-Zellar, Edward Zellar, and Ryan Henderson spent the week teaming with the teachers and working with the students in the afterschool program at Primera Iglesia Mision Cristiana. The focus of this visit was to help teachers understand the issues of mental health, drug abuse, and bullying effect their students learning and self-esteem. Two months before the mission trip the participants, working in the afterschool program, spent many hours researching the topics. We also spent many hours finding crafts, children's books and handouts related to the topics in Spanish for the teachers and students.

Our day started at 9:00am with a worship service with the teachers and staff. The first four morning worship services were led by one of the afterschool teachers. The worship service on Friday was led by Rev. Ryan Henderson, with the help of a translator. Between 10:00am and 12:00noon each day the teachers were involved in an in-service program. On Monday Chris lead an in-service on Literacy, with the help of a translator. The next three days Dr. Sunny Aslam lead in-services that focused on mental health, drug abuse, and bullying issues, again with the help of a

translator. The rest of the group spent the mornings preparing the craft activities and lessons for the day. Around noon we shared lunch with the afterschool teachers.

The students arrived each day at 1:30pm. There were between 60 and 100 students each day. The students ranged in age from 5 years old to 17 years old. We worked with a different age group of students each day. We shared the teaching responsibilities with the afterschool teachers. The lessons during the week focused on bullying. The afternoon lessons included prayers, religious songs, a book that focused on bullying, an activity that showed how bullying can affect both the bully and the person being bullied, and a craft that focused on building the students self-esteem. At 2:45pm a hot meal was served to each one of the students. The closing activity took place at 3:15, which usually involved singing a song. At 3:30pm the children left for the day.

New – Solar Panels for the First Church After School Program

We have not done anything concrete to target this project due to the high cost of \$10,000.00.

Lending Library – New Program

In 2019 we hoped to start a new lending library program for children at the First Church.

This program will encourage the children to read more and be responsible for caring for the books that they will borrow.

We are looking for a children's librarian who would like to set up the small library at the church and give workshops to the teachers about the importance of reading as well as teaching techniques.

We are accepting donations of children's books in Spanish (paperback please) and monetary donations as well for this new project.

On behalf of the New York Conference I would like to say thank you to all the churches and individuals who made these projects possible.

Peace,

Sueli Gaewsky

Report of the New York Council of Churches

Peter Cook – Executive Director



REPORT FROM NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The New York State Council of Churches is very pleased to report on our activities in 2017 and 2018. In an era where resources are more limited, we believe strongly in the value of ecumenism and working together. We see ourselves, in many ways, as a networker and a “dot connector” to help our partners know what each other is doing while helping congregations offer the Gospel in our communities, state and nation. Our ecumenical witness is greatly enriched by the traditions and identities of our denominational partners. We are keenly interested in the process of encouraging people to grow as disciples for Jesus Christ. In this spirit, we want to offer tools and perspectives which invite people to humbly engage the struggles of this world, listen to people’s real struggles, and seek to point to the promised kingdom of God on earth by offering comfort and doing justice. For us, pastoral care is not just an individual matter. It is about creating laws and policies which do not discriminate and offer hope. We think this work is effectively done in an ecumenical way. Please visit our website www.nyscoc.org

Our purpose and work can be found in the following mission statement:

New York State Council of Churches, embracing a spirit of ecumenism and hospitality, seeks to live into God’s call to do justice and to love our neighbor. Pointing to the Kingdom of God on earth, we envision a world where the marginalized are freed from poverty, where prisoners can be restored to live happier and healthier lives, and where we help young people grow in their Christian discipleship.

To live into our purpose and vision, we have three emphases:

We promote faith formation for people of all ages.

February 20 to 22 we held our annual high school trip to the United Nations. 44 high school students from across the state participated in a seminar at The Church of the Covenant (Presbyterian) in New York City. A seminar led by

theologian and hip-hop artist, Solomon Starr, who used some very creative group exercises, to help young people explore the complex dimensions of white privilege, racism, and power as it relates to the Christian faith. We also had a tour of the United Nations. Christy D'Ambrosio, Director of Youth Ministries at First Presbyterian Church in Albany, coordinated the trip. Our next trip is scheduled for February 19 to 21, 2019. We welcome high school applicants across the state.

In July, 2017 we held our first annual Bridging the Urban Rural Divide Conference in Johnstown. The Conference was geared towards helping us get beyond superficial political and geographical categories to meet concrete needs in our communities. The 2017 lectures can be found on our Facebook Page. The next conference will focus on congregations as catalysts for economic and communal renewal. It will be held July 10 to 12, 2018 at the First Presbyterian Church in Johnstown.

We certify and support chaplains in our state prison system and other state institutions.

We certify Protestant chaplains for the state. Certification is necessary before one can be interviewed by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and other state agencies. In the last year, our two certification committees certified chaplains from the Assemblies of God, Episcopal, Seventh Day Adventist, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church denominations. As of March, 2018, 28 chaplains have been visited and Reverend Cook has preached in a variety of prisons. The Council also held its annual chaplain's conference comprised of chaplains from many different settings. 64 were in attendance this year. The Department of Corrections is experiencing a chaplain shortage. We welcome applications of highly and qualified fully ordained clergy, with ecclesiastical standing, parish ministry experience, a Bachelors degree and at least 96 hours of graduate theological work to apply for certification.

We help local churches and judicatories work ecumenically on a grassroots level to collaborate with other religious and secular partners to do justice

1. Working with the Collegiate churches, Enterprise Partners, Presbytery of New York City, Interfaith Assembly on Housing and Homelessness, Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, Bronx Clergy Task Force, Kingdom Builders and many other partners, the Council formed the Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative which provides congregations in New York technical assistance to position them to use their property to

- build supportive and affordable housing. 50% of funds is allocated for projects in New York City and 50% in upstate.
2. We advocated for passage of the Home Stability Support Act to keep people in their homes who find they cannot keep up with rising rents. We also supported the Bring it Home Campaign to increase funding for woefully underfunded supportive housing communities which serve the psychiatrically disabled.
 3. We are one of a variety of co-sponsors with the Labor-Religion Coalition which is coordinating the New Poor People's Campaign in New York. The Campaign is a national movement, led by The Reverend Dr. William Barber, which is now working in over 35 states.
 4. We led 8 seminars on Doing Social justice in Politically Diverse Communities. The seminars, designed to help us work on justice issues with people in our congregations with different political perspectives, were held in Potsdam, Stony Brook, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Auburn, Little Falls, and Buffalo. More seminars will be scheduled in 2018 through out the state.
 5. Moving towards a clean energy economy we have supported the Governor in efforts to divest of Fossil fuel stocks from state pension funds. We also support the Climate and Community Restoration Act and accompanying Polluter's Tax to pay for clean energy infrastructure, restoration of social justice communities which are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards and to provide a path for workers moving from fossil fuel based jobs to clean energy jobs.
 6. We worked with many partners to prevent the repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act and to stop passage of the Federal Tax law which we believe will have a very adverse economic affect on the poor and middle class, property and small business owners across New York. The new law, in our view, will place an unacceptable strain of the state and Federal budgets and also cause significant increases in health insurance premiums. We are seeking now to support efforts to recapture some of the tax benefit which flowed to the extremely rich to restore cuts to the social safety net.
 7. We support efforts of our denominational partners to address discrimination against immigrants, people of color, and those of other faiths.

The Council wishes to thank our denominational partners for their financial assistance, along with churches, individuals, labor unions and other organizations who have offered grants and contributions. We continue to need financial support to sustain our ministries.

In faith,

Peter Cook

Executive Director