# **ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE CONFERENCE, THE CONFERENCE BOARD, AND THE CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SINCE THE LAST REPORT WAS MADE IN APRIL, 2023**

ACTION ITEM CB-051120203-1: The minutes from the April 21, 2023 meeting of the Conference Board are approved as presented. (m/s/c).

ACTION ITEM CB-05112023-2: The projected budget for 2024 is approved for presentation to the Conference Annual Meeting as amended. The motion carried without dissent.

ACTION ITEM CB-05112023-3: The Standing Rules of the Annual Meeting are adopted. (m/s/carried without dissent).

ACTION ITEM CB-05112023-4: The Board appoints Roberta (Bobbie) O’Toole as parliamentarian for the 2023 annual meeting of the Conference. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM EC-05212023-1: The Executive Committee, acting as the New York Conference Board, agrees to guarantee a loan of $50,000 from Church Building and Loan on behalf of Pilgrim/St. Luke’s UCC in Buffalo, provided the congregation can demonstrate annual income of $175,000 and has at least $30,000 in liquid assets, and that the church officers sign a promissory note in case of default. (Made by Charlaine, seconded by Janet. The motion carried 6-1.

ACTION ITEM EC-05212023-2: The Executive Committee affirms the proposed budget for 2024 as amended (previously approved by the New York Conference Board on May 11, 2023) for presentation to the annual meeting of the Conference. Motion carried without dissent.

ACTION ITEM CB-06152023-1: Motion to approve the agenda and to approve the minutes of the May 11 meeting of the Conference Board and the May 21 Executive Committee. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-06152023-2: Motion to approve holding the 2024 annual meeting at the Holiday Inn in Binghamton May 31-June 1, 2024. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-06152023-3: The following people are appointed by the Board as tellers and ushers:

Tellers: Kelly, John S. Susan, Deborah Ushers: Charlaine, Janet, Jane, Susan (m/s/c)

AM2023-1: Motion from the Finance Committee to adopt the proposed 2024 budget. The motion carried without dissent.

AM2023-2: Motion to receive annual reports, made by Mike Grinnals, seconded by Kayte Dean. Motion carried without dissent.

AM2023-4 original: Following a period of prayerful discernment and conversation on how best to serve Jesus the Christ within the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ in a time of decreasing enrollment and resources, and following affirmative votes by both associations and the creation of proposed by-laws, the members of the Black River/St. Lawrence Association and the Essex Association move that the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ approve a merger of these associations into one body, to be called the North Country Association. Following discussion, questions and answers, Kayte Dean suggested a friendly amendment editorial change, seconded by Heather Mooney, to the following amendment:

AM2023-4 amended motion: Following a period of prayerful discernment and conversation on how best to serve Jesus the Christ within the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ in a time of decreasing enrollment, and to be wise stewards of the resources available to us, and following affirmative votes by both associations and the creation of proposed by-laws, the members of the Black River/St. Lawrence Association and the Essex Association move that the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ approve a merger of these associations into one body, to be called the North Country Association. The motion to accept the amended motion, and the amended motion itself (m/s) carried without dissent.

AM2023-5-A: (Proposed Amendment)

Motion to propose the following revised language to the Conference By-laws, under governance, beginning at line 172 (proposed changes in italics):

The Conference Board shall consist of *members,* nominated through the Conference Governance Team and elected at Conference Annual Meeting. The Conference Board *will include the Officers*:  the Conference Minister, Moderator, Vice Moderator, Treasurer, *and* Secretary.  *The Board membership shall be* one member from each association of the Conference *and three (3) additional at-large seats. The at-large* *seats shall be reserved exclusively for Persons of Color selected from the diversity within the Conference. The Governance Committee should make every effort to expand the breadth of* *the Conference geography* *in filling at-large seats.  Each at large seat must be filled from differing associations so that no association holds more than two seats on the board, excluding the Officers.* Elected Conference Board members will be eligible to serve for two three-year consecutive terms.  A representative of the Conference Personnel Committee shall serve as ex-officio member.

Friendly amendment: …should make every effort to expand the breadth of the Conference *geographical representation* in filling at-large seats. Motion made and seconded, carried.

The question was called, the motion to call the question seconded and carried without dissent. The amended motion, as follows, was put to vote:

AM2023-5 (amended motion): *(beginning at line 172)* The Conference Board shall consist of *members,* nominated through the Conference Governance Team and elected at Conference Annual Meeting. The Conference Board *will include the Officers*:  the Conference Minister, Moderator, Vice Moderator, Treasurer, *and* Secretary.  *The Board membership shall be* one member from each association of the Conference *and three (3) additional at-large seats. The at-large* *seats shall be reserved exclusively for Persons of Color selected from the diversity within the Conference. The Governance Committee should make every effort to expand the breadth of* *the Conference geographical representation* *in filling at-large seats.  Each at large seat must be filled from differing associations so that no association holds more than two seats on the board, excluding the Officers.* Elected Conference Board members will be eligible to serve for two three-year consecutive terms.  A representative of the Conference Personnel Committee shall serve as ex-officio member. The vote to approve the amendment to the by-laws as amended, carried. The vote to approve the amended motion carried.

Report of the Governance (Nominating) Committee:

The Moderator introduced the report of the committee, needing no second before coming to a vote. Persons to be elected are in bold type:

Moderator (Term 1 ends 2025) Rev. Judith VanKennen

Vice Moderator(Term 1 ends 2025) Rev. Valerie Meyer

Secretary Rev. Barbara Wright

Treasurer Ms. Charlaine Apsel

*Class of 2024*

Rev John Sampson (2nd Term) North Country Assoc.

Rev. Kelly Sprinkle (1st Term) Oneida

Perdietha Rogers (filling a vacancy) HMA

Rev. Michael Sloan (1st Term) At Large

*Class of 2025*

Ms. Deborah Dee Brayton (1st Term) Metro

Ms. Susan Belair (1st Term) GVA

Rev. Prabu Sigamani (1st Term) At Large

Rev. Joya Colon-Berezin (1st Term) At Large

*Class of 2026*

John Zollweg (2nd Term) Susquehanna

Janet Wright (2nd Term) Suffolk

Jane Lytle (2nd Term) Western

Dennis Barton (1st Term) Reformed

There were no nominations from the floor, and a motion was made and seconded for the nominations to be closed. That motion carried. One vote was cast for the entire slate as presented; it carried without dissent.

ACTION ITEM CB-0624202031-01: The Conference Board supports sending the following letter, composed by Marsha and vetted by our legal counsel, responding to the Metro Board

June 23, 2023,

Siblings in Christ of the Metropolitan Association:

Recently many of you received correspondence from the Metropolitan Association Board of Directors (BOD) regarding actions taken by the board to remove the Association Committee on Ministry (CoM) Co-Chairs. It is our understanding that this action was precipitated by the board’s disagreement with the CoM decision concerning the initiation and adjudication of two Fitness Reviews, and transfer of adjudication of those Fitness Reviews to the Chesapeake Association of the Central Atlantic Conference after the CoM determined a conflict of interest exists The Metropolitan Association has sent letters regarding its disagreement to a number of United Church of Christ settings, disclosing the identities of the ministers in question. Your Transitional Conference Minister is a member of the Metropolitan Association Board of Directors and did not receive required notice of the board meeting where this action to remove the CoM chairs purportedly occurred.

The New York Conference is not in agreement with the actions taken by the Metropolitan Association Board of Directors regarding the removal of the CoM Co-Chairs. Per the UCC Manual on Ministry: “Processes of support and accountability [of authorized ministers] are the responsibility of Committees on Ministry in the Associations where standing is held” (emphasis added). Terminating those with whom we disagree does not align with our commitment as the United Church of Christ “to walk together in all God’s ways.” Per UCC polity, and the Metropolitan Association by-laws, the Committee on Ministry is a Standing Committee of the Association whose members have been properly elected to their positions by the Association membership.

As your covenantal partner, it is the position of the New York Conference that the retaliatory removal of CoM members, duly elected by the membership of the Association, is not indicative of our covenantal relationship, and runs contrary to the Metropolitan Association by-laws, which do not give the Board of Directors the authority to remove members of a Committee of the Association.  Any action to terminate committee membership should take place by vote of the Association at a duly called Association meeting. Removal of these Committee members without due process, does not support the spirit of covenant or the aforementioned governing documents.

For some time, the New York Conference leadership and the Metropolitan Association leadership have been taking steps to engage in facilitated dialogue to address some of the long-standing concerns regarding our covenantal relationship. It is our opinion that perhaps now is not the time to continue in this direction, but instead allow the Metro Board the opportunity to focus its attention on these internal association matters and pursue these conversations at a later time. Our prayer is that the Metropolitan Association leadership and the members of the Committee on Ministry will come together in the spirit of Christian love and address their differences and concerns in a manner that is covenantal and pleasing to the Body of Christ.

In Christ’s Service,

The New York Conference Board of Directors

Rev. Judith VanKennen, Moderator

Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams, Transitional Conference Minister

Made/Seconded/Carried without dissent.

Action Item CB09232023-1: The Consent Agenda, consisting of the minutes of the June 15 Board meeting, the June 24 Board meeting and the 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes of Record was approved. (m/s/c).

Action Item CB09232023-2: The Board appoints the following persons to serve on the Executive Committee as members-at-large: Valerie Meyer, Deborah Dee Brayton, Janet Wright. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB09232023-3: The Financial Reports are received for filing. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB09232023-4: Recognizing her comprehensive gifts of compassion, spiritual leadership and administration, and because her employment contract expires in April 2024, the Board declares its intention to call the Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams as the Conference Minister of the New York Conference by calling a special meeting of the Conference for that purpose. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB09232023-5: The Board approves the proposed changes to the Conference Personnel Policies per the request of the Personnel Committee. Motion came from committee; no second required. Motion carried without dissent.

ACTION ITEM CB09232023-6: The Board approves the following paid holidays for Conference staff in 2024: January 5, January 15, March 29, April 1, May 27, June 19, July 4, September 2, October 14, November 28-29, December 23, December 25. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-01062024-1: The Financial Report is received for filing. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-01062024-2: Board approves the proposed reimbursement policy for Board member expenses.

ACTION ITEM CB-01062024-3: Motion made and seconded to accept the following as our Vision Statement:

“United in Christ, we are called to embody healthy relationships in faithful connection to one another: equipping, encouraging, and empowering each other in vital witness to the gospel through radical welcome, justice, and love.”

The motion carried without dissent.

ACTION ITEM SCM02032024-1: Recognizing her comprehensive gifts of compassion, spiritual leadership and administration, and because her employment contract expires in April 2024, the New York Conference hereby calls the Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams as the Conference Minister of the New York Conference.

ACTION ITEM CB-02032024-1: The Board agrees to offer the call agreement attached at the end of these minutes to the Rev. Dr. Marsha E. Williams. (motion made by John Sampson, seconded by Janet Wright.) The motion carried without dissent. The Rev. Dr. Williams abstained.

ACTION ITEM CB-04202024-1: The Consent Agenda, consisting of the following, was approved:

* Minutes of the Conference Board dated January 6, 2024
* Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Conference dated February 3, 2024
* Minutes of the Conference Board dated February 3, 2024
* Minutes of the Conference Board dated April 10, 2024

The motion carried without dissent.

ACTION ITEM CB-04202024-2: The Financial Report is received for filing. (m.s.c)

ACTION ITEM CB-04202024-3: The Proposed Budget for 2025 is recommended for presentation at the Conference Annual Meeting. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-04202024-4: The Finance Team has recommended that the Conference draw down monies from the Building Maintenance Fund to continue to maintain the Amistad center and also allocate funds to the Office Rent line for staff. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-04202024-5: Motion to draw down various educational funds be utilized or folded into to the fund for continuing education for laity and clergy. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-04202024-6: The Conference Board approves the proposed description of the Finance/Investment Committee, as fine-tuned since its initial presentation at the February meeting. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-04202024-7: The Conference Board approves the proposed job description for the Conference Treasurer, which has been fine-tuned since its initial presentation at the February meeting. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM CB-04202024-8: The Board adopts the following policy with regard to endorsing local church applications for grants from the national UCC setting:

“A local church seeking grant endorsement will at a minimum faithfully support Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) for at least three years prior to the grant request and will participate in the ministries of their local Association or New York Conference ministries.” (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 04202024-9: The Board recommends bringing forward the Resolution of Witness from Emmanual Congregational UCC and Henrietta titled “A Resolution of Witness in Response to Christian Persecution in India” for presentation and discussion at the annual meeting. (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 04202024-10: The Board adopts the proposed Standing Rules for the Annual Meeting (m/s/c)

ACTION ITEM 04202024-10: The Board approves the Binghamton Holiday Inn as the location for the 2025 annual meeting of the Conference. (m/s/c)