

We are humbled and filled with great joy at the resolution you passed at your most recent Diocesan Convention in October. We have been moved and inspired by your faithful witness and affirmation of the informal partnership that has been steadily growing between our two denominations in recent years. Your bold call to make this expanding connection between our denominations even more intentional resonates with us deeply. We too feel the call to expand our shared ministries. The MACUCC Board of Directors, our Task Force on Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations, and I together want to respond to you and let you know our next steps.

As the expression of our church that is at the Conference level, the Board, the Task Force, and I do the work commissioned by the annual meeting of local UCC associations where we discern together on issues of theology, polity, and moral urgency in our time. We covenant with our local churches such that we speak *to* them, not *for* them, on these matters of our holy work together. To this end, we have sent out a letter to our churches, not only in Western Massachusetts but throughout all of our Conference, sharing with them your bold Resolution and our conviction that God is working within our two denominations to do a new thing in service to the Gospel. We have written to empower them to embody the spirit of this resolution in more intentional partnering with your congregations and parishes and shared with them our desire to see this commitment of yours returned in equal measure. It is our prayer and hope that our churches will pursue this call to share in serving their local neighborhoods and towns with you.

At our Conference level, we will look for ways at our regional gatherings to explore and raise up both old and new collaborations that are growing between our churches. We hope this more formal invitation with you will strengthen the good works many of our churches are already doing together. We are deeply appreciative of this expression of grace and we want to convey to you our deepest admiration and gratitude.

We look forward to God's work yet to come through our partnership.

Wishing you Christ's Peace,

The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Task Force
The MACUCC Board of Directors