MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

...Together
June 2017

Dear friends of the Massachusetts Conference, UCC,

Covenant... Relationship... Connection... Interdependence... call it what you will – it matters.

Among our 360+ UCC churches in Massachusetts, I celebrate the countless variations of the 1629 Salem Church Covenant, recognizing that they all testify to the same thing. We live out our faithfulness in relationship to God and one another. We affirm the journey and the changes it brings. We acknowledge truth, and attend to the many ways God reveals truth in our day.

Covenant provides a platform for the kind of courageous witness you will find in these pages. And in these perilous times, when our Still Speaking God is calling us to testify to God’s Blessed word of truth, it is time for us to “take courage.” (John 16:33)

Covenant provides a foundation upon which new relationships can be built – with people of other faith perspectives, across the barriers of race, class and ideology, with immigrants and with God’s great gift of creation. Because covenant is rooted in relationship, it leads to love – and again, as we see throughout this report, love is the basis of all justice.

I commend these stories to you and your congregation. Allow these stories to expand your imagination of how God may be calling you and your congregation to make God’s love and justice real. Take courage from these testimonies and join forces – recognizing that we are stronger together. And take in the wisdom of the African proverb:

If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.

Sharing the yoke of defiant hope,

Jim Antal
Minister and President

“We Covenant with the Lord and one with another; and doye bynd our selves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himselfe unto us in his Blessed word of truth.”

— Salem Church Covenant of 1629 —
The Massachusetts Conference staff and Board – reflecting the needs expressed by churches and their pastors – continue to focus primarily on three areas: Vital Churches in a New Day; Collaboration among Conferences and Churches; and Racial, Climate, and Economic Justice. We address these issues in the following pages of this Annual Report.

VITALITY

BEING VITAL CHURCHES IN A NEW DAY.
The landscape of ministry is changing – rapidly. Conference staff are constantly seeking new ways and new resources to help churches learn how to adapt and thrive. Find out more about these offerings, and about some new ministry initiatives already happening in our midst, throughout pages 4-11.

COLLABORATION.

A sense of collaboration continues to infuse much of our work – from joining together with the Connecticut and Rhode Island conferences on programs and ministry, to working with those outside the denomination on climate change. Read more starting on page 4.

When you see this symbol, you know we are working in collaboration.

JUSTICE & WITNESS

RACIAL, CLIMATE AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE.
The Conference’s work on justice issues this year has primarily fallen into these specific areas, in ways such as offering new racial justice training programs, speaking out for climate justice, and working with churches on refugee issues. Read more on pages 12-18.

Also in this report, you will find:

THE NUMBERS
Detailed information on the Conference income and spending and on church giving, pages 23-29.

DIRECTORY OF RESOURCES
Is your church taking advantage of all the Conference has to offer? Find out on pages 30-34.

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God is still speaking,
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
Massachusetts Conference UCC

Massachusetts Conference churches and their members will have free access to a series of webinars, a staff of consultants, and a library of books, articles, videos and CDs through a new arrangement between the Conference and Practical Resources for Churches (PRC), a New York based organization.

This service was contracted by the Conference on behalf of each of its member congregations. This program is made possible through local church contributions to United Church Mission, Our Church's Wider Mission and Fellowship Dues.

A catalog of available resources, including recorded webinars, can be found at www.macucc.org/prcli. Upcoming webinars will be listed on the Conference Event Calendar and included in the weekly Emailing.

The following is a brief introduction of available resources with no fee for MACUCC churches:

**Consultants**
Consultants are at the core of PRC. Sometimes the hardest thing for a member of a subscribing church to do is remember that they are not alone. The PRC team of consultants have expertise in various areas of church work and they will work with any church member in whatever way is most convenient. (See contact info at www.prcli.org.)

**Webinars**
PRC offers a program of short, one hour, topic-focused presentations by well-regarded authors and speakers that have practical answers to questions frequently asked by churches.

**Resources**
PRC consultants can recommend (and mail) resources to fit your needs, from their extensive collection of books, DVDs, CDs and more.

There are many adult Bible studies that can be borrowed, as well as material to help plan worship or put together a retreat, resources to help in church transformation, stewardship campaign planning, spiritual gifts programs and much more.

PRC also has samples of all the major youth curriculums, including VBS kits and confirmation curriculum, as well as books with lesson plans and activity ideas. PRC sends out e-mails with Sunday school lessons and activities based on the lectionary for every Sunday in the year.

Visit www.prcli.org to see additional details.

NEW PARTNERSHIP BRINGS NEW RESOURCE CENTER

Massachusetts Conference churches and their members will have free access to a series of webinars, a staff of consultants, and a library of books, articles, videos and CDs through a new arrangement between the Conference and Practical Resources for Churches (PRC), a New York based organization.

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Massachusetts Conference UCC

page 4
As we go to press, the Massachusetts Conference is preparing for an historic Annual Meeting.

The June, 2017 Annual Meeting marks the first time that the Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island conferences were to hold a joint Annual Meeting. And it is the first time since the United Church of Christ was formed in 1957 that delegates were to be asked to endorse the idea of joining “Together, As One” to form a new conference.

If delegates at that meeting vote to endorse the idea of joining together to form a new conference, then the three Boards of Directors will spend the following year developing a more specific proposal. That proposal will come before another joint Annual Meeting in June of 2018.

The three Boards, which unanimously voted in favor of forming a new conference, said that they imagine that proposal will create a new conference:

i. with a single Board of Directors made up of diverse members coming from the three conferences.

ii. This single Board would also act, as necessary, as the Board of Directors for each of the Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island conferences.

iii. The proposal would allow for the three historic and legal conference entities of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts to remain in place;

iv. The proposal may also recommend a transition to a unified budget and a new staffing structure.

v. The proposal recognizes that conference boundaries – including changes in conference boundaries – are determined by vote of UCC General Synod and we anticipate that if this proposal is approved by the joint annual meeting of the RI, CT and MA conferences in June 2018, we will appeal to synod in 2019 for recognition.

vi. The proposal may also provide a common table for other faith communities, both historic and those coming into being, to share in common vision.

Even if delegates in June of 2017 do not vote to endorse the formation of a new conference, the three conferences will continue to collaborate in the ways they have been for several years now (many of which are highlighted in this report by the 🌍 symbol).

To learn more about why the Boards are proposing a new conference, and to stay up-to-date on the conversation going forward, visit: macucc.org/together.

### MORE ABOUT OUR CONFERENCES

#### Number of churches with standing:
- Connecticut: 235
- Massachusetts: 357 active churches (plus 5 new church starts in discernment with an Association)
- Rhode Island: 31

#### Number of members:
- Connecticut: 65,739
- Massachusetts: 62,752
- Rhode Island: 6,157

#### Annual Budget:

- **Connecticut:** $2,265,433
  (Excludes Silver Lake Conference Center budget and use of restricted funds.)
- **Massachusetts:** $2,328,750
  (Includes net day camp and retreat center income; includes budgeted use of restricted funds.)
- **Rhode Island:** $459,346

(All figures shown exclude Basic Support passed through to the National setting.)

Read more: [www.macucc.org/moreaboutourconferences](http://www.macucc.org/moreaboutourconferences)
MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE
LISTENING, RESPONDING AND CHALLENGING

Adopted at the uniting General Synod of 1957, the Preamble of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ represents the core of the theological consensus that brought the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches together in covenant. It reads, in part:

It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God.

As the Body of Christ, our vitality comes when our churches increase in health, faithfulness and effectiveness. People now are looking for communities of faith that have a clear, God-given sense of their reason for being. It is the churches that have a clear sense of their mission—their identity and purpose given by God—that will thrive and be vital. We often hear from church leaders that they want help meeting this challenge of change and, in particular, how to be and do church in a new day, while keeping our UCC covenant.

The Conference offers a variety of programs and resources that can assist your congregation in understanding the dynamics of your church and the mission field that you are in, or need to be in, if your church wants to make a difference in your neighborhoods and world.

Resources and programs can be found at: macucc.org/growingyourchurch

PROGRAMS

- **Churches Alive**: What does it mean for a church to be healthy, faithful and effective in this changing landscape of ministry? This program is designed to nurture and provoke the vitality of churches who want to deeply explore and discern their future.

- **Crossroads Massachusetts**: Many churches come to a time in their congregational life where the question of clear purpose, sustainability or viability is raised. At this crucial juncture it is important to look at a wide range of options and to prayerfully discern what direction God is calling the congregation. The Crossroads program is one of the best assessment and discernment tools for congregations at this juncture in their life.

- **Super Saturday**: Each spring and fall, the Massachusetts Conference holds a Super Saturday event: a full-day of skill building, networking and discussion of best practices.

- **Vision and Vitality Options**: Our staff has been researching and training for a variety of options to help churches become healthy, faithful and effective in the changing landscape of ministry. Please contact your regional Associate Conference Minister or Rev. Don Remick for more information on these options.

- **“Making It Real”**: The Making It Real campaign is an invitation to be invited. Association leaders hope to engage every congregation in a conversation about clarity of each church’s mission and purpose. This effort aims to begin work with the “willing/early adopter” Association churches to be clear about their purpose. In gaining that clarity, or committing anew to it, our churches will take faithful next steps toward mission and ministry of the greatest impact in their community and beyond.

RESOURCES

- **Whole Church Evaluations** — A video recording of a Super Saturday workshop which looks at incorporating staff evaluations into a comprehensive plan for vision and vitality in the church.

- **Practical Guide for Mission/Outreach Committees** — Most committees make the mistake of thinking their main job is to spend the money that has been allocated for mission. The truth is that there are three tasks, and allocation of funds is the least important of the three.

- **Demographics** — MissionInsite, a program that researches your community, is provided free to MACUCC congregations.

- **The Parish Paper** — Monthly publication that offers ideas and insights for active congregations.

- **Reading Materials** — Articles addressing options for struggling congregations, ministering in the changing landscape, welcoming newcomers, and vision for your congregation.

- **Online Course** — Beginning in the Summer of 2017: Growing Your Communication and Conflict Resiliency Capacity will be available. It is a 10-module online program led by Claire Bamberg, of the Center for Progressive Renewal (available to the first 10 churches who register).
On March 1, 2016, the Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island conferences embarked on a new experiment in collaboration by agreeing to share an Associate Conference Minister for Communications.

Tiffany Vail had worked in communications part-time for the Massachusetts Conference since 1996 before taking on this new, full-time role. Since taking on that post, she has worked to eliminate much of the duplication of effort that had been taking place with the three conferences doing their communication work separately.

Vail implemented the launch of new websites for the Connecticut and Rhode Island Conferences and Connecticut’s Silver Lake Conference Center, using the same system that is used to manage the Massachusetts Conference website. By having all three Conference sites in the same system, events, news articles, blog posts and resources can now easily be posted to all three simultaneously, without having to duplicate the data-entry involved.

“Having this shared system in place when it came time to publicize the joint Annual Meeting was crucial,” Vail said. “This allowed us to easily post information, registration forms, videos and blog posts related to the meeting to all three Conference sites with ease.”

The Conferences are now exploring the development of a joint database system, which will further enhance the ability to communicate across Conference borders. It will also open up opportunities for joint staff training and other resource sharing.

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CHILE PARTNERSHIP

Global Missionary Elena Huegel visited churches, colleges and seminaries, and a retirement community in Massachusetts during the past year. Her message of hope radiated out from the Pentecostal Church of Chile into the larger community.

Huegel’s presence has been a reminder of the long-standing relationships between the MACUCC and the IPC and our ongoing work in support of youth delegations and the ministry of the Shalom Center, a peace and environmental education and outdoor ministry center of the Pentecostal Church of Chile. The Massachusetts Conference has played an important role in the development of the Shalom Center and has taken youth delegations to Chile to help build the center and to provide an opportunity for cross-cultural immersion and faith development.
Author Brian McLaren told more than 700 people attending Super Saturday that it is time for progressive Christians to get bold, and that the only things hindering them are in their minds. “The house is on fire, and it’s time to wake up and get bold,” McLaren said. "This is an actual emergency. This is a time for boldness. And I think it’s time for progressive people of faith to get their boldness back."

Speaking to a record Super Saturday crowd at Minnechaug Regional High School in western Massachusetts, McLaren acknowledged that times have changed for mainline Protestants in this country since their heyday in the 1950s. McLaren said it’s time for mainline Protestants to rediscover what they’re about.

“There is a movement building. A movement for justice. A movement for joy. A movement for peace. A movement of the spirit. A movement that says the earth matters. A movement that says all people matter, no exceptions," he said. "If we’re a part of that movement, you better believe we want to invite other people to become part of that movement. If we’re to understand all those little white buildings in all the New England towns as centers of organizing for a spiritual movement – that’s a movement worth inviting people to join."

Read more: macucc.org/supersaturday

The Rev. Laura Everett, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches (pictured right) and Angie Thurston, Ministry Innovation Fellow at Harvard Divinity School, spoke at Super Saturday, Oct. 15, 2016. They encouraged attendees to look for patterns of belonging that are local to the community, to “look closely at how the sheep gather where you are” in order to discover both what gifts they can offer to your church and what gifts your church could offer them. More than 400 church lay leaders and pastors from 115 churches in the Massachusetts Conference attended, and another 35 people attended from the Rhode Island and Connecticut conferences.

Photos and keynote recording can be accessed here: macucc.org/supersaturday

Super Saturday
October 2016
Framingham, MA
SPOTLIGHTS ON LOCAL CHURCH COLLABORATION

Throughout the past year, many churches reached out to the community – and to each other – in non-traditional ways in order to reach folks in need. Read these and other Spotlight stories at www.macucc.org/spotlight

Three Sister Churches Challenge Each Other to Collect Coats for the Needy
The First Church of Monson, UCC, Wilbraham United Church, and the First Congregational Church UCC in East Longmeadow collected close to 300 coats for children and adults throughout the month of November and delivered them to the Springfield Rescue Mission in time for winter weather. It was both a contest and a fellowship opportunity that benefited those in need.

Three Churches with History Hold a “Family Reunion” to Benefit Veterans
Three churches came together in faith, fellowship, and mission. The United Church of Christ in Abington, First Congregational Church of Rockland and the First Congregational Church of Whitman all joined together several times for different events, including a special worship service to celebrate the historical connection the three churches had, a potluck dinner, a mission project for the local Veterans hospital, and a chili/chowder cook-off. The joint projects were so successful, they will continue meeting and working together in the future.

Bethlehem Peace Light Reaches Several MA Conference Churches
The International Peace Light is a light that is carried from Nativity Grotto in Bethlehem around the world and passed candle-to-candle as a sign of hope and the peace of Christ. Rev. Jennifer Valentine of First Congregational Church of Southampton, UCC, delivered the Light to a variety of places including the United Church of Bernardston. The light was shared from there with a Lutheran and a non-denominational church in the area. First Congregational Church of Brimfield received the Peace Light and shared it with their ecumenical partners at their Blue Christmas service. The pastor of the United Church of Walpole posted on the church’s Facebook page that their light was shared with the First Congregational Church in Norwood. Shine on!

Two Churches Help Make Six African Villages Healthier
Six villages in Tanzania, Africa now have safe drinking water thanks to the First Church of Christ, Congregational in Bedford, which made a bold decision to donate all its Fall fair proceeds to a mission project, and to The Plymouth Church in Framingham, a sister church who had built many water wells over the past several years. After their Associate Conference Minister recommended the mission partner, the church representatives met, discussed the project and specific work, and decided to collaborate. Both churches discovered that love and partnership knit them all into one family.

Small Church With a Big Building Touches Many in Need
The Pawtucket Congregational Church in Lowell rents its church space to a Chinese Bible church for their Friday night services and to a Brazilian congregation in need of Sunday night worship space. In addition, various local support groups hold their meetings there, a local soup kitchen uses the kitchen facilities, and an alternate Spring break is conducted there by the local university. With the many partnerships and activities that are centered around this church, they have become a vibrant, welcoming, focal point in the community.
NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVES

A New Ministry Initiative expands on the language of a New Church Start. New Church Starts are based on a model of creating a building-centric community of faith similar in structure to existing UCC Churches. New Ministry Initiatives (NMI) have some of the same goals:

1) to form a beloved community of faith,
2) to become more deeply grounded in the experiential encounter with God, and
3) to have a meaningful impact on its larger community to make God’s realm of love and justice ever more real.

In Massachusetts, we not only want to support the ministries that are already beginning (begun), but we would like to create a culture that encourages (and has the capacity to follow up with) new ministries. An NMI may or may not be housed in a church building.

Here are four New Ministry Initiatives that have been birthed or in process since May 2016.

AGAPÉ BREWING COMMUNITY – GLOUCESTER
Our mission is to support home brewing, to build community, and to change the world.
www.agapebeer.org

Agapé Brewing Community is working towards opening a North Shore Homebrew Store that would sell supplies and equipment and offer workshops for home brewing. They will also hold regular community gatherings for discussions, lectures, music, meditation, celebrations, holiday rituals, service projects and more. Their community will be multicultural, multifaith, open, affirming, accessible and welcoming to all.

OPEN TABLE DINNER CHURCH – CAMBRIDGE
A dinner church and worshipping community
No matter who you are, you are welcome at Open Table Dinner Church. This church is one in which you can bring your whole self, mind, heart, and spirit with you. At Open Table we believe that you are beloved. There’s a place at the table for you.
opentabledinnerchurch.org

NEW HOPE, UCC – STURBRIDGE
A new community of faith forming in Sturbridge area
newhopeucc.org

This church focuses on the characteristics of the United Church of Christ – summarized in part by the key words in the names that formed our union: Christian, Reformed, Congregational, Evangelical.

DISCIPLES UCC – DANVERS
An evolution of First Congregational Church of Danvers
www.disciplesucc.org

Disciples UCC is committed to bringing the radically inclusive Gospel of Jesus to the North Shore of Boston focusing on families with disabilities, those who struggle with addiction, those who are aging out of the foster care system, and members of the LGBT community.
GROWING NEW MINISTRIES

Our Massachusetts Conference continues to support initiatives that give birth and life to innovative new ministries. Each one has its own style, personality and purpose. Some are based on bringing God’s love to people where they live and work. Others want to reach out and reassure those who thought they were not worthy of God’s love. And still others are based on specific ministries and spiritual communities. Some of these ministries are self-funded (from proceeds of the sale of their buildings and liquidation of assets). Several of them have received grants from the national setting of the UCC. The Church Development Council of the MACUCC provides support and guidance to new ministries as they become established in their local Associations.

Below are the New Ministries that have existed for over a year, and continue to grow.

| SANCTUARY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST - MEDFORD sanctuaryucc.org | Birthed at the closing of a West Medford church following the Crossroads/New Beginnings program, this new ministry is attempting to reach the busy community of Medford beyond the walls of a traditional church. |
| PHOENIX RISING - UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST - HAVERHILL www.phoenixrisingucc.org | Birthed from the closure of First Haverhill this new ministry followed a search and call process to hire a pastor who could carry out the vision of the remnant of the church. The goal was to offer an authentic progressive ministry to the ‘boomer’ (and other generations) within that community. |
| COMMON GROUND, UCC - FIRST CHURCHES OF NORTHAMPTON firstchurches.org common-ground | A farm to table ministry that has found a home in First Churches of Northampton and is modeling itself on Lydia’s Table. Worship centers around the growing, preparing, cooking, and sharing of a sacred meal. |
| AGAPE SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY - WALTHAM www.agapewaltham.org | A ministry that is focusing on outreach to the young adult/college population of the area. |
| G.A.P.S MINISTRY CAPE COD healthsignscenter.com | A ministry emerging from a client-based agency on the Cape that discovered a population who had no interest in traditional church, but wanted a spiritual community of practice. |
| WEST PARISH OF BARNSTABLE www.westparish.org | It’s Saturday Let’s Do Church: a new ministry birthed in a church that listened to the needs of young families for an alternative spiritual/ worship experience and time. It is housed out of West Parish church of Barnstable. |
| PROMISE CHURCH - SOUTH WEYMOUTH www.ourpromisechurch.org/ | This ministry comprises a group that has gathered for Bible Study and have evolved into a worshipping community, gathering folks who have not been able to find a home in other churches. |
| WORCESTER FELLOWSHIP WORCESTER www.worcesterfellowship.org | This ministry is following the model of street ministry. It is open to all, but often draws from a housing-challenged population (similar in style to Common Cathedral in Boston). |

SAYING GOODBYE TO MINISTRIES

Churches that have closed, merged or withdrawn since May 2016:
Grace Congregational, Framingham  |  South Congregational, UCC, Lawrence
East Congregational, Springfield  |  Union Church of Stow
Racial and Economic Justice

The goal of the Racial Justice Ministry of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ is to engage every setting of the Conference in the work of unmasking, dismantling and eradicating racism in its personal, inter-personal, institutional and cultural forms, to make God’s love and justice real. Here is how we, as a Conference, and as local churches, are answering the call to change the way we live.

**PROGRAM ASSOCIATE HIRED**

TJ (Toyan) Harper is the new Associate for Racial Justice for the Massachusetts Conference, UCC. This two-year position has been funded by the Barnes Fund for Mission and Justice Ministries, an expendable legacy from Arthur and Sidney Barnes, along with some income from a new endowment recently given by the Everett Church at its closing. We hope to raise further funds to continue the position for at least a third year.

TJ is working with support and guidance from Associate Conference Minister Kelly Gallagher to encourage conversation in those MACUCC churches that are aware of racial inequality, and learning ways to stand in solidarity with communities of color and those on the margins.

Read TJ’s blog articles and other Racial Justice content on www.macucc.org/racejustice.

**KEY UPDATES**

**Podcast**

The 25-30 minute podcast will be launched on a quarterly basis. Spiritual and lay leaders will discuss a series of topics, such as how to have challenging conversations on race in church, and how congregations can engage in rewriting institutionally and historically racist policies. The podcast will be made available on the MACUCC racial justice webpage. We are also exploring options to have the podcast streamed to mobile devices.

**White Privilege Training**

The white privilege training, like the current racial justice training, will have an 8-hour format; however, the substance of the program is different. This training will define white privilege, explore the history of white privilege, and discuss ways to positively use white privilege and work toward becoming a white ally. Although this training will not use the National UCC curriculum, this could be an effective way to begin an initial conversation.

**Roadmap: 3-Year Plan for Churches to Engage Racism**

Several months ago, TJ Harper created the Racial Justice Rubric to help individual congregations assess where their church is on the spectrum of racial justice. After much attention was garnered by the rubric, churches understood the “what,” but did not know “how” to take steps toward becoming more actively engaged in racial justice. This roadmap will provide a step-by-step checklist of specific books, discussions and activities for congregations seeking a deeper commitment to racial justice.
CONFERENCE LEADERS ISSUE LETTER IN RESPONSE TO ANTI-ISLAMIC PROPAGANDA

Leaders of the three southern New England Conferences of the United Church of Christ released a letter in response to “ACT for America” mailings being received by many of our churches. The mailings discouraged Christians from participating in interfaith dialogue, and called on Christians to actively oppose Islam. The leadership letter – signed by The Rev. Da Vita “Day” McCallister, Associate Conference Minister of Leadership and Vitality, Connecticut Conference UCC, The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Minister and President, Massachusetts Conference UCC, and The Rev. Barbara Libby, Interim Conference Minister, Rhode Island Conference UCC – responded to the ACT organization with a resounding “No!”

The letter read in part: “In these divisive times, we believe our call is not to speak out against any faith, but rather double our efforts to speak with our kin of all faiths. We believe that we can work together as neighbors to find the lost and heal the broken. We believe that the call to feed the hungry and welcome the stranger compels us to aid the refugees of the world, regardless of faith tradition. As Christian leaders we want to make very clear that ACT for America does not speak for all Christians, and certainly not for us. In response to their call for hate and division, let us redouble our efforts to love our neighbors, all our neighbors, as ourselves.”

OFFERING SANCTUARY

Is your church interested in becoming a Sanctuary Church? The Conference offers a webinar, documents, articles, and links to additional resources to learn more. If you want more information or are interested in signing up as a Sanctuary Church in the Massachusetts Conference, please contact John Allen of the Immigration and Refugee Concerns Task Team. Already voted to be a Sanctuary Church? Please contact Karen Methot to let us know. More info: www.macucc.org/offeringssanctuary

17 RELIGIOUS LEADERS ISSUE JOINT LETTER ON THE EXECUTIVE ACTION SUSPENDING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The leaders from 17 religious organizations, including Massachusetts Conference Minister & President The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, issued a joint letter in January on the Executive Action Suspending Refugee Resettlement. The leaders pledged their voices and their churches’ active support to resettle refugees in Massachusetts. The letter called upon elected leaders, including President Trump, to reconsider the Executive Action to limit refugee resettlement. It also asked churches to reach out in love and Christian hospitality to the refugees living near them and to show compassion and support to those who have fled hardship and violence.
Get more info at: www.macucc.org/immigration

SACRED CONVERSATIONS ON IMMIGRATION

The Immigration and Refugee Task Team of the Massachusetts Conference is partnering with churches to provide educational experiences that begin to explore and answer their congregation’s questions about immigration, the differences between refugees and asylum seekers, and the sanctuary process. Churches are invited to contact the Task Team as a partner in planning an educational experience, including: a special service, book or other small group discussions, interactive experiences of the immigration process, movie event, talking points for a sermon, or inviting a guest to speak.

Delegates of the 217th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference, UCC voted unanimously in favor of sponsoring a General Synod resolution that will call on all settings of the United Church of Christ to enter into covenants promising to welcome immigrants.
UCC CONTINGENTS TAKE PART IN WOMEN'S MARCHES IN DC, BOSTON, GREENFIELD

Associate Conference Minister Wendy Vander Hart partnered with The Rev. Dr. Nancy Taylor of Old South Church, The Rev. June Cooper and The Rev. Ruth Edens of City Mission, to organize the UCC Boston Women's March on Washington contingent. The Women's March took place the day after the 2017 Presidential Inauguration, and was started by women alarmed by the harsh rhetoric during the Presidential campaign. Hundreds of people from UCC churches across the Conference took part in the Women's March on Washington, and the sister marches in Boston, Greenfield, and other cities. Read more at macucc.org/whyimarch.

WHY I MARCHED...

“Prayer and giving money are actions that most of us already do on a regular basis, and they are definitely good and holy actions to take, but it is not enough. Sometimes you have to accept the invitation to do more, to get involved with something that makes you feel uncomfortable.”

The Rev. Jamie Green Klopatski, Founder, Brewer, Minister at Agapé Brewing Community

“I believe that my faith requires me to find my voice in moments like this. I don’t want to look back on this moment in history and be one of those folks who tells their grandchildren, ‘I never saw what was happening until it was too late.’”

The Rev. Dr. Susan Cartmell, Pastor of the Pilgrim Congregational Church in Harwich Port

“The threat of oppression already tests my spirit and my stamina. The weight of the world slows my steps. I am only one. I grow weary, I fear that on the long road ahead I will falter or fall. Then I look at my daughter Walking at my side I look at my sisters and my brothers Spread as far as I can see. And I remember... WE are walking. Together. Stronger.”

The Rev. Carol Steinbrecher, Pastor of the Stratford Street United Church in West Roxbury, MA

“I fear that a climate of dismissive chauvinism is back on the rise, a climate in which it is acceptable to sexually harass women with both words and actions, to demean women by objectifying them, and to keep them down from equal access ... I cannot be silent in the face of this threat, and I stand to lift my voice.”

The Rev. Ms. Marissa Brown-Ludwig, Chair of MACUCC Task Force on Ecumenism & Interfaith Relations and Interim Associate Pastor of First Church of Christ in Longmeadow

“Jesus brought disparate people together out of doors where they lingered under one blue sky and came to believe that we belong to each other because we belong to God. We are responsible for and to each other because we are responsible to God.”

The Rev. Dr. Susan S. Taylor, Senior Minister of the Old South Church in Boston, UCC

The Rev. Dr. Nancy S. Taylor, Senior Minister of the Old South Church in Boston, UCC
OPEN AND AFFIRMING (ONA) UPDATE
SUBMITTED BY KATHIE CARPENTER, CHAIR OF ONA MINISTRY TEAM AND ONA CONSULTANT

NEW ONA CHURCHES
Congratulations to the 14 churches in the Massachusetts Conference that were certified ONA in the past year. (See list to right.) There are now 170 ONA churches and one ONA new church start. In addition, 15 additional churches are being assisted with the ONA process.

ONA is the United Church of Christ’s (UCC) designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the UCC which make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Each ONA congregation has independently adopted an Open and Affirming covenant after a journey of dialogue, study and prayer. There are about 1400 current ONA churches nationally. (More info: www.macucc.org/lgbt)

PRIDE CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE STATE
Several hundred UCC folks participated in Pride parades and festivals that took place in Boston (June), Worcester (September) and Northampton (May). Tens of thousands of supporters and spectators showed up at the Boston parade which celebrated its 45th year.

FIRST EVENT
Min. Louis Mitchell, Ivy Tillman and Kathie Carpenter attended this annual conference in Marlborough in January 2017. First Event is the year’s first and largest conference by, for and about transgender people and their allies in Massachusetts. Louis Mitchell of South Church Springfield, was also the Saturday evening keynoter. Mitchell and Rev. Mark Seifried co-led the workshop “I Am,” an experience in knowing and naming oneself.

TRANSGENDER LAW
In 2016, Massachusetts passed a bill that extends protections for transgender people in public spaces, such as theaters, medical offices, recreation areas, retail stores and restaurants. MA Conference leaders, UCC Clergy and lay people signed the pledge of support for the bill and worked diligently with Freedom Massachusetts (a broad-based bipartisan coalition) to get the bill passed. Regrettably, a state ballot measure to roll back those protections is proposed for 2018, so we expect to become involved in the campaign to save the law.

Visit openandaffirming.org.

New ONA Churches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Certification Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pilgrim Congregational Church</td>
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<td>Gloucester</td>
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<td>First Congregational Church</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
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<td>First Congregational Church</td>
<td>North Adams</td>
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<td>First Congregational Church</td>
<td>West Springfield</td>
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<td>East Bridgewater</td>
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<td>Main Street Congregational UCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cotuit Federated Church</td>
<td>Cotuit</td>
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Climate Justice and Environmental Activism

The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas serves both the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Conference as the non-stipendiary Missioner for Creation Care. Bullitt-Jonas seeks to inspire and support a wave of religious activism to address the climate crisis, deepen reverence for God’s creation, and create a more just and sustainable society. This effort continues to strengthen ecumenical collaboration, communication and Christian witness around the critical issue of climate change. Read her blog posts at: macucc.org/jonas.

CREATION CARE HIGHLIGHTS

The tide is rising and so are we.

“That’s the refrain of the best climate anthem I’ve heard yet,” said The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas. “People of many faiths are rising up like a tide to join the struggle for a sustainable, just, and healthy future.”

This past year the Massachusetts Conference has been represented on the streets and in the halls of Congress, communicating about the climate crisis and the good news of the Gospel. Our organized efforts have helped to deepen the spiritual urgency and expand the political power of the faith-based climate justice movement. Below are some of this past year’s highlights.

Preaching
In addition to being a featured preacher for the national UCC “Keep It In The Ground” campaign to encourage preachers to preach on climate on Earth Sunday, Bullitt-Jonas has preached at several churches across Massachusetts, including at an interfaith service to mark “Sacred Earth, Sacred Trust,” a global day of prayer for “1.5º to stay alive.”

Shortly after the Presidential election, Bullitt-Jonas co-led an ecumenical prayer service, “We Are the Earth,” held outdoors at Heifer Farm in central Mass. This special event drew Christians from across Massachusetts and featured five leaders of the churches in Massachusetts: Bishop Alan Gates (Diocese of MA), Bishop Doug Fisher (Diocese of WMA), Rev. Dr. Jim Antal (MACUCC Minister & President), Bishop Jim Hazelwood (New England Synod, ELCA), and Fr. Richard Reidy (Vicar General, Catholic Diocese of Worcester), representing Bishop Robert McManus.

Talks and retreats about climate change
Sixteen churches attended the “Coming Back to Life” workshop at the Diocese of Western MA Parish Leadership Day. This was one of the many presentations given at ecumenical gatherings, clergy conferences, interfaith climate network events, panel discussions, Super Saturday, and retreats across the country.

(continued next page)

The Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas Named Winner of the 2016 EcoPreacher Contest

EcoPreacher is a website that features sermons, essays, movie and book reviews, creative writing and ecotheological reflections. Bullitt-Jonas won the award for a sermon she preached on June 12, 2016, at a special service that brought together First Congregational Church and St. John’s Episcopal Church in Ashfield, Massachusetts. June 12 was a day when people of many faiths around the world celebrated a day of prayer and action for the Earth.

In addition, Bullitt-Jonas received the “Stewardship of God’s Creation” award from the National Religious Coalition on Creation Care (NRCCC) and the 2016 “Thomas Shaw Award for Social Justice” from Episcopal City Mission. Her blog posts are often reprinted and distributed on social media by other groups.
Advocacy, Organizing, and Public Witness

Getting arrested is usually not thought of as a highlight of one’s life, but it is when it involves climate public witness. In May, Bullitt-Jonas was arrested with 15 other religious leaders (including Jim Antal) in an act of peaceful civil disobedience to protest Spectra Energy’s West Roxbury Lateral pipeline construction. In addition, through Bullitt-Jonas’ participation, the Conference was represented at the Martin Luther King, Jr. 3-day weekend walk along the route of the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the Citizens Climate Lobby Conference in Washington D.C, the “Exxon Knew” hearing in Washington, DC, convened by Congressional Progressive Caucus and Sustainable Energy and Environment Caucus, the American Climate Leadership Summit, and many other faith leadership on climate events.

TAKING ACTION

Many of our churches have taken climate action by divesting from fossil fuels, installing solar panels, creating gardens, and becoming “Green Congregations.” Find out what you can do, or tell us what you have done so you can inspire others: www.macucc.org/actionstakenbycongregations.

MEETING THE GREEN CONGREGATIONS CHALLENGE

The Green Congregation Challenge is a way for your church to set attainable goals, experience success, and build momentum around environmental protection and climate justice. These churches have been certified as reaching Level 1, 2, or 3.

Did you participate in the Interfaith prayer vigils focusing on climate justice that were held all across the nation over the course of 100 hours beginning on noon January 20th?

CONFERENCE CLERGY GATHER AT STANDING ROCK

Eight Massachusetts Conference pastors joined fellow clergy in Cannonball, North Dakota in November to stand in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Indians and against the Dakota Access Pipeline, which threatens the Standing Rock Reservation sacred lands and water. An estimated 524 clergy of 22 faith traditions participated in this action, including more than three dozen UCC pastors from across the country.

The call for clergy to gather proved a draw not only because of the potentially grave environmental impact the pipeline would have on local drinking water, but also for the racial justice and human rights issues. Clergy gathered at the Aceti Sakowin camp on the banks of the Missouri River to share prayers and songs and march together in support of the Native American protesters.

Join these other churches and add your church to the list. Visit www.macucc.org/greencongregations to see a listing of requirements, tips on starting a green team at your church, and descriptions of what various churches did to receive recognition.
ANTAL HELPS LEAD UCC CONTINGENT AT PEOPLE’S CLIMATE MARCH IN D.C.

On President Trump’s 100th day in office, 200,000 people from all walks of life ringed the White House to send him a message about climate change.

The United Church of Christ, as one of the official co-sponsors of the People’s Climate March, was well-represented. Scores of advocates from several UCC Washington D.C. area churches were joined by dozens of others who converged on the Capitol from congregations across the country.

Massachusetts Conference Minister and President The Rev. Jim Antal was one of the leaders of the UCC group, along with the Rev. Brooks Berndt, UCC Minister for Environmental Justice.

Two retired Mass. Conference pastors, the Rev. Andrea Ayvazian and the Rev. Peter Ives, biked down with other cyclists from Massachusetts, joining many other MACUCC participants.

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UCC LEADERS ISSUE STATEMENT ON ADMINISTRATION’S CLIMATE ACTIONS

In March 2017, the national officers of the United Church of Christ and The Council of Conference Ministers issued a statement in response to the March 28 executive order that undoes the past administration’s climate policies, revives the fossil fuel industry, cuts the EPA’s budget and eliminates many climate research programs.

The letter included a call to the authorized ministers and leaders, members, and people of faith to raise their voices in support of the faithful stewardship of creation, write their elected representatives and express their concern and outrage, embrace Jesus’ assurance that the truth will set us free by learning about the science of climate change, advocate for policies and laws, oppose any additions to our fossil fuel infrastructure; and to demonstrate in voice and in action the core belief that the Earth is the Lord’s, and that we are charged with stewarding creation in ways that ensure it will be here to care for future generations.

Read the full letter here: www.macucc.org/climateresponse

MASSRELEAF MINISTRY RECEIVES ABERNETHY AWARD FOR SERVICE

The MassReLeaf Ministry recently completed 11 years: facilitating 42 tree-care projects led by 45 local religious organizations of multiple faiths and other local organizations (on public access and qualified lands across Massachusetts). Together, they have planted 744 mature trees. In addition, MassReLeaf has provided 290 seedling trees to Conference churches to emphasize the importance of planting trees in municipalities and offered planting help as well. Their ministry has benefited dozens of communities and hundreds of people living in urban areas. Last spring the MassReLeaf ministry and Director Neal Seaborn were awarded the Abernethy Award from the Wellesley Congregational (Village) Church, honoring exemplary spirit and practice of service to others.
WHAT DOES BOLDNESS LOOK LIKE?

Attendees of Massachusetts Conference’s 217th Annual Meeting, were called upon to be bold and brave.

In his Friday keynote address The Rev. Otis Moss III, Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, used a story from Acts, Chapter 20, as an illustration for his call on the church to “repent, and raise a new generation of leaders.” In the story from Acts, Paul is preaching on and on at a church, and a young man is sitting in a high window to listen. As the smoke and heat from candles and incense rise, the man falls asleep, falls out of the window, and dies. Paul stops, goes outside, and heals him.

“The question is - why was the young man in the window in the first place?” Moss asked, then answered: “Because they did not have enough room for the young man in the church. Even though he wanted to hear Paul ... If we are going to be the ministry God wants us to be, we have to make room for the millennials and the next generation.”

The moderators of last year’s Annual Meeting touted it as “an opportunity to gather around God’s immense table of grace, to spend some time in a season of discernment concerning our future. It is a time when bold new initiatives are presented, worship is creative and uplifting, networking is possible at every turn, new ideas are introduced, and the people and ministries of the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC shine with the boldness, the cheekiness, the impudence of the audacious good news of Jesus the Christ. Come celebrate, worship and be joyful together as the Body of Christ!”

In other Annual Conference news, delegates voted on welcoming immigrants and on a variety of matters related to clergy compensation and Conference finances.

- Minister and President Jim Antal

- Richard M. (Dick) Harter and Angelica (Gay) Harter were named co-recipients of the Andy Gustafson Award

- Renowned musician, Ken Medema shared his storytelling and music

- Christian Educators received their certifications
In March 2017, the officers of the Interfaith Council of Western Massachusetts (on behalf of all our communities of faith), released a statement to the press condemning all acts of violence committed against anyone, especially in the name of religion, and calling upon our brothers and sisters in the Greater Springfield community to stand together in mutual respect and honor of all of us, protecting any who come under attack and standing against hate. It read in part, “We ask our civic and religious leaders to speak out against such actions and to affirm the diversity of our community as a source of pride and strength.” The statement resulted from the leaders being alarmed at the rise in anti-Semitism and islamophobia in our country.

Marisa Brown-Ludwig, Chair of the Ecumenism and Interfaith Task Force, reported that this was just one action taken by the task force. Other public witness actions taken in western Massachusetts included being part of the interfaith cleansing ritual of Mt. Tom in Holyoke, MA that took place in the fall right after the election, when anti-Semitic and islamophobic language was written on the rocks. The Interfaith Council of Western Mass. also sponsored “United in Faith, Standing with our Neighbor at the Islamic Society” to respond to anti-Semitic and homophobic local vandalism & threats. Brown-Ludwig also helped organize a rally in March at the Jewish Community Center of Springfield after the bomb threat they received.

To knit closer relationships, Brown-Ludwig and the Task Force have established many interfaith activities to help bring the community together, including:

**Coffee & Conversations**
Weekly conversations at Starbucks in Longmeadow with Jewish, Muslim, and Christian local clergy and friends.

**Worship and Studies**
An Election Night Unity Eucharist, Good Friday worship, and Easter Vigil worship services were jointly held by the UCC and Episcopal churches in Longmeadow. In addition, the new UCC White Privilege Race curriculum was taught as part of local Adult Education programs, which also included a series on Syria.

**Book Program**
First Church in Longmeadow hosted an interfaith book program with special guest Jewish scholar and peace activist Yehezkel Landau and Temple Beth-El’s Rabbi Amy Katz.

**Mission Work**
Community Interfaith Mission work included a Circle of Faith Build with Habitat for Humanity all year long, with local synagogues, other Christian churches and a local mosque, concluding December 2016 when a family moved into their new house.

For more info, visit: www.macucc.org/interfaithactionecumenism
Here are photos from the Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations Task Force, MA Conference UCC Facebook Page.

Associate Conference Minister Wendy Vander Hart (left) and Rev. Angela Wells, UCC Burlington (right) joined hundreds of other clergy in an Interfaith march to the State House on Moral Monday.

Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury held a Wednesday Worship Experience and traveled to Holy Family Catholic Church of Concord for a deep conversation on ecumenical relationships: the history, the future, the hopes, and the hurts.

Various faiths were represented at the Ecumenical Holy Week service in Needham.

United Church of Christ Congregational, Boxborough, wrote “Love Mail” for friends at the Islamic Center of Boston.

There was a great turnout for the “Moving Solarization Forward” event sponsored by SAICAN (Springfield Area Interfaith Climate Action Network) at First Church of Christ in Longmeadow UCC.

Women from Temple Shalom Emeth and the UCC Burlington, First Parish in Bedford, and others were very warmly welcomed at a Women’s Open House at the Islamic Center of Burlington, all organized by one of their 15 year olds!
Rooted in the grace of God, the mission of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) is to nurture local church vitality and the covenant among our churches to make God’s love and justice real.

We are a gathering of 360+ active churches with over 61,000 members, making us the largest Protestant denomination in Massachusetts. Our roots go back to the Puritans and Pilgrims who founded this country, making us the Commonwealth’s oldest denomination. The Massachusetts Conference is one of 38 regional bodies of the UCC, which has over 5,000 congregations and over 880,000 members. The UCC is a distinct and diverse community of Christians who come together as one church to join faith and action.

The motto of the UCC is “That They May All Be One.” This is from the prayer of Jesus (John 17:21 NSRV) for the unity of the church. Members of the United Church of Christ have been leaders in the movement to heal the divisions in the Christian church, and local congregations welcome into membership people from a diversity of religious backgrounds. Today, approximately two-thirds of our members have come to the UCC from other denominations, or from no denomination.

Our churches are large and small, urban, suburban and rural. As a Conference, we support one another in spreading the Word and doing the work of Jesus Christ. On any given weekend in our churches, you may hear traditional hymns or something more contemporary. You may meet people whose families have been in America for generations, or those who still speak the languages of their homelands in Asia, Central and South America. You may find a church hall that houses a soup kitchen or one that houses a coffee house for local performers. You may find a church that has declared itself Open and Affirming to gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual people, or you may find a congregation that is theologically more conservative.

Each of the churches of the Massachusetts Conference is unique, yet we are all united in Christ. We are a people of covenant, a united and uniting church.
WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

All the funds the Massachusetts Conference receives are given by God’s generous people, who seek to change lives for Christ through supporting the work that can only be done by the wider church. This support comes in a number of ways, as illustrated.

Net Retreat Center & Camp Revenue - $154,000 (6.4%)
- Net revenue from Edwards House rentals and Pilgrim Day Camp

Program Revenue -$138,950 (5.4%)
- Income from participation fees for program events and communities of practice.

Individual Donations and Miscellaneous - $190,250 (7.1%)
- Individual donations to the Annual Appeal and to special projects of the Conference.
- Special Grants (i.e., Lilly Endowment, Carpenter Foundation).
- Restricted Giving for specific projects.

Income from Endowments - $480,450 (18.5%)
- Income from a variety of endowments, some unrestricted and some restricted for specific purposes. The endowments have been built over the years from a combination of planned gifts from individuals, monies donated by churches which have closed, and through gifts from both congregations and individuals as part of capital campaigns.

Fellowship Dues - $682,500 (26.2%)
- Fellowship Dues, paid by congregations on a per-member basis set each year by Conference Annual Meeting.
- 2017 Conference dues are $19.00 per member. (Associations also set and bill for their own Fellowship Dues.)

United Church Mission & OCWM Basic Support – Retained in the Conference - $944,450* (36.4%)
- United Church Mission, given by congregations and shared with Associations and National UCC.* Learn more about this new way of giving to the wider church on page 26.
- Our Church’s Wider Mission Basic Support, given by congregations and shared with National UCC.*

*NOTE: The anticipated amount of United Church Mission and Basic Support contributions to be passed through to the National setting of the church in 2017 is $697,050, per votes taken at Annual Meeting 2016.

RESOURCES ANTICIPATED: $2,590,600
WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

Making God’s Love and Justice Real – Justice and Witness Ministries - $329,000 (12.7%)
- Disaster Resource Ministries
- Racial Justice Ministries
- Task forces on Environmental Ministries, Homelessness, MA Innocence Commission, Israel/Palestine, Immigration, and Restorative Justice
- Open & Affirming and marriage resources
- Dialogue and advocacy with other denominations
- Ever Flowing Streams newsletter

Equipping the Saints – Lay Development Ministries - $346,900 (13.3%)
- Super Saturdays and other training events
- Conference communications, including macucc.org and e-newsletters
- Consulting with churches on finance, stewardship and fundraising
- CE Communities of Practice and Certification
- Faith formation and youth ministry training
- Resources for faith formation, youth ministry, worship, mission and justice, church administration and communication, finance, stewardship, planned giving, capital campaigns
- Confirmation programs, youth retreats and other events

Nurturing Pastoral Excellence – Clergy Development Ministries - $330,000 (12.8%)
- Compensation guidelines for authorized ministers and other church employees
- Boundary Awareness Training
- Pastoral Excellence Program
- Clergy Communities of Practice
- New Clergy Groups
- Super Saturdays
- Worship and preaching workshops
- Safe Church information

Nurturing Church Vitality – Church Development Ministries - $173,300 (6.7%)
- Support and authorization of New Ministry Initiatives
- Hispanic Ministries
- Church visioning & vitality resources and consulting
- Training of Redevelopment Guides
- Resourcing and networking small membership churches
- Help in answering the question “Who is Our Neighbor?” (e.g. MissionInsight and other tools)

Housing and Empowering our Ministries - Buildings and Equipment - $103,400 (4%)
- Equipment for all offices
- Major repairs to Conference-owned property in Framingham
Supporting Churches and Pastors - Regionally-based Ministries - $637,750 (24.6%)
- Sharing best practices and provoking creative thinking
- Guidance and support during times of staff transition
- Church assessment and visioning tools & support
- Support in times of crisis and conflict
- Assistance and support for Association boards & committees
- New Beginnings, Crossroads, Churches Alive, and Making It Real programs
- Legacy work with congregations

Leading our Church - Minister & President/Governance - $316,750 (12.2%)
- Minister and pastor among MACUCC churches
- Liaison and collaboration with national and ecumenical agencies
- Representation of Conference in public media
- Board of Directors
- General Synod delegation
- Annual Meeting

Stewarding our Resources – Office, Administrative Development – $353,500 (13.7%)
- Financial management, audit and accounting
- Legal
- Fundraising costs
- Routine office building maintenance and utilities
- Liability insurance

MINISTRIES TO BE FUNDED: $2,590,600
What is United Church Mission?
United Church Mission (UCM) is a new way of funding our common mission through the Conference, Association, and National setting of the United Church of Christ. UCM contributions are based on a percentage of the prior year’s total income received by a local congregation. Approved by the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference in 2014, for those churches that opt in, UCM replaces Conference and Association Fellowship Dues and Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) Basic Support as the primary way congregations contribute to the shared ministries of the UCC beyond their local setting.

How many churches have opted in to United Church Mission?
To date, 72 churches – 20% – spanning every Conference Association have opted in to UCM. (See next page for a list of these churches.) More have planned to join UCM in 2018.

How does UCM work?
A UCM Initial Giving Percentage is established, based on wider church giving in relation to total income. The total income figure includes general operating income from all sources, as well as general missions giving, but not special giving such as capital campaign contributions, disaster relief, or special offerings. (See the UCM Fact Sheet at macucc.org/unitedchurchmission for a complete list of sources to be included in the UCM total income figure.) For their first year of UCM, churches commit to giving at least what they contributed in the prior year in combined Dues and Basic Support. After year one, UCM churches apply their UCM Initial Giving Percentage to prior year total income to determine the next year’s contribution. UCM churches are encouraged to consider increasing this percentage over time as they are able.

Why might our church want to join UCM?
Churches tell us they appreciate UCM for a number of reasons:

- eliminates the Fellowship Dues “head tax” that keeps some churches constantly cleaning their membership rolls to reduce payments
- streamlines wider church giving and makes it easier to explain to church members
- mirrors the message of proportional giving we give church members as well as the biblical principles of percentage giving that support this approach
- invites generosity generally, promoting giving to the wider and local church as well
- emphasizes that all church giving is mission giving
- it’s fair – all settings of the church rise or fall together

What else do we need to know about UCM decision-making?
Despite its advantages, a decision to opt in to UCM may not be without its challenges. UCM discussions go best when church leaders consider the varied perspectives of people who have questions about the transition and how it might affect the things they care about most. Sharing more information about UCM, more often than one might think necessary, will help make decision-making about UCM go as well as possible. The Conference has developed resources and approaches to help equip church leaders to guide their churches in decision-making about UCM. We encourage churches to be in touch with Conference staff regarding their interest in United Church Mission as early as possible in the church’s decision-making process.

How do we join UCM?
UCM is neither automatic nor mandatory, so churches must choose to join UCM and notify the Conference. Churches are asked to inform the Conference of their decision to join UCM for 2018 by December 15, 2017; and with advance notice we can receive churches after their 2018 annual meetings. When notified of a church’s desire to join UCM, Conference staff will contact the church to obtain relevant financial information and work through UCM calculations.

How do we get more UCM information or assistance?
If you want more information about UCM, would like a Conference representative to visit with your church leaders to speak about UCM, or are already in discussion about possibly opting in to UCM, please contact Jonathan New, Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Financial Development. Jonathan may be reached at newj@macucc.org or (508) 875-5233 ext. 231. More information is also available at macucc.org/unitedchurchmission.
### United Church Mission Opt-In Churches for 2017

**Thanks for making the switch to UCM!**

*Opted in since the last Annual Report*

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<th>Location</th>
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<td>Acton</td>
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<td>First Congregational Church, UCC</td>
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<td>East Longmeadow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edwards Church*</td>
<td>Framingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Congregational Church, UCC</td>
<td>Groton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Congregational Church of Harvard, UCC</td>
<td>Harvard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilgrim Congregational Church</td>
<td>Harwich Port</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Haydenville Congregational Church UCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church, UCC</td>
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<td>Lenox</td>
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<td>Pilgrim Congregational Church</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Pawtucket Congregational Church</td>
<td>Lowell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Church of Ludlow</td>
<td>Ludlow</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Church in Marlborough, Congregational</td>
<td>Marlborough</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mashpee Congregational Church, UCC</td>
<td>Mashpee</td>
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<td>Sanctuary United Church of Christ</td>
<td>Medford</td>
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<td>First Congregational Church in Melrose, UCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Street Union Church</td>
<td>Methuen</td>
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<td>North Congregational Church</td>
<td>Middleboro</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church of Milford, UCC</td>
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<td>Millbury Federated Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Church of Monson UCC*</td>
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<td>First Congregational Church of Natick</td>
<td>Natick</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Congregational Church UCC</td>
<td>Newburyport</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church UCC</td>
<td>North Adams</td>
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<td>Trinitarian Congregational Church (UCC)</td>
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<td>First Congregational Church</td>
<td>North Attleboro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trinity Church Northborough</td>
<td>Northborough</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCC Congregational Church of Norwell</td>
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<td>The Federated Church of Orleans</td>
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<td>Tabernacle Congregational Church, UCC, Salem</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church of Somerville, UCC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Church in Sterling, Federated*</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church UCC</td>
<td>Stockbridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Church in Swampscott, Congregational</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Christian Congregational Church</td>
<td>Swansea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wellesley Congregational (Village) Church*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>West Parish of Barnstable</td>
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<td>The First Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Original Congregational Church, UCC</td>
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**TOP GIVING CHURCHES PER MEMBER IN 2016**

*Includes Fellowship Dues, United Church Mission, Our Church’s Wider Mission Basic Support, One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church, and Christmas Fund*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Received</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Per Member</th>
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<tr>
<td>Barnstable</td>
<td>Federated Church of Orleans *</td>
<td>Orleans</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Truro</td>
<td>Truro</td>
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<td>Berkshire</td>
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<td>Pittsfield</td>
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<td>Central</td>
<td>Faith United Parish</td>
<td>Fitchburg</td>
<td>$6,857.29</td>
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<td>Franklin</td>
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<td>Montague</td>
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<td>West Springfield</td>
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<td>$231.93</td>
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<td>Boston</td>
<td>United Parish of Auburndale</td>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>$25,846.00</td>
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<td>$185.94</td>
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<td>The First Congregational Church of Rockport, UCC</td>
<td>Rockport</td>
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<td>$109.76</td>
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<td>First Church of Christ in Marblehead</td>
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<td>$92.98</td>
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<td>Old Colony</td>
<td>Lakeville United Church of Christ</td>
<td>Lakeville</td>
<td>$9,758.86</td>
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<td>$70.72</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mattapoisett Congregational Church, UCC</td>
<td>Mattapoisett</td>
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<td>Pilgrim</td>
<td>First Congregational Church UCC</td>
<td>Stoughton</td>
<td>$12,280.19</td>
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<td>$141.15</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UCC Congregational Church of Norwell *</td>
<td>Norwell</td>
<td>$40,110.00</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>$114.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"5 FOR 5" CHURCHES  2016

5 for 5 Churches Exemplify Excellence
"5 for 5 Churches" have contributed to Our Church’s Wider Mission Basic Support, or United Church Mission, and all four Special Offerings in the past year.

- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Neighbors in Need
- Strengthen the Church
- Christmas Fund

These churches exemplify excellence in Christian mission by supporting all the ways the United Church of Christ is changing lives, whether through disaster assistance, hunger programs, justice work, church vitality, leadership development, youth and children’s ministries, new church starts, or assistance to low income retired clergy.

5 for 5 Churches in 2016
* UCM opt-in churches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christ Church United, Dracut</th>
<th>First Congregational Church UCC, Whitman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christ Congregational Church, UCC, Brockton</td>
<td>First Congregational Church, Amherst, UCC*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Covenant, Federated, Boston</td>
<td>First Congregational Church, Hatfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church on the Hill, UCC, Lenox*</td>
<td>First Congregational Church of Marion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational Church of Westborough*</td>
<td>Lakeville United Church of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards Church of Northampton*</td>
<td>Maple Street Congregational Church UCC, Danvers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding Hills Congregational Church, UCC</td>
<td>Mashpee Congregational Church, UCC*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Church Congregational UCC, Methuen</td>
<td>Pilgrim Congregational Church, Lexington*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Church in Pembroke</td>
<td>Rollstone Congregational Church, UCC, Fitchburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Church of Christ Congregational, Bedford*</td>
<td>Second Congregational, UCC, Pittsfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Church of Christ in Longmeadow*</td>
<td>Tabernacle Congregational Church, UCC, Salem*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Church of Monson, UCC*</td>
<td>The First Congregational Church in Worcester, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church in Billerica, UCC</td>
<td>Trinity Church Northborough*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church of Sheffield, UCC*</td>
<td>UCC Congregational Church of Norwell*</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church of West Brookfield</td>
<td>Union Congregational Church, UCC, Groton*</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church of Williamsburg</td>
<td>United Church in Walpole</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church UCC, Chatham</td>
<td>United Church of Christ, Congregational, Burlington*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church UCC, Spencer</td>
<td>West Parish Church of Andover*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church UCC, Stoughton</td>
<td>West Yarmouth Congregational Church, UCC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUPPORT DURING TIMES OF GROWTH, INNOVATION, TRANSITION, CONFLICT, AND VISIONING

Members of the Massachusetts Conference staff are available to assist your church at times of innovation and growth as well as transition or crisis. Churches can begin with their regional Associate Conference Minister for:

- **Coaching** on best practices from across the country and multiple church traditions, gleaned from churches that have found ways to be effective in the current changing landscape of ministry.
- **Support** for discerning God’s vision for their next chapter, including help reflecting on identity and purpose and tools to learn about and listen to the culture and community around them.
- **Consultation** with pastors and leaders during times of conflict to determine the depth and extent of the conflict and the best resources to guide the church to a healthy and faithful outcome.
- **Search and Call Assistance** in times of transition, when search committees are putting together their church profiles and looking to find the best candidate to serve as their next settled, designated term or interim pastor. (See more at macucc.org/search call.)
- **Reflection** that recalls what your church has been and done in the past, challenges it to see itself more honestly and clearly by bringing an outside perspective, and holds up a mirror to help your church recognize strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

See more about support during times of growth, innovation, transition, conflict, and visioning at macucc.org/growingyourchurch.

Below is the contact information for each of our Associate Conference Ministers:

### REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTERS

- **Kelly Gallagher**
  Serves Central and Hampshire Associations
  gallagherk@macucc.org
  (413) 210-1124

- **Donald Remick**
  Serves Barnstable, Old Colony and Pilgrim Associations
  remickd@macucc.org
  (508) 875-5233 [ext. 226 - Martha Goodman, Administrative Assistant]

- **Jill Graham**
  Serves Berkshire, Franklin and Hampden Associations
  grahamj@macucc.org
  (413) 589-7034

- **Wendy Vander Hart**
  Serves Northeast and Metropolitan Boston Associations
  vanderhartw@macucc.org
  (781) 369-1396

Office: 21 Church St., Winchester, MA 01890
SUPPORT FOR CLERGY VITALITY

The Massachusetts Conference has been a pioneer in creating an environment in which pastoral excellence is vigorously pursued and joyfully supported. With a grant from the Lily Foundation, the Pastoral Excellence Program was launched in 2002 to develop, promote, and sustain excellent pastoral leadership for the churches in the Conference. It was a model that is now being duplicated in other UCC Conferences and denominations around the country. We continue to support the vitality of our clergy.

Some specific resources to support clergy include:

- The Pastoral Excellence Program is designed to develop, promote, and sustain pastoral excellence. To accomplish this goal, we have created a vibrant Conference-wide network of small groups and large learning events for our clergy in every season of ministry, offering opportunities for collegial support and ongoing development in the practices of pastoral ministry.

  - Clergy Communities of Practice (CCOPs) offer more experienced pastors opportunities to hone their practices of ministry and develop meaningful and supportive collegial relationships. Counteracting the risks of isolation and burnout, CCOPs are designed to help clergy navigate the challenges of ministry and enhance growth. There are currently 26 different groups of 5-10 participants each who support their colleagues, learn from each other, and grow in faith together.

  - New Clergy Groups (NCGs) are designed for clergy in their first three years of ministry. There are 5 NCGs who meet monthly in small groups of three to five, assisted by a more experienced pastor who is trained to serve as facilitator and mentor. Here, new pastors find the support and guidance they need to navigate the transition from seminary into pastoral ministry. They will learn best practices of meeting the challenges of the first years of ministry and developing habits that will enable them to thrive for a lifetime of effective service.

- The Board of Ministerial Aid provides confidential financial assistance and counseling to both clergy and their families who serve, or have served in the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and other churches of the "congregational way."

- Conference-wide Learning Events are designed to provide rich opportunities for learning from expert practitioners and conversation with colleagues on particular topics.

- Renewal events for clergy, such as the Tending the Fire retreat series, offer opportunities for spiritual rejuvenation.
NURTURING CHURCH VITALITY

Part of the core mission of the Massachusetts Conference is to nurture church vitality, and the Conference carries out this mission by providing resources for people involved in varying aspects of church life, including Church Growth, Justice & Witness, Christian Education and Faith Formation, Stewardship, Communication, Finance, and daily operations. Here are just some of the resources the Conference has to offer.

Growing Your Church
www.macucc.org/growingyourchurch

As the Body of Christ our vitality comes when our churches increase in health, faithfulness, and effectiveness. Our Conference continues to offer programs and coaches to assist you in your journey in understanding the dynamics of your church and the mission field that you are in.

- **Churches Alive** program, designed to nurture and provoke the vitality of churches who want to deeply explore and discern their future.
- **Crossroads Massachusetts** program, addressing sustainability or viability.
- **Church Resilience Program**, designed to help a church assess and develop its skills around communication and conflict.
- **Pearl Pastorates** program to help churches with 75 or fewer in worship be more healthy, faithful and effective.
- **Super Saturday** networking and workshops.
- **MissionInsight** demographics information.

Donald Remick
Associate Conference Minister
remickd@macucc.org
(508) 875-5233
[ext. 226 - Martha Goodman, Administrative Assistant]

Christian Education / Faith Formation
www.macucc.org/faithformation

The Conference offers a wealth of resources for nurturing faith formation in your church.

- Resources, links, and publications on **Safe Church Conduct Policies**, **School Curriculum, Baptism, and Vacation Bible School**.
- Resource Center **Lending Library** of videos and DVDs available for use at your church.
- **Events** (e.g., confirmation retreats and national youth gatherings).
- **Christian Educators' Certification Program**, designed to equip people for the educational ministry of the church.
- Educational & networking opportunities, including 6 Christian Education **Communities of Practice**.
The churches and people of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ have a very long history of looking at the world and prayerfully working to make it a better place. We offer support, resources, and the tools to connect with others in the Conference working on the same issues, including these:

- Climate Action
- Homelessness
- Immigration and Refugee Concerns
- Interfaith Action and Ecumenism
- LGBT Concerns
- Racial Justice
- Restorative Justice
- Innocence Commission
- Israel Palestine
- Chile Partnership
- Disaster Resource
- Hispanic Ministries

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- Racial Justice
- Restorative Justice
- Innocence Commission
- Israel Palestine
- Chile Partnership
- Disaster Resource
- Hispanic Ministries

Stewardship
www.macucc.org/stewardship

Generosity is a gift of the spirit. Inspiring generosity is one of the most important tasks of the church as we seek to make God’s love and justice real for everyone. This is best accomplished by a year-round cycle. We provide advice and resources to help you inspire your congregation to new levels of generosity, through:

- Annual giving
- Planned giving
- Capital campaigns
- Endowment policies

Justice & Witness
www.macucc.org/changingourworld

Kelly Gallagher
Associate Conference Minister
gallagherk@macucc.org
(413) 210-1124

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- Homelessness
- Immigration and Refugee Concerns
- Interfaith Action and Ecumenism
- LGBT Concerns
- Racial Justice
- Restorative Justice
- Innocence Commission
- Israel Palestine
- Chile Partnership
- Disaster Resource
- Hispanic Ministries

Racial Justice
Toyana (TJ) Harper
Associate for Racial Justice Ministries
harpert@macucc.org
508-875-5233, ext. 275
www.macucc.org/racejustice

Climate Action
Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
Missioner of Creation Care
bullitt-Jonasm@macucc.org

The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas is the non-stipendiary Missioner for Creation Care for both the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ.

Stewardship
www.macucc.org/stewardship

Jonathan New
Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Financial Development
newj@macucc.org
(508) 875-5233, ext. 231

Generosity is a gift of the spirit. Inspiring generosity is one of the most important tasks of the church as we seek to make God’s love and justice real for everyone. This is best accomplished by a year-round cycle. We provide advice and resources to help you inspire your congregation to new levels of generosity, through:

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- Planned giving
- Capital campaigns
- Endowment policies
Communication & Websites
www.macucc.org/communication
Tiffany Vail
Associate Conference Minister for Communications
vailt@macucc.org
(508) 875-5233, ext. 229

Having a church sign outside your doors is no longer enough to convey your message to people. Churches must use digital communication in order to attract, educate, and inspire. The Conference offers online resources, videos, audio recordings, advice, workshops, and resources on:
- Church use of social media
- Building church websites
- Communicating identity

Meeting/Retreat Space
www.edwardshouseframingham.org
Diane Montgomery
Site Manager
montgomeryd@macucc.org
(508) 875-5233, ext. 271

Facility space that is conducive to relaxed conversation, contemplation, and community, as well as to providing a productive working environment is available to churches at our Edwards House, Framingham location. The building houses 7 bedrooms, 6 baths, a living room, and lounge for:
- Day or overnight meetings
- Retreats

Financial
www.macucc.org/financial
Help for treasurers and financial managers:
- Church Finance Resources —
  A wealth of resources for treasurers and others involved with the finances of the church.
- Church Property Management —
  Resources on cell phone antenna installation, capital improvement loans, energy conservation, and more.
- Compensation Guidelines & Staffing Resources —
  Compensation guidelines, job descriptions and other resources related to church employees, clergy, and non-clergy.

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

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<th>National Setting</th>
<th>Pension Boards</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Worcester Area Mission Society: 508-832-3937</th>
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<tr>
<td>UCC Headquarters</td>
<td>800-642-6543</td>
<td>Church World Service</td>
<td>Andover Newton Theological School 617-964-1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 Prospect Avenue</td>
<td>Global Ministries 866-822-8224</td>
<td>Disaster Hot Line: 800-456-1310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleveland, OH 44115-1100</td>
<td>UCC Insurance (Information) 800-437-8830 (Claims) 800-832-7839</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.ucc.org">www.ucc.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>City Mission of Boston</td>
<td>Seafarer’s Friend 617-889-6315</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office of General Ministries 216-736-2100</td>
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<td>617-742-6830</td>
<td>Wider Church Ministries 216-736-3200</td>
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<td>Justice and Witness Ministries 216-736-3700</td>
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<td>Local Church Ministries 216-736-3800</td>
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Massachusetts Congregational Fund 800-514-1111
Massachusetts Council of Churches: 617-523-2771
Following Jesus and rooted in the grace of God, nurturing local church vitality and the covenant among our churches to make God’s love and justice real.

Massachusetts Conference
United Church of Christ
1 Badger Road
Framingham, MA 01702-5517

Return Service Requested