

Maine Conference United Church of Christ
2024 Annual Meeting Board Report

Greetings Maine Conference!

Your Maine Conference Board of Directors has spent another year working on your behalf, meeting once a month, either in person or via zoom. Board members are: Vice Chair, Stef Michaud, Treasurer Hariph Smith, Clerk: Rev. Susan Burgess, Rev. Brad Hirst, John Thompson, Beth Haynes, Rev. Bob Evans, Rev. Bill Bliss, and Rev. Ian Lynch.

The Board created an ad hoc Goals Committee this year and used their guidance to develop goals for ourselves to focus our work together over these past months. One of our primary goals was to attend to the financial viability of our Conference so it will remain viable and continue to sustain itself through the years. One concrete step the Board took toward meeting this goal was to establish another ad hoc committee to generate ideas and suggestions for ways we can increase our financial stability. Their suggestions and ongoing input to the Board is invaluable. We also support Conference staff as they conscientiously and diligently focus on using our money wisely and with intention.

Friends of the Maine Conference (FOMC) has been identified as a financial mission of the Board. FOMC is a way individual donors can make direct contributions to support the Maine Conference financially. Your donations to FOMC strengthens our ability to keep churches and our other faith communities connected and supported. The board strongly encourages all to give, as they are able, to this vital mission.

We have also engaged in conversations about what it means to be a Board in a time and in a state where transformation in religious life has been occurring, including both the good and challenging impact of COVID. Individual Board members are involved in the work of our Social Action Committee (SAC), Anti-racism Team, Friend of the Maine Conference Team (FOMC), Personnel, Conference Minister Transition Team, Disaster Team, Pilgrim Lodge Leadership Team, and Maine School of Ministry (MESOM) Advisory Team.

The Board also recognizes that we are an extension of a church body where covenant is our guiding force. We celebrate the many ways in which our deep, and often long, relationships have given us the ability to care for each other over this past year. This includes but is not limited to, communities such as Lewiston and Auburn which have experience traumas.

The Board want to acknowledge the leadership of Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola and the hard work of her staff. This year has been one of great transition, but yes, also great opportunity! If you have not done so yet, I encourage you to welcome, our new ACM, Rev. John Fiscus, new bookkeeper, Nancy Bartlett, and new administrative assistant, Kimberly Donovan-Poisson, and new Assistant Pilgrim Lodge Director, Lydia Hoffman. We are glad they are with us and sharing their gifts. We remain thankful for our Pilgrim Lodge Director, Elizabeth Charles McGough and MESOM Dean, Rev. Malcolm Himschoot. In addition, we are so glad that Renita Dehais is enjoying retirement

with her husband, Bill. Finally, our hearts remain tender at the deep loss of our beloved Anne Hodgman. Our prayers and love remain with her husband, Brian, and their children and grandchildren.

The members of the Board also thanks and extends its appreciation to Hariph Smith. He is going off the Board this year after many years of service, including that as our Conference Treasurer. Hariph's dedication and care to keeping track of financial sustainability went above and beyond. Well done, Hariph!

On a personal note. As I close this report, I also am in the midst of closing seven years of serving the Conference as a member of your Board of Directors. I express gratitude for the trust granted me, for this unique opportunity to give back and appreciation for all the grace given to me throughout these years. I am filled with hope for my beloved Maine Conference and looking forward to seeing where we will go and what we all will accomplish together!

Your Sibling in Christ,

Rev. Sara E. Bartlett. M.Div
Chair, Maine Conference, United Church of Christ Board
Moderator, Maine Conference, United Church of Christ