

Rev. John Fiscus, Associate Conference Minister,

Annual Report for the Board and Annual Meeting of Maine Conference

Bit by bit, putting it together

Piece by piece, only way to make a work of art

Every moment makes a contribution

Every little detail plays a part

Having just a vision's no solution

Everything depends on execution

Putting it together

That's what counts! (Sondheim, Sunday in the Park with George)

One year ago, as I wrote my report for the Board and Annual meeting, I was still quite new to Maine and the Conference. I spoke about my primary Goal, get my feet under me and “**learn the territory**”. I feel as though I have graduated from learning the territory to “**Putting it Together**”. Aggressively traveling all the directions in Maine was amazing. From Presque Isle to Kittery Point and Somesville to Freyberg, I now having completed that year of learning it is time to report back to you on what I have accomplished and what I hope to accomplish in the coming year.

One of my primary goals was to get to know as many churches and people of the Maine conference as possible. My top priority is most often search and call. This year I had the privilege of helping fourteen churches find and call pastoral supply through the search processes. Being able to offer training, support, and connection to these churches was incredibly meaningful to me. There is still work to be done here. For me Vitality means being able to hear and know our stories. At this writing, I have visited either through preaching, Association meetings, or pastoral gatherings, approximately fifty churches in the conference. In addition to those visits, I have attended the Committee on Ministry meetings at least once for each of the COM's. I have been serving Sunrise and Katahdin COM Associations as their conference liaison and will be adding Living Water / Oxford Union and the York Association COM's to my portfolio.

My work with the committees and teams of the Conference have also been very fruitful. Resourcing the Local Church has met to offer grants to people and churches in need. It supports students on their path as well. This year they updated their handbook which will be available after the Annual Meeting. Social Action has

provided communication, workshops, and testimony on an array of issues. They realize the complexity of our world and its multiple needs and are working to create channels of help. Disaster Relief Resource Team meets to plan for the unthinkable and prepare for emergencies. They continue to be a channel for Disaster relief across the denomination. Anti-Racism continues to monitor and offer support on issues. Communication with our First Peoples, particularly the Wabanaki Alliance, comes through their efforts.

I was blessed to have two opportunities to represent the Conference outside of Maine. I attended the Gathering called AM21, which is focused on equipping Conference staff to do great work for churches. It is a time to share and offer best practices to each other. My second opportunity came with the General Synod of the United Church of Christ in Kansas City. It had as a theme moving into the deep. It used the storage of the miraculous catch of fish to examine how the Christ is still calling us to move into the deep to do new and marvelous things. It was a chance to hear the ideas and priorities of the United Church of Christ. It was also a wonderful way to hear how our siblings in Christ are working across the nation and world. I took away a sense of connection and passion to continue our good work here in Maine.

When I write anything that is about looking back at a year, I find it important to offer my hopes and goals for the time ahead. Many of the churches on my worklist have now found pastors. I will continue to help churches in transition but am glad that our “open pulpit” numbers have significantly decreased. I also am entering a new period of being present for training and support of churches and pastors. I am currently looking at the Manual on Church as being a topic I spend time with this year. In addition, I am hoping to work on expanding my role helping churches and pastors know and flourish into our shared understanding of boundaries. I am also looking forward to entering more doors I have not visited. My preaching schedule is often full intentionally. When we pray, sing, and reason together I am blessed. I look forward to this coming year of blessings.

Rev. John Fiscus,

Associate Conference Minister for Transition and Vitality.