

Beloveds in Christ

It has been a challenging year to sort out exactly what it means to “do anti-racism work” within the broader church. The need has been clear. But, there has been much to do on many fronts. Very early in the year when the federal government made changes to how they would pursue immigration enforcement, our churches that serve immigrant and refugee communities quickly got to work learning what they could do to protect the people they serve when they are on church grounds. And, many plugged into the organizing events that the Maine Council of Churches put together under the “Here We Are. Send Us!” banner.

As the congregations that work with larger immigrant populations know quite well, more changes have come since January, particularly with religious buildings and schools no longer protected from agencies pursuing immigration arrests on their grounds. Now that we are many months into these changes in immigration enforcement, I would like to hear more from congregations who have been particularly impacted. What have you learned that helps you serve people well? How are you coping with these disruptions? What support do you need on the Conference level?

We have been working to make more robust our new-ish connections to the Wabanaki Alliance Coalition. I am grateful for Rich Stuart’s work in particular. He attends the Coalition meetings as a representative and shares a monthly newsletters with articles and information relating to Wabanaki sovereignty. It’s important to keep an eye on upcoming legislation. Supporting legislation is a key way all of us, Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki alike, can support sovereignty in our state. If you’re not signed up for Rich’s newsletter, you can also go to the Wabanaki Alliance’s legislative bill tracker and keep up there:

<https://www.wabanakialliance.com/legislative-bill-tracker/>

Realizing that many people were unfamiliar with the work of the Wabanaki Alliance Coalition, we hosted Alliance Executive Director Maulian Bryant for an introduction to the Coalition back in March. You can watch the recorded program here: <https://youtu.be/QAAKm5JdJKs>. If you like to know more about getting your church involved in the Coalition, reach out to Rich, Marvin Ellison (who spoke at the event), or the Alliance through their website.

Bruce Burnham also organized a Wabanaki REACH program in the Katahdin Association this last year. That is just the kind of programming our team would like to support. If you have something you’d be interested in doing on the Association level, let us know! We’d be happy to offer some financial support, as well as organizing support.

MESOM is going to offer a really useful course in late winter/ spring 2026 for those interested in faithful anti-racism work. The first two sessions in February and March will be led by volunteers from REACH who will present a program they’ve developed for faith communities. It would be great to have lots of folks from across the conference join this portion of the class. Then, there will be 3-4 sessions more, mostly geared to current MESOM students and MIDs (but you could

join even if you're not a current student) that will be based on a curriculum called Sacred Reckonings. Keep an eye out for more information and sign up.

With the unrest in the broader country, and impacts of the on-going pandemic on volunteer engagement and outreach programming, many people are opting to primarily spend their time in service in their local churches and local communities. I am sure that there are congregations doing some great things that we haven't yet learned about. We'll have a table at annual meeting. I hope you'll come by and tell us about what your church has been working on, and let us know where you could use support right now. We understand our role in part to be one of equipping the saints and also to show up for our siblings in Christ and our neighbors. How could you see the Anti-Racism Resource Team supporting your congregation in this challenging moment?

Respectfully submitted,

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Rev. Debbie Duval, Rev. Sarah Pringle-Lewis, Rev. Allison Smith, Rich Stuart, Rev.
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