

Annual Report for

Rev. John Fiscus, Associate Conference Minister

My third year of service in the Maine conference has officially begun. I am offering this reflection as my annual report. It seems unreal that over two years have passed since I first entered the Conference offices. I have stopped trying to list and count all the churches that I have visited, preached at, or helped at times of transition. It has been an emotional journey. I have already had to say goodbye to pastors I have come to respect and have begun relationships with others newer than I to the state of Maine. This year alone I visited as far south as Acton, North to Lincoln, West to Bethel and East to Machias. I even preached on an island that has few cars, oceans of lupine and a golf cart with scripture on the windshield to let you know it belongs to the church. Our Maine Conference is an ongoing mystery that continues to unfold.

Search and call still occupies the vast majority of my efforts. Beyond helping churches figure out what they need to say and do to attract new pastors, I find myself building networks of folks I can ask for help. I am currently working with four of the seven Committees on Ministry in Maine. They are an amazing collection of faithful people working to ensure that pastors are trained and ready for service in the Maine conference. These networks along with being present at Association gatherings have helped me view the rich tapestry woven across Congregational lives here in Maine. I have attended meetings in every Association this year.

One of the growing edges of my work continues to be ongoing support of our clergy. Our Conference is continuing to work on renewal and connective efforts across the state. We have begun to plan for the next clergy convocation in 2027. One of the other efforts along this line are the Clergy Communities of Practice. We currently have multiple groups that gather. I have had some folks ask about more affinity focused Communities of Practice and I am hoping to address that need. If you have interest in being a facilitator for a group let me know. I am hoping to be able to find groups for Chaplains, counselors, and spiritual directors. Our Ministers in Discernment and retirees have affinity groups. There is of course room to grow here.

One of the other areas that I have responsibility for is gathering new called pastors for a time of introduction to Maine and our resources. These gatherings bring together our staff, our mission teams, and newly called ministers into an intentional time of connection. Much of our success in life is measured in the ways we connect in covenant to become the body of Christ. These gatherings are great starting points.

My portfolio also includes being a resource for our ministry teams and committees. This year Resourcing the Local Church (RLC) has processed and granted requests to both churches and MID students in need of support. Social Action Committee spent time listening to the desires of the Conference members who interacted at their workshops and table at annual meeting. This year they have worked on continuing their work. Two important resolutions have been forwarded by them to the body for a vote. One of these resolutions was born and created from what we

heard from churches. Disasters Ministry Team has been at work preparing for the unthinkable. In addition, they have helped build relief kits for hard hit areas as well as hosting a mission trip this year. Finally, our anti-racism team continues to listen to and be present in areas of need. Much of our connection to the first peoples of Maine grew from their efforts.

On a personal note, I wanted to offer you a list of my thanks for being in Maine items. I love apple cider season. If an orchard makes their own donuts I will find you! I like Hot Dog stands that serve crazy things like Haddock burgers. I love how serious whoopee pies are taken here. I love the sound of the ocean crashing into rock shores beneath the lighthouses. There is a candy shop near Lebec that has a candy in the shape of a sea cucumber filled with peanut butter and caramel that will be shipped to family this year for Christmas. I love playing the game “is that one of ours” when I spot a big white steeple in a town I am passing. There are still three things on my Maine list to try. I want to see a blueberry harvest, I want to have a sip of Moxie (maybe more), and from a safe and secure distance I need to see a moose but a Bigfoot would be cool too. Year three here I come!

Rev. John Fiscus