

CONFERENCE BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

“The gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.”

- John Wesley

The New England Conference Board of Church and Society works to connect local congregations and the Annual Conference to the work of the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church. Together we strive to live out the calling toward personal and social holiness through five program priorities, *all grounded in racial justice*: **poverty, climate, health, peace, and civil and human rights**. It is our prayer, as a committee, that the work we do will equip local churches and the New England Annual Conference (hereafter, NEAC) with the necessary skills and prophetic vision to navigate a world groaning under the stressors of climate disaster, inequity, poverty, war, disease, and injustice. Our work is never-ending, requiring each of us to do our best as we strive toward the prophetic witness for which the world yearns.

During the 2021 program year, the Conference Board of Church and Society addressed several of these priorities. We began the year by selecting the first nonbinary Ziegler Preacher at Annual Conference, providing voice to many who find themselves underrepresented in our world. As the right to a safe abortion began to erode during the last months of 2021, we appealed to United Methodists throughout the NEAC to write to their government representatives to secure the right to safe healthcare among all peoples in our country. We spent a significant amount of the year exploring methods to aid those new to our country seeking assistance, and donated \$7,500 of our “Peace with Justice” funds to to Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON).

We spent time and resources researching and writing legislation regarding burgeoning threats of war, risks to healthcare, and continued unrest in Israel, reflected in the following resolutions:

- “Commitment to Peacekeeping”
- “Rights and Access to Reproductive Healthcare,” and
- “Identifying and Opposing Apartheid in the Holy Land.”

Our greatest focus in 2021 was spent finding a consistent and coordinated method to bring our churches and facilities into compliance with existing practices to minimize our carbon footprint as an Annual Conference. To this end, we sought out experts in our Annual Conference, and extend our thanks to the Rev. Kim Hornung-Marcy for her willingness to work with us. The Committee agreed that the following goals should be implemented quickly, given the immediacy of the climate crisis.

Goal #1: Educate the NEAC about global warming.

Goal #2: Implement and coordinate annual energy audits by each NEAC church.

Goal #3: Curate and distribute materials regarding each state’s energy efficiency programs.

Goal #4: Connect churches with their state Interfaith Power and Light chapter.

Goal #5: Practice recycling, composting, weatherization, energy efficient lighting, native plant landscaping, reduction of single use items in our NEAC churches and facilities.

Goal #6: Design new church facilities in ecologically responsible ways.

Goal #7: Use virtual meetings and carpooling to limit carbon emissions.

Goal #8: Use votes and advocacy to challenge elected officials to reduce carbon emissions.

Goal #9: Observe the Sunday closest to Earth Day (April 22) for a celebration of God's creation.

Goal #10: Create a Climate Change Task Force including a member from each state in the NEAC, directed by the Board of Church and Society, to implement the above measures.

Goal #11: Hire a NEAC Climate Consultant to help us assess and resource these goals.

The resolution entitled “Stewardship of Creation” supports these goals, helping to address concerns that are root causes of many ills plaguing our world, including racism, poverty, health, peace and civil and human rights. While creation stewardship does not solve these perilous and persistent problems, it does move us closer to a healthier and more sustainable planet for all.

Special thanks are extended to the active members of our Board who carved time out of their incredibly busy schedules to participate in our numerous ZOOM meetings.

This report is submitted by Rev. Leigh Goodrich, on behalf of the NEAC Board of Church and Society: Bill Aldrich, Scott Campbell, We Chang, Beth DiCocco, Becca Girrell, Jordan Harris, Alexander Hunter, Ashley Johnson, Chico Martin, Gary Richards, Ami Sawtelle, Seok-Cheol Shin.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORTS FROM THE CLERGY ORDERS AND FELLOWSHIP

Introduction

The Clergy Orders and Fellowships of the New England Annual Conference respectfully submit the following reports in fulfillment of our shared covenant of support and accountability. We request that clergy members of the NEAC read and reflect not only on the report of their own covenant community, but on the totality of reports as we continue “moving on to perfection” in shared ministry. These reports, together, provide a 1-year update to the joint statement and goals for unity that were part of the 2021 Conference proceedings.

Report: Fellowship of Licensed Local Pastors and Associate Ministers

Our conference is blessed by a group of dedicated and passionate local pastors with diverse gifts and graces for ministry. In the New England Conference, there is one Associate Member under appointment. There are 140 appointed licensed local pastors, 96 of whom are part-time (68%), 23 who are retired, and 21 who are full-time. Many are serving in missional appointments and making tremendous progress in the transformation of church and world.

Challenges currently facing the fellowship include pastors’ sense of isolation, compounded by difficulty being connected with mentors, and variability in pastors’ sense of preparation and training for the work. Additionally, the variety of formats of appointments local pastors serve (including multi-point charges, multilingual churches, bivocational ministries, etc.) would be enhanced by more specialized orientation and guidance for these unique ministry forms. A side-effect of these struggles is burnout, especially in the context of the COVID pandemic.

We would like to enhance our sense of community and connection within the fellowship by convening an annual retreat, including a remote relationship-building experience with members of each order. We also hope to provide further orientation to pastors on making the most of mentoring, and other sources of support available to us.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Richard Rego, co-char
Pastor John Robbins, co-chair

Report: Order of Deacons

As of the 2022 Annual Conference, the Order of Deacons includes 9 full members, 9 provisional members, and 10 retired members. We celebrate the growth of our order over the last five years, not only in numbers, but in diversity and variety of expressions of ministry. Through our work of compassion and justice beyond the local church, we are the Church’s servants for the transformation of the world: in