



April 17, 2024

Important Steps for the NEAC's Future

We are living in a challenging and critical season as we try to discern where God is leading the people called United Methodist after the painful process of disaffiliation, the impacts of the pandemic, and potential changes coming from the approaching [General Conference](#).

I am grateful that the New England Conference has proactively, prayerfully, and collaboratively engaged in discerning and envisioning a new future for the United Methodist Movement here in New England during the last three annual conferences. The Vision Forward Team, the Connectional Table, and connectional ministries, in collaboration with Conference boards, committees, and task forces with specific mandates, have faithfully engaged in this work.

I am pleased to be writing to you today about some of the important steps that have already been taken in this regard and to say a word about plans that will be moving forward very soon.

These steps, some enacted, some planned, will position the Conference for greater efficiency and effectiveness now and into the future:

- The Administrative Assistants for the District Superintendents have been reconfigured. Six of the 7 districts receive support services from 3 full-time (with benefits) Regional Administrators. These are Katahdin and Many Waters, Commonwealth East and Commonwealth West, and Green Mountain and Granite districts. The Seacoast District has a part-time Administrative Assistant.
- Many of the Church Conference forms have been transitioned to the "Formvite" electronic platform. The forms can be completed via email, which saves time and resources and eliminates duplication.
- The paper files and records in all of our offices are being digitized to make them more accessible and save space.
- Significant staff transitions have occurred in Finance and Administration, including retirements, staff leaving for other employment, which have led to newly reconfigured positions: Director of Administrative Ministries and Assistant Treasurer/Director of Financial Ministries.
- Recently, we contracted with an outside accounting firm, BDO in Boston, to conduct a thorough review and assessment based on current best practices in financial records, accounting and related processes that we expect to lead to improved financial procedures and reporting capabilities. Similar to work was done in 2005 and again 2014.



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- Upgrades to our financial software are underway, and plans for a comprehensive review of all our technology are being finalized and that assessment will begin very soon.

In addition, I have established the Strategic Management Advisory Group to provide advice and counsel on current and future budgeting and capital asset management decisions. This group will work with staff and the chairs of the key councils, boards, and committees with financial and fiduciary responsibility including Council on Finance & Administration, Board of Pensions, Trustees, Equitable Salaries, Preachers' Aid Society, and the UM Foundation of New England.

It will:

- engage in a conference-wide asset/liability review,
- assess the current mission share formula with a long-term sustainability and equity grounding,
- review and assess the conference investment policies and performance,
- study and develop alternative funding models for strategic and future ministries,
- and propose a conference capital asset management strategy and other non-mission share funding.

There is much work left to do in this time of transition for The United Methodist Church and here in the New England Conference. My deepest thanks to all those serving and leading in ministry on these efforts. Our goal, always, is to support the robust ministry of our local churches and connectional entities to better make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Sunday Announcements for April 21, 2024

Linda Keister, Rosamond Hammond, Stephen Boyns (at home), Georgia (Stacey & Stewart's daughter), Pinamang Boateng, Joseph Boateng, Anne Burrows, Ray Cournoyer (friend of Bill Robbins), Dot Ellis, Earl Flagg, Barbara Fletcher, Tom Friend, Beverly Grimshaw, Jim Hoffman, Don Johnson (Phil's brother), Charles & Samira Kiefer, Dorothy Norcross, Sandra O'Driscoll, David Samanen, Sandra Scheys, Alysia Simoneau, Janet Terzian, Donald Tremblay; Barbara, Frank & the Vietze Family; Grace Woode, Peter Woodcock, Laura Zoldak, Baby "T" (friend of Carol Samanen), Susan (friend of David Potts), Margie (Linda Keister's sister), Page (Allison Hansen's sister), Libby T. (friend of Phyllis Yngve), Neil Ashton (past member), Paula and Calvin Kelly (sister and brother-in-law of Linda Dylewicz), Al, Linda, and Kathy Freeburn (friends of Linda and Lou D'Acri),
Those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and alcoholism.

Ronna Davis and family on the death of her husband, John, on Tuesday, April 9th. Cards of condolences can be sent to 7 Davis Ledge Road, Sterling, MA 01564.

Announcements

May Herald: *There are always extra copies of the Herald in the Narthex by the Welcome Office.*

The May Herald will be part of the May 5th bulletin; however, it will be posted by May 3rd. Please send all articles to me no later than Wednesday, April 26th. *Thank you, Debi*

Quilters Needed...

Once a month, on the first Thursday, at 10 am we gather in the sewing room on the second floor to prepare quilts for Prayers and Squares. If you'd like to help, please reach out to Jan England at 508-886-2585.

From Carty Cupboard.....

We are in need of cold cereal, meals in a can, like stew and Chef Boyardee products, and this month we would also like jelly, (we do have a lot of peanut butter so jelly would be perfect!) We are still looking for reusable bags. Please Do Not bring us any more plastic or paper bags. Thank you to all of you who have and continue to donate to Carty Cupboard Food Pantry. *Nancy Spencer*

Grocery Gift Cards -- Now Accepting Email Orders

Gift card sales to prevent homelessness will now be available after church once a month. If you would like to order cards, please email Allison at AChis4788@aol.com, and depending on availability, she will bring your order the following Sunday, or after the next pick-up date from Central Mass. Housing Alliance.

Cards from local grocery stores, coffee shops, CVS, Panera and Target will still be on offer after church on:

May 5 (just in time for Mother's Day and graduations)	June 16
June 2	August 4

Thanks to all the people who continue to support this ministry!

Allison Hansen

Save the Dates: United Women in Faith Spring into Action

Wesley's unit of United Women in Faith has a busy spring season. Be sure to put these dates in your calendar so you don't miss out!

April 19-21 Northeast Jurisdiction Conference in Providence -- Ask Allison about reimbursements for hotel and registration fees

Friday, April 26 -- deadline to submit Mission Recognition nominations

Saturday, April 27, 8:45 a.m. -- Steering Committee meeting, John Wesley Room

Sunday, May 12 -- Mother's Day and Mission Recognition Award presentation

Saturday, June 1, 8:45 a.m. -- Steering Committee meeting, John Wesley Room

Tuesday, June 18*, 6 p.m. -- Potluck and planning meeting with presenter Tiffany Lillie, CEO of Girls Inc. of Worcester.

*Please note this date has changed from the calendar distributed last fall.

Tower & Rose Window Lightings & Altar Flowers

The Rose window lighting is given in loving memory of Doris Tremblay, Margaret Fuller and Paul Dudos by their family.

The Tower lighting is given in loving memory of Julius Sr, Helga, Julius Jr, Arthur, Lorraine, Jean, Dorothy, and Irene Tremblay and Lefty Tremblay by Donald Tremblay and nieces.

GOD MOMENT

If you could share a story of seeing God's work in your life, please tell me or email it to me. The story can be anonymous or signed, and all are invited to participate. Betsy (betspenn35@hotmail.com)

God Moments by Dr. Enoch Upkong

I arrived in Worcester for the first time from Nigeria in January 1979 at 7 pm. Having no idea what the weather was here, I had a dress on and open toe sandals and a sweater. I would never have imagined that the weather could be that cold. I stepped out of the public bus, and it seemed like midnight. Cars and taxis were going by, nobody was walking. I waved at the taxis to get a ride, none stopped. I was frozen and didn't know what to do except talk to my Lord. This was my prayer that evening, "Thank you dear Lord for bringing me safely to Worcester, in the US. I know you didn't bring me this far to abandon me to die on the roadside. I know and believe that you will provide a way for me to get to my designated apartment. Amen." About 5 minutes after my prayers, I saw a lady coming out of her office. I tried to shout to get her attention, but nothing came out of my mouth. I waved my hands and ran towards her. Finally, she saw me and came to save me by calling a cab. Within 10 minutes, the cab came. Oh, what a Mighty God we serve.

I go to St Vincent Hospital, Worcester, for clinical experience. I normally park outside the hospital, not in the garage. On our last clinical day, I parked in the garage as I had stuff to deliver to the units and it was easier from the garage. At the end of my day, I saw a Spanish lady in the garage. She looked so lost that I had to ask her if she was ok. No, she answered, I have been here for about 15 minutes, trying to get out of here. What kind of car did you drive? Oh, I don't have a car, I'm trying to find my way to downtown. She shouldn't have been in the garage if she didn't drive. At this point, I knew that she was really lost. I offered to give her a ride to wherever she was going. This lady was so thankful and grateful. The lord has been with me all the way, guiding, protecting, and blessing me. I completely depend on Him, and He has never disappointed me.



CONCERT ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Baptist Church Organ Gala Concert and Dedication, Sunday, June 2, 2024, at 4:00 pm with h'oeuvres before and dessert following a two-organ concert using gallery and chancel organs performed by Michelle Graveline, Wesley Hall and William Ness. Free

PIPES OF ALL TYPES Concert - Sunday, June 23, 2024, at 4:00 pm, First Unitarian Church, 90 Main Street. This brass, organ and choir concert with William Ness, organist, and Allegra Martin, conductor features music by Diemer, Hailstork, Sowerby, Dupre, etc. Free.