

55th Annual Meeting Central Atlantic Conference Associate Conference Minister Report Rev. Audrey C. Price, Ph.D.

In writing my report, I took some time to look over the last 18 months since the 54th Central Atlantic Conference Annual Meeting. At that annual meeting, I had only been on board as acting Associate Conference Minister for seven (7) weeks. It was not a soft or silent start, as day one I began assisting my colleagues Rev. Marvin Silver and Rev. David Popham with planning the annual meeting and helping a church in Catoctin Association—whose pastor died suddenly and unexpectedly—with interim pastoral leadership and transition. Beloved, the work of conference ministry has not slowed down since then! Please accept this summary of the work I have been doing as Associate Conference Minister since our last annual meeting.

Search and Call – Catoctin & Shenandoah Associations

Pastoral transitions have been quite active in the Catoctin and Shenandoah associations. Search and call have been a tremendous amount of my work and ministry as ACM. I have had the sheer joy and humbling privilege to journey with twenty (20) churches¹—six (6) in Shenandoah and fourteen (14) in Catoctin—in their search and call process after their pastor's resignation, retirement or death. During this time, several churches completed their call process and secured pastoral leadership. We have seen 3 interims, 3 settled pastors and 1 Lay Minister come aboard. I continue to work with the churches who have recently called interims and those who have not secured a settled pastor throughout their search process until a settled pastor is secured. In working with these twenty churches, on average, I have visited each church three times for educating them on the UCC/CAC search and call process, guidance on reading and assessing minister profiles, interviewing and candidate weekend. Angie Megna and I also have worked with a few of these churches to set up neutral pulpits for final candidates. It has been a great joy to see the culmination of the call process of a few churches and look forward to all twenty securing pastoral leadership in the near future.

Communities of Practice

Community of Practice ("**CoP**") is brand new effort in the CAC. I kicked off this new program at the last annual meeting. In 2018, the CAC Board of Directors allocated \$30,000 for a Dean of CoP. Rev. Suzanne Schmidt served as the 1st dean. At last year's annual meeting, Suzanne and I hosted a workshop and exhibitors table chock full of information regarding community of practice. CoP is a positive addition to the CAC ministry toolkit providing clergy support, education, and accountability in a small group environment. This program reinforces the Conference's commitment to healthy clergy and healthy ministry.

Program Year One (PY1)

In the 1st year, we kicked off **seven** CoP groups across the **five (5) associations** with **twenty-eight participants** in those groups. The program reached its goal of having at least one group per association. Praise God! We trained **ten (10)** facilitators to lead these groups. Additionally, the program was diligent in pursuing grants and received a **grant for \$20K** for PY1.

In PY1, we welcomed Rev. Darryl Moch as Dean upon Suzanne's resignation to attend to family.

¹ For a comprehensive listing of all churches in search and call the last 18 months please see attachment.

Program Year Two (PY2)

In October 2019, we begin PY2. On September 18-19, 2019, we conducted a facilitators training and retreat where we welcomed five (5) new facilitators. Six of the seven groups started in PY1 will continue in PY2. Additionally, we will commence a CAC-wide CoP group for members-in-discernment (MIDs) from three of our five associations in the CAC. We also welcome an existing CoP in Delaware of CAC authorized ministers—DelMarVa CoP—that was facilitated by David Popham and now will be facilitated by one of our CoP facilitators. How exciting!!!

We are grateful for a robust group of facilitators—Dwayne Roster, Amanda Hendler-Voss, Sid Fowler, Linda Higgins, Dan Bassett, Tom Willingham, Joy Mounts, Rebecca Shillingburg, Kyle Powderly, Amy Sens, Amber Neuroth, Anne Holmes, Robert Apgar-Taylor, Debra Peters-Wilcox, and Kelly Sisson. Please feel free to talk with any of our facilitators during the annual meeting about this great program to promote healthy clergy and healthy ministry.

The Community of Practice program is co-hosting a reception on Friday night of the Annual Meeting. It is open to all registered attendees and provides an opportunity for folks to meet facilitators and participants and ask questions about the program.

Visioning Event in Hagerstown, MD.

In support of our four (4) Hagerstown, MD churches—Zion Reformed UCC, Church of the Holy Trinity, Connections UCC (formerly Veritas UCC) and Christ's Reformed UCC—I coordinated with Jill White, Regional Mission Interpreter, UCC Church Building & Loan Fund, to have a *Visioning Event* to ponder, “What do YOU want the UCC to be in Hagerstown?” in June 2019. We had a fabulous attendance of clergy and laity from three of the Hagerstown churches—Zion Reformed, Christ Reformed and Church of the Holy Trinity. During the visioning event, clergy and lay leaders :

- Discussed what makes church challenging today for them and in their context;
- Discussed their church's mission and purpose
- Embarked upon developing a vision for their church's future
- Review Hagerstown area demographics from a physical and religious perspective and then explore ministry opportunities
- Explored areas of possibility for joint ministry among the churches.

UCC Authorizing Ministry in 21st Century Workshop

This is a national gathering of conference ministers, associate conference ministers and committee on ministry committee members held biennially on non-Synod years. I was invited by UCC MESA (UCC Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization team) to co-facilitate a workshop at the 2018 AM 21 gathering entitled *Orientation and Ongoing Capacity Building for Committees on Ministry*. The workshop focused on orienting and training Committees on Ministry members. I led the conversation on a few topics: Best Practices, Annual COM training; Authority, Covenant and Accountability; and Discernment, especially who will serve on a COM.

In this same vein, in September 2018, for CAC, I organized an Education Retreat for authorized ministers and COM members. Rev. Holly MillerShank, MESA Team Leader (at that time) was the invited guest facilitator. During this education retreat, we walked through the (new) 2018 Manual on Ministry. **Focus:** Educate and support these committees more intentionally to better equip them in the work they are

doing in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ in authorizing, supporting and holding accountable clergy/authorized persons. I will be organizing a Spring Education Retreat. Stay tuned!!

UCC Polity/UCC Polity Teachers' Network

I serve as a member of the National UCC Polity Teachers' Network (representing CAC). Within the CAC, I co-facilitate three of the four UCC institutes in the CAC—UCC Theology, History, and Ministry. Rev. Amber Neuroth facilitates Governance. This has been an essential program for candidates seeking authorization or ordination in the CAC. These institutes provide a low-cost, content-rich training that fulfills the UCC Polity requirement necessary for ordination but more importantly an understanding of this precious and unique denomination in which candidates are called to do ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

I owe a depth of gratitude to many people in both the Shenandoah and Catoclin associations who have worked alongside me to provide support and ministry to local churches and pastors. In calling out specific names, one always runs the risk of getting into trouble. I do want to lift up two people who have ministered with and to me as we tackled challenges in the associations. I thank God for **Norine Haas** in Catoclin and **Steve Wood** in Shenandoah who just have been invaluable partners in association ministry. My work with Pastor Steve continues and I look forward to our ministry together in Shenandoah. I extend God's abundant blessings to **Norine** in her retirement...well done God's good and faithful servant.

I am truly blessed and grateful to serve on the CAC Ministry Team particularly in this season and life of the CAC. I tremendously appreciate the authority and team ministry approach that Rev. Freeman Palmer brings in his leadership as conference minister. I feel the conference stabilizing and I look forward to the vision that both the CAC board of directors and Freeman are bearing forth. I am excited about the joy-filled times I know and believe are ahead. I am grateful for such great colleagues and staff—Marvin, Angie, Tristan, Ginger, and Beth. We are not all we can be, yet we are definitely committed to getting there. We tirelessly give our best efforts to the work and ministry of the CAC. So, my hope resides in, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of humanity, The things which God has prepared for those [the CAC] who love God." 1 Corinthians 2:9

In Christ's Service,

Audrey C. Price

Rev. Dr. Audrey C. Price

Associate Conference Minister, Leadership Development

Central Atlantic Conference

Appendix

Churches in Transition

Catoctin Association

St. John UCC, Clear Spring, MD
Christ's Reformed Church, Hagerstown, MD
Church of the Holy Trinity, Hagerstown, MD
Zion Reformed Church, Hagerstown, MD
Christ Reformed Church, Middletown, MD
Christ Reformed Church, Cavetown, MD
Glade UCC, Walkersville, MD
St. Mary's UCC, Westminster, MD
Grace UCC-Keysville, Keymar, MD
Benjamin's-Krider's UCC, Westminster, MD
Faith UCC, Frederick, MD
St. John UCC, Sabillasville, MD
St. John UCC, Woodsboro, MD
Grace Trinity UCC, Frederick, MD
Veritas UCC, Hagerstown, MD

Shenandoah Association

St. John UCC, Staunton, VA
Trinity UCC, Timberville, VA
Leakesville UCC, Luray, VA
Sojourners UCC, Charlottesville, VA
Mt. Calvary UCC, Woodstock, VA
St. Paul's UCC, Woodstock, VA