

**56th Annual Meeting
Central Atlantic Conference**

**Rev. Marvin M. Silver
Associate Conference Minister Report**

On September 15th I reached the milestone of serving five years as your Associate Conference Minister. Time moves quickly when you are focused on providing transformational leadership and being faithful to the ministry before you. I look forward to God's still speaking spirit to continue to guide and lead me in my on-going service with you.

Much has happened since we last gathered together in Bethesda, MD for the 55th Annual Meeting of the Conference, and the one thing that is most striking is not using my car in the past six months as one of my top tools to do ministry. My last in person meeting was the Conference's Board of Director's meeting (February 28th-29th). And, my last in-person worship visit was at Peoples Congregational UCC (March 1st) to meet and hear a Word from their new Senior Minister, Rev. Brandon Harris.

What would happen five days later from that last worship visit has been an important focus of my ministry this year.

Faith & Democracy 2020

On March 6th our ***Justice & Witness Action Network*** (Network) launched the ***Faith & Democracy 2020*** campaign along with a new website, <https://letjustice.org>. This is the first campaign of the Network.

Faith & Democracy 2020 is a non-partisan campaign engaging our justice leaders, clergy and local churches in:

- **Voter Registration**
- **2020 Census**
- **Voter Education & Empowerment**
- **Get Out The Vote**

We have 50 local churches and more than 165 justice leaders participating in the Campaign.

Yes, local churches and clergy can and should engage in the democratic process of our nation and support the general public's participation as well. *Federal election law states that religious organizations are prohibited from **partisan political** activity, supporting or opposing any candidate for public office. But it *doesn't prohibit non-partisan political activity*, especially supporting the general public's participation in elections.*

The central organizing principle of the ***Faith & Democracy 2020*** campaign is that every person has a right and opportunity to vote and participate in the 2020 Census without

fear, intimidation, limitations or false information. And as people of faith called to engage in public life and work for justice and liberation of God's people, our vote and participation in the 2020 Census serves as a powerful tools to rid our communities of injustice, racism, and inequity.

Our partner in this Campaign is Center for Common Ground, a non-partisan non-profit civic engagement organization based in Virginia. And, led by one of our own UCC leaders, Andrea Miller. This partnership has provided us the opportunity to develop and engage Campaign participants in our Voter Empowerment and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) initiative. Through this initiative we are empowering voters, addressing voter suppression and GOTV in low voter turn-out communities in: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Texas.

We are contacting voters via: Postcard, Phone-Bank, and Text. Our local churches have mailed more than 10,000 postcards to voters in North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas.

On September 20th, we engaged local churches in Faith & Democracy 2020 Sunday. This initiative engaged local churches for a time of worship and mobilization to call on voters to vote in the General Election and participate in the 2020 Census.

Moreover, this Campaign is giving us the opportunity to build our Prophetic Voices for Justice network (of the Network) as we highlight prophetic voices of pastors and justice leaders from across the Conference on state and national issues important in this election year.

And I can't forget our ***Faith & Democracy 2020*** Election Center at <https://letjustice.org>. Anyone living in the Conference's geographical boundary of DC, DE, MD, NJ, and VA can use this tool to:

- **Pledge to Vote**
- **Check their voter registration status**
- **Register to Vote**
- **Check their polling location**
- **Make a plan to Vote**
- **Create a Sample Ballot and access Candidate information (MD, NJ and VA only).**

All of this work is possible because of the great work of our Campaign Organizer Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa (Pastor of Congregational Church of Pinehurst, UCC-NC) and our Online Communications Consultant Mr. Tucker Ball (member of Westmoreland Congregational UCC).

My work continues on the Nehemiah Pilot Project. This pilot project officially began back at the beginning of 2019. After completing phase one, phase two will begin this October with training and leadership development being provided to cohort participating local churches by our partners, Church Building & Loan Fund.

Amongst this important work, I continue to provide support and leadership to the Potomac and Chesapeake Association Board of Directors, Council and Committees on Ministry. And finally, my work would not be complete unless I have provided guidance, support and leadership to our local churches in pastoral transition, pastors serving our local churches, and our emerging Racial Justice Network (of the Network).

There is so much more I can share about this year. Thank you for the opportunity to serve in partnership with you to transform lives and communities.

In service,

Rev. Marvin Silver