

Central Atlantic Conference, United Church of Christ, Annual Meeting June 2016

Rev. David K. Popham, Associate Conference Minister

Just a friendly reminder that my job descriptions includes relating to the congregations and ministers in New Jersey and Delaware, relating to the ecumenical and church councils of New Jersey and Delaware, being aware of and speaking on behalf of the CAC justice stances to the appropriate bodies of New Jersey and Delaware, coordination and oversight of the search and call process across the Conference, liaison to the Church and Ministry Commissions of each Association and the Pre-Ordination Commission of New Jersey, oversight of the New Jersey office and the support and guidance of New Jersey Association leadership.

I am happy to report that I reached the milestone of visiting with each congregation in New Jersey and Delaware as well as the two congregations seeking to align themselves with the UCC in New Jersey.

I continue to seek to expand the Community of Practice clergy peer to peer support groups. One was established in Delaware a year ago, one was started this spring in north Jersey, another one is seeking to begin. I hope that at least two more will be established in New Jersey by the end of this year.

Ecumenical councils continue to meet in the two states. At this time the Delaware group seems to be the stronger of the two, while the New Jersey group is groping for a purpose in a contemporary setting.

I spoke before a budget hearing of the New Jersey Legislature on behalf of Planned Parenthood. The NJPP established an interfaith advisory committee of which I am a member. Although, I yet to make a meeting as they have a propensity to meet the same weekend as does the CAC Board of Directors.

Search and Call and Church and Ministry designs continue to be reviewed and tweaked as necessary. I continue to relate to the Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization (MESA) Team in the national offices. I serve on their Task Force on Ministry and Mental Health. This task force was formed in the spring and is charged with reviewing and assessing the issue of mental health both in the context of ministerial authorization and continued authorization, and general pastor support.

Specific to New Jersey a task force has been activated to determine a new psychological evaluation center after the closure of the Northeast Ministry Development Center. Also a special inter-association team with the Metro New York Association is working to provide a process to

bring into UCC membership Rivers of Living Water NJ and Rivers of Living Water NY. Both congregations are served by the same staff. The two Associations have outlined a common process and work toward a common month for affiliation. The Rivers congregations are members of The Family of Affirming Ministries (Bishop Flunder). MESA is involved in the conversation about the recognition and authorization of TFAM ministers involved with Rivers by the UCC.

The New Jersey Association's spring meeting examined the issue of mass incarceration and the New Jim Crow. Frank Bolden, vice-moderator of the UCC, and author of the New Jim Crow resolution and State Senator Raymond Lesniak were the keynoters. Also, the Association has a new website and launched a bi-weekly email called the NJA Blast.