

2019 Special Meeting of the  
Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ  
(Congregational Christian Churches)  
*Meeting in the 220th year of the Missionary Society of Connecticut*  
May 18, 2019 1-5PM  
First Church of Christ Congregational, West Hartford  
12 S Main St., West Hartford CT 06107

**1:00PM Opening**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Good afternoon. My name is the Rev. Fredd Ward and I am the Conference Moderator. We are grateful for the warmth and the hospitality of our host church, First Church of Christ, Congregational of West Hartford. I invite the Rev. Geordie Campbell and the Rev. Elliott Munn forward to offer a greeting.*

**Pastors Welcome: Rev. Geordie Campbell & Rev. Elliott Munn**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *We meet today in the presence of a God whose love is freedom, whose touch is healing, whose voice is calm. We meet not in our own strength but in the knowledge that God's Spirit abides with us and in this time of gathering. We meet during this time of transition as we are gathered here as your Church. Welcome to the Special Meeting of the Connecticut Conference. Our meeting will include business and remarks by Conference leaders, the bestowal of the Living Waters Award and an opportunity to hear about "Simply Smiles" a ministry that was born here in this Conference. We will consider three resolutions brought to the body by churches of the Conference. At the 2018 Annual Meeting last June the delegates from the Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island Conferences voted to form a new Conference of the United Church of Christ. Next month at General Synod 32 in Milwaukee Wisconsin, the delegates to Synod will consider the resolution to form this new Conference. With an affirmative vote of General Synod the new Conference will begin on January 1, 2020.*

**Worship**

Worship provided by the Connecticut Conference Worship Team with the theme *The Body of Christ - A Body in Motion*. Preacher: The Rev. Kari Nicewander, Senior Minister at Immanuel Congregational Church, Hartford.

**Consent Agenda & Recognitions**

Moderator, Rev. Fredd Ward: *The Board of Directors adopts the rules for the orderly conduct of the meeting. These rules can be found in your packet along with*

*the Updated Consent Agenda and you will be asked to accept these rules shortly. The Moderator moderates the plenary sessions, makes announcements and keeps the meeting moving in a timely fashion. The Executive Committee of the Board serves as the business committee for this meeting. If you have any questions or concerns the committee, please feel free to speak to one of them.*

*Only delegates who have voting cards are allowed to speak at microphones on business subjects, unless you have been specifically granted “voice without vote.” Please introduce yourself each time you speak from a microphone by name and church. During open discussion times all microphones will be open. Voting members will find in your registration envelope a PINK vote card to be used for all votes taken in the plenary. You must have this PINK card in order to vote. Please keep that handy for the plenary sessions.*

*Pro & con microphones are available in the middle of the room. A neutral microphone has been set up at the front of the room. Please use the neutral mic if you are offering an amendment, referring to committee, wishing to postpone, call the question (close debate) or limit or extend debate; the Neutral mic will also be used for “Point of Order” or other incidental or privileged motion. Basically, if you are confused or just have a question and don't know which microphone to use, go to the neutral mic in the front of the room and we'll help you figure out where to go from there. We do understand that not everyone has the ability to easily navigate to a microphone. If you are unable to get to a microphone for any reason, please just raise your hand and we will come to you.*

## **Introductions**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Introduced Chair of the Board of Directors, Rev. Bridget Fidler of First Church of Christ, Congregational in Suffield.*

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Will the following Honored Guests stand as you are called:*

- *General Synod delegates*
- *Seminarians and Members in Discernment*

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *I will entertain a Motion to grant Voice without Vote to these honored guests. Upon motion moved and seconded, it was **VOTED #1** - to grant Voice without Vote to these honored guests.*

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *I invite the following groups to stand and be welcomed by the body:*

- *new Connecticut Pastors*

- *new Ordinands*
- *new Commissioned Ministers*
- *newly licensed*
- *other new clergy in Special Settings.*

*I invite all Retired Authorized Ministers to stand and be recognized.*

### **Adoption of the Consent Agenda**

**Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward:** *Please find the updated consent agenda that is included in your packet and your PINK vote card. I call upon the Chair of the Board of Directors, Rev. Bridget Fidler of Suffield.*

**Rev. Bridget Fidler:** *I call your attention to the Updated Consent Agenda. Any delegate can remove an item from the consent agenda for separate consideration and vote during a plenary session. I move to correct Rule #15 of the Rules of Procedure for the 2019 Special Meeting of the CT Conference: session will stay until 5:00 p.m. or earlier.*

**Rev. Denise Terry, East Granby:** *I move to have Acceptance of Special Report removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda. Removed without vote, according to Rules of Procedure.*

**Rev. Bridget Fidler:** *I move to adopt the amended Consent Agenda. Upon motion duly made and seconded it was **VOTED #2** - the Conference adopts the amended Consent Agenda.*

### **Resolution Priority**

**Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward:** *In your delegate packets you will find copies of the proposed Resolutions. The Resolution Committee has requested the following order for resolutions to be heard later in the Business portion of the meeting:*

The first will be the **RESOLUTION OF IMPLEMENTATION: END THE PRACTICE OF PROLONGED SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN CONNECTICUT PRISONS AND JAILS**, submitted by Shalom United Church of Christ, New Haven, CT.

The second will be the **RESOLUTION OF AFFIRMATION REGARDING CITIZENSHIP OF CERTAIN FOREIGN-BORN CHILDREN ADOPTED BY AMERICAN CITIZENS**, submitted by the Church Council of Immanuel Congregational Church, Hartford, CT.

The third will be the *RESOLUTION OF AFFIRMATION REGARDING CHILD MARRIAGE AND FORCED MARRIAGES*, submitted by Church Council of Rocky Hill Congregational Church, Rocky Hill, CT.

Rev. Bridget Fidler: *I move that the Resolution priority as recommended by the Resolution Committee be approved.* Upon motion duly made and seconded it was **VOTED #3** - to accept the Resolution priority as recommended by the Resolution Committee.

### **Chair of the Board Report**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Called upon the Rev. Bridget Fidler, Chair of the Board of Directors*

Chair, Rev. Bridget Fidler: *Reported on the Conference's community building efforts through the formation of new Clergy Excellence Groups and the Conference Minister's 60 one to one meetings held with pastors throughout the year. The Conference's overall efforts in local outreach resulted in an increase in OCWM giving and a stronger financial position than had been forecasted. She reported on joys and challenges of navigating the birth of a new conference and the collaborative work it has demanded. It has been a detailed and intricate effort for the CT Board as well as for the TAI Planning Team. Bridget thanked the Board for their support in this endeavor and the dedicated leadership of Kent Siladi, Marilyn Kendrix, & Don Remick.*

### **Living Waters Award**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Called upon the Conference Minister, The Rev. Kent Siladi and Rev. Bridget Fidler to present the Living Waters Award to Steve Lane, of First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center. Steve Lane, along with his pastor Rev. Joseph Blotz, came forward for the presentation.*

### **Bryan Nurnberger, Simply Smiles**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Called upon the Conference Minister, The Rev. Kent Siladi*

Rev. Kent Siladi: *Introduced Bryan Nurnberger, Founder & President of Simply Smiles*

*Bryan Nurnberger, Founder & president of Simply Smiles shows a video and speaks.*

## **Silver Lake Conference Center**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Called upon the Rev. Ryan Gackenheimer, Executive Director of Silver Lake Conference Center.*

*Rev. Ryan Gackenheimer shows a video and speaks.*

## **Report of the Registrar and Actions of the Board of Directors**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Reviewing the Rules of Procedure, it was discovered that when an item is removed from the Consent Agenda, that item should immediately be moved to discussion.*

Rev. Denise Terry, East Granby: *Raised concerns regarding having access to the Actions of the Board of Directors and recommended that supporting documents for those actions be provided ahead of the meeting. The Parliamentarian addressed the motion, reminding the Members that the action they were voting on was that the reports in question were “received.” Those reports were made available ahead of the meeting and therefore the action carried. It was then **VOTED #4** - The Special Report of the Registrar and Actions of the Board of Directors of the CT Conference UCC as published on the CT Conference website, are received.*

## **Action on Resolutions—Resolutions Committee**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *Remember, delegates, please have your (PINK) VOTING CARDS available for any actions that need a vote. Also please be sure to have available the resolution that is included in your packets and the rules that are attached to the Call Letter. Resolutions are moved by a committee charged with the task of bringing them to the Annual Meeting; thus, they do not require a second. Please note the Rules of Procedure, as approved in the Consent Agenda, determines the course of action for considering Resolutions. The presenters of the resolution will have 5 minutes to speak to the resolution. If there is a designated reactor they will be allowed 5 minutes as well. Then the mikes will be open to alternating pro and con speakers for 2 minutes each. Amendments must be submitted in writing to the registrar. Forms may be obtained from the registrar for amendments. Please remember to refrain from any outward expressions of approval or disapproval.*

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *I call upon the Rev. Alice O’Donovan, of Tolland and chair of the Resolutions Committee.*

*Rev. Alice O'Donovan: Moved forward the RESOLUTION OF IMPLEMENTATION: END THE PRACTICE OF PROLONGED SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN CONNECTICUT PRISONS AND JAILS.*

*A motion to amend said resolution was proposed and was accepted by the proposer.*

*It was then **VOTED #5 TO ADOPT** the RESOLUTION OF IMPLEMENTATION: END THE PRACTICE OF PROLONGED SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN CONNECTICUT PRISONS AND JAILS as follows:*

**WHEREAS**, The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews exhorts all to “remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured” [Hebrews 13:3]; and

**WHEREAS**, On any given day approximately 70,000 individuals in United States prisons and jails are being held in solitary confinement, variously called “administrative segregation,” “isolation,” “the hole,” “restrictive housing,” “the SHU” (segregated housing unit); and

**WHEREAS**, Juan Mendez, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, has deemed that being held in isolation in excess of 15 days amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, in short to torture;<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, The National Religious Campaign Against Torture, with a membership of over 300 faith organizations, including the United Church of Christ, has called for the end of the use of prolonged solitary confinement in all 50 states and the federal prison system because it is costly, inhuman, and ineffective and harms prisoners and our communities; and

**WHEREAS**, In recent years, the Connecticut Department of Corrections has limited its use of isolated confinement, and during this time staff assault, inmate assault, use-of-force incidence, and suicide have all decreased<sup>2</sup>. But none of these minimal reforms are codified by law; and

---

<sup>1</sup> Solitary Confinement Should be Banned in Most Cases, UN Expert Says, UN News Centre (Oct. 18, 2011); UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ¶ 76, U.N. Doc/ A/66/268 (Aug. 5, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> Connecticut Department of Corrections, Incidents Report, FY 2015-2016 (2016).

**WHEREAS**, In 2017 the Connecticut Legislature took an initial step towards abolishing solitary confinement with the passage of HB 7302, “An Act Concerning Isolated Confinement and Correctional Staff Training and Wellness,” which banned the placement of children in the harshest form of solitary confinement and also required annual reporting by the Department of Corrections on the use of solitary<sup>3</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, The Connecticut Department of Corrections still, however, uses solitary confinement statewide in its prisons and jails, including in Northern Correctional Institution, Connecticut’s supermax prison, holding individuals in excess of 15 days;

**WHEREAS**, In the fall of 2017 Colorado’s Department of Corrections became the first state in the United States to limit the use of restrictive housing to 15 days maximum<sup>4</sup>; and both the Assembly and Senate of Connecticut’s neighboring state, New York, have now passed Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Confinement legislation;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 2019 Special Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, declare our support for ending the practice of the use of prolonged (15 or more consecutive days) solitary confinement and commit ourselves to advocate for humane alternatives; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge our member congregations(1) to become educated about the harms of solitary confinement, (2) to learn from directly impacted individuals about the ways prolonged confinement is torture, and (3) to advocate for humane alternatives; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge our member congregations join Stop Solitary Connecticut, a coalition that is a project of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT); and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that we request our Conference Legislative Advocate make advocating for the end of the practice of prolonged solitary confinement a priority.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.acluct.org/en/legislation/2017-hb-7302-solitary-confinement-reform>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/blog/prisoners-rights/solitary-confinement/why-i-ended-horrorlong-term-solitary-colorados-prisons>

Rev. Alice O'Donovan: *Moved forward* **A RESOLUTION OF AFFIRMATION REGARDING CITIZENSHIP OF CERTAIN FOREIGN-BORN CHILDREN ADOPTED BY AMERICAN CITIZENS.** It was then **VOTED #6 TO ADOPT A RESOLUTION OF AFFIRMATION REGARDING CITIZENSHIP OF CERTAIN FOREIGN-BORN CHILDREN ADOPTED BY AMERICAN CITIZENS** as follows:

**WHEREAS**, the Bible states, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 3:28; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2019 General Synod of the United Church of Christ supports the efforts of organizations which advocate for US citizenships to be issued to all adoptees, without loop holes, who are adopted by US citizens and raised in this country; and

**WHEREAS**, many thousands of children were brought to the US to be adopted who never received their US citizenship because of the failure of adoptive parents, adoption agencies or adoptive attorneys to take necessary steps; and

**WHEREAS**, these adoptees, both children and adults, because of their lack of American citizenship, encounter barriers to living successful adult lives in the US - barriers such as the ability to remain in this country, to vote, to travel freely, to inherit property, to be employed, to receive worker's compensation or disability benefits if injured in on job, and to obtain a passport or driver's license; and

**WHEREAS**, some, on becoming adults, have been deported to their native countries even though Americans brought them, as children, to this country to be adopted; and

**WHEREAS**, the federal Child Citizen Act of 2000 provides a partial remedy to this injustice by granting automatic United States citizenship to some, but not all, foreign-born children adopted by United States citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, federal law does not cover all individuals adopted by US citizens, specifically it does not cover US adoptees:

- who were older than 18 years old when the Child Citizen Act went into effect



- whose adoptions were not completed in their country of birth, but who were issued visas for the purpose of completing the adoptions and citizenship in America and whose US citizenship process was, for various reasons, not completed.
- who entered the United States on nonimmigrant visas, following adoption by a US citizen or in order to be adopted in the United States by a US citizen; and

**WHEREAS**, federal government representatives and adoption agencies did not consistently provide intended parents with accurate or any pre-and post- adoption assistance and information to ensure all children adopted internationally by US citizen parents received their US citizenship; and

**WHEREAS**, the Adoptee Rights Campaign (ARC) has determined that the problem impacts all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Territories and Armed Forces Families and ARC estimates that:

- the current number of children adopted between 1945 to 1998 who entered adulthood without U.S. citizenship ranges from 25,000 to 49,000 adoptees;
- an additional 7,321-14,643 children adopted from 1999 to 2016 are deemed at risk of reaching adulthood without U.S. citizenship;
- these figures do not include children brought to the U.S. for adoption on non-immigrant visas and adoptions after 2016;
- the total number of children adopted by U.S. citizens living without the protection of U.S. citizenship will increase to a new estimated total of 32,000 to 64,000 adoptees between 2015 and 2033;
- the number of children brought to Connecticut between the 1999 and 2016 totals 4,623; and an estimated 28.9% are vulnerable due to entrance on certain visas; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that we the delegates to the Special Meeting of the CT Conference of the United Church of Christ enter into a dialogue and discussion with each other and our federal legislators about the citizenship rights of all foreign-born individuals adopted by US citizens in their land of origin and to adoptees brought to United States by their intended US citizen adoptive parents to finalize their adoptions here; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that we the delegates to the Special Meeting of the CT Conference of the United Church of Christ work with our federal legislators to propose and sponsor legislation in the United States Congress to grant United

States citizenship to foreign-born adoptees who were not covered by the Child Citizenship Act of 2000<sup>5</sup>.

Rev. Alice O'Donovan: *Moved forward the* **A RESOLUTION OF AFFIRMATION REGARDING CHILD MARRIAGE AND FORCED MARRIAGES. *VOTED #7 TO OPPOSE* A RESOLUTION OF AFFIRMATION REGARDING CHILD MARRIAGE AND FORCED MARRIAGES.** Motion was lost.

### **Conference Ministers Remarks**

Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: *I now call upon the Conference Minister, The Rev. Kent Siladi*

Rev. Kent Siladi: *Recognizes Alice O'Donovan for her leadership of the resolution process in the CT Conference for a very long time.*

Rev. Kent Siladi: "The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part; We are Christ's body-that's who we are!" 1 Corinthians 12 excerpted MSG The Corinthian church was the first to hear these words. The words were not just for the church at Corinth, however. These words are instructive for us, the 2019 version of the disciples of Jesus. This very day in West Hartford in this sacred place we are part of that great cloud of witnesses as well.

In the last ten months since we voted to become a part of a new Conference of the United Church of Christ much has taken place in our Conference as we have worked to bring this vision to a reality. There is still more work to be completed and we continue to labor to align the Conference with our stated vision and values. Next month the General Synod will vote on the proposed resolution to form the new Conference and in January of 2020 it will begin as a new setting for ministry here in Southern New England.

Let me say that I have been privileged to be the Conference Minister of the CT Conference for the last six years. I am so grateful for serving in this capacity among you in this vineyard. My time in this ministry will come to an end in

---

<sup>5</sup> Adoptee Rights Campaign: US Adoptees Without Citizenship National and Connecticut Estimates. March 2018 (Accessed 5/9/18) <https://adopteerightscampaign.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/05/Connecticut-Final.pdf>

December of this year as the three current Conference Ministers of MA/RI and CT become a new leadership team of Bridge CM's. There will be more to share regarding this significant change. As you may have already heard I will not be a candidate for **any** position in the new staff structure. After prayer and discernment, I arrived at my decision not to be considered for leadership in the future Conference so that new and dynamic leadership can emerge in your midst. I am open to "what's next" in my life and I am trusting in the Holy Spirit to order my steps.

I want to thank my amazing colleagues who serve on the Conference Staff. They have walked this journey with me, and I have been blessed to share the ministry of the Conference with them and among them. They are a gifted and devoted group of people in the midst of significant change, who every day help us carry out our mission and ministry. (Ask the staff to stand)

I am grateful for the work of the Board of Directors led by Bridget Fidler who over this past year have kept the mission of the Conference and the new Conference ever before them with faithfulness and a forward-looking attitude that embraces change. I am also grateful for CTUCC TA1 Board members who have also been working hard at creating the emerging Conference with great skill and commitment to the mission we have set before us.

To the pastors and leaders of the churches I am so moved by your faithful witness in these changing days in which you strive to live out the Gospel call to love God and love neighbor. It is a challenging time to lead as so many things have shifted and changed and your ministries do matter.

To the congregations of the Conference – you have made and continue to make an impact and a difference in the communities where you are located. You share the love of Jesus in so many ways and you offer God's open welcome to children of God embracing them as beloved ones with open arms.

We need each other. None of us makes it on our own. Over the last six years this has been my mantra since returning to CT. My consistent message has been that as the Body of Christ we share a connection that runs deep among us. Having been a part of the UCC my whole life I have discovered that we know how to be independent people. We do not need Bible studies or conversations to discuss our version of autonomy. We have begun to learn how to become a more connected part of the Body by claiming our interdependence through the covenant that binds us together with God's love that will not let us go.

I am convinced that the TA1 Conference is one way for us to bring to life our covenant connection and move us toward a future that is yet to unfold; filled with uncertainty, but a future which God has prepared for us to participate in as disciples of Jesus.

Making this change is not easy for some among us. However, as our archivist John Van Epps has offered, “This may seem to be a radical departure from our way of being church, even a threat to independence and autonomy. But that’s the way it was in the good old days of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.” There were Synods in that time period to deal with issues of cooperation in ministry. There was the Cambridge Platform and the Saybrook Platform which sought to undergird covenant among area churches. Saybrook was our guiding framework for 150 years until The Missionary Society of CT was formed in order to send missionaries to the west. The Missionary Society formed in 1798 has been our legal name and it is the name which will continue beyond the formation of the new Conference. We have been inheritors of a history which includes General Association, the oldest gathering of clergy in the United States. We were called the General Conference of Connecticut Churches and we have also been called the General Conference of Congregational Christian Churches. With the formation of the United Church of Christ in 1957 we took on the name CT Conference for the most recent period of time. The CT, MA and RI Conferences as named Conference bodies will come to an end with the formation of the new Conference. The Missionary Society of CT and the Trustees of the Fund for Ministers continue as legal entities to largely help to protect the endowments left for those bodies to serve as stewards of trust.

We are and will continue to be inheritors of a legacy that our forebears in the faith helped to create. We have a rich history and a commitment to making Connecticut and the world a better place. Our forebears were convinced that our faith was to be exercised in the public square and that our call to justice is an important and central part of our understanding of discipleship. We also acknowledge that we cannot sanitize our history and that along with the good that was carried out it is also true that our forebears also participated in systemic injustices which included racism, white supremacy and discrimination against the marginalized and deriving profits on the backs of human beings. We need to recognize both the blessing and challenges of our histories and to tell the truth as we endeavor to give thanks and to work towards changing the systems of oppression of others. We will bring that mindfulness forward into the creation of the new. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us and we are mindful of our responsibility to the future generations that will follow.

We know in our heads that change is a part of life. It is the only constant in life. Every day is a new day and as hard as we might want to keep things as they are, things just keep on changing. Changes can be small, like they moved the bread aisle in the grocery store, they can be annoying like having to take your shoes off at the airport and they can be life changing when you discover you will be on a certain medication for the rest of your life. Changes can provoke strong feelings and bring on grief like the loss of a soul friend. Sometimes changes are hard and so difficult to manage. Some of us love change and are early adopters of change and embrace it with open arms and a love for the adventure and experimentation. Others of us don't want to change or don't like change and we sometimes react by kicking and screaming and railing against any change that challenges us to think in new ways.

Sometimes change is for the better and many of us can look at the changes in our lives as the times when we grew the most.

Transitions are probably among the hardest changes we are invited to make. Any time there is a transition there is doubt and uncertainty. We might feel vulnerable, unsure and anxious. If we are completely honest about change it always brings some kind of loss and so we need to name that aloud here in this gathering.

Theologian Paul Tillich spoke of change in his teachings. He invited people to look at life as a constant process of starts and stops, births and deaths. He reminded us that when a baby is born, it is death to the womb and life entering a new and mysterious womb. When a baby begins to crawl and walk it is death to total dependence on parents and a whole new life beyond their arms. When a child goes to school it is the beginning of knowledge that extends beyond the family and friends and closest circle. When a teenager learns to drive a car it is new freedom. When a person moves into a loving relationship it is the end of focus on self and creating a new life of companionship with all of its blessings and challenges. At every new beginning or new experience in our life there is an ending to the former way of doing things and a new life that opens itself to the future.

There is an endless cycle of beginnings and endings, of comings and goings, or saying hello and saying goodbye. If I am honest I'm not very good at saying goodbye. I have the uncanny and cultivated ability to be present at an occasion/gathering and vanish quickly without making a splashy fanfare about my departure. Our staff have noticed this and even make jokes about it. I know that new beginnings require endings but endings are bittersweet and often painful.

Goodbyes represent an ending and so some of us shy away from saying goodbye. I once was told that the way you leave a social engagement is an indicator of how you will die. I have carried that with me since hearing it. So here is what I do. I am very intentional about saying goodbye to those with whom I have the deepest connection and the hosts of the event. I want that moment of touching base and it is important to me. I am still a work in progress around this and not quite what I need to do around endings and beginnings. Maybe that's true for some of you too?

Becoming a new Conference will be hard and filled with challenges. There will be norms and cultures that we will encounter that will ask us to be gentle with one another and recognize that long standing Conferences have had a particular way of doing things. We are going to have to relinquish some things and we will need to adjust to new ways of working together. There will be people who will depart from Conference life and new ones who will step forward. We will need to be aware of these challenges and realize that work we once did we might not do any more and there will be difficult and challenging work we may take on that calls us forth in new ways we can only imagine.

As we head into this milestone transition I am excited about what God has in store for us to work together with our siblings in MA and RI. I believe that our covenant is a compelling one in which we proclaim that we are called to live the love and justice of Jesus. We have lifted the four core values of the Conference to be central to all that we do as we move forward.

We understand the local church exists to make disciples of Jesus and we welcome all people unconditionally to share in this calling.

We commit to making God's love and justice real by loving our neighbors, children, and all of creation through our collective work, such as seeking racial, economic, environmental, and LGBTQ justice.

We believe God calls us to bring new life as agents of change and so we embrace and encourage adaptive and transformative leadership wherever the Body of Christ is gathered.

We encourage local congregations and varied ministry settings, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, to form covenant partnerships with all who work for the common good in their local communities and throughout the world.

We seek to be a Conference in which local churches make disciples, where we live the love and justice of Jesus, embracing adaptive change and transformation and forming covenant partnerships with those who work for the common good. These are the bedrock values and are the guiding star that we believe God is leading us to embody in the days that lie ahead.

So we journey on together. We are indeed a Body in Motion and we are moving towards some new dance partners. May we be bold and faithful as the Spirit continues to lead us forward.

\*Change-making God

you are in the tentative setting-out on a new pathway,  
with all the feelings of excitement and inadequacy,  
the vulnerability of hope and the fear of failure.

Give us the risk of new beginnings.

Change-making God

you are in the pressures of work and the precious space for creativity,  
you are in the losses and griefs that throw us off balance  
and in the joy and delight of new passion.

Give us the wisdom that sees your holiness.

Change-making God

you are in the exhaustion and satisfaction of completion,  
the nerve-racking waiting for the verdict of others,  
the challenge and risk of debate.

Give us the courage to find and speak our truth.

Change-making God

you are in the unknown that lies ahead,  
the changes half-guessed at, or as yet unseen,  
the new patterns and rituals of our embodied lives.

Give us the trust to be open to you.

May it be so.

\*This prayer is from Naming God, by Jan Berry. The book is published by the United Reformed Church of Great Britain

### **Recognitions, Evaluation Forms and Closing**

Thank-You gifts presented to Rev. Bridget Fidler, Rev, Fredd Ward & Rev. Alice O'Donovan.

*Moderator Rev. Fredd Ward: Evaluation forms will be sent electronically to participants who attended this meeting today. We ask that you please fill them out and help us plan future gatherings. Your positive and constructive feedback is appreciated.*

*Rev. Kent Siladi: Offered a benediction.*

*This concludes the Special Meeting of the CT Conference. The Annual Meeting in 2019 will be held November 1st and 2nd, at The DCU Center in Worcester, MA. It will be a joint meeting of the CT, MA and RI Conferences. We hope to see you all there.*

Meeting adjourned at 4:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jill Ford, Registrar & Program Associate