

## **AFFIRM NETWORK**

**Membership of the Network:** Bruce Sweet and Roy Holton, Co-Chairs; Mary Savage; Tim Reaburn; and Roz Vincent-Haven. Staff support Diane Matheson-Jimenez.

Here are the key events of the past year as well as some current initiatives: Some of our members took part in a webinar on pronoun use and offering hospitality to transitioning and transgender people. As a network, we reviewed the Celebrating Gender Diversity tool kit and began conversation about a workshop on inclusive and expansive language in worship.

We recommended that General Meeting registration forms be altered so that people can self-identify their gender and expression.

We recommended that all-gender washroom signs be purchased to reflect our desire to be more inclusive.

Diane Matheson-Jimenez, with our blessing, joined a task group to look at what an Affirming process might look like for our camps.

Diane M-J is also presently involved in work with Hamilton clergy. The City of Hamilton has written a series of pro-transgender protocols for which they are receiving pushback from faith groups in the city. Diane and several United Church clergy are now meeting with representatives from the Anglican and Catholic Church, and from the Jewish community, to create a letter campaign in support of Hamilton's pro-transgender work.

We, with the Conference's Affirming pastoral charges, are working on a discernment and education event. The hope for this event is that it will provide space for interested churches to learn about the Affirming process, and opportunity for existing Affirming churches to learn and grow.

We wrote, and had approved by Affirm United/S' Affirmer Ensemble, a mission statement and policy. The Conference Executive is currently reviewing the statement and policy, which will be presented to the court of the General Meeting in May 2017.

In the coming weeks, we will be corresponding with all Conference committees and networks to invite them into discernment about what being an affirming Conference will mean for their work.

There is much work yet to be done and we invite interested individuals to speak with Bruce and Roy, or Diane M-J, about joining the network

*Submitted by Bruce Sweet*

## **BEARING FAITHFUL PUBLIC WITNESS NETWORK**

Hamilton Conference's Bearing Faithful Public Witness Network comprises representatives from each presbytery's Bearing Faithful Public Witness (or equivalent) committee. The objective of the Network is to "co-ordinate, lift up and encourage the social and global justice work within Hamilton Conference."

In the name of good stewardship, the Bearing Faithful Public Witness Network meets exclusively by tele or web conference. The Network stays in touch, on a regular basis, by email. In 2016, priorities for the Network included sharing resources on a wide variety of topics, circulating information on educational and volunteer opportunities, and mobilizing communities of faith to respond to Urgent Action items from the General Council office.

If you are not presently receiving updates from the Faithful Public Witness Network, and would like to be on the email list, please notify Diane Matheson-Jimenez. Additionally, the Network has an opening for one representative from Niagara Presbytery. Please consider discerning whether you are called to join us in this important ministry!

*Diane Matheson-Jimenez*  
*Conference Minister for Social Justice*

## **CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY NETWORK**

Network Members: Linda Clark, Bonnie Holliday, Deborah Laforet, Debbie Siertsema, and Laurie White, with staff support from Diane Matheson-Jimenez.

The Children & Youth Ministry Network was formed in the fall of 2009. This is the mandate of the Network, which was approved by Conference Executive in May 2012.

1. To promote ways of nourishing the spirituality of children and youth.
2. To support those who are in leadership positions in ministry with children and youth.
3. To promote resources related to faith formation of children and youth.
4. To promote relevant events for children and youth both in and outside the Conference.

Since last year's Annual Report, we've had four meetings, via video-teleconferencing: April 7, 2016; October 13, 2016; January 25, 2017; and March 29, 2017.

You may recall that in last year's report, I mentioned we were in the midst of planning a Youth Forum-type event to coincide with the Celebration of New Ministries service. 'JUST Youth' was held and by all accounts, it was a successful event; we had seven youth participating, which allowed us to go more in depth around justice issues. One of the highlights was taking the youth to a Hula-hoop-a-thon, where they were involved in providing leadership activities to the younger children who were present. Deb Siertsema coordinated JUST Youth and was supported by Linda Clark, Brynna Toogood-Seagrave, Jeff Laforet, and Alexander Rey.

In conjunction with JUST Youth, Conference President Gord Dunbar provided leadership for a youth leaders networking event, with support from Laurie White, on behalf of the Network. The result of this evening was the consensus that they wanted to do it again, but this time with more opportunities for community building and networking among the participants. Gord is hopeful that we will help to coordinate such an event after his Presidency is completed.

Last year's CAYTS program also took place on the day of the Celebration of New Ministries service and so many children and young teens expressed interest that registration had to be capped. The event was coordinated by Sheena Marini with Christine Hossack and they were supported by Erin Hartmans and Brynna Toogood-Seagrave.

For the CAYTS program this year, the Network has been involved in working directly with the UNIFOR centre to create programming for the children and youth. The UNIFOR centre will be providing childcare and fun activities for this group, and the Network is coordinating Faith Animators to join them occasionally to bring a faith element to their experience. We've also been providing support to the Youth Forum planning team.

Since there is a Rendez-vous event again this year, which is a Canada-wide gathering of 500–600 youth being held in Montreal, the Network is involved in promoting it throughout the Conference.

During our meetings, we have a time for sharing what is happening in each of our presbyteries, so it would be great to have representation from each presbytery. Geography is not an issue since we meet via telephone/video conferencing. We currently have representation from Bruce, Halton, Waterloo, and Hamilton; **we would desperately like to have representation from Erie & Niagara Presbyteries**; please, be in touch with me, regardless of which presbytery you represent, if you think you would like to become part of this network.

Thank you to all the members of the Network for their enthusiasm and commitment. We especially welcome Meghan Witzel to the Network who has recently agreed to join it. We thank Diane Matheson-Jimenez for providing enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff support to the Network.

*Linda Clark, Chair*

## WEEK OF GUIDED PRAYER NETWORK

### The purpose of our Network is...

- † to enhance the prayer journey of the individual and their church community through Week of Guided Prayer retreats.

### Our current theme is “Woven with God’s Love”...

*Our lives are part of a tapestry that began at the dawn of time. God, the Master Weaver, drew in rich colours to create light and dark, seas and skies, earth, plants, animals. Then God did an amazing thing. In love, God wove people into this wonderful, ever-changing picture of life.*

*We are not just part of God’s creation but are invited to be co-creators with the One who is Holy Mystery and Wholly Love. Through prayer, we are drawn closer to the One who continues to weave with love. We invite you to join us in this week so you may experience a deepening relationship with God.*

### Goals to be achieved this year were ...

- † to provide printed resources for congregations holding Week of Guided Prayer retreats;
- † to offer leadership to facilitate Week of Guided Prayer retreats;
- † to provide ongoing support for companions through training and other events

As a network, we partner with churches within our Conference, across Conference boundaries within The United Church of Canada, as well as with four Presbyterian congregations, one Christian Reformed Church, and one ecumenical group that included Anglican, United and Presbyterian congregations. We trust that as individuals grow through prayer and personal reflection, their relationship with God deepens. This equips them to contribute to the health of their congregations and presbyteries, offer effective leadership, and faithful public witness.

### The theological rationale for our ministry is ...

The rhythm of prayer and ministry, exemplified by Jesus, is our model to be followed. As Jesus companioned disciples in their prayer experience and offered support for the spiritual journey, so we are encouraged to support one another. Lay people and clergy, with specific training companion retreatants in their prayer experience. This is not spiritual direction or counseling.

### How we achieved our goals ...

Our Network meets monthly at Conference Office and in members’ homes to pray and facilitate this ministry. We prepare the theme materials; publicity and organizational resources; and coordinators’ packets for each church. Network members share very personal stories in our materials to enhance the prayer journeys of participants. We also make prayer labyrinths available to congregations who have the space to use them.

As of writing this report, 11 churches have held or have confirmed they will be holding a Week of Guided Prayer in this Conference year. For the 2015-16 season, our theme was "Praying Our Story." Fifteen retreats were held. Eight churches reported a total of 146 participants. The actual number of participants could be as high as 254. A pastor from a United Church of Christ congregation in Nebraska has purchased materials to share with his congregation and other churches in our partner church. We are excited to be sharing the Week of Guided Prayer at the Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener this spring.



2016-2017  
Woven with God's Love

The materials for 2016-17 are available for \$50.00. Beginning with the 2017-18 series, materials will cost \$100. A copy of our Manual may be purchased for \$50.00 by contacting the Conference Office. We are in the process of updating it.

Trainings were held in Nassagaweya Presbyterian, Mountainview Christian Reformed and Islington United Churches We will hold a New Companion Training in your church, if you have a minimum of six participants. Contact Dale at [training@weekofguidedprayer.ca](mailto:training@weekofguidedprayer.ca).

In April 2016, we offered a Taste and See workshop at Knox Presbyterian Church Sixteen to introduce the Week of Guided prayer to ministry personnel.

### **Website**

We are grateful to Wayne Irwin for designing and administering our website, which offers history, sample materials, and contact information. Most churches downloaded their materials electronically. Recently, we were able to offer the option to purchase materials using PayPal, thanks to Barbara Hampson.

Visit [www.weekofguidedprayer.ca](http://www.weekofguidedprayer.ca) to learn more about our Network or to contact us.

### **Retreatants comment on their experience ...**

- † *“Busy lives. We do not take enough time to be still and listen to God's word, or to reflect on his goodness and love. For me, this week was so good for heart and soul.*
- † *“This Week of Guided Prayer was an incredibly powerful experience for me. The week was well-organized; excellent companions and coordinator who demonstrated leadership skills. I feel so blessed to have been able to participate in the week. I was able to focus on my personal growth -- mind, body and soul – and experience it fully – a renewed relationship with God and his Grace.”*
- † *“This was a very timely session – very much needed at this time in my life. I am very grateful to God that it was held at this time and not earlier in the year. May God continue to bless this ministry*

### **With thanks ...**

We are thankful for Calvary Memorial United in Kitchener who have tested our materials each year. We will be looking for a new church to test the 2017-18 materials in November.

I am grateful for each member of our Network – Pat Gushue (Co-Chairperson), Arthur Hills, Dale Kucharzyk, Debbie Johnson, Anne Murdoch, and Ferne Reeve; as well as Donna Drapkin, Jan McCormick, Bruce Seebach, and Linda Wheler who continue to support us with their prayers and email contributions. We were pleased to have Jill Cameron join us this year. With regret, we said goodbye to Debbie Johnson.

We are especially grateful to Lianna Murdoch for the beautiful drawings she provides for our materials. Thanks also to Sue Duliban, Barbara Hampson, Ruthanna Mack, and other members of Conference Staff for their ongoing support.

**If you or your church are interested in a Week of Guided Prayer, you may call Anne Murdoch at 905-842-0275 or email her at [contact@weekofguidedprayer.ca](mailto:contact@weekofguidedprayer.ca).**

Prayerfully submitted by,

*Heather Leffler, Co-Chairperson*

[networkchair@weekofguidedprayer.ca](mailto:networkchair@weekofguidedprayer.ca)

## **BRUCE PRESBYTERY**

Rooted in Christ,  
Growing through grace,  
Reaching out to serve.

I offer greetings on behalf of the congregations and ministries of the Bruce Presbytery. From the tips and shores of Bruce Presbytery and the encompassed area, the gifts of faithfulness, compassion, and dedication shown by the people who are the church is experienced in many ways.

We celebrated the beginning of summer at our June Meeting, co-hosted by Southampton/Mount Hope and Saugeen Wesley Pastoral Charges. At that meeting we were blessed by the participation of Moderator, The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell. Her presence among us and the message shared, including the reading of the litany recognizing the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Church's Apology to First Nations Peoples, continues to be an inspiration.

Noted with thanks is the hospitable support of our Conference Staff for the care, friendship, and ministry expressed during the past year. Our meetings were supported and enriched by visits and leadership from President Gord Dunbar, Persistent Friend Kim Uyede-Kai, and Personnel Minister Diane Blanchard.

As a part of the work of Presbytery, initiatives were taken to facilitate opportunities for leadership development and collegial relationships. We celebrate the ongoing development of the Presbytery LLWL programme and recognize Stephen MacDonald as a student candidate for Ordination. In order to offer peer "learning and collegiality", two groups have been established based on geography, and meet monthly to study selected texts and leading in ministry in these times.

In preparation for presbytery and congregational Board/Council Remit votes, two Remit Learning Days were facilitated. They were well attended by congregational members and presbytery members. The day included devotions, presentations on the remits as presented, questions and conversation. To date Bruce Presbytery has voted on the required remits with the exception of "One Order of Ministry."

Significant leadership and witness in Bruce Presbytery is the ministry exploration through the Bruce United Church Co-operative (BUCC). We give thanks for the six congregations and the clergy leadership within the co-operative for developing, and trying this step as a "new dance." Review of its conclusion and consideration of future possibilities will continue. A few highlights and thoughts offered by Pastors Doug and Ralph follow:

"Six congregations (Dobbinton United, St. John's United in Chesley, St. Paul's United in Mildmay, McIntosh United, Salem United, and Teeswater United) let go of "the way things have always been done," and came together to be one Co-operative with two full time ministers: Pastor Ralph Schmidt (Ordained Minister), and Pastor Doug Brown (Designated Lay Minister). The move to be "one" required significant thinking outside the box."

“We celebrated with Holy Communion, sometimes a choir, often creative reflection time with Pastor Ralph and Pastor Doug, and always, always food following worship.”

“In June of 2014, we marked the first Anniversary of the BUCC with a Sunday bus trip to all six churches, where we heard stories of local history, shared a short worship complete with singing, and ended the day with a supper hosted by Salem United Church. In our second year, we invited a Ministry Intern into our Co-operative, and were delighted when Debbie Grant came our way.”

“...finances and complex layers of other issues made it difficult for all six congregations to find the resources and the will to continue as a Co-operative, so the three-year experiment will end on June 30, 2017.”

The essence of our shared around the table at the Presbytery Executive Meeting in March are: “Thank you for trying”.

The willing hands and caring offered through congregational and outreach committees and the UCW is noted. Glimpses of the Kin-dom are found at community meals, in foodbanks, through supportive relationships to help address concerns of poverty in this area and in support of The United Church Mission and Service Fund.

The ongoing partnerships enable the congregations to reach out and support many initiatives. Counselling, children’s activities, Bridges out Of Poverty and its intentional community “Circles” is establishing relationship in Bruce Presbytery. Celebrating diversity in community and in church continues and several congregations have become directly involved in welcoming newcomers to the area.

Our presbytery continues to support and discover meaningful resources through the BPRC centrally located at Grace United Church in Hanover. Beyond our church worship places, outdoor and camping ministry is woven into Bruce Presbytery at Silver Lake Camp. The camp’s staff is preparing for another season of joyful camping, community, and making commitment in God’s World.

As we journey into the future through grace, we will continue to live into the Mission Statement of Bruce Presbytery with Rod Coates, as chairperson. Considerations are in place to continue supporting clergy and to develop opportunities for congregational representatives to encounter opportunity for spiritual retreat and renewal. This is offered prayerfully, as are my thanks to the executive for their co-leadership in Bruce Presbytery. I close with my best wishes during this time of transition and transformation.

We welcome you to Bruce Presbytery for this year’s annual meeting of Hamilton Conference.

Blessings as we Embrace the Spirit,

*Rev. Gail Clarkson, DM*  
*Chairperson, Bruce Presbytery*

## **ERIE PRESBYTERY**

Erie Presbytery continues to support the mission and work of our church within our boundaries.

During the past year, we have worked on the national remits regarding the future structure of our church, trying to inform people of the implications of these remits, in order to help them come to decisions. The information concerning the remits that required our vote has been presented over the year, with opportunities for reflection and small group discussion. Our voting follows the timeline suggested by General Council, and we expect to finish this work on time. The discussions have been detailed and very informative.

In our work of oversight of the pastoral charges in our area, we have tried to promote more cooperation among the many small churches who cannot afford full-time ministry. We have looked at “clustering” as a way into the future, and there has been some progress in three areas of the presbytery, although the discussions continue at a slow pace.

We are pleased that the amalgamation of Heritage/Brantford with Sydenham in Brantford has been successfully completed, as of January 1, 2017. The two congregations are working well together and are now searching for a new minister. Balfour St. United voted to cease worshipping in their building, and most of them have transferred into Harmony/Brantford. The future of the building has not yet been decided.

In the meantime, our pastoral relations team have worked hard to provide leadership in all of our churches. We have covenanted with two new pastoral relationships: Rev. Debra McMillan in Cayuga Pastoral Charge, and Rev. Cathy Dilts at Burford United. At the time of writing, several points are being served temporarily while they look for new ministry personnel, or new cooperative agreements.

Through our Education and Students Committee, we have recognized three new candidates for ordained ministry: Alison Miculan, Robert Lawson, and Caitlin MacKenzie. Our thanks go to all those who have volunteered their time and wisdom on discernment and interview committees.

The property committee continues its work of caring for and advising pastoral charges. We congratulate the congregation of Bethel Stone United on the construction and opening of a new fellowship centre, which will serve the needs of the congregation and the community. This committee, and the administration committee of which it is a part, have worked hard to support the work both of presbytery and of the pastoral charges.

Responding to the need for sponsors of Syrian refugees, our mission committee organized several gatherings where sponsoring groups could share their learnings and experiences. Two families were sponsored through St. Pauls/Paris, along with Burford, Bethel Stone, and St. George. They have already moved on into their second year here. Other sponsors, St. Andrews and South Cayuga, are still awaiting the arrival of new families.

We are blessed to have Nations Uniting active in our area. They have been offering helpful programmes to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee report and its



recommendations. We continue to try to learn from the people at Six Nations and New Credit/Delaware and to strengthen our ties with them.

We are also pleased that a working group is keeping Five Oaks Christian Centre open. They are exploring new ideas and goals to enable future priorities for the centre.

*Submitted by Nora Fueten, Chair*

## **HALTON PRESBYTERY**

The mission statement for **Halton Presbytery** is “*Strengthening Congregations to be Christ in the World*”; that is challenging and important work, and Halton engages the challenge in a number of ways.

Our Education and Students committee will see three people ordained this year by Hamilton Conference. The work of supporting these students and being a part of their journey is inspiring, moving, and highly valued.

Our Strategic Mission Development work has focused on our “Loving God, Loving Neighbourhood” initiative, in which 10 churches were given grants to support the work of discerning their congregation’s role and direction in their communities or neighbourhoods. These congregations are using surveys, property scans, Environics reports, and community ‘Round Table’ events to achieve this aim. We intend to offer this grant to ten more churches in 2017.

The Pastoral Relations team has been busy and challenged for several years, supporting a number of congregations going through leadership transitions – sometimes due to the minister retiring or moving, and sometimes due to conflict and a crisis in the pastoral relationship. Was this a short-term upward spike in Pastoral Relations work, OR is it a trend that will continue unabated for the coming years? With the aging of many ‘baby boom’ clergy, we are preparing for a sustained level of pastoral relations needs.

This trend links to a major decision for Halton Presbytery to end the contract with our Mission Development Officer. For nearly a decade, this position has worked with congregations in mission development and was supported many initiatives, including “Loving God, Loving Neighbourhood, and the ‘Ministry in Motion’ conference. With shifting trends, it was decided to re-evaluate our staffing to address new directions of need. Presently, a task group is evaluating the opportunities and requirements in our presbytery and determining what staffing is required and where it is best deployed.

We know that we are financially blessed as a presbytery. All our congregations have been able to pay their assessments, and there have been enough funds available to help with special grants or support for crisis needs. God is good.

Much work has been accomplished this year around Remits. At each meeting, we have dedicated 30–45 minutes for one or two remits. We have invited guest speakers with specific expertise to share their knowledge of the remit. We have engaged in group discussion and then shared some of our concerns and wisdom on the floor. So far, each remit has passed. By the time of the Conference Annual Meeting, we will have one left, which we will explore in the fall.

At the present time, leadership is lacking on our Nominations and Faith Formation teams. Overall, there continues to be a slow decline – in membership in the congregations and therefore a decline of volunteers available for servant roles. Consequently, some committee work is delayed, or not attempted.

Our co-chairs of presbytery have been very intentional in making our monthly gatherings less ‘report- driven’ so that they might be more relational, and worshipful. The co-chairs have agreed to continue for a second year. Next year, the time previously used for remits will be focused on discerning the role of the presbytery in renewal of ministry and expansion of mission. Also, if the remit passes to eliminate presbyteries and Conferences and create regions, the presbytery needs to discern whether it wants to somehow continue the collegiality and community of this presbytery and determine whether the mission of our presbytery will change from support of congregations to supporting one another.

Our mandate of “*Strengthening Congregations to be Christ in the World*” calls us to the renewal of both the local church, and through it the wider Church. The Lord be with us.

*The Executive of Halton Presbytery  
(Deborah Laforet & Orville James, co-chairs)*

## HAMILTON CONFERENCE STAFF TEAM

**Peter Hartmans**  
**Conference Executive Secretary**

### **Jesus Calms the Storm: Luke 8:22-25:**

**When Jesus fell asleep a windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. The disciples went to Jesus and woke him up shouting, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he woke up and rebuked the wind and raging waves; they ceased and there was a calm.**

The story of the windstorm described in Luke paints a picture of strong powerful winds and water filling the boat, and terrified disciples. Yet, the last experience of this story describes calm. This has been my prayer for this past year. This is my prayer for this coming year, faithful public witness, strong affirming ministry before, after, and during the raging waves, which lead to calm.

The support of a number of calm and wise voices throughout the year allows our Conference to continue to move forward and experience calm moments in the midst of the wind and waves. Throughout our six presbyteries, many congregations, and faithful communities, we offer faithful witness and strong ministry. I am mindful of all our congregations who care for their flock and vision for ministry and live out their faith. Many followers, in many places, living out our Creed:

“We live in God’s world, who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus”.

This year our Conference continues to strive to provide effective leadership and promote healthy congregations and presbyteries. We support various presbyteries, ministry personnel, lay members and congregations, exciting ministry, and also transition. Many of our congregations have strong vibrant ministries that enrich their communities and offer faithful public witness. Some of our congregations have been working on vibrant partnerships and a number of congregations are asking difficult questions about their future. Our presbyteries and Conference work hard to support our congregations.

In our Conference office this past year, we were excited to welcome our new Personnel Minister, Diane Blanchard. I have also appreciated and enjoyed working with Kim Uyede-Kai and Diane Matheson, and Sue Duliban, Barbara Hampson, and Ruthanna Mack, who provide our Conference with administrative support. Each of our staff members contribute their deep faith and wisdom as our Church continues to move forward.

This year our United Church has been wrestling with big questions about structure, ministry, and congregational support. Our Conference has been called to pray, reflect, listen, and offer leadership to our Church. My prayer for this coming year is that we as leaders will be able to provide a calm presence and strong leadership during this time of change. I want to thank our Conference President, Gord Dunbar; Past-President, Ted Smith; and President Elect, Heather Leffler, for their constant support and prayer. I also want to thank our Staff Committee;

Rosemary Addison, Chair and Staff Committee support person; and many, many other volunteers who work faithfully to support the work of our Church. This coming year let us remember the words of the Gospel of Luke: “And Jesus woke up and rebuked the wind and raging waves; they ceased and there was a calm.”

**Diane Blanchard**  
**Conference Personnel Minister**

Thank-you for your welcome to me since August 2016, when I was appointed to this role on the staff of Hamilton Conference. At the February meeting of the Conference Executive, I was formally covenanted. I embrace this work with the faith that God works with, within, and beyond each of us who seeks to follow Christ.

I work with and offer support to a large number of committees who relate to ministry personnel in our Conference, from the Education and Students Committee and the Conference Internship and Educational Supervision Committee to the Settlement Committee, the Coordinating Committee for the Sexual Abuse Response and Prevention policy, the Conference Pastoral Care Team, the Interim Ministry Committee, and the Pensions Committee. The faithful volunteers of this network at both the presbytery and Conference levels support those who want to test a call to ministry and their educational processes. Others support those in active ministry and their pastoral charges. Still others pay attention to the needs of retirees. It is a complex and dynamic system that would not function without sacrificial gifts of time and wisdom by the people of our Church. Thank-you.

In addition to those who volunteer on presbytery and Conference committees in the vocational aspects of our work, there are also the congregational members who serve on Ministry and Personnel Committees. Your work can be so important in undergirding the work of paid accountable ministry. Thank-you for the attention you pay to both people and policy and for continuing to learn and to consult.

I am enjoying getting acquainted with the varied presbyteries of Hamilton Conference and have appreciated gracious hospitality when I visit. I am designated as the “Persistent Friend” of Hamilton Presbytery and attend meetings of the full court and executive whenever I can, sharing in the life of the presbytery and offering news from Conference.

Learning how the Restorative Care Plan works has made me appreciate this resource for times when ministry personnel need to take a medical leave. The plan supports a pastoral charge for 85% of salary and benefit costs which better allows the minister to focus on getting well, knowing the pastoral charge has resources for substitute ministry.

In February I participated in a conference on Deepening Understanding of Intercultural Ministry, led by the Canadian Churches’ Forum. As the diversity of our country and our churches increases, as ministry personnel from other countries feel called to offer their gifts by being admitted as ministers in our Church, our skills in working across cultures need to grow. This is challenging and exciting. When I was a young woman, I served in Zambia as overseas

personnel. Now churches who have experienced Canada, in part, through Canadians working in their countries, are offering people to work among us.

In April, Kim Uyede-Kai and I trained as facilitators in United Fresh Start, a learning and conversational program that offers support to pastoral charges and ministry personnel as they begin a new relationship. I look forward putting this program's resources to work! There may be a training event for people interested in becoming facilitators in our Conference this fall so please let me know if this is of interest to you.

I have enjoyed becoming part of the Hamilton Conference staff and deeply appreciate the varied gifts that each person brings to the work we do. Thank-you to the staff committee for their support and to Lynne Bandy who has provided a listening ear for me in a new role.

In the midst of life and death, in the complexity of the world we live in and the pace of change, the faith grounds us for the challenges of leadership in these times. Thanks be to God.

**Diane Matheson-Jimenez**  
**Conference Minister for Social Justice**

**Mission/Purpose:** to provide consultation and program resources to committees and networks of pastoral charges, presbyteries, and the Conference in the areas related to church in society, social justice and youth, and world outreach.

**Goals/Priorities:** to assist with planning and evaluating programs in the areas of social justice and youth while keeping before the community, and the church, the prophetic dimensions of the Gospel.

My work in 2016 was grounded in Hamilton Conference's 4 named priorities: healthy congregations and presbyteries, effective leadership, faithful public witness, and strengthening partnerships.

**Healthy Congregations and Presbyteries**

At the end of 2015, many congregations in Hamilton Conference discerned a call to respond in tangible ways to the greatest refugee crisis since WWII. In order to assist congregations, I created a resource and facilitated workshops on refugee sponsorship. As is often the case, working with congregations on sponsorship has simultaneously been the hardest and most rewarding part of my work. While some sponsorship groups have already entered into their "13th month" (the time that wraps up the formal sponsorship relationship), others are just beginning their journey.

In providing support to the Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response (SAPR) Committee, I had the opportunity to give leadership to a new model of boundary training, which we piloted at the Bruce Presbytery Learning Day. Boundary training sponsored by SAPR has previously focused on clergy training, but for this workshop we opened registration to lay leaders. The response from participating clergy and lay people was overwhelmingly positive. We thank Bruce Presbytery for allowing us to pilot this project with them and look forward to the many ways that incorporating lay leaders into boundary training will add to the richness of the experience.

In 2016, I continued to serve as Persistent Friend to Niagara Presbytery. Monthly I attended both executive and full court meetings to share news; to serve as liaison between courts of the church; and to build relationship. I am grateful to Niagara Presbyters for welcoming me so warmly!

### **Effective Leadership**

With the support of Rev. John Benham, chair of SAPR, I once again offered a “train the trainers” healthy boundaries event for the directors, board members, and senior staff of our 4 camps. The purpose of this event was to equip those in attendance to train their individual staff teams to keep campers, staff and the camps themselves safe. The day was well attended and was a great opportunity for the camps to share resources and best practices on preventing and responding to sexual misconduct at camp.

Over the past year, I have had the joy of working alongside the Children and Youth Network as they created a new model for programming for children and young teens at our General Meeting, and an event for those in ministry with youth to network with one another. The new model for programming will be piloted in May 2017. The networking event will not happen in 2017 due to time constraints but will be offered in the future.

A critical component of effective leadership is practicing self-care. To that end, I assisted the Pastoral Care team in planning and leading a daylong clergy wellness retreat. Highlights of the day included reiki treatments, hiking, a labyrinth walk, spiritual practices, workshops incorporating the arts, and worship with Conference President Gord Dunbar.

### **Faithful Public Witness**

I enjoyed providing congregations, committees, and presbyteries with resources, as requested, on such topics as divestment, acknowledging Traditional Territory, and healthy boundaries for youth groups. It was a great joy for me to also be able to preach in some of the congregations on what the Bible says about refugees, radical hospitality, privilege, and climate justice.

The Spring of 2016 brought me the opportunity to assist in planning and facilitating an event for the justice-seeking youth of Hamilton Conference, aptly named JUSTYouth. For 3 days, the youth gathered to learn, perform community service, laugh, pray and grow around issues of poverty and climate change. I am so grateful for the work of the JUSTYouth planning team—Deb Siertsema, Linda Clark, Jeff Laforet, Alexander Rey, and Brynna Toogood-Grave.

Much of my time in 2016 was spent with the Conference’s Affirm Network, drafting a new Mission Statement and Policy, which has been approved by the Conference Executive and will go to the General Meeting this Spring for adoption.

In the fall of 2016, with help from colleagues, I set up an Advent Peace display in the office, which featured Zatoun products for purchase, materials on continuing the conversation about a just peace for Palestine/Israel, and Advent reflections/devotions that focused on justice. This was a meaningful way for me to live into the season of Advent.

As part of my own personal growth, I joined the editorial board for Mandate magazine. We, at the time of writing, have met once to talk about ways congregations can engage in reconciliation work. I look forward to future work with this talented and passionate group!

### **Strengthening Partnerships**

As an extension of my work with the Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response committee, I had the opportunity to partner with Toronto Conference on an online training course that used social media as a lens for dialogue around establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries. Registration for these sessions sold out and will be adapted and repeated in 2017.

I, along with Rev. Barbara Fullerton, continue to represent Hamilton Conference at the Social Justice Network of Ontario Conferences (SJNOC). This Network allows representatives from all Ontario's Conferences to come together to share resources and best practices, as well as discern joint responses to issues of injustice at the provincial level.

Beyond the work of SJNOC, I participated in conference calls with colleagues across the country on a unified response to issues of poverty, anti BDS legislation, the Unsettling Goods Campaign, and Right Relations. I so value these opportunities to be in touch with other volunteers and staff engaged in like work!

A highlight of 2016 was a conference call that gathered many of the Conference's Affirming Ministries for a time of sharing joys and challenges. The initial call was such a success that the group continues to meet and will be working on a shared project for the summer of 2017.

### **Learning Opportunities**

A committed lifelong learner, I took every educational opportunity that came my way including webinars on climate change, gender diversity, building relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, and poverty. I attended a series at Five Oaks Centre on traditional Indigenous teachings, the Two Row Wampum, treaties and land claims, and ceremonies. I thoroughly enjoyed courses in the ethos non-violence and the theology of superhero stories.

### **Looking Forward**

I am looking forward to testing, with the Children and Youth Network, a new model of CAYTS at the General Meeting in May of 2017. I feel a great deal of excitement around partnering with the SAPR committee on a boundary training workshop with a focus on gifts and finances. The early months of 2017 have brought me several opportunities to engage with ecumenical partners and I look forward to further collaboration. In partnership with Affirm United/S' Affirmer, General Council staff and consultants representing UCC camps, work has begun on creating an Affirming process for outdoor ministries.

I give thanks for the justice seekers of Hamilton Conference who remain committed, in ways big and small, to working for a better, more just and peaceful world!

In solidarity and gratitude,  
*Diane Matheson-Jimenez*

**Kim Uyede-Kai**  
**Minister for Congregational Support**

**Healthy Congregations and Presbyteries**

This past year saw a slight increase in requests for visioning workshops with single or multiple congregations exploring the possibility of clustering or amalgamating. Listening circles and governance workshops continued to be requested. I also remained Conference Persistent Friend to Bruce Presbytery and Halton Presbytery and their Executives.

Ruthanna Mack and I continue to support the work of the Conference Philanthropy and Stewardship Committee and Mission Strategy and Support (MSS) Committee. Both committees are doing the hard and faithful work of balancing fewer financial and volunteer resources with heightened needs. Notably, requests for grants and loans have increased, adding to the workload of staff and volunteer MSS committee members who sift through mounds of paperwork.

Dave Jagger, Stewardship and Gifts Officer shared with London Conference, is a tremendous resource to our congregations, presbyteries, outreach ministries, and Philanthropy and Stewardship Committee. A Stewardship Toolkit workshop offered in London saw a good turnout of Hamilton Conference attendees so a similar Hamilton Conference workshop will be offered on April 29, 2017.

**Effective Leadership**

Following the departure of Jenny Stephens, I staffed the Leadership Commission as it concluded its work with Bruce Presbytery and ended in September with a retreat for ministry personnel. It is a delight to have Diane Blanchard as a new colleague in the role of Personnel Minister. I look forward to working with her more closely.

**Faithful Public Witness**

On behalf of Hamilton Conference, I attended the 30th anniversary of the United Church Apology to First Nations Peoples, which took place in Sudbury at Huntington University and the Apology Cairn site. Participating in the event were several of the original elders from the 31st General Council, some of their decedents, and The Very Rev. Bob Smith who delivered the 1986 Apology. A number of Hamilton Conference members were also present to witness the poignant event and be part of the United Church's commitment to continue living into the Apology.

**Sabbatical January—March 2017**

I am deeply grateful for the gift of a three-month sabbatical to rest, read, reflect, and learn, and I am grateful for my staff colleagues who carried the bulk of my portfolio work while I was away.

One key sabbatical highlight was an intensive facilitator training in “Learning How to Grow Restorative Churches” by FaithCARE (Communities Affirming Restorative Experiences), Shalem Mental Health Network, and the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). This framework, which grew out of global restorative justice practices, could be especially helpful for current Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committees and congregational governing



bodies to learn to facilitate practical and equitable restorative approaches to healing relationships, repairing harm in churches, and supporting restorative culture in congregations.

Another learning highlight was “Fresh Start” (Episcopal)/”United Fresh Start” (United Church adaptation) facilitator training that I attended with Diane Blanchard. Fresh Start’s mantra is “the product is relationship” and its key principles for any new pastoral relationship are transition theory, the importance of relationship-building, and the need for self-care. Several thematic modules have been developed to support these principles.

Both Fresh Start and Restorative Practices for Churches are complimentary, practical tools. Both have relationships as core principles with potential to reduce the reliance on and frequency of formal disciplinary measures. I plan to find ways to utilize both program frameworks in the coming year.

*Kim Uyede-Kai*

## **STEWARDSHIP & GIFTS OFFICER - HAMILTON & LONDON CONFERENCES**

**Rev. Dave Jagger**  
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Greetings!

Since June of 2016, I have been your friendly neighbourhood Stewardship & Gifts Officer. The transition for me from congregational ministry to Stewardship & Gifts Officer has been immense and overwhelming, but equally rewarding and encouraging. I have learned much and have much to learn.

My position sees me consulting, resourcing, encouraging, and involved with presbyteries, congregations and individuals as I strive to support and grow the spiritual practice of stewardship across two Conferences. My work takes place across four broad areas: Congregational Stewardship and Giving, Planned Legacy Giving, Mission & Service, and The United Church Foundation.

If you would like help, or to talk and brainstorm and plan, in any area of stewardship, please contact me.

## **CONGREGATIONAL STEWARDSHIP:**

- Implementing “Called to be the Church” our United Church giving program. The 2017 version is entitled, “We Sing Thanksgiving” from The Song of Faith.
- Writing and reviewing congregational Gift Acceptance policies.
- Supporting and encouraging Stewardship Committees.
- Using the PAR (pre-authorized giving) program.
- Narrative budgeting.
- On-Line giving options.
- Reviewing congregational giving data.
- Year round stewardship teaching and activities.
- Find stewardship themed sermons at [www.stewardshipsermonsandtips.blogspot.ca](http://www.stewardshipsermonsandtips.blogspot.ca)

## **PLANNED LEGACY GIVING**

- Setting up congregational Planned Legacy Giving programs.
- Reviewing current Planned Legacy Giving policies.
- Supporting and encouraging congregational Planned Legacy Giving committees.
- Providing information and guidance to individuals about Planned Legacy Giving opportunities in order to help make real their wishes to support United Church ministries.
- Planned Legacy Giving information workshops.

## **MISSION & SERVICE**

- Telling the story of how the Mission & Service of The United Church of Canada makes a real difference in people’s lives.
- Goal setting for Mission & Service.
- Providing print and digital resources relating to Mission & Service.
- Providing timely and accurate information about congregational support of Mission & Service.

## **UNITED CHURCH FOUNDATION**

- Congregational investment of funds in The United Church Foundation.
- Congregational investment of funds through Fiera Capital Funds.
- Creating endowments and long-term funds with the United Church Foundation.
- Telling the story of how Foundation grants are making new ministry possible.

Again, if you would like help, or just to talk and brainstorm and plan, in any area of stewardship, please contact me. I have so far visited Bruce, Niagara and Waterloo Presbytery meetings. Hamilton, Halton, and Erie, I would welcome an invitation!

I was pleased with the 96 responses I received from Hamilton Conference Pastoral Charges to the Stewardship survey I conducted in July and August. The survey gave me a general idea of where Pastoral Charges stand in their stewardship activities.

In addition to the work I have been doing with a number of Pastoral Charges, congregations, and individuals on specific Stewardship topics, a Conference wide Stewardship event is being planned for April 29, 2017 at the Hamilton Conference office. Similar to the “Inspire, Ask,

Thank” event held in London Conference in November 2016, to which 12 people from Hamilton Conference registered, it will feature Gord Dunbar, David Armour, Susan Graham Walker and myself presenting information and ideas on Holy Currencies, Congregational Giving with Called to be the Church, Planned Legacy giving, Mission & Service, and the United Church Foundation.

Thank-you!!!

Everywhere I have visited I have made it a point to say as often as I can, “Thank-you!” For your generosity to support and take part in God’s mission in your local community; thank-you! For your generosity to support and take part in God’s mission across Canada and around the world together, through the Mission & Service of The United Church of Canada; thank-you! You are appreciated!

In all you do and all the ways that you share, you are making a difference! Alleluia!!

*Rev. Dave Jagger.*

*Stewardship & Gifts Officer – Hamilton & London Conferences.*



# MISSION & SERVICE GIVING IN 2016

We give THANKS for the enormous generosity of the people and congregations of Hamilton Conference for your continued support of local mission and ministry and Mission & Service.

## OUR GIFTS FOR MISSION & SERVICE IN 2016 SUPPORTED:

- ✦ Launch of Embracing the Spirit with **67** innovation grants
- ✦ **20** Canadian ecumenical networks
- ✦ **64** community ministries across Canada
- ✦ **36** chaplaincies on campus and in hospitals
- ✦ Theological education at **7** theological schools
- ✦ Support to all **13** Conferences and operating grants for **11** Conferences
- ✦ **11** Healing Fund projects
- ✦ **19** Justice and Reconciliation projects
- ✦ **74** Vision Fund projects with youth
- ✦ Grants for **84** congregations
- 🌐 **94** Mission & Service global partners in **22** countries

Our Mission & Service giving makes a difference in the world – near and far!

	2015	2016	\$ Change	% Change
Congregational and Direct Giving	23.65 M	22.97 M	-0.68M	-2.9
UCW Giving	1.34M	1.30M	-0.04M	-3.0
Planned Giving	2.10 M	1.05M	-1.05M	-50
<b>TOTAL UNIFIED FUND</b>	<b>27.09 M</b>	<b>25.32M</b>	<b>-1.77M</b>	<b>-6.5</b>
DESIGNATED GIVING				
SPECIFIC PARTNERS	2.36 M	2.77M	+0.41M	+17.4
<b>TOTAL GIVING</b>	<b>29.45 M</b>	<b>28.09M</b>	<b>-1.35M</b>	<b>-4.6</b>

Giving: By Destination



- Giving to the Mission & Service " Unified Fund" (Congregational, UCW, Direct, and Planned giving: 25,322,586)
- Designated for specific Mission & Service Partners: 2,773,833

## OUR CONFERENCE MADE AN IMPACT:

### HAMILTON CONFERENCE

Mission & Service Contributions	Amount
For World Development and Relief	\$22,515
From UCW	\$154,851
From Special or One Time Gifts	\$43,825
From Congregational Giving	\$2,652,910
<b>TOTAL MISSION &amp; SERVICE GIVING</b>	<b>\$2,874,101</b>

We celebrate the gifts we have shared for God's mission. Thank you for your role in this generosity!