

AFFIRM NETWORK

2017 was a year of significant change for Hamilton Conference's Affirm Network. At the rise of Conference, with sadness, we accepted the resignations of co-chairs Bruce Sweet and Roy Holton. Roy and Bruce have long been champions of Affirming work in Hamilton Conference and we give thanks for their faithful and steady leadership over the years!

After the General Meeting, several folks came forward to offer their time and talent to the Network. We are grateful to Mary Savage and Roz Vincent-Haven of Waterloo Presbytery; Pegi Ridout and Miriam Spies of Hamilton Presbytery; and Tim Reaburn and Micol Cottrell of Bruce Presbytery, for their commitment to leading the Network through this time of change. Diane Matheson-Jimenez continues to provide Conference staff support to the Network.

Throughout 2017, members of the Affirm Network met mainly by phone and email, to discuss how we would continue to work towards our goal of becoming an Affirming Ministry.

Our priorities for 2017 included:

- ❖ working with Conference staff to ensure that program registration forms allowed registrants to self-identify their gender
- ❖ securing all-gender washroom signs for the Conference Office that better reflect our desire to be welcoming
- ❖ writing a mission statement and policy and having it approved by Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble. The Conference Executive reviewed the statement and policy twice before recommending it be presented to the court of the General Meeting in May 2017.
- ❖ corresponding with all Conference committees and networks to invite them into discernment about what being an affirming Conference would mean for their work.
- ❖ creating a plan of action to outline how we would live into being a safe and welcoming space, and continuing to work with Conference committees on making room for the broad spectrum of theological understandings.

After much conversation and prayer, delegates to Hamilton Conference's 92nd General Meeting voted overwhelmingly in favour of becoming an Affirming Ministry. The Affirm Network celebrated this decision for a short time before rolling up our sleeves and continuing the work we are called to do. We look forward with great joy to celebrating the decision liturgically at the 93rd General Meeting in May of 2018!

Respectfully submitted by Diane Matheson-Jimenez, Staff Support

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY NETWORK

Network Members: Linda Clark, Bonnie Holliday, Deborah Laforet, Debbie Siertsema, Laurie White, Meghan Gilholm, 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 had two meetings, via video-teleconferencing: November 15, 2017 and March 7, 2018.

At the November meeting, we received reports on the various youth activities that had taken place: Youth Forum, Rendez-vous, and the Niagara Youth Festival. Hamilton Conference youth were plentiful in attendance at Rendez-vous and the Niagara Youth Festival, making up the largest contingent of young people at Rendez-vous. The Network really felt we could build on this for the 2018 Youth Forum and have been endeavouring to do just that. The Youth Forum leadership team for 2018 consists of Deb Siertsema (Coordinator), Jeff Laforet, Gary Clark, Alexander Rey, and Linda Clark, with staff support from Diane Matheson-Jimenez.

For the 2017 CAYTS program, the Network had worked directly with the UNIFOR centre to create programming for the children and youth. Unfortunately, this program was cancelled due to low registration.

Our March meeting focused on discussing the plans for 2018 instalments of CAYTS and Youth Forum, hearing updates on life in our representative presbyteries, and talking about the future. We are excited to say there are already six registrations for CAYTS, and are confident it will go forward.

In addition to the practical aspects of the work outlined above, the Network provides support to its members who are in these specialized ministries of working with children and youth; it creates a safe space for the exchange and sharing of ideas.

With the restructuring that is coming for 2019, some members of the network have expressed a desire to stay involved with this work in some way, at least those who will remain in the same region. We'll see how this desire evolves as we get closer to that time in our church's life. It should be noted that the Network is not limited by geography and so we are open to welcoming participation from across the Conference as it is now, and across the regions as they will be, during the time of transition and beyond.

Thank you to all the members of the Network for their enthusiasm and commitment. 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 “Living in God’s Time” ...

What does it mean to live in God’s time?

We often live our lives in linear time ... seeing life with a beginning and an end. Stepping back to view life from God’s perspective, we open ourselves to new possibilities. Instead of moving from birth to death, we are invited to focus on God’s transformative presence in all the moments and cycles of our lives. This Week of Guided Prayer helped participants discover how in God’s time ...

- *hidden in joyful endings are challenging beginnings*
- *wonderful new beginnings can be revealed through painful endings*
- *traumatic beginnings may lead to abundant possibilities*
- *despair can open into hope.*



This Week of Guided Prayer offered participants the opportunity to experience God’s presence with them through the moments of endings and beginnings of their lives. Living in God’s time is trusting that God is with us through our joys and sorrows—our trials and our opportunities—we are invited to deepen our relationship with Holy Mystery—the Alpha & Omega—Holy Love.

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 two Presbyterian congregations, one Christian Reformed Church, and one ecumenical group which included Anglican, United, and Presbyterian congregations. This year an Anglican parish in England and a United Church of Christ congregation in Nebraska purchased our materials to use with their congregations. Network members were grateful to share a retreat with the women of Grand Valley Institute in Kitchener. 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 accompanied disciples in their prayer experience and offered support for the spiritual journey, we are encouraged to support one another. This is not spiritual direction or counseling. Lay people and clergy, with specific training, companion retreatants in their prayer experience.

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 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, 10 weeks have been held or are planned for this conference year. For the 2016–17 season, our theme was "Woven with God's Love." Fourteen churches or pastoral charges used our materials. Ten evaluations reported a total of 180 participants. The actual number of participants could be as high as 252.

The materials for 2017–18 are available for \$100. A copy of our Manual may be purchased for \$50.00 by contacting the Conference Office.

Trainings were held in Mountainview Christian Reformed, Islington United and Three Willow United. We will hold a New Companion Training in your church, if you have a minimum of six participants. Contact Dale at training@weekofguidedprayer.ca.

In June 2017, companions enjoyed a day of renewal at Knox Presbyterian Church Sixteen.

Website

We are grateful to Wayne Irwin for designing and administering our website which offers history, sample materials, contact information, and materials churches can download.

Visit www.weekofguidedprayer.ca to learn more about our Network or to contact us.

Retreatants comment on their experience ...

† *"I liked the quietness in the church. I read and reread the scriptures to get the full picture, feeling, and quieting of my heart. This was a great experience."*

† *"The daily reflections really spoke to me."*

† *"I liked the loom because I could use the colours to talk to God as I wove."*

† *"I could not have asked for a better companion. She was truly chosen by God."*

† *"A truly uplifting experience"*

† *"Awesome!"*

With thanks ...

We are thankful for First Presbyterian in Penetanguishene who tested our materials in November this year.

I am grateful for each member of our Network—Graham Austin, Jill Cameron, Pat Gushue (Co-Chairperson), Arthur Hills, Dale Kucharczyk, Sarah Leffler, 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 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.

*Prayerfully submitted by,
Heather Leffler, Co-Chairperson*

networkchair@weekofguidedprayer.ca

BRUCE PRESBYTERY

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

Bruce Presbytery encompasses the Huron shores, the county of Bruce and beyond, including the traditional lands of many indigenous peoples. The diversity of the land and people means that we have many gifts to share with and by the communities we serve.

We celebrated the beginning of summer at Silver Lake Camp in June, which was an opportunity to experience God’s Creation through camping ministry, worship outdoors, and to connect with camp staff. It was also a symbiotic opportunity to discern some specific camp needs and help out with a few needed items as the staff prepared for another season of United Church camping.

Bruce Presbytery continued its focus on facilitating opportunities for leadership development and collegial relationships. We celebrate the ongoing development of the Presbytery Licenced Lay Worship Leader (LLWL) programme and have five candidates graduating from the program by mid-2018. A second LLWL program has begun and should be complete by 2018 year-end. A clergy retreat was offered in September 2017 and plans are underway for a repeat event in 2018. Offering peer “learning and collegiality” utilizing geography, two ministerial groups meet monthly to discuss selected topics and exchange ideas and leading in ministry. These friendly gatherings of colleagues bear much fruit—a true “fruit cluster,” if you will. ☺

Two presbyters completed the Hamilton Conference-sponsored United Fresh Start facilitator program and have already done some preliminary orientation sessions utilizing their newly-acquired skills, with more opportunities being planned. Bruce Presbytery is planning a Presbytery Learning Day in April 2018, with a focus on working sessions that will enable congregational self-support.

The Pastoral Relations unit continues to provide support for congregations undergoing transitions. At year end 2017, eight (8) of the 29 pastoral charges in Bruce Presbytery were in some form of leadership transition—e.g., Joint Search, Joint Needs Assessment, Intentional Interim Ministry, etc. Pastoral Oversight was partially sidelined for the past several years due to lack of resources and the Effective Leadership project but has now resumed oversight visits with a goal of completing all outstanding visits before 2018 year-end.

Bruce Presbytery finished its review and voting on the last of the General Council 42 remits, #6—One Order of Ministry. The active involvement of presbyters in all remit discussions and voting was an indication of healthy engagement in the new path the United Church is charting. A special presbytery meeting in January 2018 to review the Boundaries Commission draft report was well attended and received by presbyters, again demonstrating a willingness to embrace change despite not knowing exactly what it looks like.

Loss is also part of change. June 2017 saw the end of the Bruce United Church Co-operative (BUCC). We give thanks for the six congregations and the clergy leadership within the co-operative and pray that the lessons learned from this three-year experiment will leave open the door to reimagining future possibilities for “doing church.” Additionally, our presbytery reluctantly said

goodbye to the Bruce Presbytery Resource Centre at the end of 2017, a ministry that benefited many congregations for many years.

Both presbytery and executive meetings were well supported by our Conference Staff during the past year, with visits and leadership from President Heather Leffler and Persistent Friend Kim Uyede-Kai, as well as Dave Jagger (Stewardship) and Peter Hartmans (Executive Secretary).

I offer my personal thanks to all those who have volunteered their time and talents to support the life and work of Bruce Presbytery. I am especially grateful for the work, support, and wisdom of the Executive Leadership team.

Bruce Presbytery was pleased to host the Hamilton Conference general meeting in May 2017, and once again we welcome all of Hamilton Conference to Bruce Presbytery for what will ostensibly be our last meeting of Hamilton Conference.

We have not yet mapped out the ending processes for Bruce Presbytery, but we are already thinking about what ending with grace looks like and what our new beginning will be. We are now stepping into an unknown region, but on that journey we have our faith and values and the Spirit to guide us.

Blessings as we enter this exciting and challenging time of transition and transformation.

*Rod Coates,
Chairperson, Bruce Presbytery*

HAMILTON PRESBYTERY

Hamilton Presbytery began each of its monthly meetings a little differently this year; gathered in table groups, we would reflect on a theological question with a focus on scripture and recent personal ecclesiastical experience, which would be followed by prayer led by one person at each table. Following this time of check in and prayer, previously invited laity of various communities of faith whom I knew to be engaging in collaborative ministry, would share their story. This storytelling was to begin with the conception of the idea to collaborate, through the hills and valleys (trusting that the wisdom of mistakes made would be valuable for all the congregations within the presbytery) to the present moment in time. There were enough collaborative ministries within the bounds of Hamilton presbytery to have a presentation at every single meeting, with the only exception being the day we gladly welcomed our president Rev. Heather Leffler. Just knowing that there were over 14 communities of faith that were courageously venturing beyond their walls to serve Christ together with neighbouring faith communities (not all of which were United churches) was, in and of itself, a hope-filled endeavor.

We were very intentional about addressing transitional implementation as a result of the remits, beginning with an extra meeting to offer our input as a presbytery to the national task group responsible for determining the boundaries of the regional councils; an enormous task that we felt deserved our special attention. The Presbytery Executive accepted and extended an invitation to gather with the Presbytery Executives with whom we will form a regional council. Another sign of hope for this year to come.

All our committees were hard at work in each of their respective mandates:

Christian Development:

The biggest challenge this year, and subsequent highlight, was the change in leadership for the long-running traveling Summer Day Camp. Two former camp coordinators volunteered to take over the coordination and leadership for our 10th annual summer day camp. Megan & Brynna (or affectionately nicknamed Camp Goddesses) have pooled their many talents and gifts to fulfil this role with background support from Laurie White and Alison Miculan. At this time, there are eight churches registered to host a week of camp, and applications are being received for the staff team to be hired, with hopeful support from the Canada Summer Jobs program.

Pastoral Relations:

As usual, we have had a very busy year. We've had a stable membership who have worked together for many years. We've had four Interim Ministries that were supported through people on the Transition teams and of course we continue to partner with congregations on Joint Needs Assessments and Joint Searches. All of these activities stretch the energy of the members and we call on members of the presbytery for extra support. We proposed a minimum Basic Telephone Allowance of \$75 per month that was approved by the court of Hamilton Presbytery. The chair of Pastoral Relations continues to meet with the chairs of Pastoral Oversight to share information and wisdom. There will be a change in the chair of the committee at the rise of Conference when Claudia Adams steps down and Debbie Christie takes on this role.

Social Justice and World Outreach:

We surveyed the presbytery seeking thematic guidance for our work. This resulted in furthering our pursuit of education in regards to the injustices both near home as we seek right relations with our Indigenous peoples and internationally with the people of Palestine. We endorsed a national tour of Rev. Naim Ateek from Sabeel in Jerusalem and promoted the international No Way To Treat A Child campaign, which included visits with local Members of Parliament.

Resource Centre:

It was an exciting year as we moved locations. The church within which we were located ceased to be a worshipping community and sold their building. With gratitude for the years at Olivet United, we initiated a partnership with Emmanuel United on Upper Ottawa street where we continue to offer support of resources to the communities within and beyond our presbytery.

Pastoral Oversight:

This has been a busy year for Pastoral Oversight and we feel that we have once more by the guidance of the Holy Spirit been able to find resolution to several issues, many pertaining to efforts in collaboration. We deeply appreciate the support and guidance we have received from Conference Office.

Mission Council:

We are an Incorporated Body that oversees both restricted and unrestricted funds for Hamilton Presbytery. Its mandate is to support congregations, the work of presbytery, UC corporations to develop and redevelop ministry within the presbytery. We once again offered support to some very innovation and creative new ministries.

Education and Students:

We currently have two candidates, one of whom will be ordained at this general meeting providing all requirements have been met. We have an inquirer who will be interviewed in Sept by Conference Interview Board. We have five Licensed Lay Worship Leaders (LLWL) who are kept busy providing pulpit supply. We have spent time during this past year reviewing and putting in place guidelines for our LLWL.

Finance:

In addition to the overseeing the revenues and expenditures of the Presbytery, reviews the finances of Pastoral Charges entering into the JNAC and Search process, to assess that the Congregation can financially support the call or appoint of an ordered minister.

It was a privilege and a blessing to me to serve as chair of this presbytery.

It is with joy that I continue as past chair to support the incoming chair, Rev. Bill Wheeler, as we transform into a new body for Christ's sake in the world.

Christina Paradela

HAMILTON CONFERENCE STAFF TEAM

Peter Hartmans
Conference Executive Secretary

The new Creed, introduced to the United Church of Canada in 1967, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017. I always found it ironic that we refer to the “New” Creed as new. Nevertheless, for many in our Church, the New Creed still feels new and the words are meaningful and quoted often. As the New Creed’s first sentence states “We are not alone, we live in God’s world.” As Hamilton Conference and the United Church face the greatest potential change since 1925, I remind myself of these words often when facing the hope, puzzle, and stress of change. I am enthusiastic about proposed changes and look forward to 2019. However, as I reflect back on Hamilton Conference, I marvel and I am grateful for the commitment of many volunteers who have served the Conference for generations. The Conference has partnered with presbyteries and the General Council Office, we have evolved in leadership, and we have both experienced success and faced challenges. With the likely ending of Hamilton Conference (with hopefully GC 43 approval in July 2018), December 31, 2019, we will see the end of an era.

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

In our Conference Office this past year, I have appreciated the dedication of our Conference staff and volunteers during the period of transition. I have also appreciated and enjoyed working with Kim Uyede-Kai, Diane Matheson, Diane Blanchard (Program Staff), Barbara Hampson, Sue Duliban and Ruthanna Mack (Administrative Support). Each of our staff members provide their deep faith and wisdom as our Church continues to move forward. If General Council 43 approves the changes, I will be leaving what is currently Hamilton Conference and moving to serve Northern Ontario and Toronto, Regions 6 and 10.

This year our United Church has been wrestling with big questions about structure, ministry, and congregational support. Our Church 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 strong presence and leadership during this time of change. I want to thank our Conference President, Heather Leffler, Past-President, Gord Dunbar, and President Designate, Deborah Laforet for your constant support and prayer. I also want to thank our Staff Committee, Chair and Staff Committee support person Rosemary Addison, and many, many other volunteers who work faithfully to support the work of our Church.

Peter Hartmans

Diane Blanchard
Conference Personnel Minister

I am grateful for the themes chosen by Past-President Gord Dunbar, “Holy Shift,” and by our President, Heather Leffler, “Changing Seasons,” as they help our Conference acknowledge the new direction our church may take this summer as the remits passed by our pastoral charges and presbyteries are enacted. The structures, processes, and staffing needs could look quite different a year from now. In the midst of preparing ourselves for these changes, I ground myself in the knowledge that life on the ground, in our congregations and pastoral charges, will continue in much the same way. Ministry personnel will continue to share the good news of Jesus Christ in word and sacrament, provide pastoral care, and encourage their people to engage their communities with faithful public witness and good news. Pastoral charges, through their M&P committees, as well as more informally, will support and encourage their ministry personnel. For these things I am very grateful.

I am grateful for all the people who offer support to people who are interested in serving the church as paid, accountable ministers; discernment committees; Education and Student Committees of presbyteries; those who handle bursary funds; the Conference Interview Board members; the members of the CIES Committee on Internship and Educational Supervisors, which approves learning sites, assigns educational supervisors and offers learning days for interns; the Conference E&S committee, which holds final interviews for candidates for ordination and commissioning; and the Settlement Committee, which historically made sure each candidate had a position in which to serve. This network of volunteers from all levels of our church has offered compassionate care for candidates and for the church over many, many years. Thank you so very much! Moving forward with remit proposals, the new model proposed is Candidacy Pathways which will be under the auspices of a Candidacy Board shared by three regions and an Office of Vocations deployed minister. Candidates will be asked to form their own “circle of support” as well as being expected to meet with the Candidacy Board regularly as they continue their education and formation as ministers. There will continue to be a need for volunteers but many fewer than we have relied on in the past. So thank you, generous people, for your faithful work.

Another aspect of our lives in the church that will potentially change is the way that ministers and pastoral charges or communities of faith “find” one another and make a covenant to serve together. Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships was a new model that has been piloted in several United Church Conferences. Bruce Presbytery took part in one aspect of supporting the health and mutual support of ministers as part of the pilot project. Both congregations and ministers will develop profiles that will be online as part of a covenant Hub where priorities and gifts of both can be matched. From there, congregations seeking ministers can offer interviews to those ministry personnel whose profiles seem best matched to their identified needs. We will continue to need volunteers to be liaison people, helping congregations develop their profiles by determining goals and needs, but the role of the regions will be somewhat different than presbyteries have played in this process. As presbytery pastoral relations committees come to the conclusion of their work in December, please know how much your work—countless hours of meetings, support for pastoral charges in needs assessment and searches, support for M&P committees and ministers, work in conflict resolution, discipline

matters and other sensitive personnel issues—how much this faithful work has served your church. Thank you. Thank you for loving your church enough to serve in this sacrificial way.

To summarize my year, briefly, I am grateful for the chance to work with the folks listed above and to support their efforts. I have been energized by the United Fresh Start work our Conference began and am keen for it to spread so that congregations and ministers in new pastoral relationships embrace United Fresh Start, using the modules as opportunities to learn and talk together about transition, self-care, role clarity, conflict styles and resolutions, and so many other topics. In addition, I enjoyed working with the Pastoral Care Team to support ministry personnel and families and to present a Wellness Day at Five Oaks. The Conference Division of MP&E offered a Called to Leadership day with Betty Pries and Richard Choe in March. I used continuing education time this year to study coaching with the Centre for Congregational Leadership and look forward to earning credentials as a member of the International Coach Federation. Already I have found these skills useful in working with ministry personnel and congregational leaders.

Indeed, we are in a Changing Season, a time of transition into new ways of doing our work together. But the work itself remains—calling out and nurturing new leadership, supporting ministry and congregations in their work of being the church and caring for one another in the name of Jesus Christ. May God be with us through these transitions, giving us grace to try, to learn, to forgive, and to live with courage, honesty, and faithfulness.

Diane Blanchard

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 2017 was grounded in Hamilton Conference's four named priorities: healthy congregations and presbyteries, effective leadership, faithful public witness, and strengthening partnerships.

Healthy Congregations and Presbyteries

In providing support to Hamilton Conference's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response (SMPR) Committee, I had the opportunity to collaborate with Dale Hildebrand of Toronto Conference and Steve Fetter of United in Learning to develop curriculum for an online boundary training workshop. Using social media as a lens, we devised a program to engage clergy in conversation about creating and maintaining healthy boundaries.

After the success of SMPR's boundary training for clergy and lay leaders in Bruce Presbytery, Jennifer Canning, Bill McKinnon, and I created a financial boundary workshop which we piloted with Erie Presbytery. The event was well attended and the feedback from participants was very positive.

In 2017, I continued to serve as Persistent Friend to Niagara Presbytery. I attended both executive and full court meetings monthly to share news, to serve as liaison between courts of the church, to ensure word of justice engagement opportunities spread widely, and to build relationship. Later in 2017, I had the privilege to begin attending Erie Presbytery's monthly full court meetings as well. I am grateful to Niagara and Erie Presbyters for welcoming me so warmly!

Effective Leadership

On the phone, through email, in face to face meetings, and in workshops, I was able to resource congregations on topics like divestment, acknowledging Traditional Territory, duty of care, screening volunteers, healthy boundaries for lay leaders, becoming an Affirming Ministry, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

In 2017 I continued to work with a national design team, tasked with creating resources for outdoor ministries wishing to work towards an Affirming designation. Hamilton Conference's own Cave Springs piloted some of the resources in the summer and gave helpful feedback that will shape the kinds of resources that are made available in 2018.

Jennifer Bawden and I rewrote the curriculum that has been used to train outdoor ministry staff to create and maintain healthy boundaries. We had the opportunity to test the new program with three of our four camps during staff training in 2017. As always, I learned as much from the young leaders as Jennifer and I were able to teach them!

It was a pleasure to continue providing staff support to the Children and Youth Network! During our seasonal conference calls, we were able to share resources and discuss ways to promote events for youth in our own conference and beyond.

Although CAYTs didn't happen in 2017 due to low registration numbers, Youth Forum was well attended. It was a privilege to share time at the General Meeting with the young people who are shaping the church of tomorrow! I give thanks for the faithful leadership of coordinator Debbie Siertsema, and home group leaders Linda Clark, Jeff Laforet, Alexander Rey, and Sheena Riley-Marini.

A critical component of effective leadership is practicing self-care. To that end, I provided leadership at the Pastoral Care team's daylong clergy wellness retreat. Throughout the day, I offered spiritual practice stations, and facilitated a labyrinth walk in the afternoon.

Faithful Public Witness

One of the highlights of 2017 for me was having the opportunity to work with faith leaders from across Hamilton on advocacy around pro Trans protocols for the city. After several meetings to create a template, each faith group drafted their own statement in support of the work Hamilton was, and is, doing to create safer spaces for Trans and Non-binary residents and visitors. The support statements were read during an Audit and Finance meeting that was very well attended by United Church clergy from Hamilton and surrounding areas.

It was a great joy for me to be able to preach in some of the congregations on radical hospitality, privilege, Mission & Service, Right Relations, peace, climate justice; and to facilitate workshops on the justice-charity continuum, climate justice, and Mission & Service in conjunction with Dave Jagger, Stewardship and Gifts Officer for Hamilton and London Conferences.

With the blessing of the Conference Executive, I worked with President Heather to write a letter urging PayPal to extend the same services to Palestinians that they currently do to Israelis. At the time of writing, PayPal has not responded to our letter.

A great deal of my time in 2017 was spent with the Conference's Affirm Network, drafting a new Mission Statement and Policy, which was approved by the Conference Executive and adopted at the General Meeting in May. Please see the Affirm Network's annual report for more on our work.

Late in 2017, Christina Paradela and I began working on a resource to educate about the Rohingya crisis. We have found an eager ally in the MP serving the region where Conference Office is located. I look forward to continued work on this resource!

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

Strengthening Partnerships:

Together with Barbara Fullerton, I continue to represent Hamilton Conference on the Social Justice Network of Ontario Conferences (SJNOC). This Network allows representatives from all of

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 value greatly these opportunities to be in touch with other volunteers and staff engaged in like work!

A second significant highlight of 2017 was a conference call that gathered many of the Conference's Affirming Ministries for a time of sharing joys and challenges. Out of that call came a commitment to working in partnership with Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble and Iridesce the Living Apology Project to create a safer space display at the Skylight Festival. This display gave participants an opportunity to share their experience of the 1988 decision while they used finger labyrinths, helped "knit" together the Iridesce blanket, and coloured mandalas. Out of this partnership opportunity, the Conference's Affirming Ministries worked together to bring Iridesce workshops to three of our six presbyteries.

Learning Opportunities

A committed lifelong learner, I took every educational opportunity that came my way including webinars on climate change, gender diversity, theology of superhero stories, racism and Islamophobia, and youth and mental health.

As part of my own personal growth, I joined the editorial board for Mandate magazine. I continue to enjoy our conference call meetings where I learn about the justice work of the broader church and have the chance to submit story, workshop, and Bible study ideas to enrich the public witness and outreach of United Church congregations.

Looking Forward

At the time I write this, I am thinking about the final General Meeting of Hamilton Conference—finalizing plans with the CAYTs and Youth Forum leadership teams, and working with the Affirm Network on celebrating our designation as an Affirming Ministry. It seems strange to be both tying up ends and planting seeds that will be watered in, and harvested by, the new regions. I look forward with great hope and anticipation to see the new things God is calling us to!

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

2017-2018 has been a busy year for our staff team and our communities of faith and leaders as we continued to do the work asked of us while we awaited the remit results and anticipated changes in regional boundaries, regional responsibilities, and staffing.

Healthy Congregations and Presbyteries

Over the past year as Minister for Congregational Support I have been honoured to have:

- Facilitated several congregational visioning workshops with intentional spiritual listening components; assisted congregations preparing for JNACs or discerning different ways of sharing ministry and mission; and facilitated congregational women's retreats;
- Facilitated two different culturally appropriate and respectful congregational conflict mediation circles using restorative practice models learned on my 2017 sabbatical;
- Facilitated an intercultural and anti-racism workshop to prepare a congregation to receive ministry personnel from another culture;
- Deepened intentional Conference commitments to right relations and relationships by actively supporting the different ministry issues and creative visioning of all four Indigenous congregations in Hamilton Conference (Saugeen Wesley, Cape Croker Neyaashiinigiing, New Credit, and Chapel of the Delaware United Churches), Nations Uniting outreach ministry in Six Nations, and was occasionally present at events at Grand River United Church (All Native Circle Conference) in Six Nations;
- Worked closely with Dave Jagger, Stewardship and Gifts Officer with Hamilton and London Conferences, in resourcing congregations on broader stewardship, vision, and mission issues;
- Served as Persistent Friend to Bruce and Halton Presbyteries and Executives and attended most meetings;
- Along with Janet MacDonald, again attended the annual Carters' Charity and Not-For-Profit Law day-long seminar;
- With Ruthanna Mack, supported the work of the Conference (Mission and Service) Philanthropy and Stewardship Committee and the Conference Mission Strategy and Support Committee (grant and loan applications). Ruthanna gave significant support to the latter and always managed to stay on top of the large amount of paper work, detailed scrutiny, and follow-through.

Effective Leadership

- Teamed with Diane Blanchard, Personnel Minister around several pastoral relationships;
- Co-planned United Fresh Start ministry personnel learning days with Diane Blanchard;
- Attended the national Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships consultation;

- As a Reiki practitioner, offered Reiki to ministry personnel on retreat days away.

Faithful Public Witness and Strengthening Partnerships

- Teamed with Diane Matheson-Jimenez on combined legislation training on violence and harassment, sexual harassment, and accessibility for disabilities; and shared justice resources;
- Attended a General Council national racial justice consultation and serve on the working group on revising racial justice online training
- Shared resources with General Council Aboriginal Ministries Circle staff on restorative practices
- Connected with two Canadian Council of Churches committees:
 - F.I.L.L. (Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning) reference group as it reformed from the former Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministries to carry on the training work of Deepening Understanding of Intercultural Ministry; planning team member of an ecumenical intercultural ministries consultation;
 - Member of CEARN (Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network); supported the editing of *On the Doctrine of Discovery* resource; co-facilitated an ecumenical workshop to launch the resource.

In Gratitude

I am deeply grateful for my nearly seven years with Hamilton Conference. It has been an honour and a privilege to accompany and serve so many communities of faith and leaders through some difficult times as well as joyful celebrations in their faith journeys. The culture of respect and relationship has consistently permeated throughout Hamilton Conference and has been reflected in this present staff team who work together so well. The support my colleagues and I have experienced from the Conference Staff Committee has been exceptional.

My prayer is that this next transition into regional councils will be blessed with new life, new energy, and that the new regions will carry forward the best of the faithful gifts of Hamilton Conference.

Kim Uyede-Kai

STEWARDSHIP & GIFTS OFFICER - HAMILTON & LONDON CONFERENCES

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Greetings!

2017 was my first full year as your friendly neighbourhood Stewardship & Gifts Officer. 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.

CELEBRATIONS: It is exciting to work with individual congregations that are ready to increase their practices around the spiritual practice of stewardship. Whether that means doing the full “Called to be the Church” congregational giving program, or getting better at any one of Thanking, Inspiring, or Inviting. I have done a number of presentations in congregations this past year on Planned Legacy Giving. I have preached in a number of congregations on stewardship themes, as well. The message is consistent: Our job as disciples of Jesus is:

1. to be grateful for what we have received from God and from those who have gone before us;
2. to make generous use of it and improve what we have received, in order to help do God’s mission of loving, forgiving, healing, evangelism, justice and peace;
3. then to pass it along to those who come after us so that they can continue the cycle.

This is the heart of Stewardship.

In April I held a Conference-wide Stewardship event, which was well attended and planted many seeds in congregations across the Conference. These seeds have slowly been germinating all year. I also held Congregational Stewardship and Planned Legacy Giving events or training within Bruce, Niagara, Hamilton, and Waterloo Presbyteries. (still waiting on that invite to Halton!) Some of these events were held at presbytery meetings, some were held in congregations.

My work continues with individual congregations to teach and support them in their stewardship life.

I was happy to contact all the pastoral charges in the Conference that had an increase in their Mission & Service support at the end of the summer. (Way to go!!!!)

As I start to track changes and improvements due to my work, it is exciting to see congregations who use our Stewardship resources seeing real increases in giving! You can too!! If you would like help, or to talk and brainstorm and plan, in any area of stewardship, please contact me.

CHALLENGES: Time and distance.

1. I recognise that making long-term changes in stewardship behaviours and attitudes is a long-term effort. However, that doesn't mean that short-term changes don't also have an effect.
2. Distance and travel take time, so it's good when congregations share me and work together on common events.

LOOKING AHEAD: As we prepare for the new Regions that we expect to emerge, it would be beneficial to have intentional Stewardship teams in each Region. Please consider this your opportunity to contact me and we can work toward such a team/teams.

And, of course, Thank-you!!!

For your generosity, supporting and taking part in God's mission in your local community;
Thank-you!

For your generosity, supporting and taking 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!

Rev. Dave Jagger.

Stewardship & Gifts Officer—Hamilton & London Conferences



MISSION & SERVICE

HAMILTON CONFERENCE

We give thanks to you for your enormous generosity and continued support of local mission and ministry

AND Mission & Service!

OUR GIFTS FOR MISSION & SERVICE IN 2017 SUPPORTED:

-  Funding to all **13** Conferences through Mission support grants and operating grants for **11** Conferences
-  **63** Community Ministries across Canada
-  **36** Chaplaincies on campus and in hospitals
-  Theological Education at **7** Theological Colleges and **3** Education Centres
-  **20** Canadian ecumenical networks
-  **11** Healing Fund projects
-  **19** Justice and Reconciliation projects
-  **81** Vision Fund projects with youth
-  Grants for **86** congregations
-  **197** Embracing the Spirit Innovation Grants
-  **87** Mission & Service global partners in **21** countries

An Initial review of 2017 giving indicates:

Contributions to the Mission & Service Unified Fund in 2017:

1. \$23.145 M Annual giving by congregations, UCW and individuals
2. \$ 1.831 M Giving through wills and planning giving
3. \$.964 M Giving from donors through the United Church of Canada Foundation
4. \$26.000 M Total gifts to Mission & Service Unified fund in 2017

Contributions to Mission & Service Partners And Other Mission And Ministries in 2017:

5. \$ 2.134 M Additional specific and emergency gifts to Mission & Service partners
6. \$.800 M Additional gifts designated to other work of the denomination
7. \$ 2.934 M Total Designated Gifts in 2017

OUR CONFERENCE MADE AN IMPACT:

Mission & Service Contributions	Amount
For World Development and Relief	36,638.10
From UCW	145,980.68
From Special or One Time Gifts	133,792.25
From Congregational Giving	2,596,631.98
TOTAL MISSION & SERVICE GIVING	2,913.033.01