

Governance Committee
Maine Conference United Church of Christ
Report to the Annual Meeting 2024

It's been a very busy year for the Governance Committee. We spent most of the year focused on two projects:

1. Nominations for the Board and standing committees for slots that were open at the beginning of the year (or became open shortly thereafter) and in anticipation of slots that would become open as of Annual Meeting.
2. A Maine Conference Policies, Procedures, Practices and Guidelines document.

NOMINATIONS

The nominating process was especially challenging and difficult this year. Our group reached out in several different ways to many people across the Conference (lay and ordained), to fill in the slots that were open (from resignations, etc) and slots that would become open at Annual Meeting, as people fulfilled their terms or assumed new roles. We also worked closely with the Conference Minister and Board leadership to identify a new vice chair and treasurer, to be elected at Annual Meeting, as the vice chair would become chair and the treasurer would come to end of his term.

At the end of a grueling process that did not end until a week before Annual Meeting, we learned a couple of important lessons that we have shared with the Board. While the difficulties of attracting people to Conference work involves both lay people and ordained clergy, it has been much more difficult to attract lay people to serve at the Conference level. There are two primary reasons: 1) Gifted and talented lay people are generally gifted and talented and are sought after by many organizations and groups, making them too busy to add Conference opportunities, and 2) Most lay people have never heard of the Board, the Trustees, or Conference committees and teams. It's a lot to convince someone to consider serving on a Conference-related group when Governance must spend a great deal of time explaining what the various committees and teams do and why.

We go into Annual Meeting with a slate of those to be elected (Board and Trustees) and new appointments (standing committees and teams; appointed by the Board) that is not full, despite what could be described as almost herculean efforts. Our biggest concern among the less than full groups is our own, the Governance Committee. We started the year with an already less than ideal number of members: 5 (plus the Conference Minister, who attends most of our meetings). One member had to resign over the summer and two of us are "terminating out" as of Annual Meeting. That leaves two. Through the nomination process, we found only one person willing to join the group. The work of the committee simply cannot be done adequately with only three people.

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, PRACTICES, and GUIDELINES DOCUMENT (for the Board and affiliated committees and teams)

We've been working on this document in fits and starts over the past couple of years. This year, it finally got to the top of the "to do" list. Governance came up with a draft that was then shared with the Board. Over several discussions and more drafting, we finally came up with document that helps us put into writing policies, procedures, practices, and guidelines that are important, but don't rise to the level of bylaws.

A few of the issues contained in this document:

1. Expectations around participation and attendance at meetings and events
2. Expectations for meetings that take place on Zoom
3. Extended Absences
4. Terms, including how to handle partial terms and the length of time required before someone can rejoin a group after a term has been fulfilled.
5. Eligibility

We believe this document will continue to offer helpful guidance to the Board, Trustees, and Conference committees and teams.

As I come to the end of my term on Governance, I cannot fully articulate my deep gratitude for my partners in this work. While Governance requires a good deal of time and attention, it also offers the opportunity for meaningful connection, beginning with the Committee itself. My profound thanks to: Kathy Woodside, Bernys Doak, Sue Burgess, Josh Fitterling (for the first half of the year), and Marisa Laviola. Blessings to you all.

Finally, to those precious people who said "yes": Thank you! I hope and pray that you will have a rewarding and meaningful experience working alongside the good people of the Maine Conference.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan M Reisert
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