

SIGNS OF THE TIMES



During the stress-filled weeks leading up to the November 3 election, MCC promoted hope and peace by encouraging every eligible voter to cast a ballot and working to prevent voter interference and suppression. Executive Director Jane Field represented MCC by attending a number of online gatherings focused on the election, including those hosted by Faith in Public Life, Faith & Democracy, Wisconsin Council of Churches, and Choose Democracy, and was a featured panelist on a program presented by St. Joseph's College Center for Faith and Spirituality, "Conscience & Hope: Christian, Muslim and Jewish Perspectives on the Role of Faith in Political Decisions" (view the video on mainecouncilofchurches.org).

MCC was proud to offer a meeting platform for a grassroots multi-faith group of faith leaders from every corner of Maine who organized the "Defending Democracy Faithfully" pledge, website and video, work that was featured in an October 25 Portland Press Herald op-ed co-authored by the Rev. Dr. Marvin Ellison and MCC Executive Director Jane Field. This work was important to ensure a safe and fair election where every vote counted—but there is much work left to do as our country prepares for the transition of power and the daunting challenge of governing a deeply divided nation in the throes of the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism.



MCC was a proud co-sponsor of The BTS Center's Convocation 2020, "Engaged Hope: Grounded Leadership in an Era of Ecological Emergency," along with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ and Renewal in the Wilderness.

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Rev. Jane Field
Executive Director

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

As I write to you, our nation has just surpassed a devastating milestone in the pandemic: 11.7 million Americans have been infected, and 250,000 have died from COVID-19, with a disproportionate number of the sick and dead being people of color. Meanwhile, the current administration refuses to accept the election outcome, thus preventing a peaceful and orderly transfer of power. Truly, there is much to grieve and lament, much to cause stress, anxiety, and fear.

But, as Harvard Divinity School Chaplain, Kerry Maloney, has said, “we must not allow our appropriate caution to erase our extravagant care,” especially for those who are most vulnerable and marginalized. We at MCC share that belief and are committed to continue our work inspiring and uniting congregations and people of faith to create a world where peace is created with justice and justice is guided by love.

“Do not be afraid” is God’s constant refrain to humanity throughout Hebrew and Christian scripture. And in this season of Advent, we remember it is only possible to follow that instruction because God is with us, Emmanuel, and nothing—not pandemics or politics, nor life or death, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from God’s love.

Wishing you the season’s blessings of hope, peace, joy, and love,

ECUMENICAL PARTNERS RESPOND TO COVID-19

This fall, our sister councils in Massachusetts and Wisconsin have produced important documents related to the impact of the pandemic on churches and clergy. We commend their work to you:

The Wisconsin Council of Churches has completed a survey of clergy regarding COVID-19-related ministry stressors. The results are disturbing and important for lay leaders to read and understand. Read the full report and access a video webinar here: <https://www.wichurches.org/2020/08/19/wi-clergy-share-covid-19-ministry-stressors-webinar/>

The Massachusetts Council of Churches released the powerful and moving “Lament and Live Together: A Letter to the Church in New England,” calling for a re-setting of expectations, rebuking of perfectionism, granting permission to rest, lamenting communally, and sharing of mental health resources both within and beyond the churches. Read the letter here: <https://www.massCouncilofchurches.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020.10.27-Lament-and-Live-Together-letter.pdf>



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THE GIFT OF ECUMENICAL CONNECTIONS

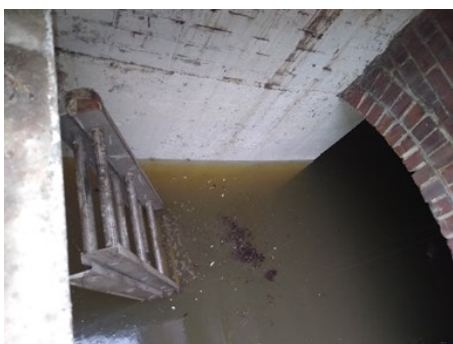
By MCC President Rev. Alyssa Lodewick, Pastor of Woodfords Church, Portland

On October 13, 2020, calamity struck the church I serve. A problem in our steam heating system caused over 35,000 gallons of water to flood into the building's boiler/utility room. The water was eight feet high; it drowned the 94-year-old boiler and infiltrated the room's electrical panels and conduits, leaving the building without heat, electricity, or water.



Unfortunately, the church wasn't the only organization affected by this disaster. We house a number of nonprofit mission partners (including the Maine Council of Churches) who only recently had returned to the building after operating remotely for months due to COVID-19. With the flood, they once again lost all access to their offices and program space.

But ecumenical and interfaith connections saved the day! Within hours, colleagues across the city offered space and support. St. Luke's Episcopal Cathedral, Temple Beth El and St. Ansgar Lutheran Church have opened their doors and hearts to our mission partners.



Moments like these remind me that ecumenical and multi-faith relationships are true gifts from the Holy. In extending grace and generosity to Woodfords Church and its mission partners, our sibling faith communities have ensured that hundreds of individuals can still access important, life-giving programs and resources. Every day, I give thanks for the Divine connections that bridge denominations, creeds, and faith traditions. How privileged we are to benefit from the richness of diversity as we support one another in community.

More than 35,000 gallons of water flooded Woodfords Church boiler room, rising to the top of the bulkhead doors

PUTTING ANTI-RACISM INTO PRACTICE

Because awareness and education are essential to building a strong foundation for MCC's anti-racist efforts, Board members and our Executive Director have recently participated in:

Racial Equity Institute's two-day Phase I Training

Racial Equity and Hunger National Learning Network's seven-part webinar series

MANP's Sounding Board, "How can Maine nonprofits increase Board diversity?"

Board member Marge Kilkelly moderated a panel discussion at the October 13 Maine Volunteer Leadership Conference and Executive Director Jane Field was a featured panelist: "Where Volunteer Engagement Fits in the Move to Eliminate Systemic Racism."

Quaker representative to the Board, Diane Dicranian, along with Public Policy Co-Chair John Hennessy and Executive Director Jane Field have been appointed to the Giving Winds Advisory Committee of Four Directions Development Corporation, an organization devoted to improving the social and economic conditions of the four Native American tribes in Maine.

The Board welcomed Rev. Kenneth Lewis to its October meeting to discuss the work of the state's Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations.





202 Woodford Street
Portland, ME 04103

MCC BOARD BIDS FOND FAREWELL AND EXTENDS WARM WELCOME



UUA Representative **Rev. Carie Johnsen** stepped down from the Board in September. We are so grateful for her ministry among us and most especially for her service as co-chair of our Public Policy Committee. She will still be assisting us with advocacy work in Augusta, where she makes her home. (Rev. Dr. Jodi Hayashida is the newly appointed UUA Representative.)



We welcome **Evelyn Johnson Moore** as an at-large Director. She is a United Methodist layperson and member of HopeGateWay in Portland. Evelyn is a church consultant and a member of the Wesley-by-the-Sea community in Wells. She worked for many years for the Rhode Island Council of Churches and currently leads an anti-racism study group at HGW. Evelyn will also be serving as co-chair of our Public Policy Committee.

Michael Seavey is the newest at-large Director to join the MCC Board. Well-known throughout the state, he has served Roman Catholic parishes in Portland, Augusta, Bangor, South Portland, Wallagrass, Biddeford, Lewiston, Auburn and Windham. He will be joining our Public Policy Committee, where his expertise and passion for workplace justice and immigrant rights will be welcome additions.



Seeking common ground, working for the common good

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Fr. Michael Seavey
Roman Catholic

Dear Friends,

During this extraordinary year, the Maine Council of Churches has been able to address the needs of people of faith, their congregations and denominations, and the wider community—and it wouldn't have been possible without your prayers, your faith in our organization, and your generous donations. You have made it possible for us to lead, collaborate, and embody compassion and hope for a broken world.

This year, as faith leaders struggle to protect the health of their parishioners while continuing to offer spiritual solace even when buildings must be closed, the Council has worked closely with the Maine CDC to provide guidelines for churches to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This year, as our churches and our nation once again face the reckoning of racial injustice, the Council has confronted its own complicity and privilege and committed to becoming a trustworthy partner with communities of color. Rather than seeking superficial quick fixes, the Council is cultivating authentic relationships. One important step has been our support for the work of the state's Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations and appointee Rev. Kenneth Lewis (Green Memorial AME Zion Church, Portland).

This year, as people of faith sought to address division and fear before the election, they turned to the Maine Council of Churches to host a multi-faith vigil on November 2 to offer prayers of hope and compassion.

Now more than ever, the Maine Council of Churches is perceived as a trusted faith leader by the governor, our member denominations, the media, and the community.

This year, of all years, please consider donating to the Maine Council of Churches (you'll find a remittance envelope inside this newsletter). We thank all those donors listed on the back of this letter who have contributed over the past twelve months. And we offer our thanks to those who will **help us make an important, positive difference in 2021**.

Yours in faith,

Jane Field

Executive Director

Alyssa Lodewick

President

PS: For the year 2020 due to Covid-19, the IRS has waived the minimum required distributions from retirement accounts (RMD). Donors may instruct their retirement account custodians to make the distribution directly to a charity of their choice instead. The distribution would not be a taxable event for the account owner. Consult your tax advisor for specific details and thank you for considering a gift to MCC.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2019-2020 DONORS*

Your Contribution – Why It's Important

You can see in this newsletter the good work that the Council is doing to find common ground among our denominations to promote social justice and civility in public life. This is only possible through the hard work of our Board, other involved volunteers and Executive Director, and through your support. One third of our budget comes from individual and parish contributions. Please consider a gift now.

Denominations and Associate Members

American Baptist Churches of Maine
Episcopal Diocese of Maine
Falmouth Quarterly Friends
Maine Association of New Jerusalem Churches
Maine Conference UCC
New England Conference UMC
New England Synod, ECLA
New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
Presbytery of Northern New England, PC USA

Churches and Organizations

Acadia Friends Meeting
Brunswick Friends Meeting
Congregational Church in Cumberland UCC
Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends
Episcopal Church of Saint Mary
Faith Lutheran
First Congregational UCC
First Parish UU, Portland
First Universalist Church of South Paris
Hammond Street UCC
Mid-Coast Presbyterian
Narramissic Valley of Friends Meeting
Nashua Presbyterian
Network for Good
Second Christian Congregational UCC
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Southern Maine Friends Meeting

Individuals

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Cushman Anthony
Sally and Ron Bancroft
Rev. Dr. William Barter and Roy Taylor
Carole Beal
Lynne and R Christian Beasley
Robert and Anne Bencks
Richard and Theresa Berman
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Mary Bloch

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T. Richard and Carole Snyder
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Tamara L. Torres- McGovern
Rev. Philip Michael Tracy

Every effort has been made to ensure the completeness and accuracy of this list.

*Please send any corrections to
finance@mainecouncilofchurches.org
or mail to*

*MCC, 202 Woodford St.,
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