

ENGAGING CHANGE WITHIN MARITIME CONFERENCE



A conversation has been growing within Maritime Conference. It has taken place within committees, at meetings, at Presbyteries, at the Annual Meeting of the Conference, and over the phone and e-mail. Sometimes the conversation is a quiet one, with individuals expressing concern for the life and health of the Courts of the Church. At other times the conversation has taken place among a Conference Executive struggling to get a fuller understanding of the changes affecting the mission of the United Church within the Maritimes.

Your Conference staff, through daily contact with Presbyters and with members and adherents of congregations, is aware of the conversations. With the support of the Conference Staff Committee, we have prayerfully reflected upon how best to offer servant leadership to the Conference at this time. Out of a staff retreat the following purpose was established to guide our ministry:

“Our purpose as Conference staff is to strengthen the ministry leadership within the Maritime Conference, Presbyteries, Pastoral Charges and Committees, to identify mission and engage in their calling.”

Here are four ways we hope to provide leadership to the Conference through on-going discernment, conversation, reflection, and analysis.

We Identify Key Issues and Priorities

It is within the life of congregations that most members and adherents live out their faith. By facilitating conversations about key values, worries, and dreams, and analyzing the emerging information and stories, a general

sense of key congregational issues and priorities will be identified. Janice MacLean will visit approximately thirty Pastoral Charges to engage these conversations.

We Gather and Analyze Church Data

In order to understand where we are, it is crucial to have a good understanding of where we have been. By gathering and analyzing appropriate data, we will identify the shifting reality of ministry in Maritime Conference. What trends have emerged over the past ten to twenty years? How are these trends affecting ministry personnel and congregations? Kendall Harrison is focusing on this aspect of the project.

We Gather and Analyze Community Data

Our Presbyteries and Pastoral Charges exist in communities. By gathering and analyzing data about the socio-economic and environmental contexts within Maritime Conference, we will discern the mission challenges for the United Church as we minister in this region for the next ten years. Eric Tusz-King has leadership in this work.

We Accompany the Presbyteries at a Deeper Level and Presence

We are aware that Presbyteries are experiencing an increasingly heavy burden. It is becoming more difficult to find Presbyters willing to assume positions of responsibility. Most Presbyteries have struggled to engage in mission discernment and visioning for ministry. The Conference Executive is considering ways to more directly support the work of Presbyteries. I am taking the lead on this and work has begun.

As Conference Ministers, we continue to discern the Call of God, the Presence of Jesus the Christ, and the Movement of the Spirit in our work as we move forward in faithful service to the Conference.

Catherine Gaw
Executive Secretary