

# Special Mailing to Delegates to the 213<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

## Additional Bylaw Change to be Proposed

At its meeting on May 12, 2012, the Board of Directors, with the support of the current program staff and commissions, voted to propose to the 213<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting a bylaw change which would allow for a year of experimentation related to the organizational model and ministries of our program commissions. (Note that this is in addition to the proposed bylaw change listed on page 17 of the Advance Materials, which may be seen at

[http://macucc.s3.amazonaws.com/3B8857F64D8D415DB579F99D09A787C0\\_AdvanceMaterials\\_2012.pdf](http://macucc.s3.amazonaws.com/3B8857F64D8D415DB579F99D09A787C0_AdvanceMaterials_2012.pdf) )

### Background:

***Our Conference Mission:*** *Rooted in the grace of God, to nurture local church vitality and the covenant among our churches, to make God's love and justice real.*

***The Core Functions of the Conference:*** *Faith formation, leadership development, prophetic witness* (see *A Still More Excellent Way*, adopted by Annual Meeting 2007: <http://www.macucc.org/pages/detail/2521> )

Since 1988, the Massachusetts Conference has been served by seven program commissions in the areas of Communications, Ecumenism, Education, Evangelism, Leadership, Mission & Justice, and Stewardship. Our bylaws give to the Annual Meeting the authority to decide on the number, titles and sizes of these commissions. The bylaws say that members will be elected to three-year terms, and that the Minister and President will assign staff to the commissions. (The bylaw may be found at <http://www.macucc.org/pages/detail/2144#VII> .)

Over the past 24 years, the program commissions have changed countless lives through faithful, creative and energetic ministry. However, the context - the landscape in which we seek to live out our mission and be the church - is changing rapidly. Just like many of our local church structures, our Conference structure of seven commissions has become hard to fully populate and difficult to staff. The structures of the past have also put unintended obstacles in the way of cooperation and collaboration among people working on related program ministries.

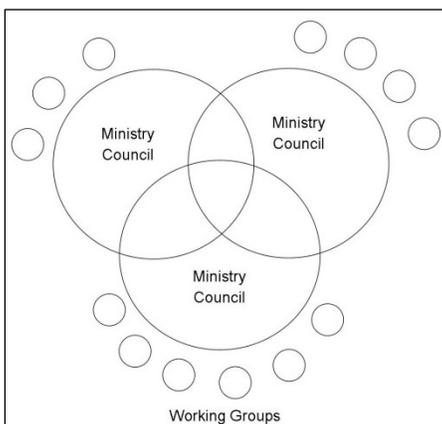
As a result of dialogue and collaboration, which included two face-to-face meetings with commission leaders and much electronic communication, the Conference staff, Board of Directors and commission leadership have developed a recommendation which will allow for current programs and ministries to be supported as they experiment with a new model for those ministries which are called for in the changing landscape. Seeking an adaptive solution, the recommendation is designed to be attentive the question: "What are the ministries which we can best accomplish together, acting as a conference of churches, rather than alone?"

## Recommendation:

In collaboration with members of the current program commissions, the Board of Directors proposes to the Annual Meeting a model for the Conference's ministry which they hope to test during the program year 2012-13. The model suggested is similar to those adopted by many of our local congregations in recent years, creating a leaner, more elastic structure which requires less staff support.

If affirmed by the Annual Meeting, the new structure, driven by the three core functions of faith formation, leadership development (both lay and clergy) and prophetic witness, will consist of three small ministry councils. These councils will be elected by the Annual Meeting to provide a) general direction and the ability to cast the vision of the ministry, b) a conduit for communication and connection to resources, and c) a means of accountability in each of three broad areas of Conference ministry. Each ministry council will authorize and encourage the work of a variable number of working groups, some short- and some longer-term, emerging from the gifts and passions of individuals within the Conference.

Working groups will focus on particular projects or areas of ministry. The program responsibilities of the three ministry councils will inevitably overlap, and collaboration among them will be encouraged. The Minister and President will assign staff to each of the ministry councils; however, most working groups will be volunteer-driven. Ministry councils will be accountable to the Board of Directors who will authorize their budgets and overall program goals.



The model has been visualized as a Venn Diagram. The design is intended to reflect integration and shared mission within and between the ministry councils.

The current program commission members will discern together how the gifts and interests of each member might best be called forth in the context of the new structure. They will also work with the Board and staff to a) determine how and when various groups will meet together, b) propose the names and portfolios of the three ministry councils, c) identify the ministries that can best be done in the

Conference setting, rather than in local churches or associations, and d) listen for the Holy Spirit to call forth the working groups God needs for us *to nurture local church vitality and the covenant among our churches, to make God's love and justice real* within the landscape in which we find ourselves.

In order to allow the Board and the current commissions to test a transition to three councils and multiple working groups, and to determine the most workable procedures to guide the new program entities, the Board proposes that Article VII be removed from the bylaws by the 213<sup>th</sup> Annual

Meeting. A recommendation as to a possible new Article VII will be developed in the coming year in by the Board in collaboration with staff and current commission members.

If this proposed action is adopted, the Board of Directors will oversee the work of the commissions between the 213<sup>th</sup> and the 214<sup>th</sup> Annual Meetings, pursuant to Article VI of the bylaws which provides ‘the corporate business and affairs of the Conference shall be under the direction of the Board of Directors.’

To this end, the Board of Directors recommends to the 213<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting:

*“The 213<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting amends the bylaws of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ by removing Article VII. The 213<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting charges the Board of Directors to bring to the 214<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting a recommendation regarding a possible further bylaw amendment to define a structure for broad implementation of the ministries of the Conference within guidelines and budget established by the Board of Directors and the Annual Meeting.”*