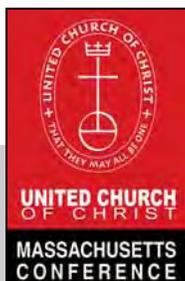


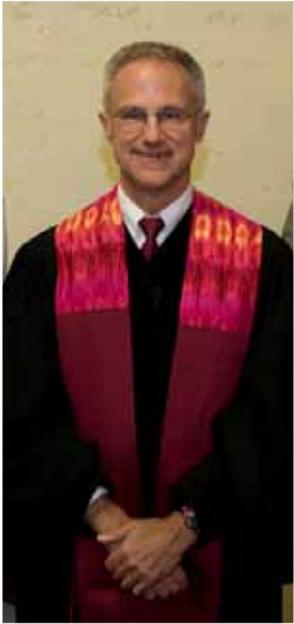
Annual Report of the  
Massachusetts Conference  
United Church of Christ

# Changing Lives

*So if anyone is in Christ there is  
a new creation.*  
II Corinthians 5:17



2011



So if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation. [II Corinthians 5:17]

May 16, 2011

Dear friends of the Massachusetts Conference, UCC,

As the landscape of ministry continues to undergo profound changes, lay and ordained UCC leaders are stepping up. These pages boldly proclaim examples of:

- how our churches are changing lives
- how the Conference is nurturing and provoking vitality, and
- how the initiatives of this Conference are providing congregational leaders with extensive and excellent support.

Yet the stories on these pages are but a whisper of the promise of our collective witness.

God is calling us: to move from whispering “God is still speaking...” to shouting it from the rooftops! To leave our buildings and go into our neighborhoods and share the Christian story and the values of the UCC. To recognize with gratitude that we can’t keep doing the same things and expect different results. To teach one another in communities of practice and other settings how best to engage a generation of young adults who are committed to UCC values but can’t imagine that these are the values of a church.

Called as we are to engage these new behaviors, we are also challenged. While 2010 ended with a small surplus, the 2011 Conference budget is making use of a variety of one-time-only funds. The Board of Directors recognized that if we simply continue doing what we’re doing now, we will have a deficit in 2012 of \$211,000. And so, in order to present to the Annual Meeting a balanced budget for 2012, the Conference Board of Directors made several significant cuts, including changing the percentage of your OCWM Basic Support which we pass on to the national setting from 55% to 53%, cutting our funding to the Mass. Council of Churches from \$54,300 to \$30,000, and reducing staff. Beginning in 2012, the Rev. Paul Nickerson will no longer be employed by the Conference as a half time Associate Conference Minister. And beginning in 2012, the work of the Rev. Cesar DePaz (part-time Hispanic Ministry Coordinator) will no longer be funded by the Conference. Instead, the Conference will solicit gifts from churches that are designated for the support of the Hispanic Ministries of the Conference.

Another important staff development has been the Rev. Dale Hempen’s announcement that he will retire from serving as Associate Conference Minister for the Southeast at the end of 2011. How we will miss Dale’s wisdom and witness! On May 16 I announced details of how we will be rearranging the assignments of our current staff, including making Don Remick a full time regional ACM. Those details are available on line at [www.macucc.org/news](http://www.macucc.org/news).

Never has the world needed to hear the Christian story as told by the UCC more than it does now. Blessed by talented, committed and innovative leaders, bluntly facing brutal facts, and inspired to engage mission in ways that are both bold and faithful let us go forward together as partners with a Still Speaking God.

Faithfully,

*Jim*

The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal ,  
Conference Minister and President

# Who is the Massachusetts Conference, UCC?



Rooted in the grace of God, the mission of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ is to nurture local church vitality and the covenant among our churches to make God's love and justice real.

We are a gathering of 378 active churches with over 73,000 members, making us the largest Protestant denomination in Massachusetts. Our roots go back to the Puritans and Pilgrims who founded this country, making us the Commonwealth's oldest denomination.

The Massachusetts Conference is one of 38 regional bodies of the United Church of Christ (UCC), which has 5,300 churches and 1 million members.

The motto of the UCC is "That They May All Be One." This is from the prayer of Jesus (Holy Bible, John 17:11) for the unity of the church. Members of the United Church have been leaders in the movement to heal the divisions in the Christian church, and local congregations welcome into membership people from a diversity of religious backgrounds. Today, approximately two-thirds of our members have come to the UCC from other denominations, or from no denomination.

Our churches are large and small, urban, suburban and rural. As a Conference, we support one another in spreading the Word and doing the work of Jesus Christ.

On any given weekend in our churches, you may hear traditional hymns or something more contemporary. You may meet people whose families have been in America for generations, or those who still speak the languages of their homelands in Asia, Central and South America. You may find a church hall that houses a soup kitchen or one that houses a coffee house for local performers. You may find a church that has declared itself Open and Affirming to gay and lesbian people, or you may find a congregation that is theologically more conservative. Each of the churches of the Massachusetts Conference is unique, yet we are all united in Christ. We are a people of covenant, a united and uniting church.

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God is still speaking,

## Changing Lives Globally ...

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.*  
~ Psalm 46:1-3



### Blessing Cabins Mark Chilean Response

A devastating earthquake and tsunamis, which occurred in February of 2010, resulted in more than 700 dead in Chile. Close to 500,000 homes were rendered uninhabitable and some two million people displaced. With your help and donations, the UCC's partner, Global Ministries, established a Blessing Cabins project to fabricate emergency housing units, known as blessing cabins, for 200 families affected by the earthquake. Each home costs about \$1,500 to construct and transport. As of June 1, 2011, local churches have contributed over \$125,000 – enough to build 83 cabins.

The Massachusetts Conference has had a longstanding partnership with the Pentecostal Church of Chile, including participation at each church's annual meetings, joint Chilean/American youth choirs, sister church relationships, support for women's organizations and micro-financing programs, work groups, homestays, and retreats to Centro Shalom, in the Andes Mountains.

### Your contributions are helping the victims of the northeast coast of Japan

One of the largest earthquakes ever recorded hit Japan on March 11, triggering a massive 23-foot tsunami. The 9.0 magnitude offshore quake, the largest in Japan's history, was followed by hundreds of aftershocks. Church World Service reported that 135,000 people still are living in registered evacuation sites across Japan; and according to May 2011 reports from Associated Press, thousands more may be living in unregistered evacuation sites. The BBC also reported in May that a reactor at Japan's crippled nuclear plant has been more badly damaged than originally thought and there are worries about contamination of water supplies. More than 80,000 local residents living within a 12-mile radius of the plant have been evacuated.

With the help of your donations, Church World Service (CWS) and its Japanese partners are working to provide food, water, health and medical services, hygiene items, clothing and fuel along the country's quake and tsunami-decimated northeast coast. Contributions from Conference churches have reached almost \$60,000 and are still coming in. Donations may be made through local congregations, and then be sent to: Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ, 1 Badger Road, Framingham, MA 01702 and marked 'Pacific earthquake/tsunami.'

"A huge THANK YOU to all who contributed to Our Church's Wider Mission in 2010! Together, with God's help, we can change people's lives for the better locally and around the world."

### Haiti - One-Year Later

January 12, 2011 marked the one-year anniversary of the massive 7.0 earthquake which shook Haiti killing nearly 300,000 and displacing approximately 2 million people. In response to that disaster, local Massachusetts Conference churches gave approximately \$340,000 to the Haiti earthquake response. According to the national setting website, these gifts, shared with our indigenous, grassroots and international relief and development partners have reached thousands of Haitians and helped in many ways:

- Emergency food, clean water, hygiene kits, shelter materials and medication have been distributed
- Artesian wells and latrines are being constructed
- Educational programs for children have been re-established; schools are being constructed
- Families are returning to their newly repaired homes
- Seeds, tools and agricultural training have been given
- Trauma counseling and cholera prevention education is actively being shared
- And, plans are in place to support full-scale home construction as soon as land ownership issues can be resolved.

The United Church of Christ, Global Ministries and our partners are committed to accompanying the people of Haiti on the long, long journey of recovery. Your prayers and gifts make this commitment possible.

## ... and Locally

### Mission: 1 — That They May All Be 1

For 11 days in early November, the entire United Church of Christ will make good on its "that they may all be one" motto with a coordinated mission campaign to gather more than one million food and household items for local food banks and marshal its 5,300 congregations to advocate collectively — and loudly — for hunger-related causes, both domestically and around the world.

"In a nutshell, 'One united church on a shared mission for 11 powerful days to feed the hungry and confront food-related injustice' is the centerpiece of this major push that we are launching today," the Rev. Geoffrey A. Black, the UCC's general minister and president, told United Church News. "If you've ever yearned for the whole UCC to walk hand in hand to achieve a common goal, this is the answer to that prayer."

"Can you find 11 people in your church who will pledge to give \$11 or \$111 online to Neighbors in Need on Nov. 1?" he said, "and will your church set a goal of gathering no fewer than 1,111 food items or 111 letters to Congress? There's a lot of playfulness we can inspire on our way to achieving these big goals, starting with local goals in every UCC setting."



Learn more at [ucc.org/mission1](http://ucc.org/mission1).



#### Next Dates:

September 17 - Eliot Church, Newton

October 22 - Mittineague Congregational  
West Springfield

November 12 - Tewksbury Congregational

### Being a Generous Church – Together!

*Coming to your neighborhood... to change the world.*

We are grateful to the Congregational Church in Littleton, the Christ Congregational Church of Brockton, and the Evangelical Congregational Church of Westborough for hosting the first of our series of breakfast gatherings. Lay leaders and clergy representing many congregations gathered for energetic discussion regarding recent initiatives and best practices in the areas of Mission & Justice and Stewardship. Plan to attend a future gathering with a team from your church!

For more info or to sign up, email Karen Methot at [methodk@macucclorg](mailto:methodk@macucclorg).

# Local Churches Helping to Change Their Communities

*Many local church community outreach stories were highlighted in the Conference bi-monthly Spotlight stories during the year.*

## Helping the Hungry

Members of **South Congregational Church UCC in Pittsfield** offered their building, dining hall, and members to help serve dinner to the needy. Now, five teams of volunteers – inside and outside the church – cook and serve dinner for 75-100 people each Wednesday. Seeing a need to do more, members initiated a food pantry – with food provided by parishioners and outside donations, as well as area food banks.

Market Ministries – an organization that serves the homeless and hungry of Greater New Bedford – uses the kitchen of **Pilgrim United Church of Christ** to prepare weekly lunches. Pilgrim took it upon itself to serve breakfast on the first Saturday of October, and got other faith communities and neighbors involved – to raise funds to buy food items, assist with the preparation of the meal, and help serve. Because of the meal ministry's great success, a clothing redistribution program was set up, which has grown to distribute books along with the clothing.

Members of the **Congregational Church of Littleton** planted seeds with an eye to donating the fresh, organic vegetables and herbs to Loaves & Fishes and the Neighborhood Supper food programs. Volunteers from the church and community, including girl scouts and rotary members, were recruited. During the first year, the garden produced 2,100 lbs. of vegetables and herbs that were donated. The second year brought a similar crop.

On the second Thursday of each month, several members of the **Tewksbury Congregational Church** get together in the church kitchen and bake up six giant batches of brownies, enough to feed 150 people at the Lowell Transitional Living Center (LTLC) – a community supported, non-profit organization that provides a safe, temporary shelter for homeless men and women in the Greater Lowell area. Another group in the church delivers the brownies the next night and serves dinner there as well. Most times clients are served in a food line, but on brownie nights when Tewksbury volunteers are there, the clients are encouraged to take a seat and are served restaurant-style, with volunteers waiting on them and treating them with love, caring and respect.

## Community Service

The members of The **Haydenville Congregational Church UCC** go into outreach action on Blue Moon Sundays – those fifth Sundays of the month which occur only a few times a year. On those particular Sundays, the members forego their usual coffee hour, and instead, march out to the community to get refreshed in a different way. Members who participate choose from four to five different activities that will help someone in need. Some members may choose to visit shut-ins, do yard work for the elderly, sing hymns at a nursing home, or fulfill any other need they see within their church or community.



Local churches give a helping hand to their local communities.

**First Church of Pittsfield** members emphasized four different mission themes to associate with the seasons. In the fall, they thought of hunger, and participated in the Church World Service CROP Walk. In winter, the members focused on acts of peace by dedicating a peace pole in the front of the church and holding community forums with the local peace and justice group. For their spring/justice emphasis, First Church was active in letter writing campaigns, encouraging Massachusetts legislators to support additional foreign aid for development in Africa as well as to keep tax credits for low income American families. The Summer theme was caring for the earth and members helped in a clean-up the Housatonic River.

**United Church of Christ Federated** took a leadership role in the revitalization of downtown **Webster**. Each church member was asked to commit at least two hours or to donate the monetary equivalent of two hours of their time, to support this all-church outreach endeavor, called COMMUNITY Day. Members volunteered to teach knitting, crocheting, quilting, needle craft, how to save money with coupons, gardening, and how to care for house plants. Some members baked and prepared food while others served it up with smiles and words of genuine welcome. The goal was to promote a sense of unity among those who live, work and worship in the downtown area of Webster so that neighbors might live together peaceably, work to ensure each other's success, and share in the goodwill that builds trust, cooperation, and genuine commUNITY.

See more stories at [www.macucc.org/spotlight](http://www.macucc.org/spotlight).

## Changing The Earth A One-Day Retreat Results in a Worldwide Climate Change Event

In early 2010 the Conference Ministers from the six New England Conferences gathered for a 24-hour retreat. At one point, one of them suggested that they collaborate to make climate change a signature issue of the New England Conferences of the United Church of Christ. Minister & President Jim Antal was then asked if he might convene the various environmental task forces from the six conferences. The group followed UCC protocol and came up with an acronym: NEREM (New England Region Environmental Ministries). They gathered in July to compare strategies and identify possible common projects. Two immediately emerged.

"We had 6,000 participants representing every state, every Canadian province and 14 countries...."

One project consisted of a Conference "Partnering with a Green God" event. NEREM sponsored this event, hosted by the Connecticut Conference at beautiful Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon. The May event featured Bill McKibben (author, educator, environmentalist and founder of 350.org) as the keynote speaker. Participants engaged creative liturgy outdoors and benefited from about 20 workshops. Many described the event as "life changing."

The second project was a Lenten Carbon Fast. This event is a Lenten program where participants commit to fasting from carbon during Lent. A NEREM member had coordinated a small scale carbon fast in

Brattleboro a previous Lent, and Jim Antal was aware of other local examples. But the group imagined a grander scale: engage a large constituency through daily emails that provided something an individual could do along with a week by week theme based set of tasks for congregations to explore.

The suggested activities ranged from the very simple: unplug electrical devices (such as phone chargers) which you're not using but use electricity even when off; to the moderately challenging: reduce your driving speed, plan trips efficiently, walk, ride a bike, carpool or take public transportation when feasible; to a few which require a longer term commitment: buy local produce and consider getting involved in a community garden.

Antal distributed the invitation through the 38 Conference Ministers, and, according to Antal: "Lo and behold, we had 6,000 participants representing every state, every Canadian province and 14 countries. And our Facebook page had almost 1,000 'likes.' Our congregation in Weston, along with dozens of others throughout the country, used the emails to give focus to their Lenten adult education discussions, and pastors did likewise with sermons. It was an unqualified success, and we'll likely do it again in 2012."

In addition to a New England Region Environmental Ministries workshop event and a Lenten Carbon Fast, many local churches became involved in climate change events throughout 2010. Here, the First Congregational Church of Montague, Trinitarian rings out to raise awareness in support of the international Global Work Party organized by 350.org. to take action for climate change. Big bells, little bells, community bells and church bells all rang 350 times as part of 350.org challenge and in concert with other UCC churches.

"The ringing of the bells has become an annual event for our church now, thanks to Pastor Barb and the UCC's involvement," said church member Dianne Dolan. "We are truly spreading the good word!"





# Changing Waters...

## Sustaining Pastoral Excellence by Sending Forth Ripples of Faith

The Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ is now a nationally recognized leader in nurturing pastoral excellence. In our grant request to Lilly Endowment, Inc., we asked them to invest in our hunch that excellent pastors are indispensable for creating excellent churches. Since receiving that initial major grant in 2002, Lilly has renewed funding for this project. Why? Because the Massachusetts Conference has shown that it's true – excellent pastors are indispensable for creating excellent churches.

Christian and pastoral excellence is a way of life marked by character, competence and constancy and is practiced in community. To that end, we have created a vibrant conference-wide network of small groups and large learning events for clergy in every season of ministry, offering opportunities for collegial support and ongoing development in the practices of pastoral ministry.

Now well over half our pastors who serve churches – and nearly 100% of our newly ordained clergy – are participating in clergy

*"We've noticed that our pastor brings us renewed energy, wider perspective, fresh insight, and creative ideas she receives in her clergy group and continuing education."*

groups we call Communities of Practice. By sharing their wisdom, experience, struggles and plans, they form a circle of accountability that enhances their effectiveness and deepens their faithfulness. The benefits of these discussions are then lived out in hundreds of our congregations. Indeed, the Pastoral Excellence Program has changed the culture of ministry in the Massachusetts Conference.

Having created such a successful program, we want to make certain that it will continue to anchor ministry in Massachusetts for generations to come. In 2011, the Conference is kicking off the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Endowment Campaign, to help ensure that the UCC in Massachusetts will have the best possible pastoral leadership. The gifts of individuals and of congregations, will send forth ripples of faith, sustaining and nurturing excellent pastors for excellent churches today and tomorrow.

To make a pledge or a gift, or to learn more, please contact Andy Gustafson at (508) 875-5233 x 231; [gustafsona@macucc.org](mailto:gustafsona@macucc.org).

[www.macucc.org/excellence](http://www.macucc.org/excellence)



### Campaign Update:

Teams of Ambassadors are already visiting churches to invite them to participate in this exciting endeavor, and generous individuals are being invited to give. We have already raised over \$576,000 in gifts, pledges and goals. Some highlights:

- 100% of the Board of Directors has committed to financially support the campaign
- 134 individuals have already pledged or given over \$425,000.
- At Old South Church in Weymouth, members gave over \$7,600 as part of a special offering towards their church goal of giving \$50,000 over the next five years.
- Central Congregational in Attleboro Falls has included a \$35,000 gift to the campaign out of their "wrap-around" capital campaign total goal of \$350,000.
- United Parish in Upton has pledged \$10,000 over the next five years.



Dick Osterberg  
Honorary Co-Chair and Member of  
Newton Highlands  
Congregational Church, UCC



Sylvia Ferrell-Jones  
Honorary Co-Chair and Member of  
Pilgrim Congregational Church,  
Lexington

## Filling your Cup... Adult spiritual formation retreats

During the 2010-2011 church year, the MACUCC sponsored two adult spiritual formation retreats, held in January 2011, and in April 2011. The theme of these retreats – *Filling Your Cup; Drawing From the Well* – speaks to the frantic and overwhelming pace of our lives today.

*“The group was awesome. I was moved by people’s willingness, by their receptivity. You created a great atmosphere- a balance of stretching ourselves and feeling safe.”*

These two retreats – led by Rev. Matthew Carriker, Ms. Heather Ramsey, and Rev. Dan Spacek, all of whom are also the leaders for confirmation retreats run through the MACUCC – were inspired by the leaders themselves. Each of them have loved their youth retreat ministry, yet felt called to expand that retreat ministry to include adults. Carriker felt that pastors and members of churches lead busy lives; and it is common to “give, give, give,” and “do, do, do,” that there is little time to simply “be” and “receive.”

“Too often we feel so depleted that we have little to give, or whatever we do give is a strain,” he said. “Yet when our cups of joy are full, then all that we give comes from that place of fullness, and is a blessing to those we touch.” Through worship, spiritual practices, reflection, singing, community building, the arts, Sabbath, and play, these retreat activities are designed to fill participants’ cups to overflowing.

These spiritual formation retreats were intended for people on all stages of the spiritual path. Twelve people attended the January 2011 retreat held at Edwards House, and six people attended the April 2011 retreat held at the IdleWild in Plymouth (each retreat was attended by a mix of lay persons, pastors, and seminarians from UCC churches). Each participant agreed that they had powerful and transformative experiences, reporting that the retreat was a spiritually grounding experience that helped to replenish their energy, joy, and purpose. “I laughed and smiled a lot. I feel restored!” said one participant. “What will I take with me?” asked another. “The spirit of community, of love, of the kindness of those who began as strangers; no wrong answers, no possibility of failure.”

For more information about future retreats, contact Matt at [mcarriker@hotmail.com](mailto:mcarriker@hotmail.com).

### New England Youth Learn, Labor, and Lift Spirits

Over two hundred young people and advisers added color and sparkle to the campus of Boston University for four days of friendship forming, lesson learning, mission marking, and wild worshiping. Drums echoed down Commonwealth Avenue, willing hands painted and planted for over 400 person-hours of service, and great preachers, dancers and musicians added energy to the praise of God.

Kris Lofrumento of the Massachusetts Conference staff was a principal leader on the planning team for this event – the first regional youth event held in New England in twelve years.

The National Youth Event is planned for June 26-30, 2012, at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana.

Full report: [http://www.ctucc.org/news/20100630\\_nerye.html](http://www.ctucc.org/news/20100630_nerye.html)



# Closing Doors to Open Windows of Hope for Others.....

## Pleasant Street Congregational Church UCC Honors Church History, Celebrates Legacy, and Proclaims Hope as It Closes Its Doors

Closing a church is never an easy process. But Pleasant Street Congregational Church UCC in Arlington has proven that it is possible to close “with responsibility and grace” as Pastor Reebee Girash says.

The church voted last fall to close after years of deficit budgets, cutbacks and dwindling membership. The decision came at the end of a year-long spiritual discernment process in which the congregation considered six or seven options, including a merger with another church. But when it became clear that those options would not work out, the church began a very deliberate process of closing.

“It was a painful process, but the part that was really important to us was that we wanted our resources to become available to others – to make the world a brighter place,” said Girash, the church’s

pastor for the last five years. “We have closed our doors in the hopes of giving life to other things.”

The church voted to sell its building and donate the proceeds to a variety of local, national and international ministries. The church’s council is waiting for its plan to be approved by the

Attorney General’s office, which oversees the distribution of assets when a nonprofit closes.

In the meantime, the church held a series of services and events to mark its closing and to give its members a chance to work through their grief.

Each Sunday in January, members of the church were invited to share their memories during worship. “We had heartfelt to really funny, silly stories,” Girash said. One Sunday was a service of reconciliation, to give the members who were feeling angry over the closing a chance to talk out their anger, name it, and let it go.” Another focused on thanksgiving, when long-time members of the church were given framed pictures of the building.

At its last Sunday service, the church went through the official liturgies of disbanding and ended with communion. “We gathered around the pews, and sang the



benediction to one another,” Girash said. “We followed with a family fellowship time, when families were invited to take a hymnal with a donation plaque in it and a teacup.” (Over the years, ladies of the church had traditionally donated a bone china teacup on their 50<sup>th</sup> birthdays.)

Then on the following Saturday, the church had a special service and open house reception designed to include the community and other churches.

“That service had three themes: honoring the history of the congregation, celebrating its legacy, and proclaiming Easter hope,” Girash said. The service included music from three guest choirs that had performed at the church over the years. The open house was designed to feel a bit like a wake, Girash said, with a slide show and a chance for people to sit around and share memories.

Girash said the other churches of the Conference were incredibly supportive throughout the closing process.

“Park Avenue Church here in Arlington literally came and served the food and cleaned up (at the open house),” she said. “It was such a blessing. After another service, Plymouth Church in Belmont came and brought us coffee hour. That ministry of food that these churches brought, it was beautiful.” She added that at least a dozen Metropolitan Boston Association churches were represented at the final service and open house. “That was wonderful,” she said.



“...other churches of the Conference were incredibly supportive....”

## .....A Tale of Two Churches

### The News of this Worcester Church's Demise Has Been Wildly Exaggerated

In the winter of 2010, United Congregational Church (UCC) in Worcester, an Open and Affirming and Just Peace congregation, took a bold step after a multi-year process of discernment. Recognizing that they were unnecessarily burdened with the upkeep and maintenance of a large physical plant and had become complacent living off the revenue from their substantial endowment, the congregation voted to donate their building and multi-million dollar endowment to the Worcester Area Mission Society UCC (WAMS).

WAMS is the mission arm of the Central Association of the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ. It helps congregations to act on such key concerns as housing, youth development, and hurricane recovery.

"Many people, hearing that United gifted their building and endowment, think that United has closed – far from it!" said The Rev. Ms. Nancy Elder-Wilfrid, Transitional Pastor.

"We continue to worship in the church's building at 6 Institute Road in downtown Worcester. Our worship is exciting and creative. The congregation participates in worship by contributing music, serving on worship teams and experimenting with new ideas. We continue to focus on nurturing community among ourselves and those who may join us. We seek ways to be welcoming to all. Mission, justice, and outreach are central to our vision and we will be working with WAMS and other community organizations to identify hands-on project opportunities for the congregation," explained Carolyn Droser-Dzaugis, United's Moderator.

"We are a church that is listening to each other, thinking 'outside the box' and making sure our community is a safe place to voice disagreement and share new ideas. We are exploring new ways of communicating: email, Facebook and Google groups. We solicit questions from the congregation and are sending out church updates biweekly."

Coming to the decision was not an easy process, of course. There are about 400 pages of documentation going back over three years chronicling the church's process of discernment leading up to this decision.

Vice Moderator Larry Iannetti, who was involved in each step of the discernment process, stated that he was humbled by the inspiration of the members, whose faithfulness and commitment did not diminish during those three years.

"...we recognized that what makes us church, and which sustains us, is not the grandeur of our building and sanctuary, but rather one in which the Biblical axiom 'They will know we are Christians by our love', has become our mantra."



"To say the least, this action on the part of United Congregational Church, was historic," said Iannetti.

"While there are those who might associate such an action as synonymous with the closing of a church, for the people of United this was the culmination of a bold journey which began more than three years ago and which has catapulted us forward toward a new incarnation of what it means to be 'church' in the 21st century."

"It has been a true journey of faith for the people of United,

one in which we recognized that what makes us church, and which sustains us, is not the grandeur of our building and sanctuary, but rather one in which the Biblical axiom *They will know we are Christians by our love*, has become our mantra," he said.

"While it was not our intention to make a bold statement to the world at large by our action; as members and friends of United, it does remain our intention to live out and celebrate in a new way, what it means for us to be a Christian faith community."

United Congregational and WAMS have partnered at many points in the past, including establishment of the Worcester Community Loan Fund, development of the first housing program in Massachusetts for families living with HIV/AIDS, and creation of the Community Ministries Fund to help children and families in struggling neighborhoods.

"Now that we will be living and working together under the same roof, I can only say, look out!" said The Rev. Robert Bachelder, Minister for Mission and Service for WAMS. "And the fact we will be joined at 6 Institute Road by the Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, the region's leading housing organization and a long time ally of both WAMS and United, only multiplies the possibilities for creative action. WAMS is more grateful than it will ever be able to say for what United has done and for the trust it signifies. In partnership with congregations of the Central Association, we will try every day to shine our light more brightly than it has shone before."

"We are trying to listen to what God is calling us to do and to be," said Droser-Dzaugis. "We are taking action and trusting that as we do so, we will learn our purpose and our relationship with God will become even more real. We took a tremendous leap in February. We have already experienced great change and we acknowledge that we are moving into an uncertain future. Yet, as a Spirited people, we go forward in Christ's name with courage, community and compassion."

## Improved Communications, Easier Connections

The Conference launched a brand new website in 2010 aimed not just at better resourcing church leaders but also at connecting local churches to one another.

One popular feature of the new site is “Local Buzz” – a front page space that is used to showcase the ministries of individual Massachusetts Conference churches. The section features links to newspaper articles, blog posts and the Conference’s Spotlight E-Newsletters.

“It’s great to be able to quickly and effectively share the good news coming out of our churches,” said Tiffany Vail, Associate for Communication. “Our web designers were excited about our ‘bottom up’ polity, and worked with us to create a website that would reflect that.”

Local churches can also add events to the church section of the website calendar and submit classified ads to the site. There are also forms on the site for submitting ideas for the Spotlight E-Newsletter and for particular ministries, such as the environment and stewardship.

### Intuitive Navigation, Consistent Design and Branding

The navigation of the site was designed to offer resources according to area of interest. Visitors find such categories as “Growing in Faith,” “Inspiring Generosity” and “Nurturing our Children and Youth.” A “Changing Our World” section connects users with those mission and justice issues for which they may have a passion.

“We have tried to create a website where users will easily be able to find the resources they need, without having to know the institutional structure and language of the Conference,” Vail said.

The new website was designed to reflect the branding of the denomination, using red and black colors as well as words and images that reflect the UCC’s extravagant welcome.

The site was designed by Brick River Technologies of Exeter, New Hampshire, and uses a content management system originally created for United Methodist Conferences. Brick River is the force behind about half of the Methodist Conference websites in the country.

“We were so excited to find Brick River because they had a product in place designed to do exactly what we needed to do, for a fraction of the cost of what some design companies were asking,” Vail said. “They understood what a Conference is, and what users of a Conference website want. At the same time, they let us create a unique website that reflects our own identity as the UCC in Massachusetts.”



### Conference News is Your News

Brick River’s system has allowed the Conference to easily add some new features to the website, including sections for pastoral transitions and obituaries in the News section, and RSS feeds.

“RSS feeds allow any of our churches to place headlines from the Massachusetts Conference site on their own websites, or allow individuals to display Massachusetts Conference news in their own news readers, such as on customized Google or Yahoo pages,” Vail said. “They have also allowed us to automatically post news stories, local buzz features and blog posts to the Conference Facebook Page, broadening our reach.”

The site is also much more easily updated by Conference support staff, who can work on it from any computer with Internet access without needing specialized software.

“Members of the staff are able to add content simply by filling in forms or using editors that are very much like using word processing software,” Vail said. “It is a much more user-friendly system, and gives us a great deal of flexibility for the future.”

The new site had 84,000 unique page views in its first 4 months online, with 12,700 different people visiting the site nearly 25,000 times.

The design was so well received that the Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC has contracted with Brick River to use the same basic site design that was developed for the Massachusetts Conference.

“It’s been great to hear so much enthusiastic feedback about the new site,” said Dawn Hammond, Associate Conference Minister for Policy and Finance. “And we are still adding features – new sections for our retreat centers are coming soon.”

# Super Saturdays for Super Learning

## Super Saturdays Supplement Annual Meeting

Over the years, the Massachusetts Conference's Annual Meeting Planning Committees constantly found themselves faced with a dilemma: how to accommodate the desire of delegates to have BOTH a shorter, one-day Annual Meeting AND more workshops. Thus was born the idea for Super Saturdays.



These one-day events were launched in October, 2010, to serve as supplements to the one-day Annual Meeting. They give church lay leaders and clergy two opportunities a year to come together for a full day of skill building and learning best practices. The Super Saturdays are truly a supplement to the Annual Meetings, carrying forth the theme from the previous Meeting and providing discussion sessions related to issue-oriented resolutions due for

a vote at the next Annual Meeting.

**Hold the Date ...  
Super Saturday:**

**October 1, 2011  
MassBay  
Community College  
50 Oakland Street  
(Route 9)  
Wellesley, MA**

**Workshops** Inspiration  
Fellowship **Super** Worship  
Pastor Relations Marketplace  
Facebook *Mission & Justice*  
Creation Deacons  
Christian Education **Lunch**  
**Networking** Demographics  
*Collaboration* Stewardship  
Resources **Best Practices**  
Youth **Learning**  
Hospitality *Safe Church*  
**Welcomers** Treasurers  
Changing Lives

Each of the first two Super Saturdays – one held in October, 2010, in Franklin and the other in in March, 2011 in Ludlow – attracted more than 300 people from churches all over the Conference plus congregations in New Hampshire and Rhode Island. Each session featured worship, a marketplace of vendors and ideas, and more than 30 workshops for attendees to choose from (each person could attend two). Workshops were designed for leaders involved in mission, stewardship, outreach, Christian education, church communication and everything in between.

Energy was high at the events, and those who participated gave glowing evaluations, with comments like “Loved it!” and “Terrific” popping up on evaluation forms.

*The next Super Saturday will be held October 1, 2011, at MassBay Community College in Wellesley. For complete information, and to register, visit: [www.macucc.org/supersaturday](http://www.macucc.org/supersaturday).*



## Celebrating Call

Hundreds of pastors, most from the United Church of Christ, were joined by some lay leaders and denominational staff for three days of renewal, fellowship, worship, and learning in May, 2011, in Waltham, Massachusetts. The *Celebrating Call, Celebrating Challenge: Ministry in a Changing Landscape* conference rooted itself firmly in the soil of God's summons to these individuals to lives of faith and of leadership in worshiping communities. The conference was made possible by a significant grant from the Lilly Foundation to the Massachusetts Conference's Pastoral Excellence Program and by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation. Read about the Conference at [www.macucc.org/celebratingcall](http://www.macucc.org/celebratingcall) – *Pastors Celebrate and Renew Their Call* by Eric Anderson, Minister of Communications and Technology Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ.

## 2010 Stats



The Mashpee Congregational Church, newest UCC congregation on the Cape and Islands in over 80 years, celebrated both its anniversary of launch and the 90th birthday of a parishioner with a festive display of 90 balloons. The church started as a project of the Massachusetts Conference in January, 2007 and received full standing in the Barnstable Association on November 7, 2010.

### Celebrations

- Hope Church, Jamaica Plain #670, and Central Congregational Church, Jamaica Plain #660 - merged to form Hope Central Church #670 Feb. 28, 2010.
- Mashpee Congregational Church, UCC – former new church start received Full UCC Standing Nov 7, 2010.

### Losses

- Union Congregational Church, Taunton, #4600 – voted to withdraw Jan. 24, 2010
- First Congregational Church of Peru, #3690 – voted to withdraw Feb. 7, 2010
- Evangelical Congregational Church, Dunstable, #1480 – voted to withdraw May 16, 2010

**Do Happy Cows Give  
More Milk?**

**Read the staff blogs at:  
<http://macucc.org/staffblog>**

## MACUCC Churches Performing Marriage Ceremonies for Same Gender Couples



South Acton Congregational Church  
South Congregational Church, UCC, Amherst  
First Church of Christ Congregational, Bedford  
Belchertown United Church of Christ  
Church of the Covenant, Federated, Boston  
Old South Church in Boston  
UCC Congregational of Boxborough  
First Church in Cambridge  
Canaan Congregational Church  
Christ's Community Church, Chicopee  
United Congregational Church, UCC, Conway  
Union Congregational Church, East Walpole  
Edwards Church, Framingham  
Grace Congregational UCC, Framingham  
First Congregational UCC, Hanover  
Hingham Congregational Church UCC  
First Congregational Church UCC, Holliston  
First Congregational Church of Lee  
Church on the Hill, UCC, Lenox  
Hancock United Church of Christ, Lexington  
Pilgrim Congregational Church, Lexington  
The First Parish in Lincoln  
Christ Church United in Lowell  
United Parish of Lunenburg  
First Church in Malden  
First Church of Christ in Marblehead, Inc.  
The Congregational Church of West Medford  
First Congregational Church in Melrose, UCC  
North Congregational Church, Middleboro  
East Congregational Church, UCC, Milton  
First Congregational Church of Natick  
Congregational Church of Needham  
Newton Highlands Congregational Church, UCC  
Trinity Church Northborough  
UCC Congregational Church of Norwell  
First Congregational Church, UCC, Reading  
First Congregational of Somerville, UCC  
The First Congregational Church of Southampton  
South Congregational Church, UCC, Springfield  
First Congregational Church UCC, Stockbridge  
Memorial Congregational Church UCC, Sudbury  
Wellesley Congregational Church  
First Parish Church United, Westford  
First Congregational Church, Whately  
First Congregational Church UCC, Williamstown  
First Congregational Church in Winchester, UCC  
Second Congregational Church, Winchester  
Hadwen Park Congregational Church, Worcester  
Lake View Congregational Church, Worcester  
United Congregational Church, Worcester

## How Do We Fund These Missions, Ministries, Programs, and Services?

In the Massachusetts Conference 77% of our revenue is provided directly by local congregations. Congregations support their wider mission as lived out by the Conference through Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support and Fellowship Dues. The balance comes from endowment and other income. It is this financial expression of covenant by local congregations of the Massachusetts Conference that pays for the mission and ministry conducted by the Conference you have read about in this Annual Report.

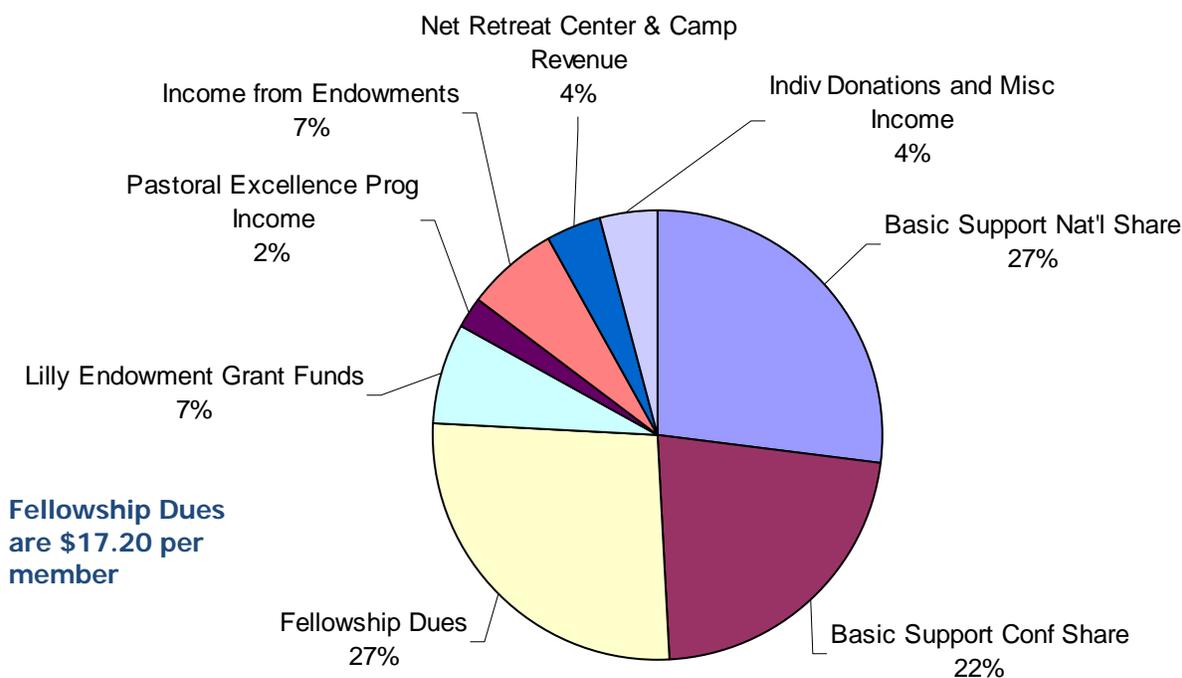


In the same spirit of covenant, 53% of the OCWM Basic Support received is contributed to the national setting of the UCC. Fellowship dues are a per member contribution established by the congregations and clergy of the Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ at Annual Meeting. This practice dates back to the 1840's. A small additional amount is added by local Associations for Association programs and expenses. Delegates voted a \$17.20 per member Fellowship Dues for 2011. Fellowship dues remain in the Conference to support programs and services to local congregations.

Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support supports both national and conference settings. In 1993 the clergy and congregations of the Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ adopted the guideline for giving that congregations should give an amount equal to at least 10% of their operating budget to mission, and give at least 50% of their mission spending to Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support.

There is no more important work in the world than the mission carried out by the whole church in all its settings — local, association, conference and national. Ultimately all the financial support for the mission we all carry out in the name of Jesus Christ comes from the generosity of the people of God, given in love. May God bless our efforts in the Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ to advance God's reign of love, peace, justice and mercy, until the kingdom comes in its fullness.

### Where Does the Money Come From?



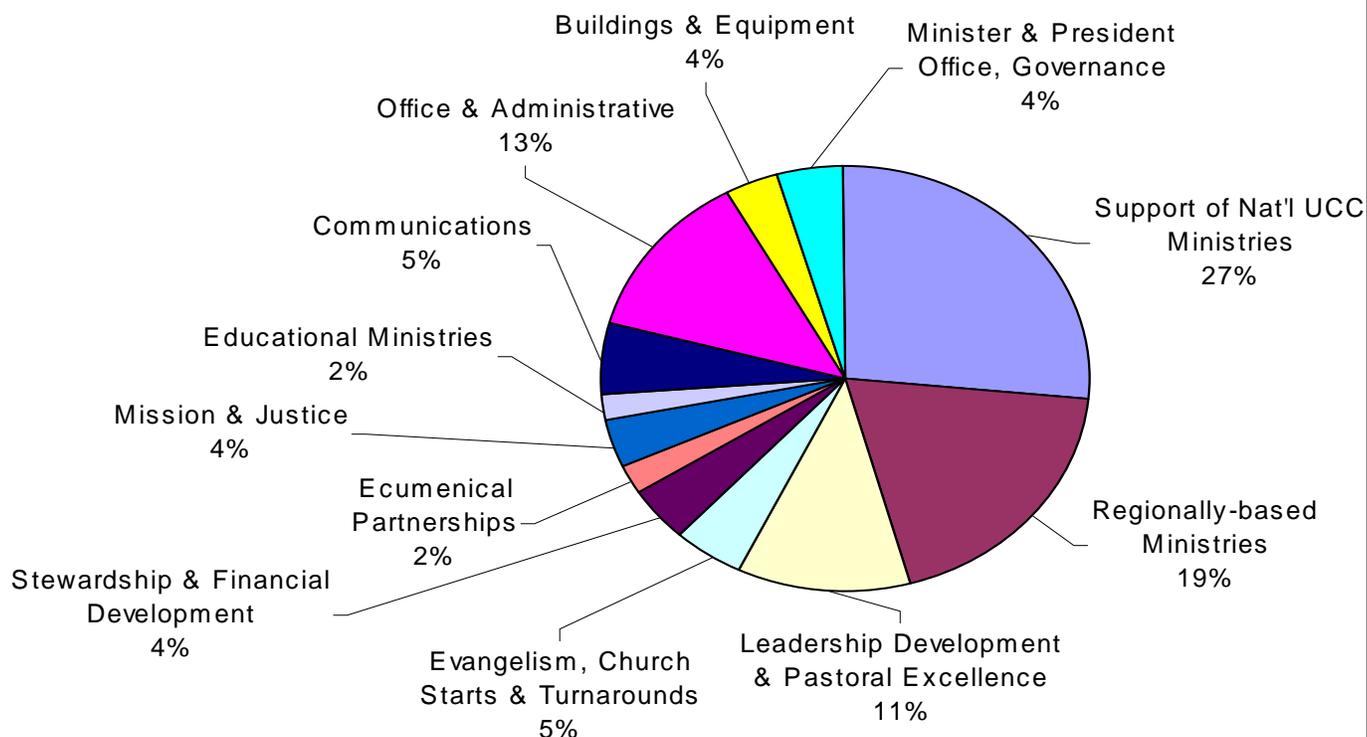
# How Much Goes Where?

RESOURCES ANTICIPATED - 2011 .....\$3,727,000      MINISTRIES TO BE FUNDED (see next page for details).....\$3,770,500

Source	Amount	Percentage
Basic Support National Share	\$1,006,700	27
Basic Support Conference Share	\$823,600	22
Fellowship Dues	\$1,000,400	27
Lilly Endowment Grant Funds	\$269,800	7
Pastoral Excellence Program Income	\$77,700	2
Income from Endowments	\$251,100	7
Net Retreat Center & Camp Revenue	\$139,700	4
Individual Donations & Miscellaneous Income	\$158,000	4

Source	Amount	Percentage
Support of Nat'l UCC Ministries	\$1,006,700	27
Regionally-based Ministries	\$707,400	19
Leadership Development & Pastoral Excellence	\$432,100	11
Evangelism, Church Starts & Turnarounds	\$175,800	5
Stewardship & Financial Development	\$163,600	4
Ecumenical Partnerships	\$83,200	2
Mission & Justice	\$132,300	4
Educational Ministries	\$78,100	2
Communications	\$203,800	5
Office & Administrative	\$487,400	13
Buildings & Equipment	\$137,000	4
Minister & President Office, Governance	\$163,100	4

## Where Does the Money Go?



# Conference Ministries to be Funded - 2011

## Support for National UCC Ministries - \$1,006,700 (27%)

- Wider Ministries
- Justice and Witness Ministries
- Local Church Ministries
- Office of General Ministries

## Regional Ministries - \$707,400 (19%)

- Pastoral search and call
- Conflict intervention and resolution
- Support for churches and pastors
- Assistance/support for Association boards & committees
- Regional programs

## Leadership Development & Pastoral Excellence - \$432,100 (11%)

- Compensation guidelines for clergy & other church employees
- Pastoral Excellence Program
- Clergy Communities of Practice
- New Clergy Groups
- Colloquies and continuing education
- Safe Church information

## Young Adult Ministry

- Young adult retreats and events
- Service opportunities and Young Adult Ministry Resources

## Educational Ministries - \$78,100 (2%)

- Seasonal Sunday school resources
- Curriculum Assistance
- Christian educator training
- CE educator cluster groups
- CE consulting
- Networking and certification
- "Connect": Christian educator's e-newsletter
- Resource Center Curriculum Open Houses

## Youth Ministry

- Confirmation retreats
- Mission trips
- Resources for youth ministry

## Evangelism, Church Starts & Turnarounds - \$175,800 (5%)

- Oversight of new church start pastors and revitalization projects
- Grants for New Church Starts and Turnarounds
- Vitality Coaches
- Church visioning & vitality resources and consulting
- "Growing Faith" newsletter
- MissionInsite demographic data

## Ecumenical Partnerships - \$83,200 (2%)

- Mass. Council of Churches
- Dialogue and advocacy with other denominations
- Support of Boston-Cambridge campus ministries

## Mission and Justice - \$132,300 (4%)

- Mission Partnerships in Chile
- Task forces on Race & Justice, Jubilee, Environmental Ministries, Homelessness and Restorative Justice
- Fair Trade project
- Open & Affirming and marriage resources
- MassReleaf ministry
- "Ever Flowing Streams" newsletter

## Stewardship and Financial Development - \$163,600 (4%)

- Stewardship trainings
- Local church consulting on stewardship, planned giving, endowments and capital campaigns
- Missionary visits
- OCWM mission interpretation
- "Inspiring Generosity" newsletter
- Handbooks for treasurers and auditors
- Web, electronic, and print resources

## Communications - \$203,800 (5%)

- Phone, mail and email costs
- Conference web site
- Events and resources for church web sites
- Social media work and resources
- Spotlight series
- Emailing and "The Mailing" info packets
- Annual Report and other publications

## Minister & President/Governance - \$163,100 (4%)

- Oversee Conference ministry, program and budget
- Liaison with National and ecumenical agencies
- Represent Conference in public media
- Minister and pastor among MACUCC churches
- Board of Directors
- General Synod delegation

## Offices & Administrative - \$487,400 (13%)

- Financial management, audit and accounting
- Legal
- Office expenses
- Property and liability insurance

## Buildings and Equipment - \$137,000 (4%)

- Equipment for all offices
- Major repairs to Conference owned property at Craiggville and Framingham

## 2010 Top Giving Churches (Per Member)

*Includes 5 for 5 (Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support, One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church & Christmas Fund), Fellowship Dues, Disaster relief and all other designated giving through the Conference.*

Church	Association	Mem- bership	Received	Per member
First Congregational Church, UCC, Haverhill	Essex	30	\$22,690.20	\$756.34
United Parish of Auburndale	Metropolitan Boston	157	\$35,522.50	\$226.26
United Parish of Lunenburg	Central	159	\$34,737.24	\$218.47
The Second Church in Newton, UCC, West Newton	Metropolitan Boston	337	\$62,615.20	\$185.80
Church of the Covenant, Federated, Boston	Metropolitan Boston	63	\$10,133.43	\$160.85
Newton Highlands Congregational Church, UCC	Metropolitan Boston	141	\$21,416.82	\$151.89
Old South Church in Boston	Metropolitan Boston	586	\$87,055.26	\$148.56
Faith United Parish, Fitchburg	Central	64	\$9,175.70	\$143.37
Mount Vernon Congregational Church, Boston	Metropolitan Boston	50	\$6,739.20	\$134.78
Edwards Church, Framingham	Central	145	\$19,100.00	\$131.72
Richmond Congregational Church UCC	Berkshire	71	\$9,186.80	\$129.39
United Congregational Church, Worcester	Central	168	\$21,079.40	\$125.47
First Church in Cambridge, Cambridge	Metropolitan Boston	439	\$54,918.55	\$125.10
First Federated Church, Hudson	Central	35	\$4,288.40	\$122.53
First Congregational Church, UCC, Reading	Metropolitan Boston	277	\$33,861.60	\$122.24
The Federated Church of Orleans	Barnstable	235	\$28,034.01	\$119.29
First Parish Church of Berlin	Central	42	\$4,868.70	\$115.92
Park Avenue Congregational Church, UCC, Arlington	Metropolitan Boston	200	\$23,115.24	\$115.58
Stratford Street United Church, West Roxbury	Metropolitan Boston	81	\$9,107.70	\$112.44
Hancock United Church of Christ, Lexington	Metropolitan Boston	725	\$80,227.60	\$110.66
First Congregational Church UCC, Stoughton	Pilgrim	166	\$18,155.15	\$109.37
First Congregational Church in Winchester, UCC	Metropolitan Boston	483	\$52,387.20	\$108.46
Pilgrim Church UCC, Sherborn	Central	351	\$37,917.10	\$108.03
Plainfield Congregational Church, Inc.	Hampshire	39	\$4,205.60	\$107.84
Feeding Hills Congregational Church, UCC	Hampden	63	\$6,501.60	\$103.20
Tabernacle Church Congregational, UCC, Salem	Essex	133	\$13,666.40	\$102.75
UCC Congregational Church of Norwell	Pilgrim	393	\$39,809.75	\$101.30
The First Congregational Church of Rockport, UCC	Essex	209	\$20,918.00	\$100.09

*Membership based on most recent report received. Received is the amount received between 1/1/2010 and 12/31/2010; \$100 or more listed.*

# Directory

## Framingham Center

One Badger Road,  
Framingham, MA 01702-5517  
Phone (508) 875-5233;  
Fax (508) 875-5485

### Minister and President

The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal  
jmantal@macucc.org  
Mr. Willie Sordillo  
Administrative Assistant  
sordillow@macucc.org; ext. 225

## Program Staff

### Leadership Development

Ms. Susan P. Dickerman  
Associate Conference Minister  
dickermans@macucc.org; ext. 233

### Stewardship and Financial Development

Mr. Andrew Gustafson  
Associate Conference Minister  
gustafsona@macucc.org; ext. 231

### Policy and Finance

Ms. Dawn Hammond  
Associate Conference Minister  
hammond@macucc.org; ext. 228

### Evangelism & Church Vitality

The Rev. Mr. Paul Nickerson  
Associate Conference Minister  
nickersonp@macucc.org; ext. 236

### Resource Center

Ms. Martha Butler Cook  
Director  
cookm@macucc.org; ext. 239

### Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Ms. Kristin LoFrumento  
Program Coordinator  
lofrumentok@macucc.org; ext. 274

### Communication and Communication Technologies

Ms. Tiffany Vail  
Associate  
vailt@macucc.org; ext. 229

## Associate Conference Ministers

The Rev. Jill Graham  
51 Center Street, P.O. Box 443  
Ludlow, MA 01056  
Phone: 413-589-7034;  
Fax: 413-589-7035  
grahamj@macucc.org

The Rev. Mr. Dale Hempen  
225 Water Street South #A115  
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Phone: 508-746-8330  
Fax: 508-746-8339  
hempend@macucc.org

The Rev. Don Remick  
230 Second Avenue  
Waltham, MA 02451  
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Fax: 781-890-1777  
remickd@macucc.org

The Rev. Wendy Vander Hart  
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Waltham, MA 02451  
Phone: 781-890-1444  
Fax: 781-890-1777  
vanderhartw@macucc.org

The Rev. Dr. Peter Wells  
51 Center Street, P.O. Box 443  
Ludlow, MA 01056  
Office: 413-589-7034  
Cell: 413-244-6079  
wells@macucc.org

## Conference Facilities

Diane Montgomery  
Site Manager  
Edwards House Meeting and  
Retreat Center  
Framingham, MA  
montgomeryd@macucc.org;  
ext. 271

Ms. Mary Woodbury, Director  
Craigville Retreat Center  
Centerville, Cape Cod  
508-775-1265  
info@craigvilleretreats.org  
craigvilleretreats.org

## National Setting

UCC Headquarters  
700 Prospect Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44115-1100  
Web site: www.ucc.org

Office of General Ministries  
216-736-2100

Justice and Witness Ministries  
216-736-3700

Local Church Ministries  
216-736-3800

Wider Church Ministries  
216-736-3200

## Other Useful Contact Information

Pension Boards  
212-870-2777

Massachusetts Congregational Fund  
800-514-1111

Church World Service  
Disaster Hot Line: 800-456-1310

Global Ministries  
866-822-8224

UCC Insurance  
(Information) 800-437-8830  
(Claims) 800-832-7839

City Mission Society of Boston  
617-742-6830

Congregational Library  
617-523-0470

Massachusetts Council of Churches  
617-523-2771

Worcester Area Mission Society  
508-832-3937

Andover Newton Theological School  
617-964-1100

Seafarer's Friend  
617-889-6315



THE MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE OF  
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