



# THE MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN 2017

## TAKING THE LEAD IN A TIME OF DIVISION

When the divisions of our country were visible for all to see after the 2016 election, President Anthony Barsamian & Rev. Laura Everett sent out a post-election message, naming our 3 core commitments to:

- We will look again at the log in our own eye, before calling out the splinter in our neighbor's
- We will listen to the pain in the Body of Christ, and prioritize the vulnerable parts.
- Finally, we vow to continue to build a network of diverse Christians devoted the mutual need and delight in one another.

In 2017, our core commitments have stood as a strong beacon and foundation, guiding and supporting our work.



## COORDINATING A COMMON WITNESS ON REFUGEES

Following the executive order banning refugees in January, 17 heads of church, including two Roman Catholic Bishops, and Bishop John of the Antiochian Orthodox Diocese of Worcester, spoke with one voice, saying our Christian faith compels us to our religious practice of resettling refugees and welcoming the stranger. We continued our common Christian witness through amicus briefs. And when we heard of increased needs in Plymouth Co, in May, we partnered to train more lay leaders to visit those being detained by ICE.

## FIGHTING FOR YOUR CHURCH AGAINST UNDUE TAXATION

The Mass. Council of Churches has saved your local congregation and denomination money. We watch the courts for cases that will affect your church, like the Supreme Judicial Court church taxation case LaSalette v. Town of Attleboro. MCC initiated an amicus brief, did the research, coordinated the responses, worked with the lawyer, crafted the media strategy, explained the case and our conviction to the press. That work saved every local congregations thousands of dollars. We joined the Coalition to Preserve our Nonprofit Services to monitor and **address any bills that will have a negative impact on our churches' nonprofit status**, and represented your local congregations as we testified on Beacon Hill.

## LIVING OUR CALLING: A SIGN OF HOPE & HUB OF COORDINATION

This year, we saw a rise in hate crimes, and blatant displays of violent racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. We were a sign of hope and a hub of coordination in the week following the neo-Nazi march on Charlottesville and protests in Boston. We coordinated with our partners in the Black Ministerial Alliance and the NAACP. When the Boston Holocaust memorial was desecrated for a second time this summer, we were there to stand with our Jewish colleague and released an open letter condemning anti-Semitism.



## MAKING THE VIBRANT CHURCH VISIBLE IN THE MEDIA

Through our strong social media presence, we reflect the vitality we see in every community and denomination. We also make the vibrant Church visible to the wider public. Behind the scenes, we are pitching stories. Because of MCC, WBUR reported on the addiction and recovery ministries of Rev. David Lima in New Bedford, Rev. Janice Ford in Webster, and Rev. Mike Clark in Belmont. Because of MCC, the **Boston Globe's front page Christmas Day column** by Yvonne Abraham was a story we pitched about Christian refugees. Because of the MCC, multiple outlets reported on the plight of Iraqi Christians in Worcester following the travel ban. Because of MCC, people heard **these stories of hopeful Christians making God's love known in some very tough circumstances.**



## STRENGTHENING NETWORKS OF CHRISTIANS

We connect disparate parts of the body of Christ, offering hope and care to Christian leaders. Our **Easter Monday “Youngish Clergyish” brunch** invited emerging leaders to gather, breaking the isolation of new pastors. Rev. Meagan welcomed the leadership of the World Student Christian Federation, sharing our story of institutional transformation. Rev. Daryl toured a group of Gordon College undergrads to visit Boston churches. With Baptist News Global, Rev. Laura hosted 30 Baptist pastors from across the **US for an immersion experience in our “Post Christendom”** context for ministry. We attend each denominational gathering

as a visible reminder that we do not do our work apart from the rest of the body of Christ. From Church Women United meeting on Cape Cod, to **gathering pastors to harvest stories of God's abundance in Pittsfield, we work statewide to strengthen Christ's Church.**

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO BROAD PARTS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

We know that councils of churches have not always reflected the whole of the Church. We intentionally reach out and build relationships with diverse parts of the Body of Christ, beyond the official membership of the Massachusetts Council of Churches. This year alone, we worked with Coptic Orthodox, Antiochian Orthodox, United Baptists, evangelicals, Pentecostals and independent congregational churches.

## EQUIPPING FOR THE NEXT ERA OF MINISTRY

We know much in the life of local congregations is changing rapidly. We equip the Church for ministry in a new era. We partner with Leadership Education at Duke Divinity School to offer the Foundations of Christian Leadership certificate program, equipping Christian leaders with mindset shift, skills, and grant opportunities. We hosted a workshop for local church pastors on best practices in **working with the media. In 2018, we'll offer the Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising with Indiana University's Lilly School of Philanthropy to help the Church's financial stability.**



## MODELING ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE OF THE GOSPEL

Like so many churches, the models of governance and staffing that once served us no longer work. In the past year, we finalized an extensive process of redesigning our governance model and changing our Constitution. We now have a leaner and more nimble leadership structure that better reflects the diversity of the Body of Christ in **our smaller “Working Board” and larger “Advisory Board.” We worked hard all year for “systems clarity”** in our finance and data-management processes, creating well-tuned mechanisms of institutional life—that make the most of every donation by streamlining administration.