

Affirming Ministry Task Group – Maritime Conference

Members: April Hart, Rev. Jane Johnson, Rev. Meggin King, Rev. Bob Johnson,
David Hewitt, Executive Secretary.

Since the last Annual Meeting of Maritime Conference, we have met five times with a two-part focus for our work: inviting input from Conference Committees and Presbyteries as to what “affirming ministry” might look like in their work and in preparation for our presentation/discussion at the 2014 Annual Meeting. Our foremost concern is that we ensure a broad participation in the conversation throughout our Conference regarding Affirming Ministry.

We asked Conference Committees to devote agenda time to discerning implications “for their respective committee” should Maritime Conference become an Affirming Ministry. The significant response to this request evidenced a lack of shared understanding about the meaning of “affirming ministry.”

We asked the Presbyteries to provide a picture of their respective Presbytery as regards policies and practices of inclusion. We received helpful responses from the majority of Presbyteries along with significant questions and requests for participation in Presbytery meetings. We are mindful that several Presbyteries have had significant conversations about “affirming ministry” which, in some cases, have resulted in positive actions.

At our upcoming Annual Meeting, the Task Group will be inviting delegates to share a discussion about what Maritime Conference needs to say in a possible “Statement of Inclusion” for the Conference and what might be needed in a followup “Plan of Action.” It is our intention to take the results of this discussion and prepare materials to be reviewed by Presbyteries and Conference Committees in advance of the 2015 Annual Meeting when Conference may take formal action to become an Affirming Ministry within The United Church of Canada.

A third focus for our meetings this past year was an invitation to share in hosting the 2015 Conference and Annual Meeting of Affirm United. Following discussions with them, Maritime Conference and St. Matthew's United Church, Halifax have offered to co-host this annual event in advance of the 2015 General Council meeting.