

1 **Section 3: Ministries of Advocacy**

2 **CONFERENCE BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

3 ***Erika Panzarino, Program Coordinator, Board of Church and Society***

4 101. This year the Board of Church and Society continued to pilot “Wesleyan Justice: Our Heritage, Our Future.”
5 We have conducted several trainings, both for local churches and conference wide, and are eager to
6 continue to schedule and offer this resource to the conference, and have been invited to share this
7 training with the General Board of Church and Society in the coming year. We continue to collect data and
8 responses from churches we have worked with, and look forward to editing the project in the coming year
9 in response to feedback from our pilot program.

10 102. Additionally, significant work has been done on a comprehensive report on the Opioid Crisis within the
11 New York Annual Conference. Chair Giselle Stanley has worked to research and complete this report
12 including input from the mental health, substance abuse, medical, and law enforcement fields in order to
13 provide a wholistic understanding of the problem and ways in which CBCS and the conference can support
14 efforts to mitigate this crisis.

15 103. We also once again participated in a Christmas card ministry that brought together churches from all over
16 the conference to hand-write over 300 Christmas greetings to those who are incarcerated. Additionally,
17 we have also continued to pursue fossil fuel divestment in investment portfolios from the Board of
18 Camping and Retreat Ministries, Board of Pension and Health Benefits, Board of Trustees, Council on
19 Finance and Administration, Committee on Parish Development and United Methodist Frontier
20 Foundation and are pleased to report that the Council on Finance and Administration has reported full
21 divestment at this time.

22 104. Representatives from CBCS attended UMForward gatherings in both Minneapolis and Dallas, continuing to
23 support the work of full LGBTQIA+ inclusion with the global denomination, in radical and intersectional
24 solidarity. These gatherings centered the voices of those who are Queer, Trans, and People of Color
25 (Q+T+POC) in an effort to stand with, not speak for, those who are historically marginalized.

26 105. We continue to seek new leadership for the Immigration Task Force; whose work remains extremely
27 necessary in this political climate. We ask and encourage anyone with an interest in this work to contact
28 us so that we may reinvigorate this ministry.

29 **NEW YORK JUSTICE FOR OUR NEIGHBORS**

30 ***Rev. Paul A. Fleck, Executive Director***

31 101. Once again, it has been a year of growth, challenges, and change for New York Justice for Our Neighbors.

32 102. As promised in last year’s report, NY JFON is now its own separate 501(c)(3) with a payroll independent of
33 the NYAC. We are still incredibly grateful to the NYAC for its continued financial support and guidance
34 through this process.

35 103. The present administration’s policies continue to make it difficult for NY JFON to represent its immigrant
36 clients. More obvious policies include recent attempts to gut the asylum regulations and laws, as well as
37 extend the time for an asylee applicant to obtain a work permit from 6 months to one year. In a press
38 release, the Department of Homeland Security (our government) said that asylees should accustom
39 themselves to accessing homeless services. However, policies like these are simply one example of the
40 callousness that our immigrant clients and attorneys must face daily.

- 1 104. We are incredibly proud of our NY JFON attorneys. TJ Mills, a longtime fixture at NY JFON, handles over
2 300 cases (note there may be multiple cases/matters per client), well in excess of the 65 recommended by
3 our national affiliate, and NY JFON is engaged in efforts to reduce his caseload. Samantha Blecher, who
4 staffs our Long Island office at Hicksville UMC, carries a caseload of over 80; we are proud that she is our
5 “go-to” attorney for unaccompanied minor cases (also known as “Special Immigrant Juvenile” cases).
- 6 105. As a result of the pandemic, we have temporarily changed out model of providing client service. Instead
7 of in-person clinics, we are scheduling and representing clients remotely. We speculate that, in part
8 because of the pandemic, fewer clients are seeking out our services, instead choosing to focus on more
9 immediate and pressing needs.
- 10 106. This year we began a grant partnership with Church World Service to represent asylum seekers, and will
11 be receiving over \$330,000 over 3 years. Alexis Duecker is the Asylum Attorney who we hired in January,
12 and her caseload for the year filled by March given the incredible demand in the New York City/ Northern
13 New Jersey area by asylum seekers.
- 14 107. We have added two part-time staff as well. Daffnie Marinez is our Bookkeeper and Hannah Reasoner is
15 our Communications Coordinator. Both have done an outstanding job respectively in keeping our books in
16 order and raising the profile of the organization.
- 17 108. Financially, we have been hit hard by the pandemic. As mentioned earlier in this report, the NYAC
18 provides a great deal of support to our ministry, and The United Methodist City Society has increased its
19 grant to NY JFON. Because of the need to postpone our annual gala/event, and because of the impact on
20 individual giving, we applied for and received a Paycheck Protection Program loan. We anticipate that by
21 the time you review this report, that we will have applied for forgiveness of that loan and/or have it
22 completely forgiven. Having said that, the Board and staff of NY JFON appreciate the necessity of raising
23 the organization’s profile and obtaining more diverse and increased resources beyond the traditional UMC
24 sources.
- 25 109. *NY JFON is a United Methodist ministry dedicated to providing free, high-quality legal advice and*
26 *representation to vulnerable, low-income immigrants in the New York Metropolitan area. You can learn*
27 *more about this ministry at www.ny-jfon.org. You can donate to this ministry by sending a check to NY*
28 *JFON, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1505, New York, New York 10115.*

29 CONFERENCE COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE (CCORR)

30 **Rev. Sheila Beckford and Rev. Gertude Nation: Co-Chairs**

- 31 101. This past conference year 2019-2020, the Commission On Religion and Race scheduled three, and
32 provided two anti-racism training events, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The training events were
33 “Undoing Racism,” as provided by The Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond, and “Analyzing and
34 Understanding Systemic Racism,” as provided by Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training.” We issued
35 approximately 80 certificates to those who successfully completed the training. We submitted a budget of
36 \$41,600 for 2021. If approved, our budget will allow us to provide additional training events to
37 accommodate those who are required to complete anti-racism training, as well as provide training across
38 the conference through various conference initiatives. CCORR is working diligently to create and present a
39 Tier 2 training component. This is in response to positive feedback and ongoing request from participants.
40 We’ve also met with a core group in the Catskill Hudson District to determine how we might provide
41 specific cross racial/cross-cultural training within the district. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we only met
42 with the core group once.

- 1 102. As Bishop Bickerton wrote recently, “The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 has brought to bear
2 the urgency to intentionally and effectively address systemic racism in all sectors of our society. The
3 church is not immune to that examination as well. We have been complicit in allowing racist systems,
4 structures, and behaviors to be maintained for as long as we have been in existence. The time has come,
5 and the opportunity is clearly before us.” CCORR, will vigorously pursue and provide anti-racism
6 education to both clergy and laity of this conference. Education has started by offerings webinars such as:
7 “Defunding White Supremacy: Decentering Racism Webinar for Allies”, “True Colors Defeating Internalized
8 Racism,” and additional upcoming webinars.
- 9 103. CCORR takes its leadership from GCORR, Resolutions passed by NYAC and the Book of Discipline. When
10 the original Resolution expired, a revised resolution was submitted which included district hires,
11 conference, and district lay leaders. All attendees to the 2019 annual conference were provided a three-
12 hour anti-racism workshop, which was facilitated by Erin Hawkins, General Secretary of GCORR. This
13 short, but informative session allowed participants to reflect on, and assess what they can do differently
14 to address racism. The 2016 Book of discipline supports the efforts to plan workshops, seminars and
15 consultations on biblical and theological grounds, and be available to assist and address racism including
16 ethnocentrism and ethnocentric. We have continued to work with Crossroads Anti-racism Training and
17 Organizing to plan training for the Bishop, cabinet, and other leadership. CCORR members will continue to
18 facilitate anti-racism training during district meetings, and during Lay Servant training whenever required.
19 It is still our hope to have this training integrated in Conference wide training. CCORR members express
20 their sincere thanks to Bishop Thomas Bickerton for his leadership, and to the Cabinet and all who
21 encouraged participants to attend, “Analyzing and Understanding Systemic Racism” Training. We look
22 forward to providing training to the churches that have expressed an interest. This is a three-hour
23 workshop for local church leaders. Pastors and churches who are interested should contact CCORR. It is
24 recommended that there are least 10 participants. The workshop is offered to the church without cost.
25 We are grateful for the opportunity to be in service to God and the NYAC.
- 26 104. We extend special thanks to the members of the commission: Jennifer Berry, Matt Curry, Scharlise Dorsey,
27 Lar L. Dumc, J. Gordon, Les Johnson. Eugene Knoth, Dorlimar Lebrón Malavé, Roslyn Lee, Orlando Morales,
28 Daryl Norman, Leslie Duroseau, Kirk Lyons, Siobhan Sargent, and Denise Smartt Sears.