*2021 Annual ACM Conference Report*

*Submitted by Rev. Damien J. Lake, ACM*

**Overview:**

My first six months has been a wonderful experience here in the MMS. I worked to create a COM retreat in August for all of our COM Members. I also learned how to use the Datahub, Profile System, and additional resources for Conference Staff within the UCC. I have led several of the Pandemic Clergy Gatherings that meet on Tuesday mornings, as well as the Chaplin Gatherings on Tuesday evenings. I helped to create different services of reflection, one following the presidential election and one for Blue Christmas. I have spent time learning more about our conference, the associations and the overall polity here. I have been working closely with the Association COMs each month, reviewing MID’s, talking about processes and providing support to churches and clergy.

**Welcoming New Pastors**

Rev. Susan Hayes...New Pastor at Church of the Master

Rev. Tony Coleman...New Associate at 1st Congregational in Memphis

Rev. Steve Garcia...Newly Ordained and Associate at 1st Congregational in Memphis

Rev. Ron Timmer...New Pastor serving DOC Church in Lake of the Ozarks

Rev. Mia White...New Pastor at 1st Congregational St. Louis

Tracey Harris...New Designated Associate Minister at St. John, Manchester

Tanya Jeffcoat...New Licensed Pastor at Ebenezer in Augusta

Debra Tracy...New Licensed Pastor at Christ Evangelical, Cape Girardeau

Glen Hollander...New Licensed Pastor at Ebenezer Stone, Gerald

**Saying Goodbye to Pastors**

Rev. Traci Blackmon, left Christ The King

Rev. Karen Eck, retired from Friedens Peace in New Melle

Rev. Vicki Hampton, left St. Luke’s, in Imperial

Rev. Andy Mockeridge, retired from St. Paul/St. Luke in Grand Pass & Blackburn

Rev. Todd Bean, left St. John’s in Weldon Spring

Rev. Susan Hayes, left St. John’s in Chesterfield

**Worshiping with Congregations**

I have worshiped with many of our congregations online this year, either sharing a greeting with them, preaching a sermon or leading the service. I have learned a lot about many of them through conversations and researching them online.

**Ordinations**

Dionne Boyice, Western Association

Steven Garcia, St. Louis Association

**Search & Call**

I have helped many churches in my first six months to find new settled pastors, interim pastors and associate ministers to serve them. I have worked diligently to find new pastors to serve our churches and I have begun to build a network of ministers that may come to call the MMS their home in future years. In addition, I have worked closely with search committees to redo their profiles, suggest ideas for best practices for interviewing candidates and help them to appeal to a larger audience of clergy seeking a new call.

**COM**

I have attended all four Association COM meetings each month. Together we use the Manual On Ministry to ground our work and continue to have productive discussions about the future of ministry in our conference through the associations. We voted to license, ordain and welcome new pastors into our associations. We met with many MID’s to discuss where they are currently on their journey towards ordination and celebrated their calling to this work. We have looked at alternative options for CPE, looked at alternative paths towards ordination and reviewed the licensing process. We have been able to offer our first online BAT this past fall, set up RJE opportunities working with denomination and held two book studies dealing with white supremacy and white privilege led by our Conference Minister. We continue to look for ways to share information between each association COM in order to create synergy.