The Commission on Ministry advocates for the New York Conference Authorized Ministers and Members in Discernment in all settings. The Commission meets four times a year, although we occasionally have extra meetings to discuss specific topics. We have a face-to-face meeting the morning of the Consultation for Committees on Church and Ministry. The other meetings are accomplished via “Zoom,” an Internet conferencing service that allows us to see one another. Here is a summary of our responsibilities, as well as what we have accomplished in the past year.

**New York School of Ministry.** Known as NYSOM, The Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine of the Conference Staff serves as Dean. Currently, there are four people enrolled in the Christian Leadership Program, and six people enrolled in the Ministry of Word and Sacrament Program. To date, six people have graduated from the Word and Sacrament Program, the most recent being Craig Wilson, who was ordained by the Oneida Association on November 16, 2019. In addition, Yvette Wyn graduated in 2019 from the Christian Leadership Program.

Fall courses included *Congregational Life* (Rev. Mark Lawson, instructor), *Introduction to Christian Theology* (Rev. Dr. Steven Johnson instructor), *Liturgy and Worship* (Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine, Instructor), and *Webconferenced Boundary Awareness Training 1/2 Basic Sessions*. Spring courses were *American Church History* (Rev. Dr. Steven Johnson, Instructor), and *UCC (Post 1957) History and Polity* (Rev. Dr. Steven Johnson, Instructor). In addition, two Learning Events took place: a Fall Learning Event, titled *Conversations for the 21st Century Church: The Many Stories That Shape Us*, led by Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine, took place November 8 - 9 at Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua, NY; and a Winter Web-Confereced Learning Event, titled *Leadership as Being and Doing* (Rev. Arlen Vernava, leader). The Learning Events were open to Authorized Ministers, as well as NYSOM students. The Fall Event was worth six hours and the Winter Event was worth five hours toward the Continuing Education requirement for Authorized Ministers.

**Boundary Awareness Training (BAT).** Penny Cannon writes the BAT curriculum and trains the Boundary Awareness Trainers. A *BAT Train the Trainers* class, originally scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, had to be postponed due to concerns about the COVID-19 virus. Committees on Authorized Ministry will be notified how and when this training will be rescheduled. The New York Conference currently has eleven certified Boundary Awareness Trainers.

The initial Boundary Awareness class, for people new to ministry, is offered on line several times a year. Refresher courses are offered by each Association. These courses are announced in *Happenings*, the weekly e-mail blast of the New York Conference.

**Anti Sexual Harassment Training.** New York State Labor Law, section 201-G(1) and (2) requires all people employed in New York State to take an anti sexual harassment training
class each year. This is a fairly new law, and it includes clergy and church employees. Marsha Williams, Penny Cannon, and Charlaine Apsel, of Practical Resources for Churches, have developed a curriculum for this, which is offered as a 90-minute interactive Webinar. (Plans to offer the class in-person prior to the Conference Annual Meeting had to be canceled this year.) Although New York State has a PowerPoint presentation for this, our on-line class offerings, led by Penny Cannon, will make it easier for churches to comply with this law.

Scholarship Program. Rev. John Hottenstein heads this, with David Losito of the Conference Office assisting. In the past, this was a scholarship-loan program, but three years ago, the Commission voted to eliminate the loan repayment component. Scholarship funds are available for Members in Discernment who are enrolled in seminary or in NYSOM. Last year, we awarded two scholarships. Congratulations to recipients Rosann A. Lowder and Tammy Torelli.

Compensation Guidelines. Rev. Dr. Ann Van Cleef works on the guidelines. The Commission updated them in 2014 so that people who pursue further theological education are compensated accordingly. In 2015, we added columns to accommodate people who had taken seminary classes beyond the M.Div level, but are not pursuing a Doctorate. For 2021, the suggested compensation will be raised by 2%. The new guidelines will be published on the Conference Website in August. People who need the guidelines prior to August should just add 2% to last year’s numbers.

Consultation for Committees on Authorized Ministry. This Consultation is held every year, and is a training session for Association Committees on Authorized Ministry. The 2019 Consultation was held at the Ramada Inn in East Syracuse on Tuesday and Wednesday, June 4 and 5. Our outstanding Conference Staff led six of the nine sessions; Rev. Joanne Ferguson, the Committee on Authorized Ministry (COAM) of the Metropolitan Association, and the COAM of the Susquehanna Association each led a single session. Worship was led by the Susquehanna Association. The 2020 Consultation, which was scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, and Wednesday, May 13, with members of the Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization (MESA) Team leading the sessions, had do be canceled due to concerns about COVID-19. There are no plans to reschedule this event. The next Consultation will be held in mid-May, 2021.

Conflict Mediation Team and Training. We have twelve people Conference-wide who have been trained in conflict mediation and restorative circles. This training, Led by Rev Dr. Marsha Williams, was held on October 14, 2019. The following Associations were represented: Black River / St. Lawrence, Hudson-Mohawk, Metropolitan, Oneida, Suffolk, Susquehanna, and Western. These people are ready to be called upon when a congregation is experiencing conflict. The Commission is informed when Conflict Mediators are called to a church, but for reasons of privacy, we are not privy to any of the details.

Last year, ACM Marsha Williams took the training necessary to become a certified Conflict Mediation Trainer, which will save the Conference considerable expense by no longer having to use the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. Our goal is to have at least one Conflict Mediation Trainer on each Association’s Committee on Authorized Ministry.

Response Team and Training. The purpose of the Response Team is to conduct interviews when a Fitness Review takes place. The most recent training session for new
Response Team members took place in November of 2018. At the present time, twenty-two people in the Conference have been trained as members of the Response Team. Associate Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams oversees the Response Team and conducts the training.

**Continuing Education.** Our Associations now require 25 hours of Continuing Education per year. (The Western Association requires 75 hours every three years.) The Commission on Ministry urges the Associations and Conference to distribute CE certificates that state the number of hours earned at the conclusion of workshops and BAT sessions. Continuing Education opportunities are published each week in *Happenings*, as well as on the drop-down menu under *Ministries* on the NY Conference website. In addition, *Practical Resources for Churches* offers many opportunities for CE credit through their webinars.

**Communities of Practice (CoP).** Communities of Practice are peer groups who share a passion for their work, learning how to minister more effectively through regular interaction with one another. Group members support one another, learn together, and share resources. There are several CoPs organized throughout the Conference; some meeting in person, and some meeting via Zoom. ACM Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams organizes the Communities of Practice. Any Authorized Clergyperson who is interested in joining a CoP should contact Dr. Williams.

**Unified Fitness Review Board (UFRB).** As it is very difficult for members of an Association Committee on Authorized Ministry to conduct a Fitness Review for a colleague, the Conference-wide UFRB allows for people from other Associations to be trained to conduct a Fitness Review. Rev. Tim Meyer chairs the UFRB. Various Conference Staff members are assigned to this Board, depending on the situation.

**Cultural Competencies.** We can all become better people when we seek to understand cultures other than our own. There is a task force in place to explore this further. Future plans include a one-day retreat as well as training sessions for Authorized Clergy.

**Continuing Education Institute.** This year’s Continuing Education Institute was to have taken place just prior to the Conference Annual Meeting. Clergypersons who were planning on using this to add to their Continuing Education hours are urged to sign up for webinars and training events offered by *Practical Resources for Churches*. These can be found in the Conference’s weekly e-mail blast, *Happenings*.

**Guidelines for Pastors Leaving a Call.** These written guidelines clarify boundaries for clergy as well as congregations when a Pastor leaves a call. Rev. John Werley worked on this project for two years. They are available as a resource on the Conference website.

The Commission continues to update and refine this important document; a formal Conference policy is being worked upon. This policy will differentiate the special circumstances of people leaving to accept another Call, people who have been asked to leave, people who retire and move away, and people who retire and remain in the community that they had previously served.

This year, the Commission put special emphasis on retiree issues; we have learned that retirees face their own special set of boundary issues. A separate BAT curriculum is being written for retirees, and we hope to institute this in 2021.
Commission on Ministry Personnel. New members: Rev. Marna Pritchard is our new Western Association Liaison. (Rev. Robert (Bob) Dievendorf relocated to the Hudson-Mohawk Association, but continues to serve in the area of Retiree Issues.) Rev. Julia Turner is our new Reformed Association Liaison. (Up until now, the Reformed Association has been sending representatives to our meetings, now we have an official Liaison.)

Joanne Nugent-Ward returns to us as our Commission Secretary, after having been on a temporary leave of absence due to medical issues. Joanne, we are thrilled to have you back!

They say that God sends the right people, both clergy and lay, to churches at the right time. I believe this goes for Conferences as well. Again, I would like to thank Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams, of the Conference Staff, for her untiring work for the Conference and for the Commission. She brings leadership, encouragement, fresh ideas, and a lot of energy to the table. It is a real pleasure to work with her.

I would also like to thank each and every member of the Commission. It is a joy to work with this outstanding group of people.

The members of the Commission on Ministry include:

+ John Werley  Black River / St. Lawrence Association
+ Tim Meyer  Genesee Valley Association
+ Kate Forer  Hudson-Mohawk Association
+ Kris Watson  Metropolitan Association
+ Lynn Sullivan  Metropolitan Association – BAT
+ Mike Grinnals  Oneida Association
+ Julia Turner  Reformed Association
+ Ann Van Cleef  Suffolk Association; COM Chair
+ Susan (Sue) Frost  Susquehanna Association
+ Marna Pritchard  Western Association
+ Marjorie Purnine  NYSOM Dean
+ Susan (Sue) Fast  NYSOM Student
+ Joanne Nugent-Ward  COM Secretary
+ John Hottenstein  Scholarship Chair
+ Bob Dievendorf  Retiree Issues
+ Marsha Williams  Conference Staff

(+ Denotes Authorized Clergy)

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Dr. Ann M. Van Cleef,
Chair, Commission on Ministry