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2024 REPORT FROM THE ASSOCIATION MINISTER
REV. DANIEL BUSCH

“Power of Love.”

*(A scribe asked Jesus, “Which commandment is the first of all?”)
“Jesus answered, ‘The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;
you shall LOVE the Lord your God with all your soul,
and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’
The second is this, ‘You shall LOVE your neighbor as yourself.’
There is no other commandment than these.” Mark 12:23b-31)*

“As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forevermore.” Past. Present. Future. As Christians, time is a gift from God in which we encounter joys and sorrows, sickness and health, plenty and want. It is God’s gift of LOVE that enables us to have meaning to life. No matter what happens to us, God’s LOVE gives us the strength to have a blessed life in all conditions of life. LOVE is the basis for relationship building with God, neighbors, and within us. Even in times of loss, abandonment, or despair, LOVE has the transformational power to turn things around. LOVE is that force that affirms life as God would intend it to be.

That Spirit of God’s LOVE permeates the work of NWOA Churches and lives are changed. We covenant with one another to care for one another, share our gifts and graces, and dare to challenge the unjust systems of the world. Through our words and deeds of LOVE to, for, and with one another, we are God’s community of faith that does mission and ministries to bring about justice and peace to a world that is engaged in destructive activities. The power of God’s LOVE transforms, forgives, and affirms that all people and the creation are God’s beloved. God calls us to turn the world upside down for Jesus’ sake and the healing of the world family.

Thank you for your sacrificial giving of time, talents, and treasures to your local church, OCWM (*Our Churches Wider Missions*), and special appeals that provide the means to be the caring church. NWOA is blessed by those who accept leadership positions as part of the various responsibilities of local churches, the association, conference, and wider church. Our ministries serve not only the local communities but touch the lives of God’s people throughout the world. In the Heartland Conference and the three other associations, we share resources, learn from each other, and affirm in each other the various gifts and graces that unite us as the Body of Christ with all its diversity. Due to financial considerations, the Conference Camp Tempel Hills is in the process of being sold, and after this year the camping program WILL CONTINUE in a new format at different locations.

It has been difficult to find settled pastors and interims for our churches due to the shortage of candidates. We are not alone, for all religious organizations are experiencing the same thing. Please pray for pastoral leadership in our churches.

Our NWOA staff is very efficient and dedicated. Joan Davidson (office administrator) and Deb Long (bookkeeper) provide excellent *“LOVE ministries”* through their service, knowledge, and assistance. Due to health reasons, our custodian, Gib Adams, resigned and we thank him for his time with us. I thank you for this opportunity and the joy of being with you for almost 19 years since I began serving you as NWOA Association Minister. I appreciate invitations to be part of worship services of our NWOA churches.

Power of LOVE: The Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann wrote, *“Covenant insists we are members one of another, prepared to live in sustained engagement with each other in ways that impinge on and eventually transform all parties.”* We live that LOVE together to the honor and glory of God. Thanks be to God! **BLESSINGS ALWAYS.**

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE ASSOCIATION MODERATOR REV. JAMES BREHLER

NWOA Moderator's Report 2024

By the time of the Annual Meeting, I will be retired as a minister for a couple weeks and back in my homeland in Michigan. For seven of my nine years in the Northwest Ohio Association, I have served the Association not only as a pastor, but also as an active member of the Church and Ministry Committee and its Discernment Working Group, but also as Moderator of the Association. I have witnessed that the success of the Association depends on the commitment of its pastors, churches, and lay leaders to live into a relationship of covenant and autonomy. I know that the greater church will continue to see significant challenges to maintaining its relevancy in the world, but I believe with all my heart that the United Church of Christ is up to the challenge. It will be difficult, requiring us to keep our hearts and minds open to the movement of the Spirit encouraging us to navigate through new ways of Being the Church while maintaining our connections to one another. It is the work of the Association, the Association Minister, the Staff of the Association, and all the authorized ministers and lay persons who sit on the Association Committees and Cabinet to nurture those connections. I have been honored to work with so many incredibly dedicated and Spirit-led people in my work in the Association. In the words of one of my favorite hymns that is often used as a Benediction Response: "God be with you till we meet again; By good counsel guide, uphold you, With a shepherd's care enfold you; God be with you till we meet again." Rev. Jim Brehler

Ms. PEGGY GEORGE

NWOA Moderator's Report 2024

Due to the retirement of Rev. Jim Brehler, I have assumed the role of Moderator for the remainder of Jim's term in 2024. My church membership is with Bloomville UCC, where I served many years as Consistory President. However, I now live in a beautiful senior living facility in St. Mary's and made this move to be closer to my son after my husband's death. I served on the Association Cabinet several years ago as vice-moderator. More recently I have served on the Human Resources Committee, and as Sandusky Valley regional representative. Please be patient with me as I navigate these new waters as Moderator with you.

**SUMMARY OF NWOA CABINET ACTIVITY
2023-2024
PASTOR JAY SCOTT**

May 2023

- The Cabinet received the annual outside audit report from its hired auditor, Mr. Ron Coon, who said the Association's financial foot is "solid and fiscally sound."
- A bid was accepted from a vendor for the re-sealing of the parking lot at the Association headquarters.
- Discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of in-person vs. online meetings. The Cabinet decided to meet in person in May, and online for the rest of the year.

September 2023

- The Cabinet adopted a formal policy for the receipt of cash and in-kind donations. The policy outlines what donations are routine and can be accepted by the Association Minister or the office staff, and what donations require formal acceptance by the Cabinet. This policy was recommended by the outside auditor.
- Rev. Busch, Association Minister, announced the closing of Faith Community UCC in Maumee.

November 2023

- The Cabinet approved a 4% salary increase for all Association staff beginning in 2025, and added this to the proposed budget.
- The Human Resources Committee reviewed the recent formal evaluation of Rev. Busch. Committee Chairman David Orr stated there was general agreement that Rev. Busch's gifts of ministry and care to churches and pastors is greatly appreciated. He said the evaluations submitted by participants indicated a need for leadership regarding the vision and future of the Association, and he added this is a shared responsibility with the Cabinet.
- A brief discussion of possible proposed changes to the NWOA constitution were discussed. More formal discussions were planned for future meetings.

January 2024

- The Finance Committee reported income and expenses would end the year balanced for the first time in several years.
- The Cabinet approved the Association Minister's housing allowance at \$12,000.
- A committee of Jay Scott, Ed Heilman, Betty Rettig, Garland Gates and Dan Busch worked on a series of revisions to the Association's constitution, including the elimination of "regions" and the establishment of at-large members of the Cabinet. Busch reviewed the proposed changes. Discussion about the use of at-large members led to a consensus that the Nominating Committee should be advised by the Cabinet to recruit these members from a variety of locations within the Association boundary. The Cabinet voted to recommend these changes to the Annual Meeting.

- Moderator Jim Brehler announced his retirement from pastoral ministry, and that he is moving to Michigan, thus creating a vacancy for the position of Moderator. The Cabinet appointed Vice-moderator Peggy George to finish Brehler's term as Moderator, and appointed Jay Scott to finish George's term as Vice-moderator. These appointments created a vacancy for Cabinet Secretary. A search for a new secretary will begin.

February 2024

- Voting via e-mail by the Cabinet resulted in the following decisions: A technical change to the proposed constitution changes was approved, and Rev. Darla Metz was appointed to finish Jay Scott's term as Cabinet Secretary.

March 2024

- Finance Committee reported income and expenses have balanced. After a review of our taxes by the Seneca County Auditor, the property taxes for the Association have been reduced by 2/3. Office staff will receive a 4% increase.
- Lay School has 12 students enrolled for the Fall semester.

The Minutes of the 60th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ April 29, 2023

After several years of this meeting being conducted online due to a worldwide pandemic, the people of the Northwest Ohio Association were invited to meet in person. Although some chose to join the meeting via the internet, we praise God that in-person meeting was finally possible.

Call to Order

Moderator Doug Ricci called the Annual Meeting to order, and welcomed those in attendance. Ricci also thanked everyone who helped plan and organize the meeting, and thanked the members of St. Paul UCC in Wapakoneta for hosting the meeting. Ricci declared a quorum to be present, allowing business to be conducted.

Opening Worship

The opening worship service was led by Rev. Dan Busch, Rev. Jim Brehler, and Rev. Mark Bishop. The offering for the day is designated for Grace Community Center in Toledo, per the NWOA Cabinet.

Adoption of the Agenda

Moderator Ricci reviewed who was eligible to vote, described the process for participation, and asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was offered by Dave Voll, St John's Holgate, seconded by Garland Gates, Steuben, and carried.

Appointments

Ricci announced the appointment of Garland Gates as the parliamentarian, and announced Cabinet Secretary Jay Scott would be taking the minutes of the Annual Meeting.

Adoption of Standing Rules

The Standing Rules of the Annual Meeting were presented in the meeting book. Brad McKibben, Trinity Upper Sandusky, moved to adopt the Standing Rules, seconded by Dave Plant, Defiance. The motion carried.

Adoption of the Minutes from the 2022 Annual Meeting

The minutes of the 2022 NWOA Annual Meeting were accepted on a motion by Jay Scott, Emanuel Upper Sandusky, seconded by Amy Kinney, St. John's Fostoria. The motion carried.

Introduction of Guests, and the Granting of Voice to Guests

Rev. Dan Busch introduced the following guests: Rev. George Graham, Rev. David Long-Higgins, Ms. Elaine Page, and Mr. Kevin Gehres.

Ken Daniels, 1st Marion, moved to grant voice to the guests listed, seconded by Ron Wilch, Emanuel Upper Sandusky. The motion carried.

Recognition of Persons New to the Association, and Members in Discernment

Rev. Ronda Hainer of the Church and Ministry Team, introduced those new to the Association, and those who are now Members in Discernment. Rev. Busch introduced newly ordained minister Rev. Mike Ebersole, who addressed the Annual Meeting.

Greetings and Comments

Remarks were heard from the following: Heartland Conference Minister Rev. David Long-Higgins, and Executive Director of Outdoor Ministry Ms. Jill Frye.

Nominations and Elections

Mary Ann Ewing, representing the Nominating Committee, presented the nominations as outlined in the Annual Meeting book. There were no additional nominations offered from the floor.

The Nominating Committee moved to close nominations and cast a unanimous vote for the nominees, all of whom were unopposed. No second was required. The motion carried.

Financial Report for 2022, 2023, and 2024

Treasurer Dian Ewald presented the financial reports, which were also published in the Annual Meeting book. She noted that the audit of 2022 records is not yet completed.

Ewald moved on behalf of the Cabinet to accept the 2022 unaudited report. No second was required. The motion carried.

Ewald moved on behalf of the Cabinet to adopt the revised 2023 budget. No second was required. The motion carried.

Ewald moved on behalf of the Cabinet to adopt the 2024 budget. No second was required. The motion carried.

Recognitions of Anniversaries of Churches and Ministries

Attention was drawn to the Annual Meeting book and the list of churches and ministries listed for special recognition.

Special recognition was also given to churches who achieved "5 for 5" status by contributing to all five of the UCC special offerings during the past year, as well as those churches that maintained or increased their giving to the "Our Churches Wider Mission" offering.

Ministry Team Annual Reports

Ricci directed the meeting's attention to the annual reports of the eight ministry teams of the Association. Barbara Osborn, Bascom moved to approve the receiving of all of the reports, seconded by Ivory Stahl, Bascom. The motion carried.

Video

The Annual Meeting viewed a video about solar lamps being distributed in Ukraine.

Special Recognition

Rev. Busch called Association Office Administrator Joan Davidson to the stage to give her recognition for 25 years of service to the NWOA. He presented her with a gift.

Video

The Annual Meeting viewed a video from Uplands Village.

Keynote Speaker

The keynote address was delivered by Rev. George Graham of the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries.

Mission Happenings

Presentations from the following missions/ministries were offered: Grace Community Center – Ms. Elaine Tate-Page, El Salvador Partnership – John Gilberg, Emanuel UCC (Upper Sandusky) – Pastor Jay Scott, Back Bay Mission – Rev. Jeanette Tangeman; Lynn and Mary Ann Ewing, Heartland Conference Disaster Ministry – Mr. Kevin Gehres.

Closing Celebration, Announcements, Amenities, Leadership Installation

Rev. Busch gave recognition to the newly elected officers and ministry team members, then led the Annual Meeting in a closing worship. Busch led the Annual Meeting in a rite of installation to their respective positions. Moderator Ricci entertained a motion by Garland Gates, Steuben, to adopt the following resolution:

“Be it resolved that the Northwest Ohio Association gathered in person at St. Paul United Church of Christ, Wapakoneta, Ohio, and through Zoom on April 29, 2023, gives thanks to God for this day celebrating **‘Missions: Making All Things.’** Be it further resolved that we are witnesses to a resurrection faith that affirms and proclaims that we remember that we are a community of faith that is challenged by our theme to be people of **‘MISSIONS,’** believing that through us God is **‘MAKING ALL THINGS NEW.’** *‘Empowered by the Holy Spirit we are called to connect, equip, and support our faith communities to grow as faithful disciples and responsible stewards, following Jesus’ call to extravagantly love all God’s children and creation.’* Be it further resolved, *‘Answering God’s call to build a just world for all, we commit in our shared life to: Live the love, unity, and compassion of Jesus; Collaborate to mutually share resources; Communicate with openness and transparency; Empower generous and responsible stewardship; and Honor God’s diverse gifts among us in all settings.’* Be it further resolved that Northwest Ohio Association expresses gratitude and appreciation to all who have organized, guided, inspired, encouraged, and resourced our 60th Annual Meeting as we gathered together to remember that we acknowledge God is calling us **‘MISSIONS: MAKING ALL THINGS NEW’** to the honor and glory of God.”

The motion was seconded by Dave Voll, St John’s Holgate, and carried.

Ricci then extended another round of thanks to those who planned and hosted the Annual Meeting, and announced that the 61st Annual Meeting would be held on April 27, 2024 at St. Stephen’s UCC in Sandusky.

Following an “exchange of the gavel” passing the office of moderator to newly elected Rev. Jim Brehler, a motion to adjourn was offered by Darla Metz, Republic, and seconded by Terra Connors, Sycamore. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Jay Scott
Cabinet Secretary
Northwest Ohio Association

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

4.03.24

TRANSFERRED INTO THE NORTHWEST OHIO ASSOCIATION

Rev. Hafidha Saadiqah from New York Conference/ Hudson Mohawk Association	May 3, 2023
Rev. Darryl Hamm from Penn Southeast Conference/Covenant Association	May 4, 2023
Rev. Jeffrey McCarn from IL South Conference/South IL Association	Dec 5, 2023
Rev. Chris Buckingham-Taylor from Heartland Conference/Living Water Association	Mar 5, 2024

TRANSFERRED OUT OF THE NORTHWEST OHIO ASSOCIATION

Rev. Carol Clements to Heartland Conference/Living Water Association	Mar 5, 2024
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DEATHS

Rev. Larry Blunden	August 27, 2023
Pastor William (Bill) Kerr	October 23, 2023
Rev. Terry Kohanski	February 23, 2024

GRANTED UCC MINISTERIAL STANDING THROUGH PRIVILEGE OF CALL

Rev. Mary Meadows	July 11, 2023 – Sylvania UCC, Sylvania
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INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Darryl Hamm	May 7, 2023 – St. Paul UCC, Oak Harbor
Rev. Darla Metz	February 4, 2024 – United Church Homes
Rev. Jeffrey McCarn	February 11, 2024 – St. John's UCC, Holgate
Rev. Chris Buckingham-Taylor	April 21, 2024 – First UCC, Galion

RETIRED

Rev. Rebecca Erb Strang	May 31, 2023
Rev. Bradley Smith	June 30, 2023
Pastor John Paputza	December 31, 2023

CHURCH CLOSING

Faith Community UCC, Maumee	August 6, 2023
Second UCC, Tiffin	March 1, 2023

SUMMARY STATEMENT

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| 87 | Total ordained ministers with full standing in the Northwest Ohio Association
(this includes 47 retired ministers) | |
| 70 | Local Churches in the Northwest Ohio Association
(this number included two Schedule I and one Schedule II churches) | 16,105 Total Church Membership |
| 33 | local churches served by UCC ordained ministers | |
| 9 | local churches served by ordained ministers of another denomination | |
| 6 | local churches served by Licensed Lay Ministers | |
| 4 | local churches served by Licensed/Students in Discernment (In-care) | |
| 1 | local church served by Licensed/Commissioned Minister | |
| 3 | local churches served by UCC Lay Ministers | |
| 3 | local churches served by Lay Minister of another denomination | |
| 7 | local churches served by Supply Pastors | |
| 1 | local churches served by a UCC Pastor holding standing in another Conference/Association | |
| 3 | local schedule I or schedule II churches | |

**ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS –Total years of Ordination - 510
 LICENSED ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS –Total years Licensed - 10
 CHURCH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS–Total years in Existence - 2410**

ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES IN 2024

70 th Anniversary	George S. Spink	June 10, 1954
65 th Anniversary	Frank Isaacs	June 21, 1959
60 th Anniversary	Alfred W. Schroeder	September 13, 1964
55 th Anniversary	Marvin W. Rettig	June 22, 1969
50 th Anniversary	Gary L. Wilson	June 21, 1974
45 th Anniversary	Mark L. Bishop	June 10, 1979
	Patricia E. Welch	June 17, 1979
40 th Anniversary	David C. Aune	March 11, 1984
	R. Scott Johnson	June 17, 1984
30 th Anniversary	Rebecca Erb Strang	March 13, 1994
10 th Anniversary	Jeremy K. Mann	October 12, 2014

LICENSED MINISTER ANNIVERSARIES IN 2024

10 th Anniversary	Margaret Mills	March 1, 2014
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CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES IN 2024

205 years	First Congregational UCC, Sandusky	1819
195 years	St. John's UCC, Bucyrus	1829
190 years	St. Jacob's UCC, Republic	1834
	Sylvania UCC, Sylvania	1834
185 years	St. John's UCC, Kenton	1839
180 years	Emmanuel UCC, Sandusky	1844
	First Congregational UCC, Toledo (Schedule I)	1844
175 years	St. Paul's UCC, St. Marys	1849
165 years	Calvary UCC, Crestline	1859
	First Reformed UCC, Kenton	1859
155 years	Buckland UCC, Buckland	1869
	Little Washington, Mansfield (Schedule I)	1869
145 years	St. Paul UCC, Oak Harbor	1879
125 years	Memorial UCC, Toledo	1899