

WHAT IS OCWM AND WHY DOES IT MATTER

“What is OCWM?” “What do those letters mean?” That’s a question I get asked often. We would not expect a visitor or newcomer to know what OCWM means. What surprises me, however, is that active church members sometimes don’t know what OCWM means. For pastors and lay leaders, I see two challenges:

- Explaining OCWM
and
- Sharing Stories About Why It Matters

For those of us familiar with it, what OCWM is about is clear: OCWM funds the broader mission of the wider church. As denomination literature states, “OCWM funds the work we do in conferences as well as in the national and global church.” But many people don’t realize that there are five components to OCWM. One of our UCC resources uses the analogy of a hand with five fingers. I find this analogy to be helpful in explaining the different components. “Basic Support is like our thumb, crucial to the flexibility and dexterity of our hand. The four special offerings are like our fingers, helping us reach out. Together, OCWM Basic Support and the Four Mission Offerings allow us to reach out and impact the lives of our neighbors near and far.” The hand analogy, along with other available resources, helps explain OCWM and its five components. That’s one step. Another step is to help people understand **WHY** it’s important; why OCWM matters.

Sharing stories, in my opinion, is one of the best ways to help people understand why OCWM matters. By “sharing stories” I mean sharing examples of what OCWM does and how it makes a difference. For example, in my congregation, Sylvania United Church of Christ, we lift up OCWM in mission moments, newsletter articles and with printed materials. Each of the five special offerings is an opportunity to be specific, to share stories about the specific impact of that offering.

Maybe most important is helping people make a theological, spiritual and justice connection. The connection that through OCWM we’re a part of SOMETHING BIGGER. That through OCWM the UCC makes a difference not just locally but also nationally and globally. At Sylvania UCC, we talk about that in our membership exploration gatherings and people appreciate learning about the broader mission of the wider church. In our world where the news tells of so much hate, division, and violence, to hear that the UCC is working to share God’s radically inclusive, justice-focused love is a source of encouragement and hope. When people hear and see how OCWM helps to share God’s love and do God’s work they support it generously and joyfully.

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