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2025 REPORT FROM THE ASSOCIATION MINISTER REV. DANIEL L. BUSCH

“Into The Deep.”

Jesus said to Simon, “Put out INTO THE DEEP water and let down your nets for a catch.”

Simon replied, “Maser, we have worked all night but have caught nothing.

Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

*When they had done this, they caught so many fish
that their nets were beginning to break. (Luke 5:4-6)*

The ministries and missions of Northwest Ohio Association are varied, diverse, and amazing in our call to follow Jesus. The story from Luke reminds us that sometimes following Jesus seems as if nothing is happening, and then to our astonishment we find out how we have touched lives and made a difference in their lives. In the “*fishing story*” from Luke 5, it was not until Peter, James, and John cast their nets *INTO THE DEEP*, a surprise place—a different place—that they had success. When the disciples opened their lives to the leading of the Spirit into the unknown, they were blessed.

Our faith is founded on resurrection that calls us *INTO THE DEEP* of darkness, unknown, and surprise. *OUT OF THE DEEP* comes blessings, love, peace and amazing grace. Resurrection reminds us that nothing and no-thing, no power, no possession and no prestige, can separate us from the love of God through Jesus Christ our Savior and the power of the Holy Spirit. We share this with all God’s people as stewards of *God’s creation*. *We are blessed by God to be healers, lovers, and witnesses to a faith that promises forgiveness, reconciliation, hope, and justice in spite of doom and gloom, the narcissistic and selfish.*

NWOA churches and members are to be thanked for supporting OCWM (*Our Churches Wider Missions*) and special appeals with time, talents, and treasures that change lives locally and throughout the world. It takes all of us to reach *INTO THE DEEP* and share gifts and graces in abundance and with gratitude. Thank you for your continued support of the “*disaster bucket ministry*” and “*personal care kits.*” These items reach people near us and throughout the United States. Again, *OUT OF THE DEEP* of your compassion and generosity through these gifts, people in need find rebirth and renewal in their lives.

I repeat what I wrote last year: “*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.*” Please be patient and understanding.

We welcome a new staff person to our NWOA Office: Kimberly (Kim) Nye who began her duties as Office Administrator in November 2024. She brings unique technical skills and familiarity to church life. Please introduce yourself to her and welcome her to NWOA. Deb Long continues as our bookkeeper, keeping an accurate record of our finances and other duties in the office. Rick Sholl is our new custodian, and we thank him for keeping the office orderly. Thanks to our staff!!! We thank Joan Davidson for her 27 years as our Office Administrator; her retirement allows her to have time to be with family, especially her grandchildren, friends, and travels; thank you, Joan!!! I have begun my 20th year as NWOA Association Minister, and I appreciate the confidence you have accepted from my leadership. I always look forward being invited to share worship, celebrations, and other church special occasions at our NWOA churches and sites. You are blessings to me, and I thank God for you being part of my life and NWOA.

The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ wrote, “*While heeding the call to deeper love, deeper commitments to justice, and deeper spiritual living, we cannot do this alone. Church, it is time for us to trust God and put out ‘into the deep’ (Luke 5:4.) May deeper living be ours in the days and months ahead.*” To God be glory. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS.*

Ms. PEGGY GEORGE

I have been a member of Bloomville UCC since 1976, serving several years as President of the Consistory. I remain a member even though Bloomville is not my current home. I currently reside in St. Marys, Ohio. I'm not new to the NWOA, having served as Sandusky Valley representative, past Vice-Moderator, and member of the HR Committee. I have taken Old Testament and New Testament classes in the Lay School.

Due to the retirement of Rev. Jim Brehler in April 2024, I assumed the role of Moderator for the remainder of Jim's term for 2024. I conducted my first annual meeting on April 27, 2024, at St. Stephen United Church of Christ in Sandusky, Ohio. I led in-person meetings at the NWOA office in Tiffin on May 18 and September 21. The rest of the year Zoom meetings were held on November 9, January 25 and March 15. We are preparing for the 62nd Annual Meeting to be held at Peace Community UCC in Waldo.

It has been a pleasure to serve as Moderator, and I look forward to continuing my service on the Association Cabinet.

SUMMARY OF NWOA CABINET ACTIVITY 2024-2025

May 2024

- The Cabinet received the annual outside audit report from its hired auditor, Mr. Ron Coon, who said the Association's financial foot is on "solid financial footing."
- "Why Calling/Covenant Statement" was reviewed and is current.

August 2024

The Executive Commit and Human Resources of NWOA held a special meeting regarding the advertising and interview process for the Office Manager position. Advertising will be done through The Vine as well as reaching out to local churches and colleges. Interviews will be held initially by Rev. Busch and Deb Long with final interviews held by members of the Executive Committee prior to final decision.

September 2024

- The Cabinet was introduced to the new NWOA Office Manager, Kimberly Nye with unanimous consent for the hiring of Kim.
- Rev. Busch, Association Minister, announced the exemption for property tax that was submitted was denied because we did not fit the categories exactly.
- It was announced there will be a reception for Joan Davidson in December for her retirement.

November 2024

- The Housing Declaration for the Association Minister was reviewed and approved.
- Updates to the Insurance Board Policy was reviewed by Rev. Busch regarding the umbrella policy of \$30 million and the board would like us to take it down to \$10 million. Rev. Busch will speak with other associations to see where their policy umbrellas are.
- Medical Reimbursement Plan for Kimberly Nye was discussed and approved.
- Rev. Busch proposed taking to the annual meeting the proposal of the association becoming a WISE association. Discussion was held and approved.

January 2025

- The Finance Committee reported that a preliminary report was sent out with final report to follow when all information has been received. Balance sheet is in balance and the funds report has good healthy activity.
- The cabinet approved the motion to accept Mr. Coon as the auditor.
- The cabinet approved the motion to move forward with lowering the association's umbrella coverage to \$10M.
- Rev. Busch reported we will be sponsoring a new congregation in Celina started by a group of Marshallese from the Marshall Islands.

March 2025

- Finance Committee reported income and expenses have balanced and will be presenting proposed budgets for 2025 and 2026 at the annual meeting. Rev. Busch brought to the Cabinet a proposal to lower his salary by \$14,896 over the next two years. After extensive discussion a motion was made and carried. The auditor hope to have the books audited by May.

- The Association will be bringing a proposal to the annual meeting to become a W.I.S.E. association (Welcoming, inclusive, safe, engaged) for mental health.
- Lay School Board has finished the new student performance objectives with exception of Theology which will be presented at the next meeting. The Board will also be looking at the purpose and goal of the Lay School and what and who it was designed for.

**The Minutes of the 61st Annual Meeting of the
Northwest Ohio Association of the
United Church of Christ
April 27, 2024**

Call to Order

Moderator Peggy George called the 61st Northwest Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ Annual Meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. George also thanked everyone who helped plan and organize the meeting and thanked the members of St. Stephen's UCC in Sandusky for hosting the meeting. George declared a quorum to be present, allowing business to be conducted.

Opening Worship

The opening worship with renewal of Baptism service was led by Rev. Dan Busch and Rev. Jerald Fenske. The offering for the day is designated for Back Bay Mission Emergency Shelter Project.

Adoption of the Agenda

Moderator George 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 Joel Fetter of Peace Community UCC, Waldo seconded by Jim Strang of Wapakoneta UCC, Wapakoneta, and motion carried.

Appointments

George announced the appointment of Jay Scott as the parliamentarian, and announced Cabinet Secretary Darla Metz 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 of Trinity UCC, Upper Sandusky moved to adopt the Standing Rules, seconded by Tom Kagy of Bloomville UCC, Bloomville. Motion carried.

Adoption of the Minutes from the 2023 Annual Meeting

The minutes of the 2023 NWOA Annual Meeting were accepted on a motion by Peggy Rettig of St. John's UCC, Holgate, seconded by Adam Shanaman of Buckland UCC, Buckland. The motion carried.

Introduction of Guests, and the Granting of Voice to Guests

Rev. Dan Busch introduced the following guests: Rev. James Pennington, keynote speaker, Rev. Char Burch, Heartland Conference and Supply Sabbatical Conference Minister, Jill Frey, Heartland Conference Camp Director, and Ms. Nicki Lawrence, LGBTQ+ Ministries, presenters, Joe Kirk, Vice Moderator of Heartland Conference, and Amaria Macintosh, Associate Director of Ohio Council of

Churches. David Weinger of Trinity UCC, McCutchenville, moved to grant voice to the guests listed, seconded by Bob Rettig of St. John's UCC, Holgate. The motion carried.

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

Rev. Joel Fetter, Chair of the Church and Ministry Team, introduced those new to the Association. David Weinger, Chair of the Discernment Working Group, introduced those who are now Members in Discernment.

Greetings and Comments

Remarks were heard from the following: Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ shared video greetings. Heartland Conference Rev. Char Burch, Sabbatical Supply Conference Minister, Ms. Jill Frey, Executive Director of Outdoor Ministries, Rev. Jon Komperda, Point Place Disaster Recovery, Joe Kirk, Vice Moderator of Heartland Conference and Amaria Macintosh, Associate Director of Ohio Council of Churches shared greetings and comments.

Constitution and By-law Update/Revisions Vote

Moderator Peggy George reported the Cabinet appointed a Constitutional Revision Committee this year to review NWOA's constitution. Revisions and updates for adoption at the 2024 Annual Meeting were reported back to the Cabinet. The Cabinet made a motion to adopt the revisions to the Constitution. Since the motion comes from the Cabinet, there was no need for a second. Members of the Revision Committee presented the changes. (See attached.) Discussion was held. A motion was made to adopt the constitutional changes and a vote was held. Motion carried.

Nominations and Elections

Rev. Kathryn Helleman, 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 2024, and 2025

Treasurer Dian Ewald presented the financial reports, which were also published in the Annual Meeting book. She noted that the audit of 2023 records has been completed since the printing of the Annual Meeting booklet.

Ewald moved on behalf of the Cabinet to accept the 2023 financial report and audit reports. No second was required. The motion carried.

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

Ewald moved on behalf of the Cabinet to adopt the 2025 Mission Spending Plan. No second was required. 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

George directed the meeting's attention to the annual reports of the eight ministry teams of the Association. Mark Bishop of St. Paul UCC, Wapakoneta moved to approve the receiving of all of the reports, seconded by Bob Rettig of St. John's UCC, Holgate. The motion carried.

Other Business

None Presented

Keynote Address

Rev. James Pennington, Back Bay Mission delivered the keynote address.

Revision to Previous Constitution Change

Jay Scott made the motion that we add the words 'and savior' to the constitution changes where it reads 'made known to us in Jesus our brother and savior.' Motion came from the committee and does not need a second. Discussion was held. It was found that any changes to the constitution must be brought to the entire body for review prior to the meeting. The constitution will stand as approved this morning. Motion withdrawn.

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. Rev. Busch led the Annual Meeting in a rite of installation to their respective positions.

Moderator George entertained a motion by Joel Fetter of Peace Community UCC, Waldo, to adopt the following resolution:

"Be it resolved that the Northwest Ohio Association gathered in person at St. Stephen's United Church of Christ, Sandusky, Ohio, and through Zoom on April 27, 2024, gives thanks to God for this day celebrating '**Power of Love.**' 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 as resurrection people. Together in Christ's love, we collaborate to reconcile and restore all God's creation. 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. 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 61st Annual Meeting, remembering that we acknowledge God's **Power of Love**, through Jesus Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, call us to be people of faith, hope, and love.

The motion was seconded by Brandon Stewart of Monroeville UCC, Monroeville and carried.

George then extended another round of thanks to those who planned and hosted the Annual Meeting and announced that the 62nd Annual Meeting would be held on April 26, 2025 at Peace Community UCC, Waldo, Ohio.

A motion to adjourn was offered by Jay Scott of Emmanuel UCC, Upper Sandusky, and seconded by Daryl Hamm of St. Paul UCC, Oak Harbor. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Darla Metz

Cabinet Secretary

Northwest Ohio Association

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

TRANSFERRED INTO THE NORTHWEST OHIO ASSOCIATION

Rev. Peg Faulmann-Illinois Conference/NWOA
Rev. Barry Bordenkircher-SONKA/NWOA
Rev. Randon Jello-Marshall Islands/NWOA

Nov 12, 2024
Dec 3, 2024
Mar. 4, 2024

TRANSFERRED OUT OF THE NORTHWEST OHIO ASSOCIATION

Rev. James Brehler-Michigan Conference/Detroit Metropolitan Association

May 7, 2024

DEATHS

Rev. Pat Danner June 30, 2024
Rev. Jeff King January 21, 2025

INSTALLATIONS

RETIRED

Rhonda Hainer December 22, 2025
Ann Wasson December 31, 2024
Lenore Kure January 31, 2025
Mary Wood March 16, 2025

CHURCH CLOSING

Union UCC, Bascom January 27, 2025

SUMMARY STATEMENT

- 87 Total ordained ministers with full standing in the Northwest Ohio Association
(this includes 50 retired ministers)
- 68 Local Churches in the Northwest Ohio Association 16,071 Total Church Membership
(this number included two Schedule I and one Schedule II churches)
- 34 local churches served by UCC ordained ministers
- 6 local churches served by ordained ministers of another denomination
- 9 local churches served by Licensed Lay Ministers
- 2 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
- 5 local churches served by Lay Minister of another denomination
- 1 local churches served by a UCC Pastor holding standing in another Conference/Association
- 2 local schedule I or schedule II churches

**ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS –Total years of Ordination - 650
 LICENSED ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS –Total years Licensed - 3
 CHURCH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS–Total years in Existence - 2990**

ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES IN 2025

70 th Anniversary	Edgar Shelley	May 29, 1955
60 th Anniversary	Kay Mooney Cox	June 6, 1965
	John Bock	June 7, 1965
55 th Anniversary	Donald Corbin	February 15, 1970
50 th Anniversary	Donald Giesmann	January 19, 1975
	Steve Trimble	June 8, 1975
45 th Anniversary	Martin Stiffler	February 24, 1980
	Fred Coulter	June 29, 1980
40 th Anniversary	Janice Bechtel	August 25, 1985
30 th Anniversary	Randall Forester	June 18, 1995
	David Borden	July 16, 1995
20 th Anniversary	Joel Fetter	July 17, 2005
15 th Anniversary	Eric Rummel	May 23, 2010
	Darrin Harvey	May 23, 2010
	Jonathan Komperda	September 26, 2010
	Audra Ferguson	November 18, 2010
10 th Anniversary	Darla Metz	June 7, 2015
	Adam Bohland	June 14, 2015
	Jeffrey McCarn	December 5, 2015
5 th Anniversary	Karsten Snitker	October 25, 2020

LICENSED MINISTER ANNIVERSARIES IN 2025

45 th Anniversary	John Paputza	August 8, 1980
10 th Anniversary	James Robinson	April 7, 2015
5 th Anniversary	Elyse Cramer	January 7, 2020

CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES IN 2025

195 years	Zion Fireside UCC, Bellevue	1830
190 years	Congregational UCC, Castalia	1835
	St. John's UCC, Tiffin	1835
185 years	Peace UCC, Galion	1840
	Windfall Emanuel UCC, Galion	1840
180 years	St. John's UCC, Fostoria	1845
	St. John's UCC, Mansfield	1845
175 years	Bloomville UCC, Bloomville	1850
	St. John's Baseline, Bloomville	1850
	St. Paul UCC, Wapakoneta	1850
170 years	Berkey Congregational Christian, Berkey	1855
	Emanuel UCC, Upper Sandusky	1855
165 years	St. John's UCC, Elmore	1860
	St. John's UCC, Holgate	1860
	Salem UCC, Kenton	1860
160 years	St. John's UCC, Milan	1865
150 years	St. Peter's UCC, Millbury	1875
15 years	Faith Christian Church, Lima	2010