

Associations Associate Minister for Congregational Vitality and Development 2017 Annual Report to the Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations

With Rev. Plant's retirement mid-winter, Rev. Bates transfer to Penn NE as their Conference Minister in August, the upcoming retirement of Rev. Root and the presentation of the Conference Vision proposal at our November meeting, to say that 2017 has been and continues to be a year of transition would be to understate the obvious. The good news is that with all of that the Associations are in a good place.

At Rev. Bates leaving there were 20 congregations in pastoral transition with 7 of those actively receiving profiles. Five of those have now called pastors with one additional congregation yoking with another of our churches. There are currently 16 congregations in pastoral transition with 8 of those actively receiving profiles, one of which is receiving profiles for an Associate Pastor position and another that is looking at the possibilities of yoking with a nearby UCC congregation.

The Vitality Team is refocusing its priorities for the short term. There was research being done towards the consideration of a new church start. That has been put on-hold during this time of transition. The ongoing Vitality Days with Michael Piazza are going well with four congregations continuing into the second year of the program and 10 new congregations beginning their first year. The Vitality Team's energies are shifting to focus on helping congregations with their discernment of where they are in their life cycle and how to best use their energies towards revitalization.

I am working on reworking the Intentional Interim/Designated Minister data base and selection process. The design is to pull the information into one unified data base with the selection focusing on training and skill sets.

The Coaching Program, I encourage you to review Bob Richardson's report. In simplified terms, our success is outstripping our resources. We are looking for ways to streamline the process to make this program more available to our churches needing this kind of support and guidance. I encourage all our clergy, and our laity with business and/or human relations background, to consider being a part of our next training. It will benefit your ministry in the local setting and those of a congregation near you.

As of 6 weeks in, it is a joy to serve you as your interim Associate – Gary Halstead