

EOA-WRA Northeast Ohio School of Ministry (NEOSOM)  
Dean's Report for 2017  
Gene McAfee

The major accomplishments for 2017 were to finish the merger process of the two lay education programs in our associations and to put in place a new ordination track for members in discernment who are referred to that program by their respective Discernment of Call Working Group.

At the first meeting of the new Steering Committee on January 19<sup>th</sup>, the final draft of the program's governing document was approved, creating the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry (NEOSOM). Like all new ventures, this year has been something of a settling-in period, when we gradually discover what works and what doesn't, but we expect that period to be relatively smooth, given the long transition toward final merger. The new governing document is now public and available on the NEOSOM website.

The Steering Committee of the new program needed one student to complete its ranks, a currently-enrolled student from WRA. Elizabeth Goodin was invited to join the Steering Committee and accepted. The members of the Steering Committee of NEOSOM are Susi Kawolics, Chair; Karen Brocco-Kish, Kelly Gerstenberger, Elizabeth Goodin, Tina Green, Diane Smith, Bertrice Wood, and Gene McAfee, Dean and Ex-Officio. The Steering Committee felt that monthly meetings were not necessary, and it will be meeting quarterly, to coincide approximately with the teaching terms.

The new ordination track, which has officially been approved by the Steering Committee, is intended to provide additional education for persons who have been accepted by the associations' Committee on Ministry as Members in Discernment, and who have been referred to that track by their respective Discernment of Call Working Group. The chairs of the two working Groups, the Rev. Kevan Franklin and the Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe and the Rev. Dr. Rita Root and I have met and will continue to discuss the various components of that track and how it will support the work of the Committee and our local congregations.

In addition to these two major accomplishments, Support Staff member Mabelle Miller and I planned and Mabelle built a new database to maintain student records for the new program. At this early stage, we're trying to determine what information we need about the students in the program, how we would use it, and how best to store, access, and maintain it. Mabelle has begun to use a series of Google Sheets (spreadsheets akin to Microsoft Excel) to preserve and utilize the data associated with our students' progress through their programs of study. This information, in various configurations, will allow greater flexibility in providing information to students and to me for purposes of student advising.



Gene McAfee  
Dean  
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