

Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations
Joint Annual Meeting
Saturday, October 29, 2016
Solon Community Church, Solon, Ohio

Minutes

The Meeting was called to order by Moderators Jeannette Brodersen (EOA) and Ceola Littlejohn (WRA) at 9:36 am. There was a quorum present and the agenda was adopted as presented. The reports were accepted unanimously. Special guests from the wider church and the UCC Polity class were introduced.

Sandy Hutchinson of United Church Homes and Doyle Luckenbaugh of Back Bay Mission brought greetings and provided historical background as well as current initiatives of their respective institutions. United Church Homes is celebrating their centennial year and invites all to join in their November celebration.

Dr. Rita M Root addressed the State of the Associations. She emphasized that it takes courage to make changes and be adaptable. Our associations reflect a deep sense of commitment for our local communities and concern for the local church. Dr. Root shared highlights of the last year and beyond including four years of shared staff and ministry. During the last year, the Associations Councils engaged in association-wide Evaluation of the success of the collaboration. While the primary reason for the initial collaboration was financial consideration, the collaboration has broken down walls between the associations. We are writing a new narrative of covenant and mutuality. Dr. Root will be with us one more year and hopes to help discover more ways to deepen the collaboration. To that end, she introduced the formation of prophetic witness team. Mindful of the role the church has to play in shaping the culture especially during this current political climate, we need to be those who invite people into a culture of peace.

Invitation: November 20 at Richfield UCC – Prayers for Peace

- Encourage developing “hate-free” zones and promote sacred and safe places of peace across differences

Dr. Root will retire December 2017. That was announced so early in order to facilitate the transition to a new AGM. She concluded her remarks by acknowledging the contributions of the Associations staff – Rich, Bonnie, Machele and Cheryl.

Ian Lynch made an appeal for volunteers to add to the AGM search committee.

Jerry Crews presented the EOA slate of officers. The slate was elected unanimously. David Rufus presented the WRA slate of officers. Doris Powell was added to replace the vacancy in the slate. The slate was elected unanimously. Rita conducted the installation of new leaders. Rita acknowledged the contributions of Jeannette and Ceola, our outgoing moderators, as well as all outgoing leaders.

Rich milestone anniversaries. Bonnie recognized new calls.

Worship

- Sermon: The Gift of Emptiness – Dr. Eric Elnes

Mark Thomas presented the report on the response to last year’s motion regarding OCWM charged to the Budget and Finance Committees. Mark has met with both Association Councils regarding the motion

to consider OCWM. The conversation continues at all levels and Mark invites all to participate in those conversations, remembering that the wider church is not separate from us but we are part of it.

Mark Fry presented the report of the working group (EOA and WRA represented by Mark, Dan Doty, Kelly Burd, and Ian Lynch) considering wider church issues. He explained the structure of the working group and the distinctiveness of the Ohio Conference within the United Church of Christ. With five associations within the Conference, there are two judicatory levels in Ohio. There are financial and constitutional challenges for the work of the conference. There should be a proposal presented next summer including the possibilities of imbedding the work of the conference at the association level or creating multiple conferences in Ohio (requiring action of the General Synod). Ideas are still welcome for this discussion.

Rev. John Gant, Interim Ohio Conference Minister, presented an update on the camps of the Ohio Conference. Temple Hills was placed on sabbatical, both camps were put on sale with the idea to sell one and operate the other, and a contractor was engaged to operate Pilgrim Hills. There is still an operational loss on the camps but it has diminished significantly. Due to this, the decision to sell has been tabled for two years while the viability of Temple Hills is explored. \$50K in camp repairs have taken place this year. There is the possibility of selling parcels of camp property at Pilgrim Hills that would not impact programming. A concern was raised regarding the sell of such a significant portion of the camp while the future of the Ohio Conference has not been resolved and ensuring a compatible buyer.

11:00 Proposal for the future of the Associations

- David Brown, Kelly Burd, Marilyn Freeman, Cheryl Lindsay

David Brown and Cheryl Lindsay presented the proposal prepared by David, Cheryl, Kelly Burd, and Marilyn Freeman based on the joint Association Councils Retreat. The retreat collated and synthesized the information collected from the Listening Sessions held earlier in the year along with feedback from the councils on what has been working well, what opportunities to further maximize resources exist, and what is the current functional reality of our shared ministry. There were eight specific recommendations:

1. Establishing one Association Council and one Committee on Ministry to serve both associations. Each body would determine how their work can best be accomplished.
2. Bringing the governing documents of the two Associations in line with each other to streamline their administrative and collaborative work. Engaging in conversation about stewardship of financial resources.
3. Exploring the feasibility of combining into one body.
4. Doing our best to overcome the distance between our settings through more effective use of technology, choosing centrally-located meeting places, and finding creative ways to communicate.
5. Fostering connections among people, churches and those with common interests for mission and ministry.
6. Living into our covenant with all settings of the church, being faithful stewards of the resources entrusted to us, and creating new funding streams. This includes taking part in the conversations about the future of the UCC in Ohio.
7. Making Faith Formation and Youth a priority focus to encourage the next generation of leaders.
8. Seeking in all ways to improve communication with sensitivity to those who do not use electronic communication.

Jeneen Kubala presented the joint budget. The joint budget passed unanimously. Jeneen presented the EOA budget. The EOA has increased their OCWM retention rate in order to balance the budget and avoid using reserve funds for operating expenses. The EOA budget carried. Mark Thomas presented the WRA

budget. Three of the WRA's larger churches have decided to designate their contributions to the association and the national setting. As a result, while the WRA retention rate is unchanged, the OCWM line has decreased from 2016. The WRA budget carried.

The body voted on the proposal for the future of the Associations presented by David and Cheryl. The motion carried unanimously.

Plenary – Dr. Eric Elnes “The Gift of Uncertainty”

The meeting adjourned at 12:29. Ceola passed the gavel to David and Ian.

Respectively Submitted,
Rev. Cheryl A. Lindsay
WRA Council Secretary