

Annual Report  
Rev. Donna Brooks  
Interim Association Minister  
Fall, 2011

It has been such a joy to participate in the many facets of the life of this Association! I have had joyful opportunities to visit many churches. Worship has been rich and varied and I have had the opportunity to participate in various celebratory events. Ordinations, installations, church anniversaries, services commemorating a time of departure for a pastor, all have been a significant part of my role with the Western Reserve Association. Another role I consider sacred is the time I have to meet with individual authorized ministers of this Association on a wide variety of issues. The one to one time with authorized ministers has been deeply meaningful to me.

Search and Call represents a significant amount of my time. At present seventeen churches are in varying stages of the search process. I continue to communicate regularly with those search committees and spend considerable time talking to candidates who are inquiring about the openings around the WRA. Once an opening is posted in the employment news there are many calls about the open churches and what opportunities there may be for candidates. I would like to uplift the work that Machel Miller does in our Support Center. She as our Profile Coordinator does a fine job of keeping track of the many profile requests that come to our association.

Another key element of my work has been with the Department of Church and Ministry as we strive to reach out with a pastoral heart to pastors and churches experiencing conflict or other difficulties. I applaud the work of Church and Ministry and appreciate their dedication and faithful service. We have provided listening sessions and other forms of outreach for churches with a variety of needs.

The Strategic Plan which we voted for last Fall calls for increasing cooperative work between Eastern Ohio Association and Western Reserve Association, and both EOA and WRA staff have been living into that concept. We read profiles together every month, and have regularly scheduled joint staff meetings where common issues are aired and discussed. We continue to have conversations about budgetary issues that impact both associations and how we can fairly allocate funding for our Support Center in Canton. Margaret Mills and the Christian Educators, along with the joint stewardship committee, continue their work together which brings now, and has brought for several years, great strength to the cooperative spirit of EOA and WRA. A recent development is the resignation of Rev. Joan Ishibashi, effective the end of 2011. We cannot begin to express our appreciation for all of Joan's work and the contributions she has made to this association. We also realize that we need to find creative ways to ensure the work that Joan has done continues. A committee has been established and is working on plans for how that work can be accomplished, all the while keeping in mind the staffing parameters that are set forth in the Strategic Plan and keeping in mind opportunities to further work together with EOA. I will be keeping you all updated as we continue this important work.

I would also like to uplift the cooperative work of two committees working toward the realization of the Strategic Plan we approved last year. The joint personnel committee finalized a role description for the new General Minister who will be called for both EOA and WRA. The joint search committee is also working diligently as this process unfolds. The work of both committees has been a true covenant between WRA and EOA.

As of the writing of this report, we are anticipating our Fall Meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup>. We will look forward to hearing Connie Schultz as well as have an opportunity as an association to work together to support hunger initiatives through Mission 1 and to collect toiletries for use at a Cleveland women's shelter. Many thanks to Lenore Marken, Gene McAfee and the committee from Faith United Church of Christ in Richmond Heights that is helping all of this come together.

We have such strength as an Association! I would like to commend all the incredible volunteers who every day make a difference in the life of the WRA. Church and Ministry, Christian educators, those working with youth, those involved with church development and vitality, Nominating, Church in the World, Stewardship and Finance, Investment Advisory Committee, mission outreach and many others indeed remind us that together, in covenant, we can accomplish all in Christ's name.

Blessings,

Rev. Dr. Donna F. Brooks

Interim Association Minister

Western Reserve Association