

LIVING WATER ASSOCIATION, OHIO NORTHEAST
HEARTLAND CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Cultivate, Enough, Courage

Be a resource and support for the health and wellbeing our congregations, that we may grow into communities of healing and grace embodying Christ in the world

2025 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ASSOCIATION'S GENERAL MINISTER (Transitional)

Gracious Friends, this ministry continues to be a blessing! I absolutely enjoyed General Synod with our Heartland community, and have continued to expand my knowledge of and appreciation for our pastors (active and retired), congregations, and agencies. While there are problems to face, they are the problems that are the work of a judicatory, mostly handled under confidentiality. My work falls into five general areas:

- Congregational Resourcing:
 - Church Visitation.
 - Search and Call Program.
 - Adjudication – listening to issues, offering counsel, connecting with resources, referring to appropriate church offices (COM, legal, etc.).
 - SPIRE Center – LWA is negotiating an online space at the Damascus Project to house our intellectual materials and increase the connections between our SPIRE-Living Water folk.
- Pastoral Resourcing
 - Vocational Counseling.
 - Committee on Ministry Program.
 - Community of Practice Program – We are planning a fall ‘open enrollment’ and training for new facilitators. The goal is to increase participation significantly in the next two to three years; LWA is at roughly only 30% of our active pastors, below our peer group.
- Wider Church Relations
 - General Synod and Heartland Conference duties (AGM Roundtable, Listening Sessions, consultation with Dave Long-Higgins, Interim Retreat work)
 - Connecting with National Ministries/PBUCC/etc. for program and administrative needs.
 - Service to the wider church as a Trustee of the Pensions Boards (and chair of Ministerial Assistance/Christmas Fund) and United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.
- Organizational Life
 - Staff coordination and relations.
 - Exploratory Team - Verbal report to be presented by Rev. Dr. Monica Dawkins-Smith, Team Facilitator for the Exploratory Team.
 - Finance and Budget with Machelle.

- Communications and Annual Meeting planning with Kellie.
- Spiritual Leadership
 - Officiating Ordinations and Installations.
 - Prayer with and for our members.
 - Visioning and holy conversations to deeply understand needs.
 - Pastoral writing and preaching to center our faith amid all we do.

A few highlights:

Our Spring Vitality Festival brought Bishop Yvette Flunder to our Association, and continued a tradition of blending theology and practical examples for vitality.

Church Vitality, Health and Completion of Ministry We are very pleased to have disbursed Vitality Grants this year for a variety of programs, from worship technology upgrades to Adaptive Faith Formation modeling.

Healthy Practices in Ministry for Authorized Ministers Our Spring Event focused on leadership shifts coming out of the pandemic, and our fall Boundary Trainings served approximately 70 Authorized Ministers; evaluations are still coming in, but the early comments are positive.

Congregations and Retreats visited on Sundays:

Avon Lake (I am a member, so I did a formal Communion concelebration visit on my first Sunday in addition to regular attendance as a member); St. Paul's UCC in Ohio City Cleveland; Brecksville UCC; West Park UCC; Federated Church in Chagrin Falls; Jefferson and Austinburg UCCs; South Haven UCC; Pilgrim in Tremont Cleveland (Pride Service); Lakewood Congregational UCC; Heartland Family Camp at Dunkirk; Bainbridge Community UCC; First Congregational Akron; Zion UCC in North Canton; First Church Oberlin; Dover Congregational in Westlake; Interim and Transitional Skills Retreat; Church of the Redeemer UCC in Westlake; Retirement Celebration for Dan Busch at Trinity UCC in Tiffin; preaching at Fairport Harbor, 11/2; preaching at Community Congregational Amherst on 11/9. There are more mid-week visits, zooms, Installations and Ordinations, but this list is a wonderful reminder of the great people I am meeting in this work.

It is a blessing to be leading and serving in this remarkable Association. There are true bonds of Christian friendship, faith in strife, joy in thriving...the Spirit abounds and continues to call us to cultivate lives of faith and action, to trust God to show us what is enough, and to have courage through it all.

Respectfully submitted, Dr. Larssen