

East Ohio Annual Conference 2010 Lay Delegate Report Submitted by Joyce Freeman, Lay Delegate IUMC

Website for all EO Annual Conference meetings and events:

<http://www.eocumc.com/ac2010/index.html>

The 41st session was held at Lakeside, Ohio, June 14-17 with Bishop John Hopkins presiding.

Bishop Hopkins opening: Theme “Hope and Healing”

Bishop John Hopkins challenged the members of the East Ohio Annual Conference to turn the church inside out (children’s rhyme, *This is the church, this is the steeple, open the doors and see all the people – where are our people?*) Need to think differently, think outside the walls. Church does not stop within the walls of church. The people inside must take the faith to the people.

“Have a heart for people who need *hope and healing* in your local community and around the world by building relationships. Believe in people because we know God believes in them,”

Finance:

We saw receipts drop by about 2% from 80% to 78%. 2010 to date is showing receipts up by ½ a point. The UMC had 65% of the churches pay 100% which was the same % we had in 2008. Some large churches faltered, at the same time some smaller churches stepped up.

NEO was able to pay our General Church apportionments for the 4th year in a row at 100%. We were one of only 14 conferences out of 63 that achieved that goal.

We saw a 25% return on investments which helped replace much of what we lost in the 2008 market. We still have a ways to go but in a much better position than one year ago.

The formula for calculating pastor’s pension liability for 2011 will remain the same as the 2010 formula as opposed to an increase as was originally projected last year. In other words, if a pastor has the same salary in 2011 as they do in 2010 then the pension cost will also be the same. Because of improved healthcare reserve position, premiums will also remain the same for 2011 as 2010 with the exception of retiree premiums which will see a 10% increase.

Membership in 2009 declined 3% in East Ohio. This continues our trend of declining every year since our inception. In addition to declining membership, worship attendance has dropped as well over the years and at a faster pace. This is a reality for most of the denomination. Most of our congregations are older. There is a loss an entire generation if not two in the pews.

Churches are slow to respond to a changing congregation and/or changing community. This is a very common problem in local churches.

Guaranteed appointment is a reality that under question at this point in the life of the denomination. East Ohio easily has 70 churches supporting a full time elder, not because they need or can afford one but because of guaranteed appointment.

What local churches are spending in operations has increased at a far more rapid pace over the years with increases in staff costs (keeping in mind that it is often excess staffing costs), inflationary increases in postage, supplies, property insurance, taking on debt that many churches are not prepared long term to handle. These costs are increasing while the number of people asked to support those costs has diminished.

After maintaining a flat budget for the last six years, the conference approved a \$12, 168,020 budget for 2011, a decrease of 3 percent.

Hope is the local church realizing that we need to do things differently and then acting upon it. Hope is a local church using endowments to try new things in order to reach new generations. It is then that an endowment is a blessing.

The mission ministry is our strong point. Our ability to do mission gives hope that the fire and passion is still there. We need to transfer the fire and passion from mission to other aspects of the church, such as increasing attendance, bringing in new members, which would fuel all the other parts of the church.

The conference members adopted the following resolutions:

- **Hope and Healing through Multicultural and Differing Abilities Acceptance**
This resolution calls churches to bring hope and healing in response to exclusivity and discrimination. It calls for greater awareness concerning diversity with development of ministries and to share these issues for the next three years with the compass groups
- **Youth Led Worship**
This resolution asks that church offer youth the opportunity to have an annual youth led worship service. Gather with neighboring church youth to pull together.
- **Rural Life Sunday**
This resolution asks that the conference designates a Sunday to celebrate Rural Life.
- **Youth leader Contact Information**
This resolution asks that churches provide contact information for a youth leader in order to be informed about conference events.

The ordination of 10 elders occurred and recognition of 20 clergy who were retired.

Membership stands at 163,815 down 2.9 percent over the previous year while worship attendance stands at 66,799 *up* 4% over the previous year.

A motion from the cabinet to **amend parsonage standards** was brought by Dan Bryant. This motion asks that basic cable or satellite service and high speed internet be provided to clergy where available and desired. **Motion approved.**

Resolutions

Resolution 2010-01: Resolution on Government-Funded Abortion

This resolution asks that the General Board of Church and Society ends its affiliation with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Resolution submitted by Damascus United Methodist Church Council. **The motion was not approved.**

In summary, we need to step outside of our church barrier and extend our faith and ministry to the community and beyond.