

1 **Conference Board of Trustees Report to Annual Conference 2026**

2 ***Submitted by Rev. Dr. Randall W. May, president***

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4 Greetings to you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ. According to ¶2512 of *The Book of Discipline of The*
5 *United Methodist Church, 2020/2024* (hereinafter referred to as “*The UMC Book of Discipline*”), each
6 annual conference must have a board of trustees responsible for receiving, collecting, holding in trust,
7 and administering all annual conference real estate, personal property and other property. The Board of
8 Trustees is required to meet as needed but must meet at least once annually. According to ¶2512.6 of
9 *The UMC Book of Discipline*, the Board of Trustees must make to each session of Annual Conference a
10 full, true, and faithful report of its doings, of all funds, monies, securities, and property owned or held in
11 trust by it, and of its receipts and disbursements during the conference year. In accordance with these
12 requirements, please receive now this 2026 Annual Report (“Report”) of the Board of Trustees (“Board”)
13 of the East Ohio Conference (“Conference”) for the conference year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending
14 June 30, 2026 (“Conference Year”).

15 During this Conference Year, the Board met four times for regular quarterly meetings on the following
16 dates: July 12, 2025 (virtual meeting on Zoom), October 11, 2025 (virtual meeting on Zoom), February
17 14, 2026 (virtual meeting on Zoom), and May 9, 2026 (virtual meeting on Zoom). Also, the Board dealt
18 with several issues requiring special Board action between regular quarterly meetings which were
19 conducted using email, online voting and Zoom, pursuant to operating rules the Board adopted in 2020.
20 At the July 12, 2025, meeting, the Board elected the following members as officers: Rev. Dr. Randall May
21 as president; Brian Bly as vice president; and Brian Knotts as secretary. Vera Milanovic, executive
22 director of Financial & Administrative Services for the Conference, serves as the Board’s treasurer and is
23 not elected.

24 The Board’s work can be allocated into three principal categories: 1) maintaining and managing
25 Conference properties; 2) acquisition, sale, and leasing of Conference properties; and 3) other tasks
26 associated with Conference properties. The following is a summary of work completed by the Board
27 during the current Conference Year.

28 **Maintaining and Managing Conference-Owned Properties**

29 **District Parsonages:** The Board, in coordination with Conference Executive Director of Financial &
30 Administrative Services Vera Milanovic and the Conference Council on Finance & Administration, is
31 responsible for the repair and maintenance of the Conference’s district parsonages. If the
32 maintenance and repair work is minimal in nature, it may be handled directly by the district
33 superintendent from a budget allocation, while more significant maintenance and repair work is
34 handled through the office of Conference Executive Director of Financial & Administrative Services
35 Vera Milanovic. The district parsonages are currently in reasonably good condition and repair,
36 although various repair and renovation work was completed during this Conference Year, and some
37 additional repair and maintenance work is still needed. On July 1, 2025, the number of district
38 superintendents was reduced from eight to four. Because of this reduction, the Board worked to
39 relocate several of the district superintendents, conduct renovations to the district parsonages to be
40 retained, and sold off all excess district parsonages. An episcopal residence used to be included in
41 this section, but because we share a bishop with West Ohio, only one episcopal residence is needed
42 and the episcopal residence in North Canton was sold in 2025.

43 **Area Center:** Ordinary repair and maintenance work was conducted as needed in the Area Center in
44 North Canton during the current Conference Year in coordination with Conference Executive
45 Director of Financial & Administrative Services Vera Milanovic. Some issues dealing with the Area

1 Center's sewage system developed because of work performed by a tenant's contractor. The system
2 has been repaired, but discussions with respect to liability are ongoing.

3 **Other Conference Properties:**

4 *Conference Church Camps:* the Board continued to review and support repairs, maintenance, and
5 improvement projects at the two camp properties owned by the Conference (Camp Asbury and
6 Camp Wanake), and at the one camp property leased by the Conference (Camp Aldersgate).
7 Additional work and costs are anticipated for all three camps in the next Conference Year.

8 *Retreat and Missional Outreach Properties:*

- 9 • *Epworth Center:* the Epworth Center property, which is owned by the Conference and had been
10 leased to a tenant for missional outreach, was closed in 2024 and possession returned to the
11 Conference. The Conference is currently marketing this property for sale.
- 12 • *Siman Property:* this property, located in Medina, Ohio, is partially leased to OhioGuidestone.
13 Other uses for the remainder of the property are currently being discussed.
- 14 • *Harbor and Bridge Property:* Harbor and Bridge was organized as an Ohio non-profit missional
15 outreach affiliated with the Conference. Ownership of the property was transferred to it in 2026
16 for no consideration. Harbor and Bridge provides a recovery home in the former parsonage, and
17 a community center in the former church which affords meeting space for many local groups
18 and non-profit organizations.

19 **Acquisition, Sale, and Leasing of Conference Properties**

20 **Acquired Properties:** the following local churches were closed, and their properties were acquired in
21 title or trust by the Conference during this Conference Year:

- 22 • *Dalton UMC (Central Valley – church and parsonage):* the closed church building and parsonage
23 were acquired and held in trust by the Board for the Conference on October 31, 2025.
- 24 • *Lewisville UMC (South Forest – church and parsonage):* the closed church building and parsonage
25 were acquired and held in trust by the Board for the Conference on November 11, 2025.
- 26 • *University Circle UMC (Northern Waters – church):* the closed church building was acquired and
27 held in trust by the Board for the Conference on March 3, 2026.
- 28 • *Elyria Zion UMC (West Plains – church):* the closed church building will be acquired and held in
29 trust by the Board for the Conference on June 30, 2026.
- 30 • *Additional Closed Churches:* as of the date of this report, the Board is aware of several additional
31 churches which are or may be closing or preparing to close. Other local churches have been
32 discussing their futures but have not yet made any firm decisions as of the date of this Report.
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34 **Sold Properties:** the following properties were sold by the Conference during this Conference Year:
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- 36 • *Clearview UMC (Central Valley – church and parsonage):* this church was closed July 31, 2024,
37 and the church building and parsonage were sold on July 22, 2025, to a corporation for net
38 proceeds in the amount of \$243,573.
- 39 • *Coshocton UMC (South Forest – parsonage):* this building was sold on September 12, 2025, to a
40 private individual for net proceeds in the amount of \$295,792.
- 41 • *Canaan UMC (West Plains – church):* this church was closed August 25, 2024, and the building
42 was sold on September 12, 2025, to a private individual for net proceeds in the amount of
43 \$119,295.
- 44 • *Nellie Chapel UMC (South Forest – parsonage and hayfield):* this church was closed December 1,
45 2024, and the parsonage and hayfield were sold on September 12, 2025, to a private individual
46 for net proceeds in the amount of \$185,120.

- *Burton UMC (Central Valley – church)*: this church was closed April 30, 2024, and the building was sold on October 1, 2025, to an Ohio limited liability corporation for net proceeds in the amount of \$45,875.
- *Former Mahoning Valley District Parsonage*: this residence was sold on October 1, 2025, to private individuals for net proceeds in the amount of \$311,464.
- *Salem-Fredericktown UMC (South Forest – church)*: this church was closed on June 25, 2023, and the building was sold on November 21, 2025, to private individuals for net proceeds in the amount of \$42,478.
- *Former Canal District Parsonage*: this residence was sold on February 3, 2026, to private individuals for net proceeds in the amount of \$389,856.40.
- *Former Western Reserve District Parsonage*: this residence was sold on February 13, 2025, to private individuals for net proceeds in the amount of \$251,848.59.

Pending Sale Transaction: sale of the following property is currently pending:

- *Nellie Chapel UMC (South Forest – church)*: this church was closed on December 1, 2024. There is an issue with the title which has required the Board on behalf of the Conference to file a legal quiet title action. This sale will close after the court resolves the title issues.

Properties with Legal Issues:

- *Chapel Hill UMC (West Plains – church)*: Reverter Clause issue in the deed.
- *Ebenezer UMC (West Plains – church)*: required subdivision of church and cemetery properties.
- *Epworth Center*: potential eminent domain issue.

Additional District Parsonage Sales and/or Purchases: the Board does not anticipate that any further district parsonages will need to be purchased or sold this year, however, in the event of any additional changes, the Board seeks authorization from this Annual Conference to sell and/or acquire additional parsonage properties *ad interim* with the consent of the bishop and a majority of the district superintendents, as approved by the Board, and subject to the subsequent approval of the Annual Conference, all as provided for in ¶2515 of *The UMC Book of Discipline*.

Leasing:

- *Oil and Gas Rights*: the Board has developed and adopted a position paper with respect to oil and gas rights based on our Social Principles as set forth in ¶¶ 160 – 164 of *The UMC Book of Discipline*. In general, this position paper encourages the Board to oppose any sale or transfer of oil and gas rights because the extraction and use thereof could be damaging to the environment and to this beautiful world created by God and given to humanity to steward. The general position in the paper opposing sales or transfers can be overridden by the Board in certain circumstances, and the Board is continuing to discuss and consider the Conference’s interests in certain oil and gas rights associated with several properties owned by the Conference.
- *Area Center Leases*: leases for space in the Area Center are currently being negotiated with two associated entities, Christian Family Credit Union and Methodist Foundation of Ohio, after their prior leases expired. We anticipate execution of these leases within the next few months.

Various Other Tasks Associated with Conference Properties

- *Camping and Retreat Endowment (C.A.R.E.)*: at the end of 2025, the total balance of all C.A.R.E. funds (restricted, unrestricted and C.A.R.E.) was \$ 3,945,846.

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- *Trusts*: the Board continues to work on resolving several trust issues associated with closed local churches. The Board has determined that there is no trust associated with the former Conotton UMC. The Goudy Educational Trust and its funds, which were formerly managed by the now-closed Beach City UMC, were transferred by the Board to the Canton Student Loan Foundation which will continue to manage the trust for the benefit of student scholarships, the purpose for which the Goudy Educational Trust was originally established. In addition, the Board is currently managing a lawsuit associated with a trust in which the Conference is named as a beneficiary. The case has been resolved, and the Board is working with the trustee to have the Conference's share of the funds paid out. In addition, funds from another trust which named a prior district as a beneficiary, which district was merged into the Conference several years ago, have recently been paid out to the Conference as successor-in-interest to the former district.
 - *BSA Bankruptcy*: the Conference has been participating in a joint legal defense and resolution effort in the Boy Scouts of America ("BSA") Chapter 11 Bankruptcy Reorganization case (the "Case"). The BSA bankruptcy reorganization plan was approved by the bankruptcy court on September 8, 2022, and affirmed by the U.S. District Court on March 28, 2023, with an effective date of April 19, 2023. A \$2.4 billion settlement trust from which all claims would be paid has been set up by the bankruptcy court and funded by various defendants, including The United Methodist Church and the East Ohio Conference on behalf of itself and all of its local churches, and claims have begun to be paid out of the settlement trust to claimants. All appeals, including to the U.S. Supreme Court, have now been resolved, and the BSA has received a discharge and exited bankruptcy. In addition to the settlement payment, all local churches in the Conference are responsible for reviewing and updating their Safe Sanctuary policies and taking other actions to protect vulnerable individuals as provided in the United Methodist Settlement Agreement.
 - *Detterman Log Church, Historic Lyme Village*: the Conference Commission on Archives and History ("Archives") financially contributed to the rescue, relocation and restoration of a historically significant log church formerly located on private land owned by the Detterman Family in Seneca County, Ohio. The church was relocated to and restored by Historic Lyme Village in Lyme, Ohio. The Board continues to work with Archives and other Conference leaders to clarify legal issues associated with the Detterman Log Church, and to determine if any further financial support is warranted or needed, and from where that financial support will come.
 - *Conference Archives Project*: Conference leadership, Archives, and the Conference Boards of Trustees of East Ohio Conference and West Ohio Conference have established a new location for the joint archives of both conferences. The joint archives were previously located at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio, but have now been relocated to Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Both conferences and the Seminary have been working on organizing the joint archives and creating a means of public access to the materials.
 - *Community Development Corporations and Other New Ideas for Use of Conference Properties*: the Board has continued to look at new ways to utilize, repurpose, and maximize the financial and spiritual value of properties owned by the Conference, such as developing relationships with new business partners or community development corporations, participating in new church planting or missional outreach efforts, and envisioning *Fresh Expressions* of church. These exciting new prospects will likely not only continue but will likely increase as the Conference continues to look for new ways to be and to grow the church within the Conference, including Bishop Jung's initiative to establish 100 new churches.
 - *Property Management*: the Board has decided to terminate the agreement with its prior property management company due to dissatisfaction with the company's work and results. Instead of hiring a new property management company, the Board, in coordination with Executive Director of Financial & Administrative Services Vera Milanovic, has decided to hire a

1 part-time local property manager, and selected Rev. Michael Farmer for that position due to his
2 prior experience and continuing interest. Rev. Farmer began this work on March 1, 2026.

- 3 • *Conference Insurance Policies:* the Board, in coordination with Executive Director of Financial &
4 Administrative Services Vera Milanovic, has been working to review current insurance policies
5 which would provide insurance coverage for Conference properties. After comparing the rates
6 and terms offered by other insurance companies with our current provider, we have determined
7 that there is no benefit or savings to changing providers, and so the Board has decided not to
8 change insurance companies at this time.
- 9 • *Request to the Board by a Local Church for Financial Support for Capital Improvements:* in our
10 theme text for the 2026 Annual Conference, Matthew 14: 13 – 21, Jesus encounters a hungry
11 crowd on a small mountain in Galilee. The disciples see only scarcity and need – just five loaves
12 of bread and two fish for a huge gathering – but Jesus sees something completely different. He
13 takes what is offered, blesses, breaks and shares it, and is able to feed thousands. Through this
14 miraculous action, Jesus reveals the abundant grace of God which provides enough food not
15 only to satisfy the hunger of everyone present but also enables the disciples to collect up 12
16 baskets of leftovers. The basis of this biblical story was recently experienced by the Board when
17 a local church submitted a request to the Board for financial help to replace its HVAC system
18 which had ceased to function. The Board has the expertise to provide this kind of support but
19 currently does not have the financial ability to provide the support. However, the request has
20 encouraged discussion of this matter with respect to allowing the Board to manage a portion of
21 the proceeds generated by closed church sales. Discussion of this issue is ongoing.

22 The Board has been extremely busy during this Conference Year, so I would like to thank all the
23 members of the Board, Executive Director of Financial & Administrative Services Vera Milanovic, and
24 Conference Chancellor Rex Miller, for their time and commitment during this challenging year. During
25 the Conference Year, the Board continued to meet, communicate, and complete all work for which the
26 Board is responsible effectively, promptly, legally, and carefully. This concludes the 2026 annual report
27 of the Board of Trustees of the East Ohio Conference.