

What We're Hearing About Unification: Three-Word Reflections from Annual Conference Members

West Ohio Annual Conference

Executive Summary

On May 30, 2026, members of the West Ohio Annual Conference were invited to submit three words describing their perspectives on the possible unification of the East and West Ohio Conferences. The 255 responses were reviewed and analyzed for word frequency; positive, negative, and cautionary themes; key takeaways; overall sentiment; and communications implications.

The West Ohio 3-word responses are strongly hopeful and constructive. The most repeated ideas center on unity, strength, opportunity, efficiency, shared resources, mission, growth, collaboration, community and hope. Respondents repeatedly describe a future marked by connection, expanded ministry capacity and a stronger shared witness across Ohio.

The positive language is not only organizational; it is deeply missional and theological. Many responses connect unification to God's work, Christ-centered mission, discipleship, outreach, grace, fellowship and reaching new people. The comments suggest that participants see the potential for stronger ministry when structure, resources and relationships are aligned around shared mission.

Cautionary words are present but less dominant. Concerns cluster around confusion, challenge, anxiety, uncertainty, large geography, travel, additional work, chaos, preserving institutional structures and the need for clarity. These responses point to practical and process-related questions that should be named honestly alongside the positive themes.

Bottom line

The West Ohio responses lean hopeful and mission-focused, with repeated emphasis on unity, strength, opportunity and shared resources. The key communication task is to pair that promise with clear, practical answers about implementation, geography, workload and process.

Key Takeaways

- Unity and shared identity are the clearest positive themes, appearing through words such as unity, united, together, one, family, connection and partnership.
- Strength and capacity are also prominent, with responses emphasizing stronger ministry, stronger connection, shared strengths, power in numbers and greater impact.
- Opportunity language is frequent, especially around new ideas, new possibilities, collaboration, innovation, creativity and expanded relationships.
- Efficiency and shared resources appear as practical benefits, including reduced overhead, lower administrative costs, fewer duplicated efforts and combined resources.
- Concerns are mostly practical and process-oriented: confusion, challenge, scale, travel, additional work and the need for clarity.

Frequently Appearing Positive Words and Ideas

Theme	Frequently appearing words/phrases	What they suggest
Unity / togetherness	unity; united; together; one; family; connection; partnership; wholeness	The most prominent theme is the desire for shared identity, common purpose and wider connection across Ohio.
Strength / capacity	stronger; strength; strengthened; powerful; power in numbers; greater impact; boldness	Respondents see potential for increased capacity, broader leadership and stronger ministry outcomes.
Opportunity / possibility	opportunity; opportunities; possibilities; new possibilities; new opportunities; adventure; wonder	Many responses frame the future as open, creative and full of new ministry potential.
Resources / efficiency	resources; shared resources; combined resources; efficiency; lower administrative costs; reduced overhead; fewer duplicated efforts	Practical benefits are frequently named, especially better stewardship and less duplication.
Mission / outreach / discipleship	mission; missional; outreach; discipleship; reaching new people; more effective outreach; greater witness	Many participants interpret the change through ministry impact rather than structure alone.
Hope / renewal / growth	hope; hopeful; growth; renewal; revive; regeneration; renewed energy; revitalized	Responses describe renewed possibility, future orientation and energy for what comes next.
Community / relationships	community; fellowship; friends; siblings; relationships; colleagues; extended family	Respondents value broader relationships, connection across lines and expanded community.

Frequently Appearing Negative or Cautionary Words

Theme	Frequently appearing words/phrases	What they suggest
Confusion / complexity	confusing; confusion; complicated; holy chaos; chaos; happy cheerful chaos	Some respondents anticipate complexity, transition fatigue or unclear systems.
Challenge / discomfort	challenging; challenge; discomfort; opportunity with challenges; logical, scary, challenging	Several comments acknowledge that the opportunity may also be difficult or uncomfortable.
Anxiety / uncertainty	anxious; fear; uncertain; uncertainty; wait and see; curiosity; anticipation	A smaller but clear set of responses indicates uncertainty and the need for confidence-building communication.
Scale / geography / travel	large geography; larger districts traveling; farther moving around; lots of traveling; larger geographical area	Geography and travel are practical concerns that may affect participation and implementation.
Workload /	a lot of work; more work; transition; need for	Respondents recognize that the work ahead may

implementation burden	clarity	require effort, planning and clear communication.
Institutional concern / resistance	diminishing; divisive; regionalization; bigger isn't necessarily better; preserving the institution; not named Ohioland	A few comments question whether bigger is better or express concern about institutional focus and naming.

Summary of Findings

The responses are overwhelmingly oriented toward promise, connection and expansion. Words such as unity, strength, opportunity, efficiency, resources, hope, mission, possibilities, community and growth appear repeatedly, suggesting that many participants can imagine tangible ministry benefits from a unified Ohio Episcopal Area.

The most compelling positive frame is mission-centered unity. Participants are not simply naming administrative efficiency; they are also naming collaboration, discipleship, reaching new people, ministry expansion, fellowship, God-centered purpose and common vision. That suggests communications should emphasize the “why” of unification before the mechanics.

The cautionary responses should still be treated seriously. Words and phrases related to confusion, challenge, uncertainty, geography, travel, workload and clarity point to understandable implementation concerns. Messaging should make space for these concerns and provide direct answers rather than relying only on hopeful language.

Overall Sentiment Snapshot

Sentiment	Description
Positive	Strongly hopeful about unity, shared mission, resources, efficiency, collaboration, growth and renewed ministry possibility.
Mixed / cautious	Open to the opportunity, while acknowledging challenge, transition, communication needs, workload and geographic concerns.
Negative	Limited but present concerns about confusion, fear, divisiveness, institutional preservation, scale and naming.

Suggested one-sentence summary

West Ohio 3-word responses reveal a hopeful, mission-centered view of unification, emphasizing unity, strength, shared resources and new opportunities while also naming practical concerns about clarity, geography, workload and transition.

Communications Implications

- Lead with mission-centered unity: stronger together for discipleship, outreach and reaching new people.
- Connect efficiency and shared resources to ministry impact, not simply administrative savings.
- Use language that reflects the respondents’ own words: unity, strength, opportunity, collaboration, hope, community and growth.

- Address the practical concerns clearly: travel, geography, workload, district structure, transition timeline and decision-making process.
- Keep listening visible by showing how questions and feedback are shaping implementation decisions.

Source note: Prepared from OEA Task Team 3-word responses, West Ohio, dated 5/30/2026. Documents are available for review by contacting the Communications Office.