

# The Old Apple Tree



*East Ohio Conference Retirees Association  
Fall 2025*

## **2025 Retiree Association Annual Gathering**



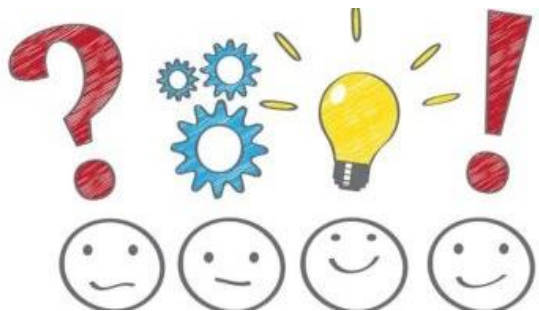
The 2025 Retiree Gathering Luncheon and Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, October 9, at Ashland University. This is a time to recognize the 2025 Class of Retirees, honor those who have gone on to their heavenly retirement, and to fellowship with one another. Plan to join us at this annual gathering and reconnect with colleagues and friends. You should have received a reservation form by mail in August. If you did not receive a form and wish to attend please contact Paul White at [paulw2800@gmail.com](mailto:paulw2800@gmail.com). Reservations are due by September 20.

## **Present Retiree Gatherings**

At present there are two regional Retiree Gatherings that continue to take place. Each of these Gatherings is open to anyone who may wish to attend. These Gatherings and contact persons for more information if you wish to be invited/included are:

- Coshocton Area: meet quarterly in the Coshocton area; Contact Martha Stuller at [mlstuller@gmail.com](mailto:mlstuller@gmail.com) for more information.
- Mansfield/Ontario Area: meet at 11:30 am on the second Tuesday of most months at Ontario U.M.C. for lunch, fellowship, devotions, and light programs of interest. If any of the TOAT readers would be interested in attending or visiting, please contact David Mansperger at [demansperger@yahoo.com](mailto:demansperger@yahoo.com).
- Any retirees in the South Forest District interested in forming an "Out to Lunch" Bunch? Email, call or text Lee Ann Dunlap ([revlad1959@gmail.com](mailto:revlad1959@gmail.com) or 330 691-5602). Please indicate your preference for a locale – Cambridge, New Philadelphia, or St. Clairsville – and best weekday availability.

If you would be interested in establishing a gathering in your area you can contact Paul White ([paulw2800@gmail.com](mailto:paulw2800@gmail.com)) who will be willing to assist you in beginning such a gathering.



## **Questions from Board of Directors**

Your Retiree Association Board of Directors has a couple of questions in which we would like to have your response.

1. Do you agree to have your contact information shared with other retirees? Currently all retirees are listed on the conference website by name only. At times we are contacted by others who wish to communicate with a retiree or surviving spouse but do not know how to do so. If you are willing to have your contact information (address, telephone number, email address) shared with others you need not do anything. If you **DO NOT** wish to have your contact information shared, please notify Paul White ([paulw2800@gmail.com](mailto:paulw2800@gmail.com)).
2. Are you or a retiree you know living in a health care facility and would enjoy a visit from another retired clergy member please contact Paul White ([paulw2800@gmail.com](mailto:paulw2800@gmail.com)). As an association we want to continue to show love and concern for those who may not be able to participate in a local church.

## **News from Conference Benefits Office**

Hi Retirees! I hope you are doing well! Effective January 1, 2026, there will be some changes coming to your UHC Medicare Advantage Plan. The cost of the plan is increasing, and the Board of Benefits is working hard to keep any increases or changes which may happen to a minimum, whether that cost difference is in the plan design itself or in premium payments.

Your plan will still provide these additional benefits not covered by Medicare:

- UHC Healthy at Home
- House Calls
- Let's Move
- Fitness Benefits
- Member Rewards and Incentives
- Virtual Medical and Behavioral Health Visits

**Also – a new benefit – Calm Health will be added to the plan.** Calm Health will be available at no cost. It is a self-paced digital tool that can help develop skills to address emotions, sleep, and mindfulness. Calm Health can also help recommend other mental health resources such as counseling.

**Effective 12/31/25, UHC will be discontinuing the Emergency Response System (PERS).** Starting January 1, 2026, if you are presently using PERS, you will have the option to convert to private pay and continue this service with Lifeline at a discounted rate. Alternatively, you may choose to discontinue the service in which case Lifeline will deactivate your device during the first week of January 2026.

If you haven't already done so, you can create an account at [www.UHCRetiree.com](http://www.UHCRetiree.com) and enjoy perusing all the benefits offered through your UHC Medicare Advantage Plan. If you ever have any questions or concerns, please let me know. I will update you on any changes/increases which will happen once the renewal is set in place. God Bless, Robin Whitacre, Benefits Manager; [robin@eocumc.com](mailto:robin@eocumc.com), 330-499-3972, Ext. 151.

# Connections

We tell each other our hobbies, new ventures, and many ways of serving Christ within and beyond “appointment” ministries. We may be retired, but we are still alive in Christ and active in the church and in the world. We also ask for prayer in the challenges of elder years.

## West Plains District

**Dean Roush** reports he has made the move from my house to Assisted living at Bickford of Upper Arlington. Congestive Heart Failure is taking control. I am about ready to register with hospice.

**Bill & Marty McFadden** have been engaged in assisting women from a refugee camp in Zimbabwe enroll at Africa University through the program “Lift Her Up”. Four women have completed their first year and are now being sponsored by Berea, Wooster, East Liverpool and Lakewood UMCs. Six more women have begun their studies this academic year. If you would like to help you can donate by going to the East Ohio Conference web site. Choose fund 9168.

**George & Trudie Lee** report it's been a different summer for us. George finished his year at Ontario UM on June 22. It was a great time with the congregation there. Then we

found Trudie needed a heart valve replacement which took place on August 6 at Ohio health in Mansfield. She is blessed and is back doing ok. Grateful to God. George just finished 59 years of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ these many years a gift from our Heavenly Father. He still loves sharing the word of God anytime he has a chance. We have been blessed in so many ways. Grateful for all our blessings.

## Northern Waters District

**Roger & Joan Skelley-Watts** celebrated their 50th anniversary on March 22. We did so by getting our extended family together for the first time in decades at Pier W restaurant in Cleveland. The only previous 50-year couple on either side of our families was my grandparents, Cordelia and R. J. Rogers, farmers in Georgia. We have an old black-and-white photo of them cutting their anniversary cake. Hometown Bakery in Vermilion re-created the cake for our family dinner. AWWww! Then Joan and I returned to

Charleston, S. C. where we spent our honeymoon 50 years before. It was a delightful journey of memories and making new ones. Such as dining at a restaurant recommended by our son Andrew (owner of Cordelia Restaurant in downtown Cleveland). At another dinner, we sat next to a young couple who had just been wed the week before, on our anniversary date! Can you say, "providential"? Our daughter Kathryn is a North Carolina farmer and community garden manager less than an hour away from Asheville. All her fields and much of her property were destroyed. Then she totaled her truck. The good news is that farmers are helping one another, outside work crews have been coming ( including one from Vermilion Grace UMC), State of North Carolina, and FEMA (until it was dismantled) were giving grants, and physically she's fine. Please keep praying. Violinist Joan fell a year ago in January and broke both wrists. Then followed medications, surgeries, therapy, and exercises. Vermilion Grace UMC broke out in applause when she finished playing her first number since, at Maundy Thursday worship. It was an Easter miracle. I've become politically active, am a Democratic Party and election

official. For seven years, I've served on the Board of CHOADS, which operates an orphanage for children in Haiti with AIDS. Currently we house 24 babies and children, served by 14 staff. For the first time in our 21-year existence, USAID medical care has abruptly stopped. By the time you read this, medication has run out, and all doctor's bills are out of pocket. We had no time to budget for this calamity. If you feel called to help, you can give through EOC Advance Special #9922 CHOADS. This year marks my 53rd anniversary of Deacon's ordination (1972) in the Tennessee Conference. Joan and I were ordained Elder in 1977 together, the last class of Bishop Francis Kearns. Another AAWWww. Our 3-year-old English Goldendoodle puppy Clara is 50 pounds of fun. It's always a joy to connect. God bless us, everyone.

**Paul & Linda Beal** send greetings to EOC retirees who may still remember us. We are, fortunately, in good health living in retirement for 23 years. We are grateful for our family, friends, and faith which sustains us. We pray daily for you, the United Methodist Church the conference, for our nation and world, trusting that God will provide and sustain God's Children through whatever crisis humans can conceive. Our faith in God gives us hope that humankind will endure through God's love, mercy, and faithfulness. Best wishes and love to you all. Our thanks to Paul White for continuing to lead us retirees through his faithful editing of

The Old Apple Tree and our annual retirees' gatherings.

**Stan & Carol Wallace** welcomed their son and his teenage twins for a week of fun. The highlight was the annual trip to Cedar Point. They rode 29 rollercoasters, including 3 Sirens Curse, over two days. Grandma and Grandpa rested comfortably and sipped drinks while reading and enjoying the view of Lake Erie. The rest of the week included swimming, miniature golf, many fabulous meals by Carol and one trip to the Twisted Olive, games inside and out, some home movies and just fun being together. Our daughter Beth and her daughter Chloe came over, and we got a photo of the whole family. Stan has recovered from his 3 illnesses, and back to walking without help.

**Marvin & Sandy Brown** write I retired in 2010, and here it is 15 years later. Those of us who have reached the point of receiving the Old Apple Tree are regularly found asking the same question: "Where did the years go?" I left my secular job in Akron when I was 33. I headed for seminary and started serving two small churches as a fulltime student pastor. I remember standing in the sanctuary of the Blooming Grove church. There I was, just me and God, and I am saying, "God, you had better

know what you are doing because I don't have a clue".: I made so little money at that time I thought I would never be able to retire. I just thought I would work (serve the church) until the day I said good-bye to this world. I turned 81 this past May and with advanced age comes days of reflection. I and Sandy have been so enriched over these years with so many wonderful people, colleagues, and parishioners, many of whom are reading this article. God has blessed Sandy and me beyond our deserving with two beautiful daughters, two special sons in law and five incredible grandchildren. Sandy and I have done our share of traveling since retirement, but mostly we hang out closer to home here in Chardon these days. Sandy and I wish each of you, lots of laughter and good health.

**Ken & Kathy Moody-Arndt** have been active in retirement in a variety of ways. Kathy volunteers at The Hope Center in Cleveland, tutoring people who are preparing for citizenship. She worked for a while with an organization mentoring foster children who have aged out of the foster care system, and is also active at Pilgrim Congregational UCC, where she volunteers at the Church's food pantry, and participates in the Pilgrim Singers, and in the bell choir. Ken has been serving quarter

time on the pastoral staff at Lakewood UMC since 2023, and as a volunteer since 2017, leading “Awakening,” a contemplative service, every Sunday and assisting and sometimes leading the Traditional service, as well as helping with visitation. He also makes the rounds on Cleveland’s open mic circuit as a singer/songwriter and does an occasional gig at local coffee houses and bars. With a lot of help from some friends, he came out with a CD, “Wheels,” in 2014, and is currently at work on another recording project.

Dan & Debbie Drew are still traveling with Educational Opportunities Tours. In August, we did a cruise to Iceland, Norway, Netherlands, and Belgium! Rev. Rob Fuquay was our inspirational speaker, and we were able to tour with Bishop John and Elaine Hopkins, and Gary and Peggy Streiff! There were over 60 EO passengers from around the connection on the tour! Great fun experience!

### Central Valley District

**Mark & Linda George:** I’ve never officially given the information about my marriage in 2023. Linda and I were married at Church of the Lakes in Canton on January 14, 2023. We had known each other for 60 years at that

point, as she had been the teenage babysitter for our family, when I pastored in Newton Falls, and had become a close friend to my late wife, Gaynalee. We live in a senior living apartment complex in Green, Ohio, and are enjoying our combined families - they total 10 children, 31 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren (Linda has a large family! 😊) We are thankful to God for all He has done in our lives!

**Dick Smith** reports participation in the Central Valley (Youngstown Area) retiree group has steadily declined and I am “retiring” from leadership of this group. Therefore, the group will no longer meet on the 4th Thursday of the month. Perhaps a group inclusive of retired/serving pastors would be more viable. Most retired pastor’s I know are still serving in some capacity. Blessings to you all!

### Out of State

**Roger & Jacquie Talbot** are involved in Jews for Racial and Economic Justice here in NYC (you don’t have to be Jewish to belong.) I am writing a series on interfaith families for the Jewish Grandparents Network. Our son, Jim, is a convert. Our daughter-in-law is a rabbi, and, of course, their two kids are Jewish, so I am a Jew-ish grandparent.

**Yvonne & Tom Matus** have retired to Louisiana and are enjoying doing activities with our daughter, son in law, & granddaughters.

**Russ & Ellen Martin** write from Burlington, NC the garden is growing GREAT this year with hundreds of tomatoes to share. Huge zucchinis greeted us when we returned from our month-long vacation in the month of May. Ellen has made 48 loaves of Zucchini-nut bread to share at church and at Twin Lakes Community. Peppers are very abundant this year as well as cucumbers from which Ellen makes freezer pickles that last us the year. My garden is 12’ X 30’ and since I put up the fence to keep the deer and rabbits out, the produce has been abundant. In addition to gardening, I do all of the mechanical maintenance for the garden equipment (mowers, tillers, etc.). The temperature forecast to drop into the 70’s this weekend, I plan to take out all of the current plants and put in a late summer/autumn crop as the growing season here goes into late November.

I mentioned our month-long trip. Every ten years, Twin Lakes Community completely repaints each villa and puts down new tiles in the kitchen and bathrooms. Our 1700 sq. ft. villa looks great after we changed the color palette, took up some carpet in favor of hardwood and had our own



choice of carpet installed (Twin Lakes offers 4 choices, none of which Ellen like.) During the month of renovation, residents are moved to an apartment on campus. We decided to travel instead spending a week at the beach with Ohio friends, a week in Lancaster, PA exploring the Dutch country and a week in Boston where Ellen grew up. An amazing time!

I continue to be involved in our local church but no longer serving on the Boards or Committees. I led a Capital Funds Campaign last spring realizing our goal of \$500K. I also took on the role of Democratic Precinct chair for the precinct which encompasses the 213-acre campus of Twin Lakes with nearly 800 residents. Never having done political organizing, the learning curve is steep, but fortunately there are many knowledgeable helpers in Burlington and at TLC. We are working to turn a red county blue by 2026.

Ellen continues with her church involvement, having chaired the Hospitality Committee for two very successful years. She continues to play handbells at both church and at TLC. She also does meal delivery on campus at lunch every week. She is chair of the Prayer Shawl group at church which produces and distributes 6 – 10

prayer shawl per month to parishioners, members of the Burlington/Greensboro community and TLC residents. The Prayer Shawl ministry has been a true healing blessing for so many.

Our daughter Sarah recently received her second Masters in Nursing and is now a Nurse Practitioner with the family practice physician near Burlington. After 20+ years of Hospice/Palliative care nursing, she decided she wanted to go into a therapeutic nursing field which requires another two years of study and clinical work which she did while working 13-hour shifts on weekends at the Hospice House. She graduated from UNC-Greensboro in May, passed her state boards, and is enjoying seeing new patients daily. Carmen, Sarah's daughter, will be entering her senior year at The Burlington School (a private school). She excels in music by singing soprano parts in the choir and dramas (she starred in Beetlejuice this spring). She was able to attend a three-week vocal music intensive at the UNC School for the Arts in Winston Salem in June/July. She and Sarah are now travelling to see colleges and universities – they were at BWU this summer – hoping to get applications in in September.

Steve, Trinity and their three daughters (Evvy, Gwen, and Harper) are still in the Spanish

emersion program in their school near Charlotte. They speak Spanish often at home as both Steve and Trinity have become fluent as well. Currently they are in Canada visiting Prince Edward Island after having travelled leisurely up the east coast. Ellen and I are dog-sitting their two French bulldogs.

That's about all for now. Blessings to our Ohio colleagues.

**Chuck & Gerry Hofmeister** write that while the Fall TOAT is being put together they will be sailing the 5 Great Lakes on a Victory Cruise. The 11-day package starts in Chicago, ends in Toronto (Canada, not Ohio), and stops at major ports along the way. From Toronto we have reservations to fly to Edmonton, AB to see our daughter and family. After that we plan to stop in Burbank, California to see Gerry's sister and brother-in-law. Finally, we come back home to Texas. It's an ambitious undertaking for folks our age, but with the Lord's help, we'll make it.

**O. French Ball** states my news is that I have moved to an independent-living retirement community. My new address is 632 Highway 70 S Nashville 37221, Apt. 342.

**Everett (Ev) Stoddard** (retired in 2019) has continued to enjoy traveling with Burke's Christian Tours of North Carolina going to the

West Coast this summer as well as a “cowboy” trip to Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota. I have also gone a couple times to near Las Vegas (Henderson, NV) where his eldest daughter, Kara, and her family recently moved. This fall I’ll be a Table Leader at Emmaus of the Central Carolinas while continuing to live in Gastonia, NC leading Bible studies, adult Sunday School and offer worship for a nursing care center there.

**Ken Ehrman** reports **Sally Dyck** and I have now lived in Napa, California, for over five years. The Napa First United Methodist Church is a dynamic congregation where we are invested in the people, mission, programs, and worship. In addition to volunteering at church, we read, hike, walk, bike (Ken), run (Sally), kayak, garden, and occasionally, take a trip. I’m looking forward to being at Westlake UMC for their 200th Anniversary Celebration this September.

**John & Francie Dailey** have been living in Durham, NC since December 2022. Our son, Micah, is a PhD candidate in genetics at Duke, completing his fifth year in the program. We are very pleased to be living close by, and especially now as our first grandchild, a girl, will be arriving in the next month. John has continued to have health challenges but keeps on facing them. Many of you will

remember when he received a bone marrow transplant in 1999. His younger brother Ted was the donor, and this spring Ted went home to the Lord. The day of the transplant our beloved colleague, Bob Kuntz, came to the hospital and prayed with us. In June Bob and Libby led the graveside service for Ted in North Canton. It was such a blessing for the family to have that gift. John was in the hospital at the time but was able to join us via FaceTime. The present concern for John is a septic knee. He had a second surgery to clean out infection on July 28<sup>th</sup>, and has not returned to a rehabilitation facility as the knee heals and he received OT and PT care. His first surgery was on Father’s Day, so this has been a long process already.

John retired from a twelve-year part-time appointment in sweet county church north of Baltimore, MD, just a few months before our move. Since the move, due to his immunosuppression, most of the time we worship via livestream at Duke Chapel. The services are such a blessing, although we miss being part of a church community. We will always think of East Ohio as our home and think about you, our colleagues, so often. We are glad to get your updates in The Old Apple Tree. God bless each of you.

The deadline for submitting materials to be included in the 2026 Winter Issue of TOAT is December 15, 2025. Submit materials to [paulw2800@gmail.com](mailto:paulw2800@gmail.com)

## THE OLD APPLE TREE

**Compiled by the TOAT Editor  
from the East Ohio  
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North Canton, OH 44720  
800-831-3972

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East Ohio Conference UMC  
PO Box 2800  
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Please keep in prayer the families of the following retirees who have entered the church triumphant since our last reporting May 1, 2025:

**Duane C. Hetzer**, *retired Elder*, died April 6.

**Joel K. Greenberg**, *spouse of Pastor Sandi Dennis-Greenberg*, died April 29.

**Joanie M. Ready**, *surviving spouse of the Rev. Charles Ready*, died May 22.

**Patricia Reiter**, *retired Associate Member*, died June 10.

**Ruth D. Williams**, *surviving spouse of the Rev. Deane R. Williams*, died June 25.

**Violet Wetzel**, *surviving spouse of the Rev. Fred Gaston*, died June 26.

**Edna Juanita Gardner**, *surviving spouse of the Rev. James C. Gardner*, died June 26.

**Chester C. Rupert**, *retired Associate Member*, died July 13.

**Elizabeth D. Stone**, *retired Clergy*, died July 26.

**Joyce L. George**, *clergy spouse of the Rev. P. Douglas George*, died July 29.

(Please note that a family member should contact the bishop's office at time of a death. Send notices to Melissa McGee at [mmcgee@eocumc.com](mailto:mmcgee@eocumc.com)).