

The Old Apple Tree



*East Ohio Conference Retirees Association
Fall 2026*

2026 Retiree Association Annual Gathering

The 2026 Retiree Gathering Luncheon and Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, October 8, at Ashland University. This is a time to recognize the 2026 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 either email or snail mail recently. If you did not receive a form and wish to attend, please contact Paul White at paulw2800@gmail.com. Reservations are due by September 20.



Message from Bishop Jung

Dear Retired Clergy and Spouses of East Ohio,



As I continue to serve the churches you have loved, led, prayed for, and strengthened through the years, I am deeply grateful for the sacred legacy you have entrusted to us. Wherever I travel across East Ohio, I continue to encounter the fruit of your ministry, and I carry profound respect and affection for you.

The Church today faces realities that are different from those of earlier generations. Our cultural context is changing rapidly, and many congregations are navigating uncertainty, transition, and new challenges. Yet I remain convinced that the sacred traditions of East Ohio—faithful discipleship, connection, mission, prayer, and love for Christ and neighbor—remain strong foundations for our future.

As we move toward 2027, I ask especially for your prayers.

Please pray that our local churches may become ever more deeply **rooted in the love of Christ and abounding in hope**, with courage to live the Gospel boldly in their communities. Pray that our clergy and laity may grow in unity of heart, spiritual vitality, and confidence that the Church of Jesus Christ can still be a transforming presence in the world.

I also ask for your prayerful support as East Ohio and West Ohio continue discerning a possible future as One Ohio. May this journey honor the history and strengths of both conferences and remain deeply rooted in the spiritual heritage of our United Methodist connection. May we listen well, discern faithfully, and follow where the Holy Spirit leads.

Your prayers, wisdom, and continuing witness remain a gift to the Church. I pray also for you—that your days may be filled with health, gratitude, peace, and the abiding joy of knowing that the seeds you have planted continue to bear fruit.

Thank you for continuing to walk with us in prayer.

Rooted in Love, Abounding in Hope.
Grace and peace,
Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

From the Conference Benefits Office

Hi Lovely Retirees!!

I hope your summer has been going well. I can't believe it's August already. Where does the time go?

As you know, you all received a 5% premium increase onto your healthcare premium in 2026. The full increase was 15%, so the Board of Pension made the decision to take on the additional 10% of the 15% increase.

We will, however, need to increase the retiree premiums by 15% in 2027. This means if you are currently billed \$104.10/month (the maximum 30% of the premium), your new premium will be \$119.70/month. It has certainly been quite a task trying to maneuver through the growing costs of healthcare.

The good news is ... there will be NO MEDICAL DESIGN CHANGES in 2027. You will still get the great coverage you have always received.

Please remember, if you have not already done so, you can set up an account at www.UHCRetiree.com. Don't forget ... the plan offers:

- **\$0 copay** for home-delivered meals, transportation to medical appointments and the pharmacy, and non-medical personal care to assist with daily activities after a hospital stay or skilled nursing facility.
- **Earn Rewards** to spend on eligible items like gifts, clothing, groceries and more.
- **Free delivery with Optum Home Delivery Pharmacy** for prescriptions you take regularly.
- **Free standard gym membership** at participating locations
- **Free United Healthcare HouseCalls visit** from one of our licensed health care practitioners.
- **Free hearing exam** and \$500 allowance to spend on a broad selection of hearing aids.
- **Medicare Advantage's largest national provider network**

- **Special programs to help you** if you are living with a chronic disease, like diabetes or heart disease, or other complex health needs.
- **Free diabetic supplies** like continuous glucose monitors, needles and test strips

Please take advantage of all these wonderful services!!

There will, however, be a few changes in prescription co-pays and deductibles for 2027.

	2026	2027
Tier 1 Generic Copay	\$15/month	\$20/month
All other co-pays remain the same		
	Members pay 100% of cost sharing until they reach	
	2026	2027
Deductible	\$650	\$700
Initial Coverage Limit	Members pay 25% of cost sharing until they reach	
	\$2100	\$2400
Catastrophic Phase Begins	Members pay 0% out of pocket of cost sharing after reaching	
	\$2100	\$2400

If you would like to know what your premium will be in 2027, do not hesitate to contact me at 330-499-3972, Ext. 151 or email at robin@eocumc.com.

Love you all!
Robin Whitacre
Director of Benefits

Financial Resource



reflects Christian stewardship.

Recently the conference office received information about a resource whose purpose is to provide financial assistance to retired Christian faith leaders and their families who are experiencing financial, medical, or other hardships. In particular, The Shepherd's Fund exists to walk alongside retired pastors and missionaries during seasons of hardship, offering support that preserves dignity, affirms faithful service, and

Eligible expenses, not fully covered by insurance, may include:

- Medical bills
- Hospitalization and surgery costs
- Prescription medications
- Medical equipment (e.g., mobility aids, oxygen, hearing aids)
- Vision or dental care expenses
- Mental health counseling or therapy
- Diagnostic tests and procedures
- Skilled nursing care or home health services

- Long-term care expenses directly related to medical necessity
- Medical travel expenses (when medically required)

Retirement can sometimes bring unexpected costs that place added strain on fixed incomes. These expenses may also be considered, including:

- Essential living expenses directly impacted by medical hardship (e.g., utilities, housing costs)
- Emergency expenses directly resulting from illness or disability
- Other costs clearly tied to sustaining basic needs during any hardship event

All requests must be supported by invoices or receipts. Approved applicants may qualify for up to \$25,000 in lifetime assistance, ideally used over multiple years to support needs as they arise. Eligibility and financial qualification are reviewed at least once every twelve months, after which additional documentation for qualifying expenses may be submitted throughout the year.

All applications, and any requests for help completing them, can be directed to The Shepherd's Fund office. For the fastest processing, we strongly encourage online submissions.

Website: www.theshepherdsfund.org

Email: support@theshepherdsfund.org

Phone: (844)-253-9870.

Mailing Address:

1859 Northgate Blvd.

Sarasota, FL 34234



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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

Steven & Linda Brown appreciate all the prayers and support since she was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma in May 2024. She had 15 months of mild, weekly chemo and spent 18 days at the James Cancer Hospital in July 2025, but we are thrilled that she's been in remission since October 2025 and the doctors are optimistic. In June 2026 we took a trip to Iceland which included a few days in Amsterdam and the highlight of the trip was to spend time at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. All's well, and thanks for all the concerns and prayers.

Rebecca & John Innerst: We are enjoying our new home at Otterbein Marble-head! We moved here in April after 50 years in our home near Sebring. Our daughter, who is VP of Advancements and Marketing in Lakeside wanted us to be near her and her family; we decided to right size our home, put it on the

market, selected the furniture we wanted in our patio home and within a month the move happened. We are enjoying all the activities Otterbein offers, Lakeside, and of course our new golf cart to run to our daughters and all the summer fun this area offers. Otterbein is a very warm, friendly community with a very personable staff who calls all of us by name. We have enjoyed the beauty of Lake Erie sunsets, and the woods and flowers that grace our campus. Both our children are glad we made the decision and they didn't have to for us. We are enjoying our new home, family coming and going and knowing Gretchen and Joe are close, and Brad's drive has been shortened from Wisconsin. Our advice- enjoy retirement in a planned senior community and enjoy no yard work, no home repairs and lunch and supper cooked and served at The Bistro! Keeps our kitchen clean! Blessed to be a blessing!

Tammy Wilden is serving as a chaplain three days a week at Marion General Hospital. She

enjoys serving in leadership for the Ohio Candidacy Summit and as a mentor for those exploring their call. **Phil Wilden** spends quite a bit of time with lawncare and a vegetable garden and visiting his parents in Coshocton County.

Andy & Gail Angel: Our lives shifted into a much lower gear in February as Andy learned he had cancer spreading to his bones and Gail learned of orthopedic issues in her lower back and knee. We quietly celebrated our 40th anniversary in May after Andy had a rod put next to his femur and then had radiation therapy on the cancer there. It's a good thing we celebrated our 25th anniversary with a party at the Candlewood Lake Lodge. One dear memory was Bill & Judy McCartney attending and Judy exclaiming: “So, this is your Lakeside!” One of the chemo pills Andy takes lowers his hemoglobin, so that he gets out of breath as his pulse races with minimal exertion. Since we got a Dalmatian puppy in December, Gail has been

walking the dog, watering the garden and all. We're thankful for many prayers and great neighbors and family support! By the time you read this, Andy should have gotten his 2nd PET scan, and we hope results are encouraging.

Northern Waters District

Stan & Carol Wallace rejoiced at three grandchildren graduations. Chloe came back from Barcelona with a Masters degree and immediately got a job in Cleveland, which she loves. Jackson and Sarah graduated from High School in Seattle and are headed to Western Washington University. They spent a week with Papa and Grandma which included their annual trip to Cedar Point, swimming, playing games, eating and enjoying the time together.

Dan & Debbie Drew sold their Lakeside Cottage, after 21 years of joy, relaxation, hosting parties and renting it to many families. It was a lot of work and yet it opened us to many relationships with other Lakeside residence and visitors. We did three major remodeling projects, so it is really not the same cottage as the one we bought. We enjoyed parties and open houses during Conference weeks, and at other times of

the year. We cherish many letters and notes from renters and their experiences at the Chatauqua on Lake Erie. But there comes a time when two houses and two yards to care for are more can be done. We did sell it on the open market and are delighted that another clergy family from West Ohio, purchased it, and they are enjoying and sharing it now with others. Blessings to all!

Paul & Linda Beal are well. We have had a nice summer so far. Our 23-year-old granddaughter, Ryan, and her boyfriend, Erik, who lives in Minneapolis, visited us which was a treat. We mourn the death of friends Bonnie Magaw, Blake Wagner, and Ben Black. We look forward to the fall with the change of seasons, lots of football and our EOC retiree gathering in October. Best wishes to all.

Linda Short: On Sunday, August 2, the UMC of Berea Celebrated 70 years of women being ordained in the Methodist Church. Rev. Carrie Antczak designed a worship service that included History, women sharing about their ministries, music composed by women and Holy Communion. Those participating included active appointed Licensed Local Pastors Megan Buehler and Jennifer Darling Mellott; Deacon Carrie Antczak;

Retired Elders Sharon Carson and Jan Yandell; Elder on Medical leave, Karen Wolcott; retired Deacons Linda Short and Linda McCowen; retired Deaconesses Karen Caldwell and Sherrie Buehl and to represent the future, seminarian Lori Hanson.

Preacher: "Please take it easy on the bill for repairing my car. Remember, I am a poor preacher."
Mechanic: "I know, I heard you on Sunday."

Central Valley District

Pam & Randy Monteith: We celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary by cruising to Iceland (yes! we saw puffins, one of God's most adorable creatures!), Norway, Scotland, and England. After the cruise, we traveled to London and then on to Paris. We encountered a Paris' heat wave of 106 degrees. The day before our many months earlier reservation for dinner in the Eiffel Tower, we received an email canceling the dinner -- the Eiffel Tower was going to be closed early because of the heat! Instead, Randy booked a champagne dinner on an air-conditioned Seine River boat for our last night. Thanks be

to God for the gifts of life and love.

Out of Conference

Dale & Nancy Sanford are well and living at a National Church Residence, 120 E Stafford in Worthington, Ohio. Across the street is a JR. Hi Soccer field and tonight they have a band concert. The energy is awesome. Hope all of you are well.

Out of State

Bill & Ginny Norman write Dear East Ohio friends, Coming from New Mexico for an Ohio visit, Ginny and I do hope to be at the gathering at Ashland University in October. It will be great to see you. Ginny and I are in pretty good condition for octogenarians. The high desert is generally agreeable to us, but it is plenty hot now in July-August. Since 2013, It is good to be living in White Rock, near Ben, Deb and Grace, now 15, and taller than Grandpa Norman. She is thriving in Navy JrROTC. Our White Rock U.M. Church is doing OK after the recent challenges. We kept most of our people.



Embarrassing moments for scribes.

from *JoyfulNoiseletter.com*

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Conference Cane Holder

With the death of Charles Stoneburner at the age of 99, The Rev. Mark L. George now becomes the recipient of the Conference Cane.

Request from Conference Archivist

The Ohio Methodist Historical Society is a joint ministry of the West and East Ohio Commissions on Archives and History. The Society is seeking new members who are willing and able to share in the Ohio "ministry of memory". We would also be interested in ideas you may have to enhance our work. If you are interested in helping to preserve our rich denominational history, please contact Rev. Don Trigg The Ohio Methodist Historical Society is a joint ministry of the West and East Ohio Commissions on Archives and History. The Society is seeking new members who are willing and able to share in the Ohio "ministry of memory". We would also be

interested in ideas you may have to enhance our work. If you are interested in helping to preserve our rich denominational history, please contact Rev. Don Trigg for more information. Thank You. (DLT419@aol.com)

The deadline for submitting materials to be included in the 2027 Winter Issue of TOAT is December 15, 2026. Submit materials to
paulw2800@gmail.com

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from the East Ohio
Conference Retirees
Association**

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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, 2026:

Ruth Ann Cunningham, *spouse of the Rev. Harvey Cunningham*, died August 5, 2025.

Charles Stoneburner, *retired Elder*, died February 22. At age 99, he was the Conference Cane holder.

Elizabeth Ury, *surviving spouse of the Rev. William Ury*, died March 4.

Julie L. Corwin, *surviving spouse of Pastor Mike Corwin*, died April 6.

John D. Peterson, *retired Elder*, died April 27.

Clarence E. Neth Jr., *retired Elder*, died May 1.

George F. Shiltz, *retired Elder*, died May 7.

Dan Jenkins, *Honorable Location retired clergy*, died May 14.

Dale E. Epple, *retired Elder*, died May 15.

Constance Dieterich, *surviving spouse of the Rev. Robert R. Dieterich*, died May 19.

Anne E. Statz, *spouse of the Rev. Christopher Statz*, died May 21.

Colleen Gilrane, *spouse of the Rev. Michael O'Donnell*, died June 10.

Shirley E. Sackett, *surviving spouse of the Rev. Gene H. Sackett*, died June 19.

Bonnie Magaw, *spouse of the Rev. James Magaw*, died July 4.

Blake D. Wagner, Sr., *retired Elder*, died July 28.

Benjamin J. Black III, *retired Elder*, 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).