

The Old Apple Tree



*East Ohio Conference Retirees Association
Winter 2025*

2024 Retiree Association Annual Gathering



Over 125 retirees enjoyed a delicious meal, a great time of fellowship with one another, and a program filled with stories and laughter about our years in ministry when we gathered for our Annual Gathering at Ashland University in October. We welcomed and introduced the 2024 Retiring Class who joined us for the first time. The feedback and evaluations proclaimed it a wonderful time of gathering. Mark your calendars for October 9, 2025, next Annual Gathering. Details of this gathering will be available in the spring.

Officers and new Board Members were also elected during the Annual Meeting part of the Gathering. Those elected to serve for 2024-25 are:

President: Paul White; Vice President: Pam Monteith; Secretary: Peg Welch; Treasurer: David Mansperger; West Plains Representative: Bill McCartney; Northern Waters Representative: Gary Streiff; Central Valley Representative: John Ferris; South Forest Representative: Walt Jones; and At-Large Representatives: Lorraine George, Darlene Robinson; Lee Ann Dunlap, Gail Angel, Marilyn Coney, and Marta Mathatas.

You may contact any of the Board Members with suggestions and ideas for our association.

Present Retiree Gatherings

At present there are three Retiree Gatherings (from our former ten districts) 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:

- Youngstown Area: meet once a month at the Eat-n-Park Restaurant for breakfast at 9:00 a.m. at 5451 Mahoning Ave., Austintown, OH; Contact Dick Smith at smithdsmith48@live.com for information.
- Coshocton Area: meet quarterly in the Coshocton area; Contact Martha Stuller at 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.
- 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 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) who will be willing to assist you in beginning such a gathering.

Letter from Conference Benefits Office

Hi EOC Retirees!!

As you know, medical costs have been increasing over the last several years, and your EOC Board of Benefits has tried very hard to keep costs the same for you. Unfortunately, administrative costs will be increasing by 38% in 2025 for the East Ohio Conference. This resulted in a need to increase the premiums for our retirees, and make a few design changes, as we did not want to pass this full 38% increase to our retirees.

On October 28, 2024, the UHC 2025 Plan Design Changes were sent out by email or “snail” mail to all participants; however, I wanted to remind you of those details as well, so you are prepared for 2025.

The design changes are as follows:

- The Medical Deductible will be increasing from \$200 to **\$400**.
- The Prescription deductible will be increasing from \$150 to **\$250**.
- The Tier 1 Prescription Co-pay will be increasing from \$10 retail/\$20 mail (2024) to **\$15 retail/\$30 mail (2025)**.
- The total Out-of-Pocket will now be **\$2000 in 2025** (previously \$1500).
- The increase in premiums for retirees will increase by 10% in 2025. Example: The \$90/month premium will now be \$99/month.

If you would like to know what your premium will be, please contact me, and I will be happy to give you that information.

Also – please remember – the opportunity is available to purchase Dental or Eyecare benefits. Dental is through MetLife, and Eyecare is through EyeMed. If you would like information on one or both

plans, please give me a call, and I will send you the flyers for you to review. Payment for these programs can be made through the provider.

And ...If you have never created an account for your Medicare Advantage Plan, you may do so at retiree.uhc.com. There are MANY great perks to your UHC Medical Advantage Plan which you would want to take advantage of!! **PLEASE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS WONDERFUL BENEFIT!!!**

I wish all of you a **Very Merry Christmas** and a fabulous **New Year!** God Bless you all!

Robin Whitacre
Benefits Manager – East Ohio Conference
330-499-3972, Ext. 151
robin@eocumc.com

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 Brown: I have been able to participate in the online Task Force on United Methodist Immigration Ministries in Ohio and encourage others to participate. The Task Force is facilitated by Deacon EmilyKvalheim@gmail.com, who is an immigration attorney. This is for both the East and West Ohio Conferences. Despite the current political climate, I think Christians have a moral obligation to assist with refugee resettlement.

Marta & DeLoe Mathatas had a great week in Portland, IR, visiting our youngest son, the Pacific Shore, and a couple of cousins. Our oldest, who is in construction, just finished 2 months of flood recovery work in North Carolina.

Northern Waters District

Larry & Cheryl Morrison: This past September/October we celebrated 20 years of mission work in greater Mumbai India, most specific-

ally the Maharashtra State, but also throughout South and Central India. 20 years ago, we formed the Vine and Branches India Ministry Foundation. The work of the Foundation was initially formed to provide fresh water for isolated villages beyond Mumbai, generally in the jungles. The Foundation has grown considerably through the support of local churches, and individual contributions. What was initially designed to provide freshwater has now grown to support the ministry of two local pastors, provide supplies for pre-school child-

ren, provide conferences for women, mothers, local pastors, and leaders. We have also had the privilege of building a church in the center of one of Mumbai's largest slum areas. It has truly been an exciting journey. We are now planning for and raising funds for the 2025 trip. Anyone interested in hearing about our experiences are welcomed to contact me at 330-418-7117, or lfm4merds@aol.com.

Paul & Linda Beal from Akron send holiday wishes to all our EOCUMC colleagues and families wherever you are. We hope you are doing as well as possible. Keep the faith despite the heartbreaking division in our beloved UMC churches, the lasting effects of Covid, and the results of the recent presidential election and the devastating destruction and loss of lives due to war, hurricanes and other catastrophes. The next four years will be a real test of our faithfulness: To our faith in God, the Church, and our beloved country. Blessings to you all.

Stories of a Lifetime by **Jerry D. Butcher** are now on Amazon Kindle Books. A third book of fifty stories, Stories of a Lifetime by Rev. Jerry Butcher, PhD is about growing up in West Virginia, his life as a pastor in the United Methodist Church in

Ohio, a Flyfisherman, and Bible teacher. The paperback version is available for \$16.47. Simple search, Jerry Butcher on Amazon. For a free PDF eBook contact the author at Texasmuzzy@gmail.com. His two books, Come Sit a Spell and Jesus Will Listen to My Stories are also available on Amazon.



Central Valley District

Coralee Cox performed the memorial service for a former clergy colleague and afterward the surviving spouse found his “Retired Clergy” pin and gave it to me. I, of course, have one of my own, but I am wondering if any of our retired clergy colleagues may have lost theirs and would like another one. I would happily mail it to them. If you would like this pin, you may contact Coralee by text at 330-428-0205 or emailing her at pastorcoralee@yahoo.com.

Beth McGuire: The Spiritual Life Committee at Copeland Oaks asked me to chair the committee when the previous chair stepped down. As is often the case I found out how much work is involved after I said yes. The committee does a lot of work. We have five Bible study groups, one that is televised on our in-house TV channel. We have an all-volunteer led weekly Sunday evening Vespers which broadcasts live throughout our campus. Unlike the local church we have a different preacher every week (consider this an invitation to come and preach here). We have both a chorale and a chimes choir who share their gifts at various services. We also have a team of volunteers that repurposes the live altar the flowers that go mostly to Crandall Medical Center, our skilled nursing unit, as well as our two memory care units. One of our District Superintendents, Rev. Edgar Brady, preached and co-officiated with me on World Communion Sunday (he is also the Bishop's representative on Copeland's Board of Trustees). During Advent we held a meet and greet for our new Bishop Hee-Soo Jung and his wife, Rev. Jung, when they visited our campus, and he preached at Vespers.



We are excited that after a long hiatus after our previous full-time chaplain retired that a part-time chaplain, David Kidd, joined the staff. It is a step in the right direction. He will bring the message to our February 2 vespers. On a personal note, my husband **David's** health issues prohibit any long distance traveling but we get out and about locally. In addition to various Copeland Oaks activities, we celebrate our weekly "date night". We just completed our 29th annual Christmas bird count (we do the driving count now), which coincidentally marks the same number of years we have been married.

South Forest District

Richard Hoover has again written the narration for the Coshocton Community Choir Christmas Festival Concert, which was held December 8, in the River View High School Auditorium. One hundred and fifty vocalists and instrumentalists provided a moving concert that day. On October 29, **Alice Hoover** portrayed Ruth Sheldon, the wife of the circuit rider who established the Caldersburg Methodist Episcopal Society in 1826 which would become the Roscoe United Methodist Church. She shared the story of the life of Henry Olcott Sheldon, a man of God, with

this congregation which will soon be 200 years old.

Out of State

Sam & Natalie Slack are happy to report that we did make the 53-day cruise to Japan, and we learned how large the Pacific Ocean is. Natalie and I visited the Japanese schools where we taught 65 years ago. Natalie's school was "Canadian Academy" located in Kobe, Japan. In 1995 an earthquake destroyed her school, but the school had moved its location to a man-made island in Kobe harbor in 1990. So, no students or faculty died in the earthquake as did 6,000 Japanese residents. My school, Chinzei Gakuin, has now added a university and has an exchange student relationship with Tennessee Wesleyan University. We were overwhelmed by the reception we received from both schools and invited to stay longer with them. We wished we could have but our cruise ship was only in port for one day! The wonderful welcome we received in Japan has encouraged me to work to increase the exchange opportunities between our two countries. I am working to raise money to get two Japanese bamboo flyrod makers to attend the "Carolina Cane Gathering" this March

(2025) in the North Carolina mountains and have mutual sharing of techniques in building bamboo flyrods. Both our countries have much to learn and share. And what fun it will be. Natalie and I encourage you to try some new international travels this year that connect you to the people of the visited country (countries). Our love to all.

Bill & Ginny Norman expect to keep residing in White Rock, on a plateau (6300 ft) in the high desert of northern New Mexico, as our son is a scientist at Los Alamos National Lab. He has been there since 2003. He and his wife Deb have a wonderful daughter Grace, who is 13, in grade 8, and taller than me. Her mom is tall. We are generally healthy for being 80+. Bill is dealing with bone marrow issues and anemia. Ginny has had a good recovery from a knee replacement. We miss so many people in Ohio and the East Ohio Conference, and we cherish most of the memories. Inflation is affecting our ability to travel after 17(!) years of retirement. May God bless all of you.

Marta Mathatas talked to **Jim Cox** in early November. They were neighbors in Arizona to a couple of college friends who saw Marta at Cornell's Homecoming and wanted her to re-connect with them. **Jim**

& Kate are back in Michigan, Kate's home state, near Dearborn. Jim is in Senior Living there, and they hope Kate can join him soon. Following extensive back surgery in October 2023, Kate fought her way back from near paralysis to walking with a walker. They had been told it would take at least a year, so she is on track in her road to recovery.

Valentine Treats



"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is okay." – Danny, 8

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well." – Tommy, 6

"Love is when my older sister gives me her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones." – Lauren, 4

"There are two kinds of love. Our love. God's love. But God makes both kinds." – Jenny, 4

"To love is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart

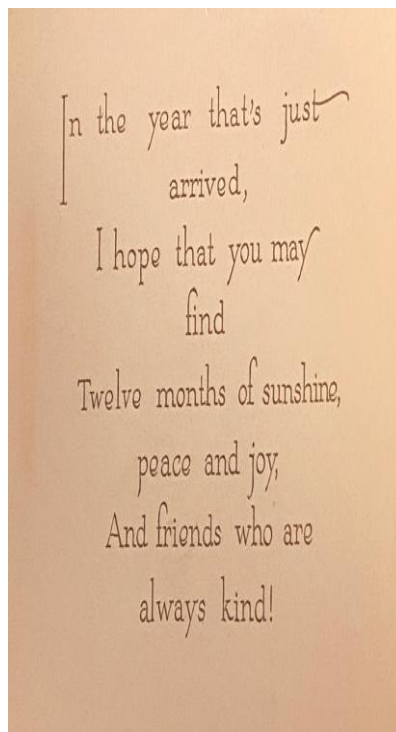
will certainly be broken. If you want to be sure of keeping it intact, you must give it to no one." – C.S. Lewis

"Your faithful love is priceless, God! Humanity finds refuge in the shadow of your winds." – Psalm 36:7

"This is how everyone will know you are my disciples, when you love each other." – John 13:35

"The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love." – 1 John 4:8

From The Joyful Noiseletter
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— early 1900s greeting card

The deadline for submitting materials to be included in the 2025 Spring Issue of TOAT is April 15, 2025. Submit materials to paulw2800@gmail.com

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Association

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If you are willing to receive future TOAT editions by email, please notify paulw2800@gmail.com if you have not already done so.



MLK Day, January 20

Carving a Tunnel of Hope

"It really doesn't matter what happens now. I don't know what will happen now — we've got some difficult days ahead — because I've been to the mountaintop.

"Like anybody I would like to live a long life; longevity has its place, but I am not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will, and He's allowed me to go up the mountain, and I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land.

"And I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. I have the dream this afternoon that the brotherhood of man will become a reality. With this faith, I will go out and carve a tunnel of hope from the mountain of despair.

"With this faith, we will be able to achieve this new day, when all of God's children — black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics — will be able to join hands and sing with Negroes in the spiritual of old, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty we are free at last.'"*

** Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., from his speech made to the sanitation workers of Memphis, Tenn., on April 3, 1968, the night before he was assassinated.*

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Please keep in prayer the families of the following retirees who have entered the church triumphant since our last reporting September 1, 2024:

Phyllis Jean Bell, *spouse of retired Rev. Gerald Bell*, died August 8.

Cathleen Poremba, *spouse of retired Rev. Tom Poremba*, died September 3

David M. Lynn, *retired Elder*, died September 12.

DeForest L. Winner, *retired Elder*, died September 25.

David Blood, *retired Elder*, died November 6.

Dennis Hartman, *retired Elder*, died November 15.

Richard W. Smith, Sr., *retired Elder*, died November 21.

Neal Malicky, *retired Elder*, died November 22.

David Rinkes died November 28.

(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).