

Conference Council Moderator's Report – 2018

David Mehl

Maybe the desire to make something beautiful is the piece of God that is inside each of us.
– Mary Oliver

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we ought to love one another. – 1 John 4:11

Reflecting on 2017 and early 2018, the Missouri Mid-South Conference is a dynamic thing – a complex, sprawling, faith-based, unfinished entity that embodies *the desire to make something beautiful – that piece of God that is inside each of us*. The heart of the Conference is its people – gifted, dedicated, and faithful – whose reports herein sing praises to God, who loves us so much.

Celebrate our standing committees: **Leadership & Program, Finance & Administration, Local Church Ministries and Wider Church Ministries**. Through these committees, the Conference Council carries out much of its work. Our standing committees also have the responsibility to support, encourage and hold accountable our covenanted ministries. As we change our culture from a Conference office-centered culture, to an effective web of sustainable networks, these relationships will need continued nurture. In early 2018, the Finance & Administration Committee is implementing an excellent plan to administer funds for our covenanted ministries so each knows how much money they have to spend each year from available accounts. This newly-working template will energize these ministries among us.

Celebrate our growing covenanted ministries: **Ambassadors, Communications, OCWM, Church Vitality, Older Adult, Youth, Committee on Ministry, Justice & Witness, MoVal, Shannondale, and Heritage**. They serve as the leading edges of our shared work. They are meant to be nimble, creative, collaborative, action-oriented groups that facilitate our *desire to make something beautiful*. Conference Council has stepped up its oversight to support these ministries, to evaluate their effectiveness, and to envision new expressions as we live into our strategic plan. As the **Vision Implementation Team** completes its charge, we celebrate their persistence. Our Conference networking, covenanted ministry model is beginning to flourish because of their guidance through the strategic planning process and its implementation. Thank you, VIT leaders! We thank and decommission them during the final CAG worship this year.

Recall the tough place we found ourselves at the end of 2016 and into early 2017. Conference Council redoubled its efforts to support a robust OCWM Covenanted Ministry and a Friends of the Conference program. The OCWM Team is doing a good job of reaching out to pastors and congregations, clearly saying that we're listening, we care – and we need one another. Thanks to Lorin Cope, Nancy Litzinger and others who continue to help us live into the model of a web of loving relationships.

Celebrate **Shannondale and Mo-Val** – gems of this Conference. Thanks to the fine leadership of Jeff Fulk and Jeremy Force and their staffs and Covenanted Ministries which serve our UCC family and their surrounding communities. Our carbon credit program is an unfolding resource – we've not yet seen these leafy assets reach our bottom financial line, due to a lack of demand in the marketplace. Its day will come. Our sincere thanks to Jeff Fulk, whose vision and sustained leadership have paved the way for Nate Fulk's strong interim work. Our love to Jeff and Laurie as they open a new chapter at Saron UCC in Indiana. Our prayers and encouragement to Jeremy

Force and the MoVal Covenanted Ministry team as they initiate a discernment process across the Conference about the future of Camp MoVal. Watch for opportunities to engage in conversations about new models for our shared future in coming years.

Celebrate our other hard-working **Conference staff** – Conference Minister Ginny Brown Daniel, who continues to bring vision, love of the gospel and bubbling enthusiasm to this regional work. Thanks to ACM, Dale Parson, who for many years was a prophetic voice, pastoral companion, and a faithful counsellor in our many expressions. Our good wishes to Dale and Deb now in retirement. Thanks to Nia Chandler and Tyler Connoley, who've stepped into leadership with creativity as we learn to live into our still-emerging Conference structure. Thanks to Lorraine Brooks, bookkeeper, for her steady presence. Special gratitude to Conference attorney, Mike McKee, an incredible source of institutional memory about the life of this Conference for more than three decades. Welcome to Courtney Chandler, our able Youth Coordinator and Cindy Birkner, Youth Ministry Resources. Welcome to Kathleen (Kathie) Rainey, our Office Manager, and Lorna Hale, our Data Management Specialist. Thanks to Gail Rosenberg for her brief but excellent presence as Office Manager. Truly gifted folks! Our common life depends on a widely-shared energy. Our staff can't do it all. So we, of both necessity and grace, become more resourceful, creative and courageous as we discover new ways to be Christ's church.

Thanks to **Conference Council** members – dedicated leaders who serve also on a Standing Committee and as liaison to a Covenanted Ministry. Thanks to our Executive Committee – Vice Moderator Chase Peeples, Treasurer David Rauch and Secretary Rhonda Stocklausner – who have teamed with me so ably. As a new Executive Committee steps forward, we offer our full support. We are blessed with Chase Peeples, Donna Smith-Pupillo, Les Kemp and David Rauch.

Thanks to our **Council for Health and Human Services (CHHSM) agencies** in the Conference – and see their report in this year's CAG materials. We are fortunate to have them among us as partners in ministry. We can learn a lot from their faithful resilience and organizational savvy.

And thanks to the **Conference Annual Gathering Planning Team**, under the leadership of Rick Oberle and Jane Porchey, who, with a growing collaborative leadership team, have outdone themselves again in creating a wonderful 2018 Annual Gathering. Bravo to all!

It has been my joy and high honor to serve as Moderator during these amazing years of change and challenge. Thank you all for your advice, encouragement and love. God continues to call us into loving relationships that show forth God's own gracious love for us. So let us love one another *since God loves us so much*. Beloved friends and followers of Jesus, let's continue to *make something beautiful* of the **Missouri Mid-South Conference, UCC!**