

LISTENING SESSIONS



SELECTED REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS

- What does the Conference do?
 - *What does judicatory mean?*
 - There is a lack of a well-articulated mission
 - *Staff specialists less important than personnel who know where to find resources and models*
 - Personal and small group relationships are needed to sustain the vitality of the settings
 - *Authorization and support for ministers and ministries is paramount*
 - Effective communication
 - *Meet needs of local church*
 - Focus on local churches and clergy
 - *Connect churches*
 - Most frequent reference to what “conference” does is outdoor ministry (not faith formation); less frequently, ecumenical relationships; even less stated to serve as link to national setting; and hardly ever, link to global work of the UCC
- **Other references:**
German partnership (but not with much understanding of what that is), disaster response, provide the lead on social justice/prophetic witness concerns
- *Establish sense of identity*
 - Tendency to allow “Synod issues” to divide or separate congregations/clergy
 - *Could associations absorb tasks covered by conference*
 - Need “regional” leadership to help connect and resource congregations
 - *Need educational resources/leadership from wider setting*
 - Develop a “community of ministries” – to avoid lone rangers or isolation
 - *Most common impression of “wider church” is that it asks for money*
 - Reduce overhead, eliminate duplication of services which could be managed regionally
 - *Contemporary cultural pressures reduces willingness of volunteers to serve locally or in wider church responsibilities*
 - Discover and highlight opportunities for collaboration
 - *Build a culture of trust*
 - Determine who has “the real say”
 - *Concerned but unspecific about how or why geographic boundaries are established*
 - Perception is that younger persons do not care about structure or “institution of the church.” They want to “do” something, and give to what interests them
 - *Accept that whatever grows out of all this discernment will not likely be perfect*
 - Less discernment and more decisions
-
-

SPECIFIC and NOTABLE REMARKS from Listening Sessions

“We tend to use a medical model of illness and churches call when they are ill. Judicatory needs to prevent illness. Should not do things that are best done at the local church.”

“We need a clear cut goal that catches people’s imagination. What wcan e focus on for three years, five ears....?”

“What is the future of the UCC? Is it primarily social justice focused?”

“Local churches need to know and value what the judicaotry does. (But) You can’t take for granted that the dollars will come in”

“I am troubled by the thought that the conference is here exclusively to serve the churches. What about our witness to the world.”

“make a choice between fear and opportunity”

“We aren’t sufficiently tolerant of failure. There are times when we don’t try again when something doesn’t work well the first time.”

Participation in outdoor ministry is often a challenge for small churches because there are so few children and there aren’t people going to camp that they know”

“Will there be a ‘first responder’ team for crises in the local church.?”

“Form and structure don’t matter if it doesn’t improve and strengthen the relationships with the local churches.”

“We need to take pride in the United Church of Christ.”

“It is very important for the Vision Team to stay in touch with clergy and lay people, so that when a proposal is presented at the Annual Gathering people have had a chance to consider and respond.”

Formerly, program districts were built to maintain connections... Conference is too big for there to be close relationships. Groupings into “areas” have mostly dissolved..

“Judicatories need to help me connect with others; resources that I need are for better use of social media in sharing information.

“Need opportunities to bring conference/associations/churches together to share common vision and goal.”

“Think about including other denominations. Link up and join together with like-minded churches. Think outside the denominational box”

“What if we let things go with no change? What if we let things die a natural death?”

“The goal statement is too good to be true. People are reluctant to give up authority and control.”

“The goal statement doesn’t include any reference to God or Christ. We need to be clear about being ‘Christ-centered.’”

“Consider returning to programs to orient all incoming clergy to history, ‘distinctions of’ the Ohio /WV/NK experience of the UCC.”

“Not always necessary to be surrounded by professional specialists, but by persons who know where the resources and expertise are.”

“Decline of clergy collegiality – very few clergy attend ordinations and installations of others.”

“There is an apathy in Ohio that isn’t seen in other conferences.”

“what has kept us from having ‘ideal’ judicatories is (the need for) a balancing of autonomy and covenant, and the 1950s/1960s structure developed as a political compromise at the time of the formation of the UCC in Ohio.”

WHAT SHOULD A JUDICATORY DO

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH

(* comments noted frequently; other comments noted more than once;)

*Educational resources

*IT support, recommendations, training

*Outdoor ministries

*Pastoral support

*Relationships – repeated often in various ways

*Respond to the needs of local setting

*Search and call, authorizations

*Specialized resources for church vitality, safe church, fund development

Be the connective tissue

Ceremonial functions

Collaboration with other denominations

Crisis management

Faith formation leadership

Legal support

Market place of ideas

Mission - mobilizing churches to respond

Purchasing power

Relationship to smaller congregations in smaller communities or open country church growth,

Resource the community in areas like ONA, crisis response, stewardship, financial management

social justice, prophetic voice, and training events

Listening sessions page 3

WHAT SHOULD THIS ENTITY/COMMUNITY BE CALLED THAT IS INCLUSIVE?

River Conference

Jack (like Jack Be Nimble)

NOW (Northern Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia) or WOK (Wv, OH, NKy)

Regional support and services

Couldn't care less

The Heart of it all

The Great Lakes Conference

Ohio River Valley

Templed Hills Conference

The Pilgrim conference

Tri-State Conference

The Grace Conference

The Nimble conference

Freshwater Conference



EMAIL RESPONSES

(full statements as received via email)

...it is evident to me that so many other places in the church and beyond do a much better job of celebrating, with great joy, the successes of their leaders and growing communities.

One last thought, the three categories we were asked to reflect on was missing a huge fourth category. In this denomination we have given up on church growth. It's so sad. All of the categories could be boiled down into management and protection of resources. Without evangelism and growth we have no future.

So what's the point?

If we don't believe enough in our denomination to list growth as one of the key features for this conference, we have simply become a triage unit in a battlefield hospital taking care of dying patients. Is that how we see our church? I think in most corners of the wider church that's how we see it....

Church growth drives stewardship and OCWM. Simple as that. If the church shrinks stewardship and OCWM shrink with it. You can create any number of equations for this conference, any structures you like, but without growth in the next 20 years we will shrink to a size that no one recognizes us as relevant in any way, shape or form.

Please pass these reflections on to our committee. Thank you so much.

Thoughts for the Vision Team

These thoughts are all in process, but I hope may provide some stimulation for the work of the vision team and the various working groups. Thanks for reading/listening.

Help define the Mission...

Vision and Mission

Though there certainly are different schools of thought about how vision and mission are described, I would like to suggest that Vision comes first and that mission serves to work toward the vision. With that in mind, here some thoughts about the Vision of the United Church of Christ in West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio:

Vision

As one Church in many locations,
we are called as covenanted communities of Christ,
bound by God's love,
strengthened and transformed by the Spirit,
for the mutual upbuilding
of a world more gracious, inclusive, loving and just.

EMAIL RESPONSES PAGE 1

With this vision in mind for the conference, the question of mission then becomes what will be the shaping energies of that mutually covenanted transformational life? While the following are words/works in process, I would like to suggest them as at least a starting point:

The Mission of the United Church of Christ In West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio is to:

- **Empower** – To engage in shared worship and hold one another in prayer, trusting that the loving spirit of God will work in ways that inspire each congregation and its leaders to clarify their charisms or gifts for ministry such that each may be strengthened to live into that giftedness for the strengthening of the human community and all God’s creation locally and globally.
- **Encourage** – To cultivate a sense of presence such that each leader and congregation may know that they are accompanied and not alone.
- **Equip** – To be a conduit whereby the best practices and resources for engaging God’s call to transformational ministry may be shared by all for the good of all in the widely varying contexts of ministry. Examples of this (among many others) would include: To be a catalyst for search and call processes for pastoral and other leadership (ordained and not ordained). To be good stewards of Templed Hills as a resource for faith formation.
- **Engage** – To build connections that overcome isolation and build a palpable sense of connectedness to the ministry of the conference both within and beyond its immediate geographical location into the wider context of our nation and the global community in both parish and non-parish expressions.

How might the wider church of the UCC in this geographic area be organized to fulfill that mission and become one nimble and responsive judicatory?

Given what I have named above, I believe the best way to organize is for there to be one judicatory level working in a highly collaborative, mutually encouraging, but geographically dispersed configuration. Because “in person” presence matters having staff in various areas throughout the conference makes sense. Because the ideas, gifts and resources of one area of the conference might well serve in other areas of the conference, there needs to be a strong sense of connection so that what is mutually beneficial may be easily shared. Because ministry in any setting can be isolating, it is important that staff have the encouragement of each other as they seek to offer that same encouragement to those whom they are called to serve. Hence, the staff working as one collaborative entity seems to make sense. This would certainly also include staffing that supports our shared outdoor ministry. This is not about any kind of hierarchy, but rather about what may strengthen the spirit of all who are engaged in ministry. Mutuality is key.

I think study about what efficiencies (for example in office operations) can be built into the new structure will be vitally important from a good stewardship perspective. However, efficiency alone must not be the only barometer for decision making. There must be a sense of high accessibility to the resources of presence however broadly that may be defined.

That said, the geographical determinations of associations will need to make sense in terms of proximity of congregations to one another.

EMAIL RESPONSES PAGE 2

Vision Team Working Group Comments:

Best Practices

As I consider this group's work I think definitions is vitally important. Hence the words best and practices both deserve some clarification. I will not offer exhaustive lists, but rather a framework for consideration.

When the word "best" is used, it suggests that something has achieved the highest level of its desired outcome or has in some way approached that highest level. So, a question related to "best" that might be helpful would be, "When this practice is engaged in its best form, what does that look like? What part of the vision does it support? What effect would it have in the life a church community or other ministry setting? What can be learned from that realized (partially or in full) vision made real due to a particular practice? How can that learning most helpfully be shared with others?"

Practices

When the word practices is used there is a presumption it seems to me about the nature and purpose of the church. H. Richard Niebuhr once wrote (based on the great commandments) that the nature and purpose of the church is "the increase of the love of God and neighbor". Yet, I think it might be more helpful to identify different dimensions of the life of faith that are part of the Christian journey personally and collectively which when considered might suggest particular practices and questions. I would suggest four words: Information, Formation, Affirmation and Transformation.

Information has to do with how the content of our faith narrative is transmitted, learned, absorbed. In what way does the larger story of God's unfolding work of love in the life of any individual or community become known? What is the language of the tradition scripturally, theologically, historically that can serve as one of the shaping contexts through which one may discover the transformative work of the Holy Spirit? Best practices will identify how this kind of work is cultivated in its varied forms.

Formation has to do with the ways in which the alive presence of God works to form a person and a community from the inside out. Varied spiritual practices such as worship, prayer, study, fasting, meditation, will likely be among the practices of formation that would help aid the discovery of God's spirit working to change the heart and mind in a way that is more and more congruent with the way of the Christ. The engagement of such practices has not to do so much with a kind of mechanical approach as if by doing certain things one can control how God is discovered. Rather, such practices of consent cultivate a space whereby one may discover God doing transformative work. Formation has to do with the experience of God, and not simply information about God. Best practices will seek to cultivate this kind of engagement in the lives of individuals and churches and between churches.

Affirmation has to do with the ways in which one says "yes" to the Christian journey. This implies both a commitment to community and an ever-emerging clarity about what serves as foundational for a person or a community's life. In many ways the work of information and formation are different dimensions of spiritual discernment which serves as the basis for action in the world. Best practices will seek to identify and share the varied ways in which individuals and communities engage this vital (as in life-giving) work of discernment.

Transformation refers to the work of the Holy Spirit to form the heart and mind of Christ in individuals and communities for a life of mercy and justice and love in the world. It is the necessary outgrowth of the prior three arenas of practice. As such, best practices will seek to identify the varied ways in which

EMAIL RESPONSES PAGE 3

individuals and communities move from the intersection of information, formation and affirmation into a lived work empowered and guided by God that seeks justice and God's vision of shalom (my working definition of justice based on scripture is as follows, though I know many others would have helpful additions):

An arrangement of life empowered by agape love where all God's children can freely use their gifts without fear for the upbuilding of the common good and the good of creation so that all may thrive and share in God's abundance and know God's deep intended joy.

Structure and Form

As mentioned above, I believe one level of judicatory arranged in a mutually supportive, responsive and responsible arrangement facilitated by a conference minister would work best. Due to the amount of work required for search and call and other missional priorities in associations, it seems that it would be necessary for there to be a point person for the ecumenical and interfaith and wider church connections (Global, CHHSM, Educational, etc.) that will be necessary in order for the conference to not become insular or parochial over time. Again, analysis of what functions of support can be consolidated will depend on what kinds of support are needed in each of the various ministry areas (associations). It seems a dedicated staff presence for outdoor ministry as part of the shared team will be vitally important both for oversight and for integration of programming and faith formation opportunities.

Office support in the areas of finances, social media, and administrative support for planning and follow-up will be key. Consolidation of these roles in one or two locations may be good stewardship in terms of time and money.

As regards association councils, it seems these would be a necessary framework for establishing more local missional priorities and strategies. Budgeting proposals could arise from the work of each of these councils and could be offered in a shared annual stewardship conclave in which association council members from the entire conference would meet to prayerfully discern how best to form the budget in ways that support the identified priorities.

It would be good to learn from other conferences about how such budgeting processes happen with a unified staff arrangement.

It will be vital for pastors and other church leaders to know whom to call with their questions.

Once the vision and mission is clarified it will be vital to establish what working groups both short term and long term will be necessary to realize the vision and mission in terms of actual missional and ministry networks and strategies. Some of those working groups will be local, but where there are duplicate ministries going on (lay schools, for example) there may be some benefit to collaboration across the conference.

Technology must be creatively engaged as a matter of good stewardship.

EMAIL RESPONSES PAGE 4

Finance and Stewardship

Given the structure and form pieces identified above as one level of judicatory, it seems that it would make sense for there to be a unified system of funding and accounting with missional priorities clarified in a conclave as described above (just an idea ☺).

Creative mission interpretation will be key as a way of building connection and cultivating passion for the work God is doing. Wide-ranging use of media will be essential. Giving follows passion. So, the question will be how the story gets passionately communicated. How our shared ministry is transforming lives near and far will be an important question to answer and share.

What Should the New Entity Be Called?

Certainly the name of this new community of Christ in West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio needs a new name that reflects these various geographical settings. In some ways, the name should helpfully identify our location to the wider United Church of Christ. Would an acronym be best? Something like KenOhWeV. Or is that just gibberish? Heartland might describe us, but sometimes Kansas likes to claim that status. Or should the name be theological like Kairos Conference, suggesting God's forming us for such a time as this? I realize these are not so much answers as musings.

Thanks for listening. I hope something of what I have shared is helpful.

Response 1:

My parishioner who attended last night's gathering suggests "Freshwater Conference"...as a new name.

Response 2:

I have been meaning to share some feedback since we attended the listening session in Oberlin.

1. First let me thank you all for taking on this very important task. We heard the difficulties of shaping a new structure, but, I believe with God's Help, it will come to fruition.
2. I affirm and encourage your process of Listening Sessions throughout the Conference. I support the idea of giving all those that would like too, an opportunity to ask questions, offer suggestions and pose concerns. This is the "congregational" way 1—)
3. Do not be discouraged by those that say "you do the structure" or express little interest in the details (location) Believe me, they will care after its done.
4. Northern Kentucky, Ohio, W. Virginia.
5. i did share info with my home church (Amistad Chapel, UCC) and encouraged members to use email to share questions, comments, etc.
... referenced the book of Esther, "for such a time as this" Now is the time a beginning Mission Statement might be,
Our Mission is to serve the Churches of the United Church of Christ NOW (N. Kentucky, Ohio, and W. Virginia) with:

- *resources that support and enable local church ministry
- * provide opportunities for participation in Social Justice, ecumenism and evangelism
- * encourage partnerships and networking among congregations.

EMAIL RESPONSES PAGE 5



ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

Full text of every survey is posted on basecamp

QUESTION 1 Define the Mission:

- ✓ Bring and be the active Word of God to all
- ✓ Love God and love our neighbor as ourselves.
- ✓ to bridge congregations with each other in faithful education, resources, and ministry. No one stands alone.
- ✓ To build and strengthen the faith community
- ✓ staying to be connected with one another as we share Christ's message of love in today's world
- ✓ Welcome all pilgrims on a deep spiritual journey
- ✓ being the hands and feet of God here on earth, doing actual mission work.
- ✓ Support local churches in mission and ministry and relate to other levels of the church
- ✓ To be Christ's church in the world, sharing God's love and caring for each individual
- ✓ To nurture spiritual growth among its members and to promote justice in the world
- ✓ To build a truly inclusive and affirming church that ensures everyone has a place at the table.
- ✓ to make disciples of Christ
- ✓ equip people for the faithful life of Christ to do justice in the world.
- ✓ Working toward being actors in the process of shaping communities of justice and peace. Should be consistent with national but with the addition of anything unique or special to the region,
- ✓ share by word and actions God's inbreaking realm revealed through Jesus Christ
- ✓ to be the Church, gathered and scattered,
- ✓ to seek Jesus, to seek God, to seek the Holy Spirit, and to seek justice in the world so we may all be one.
- ✓ Should be the same as the UCC mission statement - United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.

- ✓ Through the Association only, be Jesus the Christ in stewardship of the Word, dramatize compassion to people in need, and through religious educational opportunities train congregants to be deeper disciples.

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES PAGE 1

QUESTION 2: How to be one nimble and responsive judicatory

- Be one active Association that will be present in all that affects the community. Communication is key. Contacts right with people not church offices
- I'm not sure we need the larger conference/state level structure. I think the Associations can do a better job responding, thinking creatively, and serving. The Association can also bridge other Associations.
- Maybe a 'tent revival' would work again. Focus on local problems and not get too involved into political forces beyond our immediate reaches.
- Through area mission councils. . Each would be served by an Associate Conference Minister.
- Dissolve present associations. Make all staff conference staff. Reform smaller, more local associations.
- One Conference/Association for whole area. One general minister. 4 mission teams. Main office at Temple Hills
- more communication between associations
- Why does it have to be "one" judicatory?
- Rather than have one central body, create a council of shared resources (association general ministers) who can collaborate and bring their best gifts
- one "conference" that includes multiple regions that are staffed, resourced and empowered to engage and support local churches and pastors (i.e., bottom up; no centralized, staffed office
- Churches don't tend to work well with each other. Providing volunteering opportunities, projects and donations towards a common goal may help unify them.
- Direct resources for creative, faith-filled risk-takers within local churches who are seeking to carry out the mission of the church in new forms
- Current/consistent communication strategies streamlined across multiple platforms
- Contract with a proven church growth consultancy,
- Keep the (relatively) functional level of the middle judicatory -- the association -- and get rid of the dysfunctional level, the conference. It's not needed and hasn't worked for years
- Too many layers of judicatory. Only need associations
- . I'm not sure how the conference does more with less in bringing the wider church issues to prominence in our diverse congregations, but I believe that is the essential task.
- each association becomes a conference
- The meetings for the conference must be alternated equally between each location
- 4 Conferences to replace the 5 Associations and 1 Conference
- By paring down Conference staff and expenses and empowering Associations with training, guidance, and resources
- My own preference would be two conferences, each taking in one half of the state split on a north/south axis

- Beacons of Light. Figure out 2 or 3 issues to rally around. Mission is the key to growth in our churches and we will be more effective in groups that are focused.
- not sure but the less fragmented we are the better.

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES PAGE 2

- With modern technology there is no need for more than one official judicatory setting, preferably in Columbus as it is most centrally located. Satellite presences could be maintained for those who still wish a presence in the historic Association offices.
 - It needs to represent all its constituent members and not just the progressive aspects.
 - Put a priority to working ecumenically with other groups who are engaged in the same work.
 - for starters, be more transparent.
 - establish a series of support centers around the Conference.
 - One conference with reps in different areas facilitating dialogue, no associations
 - I think the local churches need to learn how to get along and respect each other
 - I do not know
-

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES PAGE 3

QUESTION 3 What would you like to say to these working groups?

- A conference minister might be the one to find experts in certain fields and then invite Association committee members from associations to attend and learn and go back to their associations and do the work
- Stop treating churches as if they aren't businesses. Form a strategy, create a budget, find people willing to be accountable, and make it happen. I'm done sending \$\$ to "do God's work" when God's work doesn't have a plan or accountability. "Doing good" and "having business smarts" are not exclusive qualities
- Tell us in the local churches what are the Best Practices that have led to growth, and what are the Bad Practices that have led to shrinkage and closure
- Let's not reinvent wheels. If another conference/association is doing something well: let's consider doing that. Also, let's plan to not go into debt again. If we don't figure out the finances the rest isn't going to matter much.
- You have your work cut out for you. God be with you.
- make your presence known to someone other than large churches
- The closer the judicatory is to the local church, the more support it will receive
- I'm so glad you are taking on this important and difficult work. May the Holy Spirit bless and guide your endeavors so that we may have "better problems" than the ones we already have....
- , I believe that a council of association general ministers might better suit the region as our region is so varied in need.
- Be more inclusive of our average churches in the Ohio Conference and the average Pastor in the Ohio Conference.
- Best Practices: Look at not only the big churches, but also the small churches that may be doing amazing things (just without the large budgets and numbers of people);
- Best Practices: look outside the UCC/mainline bubble. Don't be afraid of gleaning from the best practices of Christian traditions that are stronger in spirituality, disciple-making, church-planting
- people are less inspired to give to an organization just because they are a part of it. They need to see how our churches coming together are accomplishing something greater than we could do alone
- WHERE is the working group for church revitalization...??
- The draft proposal circulated at the annual meeting of the Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations last November has all the fingerprints of (a) a money- and power-grab on the part of the conference (and, possibly, the national setting), (b) a backroom deal with (c) hidden agendas and (d) a fait-accompli: the associations will be sacrificed for the sake of the conference. I have been told, repeatedly, that this is not the case, but no one has convincingly shown me why it's not. This is a bad idea

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES PAGE 4

- Well, it seems to me, we've allowed a historic abyss to exist between the issues and concerns of the National church and the values and efforts of the local congregations. I think we need to work together to affirm the UCC "identity" and celebrate our connectedness in ways that are both effective and relevant to local membership. How one does that is challenging, given the long practice of lone ranger clergy types acting as if our autonomy eliminates the kind of covenantal commitments that connect us, and make of us our disparate parts one Church
 - We are one church family, and need to work collaboratively as a group, and not have congregations or regions compete, which would work against our common mission.
 - Encourage the staff to work in the field, meeting with churches and the parishioners. Encourage everyone to ask, "How may I help you become more successful? What does your church need?.. Please get out in the field!
 - Middle judicatories are most likely duplicating efforts of each other and Ohio Conference. Can they be eliminated or restructured/combined? Do we need Association Ministers? Can Associations be run by moderator and others serving in offices?
 - The entire UCC needs to start taking fundraising seriously. This is a structured, intelligent, well organized industry. Time to grow up and get into it.
 - Eliminate all groups that serve little spiritual purpose. Downsize wherever possible. Don't cling to structures that exist simply because they always have. Possibly merge several Associations.
 - The invitation to include as many voices as possible is appreciated but please do not spend so much time discerning any of these areas that decisive action is delayed beyond a reasonable time.
 - The time for action is now
-

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES PAGE 5

QUESTION 4 What should we call a new entity?

Northern Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia Association

I would not change the name

Hopewell – we hope for wellness throughout all of god’s creation

Don’t waste your time thinking of an ew, so-called inclusive name

Northeast Conference

Appalachian Neighbors Conference

Eastern Midwest Conference

Shawnee Conference

United Church of Christ Alive

Antoinette Brown Conference

WeOhNo Conference

Greater Ohio

Appalachian Conference

Greater Oho River Valley Conference

The WEST Ohio UCC and the EAST Ohio UCC – two conferences

Ohio and Erie Conference

Four-Toed Conference

Scioto Con/Assn

Three States Conference

Oh-We-Vir-No-Ke –Con

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES PAGE 6

QUESTION 5 Other comments

- Take the small steps to affective change (don't talk it too death),
- The association ministers
- meet regularly and decide what their associations need as far as leadership education etc. and then ask the conference minister to arrange programs which would be cost prohibitive if done by just one association. The conference is run out of the conference minister's residence. Seminars, etc. requested by the associations would be held at the camp using it's updated facilities. A bookkeeper- secretary works from their own home. No office space Needs to be rented.
- I am not at all confident, based on this survey and the reported fact that only 80 people have responded so far, that this task is going to have enough input and momentum to make much progress.

- Can the word "judicatory"
- I am optimistic for the success of this enterprise.
- I affirm the need for this process. However, I see much disconnect between the structure of the UCC in Ohio and the "people in the pews".
- It is hard to justify providing financial support to an entity that seems to search to determine its purpose. It seems important to note that if one's purpose is not apparent, perhaps it is no longer needed. Our congregation is considering withdrawing support to the conference as a result.
- Could we join with other UCC members to address social issues? Some of us are in congregations which have only a few interested in social action. It would be great to have a way to find others to work together.
- There are many "regular" congregations who are doing great things and many Pastor's who are doing good ministry but we are never included. Sometimes it seems we are too white or too straight to be included.
- As an active member of an Ohio Congregation I have little awareness of issue at the conference level. Somehow sharing and communication needs to be improved.
- Work at the theological thread.
- Thank you for reaching out for our opinions in so many different ways!
- I wish the team well it's a huge undertaking with a lot of sacred cows in the way,
- Will you communicate these results through the website(s) and social media?
- We need to get back to basics. Focus on the local churches and their growth. Cut back on the political emphasis in Cleveland. spiritual formation, missions, evangelism, leadership training, prayer, spiritual vitality.
- Boutique as opposed to Big Box
- Across the denomination conferences are becoming more and more irrelevant with the passage of time. When will the Ohio leadership come to that realization? Judicatories that are closest to the congregation can easily justify their purposes and mission. They can enable congregations to grow more spiritually and numerically.

- Get 'er done!

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES PAGE 7

OBSERVATIONS



- ❖ The term “conference” was the target for remarks about irrelevance and was often thought of by responders as what the “one judicatory” would become. Using the term “community” perhaps opens up or frees up the conversation a bit more.
- ❖ Associations have the visibility because of program and services (like search and call, authorizations, boundary training, lay schools, etc) so that “conference” feels invisible.
- ❖ How much participation in these exercises came from larger membership congregations?
- ❖ Little or no reference to the significance of national setting work such as MESA providing guidelines and services like Manual on Ministry, profile supervision, support for all search and call efforts, and consequently deserving the support of congregations and middle judicatories.
- ❖ The frequent calls for effective communication and tech tools showed little evidence of awareness or utilization of what is already available and in play.
- ❖ Virtually no reference to service/outreach ministries which do what local churches and associations and conferences cannot do – like CHHSM partners.
- ❖ Similarly no mention of higher education and theological education ministries of the UCC which grow out of and grew out of needs of congregations and clergy. Nor of global ministries.