



Reports from Committee on Ministry and Conference Council Liaisons

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KANSAS-OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Committee on Ministry, Subcommittee "A" Authorization/Standing

The Committee on Ministry, Subcommittee on Authorization has responsibility for the support and oversight of Authorized Ministers in the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference.

Your Committee on Ministry A has met at least 8 times by zoom and will meet just before annual meeting for approximately 8 hours. Individual members have made phone calls and attended meetings with ministers. We have been educated through webinars from the national setting as well as attended conferences. We have depended on Jan Lange, our conference registrar, to keep our meeting minutes as well as to maintain all our data on the national system and provide reports as needed. Of course, I cannot say enough about the support, leadership and guidance from our Conference Minister, Edith Guffey. We as members of COMA are trying to take on tasks that Edith has performed as we grow and look forward to our future.

At the 2018 Annual Meeting, the Conference Council was expanded to have a member representing Committee on Ministry. I have served in that capacity this year and will continue to do so.

As a personal note, I want to thank the committee members, Jan and Edith for their support of me and my family. My husband broke his hip in January and was in care for about 3 months. Since then he has been home with home care. I have attempted to continue to serve as chair and have done because of their support. I am deeply grateful for this support both with taking on responsibilities as well as ministerial and prayer support.

As the year began our membership consisted of:

- Suzanne Nichols, Church of the Open Arms, OKC (Chair),
- Rev. Regan Saiorse, First Congregational Church, Onaga, (Vice-chair),
- Julie Summers, Fellowship UCC; Tulsa, OK
- Ellen Neufeld, St. Peter's UCC, Inman, KS
- Rev. Gary Blaine, Highland Trinity UCC, Newton, KS
- Rev. Gage Church, Central Congregational UCC, Topeka, Kansas
- Rev. Rachel Pryor, Andover Lutheran Church, Windom, Kansas
- Jan Lange, Registrar and Edith Guffey (ex officio members without vote).

During the year Regan Saiorse discerned that she could not continue serving on Committee A due to increased work load. Regan has chaired meetings in my absence, called numerous ministers and sought to bring the committee into full participation. Thank you Regan.

The Council appointed Mauri Peaco to fill Regan's position. Mauri just transferred to KO from Missouri Mid-South Conference during the year. She has several years of experience on Committee on Ministry including teaching boundary training. We look forward to her participation as the years proceed.

As a review I will list the responsibilities of COM A:

- Collect annual Authorized Minister review forms from each Authorized Minister
- Meet as needed with all licensed ministers
- Meet with ministers transferring into the Conference
- Process requests for Leaves of Absence
- Consider requests for specialized ministry positions
- Provide process for regular contact with Authorized Ministers
- Update compensation guidelines
- Situational Support Consultations and Fitness Reviews as needed

Since the last Annual Meeting the Committee has engaged several tasks. As Chair, I had the opportunity to attend AM 21 (Authorizing Ministry in the 21st Century) which is a gathering for conference staff and those serving on Committees on Ministry throughout the country. Kayla Bonewell from COM D and Conference Minister Edith Guffey also attended from KO. AM 21 focused in many ways on the new Manual on Ministry (MOM) that has been released and the changes that it brings to the oversight of all authorized ministers; you can find the MOM on the UCC website https://www.ucc.org/ministers_manual. This conference gave us additional information on using the MOM and COM A will focus on it more just prior to Annual Meeting.

We join with COMD in support of by-law changes by the Conference so that the Committees will have as much flexibility as possible to serve our churches and to meet the guidelines from the National Setting. We will have more information during this year as it is developed.

As we began to do a summary of the types of continuing education our ministers engaged in, we discovered that we did not collect the needed information. The Informational Report Form has been changed to collect that data. We anticipate disseminating that information through the Conference eNEWS. There are more and more options for continuing education available through technology and we will explore how to use these resources more effectively in KO.

COM A is slowly developing more consistent contact with each authorized minister. We focused in 2018 on those ministers who are the least active with the Conference. In 2019 we emphasized our retired ministers. We asked retired authorized ministers if there were ways the COM could be better support; there was little response. We also sponsored the Communities of Practice with 19 pastors participating and the continuing education seminar this year was Mental Health First Aid for 20 authorized ministers participating. We are grateful for a grant from the Brown Fund that helped fund the Mental Health First Aid Training for authorized Ministers. Please let us know what other resources we might provide to help you in your ministry.

The chart below includes the number of ministers in the KO Conference including active, retired, licensed and on leave as well as a state by state breakdown.

Authorized Ministers in Kansas-Oklahoma Conference 2019			
Standing	Kansas	Oklahoma	Total
Licensed	8	1	9
Commissioned	1	1	2
Dual Standing	2	0	2
Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing	3	1	4
Ordained Active	26	20	46
Ordained Retired	26	4	30
Leave of Absence	1	0	1
	67	27	94

Please continue to keep Subcommittee “A” in your prayers.

Respectfully Submitted,
Suzanne W Nichols, JD, MTS
Chair

Committee on Ministry Subcommittee D Discernment/Preparation

Committee Members

- Kayla Bonewell, *Church of the Open Arms & Cathedral of Hope, Oklahoma City, OK*
- Robin Colerick-Shinkle, *Trinity United Christian Church Cheney, KS (resigned mid-year)*
- Sheri Curry, *Fellowship UCC Tulsa, OK*
- Cody Rine, *Midland UCC, Sterling, KS*
- Aaron Roberts, *Colonial Prairie Village, KS*
- Caela Simmons, *Wood First Congregational Church Manhattan, KS (chair)*
- Darin Stephens, *First Congregational Church, Topeka, KS*
- Jan Lange, Registrar
- Edith Guffey, Conference Minister, Ex-Officio without vote

Support for Inquirers, Members in Discernment, and some Licensed Pastors

The heart of our work as a committee is providing support to those in our conference who are seeking authorization for ministry. We regularly meet with those who are at the beginning of their journey to explain the process, enter into a spirit of discernment with them and their local church, and clarify expectations. We also meet with and support those who are nearing the end of their time as Members in Discernment (MIDs) to prepare for the final stages of the pathway towards authorization. This past year we have also spent a fair amount of time talking with several licensed pastors who are still completing educational requirements related to their authorization. Once again this year we invited all MIDs to join us at annual meeting for a luncheon. This is an important time of making connections with the committee and other peers on the journey.

The following persons are formally Members in Discernment (MID) or are licensed for ministry and still under the care of CoM D:

- Debra Bolton, *Community Congregational Church Garden City, KS*
- Heidi Hawkinson-Penny, *membership in transition*
- Dee Moore, *Central UCC Topeka, KS*
- Mike Munz, *First Congregational, Great Bend, KS*
- Pam Schonauer, *Church of the Open Arms, OKC*
- Michael Vollbrecht, *Plymouth Church, Lawrence, KS and Peace UCC Alma, KS*
- Jennifer Wachowski-Estes, *Fellowship UCC Tulsa, OK*
- Sue Zschoche, *First Congregational Manhattan, KS*

Beth Ruhl was ordained in February 2019.

In 2019 we spent time clarifying the initial process when a person approaches the committee as an inquirer. We reviewed all of the documentation that the committee provides to them and made clarifications on what needs to be completed before their first meeting with the committee. We also approved a change in language for the person assigned to each MID as a companion for their

discernment process: the MID Advisor (formerly Mentor). We hope to roll out printed guidelines for the Advisor role in the near future.

Multiple Pathways to Ordination

CoM D continues to ponder what it means to do our work faithfully and consistently in a changing world. As Edith said in her report last year, “In the past, a person coming before the Committee on Ministry was going to seminary to get a seminary degree, that was it, it was clear, the course work was laid out, and the work of the Committee on Ministry was to keep in touch with them. If they passed their coursework, all was good, they wrote a paper, had an ordination exam, etc, all was good. That simply isn’t true anymore and for some very good reasons.” We spent many hours this year creating a framework for Multiple Paths to Ordination in the KO Conference. We now have a document of guidelines which lays out clearly two paths to ordination – Pathway One (which involves completing an M.Div.) and Pathway Two (ordination without an M.Div.). Both pathways are robust and we believe both pathways can adequately prepare a person to develop the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. While we recognize there will certainly still be people who take a path that differs from the two we have outlined, we believe this document will serve as a helpful starting place for communication with our MIDs and provide much-needed guidance and support.

Manual on Ministry Changes

MESA has created a new Manual on Ministry for us to consider using. Our committee has been in conversation for over a year now about the pros and cons of switching over to the new Manual on Ministry, which has some significant changes. This will be a continued area of conversation for us as we move forward. We were thankful that Edith Guffey and Kayla Bonewell had a chance to attend the AM21 conference earlier this year to talk with other CoMs and Conference Ministers about how they are adapting to the new Manual on Ministry.

A Word of Thanks

It has been a joy to work with the committee, Edith, and Jan this past year. We have had rich conversations about complex topics and I am so pleased with the work we have accomplished. I also want to say thank you to all the clergy in our conference who support those in your congregations who are considering or working towards authorized ministry. If you ever have questions about the process for inquirers or MIDs, please do not hesitate to reach out to Edith or the CoM chair to learn more so that you can best support the MIDs in your congregation. We are happy to help.

*Respectfully Submitted for CoM D,
Caela Simmons Wood
Chair*

Registrar's Report on Formal Actions

Committee on Ministry A

Accepted Transfer of Authorized Minister Standing to Kansas-Oklahoma

- Mauri Peaco transfer from Missouri Mid/South, Eastern

Committee on Ministry D

Ordinations or Approved for Ordination Pending Call

- Beth Ruhl Ordained February 24, 2019

Persons Licensed for Ministry

- Sue Zschoche – License continued through December 2019
- Mike Munz – License continued through December 2019

Accepted as Member in Discernment

- Pam Schonauer, November 25, 2018

Actions Completed by the Registrar

Standing Transferred from Kansas-Oklahoma

- Constance Bixby Tanis to Missouri-Mid South, Eastern
- Harold Leonard Zimmerman, Jr. to Missouri-Mid South – Western Association
- Ruth Wagner Bradshaw to Wisconsin-Southwest
- Cynthia Meyer to Pacific Northwest-No Associations
- Melinda Foster to South Central-Houston

Churches Closed; Updated in the UCC Data Hub

- St. John's United Church of Christ, Junction City, Kansas Removed March, 2019

*Respectfull Submitted,
Jan Lange
Conference Registrar*

Specialized Ministry Report

The Kansas Oklahoma Conference is the home for several Ordained Ministers in Specialized Settings. These are people are authorized for ministry in a setting outside of parish life. They work in diverse settings including chaplaincy in healthcare or prisons, university educational institutions, counseling, non-profit organizations, and other important work. If you are working part time in a specialized setting, please consider adding your name for future correspondence.

- Rev. Sheri Curry
- Rev. Nancy Eggen
- Rev. Shannon Gorres
- Rev. Dr. Kathy McCallie
- Rev. Lizette Merchan Pinilla
- Rev. Regan Saoirse
- Dr. Edith Guffey
- Rev. Laura Woods
- Rev Jessica Derise
- Rev. Eleanor McCormick
- Rev. Lisa Wolfe
- Rev. Christian Watkins

Report of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Liaison

If you're like me, you see and hear that congregations within the KO are doing great things with ecumenical and interfaith partners. I hear of events and projects in Tulsa, Manhattan, Topeka, Lawrence, and Oklahoma City to name a few, but I don't know the details about the projects or events. I know there are probably others out there too. If your congregation is involved with other faith communities in creating a better community or future for others, please let me or another KO Council member know. We love to hear of the work of our member congregations.

As we continue to strengthen our relationship with the Evangelische Landeskirche in Baden, Germany (The Protestant Church in Baden) I want to remind you of the goals for this relationship.

- 1) increase the world view of our members;
- 2) explore how each of our churches (KO and Germany) are addressing common challenges (immigration, xenophobia, race);
- 3) affirm historical ties;
- 4) how are each of us responding to a changing church as we know it; thinking about shaping church for the future;
- 5) what are best practices, what are the areas of "church life" that we can be resources for each other?
- 6) give our members, particularly youth, opportunities for direct engagement with German youth and members on "hot button" issues and to understand how "we" are experienced in other parts of the world.

Anyone who has read e-News regularly or had other opportunity to keep up with our conference's activities knows that we've been working hard to strengthen and grow this relationship. Earlier this year a delegation from Germany visited us, during that time we developed a plan to reinforce our commitment to each other in building our connection. We've hosted both youth and adults from Germany this past twelve months and we've had young adults and youth visit Germany. Edith has also gone there to represent our conference. Each event has been a positive experience for all involved. We plan to carry on this exchange of people and ideas as our relationship grows and strengthens in the coming years. A wonderful addition to this relationship with our German partners was Eleanor McCormick moving there. This will certainly be helpful as one of her responsibilities is to assist in this area.

Next year we will focus on adult lay leaders and authorized ministers having a more meaningful experience. This will include making a trip to Germany to further deepen the relationship. More information will come as this grows and plans solidify. I encourage you to consider what part your congregation or you might play as we continue this relationship. As we make plans for next year, contact me or the conference council with your ideas for how your congregation can get involved.

Respectfully submitted,
Eve Kendall, Central Congregational Church, Topeka KS
Ekendall65@gmail.com

Report of the Justice and Witness Liaison

Does the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference actually DO justice work? Well, that depends. How do you define justice work? If you define “doing justice” as actually in the trenches marching, making signs, showing up for protests, organizing local services and events that embody the message of God’s love for all; then the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference doesn’t actually DO this often. And the reason is primarily because of capacity. The day to day, “hand on” justice work” is done best by our local congregations. And the role of the Conference is to keep you informed of what’s going on. For example, in eNEWS or on Facebook information has been provided on:

- Weekly Immigrations vigils in Oklahoma City
- Open and Affirming Ecumenical Worship at Mayflower
- Interfaith worship services following shootings
- Members of Plymouth rallying in support of Syed Jamal as ICE moved to deport him after living legally under supervisory work orders in the Lawrence community for 30 years
- Colonial Church’s Justice & Witness Committee advocating for the passing of the Lamonte’s Law, restitution for Kansas wrongfully convicted.

But we can only share what we know, so let us know what you are doing! Either send a message your Local Church Liaison or make sure your pastor shares a post on Facebook so we can repost it on the KO Facebook page! As you’ll see below in this report social media is a valuable tool, and you can help by sharing, sharing, sharing!

About JUSTICE; just What DOES **The Conference** do? The role of the Conference is to connect and encourage, support and facilitate and when possible to participate. And so, The Conference:

Supports Kansas Interfaith Action: We give dollars but also many in our congregations are active participants in KIFA; Rachel Pryor and Mike Munz are on the Board of Directors and several local congregations are involved. When we are notified, you will find information about KIFA events on the website. Our Conference Minister, Edith Guffey along with other Authorized Ministers participated in a press conference in Topeka to speak against the practice of separating children from their parents at the border.

Supports the Continuing Work on Racial Justice: Conference Minister Edith Guffey supports the Racial Justice team at Plymouth to continue their work at Plymouth and on behalf of the Conference to training trainers to use the UCC curriculum on white privilege beyond KO. But here in KO, in addition to providing financial support to Oklahoma Conference of Churches, (OCC) the Conference partnered with OCC to train over 40 persons to use the curriculum in congregations in Oklahoma beyond the UCC. You will also find many UCC members engaged in the work of justice through OCC where Rev. Lori Walke serves as the Vice Chair of the Board.

Resources and Connects: Responds to calls for information on how to and where to go;

- Edith has connected callers from other Conferences to persons in Oklahoma to assist with questions regarding sanctuary churches, or to respond to requests to provide assistance to non-documented persons arriving in Oklahoma on their way to another state.
- Endorsed and made recommendations that resulted in approval of Neighbors in Need grants for JUMP (Justice Unity and Ministry Project) in Topeka for public transportation and a special grant for Justice Matters in Lawrence for a conference on Restorative Justice in schools
- Resourced congregations on how to begin the ONA process (did you know that our own Rev. Dennis Ureche, pastor at Inman, KS is a trained ONA consultant and has been for years?)
- Social Media: Posting on Facebook is an attempt to connect congregations; FB was updated daily during PRIDE Month with some new information or fact regarding LGBTQI information. This was an idea that was presented through one of the conference's listening sessions, and a team including Michael Vollbrecht, Edith Guffey and myself, Jennifer Parson as the JW Liaison worked to post daily during the month of June. This was a successful endeavor as the "hits" to the website increased significantly, and minimal funds were used to "boost" some particular posts. Boosting a post ensures it is seen by a wider audience than just those who already follow the conference on Facebook—sort of like a temporary paid advertisement. It was a learning experience, and the outcome bears some careful examination regarding policies for comments and also careful conversation about better use and investment in social media. Facebook provides page administrators (including myself) metrics which measure the activity of a page over a period of time. Between June 2 and June 29, the numbers reflected the following:
 - Post reach (the number of people who see a given post) was at 19,100 for an increase of 160% from the previous month.
 - Post engagements (the number of people who "liked", commented, or opened a link from a post) was at 4,611 for an increase of 411% from the previous month.
 - New page likes (people who liked or followed the KO Conference page) was 33 for an increase of 230% from the previous month.

You saw those numbers right! One of the main concerns I keep hearing is that people don't know who or what the UCC is in Kansas and Oklahoma. That is both troubling and fixable, but people will not know who we are unless we say so publicly and clearly — and outside our own buildings! I am so proud of the good work our congregations and the conference are doing and that we can support and celebrate each other by sharing our stories.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Parson*

Report of Kansas Local Church Representative

The 2019 KO Conference Annual Meeting begins my third year as Local Kansas Church Representative to the Kansas-Oklahoma (KO) Conference United Church of Christ. Once again churches in the Kansas part of KO have had a busy year. As I read many monthly newsletters from many congregations. While what everyone in Kansas is doing doesn't often make it into the KO e-news it is impressive what y'all are accomplishing. There is much going on here in Kansas. From innovative and creative ways to celebrate Lent and Easter to Ice Cream Socials to German Sausage dinners to great Vacation Bible schools and much more God is being worshipped and Jesus being followed.

There is exciting news out of KO. If you haven't heard, KO along with Missouri Mid-South Conference will be hosting General Synod (GS) 33, July 16-20, 2021, in Kansas City, Missouri. For many this will be the closest GS will ever be. This will be a great opportunity for individuals as well as congregations to see the greater United Church of Christ in action. There will be many ways in which to volunteer to work this event and offer hospitality to those attending. Mark your 2021 calendars now and begin making plans to attend. Be sure to watch e-news for additional information as we get closer to the dates.

Speaking of e-news. If you are not received the monthly KO Conference newsletter by e-mail you can sign up here, <https://kocucc.org/ko-e-news-signup/>. This is a great communication tool to keep you up to date on the happenings of the conference.

Several churches in Kansas are beginning the process of becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation. In addition to my duties as Local Kansas Church Representative to the conference council I have also been trained by the national church as an ONA Consultant, available to help with the ONA process. If your church has already begun the process or if you are thinking about it, I am available to help. I can be reached at 620-585-2627, I am ready to help and come to you.

I hear from many of our Kansas churches, but I would like to hear from more. If you have a newsletter, please mail it to me at St. Peter's UCC, P.O. Box 506, Inman, Kansas 67546. Or better yet, e-mail it to me at ureche1@aol.com. Also, remember there are many ways in which KO can help your congregation with a program or project. If there is anything that the Conference or myself can help with, please call me at 620-585-2670.

Finally, there is a way for you to help KO when you shop on Amazon. They have a program called Amazon Smile that returns 0.5% of each purchase you make with Amazon to KO. Here is where you can find more information and sign up, <https://blog.aboutamazon.com/community/how-to-sign-up-for-amazonsmile>.

Peace and blessings to all of you as we all continue to work to "Being United as One."

Rev. Dennis Ureche

Report of the Oklahoma Local Church Representative

My name is Joseph D. (Jody) Maness. I am a lay member of The Federated Church (DOC, UCC, PCUSA) in Weatherford, Oklahoma. This role has been a challenge as I know only a few people and my attempts to communicate with congregations have not been successful. What I know of ministry in congregations in Oklahoma I know through our own pastor and what I hear from members of Conference Council. So I know that things are going very well in Weatherford, Oklahoma. I believe that Oklahoma could benefit from being more engaged in the life of the Conference but do not know how to make that happen. While I have appreciated the opportunity to serve and am willing to continue, I have suggested that perhaps a pastor may get a better response from other pastors than I have had as a lay person. I still I look forward to meeting many more KO members the Annual Meeting.

Jody Maness