

## Report from the Ohio Conference UEK Working Group

- a. A brief background of the Conference-*Landeskirche* relationship (in the initial report, at least).

The Ohio Conference has had a partnership with the Westphalian *Landeskirche* since 1990. During the course of these first 20 years there has been a variety of ways in which we have shared together.

**German Counselors at the Ohio Conference Camps.** Each year the camping program of the Ohio conference has benefitted from the presence and leadership of up to 3 young adults during our summer camps. These individuals apply and are interviewed by the UCC Forum in Germany and sent from their church to participate as counselors.

**Choir Tours.** There have been various local church choirs who have over, the years given concerts in the churches in Germany. These tours have drastically dropped off since about 2001.

**Conference Tours.** There have been tours offered to the members of the Ohio Conference to visit our partners. The last one was in 2004 and included the 23 participants attending the UCC Forum Retreat, home stays and visits in local churches and touring of other cultural places. Another tour is being considered in either 2012 or 2013.

**Church-to-Church Partnerships.** There have been a variety of local churches who have desired to be in partnership on a local level. In 2011 there are at least 2 active partnerships involving congregations in Canal Winchester, Ohio and the Noah Parish in Mengede and the Community UCC in Westerville, Ohio and the church in Schwelm, Germany. These congregations have had exchanges and tours involving both laity and clergy.

**Clergy Exchanges.** Currently clergy are encouraged to consider participating in a stay in a local German congregation for one to three months. This could be a part of a sabbatical and is coordinated between the Conference and *Landeskirche* Committees. It is assumed that the host congregation will provide a place to stay and that the pastor will report back to their respective conference/*landeskirche* committees about their experience. The last German pastor to spend time in the Ohio Conference was Rev. Gerhard Hille who was hosted by St. John Evangelical Protestant UCC in Columbus, Ohio for three months in 2008.

**Official Visits:** There are times in the life of the larger church when the representative Conference Staff are requested to be present. In 2008, the newly called Ohio Conference minister attended the annual Synod of the Westphalia Church which met in Bethel. In 2009 Dr. Ulrich Moeller and Ms.

Christa Kronshage represented the German Church at the Installation Service of Rev. Molsberry. And later that year, Praesis Buss and a delegation from the German church came as guests to the Ohio Conference. Rev. Molsberry hopes to be able to be present at the Installation Service of the new Praesis in March 2012.

- b. **Recent highlights** (trips, visits, exchanges, other interactions)  
**Affirmation and Commitment to the Partnership.** In September 2010 Mr. Bob Kutsbach, his spouse, Diana and the Revs. Dave and Beth Long-Higgins represented the Ohio Conference during a meeting with the UCC Forum in Bielefeld. The programs and highlights of the past 20 years were assessed and evaluated and suggestions for the next years were discussed. A highlight of the meeting was a session during which the group in Germany was able to be in conversation with Bob Molsberry and Rev. Sigrid Rother back in Columbus via Skype. Together the partnership was affirmed and areas for the focus of our energy for the future was celebrated. Continued opportunities for youth are important, including the existing program with the Ohio Conference camps and the development of opportunities for Ohio youth to volunteer in Germany. The initiation of a program similar to the Indiana-Kentucky Conference Young Ambassador program is also being explored. Additionally, continuing education or retreat opportunities for clergy are being considered. The group also affirmed increase use of technology, such as Skype, to improve our communication and exchanges.
- c. Themes important in the relationship and how the forum has supported the “25 years of *Kirchengemeinschaft*” document from 2005 (last paragraphs)  
<http://globalministries.org/mee/partners/kirchengemeinschaft/final-statement-25-years-of-kirc.html>  
The themes of the UCC Forum in Germany each year are often reflective of the themes lifted up in the 2005 document. We continue to find ways to be in conversation around issues of peace and stewardship.
- d. Plans for upcoming events/common work  
A possible trip of people from the Ohio Conference to Germany in 2012 is being considered. The implementation of the new Youth exchange program is also being developed.
- e. Contact information (in the Conference and *Landeskirche*)  
Chair of the Ohio Conference German Partnership Committee:  
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