MOUNTAIN VALLEY
ASSOCIATION

BUSINESS ITEMS
& ADVANCE REPORTS

Inaugural Fall Meeting

Saturday, November 7, 2026

Fermenting Hope: New Wine

Lower Saucon UCC
1375 Third Avenue, Hellertown, PA 18055

Mountain Valley Association of the Keystone Conference
United Church of Christ
105 E. 19th Street, Northampton, PA 18067

From our Moderator ~

The past year has brought both new beginnings and new challenges for the Mountain Valley Association. The transition from the PNEC to the MVA has indeed been a work in progress, and that work continues today.

While significant effort was devoted to planning and preparing documents before becoming the MVA, some processes and challenges emerged that could not have been fully anticipated during the transition. As a result, our work has been one of continuous learning, adaptation, and improvement.

As we continue to grow into our new association, some of the decisions made this year may need to be revisited and adjusted in the years ahead. This willingness to evaluate and refine our approach is an important part of building a strong and sustainable future for the MVA.

I want to sincerely thank everyone for their patience, understanding, and support throughout this transition. Your commitment and encouragement have been invaluable as we navigate this journey together.

Peace,

Lori Balliet

Keystone
CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

— Isaiah 43:19

Dear Friends of the Mountain Valley Association,

Grace and peace to you as you gather for your Annual Meeting.

This has been a year of significant change for the churches and people of the Mountain Valley Association. For many years, you knew yourselves as the Penn Northeast Conference—a community with its own history, relationships, ministries, resources, and ways of doing things together. Becoming an Association within the new Keystone Conference has meant more than adopting a new name or organizational structure. It has required learning how to live together in a new way, while carrying forward the relationships and identity that have been built over generations.

Transitions of this magnitude are rarely simple. They bring excitement and possibility, but they can also bring uncertainty, frustration, grief, and disagreement. All those experiences belong to this season. My hope is that we can make room for them while continuing to ask where God is leading us next.

One thing has not changed: the ministry happening in your congregations. Since January of this year the MVA churches have continued to faithfully worship, serve their neighbors, nurture faith, care for communities, and proclaim the Gospel. Becoming part of Keystone does not erase that history or diminish the gifts that your churches bring. Rather, those gifts now become part of a larger covenant of more than 500 congregations across Pennsylvania.

I am particularly grateful for the ministry of Rev. Dr. Nora Foust, who has accompanied MVA through this transition with a growing knowledge of its churches, clergy, history, and people. I know that much of the work of this first year has involved listening, learning, answering questions, navigating new structures, and building relationships. That work takes time and diligence – and it matters.

Isaiah's words about God doing "a new thing" are sometimes easier to quote than to live. New things ask something of us. They require us to carry forward what is precious without assuming that everything must remain as it was.

As your Executive Conference Minister, I look forward to being with you at your Annual Meeting—to listen, to learn, to worship with you, and to continue building the relationships that will shape our life together. Keystone is still becoming Keystone. MVA is part of that becoming, and your voice, experience, history, and ministry matter deeply to the Conference we are building together.

May God bless your gathering, your conversations, and the ministry you share.

In Christ,
Rev. Carrie Call, PhD
Transitional Executive Conference Minister
Keystone Conference, United Church of Christ

Keystone
CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Greetings Friends!

Paul's opening words to the Philippians have been on my heart as I have reflected on this past year: *"I thank my God every time I remember you… for your partnership in the gospel…I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion...I hold you in my heart, for all of you are partners in God's grace."* Philippians 1:3, 5–7

I find myself especially grateful as I think about this first year together. It has been a year of learning, for Keystone, the Mountain Valley Association, and me as your Regional Conference Minister, as we discover what it means to be an Association within this new Keystone Conference. The Mountain Valley Association entered this merger with a long history of being a Conference that also functioned as an Association. You had established ways of gathering, making decisions, caring for congregations, and doing ministry together. Now we are learning what to carry forward, what to reshape, and what new things God might be inviting us to imagine.

While zoom is valuable, I have been grateful that I have not had to learn this from a distance. I have visited almost 20 MVA congregations for worship this year and met with others for search and call assistance or myriad issues needing conference resourcing. Through monthly meetings with your Association Board, conversations with your leadership, and the work of the Committee on Ministry and its various working groups, I have had the privilege of walking alongside these Association leaders. I have asked questions, listened, learned your history, and sometimes wondered right along with you what the best next step might be. I am grateful for the patience and generosity you have extended to me as I have found my way into this new relationship with you.

One of the things I have heard, and something I have felt myself, is the temptation to believe that every decision we make in this first year must establish a precedent for everything that follows. That can make learning something new feel rather daunting. Every question becomes a question about the future. Every decision feels as though it needs to get it exactly right. I have encouraged leadership to give ourselves permission to breathe a little more deeply and to share abundant grace in this process. Not grace as an excuse for carelessness, but grace as the space we need to learn together.

We are allowed to be new at this. We are allowed to try something and discover that another way might serve us better. We are allowed to ask questions, to listen to one another, to adjust, and to grow. We can make thoughtful decisions with the wisdom we have today without needing to know exactly what every decision will mean five years from now.

Perhaps this is part of what Paul understood when he expressed his confidence that the one who began a good work among the Philippians would bring it to completion. His confidence was not in their ability to get everything right. His confidence was in God.

That is where I want our confidence to rest, too. Because there is already so much good among us. I see it in the people who continue to show up and offer their gifts. I see it in the faithful work of our boards and committees. I see it in the willingness to have honest conversations, even when the answers are not obvious. I see it in the relationships that are growing across what used to be separate structures. And I see it in the simple decision, week after week, to keep showing up for the ministry God has entrusted to us.

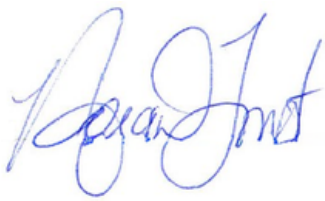
So, as we gather for this Annual Meeting, I mostly want to say thank you. Thank you for welcoming me into your work. Thank you for your patience as I have learned. Thank you for your questions and your wisdom. Thank you for the ways you have helped me understand where you have been and where you hope to go. And thank you for trusting that we can figure some of this out together.

We are not the Mountain Valley Association of the future, we simply need to keep taking the next faithful step.

Paul prayed that the Philippians' love might "overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight." I think that is a beautiful prayer for us in this season. May our love for one another deepen as we learn more about one another. May our shared wisdom grow through experience. May we have enough humility to change course when we need to and enough courage to try something new when God calls us forward.

And may we trust that the good work we are doing is not ours alone. God has begun something among us. We are still learning what it will become. And I am grateful that we get to discover that together.

With gratitude, grace, and hope,



Rev. Dr. Nora Foust
Regional Conference Minister - Region 2
Keystone Conference
United Church of Christ

Keystone Conference Communications

for your Fall 2026 Association Meeting

Keystone Connections

KeystoneConnections isthe electronic e-newsletter sent out twice weekly and for special events. Anyone can sign up for Connections. We encourage all pastors and church leaders to be signed up in order to be kept aware of Conference happenings. If you are not receiving "Connections" and would like to, simply go to the Conference website – keystoneucc.org – and on the opening screen click the gold box labeled "Sign up for weekly mailing".

Keystone Conference Remittance Form

TheKeystone Conferenceremittance formcan be found on the Keystone website at this location: https://keystoneucc.org/resources/wider-church-remittal-form/ OR go to keystoneucc.org and search "remittance form". It is available in word and pdf format. This is your form to remit OCWM, the special offerings of the UCC and any donation for special cause or in support of our Ministry partners.

Where to Find Upcoming Events (Conference events/ Boundary Trainings /Installations, etc.)

Are you looking for upcoming Conferenceevents? Perhaps you need boundary training. To find events sponsored by the Conference go to the Keystone Conference website (keystoneucc.org) and click on the "News & Events" tab and then the "Calendar of Events" subtab. Now, on the left side of your screen click the "Event Category" box, to narrow down the options to find specifically what you are looking for.

Clergy Connections Email - The creation of Clergy Connection Monthly Email, sent on the second Thursday of each month, started in April. If you are a clergy not on this list, contact Paul at paul@keystoneucc.org . Things being shared include:

- Boundary, Diversity, Continuing Education trainings.
- Listing of new churches receiving profiles, and link to searching Keystone churches.
- What your ministerial staff is reading, watching, thinking about.
- Clergy Deaths and where to send notes of condolences.
- Transition Section, pastors moving to and from churches/ministry settings
- News on standing issues with clergy, especially termination of standings or other disciplinary actions.

Keystone 2026 Fall Meeting – November 14 via Zoom – 9:00 am

We will come together forthe single purpose of approving the Keystone 2027 budget. This meeting will be held via zoom. We will need to meet quorum of 1/3 of our 507 churches in attendance.
All pastors with standing will have a vote and churches will be entitled to the following delegates:

Membership up to 100—2 delegates / Membership of 101—300—3 delegates
Membership 301—500—4 delegates / Membership over 500—5 delegates
1Youth delegate (ages 14-17) with voice but no vote.

Budget Information

The 2027 budget will be posted to the Fall Meeting site on our website no later than October 12th.
https://keystoneucc.org/event/keystone-conference-fall-meeting-2026/

Mission Grants Applications

The historic conferences which made up the Keystone Conference had very active programs of providing funds for specific projects or programs to their congregations and faith communities within their boundaries. The money came from endowments, bequests, and donations from individuals and churches. The Keystone Mission Grants Committee is reviewing the different application forms and approval cycles from over 90 funding sources to try to consolidate and make the application and review process as simple as possible, especially considering that some of the funds had restrictions placed by the donors. To see the different grants available, go here: https://keystoneucc.org/mission-grants-committee/

Continuing Education Events

Each Association of the Keystone Conference acknowledges that continuing education and lifelong learning is a key component of building transformational leadership in pastoral ministry. Authorized Ministers should discuss their specific requirements with their Association Committee on Ministry chairperson, as policies vary across the conference, please use this link for more information: https://keystoneucc.org/lifelong-learning/

January 2027 Keystone Women's Clergy Retreat

Awomen's clergy retreat is being planned for January 12-14, 2027. Theme will be "A Joyful Rest". Watch the Keystone Connection for registration to open soon.

Clergy Convocation 2027

Clergy Convocation 2027 will take place January 26-28 at the Red Lion in Harrisburg (same location as last year). The theme will be: "Embodied Reconciliation: Congregational Healing as Pastoral Care". The guest speaker will be: Dr. Leanna K. Fuller, Associate Professor of Pastoral Care at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Registration will open soon.

Keystone Conference 2027 Annual Meeting – June 4-6 @ Millersville University

We are thrilled that so many of you felt our first Keystone Annual Meeting was such a success! Due to lack of time to find another venue to be able to accommodate our size and be reasonable in pricing, the 2027 Annual Meeting will return to Millersville. Don't worry, we have heard your concerns, and they are being addressed. Registration will open in the Winter.

*Important!! A meeting of this size needs many hands to make it successful. From golf cart drivers, people to assist with tech, workshops, to helping people find their way. If you are willing to help in any way, please read the registration carefully when it opens. We will be offering a $25 discount to all volunteers.

Save these 2027 Dates – All items can be found on the Keystone calendar at keystoneucc.org

Jan. 12-14 – Women's Clergy Retreat at Mariawald Retreat Center in Shillington. Theme : " The Joyful Rest"
Jan. 26-28 – Clergy Convocation at RedLion Hotel in Harrisburg
Jun. 4-6 – 2027 Annual Meeting at Millersville University in Millersville.

Schedule & Business Agenda

- 8:30 AM - 9:00PM - Registration
- 9:00AM - 9:15AM - Welcome
- 9:15AM - 10:00AM - Keynote
- 10:00AM - 10:15AM - Break
- 10:15AM - 11:00AM - Breakout Sessions
- 11:00AM - 11:45AM - Worship
- 11:45AM - 12:30PM - Lunch
- 12:30PM - 1:30PM - Business
  - Call to Order
  - Appoint Parliamentarian and Assistant Parliamentarian
  - Define the Bar of the House
  - Adopt Agenda
  - Registrar's Report
  - Adopt Business Guidelines
  - A Time of Remembrance
  - Anniversaries of Authorized Ministers
  - Welcome of New Authorized Ministers of Mountain Valley Association
  - Welcome of New Members-in-Discernment and those approved for Ministerial Standing
  - Recognizing Church Closures
  - Recognizing Church Anniversaries
  - Vote on Constitution & Bylaws Amendments
  - Approve Treasurer's Report
  - Vote on 2027 MVA Budget
  - Presentation of Nominating Committee
  - Recognition of Gratitude for the Service of Rev. Martin Nuscher
  - Installation of MVA Officers and Committee Members
  - Adjournment
- 1:30PM - Benediction

Mountain Valley Association Board Highlights

Board Members: Lori Balliet, Moderator; James Robison, Assistant Moderator; Martin Nuscher, Treasurer *resigned; Susan Weldner, Treasurer; Suzanne Schaeffer, Secretary; Jeff Brinks, chair of Committee on Ministry; Rebecca Thomas, chair of Nominating Committee *stepped down; Lori Esslinger, chair of Nominating Committee; Doug Lander, chair of Search & Call; James Gottwald, chair of Program Committee; Nora Foust, Transitional Regional Conference Minister for Region 2 and Ex Officio

Met monthly since Jan

Jan – James Robison was appointed to fill the vacancy of Assistant Moderator

Feb – decided to extend committee members' terms to Dec 31st

Feb – informed that Longsdorf Fund will be merged with Keystone Conference Scholarship Fund for Authorized Ministers

Feb – terminated MVA Registrar since Keystone Conference has a Registrar encompassing all the associations

Mar – Martin Nuscher resigned as MVA Treasurer effective Mar 1st

Mar – ended the lease of MVA office space at St. Paul's UCC, Northampton since files on MiDs and Authorized Ministers are electronic

Mar – Susan Weldner appointed MVA Treasurer by the Board

May – Rebecca Thomas stepped down as chair of the Nominating Committee

Jun – discussion of governance concluded with Generosity Team on hold; no clear decision regarding Area Mission Councils, Mental Health Team, Racial Justice Team, Spiritual Development Team [some of these might be absorbed in to the Keystone Conference like Amigos and Bible Mission School in Liberia; Vitality Team merged into Keystone Conference structure

Jun – decided at money donated to MVA for Pride be held separately and any additional money over and above expenses be held over from year to year

Jul – Racial Justice Team merged into Keystone Conference structure

Jul – Gwilym T. Williams Scholarship Fund (GTW) will continue to assist students going to college with the MVA Scholarship Committee making decisions regarding recipients while the Keystone Conference will serve as trustee of the fund

Jul – informed that the funds used to cover PNEC cost including Guatemala Partnership, Disaster Response, and other donor-supported initiatives would be restored after the sale of the PNEC Office in Palmerton

Aug – decided to discontinue financial support of historic mission partners of the PNEC and will determine financial support moving forward and encouraging local congregations to support those they wish

Aug – Lori Esslinger became chair of the Nominating Committee

Aug – conducted a site visit at Lower Saucon UCC, Hellertown in preparation for Annual Meeting on Nov 7th

Sep – approved by consensus the Annual Meeting on Nov 7th including recommendations to amend the MVA Constitution & Bylaws, the 2027 Proposed Budget, and a Proclamation of Gratitude honoring Rev. Martin Nuscher's service as Treasurer

BUSINESS GUIDELINES FOR THE MOUNTAIN VALLEY ASSOCIATION

1. **Parliamentary Procedure**

   The meeting will follow Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th Edition, except where these guidelines provide otherwise.

2. **Voice**

   Delegates, Alternate Delegates, and registered participants either in person or by Zoom have voice.

   Those attending in person should raise their hand and wait to be recognized by the Moderator. Those attending by Zoom should use the "Raise Hand" feature or contact the Chat Teller through the Zoom chat.

   When recognized, please give your **name, affiliation, and/or the church name and location you represent.**

3. **Voting Privileges**

   Voting privileges are limited to:

   - Delegates or designated alternates from Local Churches;
   - Authorized Ministers, holding standing in the Mountain Valley Association; and
   - Lay members of the Association Board.

4. **Bar of the House**

   Only eligible voters who are within the designated in-person meeting space or participating through the official Zoom meeting are considered within the Bar of the House and may vote.

   In-person voting will normally be by official delegate card. Zoom voting will be conducted electronically as directed.

5. **Speaking on Business**

   The person presenting a motion may speak for up to **five minutes**. Others speaking to the motion are limited to **two minutes**.

   A person who has already spoken should wait until everyone wishing to speak has had an opportunity before speaking again.

   Zoom attendees may request their chat to be spoken by the Chat Teller.

6. **Length of Discussion**

   The presiding officer may limit discussion when necessary to conduct the business of the meeting efficiently and fairly.

7. **Motions and Amendments**

   Main motions and amendments should be submitted in writing to the Conference Secretary. Zoom participants may submit them electronically as directed by the Moderator or Chat Teller.

8. **Budget Questions**

   The MVA Treasurer will be available to answer questions concerning the proposed budget.

9. **Business Committee**

   The officers of the Mountain Valley Association Board will serve as the Business Committee. The committee will receive business items and determine their appropriate place on the agenda. It may organize related items to avoid duplication and help the meeting proceed efficiently.

10. **Resolution and Proposals**

    Resolutions, proposals, and other business should be submitted to the Board of the Mountain Valley Association before the meeting whenever possible.

11. **Business Not Considered**

    Any resolution or proposal not accepted for consideration at the meeting will be referred to the Board of the Mountain Valley Association for review and possible consideration at a future meeting.

Proposed Changes to the MVA Consitution and Bylaws

Items in red are the recommended additions and items ~~crossed out~~ are the recomended deletions

MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association Constitution & Bylaws

Constitution

ARTICLE I
NAME AND AFFILIATION

Section One: The name of this Association shall be the MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association of the KEYSTONE Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Section Two: The area of the Association shall be those counties and areas defined as part of the predecessor Penn Northeast Conference.

Section Three: This MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association shall continue without break, the corporate entity and historictraditions of the Penn Northeast Conference acting as an Association.

ARTICLE II
PURPOSE

Section One: To unite the Local Churches of the United Church of Christ within its boundaries in Christian fellowship, to admit Local Churches and ministers to standing in the United Church of Christ, to assist its member Local Churches and ministers, and to further the work of the Kingdom of God through the KEYSTONE Conference and of the United Church of Christ in this locality, the nation and the world.

Section Two: Nothing in the Constitution or Bylaws of this Association shall destroy or limit the right of each member Local Church to continue to operate in the way customary to it, nor shall it be construed as giving the Association now or at any future time the power, to abridge or impair the autonomy of any member Local Church in the management of its own affairs.

ARTICLE III
MEMBERSHIP

Section One: Membership shall consist of the Local Churches in the United Church of Christ who choose to affiliate with the MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association and hold standing in the Association. Additionally, all Authorized Ministers holding standing in the Association are members.

Section Two: The voting membership shall consist of the Authorized Ministers, holding standing in the Association and of the Lay Delegates selected by and representing the member Local Churches, as provided in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE IV
ORGANIZATION

Section One: The officers shall be a Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Secretary, Treasurer and such other officers as the Association may from time to time determine, they shall be responsible to the MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association.

Section Two: The Board of Directors shall consist of the officers and the Standing Committee Chairs as are specified by the Bylaws.

Section Three: The Board of Directors shall have general supervision of the affairs, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of this Association, of the KEYSTONE Conference, and the United Church of Christ, and subject to the will of the Association expressed in its regular and special meetings.

Section Four: The Board of Directors shall prepare a proposed Association budget which shall be submitted to the Association. At its Annual Meeting the Association shall adopt a budget for the following year.

ARTICLE V

MEETINGS

Section One: The Association shall meet at a minimum annually and at such other times as may be necessary for the discharge of its responsibilities, as provided in the Bylaws.

Section Two: Procedures for conducting Association meetings shall follow the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.

ARTICLE VI

MINISTERIAL STANDING

This Association shall determine, confer and certify authorized ministerial standing in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE VII

CONGREGATIONAL STANDING

This Association shall determine, conferand certify congregational standing in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE VIII

AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those voting in a duly called meeting of this Association, provided that the Amendment has been presented to the Association at a previously duly called meeting or recommended to the Association by the Board of Directors. In either case, a copy of the proposed amendment shall be provided to each Authorized Minister and each Local Church holding membership in the Association, with the call for meeting, not less than 30 days prior to the meeting at which action on the proposed Amendment is to be taken.

Bylaws of the MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association of the KEYSTONE Conference of the United Church of Christ

ARTICLE I
MEMBERSHIP AND AREA

Section One: The Association shall consist of the Local Churches and Authorized Ministers which have standing in the MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association of the KEYSTONE Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Section Two: The area of this Association shall be the counties and areas located in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey that were part of the predecessor Penn Northeast Conference.

ARTICLE II
OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section One: The officers shall be: Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Section Two: The Board of Directors of the Association shall consist of no more than eight ~~persons~~ individuals. The eight shall be the officers and the chairpersons, or their designee, of the standing committees as are specified by the Bylaws. The Board of Directors shall provide vision, oversight, and resources to the Local Churches of the Association. It shall receive and disburse the funds of the Association.

Section Three: Election of Officers and Chairpersons

a) The officers of the Board of Directors shall be elected by the Association at the Annual Meeting.

b) The ~~Moderator and~~ Assistant Moderator shall be elected for a term of two years, followed by a term oftwo years as Moderator, so that the Moderator and Assistant Moderator will alternate between an Authorized Minister and a Lay Person. ~~and~~ No person may serve in one of these offices for more than one consecutive term.

c) The Secretary shall be elected for a term of one year and may serve an unlimited number of terms.

d) The Treasurer shall be elected for a term of one year and may serve an unlimited number of terms.

e) ~~The Registrar shall be appointed by the Board and shall serve with the authorization of the Board.~~

f) The Chairpersons of the Standing Committees shall be selected by members of their committees.

The term of office for all officers and members of the Board of Directors shall begin on the first day of January following the Annual Meeting at which they were elected.

g) The Officers shall be either Authorized Ministers or Lay Persons.

Section Four: Duties of Officers

a) The Moderator shall preside at meetings of the Association and the Board of Directors and perform such other duties as are appropriate to the Moderator.

b) The Assistant Moderator shall assist the Moderator with the work of the Association and perform the duties in the absence of the Moderator. This person shall be responsible for the planning of the Annual Meeting of the Association

c) The Secretary shall keep the minutes for the meetings of the Association and the Board of Directors and carry on such correspondence and perform such other duties as are appropriate to the office.

d) The Treasurer shall have custody of the funds of the Association and shall make such disposition of them as the Board of Directors authorizes. A report shall be submitted to the Annual Meeting and such other reports made as the Board of Directors requires. ~~The treasurer shall be bonded for an amount deemed sufficient by the Board of Directors. The books shall be professionally reviewed annually and audited as requested by the Association Board of Directors.~~ The Board of Directors will have the books audited annually by three volunteers appointed by the Board of Directors.

~~**Section Eight**: The Registrar shall keep an accurate list of the Local Churches which are members of the Association and Authorized Ministers who have standing in the same, and Ministers having Dual Standing or Privilege of Call. A permanent record shall be kept of the Local Churches and ministers which have been members of the Association, indicating the date when they were admitted and dismissed. The Registrar shall be responsible for maintaining communication and accurate records with the Conference Registrar. The Registrar shall be a member of the Committee on Ministry, serving as its secretary.~~

Section ~~Nine~~ Five: Meetings of the Board of Directors shall be called by the Moderator. The Board of Directors shall meet at least two times a year.

Section ~~Ten~~ Six: Five members of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum.

Section ~~Eleven~~ Seven: If any officer or member of the Board of Directors resigns, or is unable to serve, or moves from geographic bounds of the Association, or no longer holds membership in a Local Church of the Association, the Board of Directors shall appoint another person to complete the term of office. This person shall still be eligible for election to a full term in the same office.

ARTICLE III

STANDING COMMITTEES

Section One: The Association shall have the following Standing Committees:

a) Committee on Ministry
b) Nominating Committee
c) Search and Call Committee
d) Program Committee

Section Two: The Committee on Ministry shall consist of the members of its three Working Groups: Authorization Working Group; Oversight Working Group; and Local Congregational Support Working Group. The Association Board shall determine the minimum and maximum number of members of the Committee on Ministry and Working Groups.

a) Each Annual Meeting of the Association shall elect the following:

1) One third, at least two of whom shall be Lay Persons to serve on the Authorization Working Group.
2) One third, at least two of whom shall be Lay Persons to serve on the Oversight Working Group.
3) One third , at least two of whom shall be Lay Persons to serve on the Local Congregational Support Working Group.

b) Working Group members are elected to a three (3) year term not to exceed two (2) consecutive terms on one of the three Working Groups.

c) The chairperson of the Committee on Ministry shall be chosen ~~annually~~ by the committee and shall have at least one year of service in one of the Working Groups and shall be elected to a two-year term at the last meeting of the Committee on Ministry prior to the Association Annual Meeting where committee members are elected.

d) Each Working Group will consist of a chairperson and a vice chairperson, who will have at least one year of service in that Working Group. They shall be elected to one-year terms at the last meeting of their Working Group prior to the Association Annual Meeting where committee members are elected.

e) The chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of each Working Group will constitute an executive committee convened by the Committee on Ministry chairperson as needed.

~~**f)** The Registrar shall serve as Secretary of both the Authorization and Oversight Working Groups. Both the Registrar and the Moderator will serve ex-officio with voice, and without vote.~~

Section Three: The Nominating Committee shall consist of ~~at least three persons~~ six individuals, at least ~~one~~ two of whom shall be ~~a~~ Lay Persons. ~~They shall be elected by the Association at the Annual Meeting for a term of one year, being eligible for re-election for two additional consecutive terms~~

a) Each Annual Meeting of the Association shall elect two individuals to a three (3) year term, not to exceed two (2) consecutive terms.

b) The chairperson shall be chosen annually by the committee and shall have at least one year of service on the Committee.

Section Four: The Search and Call Committee shall consist of at least four members, all of whom shall be Lay Persons.

a) Members of the committee shall be identified by the Nominating Committee and appointed by the Association Board.

b) The chairperson shall be chosen annually by the committee, shall have at least one year of service on the Committee.

Section Five: The Program Committee shall consist of ~~at least~~ six members plus the Assistant Moderator and an Association Clerk, at least two of whom shall be Lay Persons.

a) Each Annual Meeting of the Association shall elect two ~~persons~~ individuals, who are elected to a three (3)year term, not to exceed two (2) consecutive terms.

b) Each Annual Meeting of the Association shall elect one individual to serve as Association Clerk for a term of one year and may serve an unlimited number of terms.

c) The Association Clerk, working in conjunction with the Administrative Assistant for Region 2, shall register participants for the Annual Meeting of the Association, track the number of Authorized Ministers, Lay Delegates, Youth Delegates, and Visitors at Annual Meetings, verify and report whether quorum requirements are met at Annual Meetings of the Association, assist with logistical preparation related to registration by distributing annual meeting agenda, advance reports, and venue maps at registration table, as well as take care of name tags and questions when delegates and visitors register.

d) The chairperson shall be chosen annually by thecommittee, shall have at least one year of service on the Committee.

Section Six: The term of office of all committee members shall begin ~~the first day of month~~ January 1 following the election at the Annual Meeting.

Section Seven: A vacancy on a Standing Committee shallbefilled by the committee on which the vacancy occurs, with the approval of the Board of Directors.

Section Eight: The Association Moderator is an ex-officiomember of all Standing Committees with voice, and without vote.

Section Nine: The Board of Directors may from time to timecreate additional teams or task forces for specific purposes. The chairs of these teams or task forcesdonothave a vote on the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IV
MEETINGS

Section One: The Annual Meeting of the Association shall be held at such time and place as the Board of Directors shall determine.

Section Two: Special Meetings of the Association may be called by the Board of Directors stating the purpose for which the meeting is called.

Section Three: Notice for the Annual Meeting of the Association shall be provided 60 days in advance of the meeting date. Notice for any Special Meeting of the Association shall be provided 14 days in advance of the meeting date. Notices shall be given by the secretary and provided to the Authorized Ministers and Local Churches holding membership in the Association

Section Four: The voting membership of the Association shall consist of the Authorized Ministers holding standing in the Association, the Board of Directors, and the Lay Delegates selected by and representing the member Local Churches. ~~Each Local Church having up to 500 members as reported in the UCC Yearbook, shall be entitled to be represented by one delegate, plus one youth delegate. Each Local Church having 501 or more members as reported in the UCC Yearbook, shall be entitled to be represented by two delegates, plus two youth delegates.~~ Churches will have the following delegates based on their membership reported in the UCC Yearbook: membership up to 100 – 2 delegates, membership of 101 to 300 – 3 delegates, membership 301 to 500 – 4 delegates, 501 and over – 5

delegates, and each Church eligible for 1 Youth delegate (ages 14-17). Other representatives of the Local Churches and visitors shall be welcome with the privilege of voice without vote.

Section Five: A quorum for a meeting shall be Authorized Ministers or lay delegates representing 30% of the local churches with standing in the Association. An Authorized Minister serving multiple local churches shall represent only one local church at the meeting.

ARTICLE V
DUTIES OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Section One: The Committee on Ministry is responsible for the authorization and oversight of individuals seeking or serving in an Authorized Ministerial capacity within the Association as well as the standing and support of Local Churches in the Association.

a) The Committee on Ministry will convene an Ecclesiastical Council when needed as part of its quarterly meetings; authorization of candidates for ordination; removal of an Authorized Minister's standing; and approval of Local Churches requesting affiliation with the United Church of Christ.

b) The Authorization Working Group of the Committee on Ministry reviews and decides on requests for: Member in Discernment; Lay Ministerial Standing; Privilege of Call; and, Dual Standing.

c) The Oversight Working Group of the Committee on Ministry determines the criteria for Authorized Ministerial Standing; reviews and decides on requests for Authorized Ministerial Standing; provides Periodic Support consultations; conducts Situational Support Consultations; and conducts Fitness Reviews in consultation with the UCC Manual on Ministry.

d) The Local Congregational Support Working Group identifies resources for Local Churches in crisis; refers coaches to Local Churches; and organizes training for lay leaders and lay education programs. The Committee also reviews and recommends to the Committee on Ministry granting standing to a new United Church of Christ Local Church. It reviews and recommends the revocation of standing of an existing United Church of Christ Local Church.

e) Any member of any of the Association's committees, or any participant in an Association's oversight actions, who has financial, personal, or official interest in, or conflict or appearance of a conflict with any matter pending, of such nature that it prevents or may prevent that member from acting in an impartial manner, will offer to voluntarily recuse themselves and refrain from discussion of, participation in and/or voting in the activity where the conflict or appearance of conflict exists. If there is a conflict either real or perceived and the individual does not voluntarily recuse themselves, the Association's committee may, by a vote of two-thirds of the members then present and voting, require involuntary recusal.

Section Two: The Nominating Committee shall nominate candidates for officers and members of the standing committees. It shall secure the consent of each nominee to serve, if elected. The chairperson shall submit the names of the nominees at the Annual Association Meeting.

a) Nominations may be made from the floor. Such nominees shall have consented to serve, if elected. **b)** Elections shall be held by ballot. However, if only one candidate for each position has been nominated for Board officers, Committee on Ministry members and/or Nominating Committee members, those candidates may be elected by a voice vote.

Section Three: The Search and Call Committee will work with Local Churches who are seeking pastoral leadership. Committee Members will be assigned to each vacant Local Church, working with its Search Committee to determine the pastoral leadership needs of the Local Church and the methods to identify such leadership. The Seach and Call Committee will work in close collaboration with the Regional Minister and/or other staff and the search process of the national setting of the United Church of Christ.

Section Four: The Program committee will seek to identify needs across Local Churches of the Association and develop programs and identify resources to respond to those needs. The Program Committee is also responsible for any program content occurring at the Association Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VI

Fiscal year

Section One: The fiscal year of the MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association of the KEYSTONE Conference of the United Church of Christ shall be from January 1 through December 31.

ARTICLE VII
Stewardship and Finances

Section One: The Association retains the right to maintain a treasury and adopt an annual budget. Member Local Churches of the Association are encouraged to create a line item in their annual budget to support the Association. The amount can be calculated based either by membership or as a percentage of the budget.

Section Two: Funds contributed to the Association shall be disbursed to further the mission of the Local Church, including, but not limited to the following:

- **a)** To support individuals in the call to Christian ministry, while ensuring adequate financial, professional, and spiritual support for their journey.
- **b)** To create opportunities for communal celebrations that enrich our covenantal relationships and shared ministries.
- **c)** To work together in mission, education, and other forms of ministry that celebrate and reveal the reign of Christ in and beyond the Association.
- **d)** Any other Association expense that the Board approves.

Section Three: Proceeds from the closing of Local Churches within the Association will be the possession of the KEYSTONE Conference.

Article VIII
Amendments

Section One: Notice of any proposed amendments to these Bylaws shall be provided at least thirty days prior to the Annual Association Meeting at which a vote is to be taken. The proposed amendments require a majority vote of the Association members present at said Annual Association Meeting for approval.

Article IX
Dissolution

Section One: In the event of the dissolution of the MOUNTAIN VALLEY Association, its assets and all property and interests, including any devise, bequest, gift, or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall vest in the KEYSTONE Conference of the United Church of Christ or its successor.

MOUNTAIN VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF THE KEYSTONE CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

2026 INAUGURAL FALL MEETING

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026

TREASURER'S REPORT

Below are the financial results for the 9 months ended September 30,2026.

We've had initial funding donations of $30,000, along with Member Church and Individual Donations, for a total of $41,629 received to date. We've received donations from 21 of our Member Churches, or approx. 20% of the total MVA membership. We are grateful for everyone who has been able to give!

On the expense side, we incurred several one-time start-up costs. As we continue to refine our role within the broader Keystone Conference, we are gaining a clearer understanding of our financial needs. Even so, as our first year draws to a close, we remain in a strong financial position.

MOUNTAIN VALLEY ASSOCIATION - KEYSTONE CONFERENCE UCC
September 30, 2026

		Year-To-Date Actual
REVENUE		
INITIALFUNDING		30,000.00
MEMBER CHURCH DONATIONS		10,129.00
INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS		1,500.00
	TOTAL REVENUE	41,629.00
EXPENSES		
BUILDING RENT		(1,125.00)
OPERATING EXPENSES		(2,270.21)
COM EXPENSES		(97.00)
KEYSTONE ANNUAL MTG SPONSOR		(1,000.00)
	TOTAL EXPENSE	(4,492.21)
NET CHANGE IN FUND BALANCE		37,136.79
BEGINNING FUND BALANCE		1,673.00
ENDING FUND BALANCE		38,809.79

MOUNTAIN VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF THE KEYSTONE

CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

2026 INAUGURAL FALL MEETING

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026

2027 PROPOSED BUDGET

Below is the 2027 Proposed Budget presented for approval.

Building on our 2026 experience, our 2027 Budget focuses on expenditures related to support of our member churches and their ministers, including

- Seed money for various programming
- Mission support, potential annual "mva mission project"
- Disaster relief, emergency support, special aid

Our 2027 Budget also includes support for MVA and Keystone Annual Meetings, and delegate support to UCC Synods.

MOUNTAIN VALLEY ASSOCIATION - KEYSTONE CONFERENCE UCC

2027 BUDGET - DRAFT

	2027 Budget
REVENUE	
INITIALFUNDING	
MEMBER CHURCH DONATIONS	12,000.00
INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS	1,000.00
MVA ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATIONS	2,500.00
TOTAL REVENUE	15,500.00
EXPENSES	
OPERATING EXPENSES	(750.00)
COM EXPENSES	(1,000.00)
KEYSTONE ANNUAL MTG SPONSOR	(1,000.00)
PROGRAMMING	(500.00)
MINISTRY DAY	(500.00)
PRIDE	(500.00)
MISSION SUPPORT	(4,750.00)
MVA GOOD SAMARATIN FUND	(2,000.00)
MVA ANNUAL MEETING	(2,500.00)
MVA DELEGATE UCC SYNOD	(2,000.00)
TOTAL EXPENSE	(15,500.00)
NET CHANGE IN FUND BALANCE	0

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United Church of Christ
105 E. 19th Street, Northampton, PA 18067

2026 Annual Report - Nominating Committee

Current members of the MVA Nominating Committee Class of 2026: Rev. Becky Thomas, Rev. Allan Kramer Moyer, Mandy Muschett, Rev. Mike Eckroth, Rev. Bob Rapp, Rev. Patti Hoyt, Lori Esslinger

We offer our sincere thanks to all who have served in these ministries of the Association. We especially recognize those who have completed their terms of service and those who, for various reasons, have concluded their service prior to the completion of a term.

- **Cecelia Baxter, Jameson Baxter, Brad Hackett, Kathy Latshaw, Martin Nuscher, Becky Thomas, Allan Kramer Moyer, Bob Rapp, Dave DeRemer, Dave Schnaars, Gary Barraco, Joanne McGee, Teresa Martin, Laura Oesterle, Carol Jastremsky, Jessica Anderson.**

We are grateful for the time, wisdom, energy, and commitment each person has shared in strengthening the ministry of the Mountain Valley Association.

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, we are pleased to present the following slate of nominees as the Class of 2029 for service within the Mountain Valley Association:

- **Authorization Working Group:**

Michelle Funk, Gina Harvey, Bob Quinby, Lee Schaeffer, Becky Thomas; and Jean Fennell, completing an unexpired term for the Class of 2028

- **Oversight Working Group:**

Joel Biggers, Christian Creyer, Kathy Heckman, Larry Pickens; *and we are hoping to receive nominations from the floor at our annual meeting* ~ one person to serve in the class of 2029; and one person to serve an unexpired term in the class of 2028.

- **Local Congregational Support Working Group:**

Lynn Breedy, Diane Schnaars, Kayli Freeman

- **Program Committee:**

CrissaRobin Carroll; *and we are hoping to receive nominations from the floor at our annual meeting* ~ one more person to serve on this committee.

- **Nominating Committee:**

Class of 2029: Mike Eckroth, Patti Hoyt
Class of 2028: Mandy Muschett, Lori Esslinger
Class of 2027: *and we are hoping to receive nominations for two individuals from the floor at our annual meeting.*

Respectfully submitted by Lori Esslinger, Chair of Nominating Committee

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2026 Annual Report - Search and Call Team

This has been a transformative year for the Search and Call Team representing the Mountain Valley Association. Conversations about what Search and Call would look like in the Keystone Conference started in early 2025 and continued into the first half of 2026, with members of the team engaged in-person and virtually. Initial conversations reflected on how each of our four former Conferences provided Search and Call assistance to local churches.

While our existing Consultants continued work with multiple churches in our region, we were challenged with navigating already existing changes to the local church profile, the profile placement on the national website, adopting a less active role in the voting process for Call Sunday, and lamenting the absence of former PNEC administrative staff who had been invaluable resources. Meanwhile, our Keystone Conference leadership, particularly the Regional Conference Ministers (Rev. Kevin McLemore, Rev. Dr. Nora Foust, and Rev. David Ackerman) and Rev. Dr. Carrie Call (Transition Executive Conference Minister) finalized the process to be used statewide for Search and Call. The result of their work includes multiple resources for our local churches; from the time a Pastor leaves their current setting to planning a Candidate Weekend to consider extending a call to a new Pastor. A comprehensive checklist was also created, identifying areas of responsibility for church leaders, Conference staff, and Search and Call Consultants. Finally, a virtual meeting was held in August to introduce the finalized process to Conference staff and Consultants throughout the Keystone Conference.

The Mountain Valley Association has been blessed to have a team in place for many years, working with local churches as they navigate the process of seeking a new Pastor, including the successful calling of three new Pastors. Going forward, the most significant changes for us include earlier engagement as churches identify someone to serve during a period of transition and engagement with churches seeking less than full-time leadership. Due to the rather large geographic boundaries of our Association and existing Consultants residing in the greater Lehigh Valley area, some of our future consulting opportunities will be performed in a virtual environment. It is our hope that we will be able to increase the number of Consultants in our Association and identify volunteer Consultants for other Associations also part of Region 2.

Our Search and Call Team has welcomed our Regional Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Nora Foust, and appreciate her commitment to Search and Call. At the present time, Consultants are actively working with two churches, with multiple new opportunities becoming available in the months ahead. Our team, starting with the longest years of service, includes Ron Smith, Doug Lander, and Yvette Mattina. We have also welcomed a former member, Rev. Joyce Donigian. Collectively, our team members have provided over sixty years of service to our local churches.

Thanks be to God!

Doug Lander, Chairperson
MVA Search and Call Team

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2026 Annual Report of the Committee on Ministry

At our meeting on Saturday, January 10, 2026, the Committee on Ministry held ecclesiastical councils for Lou Aita, serving Emmanuel UCC in Mountaintop (Dorance) and Jeremy Lau who is now serving at New Creation, Easton. Both were enthusiastically approved for ordination.

In additional business, the CoM:

- Affirmed the historic PNEC Fitness Review Polices and Guidelines until Keystone Conference formulates new policy which Associations approve. (still in progress as of this report)
- Announced that the MVA would follow the Keystone Conference continuing education requirements for Authorized Ministers.
- Voted to discontinue requiring that Annual Call Renewals and Three- and Four-way Covenant Renewals be sent in to the Association.
- Announced that Policies and Ways of Work would be revised as we live into being the Mountain Valley Association.

While the CoM usually meets quarterly, the April and July meetings were canceled due to a lack of business.

At our meeting on September 19, 2026 meeting an Ecclesiastical Council was held for Samantha Kistler. Samantha was enthusiastically approved for ordination. She has been offered a part time call to St. John's, Whitehall.
In additional business, the CoM elected the Rev. Kayli Freeman as the chair of the CoM effective January 1, 2027. No one was nominated or volunteered for the position of Secretary or Vice-Chairperson. Both positions will be on the agenda of the next CoM meeting.

Submitted by Rev. Jeff Brinks, Chairperson of the CoM

2026 Annual Report - Authorization Working Group

Members of the AWG are Class of 2026: Jeff Brinks, Dave DeRemer, Michelle Funk, Dave Schnaars, Becky Thomas; Class of 2027: Gary Barraco, Tracy Burkhardt, Gilberto Garcia Rodriguez, Doug Taylor, Ralph Todd; Class of 2028: Becky Beckwith, George Eckstein, Jean Fennell, Dave Quinn, Dennis Schappell.

The AWG meets the third Tuesday of each month for two to three hours. We review the status of each MID, conduct interviews with them at least once each year. We also interview those from other denominations seeking standing in the UCC.

The Group has recently adjusted the process that MIDs follow from a plan of formation (a checklist type of situation) to a portfolio presentation centered around the eight marks of faithful and effective ministry:

- A psychological evaluation will no longer be required for entry into the MID program but will be required to be completed within the first six months of entry into the program.
- MID candidates will be required to preach in at least two churches other than the one they may be serving each year. The purpose of these events is to introduce the candidate to the people of the Association and to broaden the candidate's experience of the UCC.
- Candidates will submit a portfolio of artifacts that demonstrate their understanding and abilities in each of the eight Marks.
- An ordination paper will still be required.
- MIDs will still be required to meet with the AWG at least once a year.

This puts us more in line with the UCC policy of multiple paths to ordination. In August we spent time with Nora Foust who presented training using this approach.

This year we have approved two people for ecclesiastical councils: Samantha Kistler and Joshua Nemeth. We have accepted one new MID: Erica Yenchick.

Currently two MID's have been granted Lay Ministerial Standing:

Linnea Meiser at Zion Stone Church
Josh Nemeth at St. Peters West Penn

There are currently six candidates in the MID program and four people in the process of applying for entry to the MID program.

This completes our report.

Rev. David Schnaars, Chair

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2026 Annual Report - Oversight Work Group

Blessed by Our Partnership

Members of OWG are Class of 2026: Carol Jastremsky, Larry Pickens, Kathy Latshaw, Joel Biggers; Class of 2027: Heather Hunnicutt, Rich Teitsworth, Steve Henderson, Brenda Chadeayne, Dale Sattizahn; Class of 2028: Steve Davis, RuthAnn McCay, Christian Creyer, Sue Schaeffer, Ashley Werkheiser.

When I began serving in ministry at the age of 19, a pastor of my adolescence told me to look to the other clergy of my conference as my partners in ministry. The strengths and challenges of each one of us were held in solidarity with each other. We shared a relationship covenant that inspired me, both then and now. I continue to find the work of ministry filled with opportunities for great partnership. I welcomed a new role this year in partnership with Sue Schaffer as the life challenges from some of our team called for them to prioritize family and personal well-being. I'm thankful for the work of each person on the Oversight Working Group, as well as the partnership we share with the Authorization Working Group and the Local Congregational Support Working Group each shared significant roles in bringing new people into ministry. Together, we worked to bring our support, inspiration, and covenant accountability to our partnership in ministry.

The Oversight Working Group has met monthly in 2026, to share in support for pastors with transitions in their ministry, retirements as well as new places to serve; transfers of standing to and from the Mountain Valley Association and helping facilitate Continuing Education support and training requirements. We will meet 11 times this year to do our work. "Oversight" is less about scrutinizing the work and more about how we help each other live into our professional relationships with strength and support. When the need for accountability has come, the OWG has sought to engage in deeper conversation and strengthen our connections, while also holding to the boundaries and expectations we have for professional conduct. As a last resort when other solutions could not be reached, authorization and ministerial standing have been withheld. Where restoration became possible, we celebrated the many diverse ways we could hold one another in covenant and be the Church of Jesus Christ.

At our first Committee on Ministry meeting in January, the OWG shared updates to our policies and guidelines from our historic PNEC regarding Fitness Reviews, as well as sharing changes recommended from the broader Keystone Conference for training requirements and continuing education in 2026. As part of that effort, the OWG chose to offer grace to those not in compliance at the end of 2025 and call

on all authorized ministers to get current with the training in 2026 and have a fresh start without penalty. While appreciated by many, there were still "growing pains" of adjustment to new systems to track continuing education and report it to the Keystone Conference, which in turn was shared with the OWG on a quarterly basis. We are pleased that many clergy continue their plans for personal development and professional training to enhance their ministries. We are also pleased to continue to share scholarship assistance for continuing education, for participation in Communities of Practice, and other opportunities to deepen our life in ministry in an ever-changing community as a local, national and global church.

We are still laboring through updates in our processes and discovering that "the Conference" (a.k.a. Patty and Barbara) took incredible care of us, and dare I say, made it too easy for us. We are still discovering things that happened because of these two magnificent servants of Christ, which we now are still trying to figure out how we can do those things ourselves. Association work and functions are new to many of us, and we are giving each other great grace and encouragement. Our Policies and Ways of Work revisions continue as we live into being the Mountain Valley Association.

As we end 2026, we will schedule triennial conversations (personal visits with 1/3 of our ministers each year) in early 2027, as well as share updates for continuing education and compliance for standing.

The Oversight Working Group expresses thanks to all our pastors, ordained clergy, authorized ministers and laity for the ways you help sharpen and uphold our connections as the new Mountain Valley Association in the Keystone Conference. Because of the partnership we share, we are building a stronger community for all people to know the love of our still-speaking God and experience the grace of Jesus Christ in the fullness of the Spirit. We are grateful for whom we get to become in partnership together.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Steve Davis, OWG Co-Chair

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2026 Annual Report - Local Congregational Support Working Group

We would like to extend our greatest gratitude for those who serve as part of this working group: Class of 2026: Pastor Lynn Breedy, Mrs. Diane Schnaars, Rev. Kayli Freeman; Class of 2027: Rev. Todd Fennel, Mr. David Lee, Mr. David Stuempfle, Class of 2028: Rev. Sharon Frye, Rev. Robert Gutekunst, and Rev. Steve Hummel. We are grateful for your tireless work for this group and to the association. Special thanks to Rev. Dr. Nora Foust who has helped move us toward the future, while we continue to learn our role in the association and conference.

This past year has brought many challenges for the Local Congregational Support Working Group. Through some trial and error, we have finally grown into what our working group is called to do and be within our association. Our tasks have been narrowed down to include: being the liaison for congregations in transition, conducting exit interviews with congregational leadership when in pastoral transition, be present during farewell liturgies (and other duties), be available for situational support consultations, and work with congregations seeking standing (and/or disaffiliating).

This year we have spent much time redefining what our purpose is within the conference and association. We have been informed of many congregations in transition, pastoral or otherwise. We've offered multiple exit interviews with congregational leadership; some offers were accepted. We continue to hold all of the congregations in transition in prayer and will continue to be a support for them, and for all congregations.

2026 brought a "new" opportunity for our working group, as we had to send two letters to two separate congregations that have made the decision to leave the United Church of Christ. In February, letters were sent to Ebenezer Church and Christ Church Lowhill. They were wished well, let know that we are here should their minds be changed and they feel called back into covenant with the MVA/Keystone/UCC, and that they need to be sure to do the legal work of not using UCC affiliated insurances, tax exempt status, and any other legalities. Though it is always sad when a congregation makes the decision to end covenantal relationship with the United Church of Christ, there is always hope. That hope is found in working towards new church standings for congregations wanting to join the UCC. And we are excited for this possibility in the coming months.

On top of this everyday work, we also continue to figure out ways to help congregations be successful, regardless of their size. We are working on creative ways to reach our "isolated" and "forgotten" congregations. Be on the watch for these opportunities in the future.

We recognize that we are still in quite a time of transition. Things will continue to be fluid and we strive to meet the needs of our congregations as best we can. We thank our association and conference for their support, and for the continued work we all continue to do to be stronger together.

Respectfully Submitted on behalf of the team,
Rev. Kayli Freeman—LCSWG Chair

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2026 Annual Report of the Program Committee

Members of the MVA Program Committee Class of 2026: Rev. Gary Barraco, Rev. Michelle Funk; Class of 2027: Ms. Arlene Altemose, Mrs. Chris Lander; Class of 2028: Rev. James Gottwald, Rev. Bob Gutekunst; and Assistant Moderator Rev. James Robison.

The MVA Program Committee is to identify needs of local MVA congregations throughout the Association, identify resources to respond to those needs, develop programs that address those needs, and plan the annual meeting of the Association traditionally held the first Saturday of November.

Our committee met almost monthly via Zoom with the primary focus of planning our Inaugural Gathering set for November 7th. During these meetings, we…

- Chose a venue
- Decided our focus
- Established the theme and invited people to serve on the Worship Team
- Orchestrated a Keynote Panel and Breakout Groups
- Created a Schedule for the day's proceedings
- And solicitated volunteers to serve as parliamentarians, tellers/ushers, IT crew, décor coordinator, hospitality/luncheon team, and registration coordinators.

Our hope was to create an experience of covenant with a strong spiritual foundation as we begin our first steps together to empower laity across the Mountain Valley Association.

As 2027 unfolds, we are looking forward to a Festival of Praise on Sunday, April 11, 2027 at St. John's UCC in Nazareth. Registration will begin early next year. The Rev. Todd Fennell is selecting six to eight anthems for a combined MVA Choir-led worship on the evening of April 11th.

Respectfully submitted by James Gottwald, Chair of the Program Committee