

Dear SONKA,

Over the last few weeks, I have had the privilege to represent you on the Heartland Conference's SONKA Working Group. Dan Deitz, SONKA Treasurer, and Rev. Carl Robinson, SONKA Designated Minister, also served as part of this team. This group gathered at the request of Rev. David Long-Higgins, Transitional Minister for The Heartland Conference, and was comprised of leadership from all the Associations. The purpose of the group was to discern ways to help SONKA with the financial crisis we face.

Our first task was to provide the group with a summary of SONKA's ministries and finances. We have a lot of spirit-led ministries happening: collaborative ministries in Cincinnati, in Dayton with Shiloh and response to the Memorial Day tornadoes, with Church Safety Trainings in response to mass shootings, through Lay School classes, during Fall and Spring Gatherings building up the spiritual community of SONKA, and so much more. Dan Deitz provided the group with all our financials. These included the downward trends in OCWM giving over the last eleven years. These were hard, but necessary discussions.

The group overwhelmingly affirmed the vital ministries we have in SONKA. There was excitement and enthusiasm for finding ways to share resources to ensure that SONKA was able to continue in ministry as part of the Heartland Conference. Association representatives agreed to be in prayer with/for SONKA, and to explore tangible ways to help SONKA. As the leadership of SONKA, we agreed to look for ways we could reduce our spending.

The Working Group gathered again on Wednesday, May 6. God's spirit of possibility was alive in our midst. Each Association offered ways to partner with SONKA in this difficult season. The Conference and one Association offered financial assistance. All offered support through partnering in ministries. I was in awe as God's Holy Spirit moved through us weaving a beautiful tapestry and picture for ministry within SONKA and throughout the Heartland Conference. Through the generosity of our partners in covenantal ministry, light shines down the path for SONKA's ministries.

We still have work to do. SONKA leadership has already begun to explore alternative options for the SONKA offices. We will soon begin the task of working through details of shared ministries with other Associations. Adjustments in how we do ministry will happen. These adjustments open great possibilities for growth and collaboration with the Conference and wider church.

These are exciting times full of possibility. These times need to be undergirded with prayer. I ask all of you to enter a season of prayer with me for SONKA. Pray for the ministries, leadership, and staff of SONKA. Lift Carl by name. He needs our prayer support. Wherever you have connection to prayer circles/teams, ask to add SONKA to their lists. We are a people of faith. It is through us that the Holy Spirit will work. Please join me and let's "lift our eyes up to the hills... for our help will surely come from the LORD." (Psalm 121)

In Christ's service,

Rev. Lauren A. Roe  
SONKA Moderator

