

BOARD OF LAITY AND LAY SERVANT MINISTRIES

Janice McCallen and George Brown, TWK Conference Lay Leaders

The laity of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference have shown great resilience and adaptive leadership during this transitional year that challenged us spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

As we bid a fond farewell to our beloved Memphis and Tennessee conferences, we joyfully celebrate the uniting of these conferences as we officially became the laity of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference on January 1, 2022.

We are so much stronger together! As the laity of the TWK Conference continue to fulfill our calling to live out the Great Commission and to work together in mission and ministry, we are building exciting new relationships throughout the conference. This past year, God has inspired laity in new ways to minister to our neighbors by feeding the hungry, giving a drink to those who are thirsty, providing shelter for the homeless, donating clothing for those in need, and visiting the sick and those in prison.

Laity throughout our conference and beyond have banded together to provide disaster relief efforts, as our geographic area was battered with severe tornados, flooding, and fires over the past year. As a result of these efforts, the TWK Conference has partnered with the Kentucky Conference and volunteers have helped clean up and rebuild in the aftermath of several tornadoes that caused significant damage throughout the state of Kentucky.

As our churches continue to adapt to the ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic, lay people have partnered with their clergy to provide in-person and virtual worship opportunities for their churches all throughout the conference. Stories abound about how these new ways of worship have brought more people into our church buildings and our online communities. Although many of our churches have now returned to in-person worship, many more are continuing to maintain and build their online presence and are reaching a worldwide community of believers.

Our laity continued to participate in Lay Servant Ministries courses that were offered virtually and in person throughout the year. These classes have made it possible for laity all over the conference to meet online and be part of these class offerings, without having to leave their homes. Our virtual classes continue to be popular and provide many more opportunities for training than would otherwise be possible with only in-person classes.

We experimented with a new approach to our nominations process this year, and as a result, several hundred lay and clergy offered themselves for service on various ministry teams that have been formed or continue to be formed. We have many, many talented and extremely gifted laity that are now leading and guiding many of our ministry teams as we continue to build the structure of our new conference.

We appreciate that our 2022 annual conference will offer opportunities to participate in person and online. Some of our lay delegates will serve as hosts both in-person at Brentwood and in our online community. We look forward to our first annual conference as the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference.

Our report would not be complete without offering thanks and praise to God for the dedicated and faithful leadership of Holly Neal, who served eight years as the Tennessee Conference lay leader. Holly retired at the end of 2021. She was an integral part of bringing our boards of laity together and offering wisdom and guidance as we began meeting together several years ago. Holly leaves a legacy of leadership that will not soon be forgotten.

The laity of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference are committed to partner with our clergy leaders to fulfill the mission of our conference. Together we will “discover, equip, connect and send lay and clergy leaders who shape congregations that offer Christ to a hurting world, one neighborhood at a time.” We are honored to be part of this great work.

God bless the laity and clergy of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference!