

Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference Board of Laity and Lay Servant Ministries
Janice McCallen and George Brown, TWK Conference Lay Leaders

The laity of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference continue to show great resilience and adaptive leadership as we completed our first year working together in mission and ministry as a new conference.

We are so much stronger together! As the laity of the TWK Conference continue to fulfill our calling to embody the Great Commission and to work together in mission and ministry, we continue to build new and exciting 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 continue to support disaster relief efforts, as our geographic area was battered with severe tornadoes, flooding, and fires over the past year and a half. Our conference continues to work with the Kentucky Conference as volunteers help clean up and rebuild in the aftermath of several tornadoes that caused significant damage throughout the state of Kentucky. Relief efforts continue in West Tennessee where tornadoes recently hammered Covington, TN and severely impacted that community.

Our churches continue to adapt in new ways to offer worship, and lay people have partnered with their clergy to provide in-person and virtual worship opportunities for their churches throughout the conference. These new ways of worship have brought more people into our church buildings and our online communities. It is also a blessing to see more people return to in-person worship, while continuing to maintain and build their online presence, which provides opportunities to reach a worldwide community of believers.

Our laity continue to participate in Lay Servant Ministries courses which are offered virtually and in-person across the majority of our districts. These classes have made it possible for laity all over the conference to “meet” online and participate in 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.

Hundreds of lay and clergy continue to offer themselves for service on various ministry teams that have been formed as a result of our new nominations process introduced last year. We have many talented and gifted laity that are now leading and guiding many of our ministry teams as our new conference structure continues to evolve.

During our 2022 annual conference held at Brentwood UMC, Board of Laity members and others served as hosts for various lunches that were served throughout the annual conference. This provided opportunities for the Board of Laity members to get to know each other better and form new friendships.

We will continue with a hybrid approach to annual conference this year, which will offer opportunities to participate in-person and online. Some of our lay delegates will serve as hosts both in-person at the Renasant Convention Center in Memphis and in our online community. We look forward to our first annual conference in Memphis as the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Annual Conference convenes again in June.

We were blessed to host our first in-person TWK Board of Laity meeting on March 25, 2023. With nearly 100 percent participation, we enjoyed a great meeting led by Bishop McAlilly, Jefferson Furtado, George Brown, and Janice McCallen. Some members met for the first time and quickly began forming friendships. Two members joined us via Zoom and were also active participants.

Although disaffiliations continue to be a distraction for our conference, in this season in the life of our denomination, many lay people continue to celebrate, highlight, and affirm the many reasons why it's important to remain in the UMC. We are thankful and blessed that our current Board of Laity members remain committed to the UMC.

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!