

Presbytery of the Miami Valley
Meet Our Moderator and Vice Moderator
for 2023-2024

Ruling Elder Michael Seewer, Moderator

First Presbyterian Church, Fairborn



Having served as Vice Moderator of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley for the 2022-2023 year, it has been my distinct honor to deal with the many fine, devoted, and supportive people of this presbytery. If the commissioners are willing, I would be pleased to accept the role of Moderator for the coming term. This follows the able care and gracious leadership of the Reverend Sarah Sparks-Franklin.

Foregoing my personal biography, I believe sufficiently addressed last year, I would rather focus on the future. I find it quite tragic that membership in the entire Christian community in the United States is declining, especially among the younger generations. My firm conviction is the base cause is similar to a situation existing at the conclusion of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. While I do not accept that history repeats itself, sometimes close resemblances can be perceived. In the earlier time frame many Christian churches were dominated by conservative elements who believed that the only role of the church was to assist the parishioners or members save their souls to the exclusion of dealing with problems facing society. This belief resulted in the counter development of the Social Gospel Movement, an important element of the Progressive Era.

The principle goal of the Social Gospel Movement was to provide for the needs of the many in society who were suffering under the existing conditions of the Gilded Age, fulfilling an important aspect of Christ's mission. The Presbytery of the Miami Valley has committed itself to the Matthew 25 Agreement, and hence is primed for a New Social Gospel. I would very much like a New Social Gospel to be the theme for the coming year. It will be based on four important and significant ideas, all Scriptural based. These four are: Love, Empathy, Compassion, and Care. Each one can be considered individually as a basis for thought and action by both the presbytery and the congregations throughout the coming year, as well as into the future. In this fashion the presbytery can reinforce the difference between the current perceptions of Christianity by the young and the true mission of the Christian church represented, albeit thankfully not solely, by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Again I wish to thank everyone for their trust in me during this past eventful year. I shall endeavor to do my utmost to serve with a humble spirit and both conscientiously and

appropriately as your trust extends my call to the coming year. With grateful thanks, may the peace and grace of Christ be felt by all now and forever.

Ruling Elder Janet Miller, Vice Moderator
Bath Presbyterian Church, Dayton



My mother was a strong influence on me although I did not realize her impact until I left home. For one, my mother instilled a desire to see the world and I have, indeed, seen much of our beautiful planet and met many extraordinary people over the years on my travels. I joined the US Navy right out of high school and was stationed on both coasts of the US. Then, when my enlistment was up, I attended college after which I became an officer in the US Air Force. While I was not stationed overseas other than Hawaii, I had the opportunity for temporary duty in Japan, South Korea, Germany, Denmark, Qatar, England, and Mexico. In addition, I led or was a member of build teams with Habitat for Humanity/Global Village to Portugal, Malawi, Viet Nam, India, Guatemala, Macedonia, and Thailand. As you can imagine, my vacations have included world travel with the last being to Argentina, Antarctica, South Georgia, and Falklands. Planet Earth and her inhabitants are to be treasured and cared for by us as God expected.

Secondly, my mother stressed the importance of education. Although I joined the US Navy after high school rather than going straight to college, I have spent much of my spare time acquiring knowledge and working on educational degrees. I have two bachelor's, two master's and a PhD which I have been able to apply over the years in a technical work environment.

Thirdly, and most importantly, my mother had a strong Presbyterian faith. She was an elder in the church and volunteered both herself and us in a variety of ways from singing in the choir to serving food at our annual Strawberry Festival to nursery duty. My memories include the sun pouring through stained-glass windows, singing "Fairest Lord Jesus," attending summer Bible schools, playing hide and seek in the shaded, grassy graveyard and, my favorite, attending summer Bible camps, especially Camp Lambec on Lake Erie, where I grew the most in my faith and felt closest to God.

I have attended Bath Presbyterian Church since 2001 with my husband, JO, and am using these three influences to be an instrument of God within the world. I have been and am now a Ruling Elder at Bath, chairing the Mission Committee. While my advanced degrees have been technical, now that I am retired from working in technical fields, I am developing my compassionate, caregiving side. I am working to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder which included taking classes at Dubuque Theological Seminary such as Pastoral Caregiving. I completed the

Older Adult Ministries Certificate Program with Columbia Theological Seminary and will be taking Clinical Pastoral Education this summer and in the fall. While I cannot disregard the possibility God has a church for me as a lay pastor, I look forward to emphasizing work with PMV's older adults, both congregants and retired pastors.