

## **Growth Ministry Council Annual Report 2026**

***Rev. Dr. Irvan A. Gammon***

The Growth Ministry Council (GMC) for the 2025–2026 term included Rev. Dr. Irvan A. Gammon (Chair), Sharon Brown (Scribe), Lisa VanAlst, Rev. Michael Freeman, and Rev. Dr. William “Ron” Toliver. We met on the first Thursday of each month via Zoom—faithfully demonstrating that even when our microphones don’t cooperate, the Holy Spirit still does. If sanctification had a loading bar, ours would occasionally freeze at 87%, but it always finished eventually.

Our mission remains steady and Spirit-led: to encourage and support NACCC congregations in their faithful journey. We do this by nurturing new Congregational churches, strengthening worship and spiritual growth opportunities, and championing children and youth ministries across our Association. We are especially grateful to have resources available to support “hurting churches” in seasons of strain, transition, or what some of us affectionately call “holy turbulence.”

At the start of the year, we welcomed Moderator Jodee Lord and Executive Director Rev. Dr. Gerry Krupp into our monthly gatherings. Their presence kept us connected to the heartbeat of Oak Creek and the behind-the-scenes orchestration of the Annual Meeting. Between their updates, our discussions, and the occasional moment when someone’s pet made a surprise cameo—clearly auditioning for “Most Active Lay Participant”—we also began revisiting our purpose statement. It turns out that while “We’ll figure it out as we go” is honest, it doesn’t look great on official documents.

Throughout the year, we partnered with Rev. Dr. Krupp and Moderator Lord on several projects involving protocols and charter work. Our ongoing dialogue with the NAPF/HOPE Youth Conference Planning Task Team was dynamic, optimistic, and constructive, especially when we were once again able to offer a significant grant to help offset conference costs. We also awarded scholarships to twelve students. Most recently, we recruited a young man from Connecticut to serve on the Conference Planning Committee, and we look forward to confirming his appointment at this Annual Meeting in Springfield. (He has already survived a Zoom call with us, which we consider a promising sign.)

A special word of appreciation goes to the Advent and Lenten Devotional Task Team. Once again, their work brought spiritual wisdom and beauty to congregations across the NACCC. To every writer, editor, and proofreader who sacrificed sleep, screen time, or the last shred of their patience to meet a deadline: your dedication is a witness to faith in action. And to the Task Team as a whole—you continue to pull off publishing timelines that would make professional editors mutter, “How did they do that?”

This year, we also revisited our job description with an eye toward expanding our support for local churches. As a result, we introduced a new grant to assist congregations planning Vacation Bible School programs. We are also exploring ways to connect churches as prayer partners, strengthening the bonds of fellowship and mutual encouragement across our Association. Think of it as a spiritual buddy system—minus the matching T-shirts, though we’re not ruling that out for future years.

In short, the members of this Council are enthusiastic, committed, and fueled by equal parts calling, caffeine, and the occasional baked good. Serving as Chair has been a blessing, and I remain excited to see how God will continue to move through this remarkable team and the congregations we serve.