



**Gifts of congregations like ours to OCWM Basic Support make it possible for our Conference to support and strengthen local churches and leaders. The Conference does this through programs like the recent ministerial retreats.**

The “Woven Together” retreats took place on March 13 at Cedar Valley and March 18 at Siena Center in Racine. The gatherings provided a place for clergy to reconnect through contemplative prayer, creative engagement with one another through conversation and weaving, and Communion. Associated Conference Minister Rachel Bauman opened the retreat with an introduction to contemplative prayer, raising questions that people discussed throughout the retreat.

Dr. Sheila Feay-Shaw of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee engaged those in attendance in the experience of weaving. The activity centered on the idea of Jesus Christ as a weaver of people who searches out individuals who brought color to his “life-weaving.” Like Jesus, we include in our life-weaving people with whom we don't agree. Some may regard people we include as “garish” because of some part of their story. People may leave, creating a hole in our life-weaving that may

never be filled. Participants reflected on these ideas while creating a weaving together.

Pastors may worry about what people will think about their work. It can be uncomfortable. The weaving exercise presented similar challenges. Several individuals approached what we did with trepidation because they did not see themselves as “crafty,” but as people got to talking and weaving a small piece of material into the common loom at the table, they found a sense of belonging, value and success. The clergy shared stories of their lives, their calling to ministry, and their joys and concerns in serving others.

Associate Conference Minister Jane Anderson closed the day with a celebration of Communion. “This was the first time in a very long time that I’ve been able to receive communion without having to be the host,” one minister said.

Retreats like “Woven Together” provide vital nourishment to our pastors. “It was refreshment for the spirit,” one pastor said.



**Our gifts to OCWM Basic Support make an impact on congregations and leaders throughout Wisconsin through programs like the “Woven Together” retreat for pastors.**

*Learn more about the Wisconsin Conference UCC at*

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