

2009

North Coast District Lay Speakers' Pastor of the Year: Rev. Karen Burtner Graham

The Rev. Karen Burtner Graham is the pastor of Church of the Redeemer in Cleveland Heights, a church with a strong tradition of active lay speaking. There are currently 11 active lay speakers at Redeemer. They are active in all aspects of church leadership and are a wonderful asset to the ministry of the church. Throughout her ministry Rev. Graham has supported and encouraged lay speaking within the churches she has served. She has been part of the teaching team for both the Canal (formerly Akron) and North Coast District Training Events.

Karen is the mother of three children. Her son Andrew is married and is pursuing a Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, and her son Alexander, also married, is in an Analytical Chemistry Ph.D. program at Indiana University. Her daughter, Grace, will graduate from Cleveland Heights High School in June 2009. Karen's father, Dr. Hugh Burtner, is a retired elder within the East Ohio Conference, as well as a retired professor of Baldwin-Wallace College. Karen and Grace enjoy living within walking distance of he and his wife, Marilyn in University Heights.

Karen graduated from Berea High School, and was active throughout her youth in the United Methodist Church of Berea. A member of Phi Beta Kappa, she received her B.A. from Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, majoring in Religious Studies. She then earned the M.Div. from Vanderbilt Divinity School, in Nashville, Tennessee.

2009 marks Karen's 25th anniversary in ordained ministry in the East Ohio Annual Conference. Her previous appointments include: Tiro (Mid-Ohio), Mogadore (Canal), and Streetsboro (Canal). In addition to her pastoral ministry, Karen has served on numerous District and Conference Committees. She is currently the vice-chairperson of the East Ohio Episcopacy Committee, and the chairperson of the North Coast District Finance and Administration Committee, as well as the convener of her Conference Compass Group. She is also the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for United Campus Protestant Ministries, an ecumenical ministry serving the students of Case Western University, Cleveland State University, and Tri-C in Cleveland.

Rev. Graham enjoys the varied responsibilities of pastoral ministry, and the opportunity to be with and work with so many different people. She defines her theological task as that of finding ways to connect people with God, and discovering and interpreting God's presence in our world today.