



Western Lakes District

News from The United Methodist Church

WLD Office (937) 739-4445 Email: westernlakes@wocumc.org

WLD Important Information

Jots From Jim...

On this beautiful snowy Friday morning I was reminded again what a blessing it is to travel around the Western Lakes District. There was no “snow day” for this superintendent. It was in the truck, out across the tundra, and to a meeting. Somebody told me early on in the superintendency to “enjoy the drive.” It has truly been my motto and today was a drive to enjoy. However, I am perplexed. If a snow plow truck does not have a plow, is it still a snow plow truck?

I was driving thru beautiful Urbana and I saw a city truck. Now let me be clear, the City of Urbana is doing a fantastic job plowing the streets and clearing the roads. But I saw a city truck go by and there was no plow on the front of the truck. Likewise, there was no salt in the bed of the truck. Beyond any doubt this vehicle was a snow plow that spreads salt. I am sure there is a story behind the truck, a reason for everything under the sun. It prompted my theological reflection as I drove about the district.

Sometimes I have seen a church without a plow and no salt in the bed. It's still a church. But somehow the plow is no longer on the front and it has been ages since any salt has been spread. The church sits in the beautiful country, or in the ever-changing city. The stained-glass sparkles and tells stories of ages past. But somehow the plow was detached and lost. There is no money to buy salt to spread. The driver is getting older. There is a shortage of substitutes to fill in for the driver. It becomes easier just to let the truck sit and not drive it anymore.

I invite you to inspect your snow plow today. If you have lost your plow, go get another one. If you are out of salt, buy some. Be a “snow angel” today as you take God's blessing upon your life and share that blessing somehow, someway. Don't drive around in meaningless circles. Plow the snow and share the Gospel.

May each of our 97 “snow plows” in the Western Lakes District make the roads clear for people to Know Christ, Grow in their Faith, and Serve Others. Thank you for all the faithful ways you share Jesus.

Jim



24 Ideas to Change your 2024

Western Lakes District Leadership Training Days
Presented by District Superintendent Rev. Jim Wilson

The Western Lakes District will hold four different regional Leadership Development Trainings.

Sunday, January 21, 2024 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm - Miami, Darke, Shelby Counties
Troy First UMC | 110 W. Franklin St., Troy
Deadline to register is January 20, 2024

[Register Here for Western Lakes District Training January 21st](#)

Sunday, January 28, 2024 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm - Van Wert, Allen, Mercer, Auglaize Counties
Spencerville Trinity UMC | 119 N. Main St., Spencerville
Deadline to register is January 27, 2024.

[Register Here for Western Lakes District Training January 28th](#)

These events are **open to all local church leaders**.

Join with your other United Methodist churches for a fun and informative time together.

To register contact Cortney at creed@wocumc.org

One-Day Mission Trip with DS Jim Wilson

Join District Superintendent Rev. Jim Wilson on a bus trip to the Cincinnati area to volunteer at Matthew 25 Ministries, an organization that reaches out to the poorest of the poor and disaster victims around the world. Join the 96 United Methodist churches throughout our 13 county area as we unite in reaching out to others in the name of Jesus.



Date:

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Time:

Passenger pick-up at: 7:00 a.m. Cridersville UMC (105 Shawnee Road, Cridersville)
Passenger pick-up at: 8:00 a.m. Ginghamburg UMC (6759 S County Road 25A, Tipp City)

Arrive at Matthew 25 Ministries at 9am
Depart Matthew 25 Ministries at 3pm

Passenger drop-off at Ginghamburg UMC 4:00 p.m.
Passenger drop-off at Cridersville UMC at 5:00 p.m.

Cost: \$15.00 per person (in cash payable upon departure)

(cost includes bus transportation, gratuity, and lunch)

No large bags or backpacks are allowed. Small purses are fine. Please wear closed toe shoes.

Registration:

Contact Cortney at the District Office to register. creed@wocumc.org

Deadline to register is March 1st

Western Lakes District -- Making a World of Difference

Winter Youth Gathering 2024

Join us at the Winter Youth Gathering 2024 with Bishop Gregory Palmer! This event, specially crafted for 6th-12th graders, will take place on Friday, February 2, from 6:00 to 9:30 PM at Powell UMC.

Event Schedule:

- Dinner/Activities (6:00-7:00): Kick off the night with a delicious dinner and fun activities that will set the stage for an unforgettable experience.
- Worship: Immerse yourself in a powerful worship session starting at 7 PM. Let the music and message inspire and uplift you.
- Interview with Bishop Palmer: Hear about Bishop Palmer's faith journey and call to ministry.
- Small Groups: Following worship, dive into small groups where you can connect with your peers, share your thoughts, and explore the meaning of faith in your lives.
- Panel Discussion: Gain insights and perspectives from a diverse panel of speakers, addressing topics that matter to today's youth. This is your chance to ask questions, share your opinions, and learn from one another.
- Communion: Conclude the evening with a meaningful communion service, symbolizing unity and the shared journey of faith.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to strengthen your faith, build lasting connections, and have a blast in the company of fellow youth. Mark your calendars for the Winter Youth Gathering 2024 at Powell UMC.

Service Opportunity- Youth and leaders are invited to bring winter items: hats, scarves, and gloves to support neighbors of Kaleidoscope Youth Center and Church for All People. We can't wait to see you there!

Registration link: [Winter Youth Gathering 2024](#)

Deadline to register is Sunday, January 28

Racial/Ethnic Local Church Grant Applications

The 2024 Racial/Ethnic Local Church(RELC) Grant and the Annual Conference Multiethnic Ministries Grant applications are now available! RELC Grant and Multiethnic Ministries Grant applications will be accepted January 2 – March 1, 2024. Application forms can be found here: <https://umcmmission.org/multiethnic-ministries/>

RELC Grants are provided to assist local racial/ethnic congregations with projects and programs on one of three areas: 1) Leadership Development; 2) Church Growth and Development; and 3) Pastoral Salary Support. The maximum RELC programmatic grant is \$15,000 and the maximum pastoral salary support grant is \$12,000. The church's membership must be at least 51% majority racial/ethnic.

Multiethnic Ministries Grants are provided to annual conferences to assist with programs focusing on racial-ethnic leadership development and racial/ethnic church growth and



"We Love Jesus and Our UMC" Photo Contest

Contest Theme: Capture moments that showcase your church's love for Jesus and the spirit of The United Methodist Church.

Submission Criteria:

1. Photos should reflect the theme of love, faith, and community within the context of the UMC.
2. Images can include church activities, worship services, community service, or any other aspect that embodies the spirit of your congregation or ministry setting. Images should reflect events from January 2023 to February 13, 2024.
3. Submit up to 20 digital images to: WOCMedia@wocumc.org.
4. Include photographer's name, phone number and email address, and photograph location/church.

Technical Requirements:

1. Submissions should be in color.
2. High resolution preferred.

Judging Criteria:

1. Relevance to the theme.
2. Creativity and originality.
3. Composition and visual appeal.
4. Emotional impact.

Prizes:

- 1st place: \$100.00
- 2nd place: \$50.00
- 3rd place: \$25.00

Images submitted may be displayed at the West Ohio Conference Center and on our social media channels. Photos will also be used at the 2024 Annual Conference. Photo credits will be included.

Submission Deadline: February 14, 2024

How to Enter: Send digital images to WOCMedia@wocumc.org

Events



The Road to General Conference Town Hall set for January 30

The much-anticipated United Methodist Church General Conference will be held April 23-May 3, 2024, in Charlotte, North Carolina. In preparation for this event, Bishop Palmer will be holding an online Town Hall to answer some of the questions West Ohioans have regarding this important work. The webinar will be held on Tuesday, January 30, at 7:00 PM.

Some of the topics will include: What is the General Conference and how does it impact the local church? How does legislation get to the GC? Who votes at GC? Who attends the General Conference? What are the General Agencies of The United Methodist Church?

If you would like to submit a question for this webinar, please send it to: townhallquestions@wocumc.org

To register for the webinar [CLICK HERE](#)

Foundation Fundamentals Class Online Jan. 23

Have you ever wondered what the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio could do for your church? There's a great opportunity to find out on January 23rd – all from the comfort of your home or office! Join Foundation Executive Director Susan Black for an online forum beginning at noon, January 23, 2024, and learn more about what the Foundation is, how it operates, and how local congregations and donors can benefit. Registration is not required. Find the Zoom link here: [Join Zoom Meeting](#).



Mark your Calendar for Clergy Day Apart

Mark your calendar for West Ohio Clergy Day Apart scheduled for Tuesday, February 6, 2024 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM at Grove City United Methodist Church 2650 Columbus St., Grove City, Ohio

Doing Ministry on Malta: The Good News of Shipwreck with Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean.

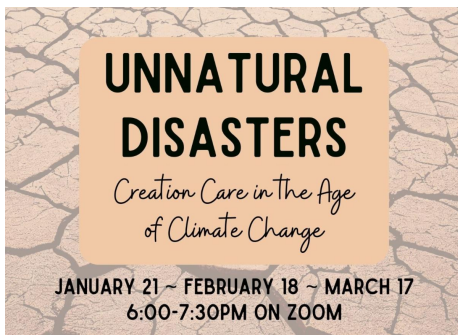
Be sure to register now at the link below. Deadline to register is February 1st. <https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/event/2024-clergy-day-apart>

Laity Discernment Retreats Returning In Early 2024

Do you feel God's call on your life but are uncertain how to discern that call or what to do next? If so, then this is the retreat for you!

At the Laity Discernment Retreats, we will talk about call, discernment and what it means to be "called by our baptism." We will learn ways to intentionally enter into a time of prayer about discernment and we will discover Spiritual Rhythms that can help guide our journey. We will also discuss the variety of ways laity can serve both in our churches and in our communities.

[Read more...](#)



Register Now for “Unnatural Disasters” Documentary Series

Floods. Hurricanes. Wildfires. Droughts. As the planet warms around us, causing disasters such as these to become more extreme and more common, how can people of faith take better care of God's creation? “Unnatural Disasters” is a series of three documentaries that will take you to places around the country where people are finding creative ways to care for the planet in the midst of devastating disasters. Sponsored by the East Ohio and West

Ohio Conference, this virtual event is free and open to the public.

- January 21, 6-7:30PM: Flooding in Detroit
- February 18, 6-7:30PM: Hurricanes in Puerto Rico
- March 17, 6-7:30PM: Wildfires in Northern California

Register here for all three!

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScOmXwEkqhXZoDAFzu-ybMXHpfd6-KIKSndYcy6G4EPDquRvg/viewform>

Basic Course being offered in February

February 23-24, 2024 -Via Zoom

Friday evening: 6:30-9 PM; Saturday 8:30-5 PM

Instructors: Harry and Ann Peat



This course is foundational for all courses in Lay Servant Ministries. Lay Servant Ministries will give you a variety of opportunities to serve your local and the greater church. The ministries of Lay Servanthood are Leading, Caring, and Communicating. We can all find a calling in one or more of these areas of ministry. This class will familiarize you with these areas of ministry and give you a chance to explore each one.

Lay Servant Ministries Basic Course Participant's Book available in the links below
Cokesbury - [here](#) and Amazon - [here](#)

[Register Here](#)



Confirmation Event With Bishop Palmer March 3

Save the Date -Attention all confirmation teachers, students, and church leaders! On March 3, 2024, Bishop Gregory V. Palmer will be hosting a very special confirmation event for all confirmands of West Ohio.

Details: March 3rd from 2:00-6:00pm @ Ohio Wesleyan University and registration is done as a group by your confirmation leader. This event is free and will include a Mexican buffet dinner.

To register for updates about this event or ask questions, contact Director of Camps, Retreats, and Next Gen Engagement Rev. Ann Marie Carley amcarley@wocumc.org.

For more information go to: <https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/event/connection>

Deadline to register is February 13th.



Bryan Stevenson of "Just Mercy" Leadership Clinic March 11 - Online

Bryan Stevenson, founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a human rights organization will be the featured guest for Bishop Palmer's Leadership Clinic on March 11, 2024.

Under his leadership, EJI has won major legal challenges eliminating excessive and unfair sentencing, exonerating innocent death row prisoners, confronting abuse of the incarcerated and the mentally ill, and aiding children prosecuted as adults. Mr. Stevenson has received over 50 honorary doctoral degrees and numerous awards.

He is the author of the critically acclaimed New York Times bestseller, Just Mercy, which was named by Time Magazine as one of the ten Best Books of the year. Just Mercy was adapted as a major motion picture. Mr. Stevenson is also the subject of the Emmy Award-winning HBO documentary True Justice. He is a graduate of the Harvard Law School and the Harvard School of Government.

The first 200 to register will receive a copy of Just Mercy.
[Learn more and register at WestOhioUMC.org](#)

Resources

All In Community Receives Grant to



Support Four Friends

[All In Community](#) (AIC), West Ohio's ministry with justice-involved individuals, has received a \$5,000 grant from the Foundation for Evangelism to support the work of the Four Friends Speakers Bureau.

The Four Friends Speakers Bureau is a group of returning citizens who share their powerful stories of redemption. Created from the vision of AIC leader, the late James Clay, this ministry's focus is to use personal stories to inspire churches and communities to join in ministry with individuals impacted by crime and incarceration.

Four Friends speakers are trained, resourced, and deployed to churches throughout Ohio. They share their stories of God's redemption to reduce justice-involved shame and stigma through conversations, and to encourage churches to join in justice-involved ministries. In sharing stories of transformation, Four Friends speakers serve as a catalyst for healing, both for speakers and congregants.

The [Foundation for Evangelism](#) grant supports AIC's ministry goal of deploying Four Friends to 24 United Methodist churches throughout Ohio by June 2024. If your congregation is interested in hosting a Four Friends speaker, please contact Rev. Rae Lynn Schleif at rlschleif@gmail.com.

All In Community - Ministry Monday

Are you a trained Stephen Minister ready to help those in crisis?

Are you a Stephen Leader looking for new ways to provide care to those in need?

All In Community, a mission initiative through the West Ohio Conference, exists to engage individuals, churches, criminal justice professionals, and community leaders in local efforts to restore hope and support healing during these lived experiences with the criminal justice system. One of its signature initiatives is the Good Samaritan Ministry.

Each correctional facility in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) system has an active Stephen Ministry program where inmates are trained to provide care to other inmates. Through the Good Samaritan Ministry, All In Community is working to create a network of Stephen Ministers to assist each of the ODRC's facilities to enhance this vital program and keep it moving forward.

On Monday, January 22, beginning at 7:00pm, join All In Community as valuable information will be shared to engage Stephen Ministers throughout Ohio to utilize their many hours of training in new ways. This information session will be held online via ZOOM.

Questions and requests for the ZOOM link can be directed to Jami Nathan, AIC Ministries Coordinator, by email (jami.nathan.22@gmail.com) or by phone (419-591-9717).

For Flyer and Zoom Link [CLICK HERE](#)

2023-2024 Appointments



The list of pastoral appointments beginning July 1, 2023 can be accessed [clicking here](#).

Please refer back to these lists as they are updated frequently.

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