

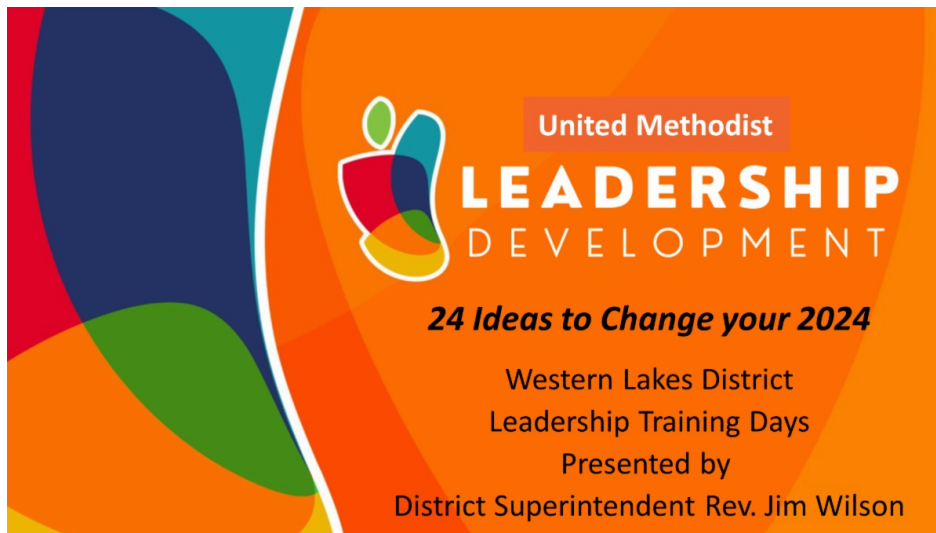


# Western Lakes District

*News from The United Methodist Church*

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

## WLD Important Information



### ***24 Ideas to Change your 2024***

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

**January 7<sup>th</sup>** Madison, Clark, Champaign Circuit Churches  
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Location: London First UMC, 52 N. Main St., London, OH

**January 14<sup>th</sup>** Union, Hardon, Logan Circuit Churches  
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Location: Bellefontaine First UMC, 201 N. Main St., Bellefontaine, OH

**January 21<sup>st</sup>** Miami, Darke, Shelby Circuit Churches  
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Location: Troy First UMC, 110 W. Franklin St., Troy, OH

**January 28<sup>th</sup>** Van Wert, Allen, Mercer, Auglaize Circuit Churches  
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Location: Spencerville Trinity UMC, 119 N. Main St., Spencerville, OH

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](mailto:creed@wocumc.org)

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## Cuba Mission Trip 2024

Join Rev. Jim Wilson on a humanitarian mission trip to Cuba January 29-February 3, 2024. The all-inclusive price includes roundtrip airfare, housing, transportation, meals, interpreter, guide, and sightseeing. Visit local congregations, discover mission connections for your church, and help build relationships with the Cuban people. This life-changing missional experience is limited to 12 people. The cost is \$1950.00. Deadline to register is December 22, 2023. Flight will originate out of Columbus, Ohio.

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## Western Lakes District Clergy Christmas Luncheon

“Eve Before The Eve Celebration”

Rev. Jim & Nancy Wilson invite the clergy and their families to be their guests for lunch at La Palma Mexican Restaurant, 1629 E. State Route 29, Urbana, Ohio on Saturday, December 23 at 12:00 Noon. Join them for food, fellowship, and a drawing for a variety of door prizes. The grand prize drawing is a free mission trip for two to Nicaragua in 2024. Must be present to win. Use the following link to RSVP. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E48A4A629A1F5C70-46333493-western>

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## Fund Receives New Life with New Congregation

In 1995, Beulah Davis of Plain City, OH chose to put her faith in the future and make a planned gift with the West Ohio Conference Council on Development in honor of her parents Paul and Lucile Davis. The gift was to benefit their church, Plain City UMC, specifically for maintenance of the building or parsonage. Unfortunately, the church closed some years ago and since that time the gift that was made to the COD became dormant.

“We wanted to put those funds to use, but in situations like these, we have limited options,” explained United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio Executive Director, Susan Black. “Since the original donor is deceased, and it is impossible to meet her original intent, and the amount is under \$20,000 and over 20 years old, we sought permission from the Ohio Attorney General to use the funds for a purpose that is closest to the donors’ original intent.”

That purpose is the maintenance of the church or parsonage for the newly formed Beloved UMC in Marysville, OH. “We’re delighted that we can make a grant for the full amount of the fund to help Beloved cover anticipated capital costs and free up current dollars for operating purposes,” said Black.

Beloved UMC will receive a grant of approximately \$15,000 from the Foundation this month and has pledged to uphold the original intent of the donor as closely as possible.

“Donor intent is important,” said Black. “In fact, it’s the bedrock of our work because if donors don’t trust that we will be good stewards of their gifts, they won’t give. While this is an unusual case for the Foundation, it’s resulted in new life for this new congregation, and we couldn’t be more pleased with that outcome. We hope Ms. Davis would agree.”

For more information about how to make a planned gift to benefit your church, contact Susan Black at [sblack@wocumc.org](mailto:sblack@wocumc.org).

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## 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://umcmission.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 development.

## Events

### HealthFlex Billing and Withholding Training for Local Church Treasurers, Finance and Payroll Administrators

**Purpose:**

This training aims to help backend office teams process invoice statements for the new HealthFlex insurance billing, clergy and lay payroll deductions for healthcare premiums, and health savings (HSA) contributions, as well as 2025 W-2 reporting.

**Who Should Attend:**

Treasurers, Finance Chairs, Payroll Administrators and whoever is responsible for accounting. Clergy are also encouraged to attend, especially if they will be enrolled in Health Flex.

**Presenters:**

- Conference Benefits Officer, Grace Welch
- Controller, Linda Russo
- CFO, Bill Brownson

**Zoom Links and Dates:**

- Tuesday, December 12 at 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM  
<https://wocumc.zoom.us/j/84461355181>
- Tuesday, December 12 from 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM  
<https://wocumc.zoom.us/j/82946174319>
- Thursday, December 14 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM  
<https://wocumc.zoom.us/j/87859418721>
- Thursday, December 14 from 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM  
<https://wocumc.zoom.us/j/82376736284>

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### Foundation Plans Year of Engagement and Education Opportunities

The United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio announced this month that it will be offering monthly programs in 2024 intended to connect with West Ohio congregations and donors. Options for online and in-person experiences will be provided.

The program calendar kicks off in January with "Foundation Fundamentals", January 23rd at noon. This online forum will provide an opportunity to learn more about what the Foundation is, how it operates, and how local congregations and donors can benefit. West

Ohioans can also meet Foundation staff at two of the District Leadership Days in January on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. Those programs will focus on generosity and stewardship.

“Each quarter in 2024 will have 2-3 opportunities for folks to get engaged,” said Executive Director Susan Black. “There will be online speakers including some of the favorites from our Generosity Summit; a Wespeth Town Hall in February and August focused on investments; and in-person meeting opportunities out in the Districts. We hope there will be something for everyone.”

Watch the Conference and District newsletters, social media and Foundation Facebook page for more information or request a flyer with all the details from [sblack@wocumc.org](mailto:sblack@wocumc.org). You can also find the details on the Foundation webpage at [www.umfwestohio.org](http://www.umfwestohio.org).

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## **2024 Preview Education and Engagement Opportunities through the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio**

January Foundation Fundamentals Jan. 23 Noon Online

Learn about what your United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio is doing for the Conference, and the many ways the Foundation can help your church grow.

February Wespeth Institutional Investments Town Hall Online

Join representatives from WII as they bring you up to speed on 2023 in review, changes in the markets for 2024, and answer your specific questions about endowment management.

March Days on the District Mar. 11-14 In person

Take advantage of the opportunity for your Circuit, finance committee, stewardship committee or endowment committee to meet face to face with Susan Black, Maddy DeWitt, and Karen Manzcko as they make visits to your area. Districts to be visited will be announced as plans are made.

April Developing an Intentional Discipleship Process April 11th 6:00 p.m. Online

Join Rev. Dr. Ken Sloane as he reprises his popular session from the Generosity Summit about one of our stewardship standards: the Intentional Discipleship Process.

May Leaving a Lasting Legacy May 21st 7:00 p.m. Online

Join Foundation Executive Director and Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy (CAP®) Susan Black as she helps unravel the mystery of planned giving for your congregation. All churches and individual members are welcome to join this legacy giving presentation.

June - See you at Annual Conference! Come visit the Foundation resource table and visit with us and our partners, Wespeth Institutional Investments and Christian Family Credit Union.

July Saving Grace with Rev. Anna Guillozet July 23rd Online

Join Rev. Anna Guillozet as she reprises her presentation about one of our stewardship standards: incorporating personal financial literacy into your church. Anna will discuss the benefits of the Saving Grace curriculum for church members and clergy.

August Wespeth Institutional Investments Town Hall Online

Join representatives from WII as they bring you up to speed on the markets, discuss the impact of the 2024 election and answer your questions about endowment management.

September Days on the District/Bishop's Fall Tour In person

Take advantage of the opportunity for your Circuit, finance committee, stewardship committee or endowment committee to meet face to face with Susan Black, Maddy DeWitt, and Karen Manzcko as they make visits to your area. Districts to be visited will be announced as plans are made.

October Stewardship in the Extraordinary Church Online

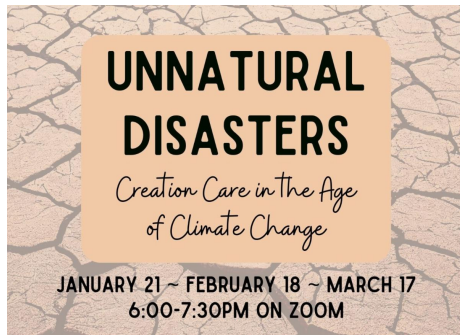
Join Horizons Stewardship CEO Joe Park as he reprises his Generosity Summit session on stewardship approaches for extraordinary churches.

November Leaving a Lasting Legacy May 21st 7:00 p.m. online

Join Foundation Executive Director and Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy (CAP®) Susan

Black as she helps unravel the mystery of planned giving for your congregation. All churches and individual members are welcome to join this legacy giving presentation.

Dates and times subject to change. Watch our Facebook page and newsletter for more information. Not receiving our newsletter? Contact Maddy at momalley@wocumc.org to sign up



## 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>

## NYT Bestseller Kate Bowler to Join Bishop Palmer for Clinic

New York Times bestselling author and award-winning podcast host, Kate Bowler will be Bishop Palmer’s guest on his Leadership Clinic on Thursday, January 25. Bowler is the author of “Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I’ve Loved.”



The week of this clinic, Bowler’s latest book, “Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day! Daily Meditations for the Ups, Downs, and In-Betweens”, will be released and will be given to each person registered for the clinic.

To learn more about Kate or to register for this online clinic, [click here](#).

## Basic & Recert ERT Classes to be offered January 13 in Columbus

UMCOR’s Early Response Team (ERT) Basic class will be offered on Saturday, January 13, 8:00 am-4:00 pm at North Broadway UMC in Columbus. A four-hour recertification class will also be offered. West Ohio ERT trainers will teach participants how to assist survivors of natural disasters in their time of need. Trainees will learn how to provide a caring, Christian presence while taking steps to prevent further damage to the family’s personal property. Skills that are taught include tarping, debris removal, mucking out flooded homes, etc. FEMA recognizes this training to enter a disaster scene. A background check is required, and a link to complete this will be provided upon registration. Cost is \$40 for the Basic class or \$35 for recertification. *ERT members are not required to be United Methodist but must deploy with a United Methodist-led team.* For more information or to register, click here: <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/early-response-team-training-recert-nbumc>.



## 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.

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](mailto:amcarley@wocumc.org). More details around this special event will be coming soon!

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## Join a Mexico VIM Team Journey in 2024

Each year, the West Ohio Conference sends five to six Volunteers in Mission teams to the Oriental Conference in Mexico. There, they work with a ministry called Manos Juntas - Hands Together - which has a variety of outreach programs, including a daycare center, children's home, after school programs, community center, retreat center, construction ministry, and medical clinic. While West Ohio teams are best known as medical teams, there are plenty of other opportunities for ministry with Manos Juntas!

Teams can take part in construction projects, run a VBS program, or hang out with kids at the children's home!

[Read more...](#)



## 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](#)

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## Resources

### It's Time for Clergy W-2's!

2023 W-2's are due to all employees by January 31, 2024. Information to help with preparing IRS Form W-2 for clergy, which can be complicated, can be found on the [Conference Website Here](#). Use the worksheet and example as a guide for preparing your pastor's W-2. This sample spreadsheet and W-2 is just that, a sample. Your fact set may include more or fewer items to report (for example, moving expenses that are now

taxable if paid or reimbursed are not in the sample).

Highlights and guidance for 2023 W-2 preparation:

- Report Housing Exclusion resolutions amounts only as information in Box 14. Do not report cash housing allowance.
- Do not report the cost of the Conference health insurance policy in Box 12.
- W-2 Boxes 3-6 should be blank for clergy; churches should never withhold for Social Security or Medicare for credentialed clergy.
- Moving expenses paid by churches directly to moving companies or via reimbursement to clergy are taxable and must be reported as income and included in box 1 (see the moving expense section of IRS instructions completing W-2's [here](#)).
- If your pastor received health insurance through the Conference Plan (Anthem) they received a contribution to their HSA account that should be reported. Clergy on single plans received \$500 in January and July 2023 for a total of \$1,000. Clergy on Family-2 or Family-3 plans received \$1,000 in January and July 2023 for a total of \$2,000. If two churches share in the cost of health insurance, adjust accordingly.
- All full-time clergy and some  $\frac{3}{4}$ -time clergy receive a \$50,000 death benefit through a conference plan. This is in addition to \$50,000 available through the denominational plan (CPP). The cost of group life insurance over \$50,000 is taxable. To calculate the amount, click here [IRS Publication 15-B](#) and go to page 14. Using your clergy's age, take the corresponding cost and multiply by 50. That is the monthly amount. Multiply by 12 for the yearly total. This is letter "H" on the fact pattern example W-2.
- Note: If your pastor is not on the Conference health insurance plan and your church has not established its own qualified plan, direct payments to clergy to offset the cost of health insurance (for example on a spouse or other employer plan) are taxable income.

The resources referenced here and on the Conference website should answer most of your questions. However, contact your payroll provider, a CPA, or tax preparer if you have technical questions.

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## Receive Free Steaming for Advent Studies When You Sign Up for Amplify Media

Whether you want to experience Advent through the sights, sounds, and smells of the season, or explore the events surrounding Jesus' birth from the points of view of those biblical figures who *don't* take center stage, you can invite your congregation or small groups to encounter the season differently this year with these new studies from Matt Rawle and West Ohio's Rachel Billups!

Click here to preview [Experiencing Christmas](#) or [An Unlikely Advent](#). Then, subscribe to access these studies and hundreds more resources for Advent and beyond. [Click here to subscribe...](#)

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## Explore Podcasts from Across the Connection

Across the connection, United Methodist clergy, laity and agencies have created and produced podcasts covering various topics.

Last month, *Times Like These*, a podcast of the West Ohio Conference Communications Team, participated with other UM podcasts in a *podcast- a -thon* sponsored by United Methodist Communications. The event showcased the diversity of programming through this media.

The audio version of participating podcasts are available for you to explore and become familiar with the different programs available.

[Click here for audio of participating podcasts from the Podcast-a-thon](#)

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## Creation Care In West Ohio Conference

Since 2008, the WOC has passed resolutions encouraging local church establishment of Green Teams, advocacy for environmental justice, support for Fossil Free UMC, and net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. As the Creation Care Task Force promotes these activities within the Conference, it seeks to determine what is already being done in local churches and where additional efforts are needed. To that end, we are asking local churches to share what they are already doing (Green Team, church garden, renewable energy, environmental advocacy, energy audits, Wild Church, etc) and what they plan to do in the near future. Send short descriptions of your efforts to the Task Force lead Bob at [bobdowns@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bobdowns@sbcglobal.net), for compilation and sharing at <https://www.westohioumc.org/climate-justice> . Also, if you are interested in joining the Task Force, notify Bob Downs at the email above.

## 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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