



Western Lakes District

News from The United Methodist Church

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WLD Important Information



Jots From Jim...

"I can't believe Jim Wilson kissed the trophy." Well, all I can say is you don't know Jim Wilson very well. Keep reading this post and you might get to know your district superintendent a little better.

Recently the West Ohio Conference had a tremendous celebration recognizing churches who were receiving grants to try new ways of sharing the never-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. There was a contest amongst the six districts as to which district would have the highest percentage of churches receiving grants. I made a big deal about this as I met with pastors in the district for our annual conversations. Why would I not encourage pastors and congregations to try new ministries, to dream of new ways of making an impact in the name of Christ in their communities? I am thrilled that almost \$200,000 was awarded to congregations throughout the Western Lakes District for new expressions of ministry.

When the winner was announced I was surprised and excited and happy to receive the trophy. I hoisted the trophy high and kissed it. Blasphemy? Idolatry? Stupidity? Not so fast my friends.

As any good pastor would do I "Googled" the phrase "why people kiss a trophy" to see if I had indeed committed a fatal sinful act. I learned that kissing the trophy is also known as a "biceps kiss." Google says it is a way to show off your physical strength and athleticism. Oh no, maybe I had made a mistake. I needed to "Google" some more. Then I found it. While the origin of kissing a trophy is unknown, it also is a way to celebrate with your teammates. Exactly.

I kissed a trophy to celebrate with my 97 teammate churches scattered across 6,000 square miles, 13 counties, and two states. I am proud of the congregations who reached out in faith to dream of doing something different as a church. I am excited that so many churches made a decision not to do the same old thing but to experiment and take risks in sharing the Gospel.

So, I extend my congratulations to the Western Lakes District champions. Would I kiss the trophy again? Absolutely. Maybe twice as long the next time. Why? Because we praise God from whom all blessings flow. We believe that we are blessed to be a blessing. Our churches make a great team together.

I know some are troubled with a competitive Christian spirit and believe everybody should get a participant ribbon. In this season of Lent I will join many others in singing the hymn "The Old Rugged Cross." There is part of a verse that says "and my trophies at last I lay down." You can't lay down what you have not lifted up. Just sayin....

Still reading? 😊 I hope you appreciate the sarcasm of this writing. Relax. Smile. It's OK to have a little fun. I love Jesus. You love Jesus. We are all on the same team. We are "One Band, One Sound" in the Western Lakes District. From county seat churches to churches who have outhouse seats. From the largest United Methodist church in Ohio (Ginghamsburg) to one of the smallest congregations like Dunkirk Grace UMC, we are teammates in sharing the Gospel. It's not so much about a trophy, but a cross we lift up for the world to see. Our victory is in Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Jim

Congratulations Western Lakes District



We thoroughly enjoyed celebrating all of the innovative ideas receiving Go Grants! It truly was an amazing evening, and we are so thrilled to be able to support you in your ministry.

We congratulate Riley Creek UMC for receiving the Foundation's Breakout Vision of the Year and to **Western Lakes for receiving the Christian Family Credit Union's District Go Award for having the highest percentage of recipients!**

[GO Grants](#) resource innovative ministry ideas that help West Ohio churches develop relationships beyond the walls of their buildings and within their communities, to make new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

On February 4, churches from across the West Ohio Conference gathered in Columbus to celebrate what God is doing through 100+ new ministries across the conference. Seven West Ohio teams across five budgets aligned to support these new dreams which will also provide research & development for ideas that can be shared in a variety of contexts. [Click here](#) to see all the award recipients.

You can see a playback of the livestream on the West Ohio Facebook page [here](#). Thank you for all you are doing to further the Good News and make disciples of Jesus Christ. Please let us know if you have any questions.

We are cheering you on!

2024 West Ohio Annual Conference: God is Able

The 55th session of the West Ohio Annual Conference is set to convene from Wednesday, May 29 through Saturday, June 1, 2024, at Capital University in Bexley, Ohio. This year's theme, "God is Able," draws



inspiration from Ephesians 3:20-21, promising a gathering that celebrates the limitless power of God.

The conference will offer a rich tapestry of events, with powerful worship experiences at the core. Members will engage in thoughtful reflections on the scripture, exploring the profound message in these verses. A significant aspect of the conference includes voting on crucial business matters that will shape the future of the West Ohio Conference. Members will actively participate in decision-making processes that impact

churches within the conference.

Furthermore, the conference will be a time of celebration as it marks the retirement of esteemed Bishop Gregory and Mrs. Cynthia Palmer. Their dedicated service and profound impact on the West Ohio Conference will be honored with heartfelt tributes and expressions of gratitude. The conference will also shine a spotlight on the ordination of clergy, symbolizing a commitment to nurturing new leaders and fostering spiritual growth within The United Methodist Church.

"We are thrilled to come together under the theme 'God is Able,'" said Rev. Lou Seipel, Chair of the Annual Conference Planning Team. "This conference is not just a gathering; it's a testament to our shared commitment to faith, community, and the transformative power of God's grace."

Registration for conference members will open March 5. There will be limited guest seating; however, the conference is expected to be livestreamed on the home page of the West Ohio Conference website: westohioumc.org. More details will be made available in NewsNET, the conference website, and social media channels.

Annual Conference Legislation Deadline is March 1

As stipulated in our conference rules, all legislation must be submitted to and received by the Conference Secretary Chris Clough by 11:59pm, Friday, March 1, 2024. Any legislation received after that date will be returned. The maker of that legislation can decide if they want to ask to suspend the rules for consideration of the Annual Conference body. Legislation should be sent to: Conference Secretary Chris Clough at cclough@wocumc.org.



Register Now -Bishop Palmer General Conference Town Hall March 19th

On January 30, Bishop Gregory Palmer held the first of two Town Hall meetings regarding the upcoming General Conference. After his opening comments,

Bishop Palmer answered questions that were submitted by West Ohioans. The second Town Hall is scheduled for March 19th at noon. You may submit your questions to: townhallquestions@wocumc.org

[Watch Video Here](#)

[Register Here for March 19th Zoom](#)

Raise the Roof for Tanzania School

On Tuesday, January 18, people attending Bishop Palmer's Leadership Clinic learned of an immediate need from our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. They need our help to complete a project that was left undone by a church that chose to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. Seven classrooms for preschool and primary school

children have been built but there is no roof.

“We have the opportunity to Raise the Roof,” said Bishop Gregory Palmer. “There is a need and I know West Ohioans will rise to the occasion and supply the \$15,000 that is needed for this special project.” Palmer was the first to contribute to the cause. With a comprehensive approach on evangelism and church planting, the Tanzania Annual Conference, led by Bishop Mande Muyombo, and Global Ministries started a mission center in Mwanza District. The center includes an orphanage with 85 children, United Methodist schools, and a hospital.

“I believe West Ohio will complete this project so Tanzanian children can focus on learning about Jesus Christ and academics in this United Methodist school,” Palmer said. To contribute to “Raise the Roof,” you may donate online through the link below or send a check to the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio, 32 Wesley Blvd, Worthington, OH 43085, with 'Advance #00205A-Raise the Roof' in the Memo line. If you give online, be sure to mark the donation 'In Honor of' and include 'Advance #00205A-Raise the Roof' in the Name line.

[Give now...](#)

2023 Statistical Reporting

2023 statistical reporting information was recently emailed out to pastors, treasurers, administrative council/leadership team chairs, and church office administrators.

These reports are due by April 15th, and online submission is preferred. Providing accurate information is essential, as this reporting affects how your 2025 apportionments are calculated. You can access all information that you need to complete those reports [here](#).

For questions around these reports contact Jack Frost, jfrost@wocumc.org.

Annual Reporting

The information for the church and clergy Annual Reports has also been updated recently and is available for access. These reports include the Fund Balance Report, Trustee Legal & Property, Parsonage Inspection, Clergy Self-Assessment and SPRC Assessments. They can be found on the district website on the Resource tab or by clicking [HERE](#). They are due June 1st.

Racial/Ethic 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 development.

Let us remember in prayer those grieving the loss of their loved one, and remember in thanksgiving the life and ministry of:

Rev. Grayson Atha, who passed away on February 11, 2024.

Grayson is survived by his wife of nearly 65 years, Wende, and their children Marcus (Kristen) Atha, Angelyn Atha, and Holly Atha, and grandchildren Harris Scott (Ethan), Haviland Atha-Simonton, Lucas Atha, Chelsea Atha, Cameron Atha, and Simeon

(Margot) Atha. He was also preceded in death by siblings Marilyn Goldsmith, Sharyn Figley, and Alan Atha.

During his time in ministry, Grayson served a variety of United Methodist Churches, including the Haviland Charge, Norwood Grace, Lebanon UMC, Mt. Zion (Cincinnati), King Avenue in Columbus, Williams Street in Delaware, and Summit UMC and Gates Fourth UMC, both in Columbus. He also served as District Superintendent for the former Findlay District, where he made the first cross-racial appointment in the West Ohio Conference, and following his role as District Superintendent, he was appointed to a cross-racial appointment at Mt Zion UMC. Grayson was most recently named Pastor Emeritus at King Avenue UMC.

We encourage you to read Grayson's full obituary, partially written by Grayson himself, [here](#), where you may also leave condolences for the family.

A celebration of life will be held on Saturday, February 17, 2024 at King Avenue UMC, 299 King Avenue, Columbus, Ohio, 43201. Visitation is from 9:30 am - 11:00 am, with the service immediately following. The service will be live-streamed at www.kingave.org.

Events



Global Village presents Finding NEEMA (Grace in Real Time) Pop Up Shops

Saturday, February 24th 10:00am - 2:00pm at Northridge UMC 4610 Derr Rd. Springfield, OH 45503

All of us are aware that there are many people in the churches around our community who need to experience God's love, mercy and grace through those who are disciples of Jesus Christ. Because we are aware that love compels us to reach out and touch others with the love of Jesus, we

would like to help you think about the ways in which you local congregations can use what it has at its disposal to put that love into action in a way that will be meaningful to God to you and most of all to those in your community.

Every now and then we need to rethink, retool, rework and recreate who we are as disciples and how we connect to the people around us. To this end I would like to invite you to a process that will allow your congregation to engage in some opportunities and experiences that would revitalize and energize your faith, your ministry in the community and the ministry of the local congregation.

The Urban Pop Up Shops will help reach these objectives. During the Saturday events we will offer:

- New ways to think about engaging social media platforms and how you can maximize your worship footprint.
- Ways you can connect with a local school in your community.
- Way to connect with other organizations public and private in your community to build new ministry partnerships..
- Using what your property and building(s) to engage in meaningful community connections and opportunities
- Ways to add life and vitality to your congregation and community by engaging in a SWOT analysis and revisiting Mission Insite information.
- Understanding connections to the culture in the community and around your church and in your city.
- Ramping up discipleship, mission and evangelism in the local congregation.

- Ways to stay engaged in on ongoing group of urban ministry conversations and opportunities for training

We invite you to come as a team of pastor(s) lay leaders and other interested Christians in you congregation to come with open hearts, open minds and open doors.

[Sign Up Now!](#)



Let me tell you how valuable a letter is . . .

This month during All In Community's *Ministry Monday* information session, we will be discussing our signature initiative, HOPE Letters.

HOPE Letters is a mentorship through correspondence program that reaches inside our state correctional facilities to offer hope to those who are incarcerated. Endorsed by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction,

HOPE Letter writers are touching many lives to offer encouragement, non-judgmental companionship and a listening ear.

The gift of a letter or card can have a profound impact on a person in prison who feels forgotten by the world, and perhaps, by God. The good news is *anyone* can write letters or sign cards. It's an easy way to make a big difference in a person's life.

Come learn about how we can send hope to neighbors who are returning to our communities through this valuable ministry on **Monday, February 26, beginning at 7:00pm on ZOOM.**

ADVANCED REGISTRATION REQUIRED

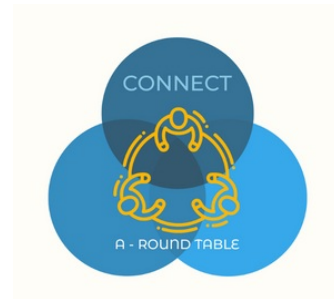
<https://wocumc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsf--srTgrEtZNi07ixXRtNqUgu4qT6JTI>

Cost: FREE

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).

Join the Conversation on Aging Well

Join us on zoom for the next Connect A-Round table on Wednesday, February 28, at 10:00am. We will have brunch together while we hear from experts who will engage us in conversation around aging well. Peg Carmany, Jennifer Wessel, and the team from Life Enriching Communities will be presenting on:



- How to map out your future regarding your own goals
- The importance of putting a plan in place for you and your loved ones
- The benefits of aging in place vs. the benefits of a continuing care retirement community (CCRC)

[Register now...](#)



**United
Women
in Faith**

2024 Spring Spiritual Day Western Lakes District

Saturday, April 13, 2024, 10AM-12PM
Bellefontaine First United Methodist Church 201 N.

“Moving Forward Together”

Speaker: Pastor Charlotte Hefner Come, Reconnect, Make new friends

Continental breakfast will be served

All women are invited to this FREE event!

Please call Sheila Rowe at 419-230-5361 or email sheilabug100@hotmail.com for reservations by April 8th. Please provide your name, your contact info and your church name.

Is Your Congregation Looking to Grow Younger?

Join us at Generate 2024! In this one-day event, you and your team will generate momentum across generations. Hear from leaders who are experts in generating a culture of intergenerational leadership, worship, and sustainable multiplication. Plan to come away feeling empowered to cultivate a presence for all generations in your church. There are only 300 spots, so space is limited. Questions? Contact Ann Marie Carley (amcarley@wocumc.org) . [Reserve your tickets today](#)



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](#)

Basic & Recert ERT Class to be offered March 2 in Beaver creek

UMCOR's Early Response Team (ERT) Basic class will be offered on Saturday, March 2, 8:00 am-4:00 pm at Aley UMC in Beaver creek. 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-aley-umc>.

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

Bryan Stevenson

Author of "Just Mercy"



March 11, 2024 | 10-12 EST
Online Edition



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](https://www.westohioumc.org)



Celebrate John Medaugh's 90th birthday!

SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 2024
2 TO 4 PM

OTTERBEIN ST MARYS

Meyer Community Room
11230 State Route 364
St Marys, OH 45885

Kindly request no gifts

Let's Celebrate John

John G. Medaugh will turn 90 on March 19, and is hosting a celebration on **Saturday, March 16**, in the Meyer Community Room at Otterbein SeniorLife in St. Marys, Ohio, from 2-4.

John joined the Methodist ministry in 1959 and served at Lafayette, Waldo, Marion, Wheelersburg, Lancaster Camp Grounds, Lima Grace on Kibby, and Delphos Trinity, where he retired in 1996. He also served interim appointments after his retirement including Celina St Paul and Cridersville.

Resources

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.

Western Lakes District | 32 Wesley Blvd, Worthington, OH 43085

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