



Late May 2024

## **Message from Hocking River District Board President, Rev. Joy Wigal:** Some Reflections on General Conference 2024

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It was memorable. It was historic. It was what I have often prayed our United Methodist denomination would one day be. Like many first in-person gatherings since the pandemic, there was a sense of joy in being back together again with siblings in Christ who had gathered from all around the globe. Worship was outstanding as usual and delegates separated into legislative sections (committees) to begin the daunting task of reviewing each petition. However, it wasn't long after the full conference began working through legislation to learn that this was indeed not the same body that had met in 2019, or 2016 or any year prior for that matter.

On the "Consent Calendar" was a simple recommendation that would remove a statement which has caused division throughout our denomination since its insertion in 1972. It said that homosexuality was "incompatible with the Christian lifestyle." The "Consent Calendar" is composed of items that passed their legislative section (committee) by at least 90%. Also on the same calendar was a change in language in the Book of Discipline that would leave it to the individual churches and pastors as a "matter of conscience" as to hold or perform same sex weddings. It was surprising enough that it would make it onto the consent calendar! When it came to the floor of the main session with little fanfare or debate and subsequently passed, there was at first a moment of stunned silence... then an eruption of joy! Without dragging each other thru the mud, we had settled on verbiage that covered the span of those present, ranging from traditional to progressive – or, as we used to say, conservative to liberal.

Here's the beauty of what was passed: it affirms that we are not all at the same place and accepts each person, church, or conference where they are. If you are a traditional church or pastor and God is not calling you to support same sex marriage, the Book of Discipline affirms that and empowers you to do ministry accordingly. It also allows to whom God is calling in a different direction. (When I attended General Conference for the first time in 2012, I learned many things and what hurt my heart the most was hearing my United Methodist siblings tearing one another apart, doing significant harm to one another). I was also impressed by the diversity of ministry in other parts of the United States and around the world. There are places where God needs traditional/conservative/straight congregations and places where God is calling churches and pastors to be all-inclusive. Did you know that there are United Methodist Churches that *request* a pastor who identifies as part of the LGBTQ community? Did you know that there are more requests for such pastors than there are pastors to supply those requests? God needs all types of people in order to reach all types of people!

Yes, the changes at General Conference 2024 were sweeping! Most importantly, those changes enabled us to grow to include a greater breadth of people, *including both traditional and progressive*. You don't have to "agree" with homosexuality to be part of the UMC and you don't have to disagree with it. Instead, you are simply asked to affirm 'Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and put your whole trust in his grace...'. General Conference also established sacramental privilege for Ordained Deacons, such as Rev. Jessica Stonecypher within our Hocking River District, as well Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads and Rev. Rachel Miller that many of us remember from their time among us. An important change for our Local Pastors regarding Course of Study is that it may now be taken *entirely online!* There will also be some constitutional amendments about "Regionalization" and our West Ohio Conference and Bishop Palmer will provide additional details about what that means and how it will impact us. Unfortunately, many of the additional rights we were seeking for Licensed Local Pastors and Deaconesses (different from Deacons!) were not passed. However, there are many folks, including United Methodist Rural Advocates and United Methodist Appalachian Ministry Network, that are already discussing how to make improvements in those areas in the future. I would welcome dialogue around any of these issues and, even though I will soon be a city dweller, will always carry the unique opportunities and challenges of rural and Appalachian ministry as a part of who I am. Thank you for allowing me to serve among you for the last 22 years, especially as chair of your District Committee on Ministry and as chair of your District Board of Directors. It has been a privilege and an honor.

In Christian love,  
Rev. Joy Wigal  
Faith/First UMC, Zanesville



## **LSM Classes Being Offered Around the Conference**

Here's the link to check out what classes are being offered across the West Ohio Conference:  
**<https://www.westohioumc.org/leadership/lay-servant-ministries-class-schedule>**

Included this year are the following classes being offered in the Hocking River District:

**Leading in Prayer**                      **Friday, June 7 from 6-8pm(Zoom) & Saturday, June 8 from 9am-5pm**  
**Either in person at the district office or by Zoom**

**United Methodist Polity**           **Friday, August 23 from 6-8pm(Zoom) & Saturday, August 24 from**  
**9am-5pm either in person at the district office or by Zoom**

**Basic Course**                              **Friday, October 11 from 6-8pm(Zoom) & Saturday, October 12 from**  
**9am-5pm either in person at the district office or by Zoom**

We will be offering an advanced course in the first quarter of 2025. Remember, even if you have completed the Basic Course and all of the Core Courses, you need to take an Advanced Course every 3 years as part of maintaining your certification. Not sure what you need next? Call the Hocking River District office at (740) 677-0136.

**PHONE NUMBER FOR HOCKING RIVER DISTRICT OFFICE:**  
**(740) 677-0136**



## **Help Your Congregation Be a Part of Annual Conference Through Prayer**

As we draw nearer to Annual Conference 2024, there are multiple opportunities for faith communities to be involved through prayer. Congregations can be in prayer leading up to annual conference, using Bishop Palmer's prayer or congregations/ individuals can sign up to be a part of the work being done during annual conference.

To sign up for one of the 30 minute intervals during the business of the annual conference, enter in your browser <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0944A5A62FA2FCC16-48801099-godisable#/>. Don't worry, we'll make sure you have some prompts to help guide your 30 minutes with God. This year's annual conference theme is "God is Able" and Bishop Palmer's prayer for annual conference is "Gracious God, we humbly acknowledge that you are the source of our life. We confess we are often tempted to try being your church without your love, without your power. Forgive us. Grant to us, grace-full God, to put all our hope and confidence in you. For you are Able. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."



**YOU'RE INVITED!**

## **Bid Farewell to the Palmers at 32 Wesley Open House**

Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer is retiring after serving 24 years in Episcopal leadership. West Ohio has been blessed to have Bishop and First Lady Cynthia Palmer serving us in this conference.

On Tuesday, June 4, from 4:00pm-6:00pm there will be an Open House celebrating the Palmers at the West Ohio Conference center, 32 Wesley Blvd., Worthington. You are invited to attend to share well wishes in person. Light refreshments will be served.






## Foundation Program for May:

### Foundation to Offer Online Legacy Planning Seminar May 21

The United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio will be offering a seminar on estate planning and legacy giving on May 21 at 6 p.m. via Zoom. All congregations and their members are welcome to attend. No registration required. The seminar will cover basic estate planning and legacy giving options. Participants can join the seminar at this link: [Join Zoom Meeting](#) or contact Susan Black for more information at [sblack@wocumc.org](mailto:sblack@wocumc.org).



### Have a preschool in your church or staff/volunteers who work with preschoolers?

**We'd love to have them join us May 23rd from 10am-4pm.**

The West Ohio Conference Center (32 Wesley Blvd, Worthington, OH 43085) is having a special day designed specifically for those who work with this fun age group. The focus of the day will be on storytelling (through Godly Play) themes, prayer, and connections with parents. This is a FREE event that will inspire, renew, and help those who love preschoolers connect.

This event would count for staff and volunteers who work with preschoolers and need the yearly required training for Safe Sanctuaries. It has also been submitted to OCCRRA for approval towards credentialing of preschool educators.

We know Worthington is not next door for everyone, so hotel accommodations are available at a significantly reduced price if an overnight stay is needed for the 10am start time.

**To register, please email Lesley Moore, Connectional Ministries Administrative Support, at [lmoore@wocumc.org](mailto:lmoore@wocumc.org)**



Chester United Methodist will be having a community party (including food, inflatables, music, games & more) on Saturday, June 15 from 3:00-6:00 PM to celebrate the grand opening of our wonderful, lighted walking path. The event is open to the public .



An online certification class for administrators is available through PAUMCS – Professional Administrators of the United Methodist Connectional Structure. It begins June 1 and is a self-paced curriculum with a few live sessions. An admin will learn more about Taxes and The Church, Connectional Giving, Ethics and Confidentiality, Conflict Resolution, Polity of The Church and Office Finances.

[2024 PAUMCS Certification Course | GCFA Training Ministry \(teachable.com\)](https://teachable.com)

Church admins can sign up to learn more about Taxes and The Church, Connectional Giving, Ethics and Confidentiality, Conflict Resolution, Polity of The Church and Office Finances.



**PAUMCS**

**PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATORS  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST  
CONNECTIONAL STRUCTURE**

## Lakeside Institute July 21-27, 2024

Lakeside Institute is a camp like no other. Located inside the gates of the Lakeside Chautauqua community, Lakeside Institute has been helping youth and young adults, ages 14 through age 20, further their personal faith journeys for over 100 years!

Through daily messages, small group conversations, large & small group activities, devotionals and worship opportunities, each youth is encouraged to develop their individual relationship with Christ. Supported by adult volunteers, the camp Chaplain and their peers, Lakeside Institute provides a place for them to explore their personal faith beliefs, deepen their understanding of God's work in the world, ask questions, and prepare for a lifelong journey of faith.

The theme for camp this summer is "Finding the ME in the WE." Using Luke 1:28 and the story of Mary as an entry point, youth will explore what it means to claim their God given identity, while also remaining deeply connected to the larger community where they have been called.

While Lakeside Institute runs through East Ohio Conference, there is a long history of involvement from West Ohio as well. Hilliard UMC has several leaders on staff, including one of the deans (April Andrick) and this year's chaplain (Rev. April Blaine). The leadership works to create an accommodating and inclusive environment for all young people, including LGBTQIA+ youth.

Campers stay in Wo-Ho-Mis and nearby cabins on the grounds of Lakeside. Youth are welcome to come on their own, or with others from their church. Come and join the fun at Lakeside Institute this summer!

Promo Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjMNP4glseE>

Register Here: <https://lakesideinstitute.wordpress.com/register/>



### New Resource for Congregations Looking to Grow Younger!

Last month over 160 leaders from 45 different congregations across West Ohio came together at Ohio Wesleyan University for Generate 2024. There were six different generations represented during this transformational day of learning, listening, and launching a movement of growing younger. There will be many more stories to share from this day as churches across West Ohio continue to take their next steps in growing younger.

If you missed this event or lost your notes, you can now find the resources shared during the day and hear what others thought by visiting [www.generateohio.org](http://www.generateohio.org). Not only will you find the notebooks and slides shared during Generate, additional resources like summer camp options, connecting with our family ministry networks, and micro-grant information is available. Stop by often as resources are being added frequently.

## **DON'T FORGET!**

**Your Attendance is Needed At the Spring District Conference to Be Held THIS SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2024 At St. Mark's UMC in Belpre, 2PM**



## **UPCOMING EVENTS:** **WATCH FOR FURTHER INFORMATION!**



### **New Pastors' Event: An Evening at Tecumseh!**

Hocking River District will be teaming up with Scioto River District to welcome our pastors who will be serving in a new position beginning July 1, 2024!

Stay tuned to future newsletters to learn more!

**The Hocking River District Office Will Be Closed During the Week of  
May 27, 2024—May 31, 2024**

**Due to the Memorial Day Holiday and West Ohio Annual Conference**

Questions can be addressed to and assistance can be gained by contacting Lesley at [lmoore@wocumc.org](mailto:lmoore@wocumc.org) or by calling the WOC office at (614) 844-6200.

### **West Ohio Annual Conference**

#### **Session**

Wednesday, May 29 - Saturday, June 1, 2024  
Capital University, Bexley OH



### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**Office Hours: M-F 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.**

**E-Mails: Office - [hockingriverdistrict@wocumc.org](mailto:hockingriverdistrict@wocumc.org)**

**Mark Chow, DS - [mchow@wocumc.org](mailto:mchow@wocumc.org)**

**Barbara Conover, Office Admin. - [bconover@wocumc.org](mailto:bconover@wocumc.org)**