



# 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

### **Jots From Jim...**

In the coming days many of us will hear the phrase “What did you ‘get’ for Christmas?” This phrase is rooted in many childhoods and takes on a maturity over our lifetimes. There comes a moment when we realize the beauty is not in the “getting” but in the “giving.” Furthermore, the day comes when we more fully realize the beauty of the phrase, “For God so loved the world that He gave...”

Recently I worshipped at the Western Lakes District church called New Madison-Eldorado UMC. Pastor David Richey and congregation have done a beautiful job of creating a “Giving Manger” where congregants bring lists of what they “gave” during Advent and place it in the manger. Emphasis was given to the things we “give” which have no price tag but are expressions from the core of our humanity.

As 2023 comes to an end I want to say “thank you” to all of our churches who gave to the cause of Christ. Yes, apportionments are a big deal. Thank you. But so are the ways you gave thru your community food pantries, social outreaches, compassion to the lonely and forgotten, and the smiles you gave to others when no one else was watching. The Western Lakes District manger is full thanks to the generosity of 96 churches across 13 counties including one in Indiana.

My wife, Nancy, along with our infamous black lab named Thor, wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May the coming year be a time of new beginnings, fresh starts, and a deeper love of Christ as our Lord and Savior. May our mangers overflow with generosity because of the generous love of God that was poured out upon us.

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 7, 2024 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm - Madison, Clark and Champaign Counties  
First UMC London | 52 N. Main St., London  
Deadline to register is December 31, 2023.

[Register Here for Western Lakes District Training January 7th](#)

Sunday, January 14, 2024 2:00 pm- 3:30 pm - Union, Hardin, Logan Counties  
Bellefontaine First UMC | 201 N. Main St., Bellefontaine  
Deadline to register is January 7, 2024

[Register Here for Western Lakes District Training January 14th](#)

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 14, 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 21, 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](mailto:creed@wocumc.org)

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## **One-Day Mission Trip**

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)

**Registration:**

Contact Cortney at the District Office to register. [creed@wocumc.org](mailto:creed@wocumc.org)  
Deadline to register is March 1<sup>st</sup>

*Western Lakes District -- Making a World of Difference*

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**Cuba Mission Trip 2024**

Join Rev. Jim Wilson on a humanitarian mission trip to Cuba January 29-February 2, 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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**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://umcmision.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.

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**Date Extended to Receive 2023 Apportionments**

All 2023 apportionments must be received by Monday, January 8, 2024 to be counted for 2023.

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

**Rev. Kenneth Everett Brown**, 83, passed away surrounded by family on Wednesday, November 29, 2023.

Kenneth was born on September 5, 1940 in Jacksonville, Ohio to James R and Melba (Grimm) Brown. He is survived by his wife, Barbara A. (Bushee) Brown, a brother, David

(Mary) Brown of Roseville, OH, his son Mark (Heather) E. Brown of Centerburg, OH, 3 grandchildren Mary E. (Victor) Brown-Litteral, Ian E. Brown, and Alistair C. Brown, 3 great-grandchildren, Magnus, Theodore, and Nikolaus Litteral, and a nephew, Dwayne (Jennifer) Bushee. He is preceded in death by his parents, and his sister Darlene (Mike) Hughes, and his brother Roger (Ingrid) Brown.

Kenneth graduated from Lancaster High School in 1958, received his BA from the College of Arts and Sciences at Ohio University in 1967, and his M.Div. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary in 1971.

Kenneth served as a pastor, first in the Evangelical United Brethren Church, then in the United Methodist Church for over 50 years. He served congregations throughout Fairfield County, as well as in Liberty Center, Newark, Kenton, Englewood, and Westerville. He preached his first sermon at 12 years old, then was appointed to his first congregation at 18, and ordained an Elder at Trinity Church in 1972. Kenneth retired in 2002, being subsequently called out of retirement to serve smaller congregations.

Kenneth received the Harry Denman Award for Evangelism, the 33rd Degree and the Royal Order of Scotland of the Scottish Rite, and was a member of the American Rose Society and Lodge #57 Lancaster F&AM.

The funeral was held at noon on Tuesday, December 5 at the Halteman-Fett & Dyer Funeral Home at 436 North Broad Street Lancaster, OH 43130. Interment at Green Summit Cemetery in Adelphi, OH.

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/lancaster-oh/kenneth-brown-11561699>

## Events



### Mark your Calendar for Clergy Day Apart

Mark your calendar for West Ohio Clergy Day Apart scheduled for Tuesday, February 6, 2024 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM at Grove City United Methodist Church.

Look for more details and registration information in early January in NewsNET, on the conference website and your district newsletters.

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### 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...](#)

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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 Wespath 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 Wespath 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, Wespath 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 Wespath 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.

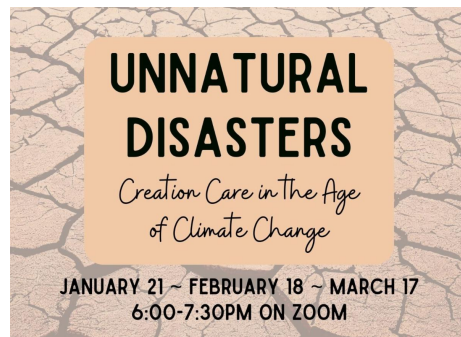
November Leaving a Lasting Legacy May 21st 7:00 p.m. online

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>.



**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.

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!



## 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.

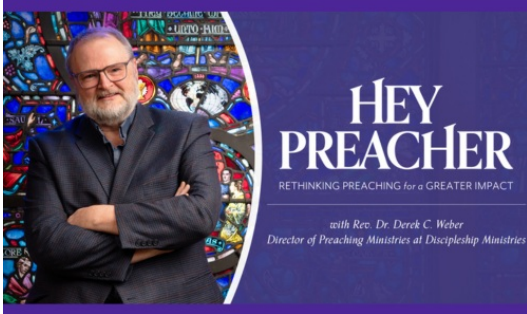
The first 200 to register will receive a copy of Just Mercy.

[Learn more and register at WestOhioUMC.org](#)

## Resources

### Hey Preacher Launches in 2024

Does your preaching ever feel uninspired? Have the changes in your church from the



pandemic made the preaching task even more difficult as you navigate online and in-person congregations? Do you want to improve your preaching process so that it becomes compelling and inspires your congregation?

Discipleship Ministries, through a Lilly Endowment grant, will be offering resources, videos and workshops, recommended preaching coaches, as well as online and in-person courses on preaching and worship.

Bishop Palmer is one of the contributors to this project.

These offerings will not only instruct but are also designed to help create relationships with your peers and mentors to take your preaching to the next level. This program is offered in part through the Lilly Endowment Compelling Preaching project.

Click the link below to be notified of Hey Preacher opportunities and events.

[Click here to receive notifications...](#)

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## 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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## 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](#)

## 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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