



Enlarge My Territory

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Some years ago, there was a popular but controversial book about an obscure prayer by an unknown leader named Jabez. In a few short verses, this faithful follower found himself in the Hall of Faith for his bold petition to God.

"Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, *'I gave birth to him in pain.'* Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, *'Oh, that You would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let Your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.'* And God granted his request." (1 Chronicles 4:9-10 NIV)

Some devoured the thought of praying this prayer regularly and being greatly blessed. But not all. Others disagreed with the concept that God's blessings would follow so effortlessly by simply reciting these words.

Whatever one thinks, the account of this man and his prayer is found in the Bible, along with many other unbelievable experiences and encounters.

With the recent announcement from Bishop Palmer, I couldn't help but think of this passage. While I have not been actively and eagerly praying that God would "*enlarge my territory*," it **is** coming to pass and I will need to make adjustments in how I manage my self, my time and my service.

Effective July 1, 2024, I will become the Superintendent of the Scioto River District as well as of the Hocking River District. With the announcement of Rev. Calvin Alston's impending retirement, Bishop Palmer invited me to prayerfully consider expanding my responsibilities.

[Reverend Chow's message continued on page 2....](#)

While the overall area will include twenty counties in southern and southeastern Ohio, the total number of churches and pastors will be fewer than what the former Foothills District had a few short years ago when I started this journey with you.

And, while I was not praying for God to enlarge my territory, I will be praying that God's hand will be upon us and will keep us from harm as I oversee the 140 churches and 90 or so pastors of these two Districts.

I covet your prayers as I begin a new adventure: a different version of a two point charge.

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, 'Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!'" So God granted him what he requested." (I Chronicles 4:10 NKJV)

May God Bless and Keep you always!

Mark



Chow named Superintendent of Scioto River and Hocking River Districts

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer has announced Rev. Mark Chow will serve as Scioto River District Superintendent effective July 1. He replaces Rev. Calvin Alston who will retire at the end of the conference year. Chow will continue to serve as the district superintendent of the Hocking River District.

"I am humbled and honored to serve the people of both the Scioto River and Hocking River Districts," Chow said. "With your prayers and God's grace, I look forward to this opportunity to serve God."

Bishop Palmer met with the district superintendency committees ahead of the announcement. Both districts are similar culturally and regionally.

"Mark has served all over West Ohio. It is hard for me to think of anybody who exudes servant leadership more than Mark," said Bishop Palmer.

Chow holds a Bachelor of Arts in speech-theater from Ohio Northern University and a Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary. He was ordained an elder in the West Ohio Conference in 1989.

Born in Iowa, Chow and his family lived in Pennsylvania and Kentucky before moving to Ohio where his father, the late Rev. W. Jing Chow, served several churches in the West Ohio Conference.

He is married to Nancy Schumacher-Chow. They are the parents of four adult daughters: Jayme, Jenn, Deborah, and Molly. They are also grandparents to Henry and Rachel.

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

Dessert and Dialogue

We are grateful for your leadership in the Hocking River District! This is an important time of transition and cultivating a Christ-centered community is vital to moving forward focused on our mission. It is also important that we know the responsibilities and tasks that we are called to do as we move forward. These discussions are important training. If you are a

Board of Trustees member, a member of the S/PPRC Committee, or a Finance Committee member it is important that you attend.

For information on **Board of Trustees or Finance Committee:**

Thursday, March 7 from 6-8pm, Hopewell UMC, 11742 Gower Rd, Glenford.

Or

Wednesday, March 13 from 6-8pm, McArthur First UMC, 200 S. Market St, McArthur.

For information on **S/PPRC Committee:**

Thursday, March 21 from 6-8pm, The Coolville UMC, 25460 Main St, Coolville.

Or

Tuesday, March 26 from 6-8pm, Bethany UMC, 159 Adams St, Corning.

If you are a pastor, please make certain that you or someone from your church attends these trainings!



Using the Conference Website for Annual Reporting and More

You can find many needed forms and documents for your reporting requirements by visiting westohioumc.org ! Log in to your account and view the top of the page. There are 7 choices across the top of the page:

About Us Ministries Leadership Stewardship & Finance News & Media Resources Events

The little arrow next to each provides a drop-down menu with many choices.

One example is **Stewardship & Finance** Choices include **Church Administration**, for instance.

By clicking on **Church Administration**, you will have access to **2023 Annual Report Form, 2024 Minimum Salary Guide, End of Year Reports**, and **Local Church Resources**, to name a few.

By then clicking on **Local Church Resources**, you can obtain information on Choosing a Parsonage or Housing Allowance, Internal Controls, Records Retention, Parsonage Standards, and more!



*February 14th
Is not only Valentine's Day this year, it's also
Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent!*



Hocking River District Hosts Adam Hamilton

Central Venue was the site of the first stop on Adam Hamilton's book tour in Ohio. Many thanks to Pastor Paul Risler and Pastor Lauren Fuchs and the amazing team of servant leaders of Central Ave United Methodist Church for providing a warm, hospitable space for about a hundred persons. They came to listen to Adam Hamilton share his story and his insights which comprise his newest book, Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith.



Paul Risler, Adam Hamilton, Lauren Fuchs, Mark Chow



Adam Hamilton, Mark Chow

LSM Classes Being Offered Around the Conference

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 at Cokesbury or Amazon.

Advanced Course: Discover Your Spiritual Gifts being offered in April

April 19 - 20 2024 - Via Zoom

Friday eve: 6:30-9 PM and Saturday 8:30 AM -5PM

Cost for Classes: \$15.00 per participant zoom

Instructors: Harry and Ann Peat

The early church knew about the gift of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts flowing from the Holy Spirit through the believer. Today, the church is still discovering this. Learn more about how your spiritual gifts support your lay servant ministries. This course is one of the required courses for Lay Speakers.

Be sure to purchase and read the book, "Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts" by Charles V. Bryant prior to the class.

Please purchase the book from either Cokesbury or Amazon.

Registration Opens March 1

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 on the West Ohio Conference website, at [End Of Year Reports | West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church \(westohioumc.org\)](https://www.westohioumc.org/End-Of-Year-Reports)

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

Didn't receive this information via email? Please update your church's leadership contact information, either in MyChurch account or by calling or emailing the Hocking River District office!



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-ale-y-umc>

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



Save the Date! Confirmation Event With Bishop Palmer March 3, 2024

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.

Registration for Bishop Palmer's Confirmation Event Ends February 15th

If you have confirmands from last year, current students, or students who will be entering confirmation this fall, you do not want to miss this special event with Bishop Gregory V. Palmer. During our time together we will be reviewing United Methodist history, polity, experience the unique connections of being a part of West Ohio, fellowship, worship, and time talking with our Bishop. This event will begin at 2pm and will conclude with a meal together, able to leave Ohio Wesleyan by 6:30pm. [Registration will close February 15th, so make sure to register your group today!](#) If you have questions or difficulty registering contact Ann Marie Carley, amcarley@wocumc.org.

Registration is now open via WestOhioUMC.org!

If you have questions, contact Rev. Ann Marie Carley amcarley@wocumc.org.



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(740) 677-0136

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*.

[Bishop Palmer's Leadership Clinics: Live | West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church \(westohiumc.org\)](#)



"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.

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 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

EAST AND WEST OHIO CONFERENCES TO SHARE AN EPISCOPAL LEADER EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

A special-called session of the North Central Jurisdiction (NCJ) Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church was held on Tuesday, January 23 "for the sole purpose of approving new episcopal areas for episcopal assignments to be effective September 1, 2024."

Delegates to this special-called NCJ Jurisdictional Conference voted to form two new episcopal areas, one to include the East Ohio Conference and the West Ohio Conference, and one to include the Northern Illinois Conference and the Wisconsin Conference. The two conferences in each new episcopal area will share one bishop.

By the action of the special session, the North Central Jurisdiction will transition from nine to seven episcopal areas. The North Central Jurisdiction Committee on the Episcopacy assigns the bishops to the episcopal areas and all assignments will be announced at the NCJ Jurisdictional Conference July 10-13 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The new episcopal areas and the bishop assignments to each of the seven episcopal areas will be effective September 1.

Executive staff leaders and members of the Committee on the Episcopacy in both the East Ohio Conference and the West Ohio Conference have been engaged in strategic conversations to explore the sharing of an episcopal leader since the NCJ Committee on the Episcopacy proposed the possibility during the 2022 Jurisdictional Conference.

"I and Bishop Palmer convened a leadership team that has been working to identify the key administrative matters that need to be addressed and to examine the best practices of other episcopal areas where shared episcopal leadership has worked well. This work will continue as we prepare the conferences for this transition," said Bishop Tracy S. Malone, resident bishop of the East Ohio Conference.

"I am confident the people of the East and West Ohio Conferences are well suited to be served by one bishop with a single eye to living the mission of 'making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,'" said Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, resident bishop of the West Ohio Conference.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

SAVE THE DATE!

Hocking River District Clergy/Spouse Retreat Friday, April 12- Sunday, April 14, 2024 Burr Oak State Park



Rev. Dr. Dan Wells and Jacqui Wells will be our retreat leaders. We look forward to a time a renewal and refreshment as individuals and/or couples in life and ministry.

Interested in attending? Please email or call the district office to be put on the preregistration list!

The Next “Road to General Conference Town Hall” With Bishop Palmer Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at Noon via Zoom



Look for a Zoom link to be sent out soon!

West Ohio Annual Conference Session

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

STAY TUNED FOR



MORE DETAILS!

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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

E-Mails: Office - hockingriverdistrict@wocumc.org

Mark Chow, DS - mchow@wocumc.org

Barbara Conover, Office Admin. - bconover@wocumc.org