



Great Miami River District

News from The United Methodist Church

News and Notes --- March 5, 2025

Today is Ash Wednesday. We begin the season of Lent with the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Since it's a day of confession, I must confess that I have often chosen to use the other option for the words as I have shared the ashes, "Repent, and believe the gospel." As I reflect on why, I guess it is because it seems more positive, even easier. Repent and believe--these are things that we can do, feel better, and move on.



The words about the dust are different. They are not about what we do, but who we are. They are a reminder of something essential that we cannot escape or avoid. It's not only that we use to be dust or will be dust, but that we are dust.

We are dust. It's hard enough to process the phrase from the funeral liturgy, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," but to think of ourselves as dust right now is humbling. It changes our perspective on everything.

If we are dust, then we are all equally dust, and we are all part of a larger whole. When we claim that we are dust, we are not only accepting that we are one small piece of something, we are also claiming that we are connected to the whole of the universe. We are connected to each and every person and element of creation.

Most of the time we resist that. We like to think of ourselves as independent and unique and better than. We distance ourselves from each other and other groups. We like to think that somehow, we have escaped dust, at least for a while.

But on Ash Wednesday, when we hear these words spoken as dust is put on our foreheads, we experience a connection--with the dust that makes up the cross on our forehead, with all of the once living things that made that dust, with the one who is putting the dust on our foreheads, with those in the room with us, and most of all to the one who takes all of the dust and causes it to cling together for a time and breathes the breath of life into it.

Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are connected to all of the dust in the universe and all of the creation that God has called good. It reminds us to live in ways that honor that connection. The season of Lent is the invitation to consider all the ways we have been disconnected and all of the things we have done to cause that disconnection to God, self, others, the church, and the universe, to repent and then to commit ourselves to believe in the good news again—that we are one in Jesus Christ, connected to the one who became dust for us, connected and living in his love and grace.

Grace and Peace,
Suzanne

**Annual Committee Reports are Available Now for
Completion by June 1**

STAFF/PASTOR PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

- The **Local Church Pastor Assessment Form**, which should be completed by the pastor
- The **Pastoral SPRC Assessment form**, which should be completed by the SPRC
- The **SMART Goal Formation Plan Guide**, which should be completed by the pastor and the SPRC together



TRUSTEE REPORTS

- The **Trustee Legal and Property Report** – This report should be presented at the church's fall annual conference and can be completed online.
- The **Parsonage Inspection** (if applicable) - Note that the Parsonage Inspection Form also requires the signature of the SPRC Chairperson. You can find the parsonage standards [here](#). This report can be completed online.
- An **Accessibility Audit**, which is required in the Book of Discipline. This report can be completed online.
- The **Green Church Audit**, which is required per General Conference action in 2024. This report should be completed then uploaded online.

CHURCH HISTORIAN

The West Ohio Conference Commission on Archives and History is requesting that each congregation in the West Ohio Conference submit an updated **Local Church History Survey Form** this spring. If you currently don't have a recorded church history or a Church Historian, please involve your members who may best recall your church's history and start the documentation process.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Annual Fund Balance Report (Audit). Please take this report and financial review process seriously. When there is mismanagement of funds it is not only the dollar loss that is significant, but the loss of credibility, energy for ministry, and focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ, as well. Remember that *this Fund Balance Report should be done by someone who does not have access to incoming or outgoing funds.*

All report forms can be found by logging on to the West Ohio Conference website and navigating to MyChurch / Annual Reports, or if you would prefer a printed copy, contact [Nancy](#).

Annual Conference is May 28-31, 2025

The 56th session of the West Ohio Conference will be held May 28 - May 31, again this year at Capital University in Bexley. This will be the first Ohio Episcopal Area annual conference in which Bishop Hee-Soo Jung presides. The theme for the session is Rise Up, Beloved: Trust in God's Promises, inspired by Mark 5:35-43, where Jesus encourages Jairus, a synagogue leader, to have faith that his deceased daughter will be raised from the dead.



At large members are needed to represent the Great Miami River District. If you are interested in serving, please contact Nancy Newton at nnewton@wocumc.org.



As we do every year at Annual Conference, West Ohio Disaster Response Ministries will be collecting kits and supplies for Midwest Mission Distribution Center, a cooperating depot in the UMCOR relief supply network. However, this year's collection will also include Bishop Jung's **Hands of Hope Challenge**, where we see which district can contribute the most items! All kits and supplies [on this webpage](#) will be accepted. Let's make sure we welcome Bishop Jung with Hands of Hope!

Supplies will be collected on May 29 and May 30 at the Midwest Mission truck on site at the Capital Center. In order for your donation to count towards our

district's total, you'll need to [FILL OUT THIS FORM](#) and give it to the Midwest Mission personnel at the truck. If you have questions or need more information, email [Mariellyn Grace](mailto:Mariellyn.Grace).

[Hands of Hope Challenge Flyer](#)
[Midwest Mission Flyer](#)

Denman Evangelism Award Nomination deadline is March 15, 2025

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award program honors United Methodists in each annual conference whose exceptional ministry of evangelism – expressed in Word (what), Sign (why), and Deed (how) – brings people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.



Nominations are now being accepted for the 2025 Harry Denman Evangelism Award: [click here](#) to download and complete the form with your nomination. Please submit the form and supporting documents to mgrace@wocumc.org, or mail them to West Ohio Conference, Attn. Mariellyn Grace, 32 Wesley Blvd, Worthington, OH 43085. Nominations are due by March 15, 2025.

How Healthy is Your Church Culture?

A healthy church culture is critical to the long-term growth and viability of a congregation.

Jim Ozier shares a list of attributes that can help diagnose whether your church culture is healthy or in need of change. From the Lewis Center for Church Development. [Read more](#)



SERVICE & EVENT OPPORTUNITIES

Super Serve Saturday - A Monthly Serve Opportunity

In partnership with Hyde Park Community UMC, the Great Miami River District offers monthly community serve opportunities from September through May. This is a way for families, multiple generations, small groups, youth groups, friends and people of all backgrounds to put their faith into action by serving in the community.



On March 15th there are 3 volunteer activities for people to choose from at two locations - New Life Furniture Bank and Wesley Foundation in Cincinnati. We are hoping to expand the reach of Super Serve Saturday to all of the counties in the Great Miami River District. If you know of an organization who may want to participate, please [contact Nancy](#) at 513.421.2057.

Super Serve Saturdays (S3) take place on the 3rd Saturday of the month. There is something for every age and ability - no superpowers necessary - just a willing, humble and flexible spirit and heart for all! [Click here to sign up to help on March 15](#)

Join us for the District Confirmation Connection gathering!

Confirmation leaders, you are invited to bring your confirmation students to the Confirmation Connection at First UMC in Franklin on April 6 from 3-5:30pm.

Last year's Confirmation Retreat with Bishop Palmer was a really special event for our students. Many of you have asked whether that event would take place again this year. Due to Bishop Jung's commitment to the days on the district and visiting all churches in both the East and West Ohio Conference, he will not be able to host the event this year. Instead, we will host these events by District. The students will get to spend time with their District Superintendent and other conference leaders, and have the opportunity to interact with students and leaders from other UMC churches in the area to better understand what it means to be a United Methodist.



Hosted by our West Ohio Conference Next Gen Engagement team, students will learn about our UMC connection, participate in a mission project, an art project, worship, food, and fun to bring our connection to life. [Learn more and register here.](#)

Ohio Methodist Historical Society Convocation and Annual Meeting May 2-3, 2025 Ontario United Methodist Church



This year marks the 186th gathering of the Ohio Methodist Historical Society and a weekend of exciting events are planned May 2-3. Highlights include touring the Ohio State Historical Reformatory and the Bible Walk Museum. You don't have to be a member to participate.

The theme is "Telling Our Faith Story". We all have opportunities to tell our faith story, sharing how God has worked in our lives. This weekend's events will highlight several ways to tell our story through art and photography.

For more information, contact [Mary Ann Stotts](#) at 419.295.9559. [Learn more here.](#)

TRAINING & RESOURCES

Deacon Formation Event Building Community - The Font & Table Thursday, March 27 from 10am - 2:30pm



Deacons across all stages of ministry—including provisional, full, and retired—as well as inquiring and certified deacon candidates are invited for a day of learning at the West Ohio Conference Center on March 27. Together, you will explore how deacons serve as bridges in the church and world, particularly in leading through the sacraments and fostering communion.

Your time together will include:

- Interactive sessions and discussions.
- Best practices for engaging in ministry at the font and table.
- Opportunities to connect with other deacons and candidates in a supportive community.

[Register here.](#) Hurry! Registration ends March 20th.

Cultivating Racial Resilience Cohort

In partnership with the Lilly Endowment's [Pathways for Tomorrow](#) initiative, MTSO is offering an immersive 1.5-year anti-racism training experience entitled [Cultivating](#)

[Racial Resilience.](#)

Cultivating Racial Resilience is a compassion-based anti-racism and anti-bias training method that helps individuals develop an anti-racist conscience and institutions develop an anti-racist ethos. This 1.5-year immersive experience in cultivating racial resilience is offered at no cost to participants. Free on-campus housing and meals are provided, and travel expenses are covered for attendees within the United States.



MTSO is currently accepting applications for their first cohort of 10-15 appointed clergy who are eager to learn more about anti-racism from a theological perspective and desire to apply these principles to an existing or new ministry project.

To apply for Cultivating Racial Resilience, please [review the website](#), and complete the application by March 10th.

Lay Servant Ministries

Lay Servant Ministries is one of the most significant lay leadership development programs available within the United Methodist connection. Through this equipping and empowering system, lay servants have the opportunity to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ who then go and make other disciples



Classes are scheduled now for 2025. They are all either on Zoom or offer a hybrid opportunity so no travel is required. Click each link to learn more and sign up.

Great Miami River District – [Introduction to Lay Servant Ministries: The BASIC course](#) (March 16, 18, 20, 23, 25)

Great Miami River District – [Public Prayer](#) (March 30, April 1, 3, 6, 8)

Olentangy River District – [Introduction to Lay Servant Ministries: The BASIC course](#) (April 4-5)

Olentangy River District – [Discover Your Spiritual Gifts](#) (May 16-17)

Hocking River District – [Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts](#) (June 6-7)

Great Miami River – [Ministry with the Forgotten: Dementia through a Spiritual Lens](#) (June 16, 19, 23, 26, 30)

Hocking River District – [Introduction to Lay Servant Ministries: The BASIC course](#) (September 12-13)

Hocking River District – [Loving People and Planet in God's Name](#) (October 31-November 1)

View the 2025 LSM calendar by clicking [here](#).

GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

GMD Youth Summer Trip Grants

"The past few years have made it all the more clear how much youth long for and need connections to God and each other that church, youth group, and mission trips offer. Covid made it clear how much disparity and need there is in our world. Near and far there has been a clear call for the



church to help with issues of homelessness, food insecurity, care for the environment, poverty, dismantling racism, rebuilding after natural disasters, sharing the gospel in word and deed....the list is long."

-Rev. Justin Fuhrmann, Great Miami River District Strategy Committee Chair

Due to these clear needs and with an expanded understanding of what a 'youth summer trip' means, the Great Miami River Mission Foundation is offering \$1000 youth mission and spiritual development grants to local churches. The application process closes on Friday, March 14, 2025.

[Click here for the application](#) or visit our website: [District Grants | West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church](#).

United Methodist Higher Education Foundation Scholarships

Each year, UMHEF invites students to apply for scholarships to help pay for college or seminary. A nonprofit foundation, UMHEF awards \$2+ million annually to students attending United Methodist-related schools.



Applications for the 2025-2026 academic year will be received until April 1, 2025. [Click here](#) for more information and to apply.

LOCAL CHURCH AND MINISTRY PARTNER EVENTS



Armstrong Chapel UMC
Mens's Event: Faith on the Field
March 15
Click [here](#) for more details



New Day UMC
A Night of Comedy
March 29
Click [here](#) for more details

CLASSIFIEDS

[Click here](#) to view/respond to the ads below
[Click here](#) to submit your own classified ad or event

Employment

Ministry Assistant - *Memorial UMC*
Youth Director - *Ware's Chapel UMC*
Instrumentalist - *Aldersgate UMC*
Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries - *Shiloh UMC*

Needed

Choir Robes - *Middletown Christ UMC*

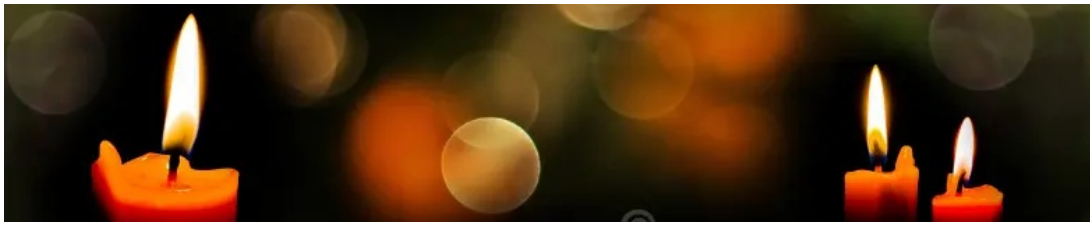
Available

Choir and Handbell Music - *Resurrection Mason UMC*



CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE

Notices of deceased clergy and clergy spouses are posted on the West Ohio Conference website under "Celebrations of Life." [Click here to view](#).



Great Miami River District | 7388 E Kemper Road | Cincinnati, OH 45249 US

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