



October 2025

Blessed and Grateful

Dear friends and family of the Hocking River District,

Regional Charge Conference

◇ Day of
Thanksgiving &
Unity

◇ Rural Chaplains
Event

◇ Clergy Info

Laity Info

Apportionments

◇ Feeding our
Neighbors, Safer
Sanctuaries,
Remembrance

◇ Reporting
Schedule

MiniGrants,
UMCOR, ERT
Training

2 As we approach the end of the Christian liturgical year and move closer to
3 the end of 2025, I find myself more reflective. Looking back over the
4 past few months, with all sorts of activity and opportunity abounding, I
5 pause to offer deep gratitude for the blessing of serving alongside each of
6 you, in whatever way it might be.

7 For the clergy and laity serving in local congregations, I feel honored to
8 be on this journey with you. Having completed our annual “one-on-one”
9 consultations, I realize how blessed I am to oversee the amazing ministry
10 that happens within the bounds of the Hocking River District. For the
most part, that means I have absolutely nothing to do with the actual
ministry and mission. But, like a proud parent watching a child in a
musical or theatrical production or sporting event or an academic awards
program, I beam on the sideline or in the audience, while bursting with
great joy on the inside, because of you.

This past month was Clergy Appreciation Month. I trust you pastors have
felt the love and appreciation of the congregation(s) you serve. Thank
you for the many sacrifices you make each day, each week, each month to
fulfill your calling and commitment. Like Mother’s Day or Father’s Day,
Clergy Appreciation Month is a time set aside for special recognition and
acknowledgment of a certain individual or group among us whose efforts
often go unnoticed. Those called to serve as pastors often do so with a
deep sense of responsibility.

Perhaps you have been serving because someone in the church asked you
to do so, stepping into a role that was very foreign. Maybe you felt God’s
nudging to live out your Christian faith in some sort of ministry or
outreach. Others of you may have had a calling upon your heart for many
years and are now able to fulfill that calling.

Whatever your story or reason, thank you for serving with all your heart!
You are a blessing!

[Rev. Chow’s message continued on page 2...](#)

I echo the words of the Apostle Paul in my deep love and appreciation for each of you:

"I thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers. I'm thankful for all of you every time I pray, and it's always a prayer full of joy." (Philippians 1:3-4 CEB)

Deeply grateful for you!

Mark

Your church must attend a regional charge conference.

All charge conferences will be held at 1:30pm on Sundays in October and November. Homemade soup and sandwiches are provided so that you can make it to the conference after your church service is over. Choose a location (or date) that is convenient for your church leaders and pastor to show up:

Zanesville Coburn UMC, November 9

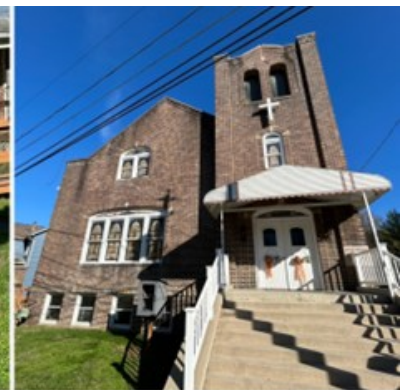
McArthur UMC, November 16

Link to paperwork: [CLICK HERE](#)

Food will be available starting at 12:30pm, so that we can begin the Charge Conference at 1:30pm. You may eat before or after the conference, depending on how long it takes you to get there!

We are waiting to see 60 more churches with annual paperwork for worship and lunch.

Here are pictures from Rockbridge UMC:





*"Christ holds all
the parts together"*

EPHESIANS 2: 21-22

DAY OF THANKSGIVING & UNITY | NOVEMBER 15

You are invited to join laity and clergy from across Ohio to celebrate the second annual Day of Thanksgiving & Unity on Saturday, November 15 at Roscoe UMC in Coshocton. The theme for our time together will be "Christ Holds All the Parts Together" grounded in the words from Ephesians 2:21-22.

Bishop Lanette L. Plambeck, resident bishop of the Minnesota Conference and the Dakotas Conference, will preach and lead a one-hour plenary in the morning. Rev. Dr. Beth Stroud, assistant professor of History at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, will present in the afternoon. Bishop Hee-Soo Jung will preach the closing worship service.

ROSCOE UMC

475 High Street, Coshocton, Ohio 43812

(less than an hour north of Zanesville)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Friday, November 7, 2025

REGISTRATION LINK:

<https://eastohio-reg.brapp.com/DayofThanksgivingUnity71>

South Forest District in EOC and Hocking River District in WOC will be providing the choir for this service! Register to attend and support our choir members! Registration is required for an accurate lunch count.

If you need to change your electronic record with the West Ohio Conference,

PLEASE contact the Hocking River District Office at 740-677-0136.

Creating a new account creates problems for registration for Annual Conference and other events. If your primary email address or phone number is changed, or you have moved, or gotten married, etc., we need to use the original record and make changes there.

Call or email me with any changes, and I am happy to make updates!

RURAL CHAPLAINS ASSOCIATION

FOCUS EVENT OCTOBER 15-18, 2025

Chatham-Kent in Southwest Ontario Canada was the location of the 2025 Rural Chaplains Association Focus Event. The Reverend Eric Skillings and the four churches he pastors in the area hosted the event which focused on collaboration in ministry and in the workplace. 24 Rural Chaplains and guests from as far west as Saskatoon Saskatchewan Canada and Longmont, Colorado, as far south as Alabama and as far east as Massachusetts and North Carolina gathered in Chatham for the 3-day event.

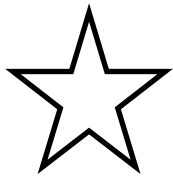
While there, we learned of the work of Greenfield Global, an ethanol plant in Chatham. At the plant they process approximately four hundred acres of corn daily into ethanol. That equals about two hundred million liters of ethanol annually. They produce four different grades of ethanol at the plant: Fuel grade, higher purity ethanol, food and alcohol beverage, and pharmaceutical grade alcohol. One of the bi-products of the distillation process is CO2. Greenfield Global is in partnership with Truly Green to provide CO2 to heat the 90-acre greenhouse across the street from the ethanol plant. Truly Green raises tomatoes, peppers, and other vegetables year-round in the greenhouse. It is an example of how working together can benefit both companies, the community, and the environment.

We also heard of the experiences of Hector Delanghe, owner of Delhaven Orchards. The orchards and the fruit growers work collaboratively with the Canadian government to provide jobs for seasonal migrant laborers who enter the country for up to eight months at a time to work in the agricultural field. In addition to their pay, the workers get plane tickets to and from Canada, housing, and medical care while in Canada. Hector is proud of the fact that some of the laborers return to Delhaven yearly, with some even being recognized for 25 years at the orchard. A major focus of collaboration is the work of the four churches that Eric serves. When he began his ministry there, he had two smaller-membership churches. As has been the case in rural communities in both Canada and the United States, the numbers in the churches were declining and the churches were looking for ways to thrive and be sustainable in their areas. Laity in one of the churches contacted members of a nearby church that was looking for pastoral leadership and suggested that they find a way to work together. There was interest shown, so Eric, the three churches, and a leader from the judicatory were able to reach an agreement to add the church to the circuit. Things were going well in the three churches following the change, and later, a fourth church was added. The efforts to change were lay instigated and lay led. Today Eric serves St. Luke's United Church of Canada, Darrel S. Moffat Memorial UCC, St. Andrew's UCC, and Talbot Street UCC. There is a Transition Team that includes members from all four churches that continue to meet to see that things run smoothly and the needs of the churches, as well as Eric and his family, are cared for.

On Friday, we were able to tour the Buxton National Historic Site near Chatham. BNHS is a site where the Underground Railroad ended for many slaves fleeing slavery in the United States. The community was founded by Rev. William King, who inherited slaves when he married. Rev. King did not believe that slavery was right, so in 1849 he brought all nineteen of his slaves to Canada, where he freed them. He then helped them become self-sufficient landowners and businesspeople. Rev. King also helped found a school in North Buxton that provided a "classical" education to the students. Studies in Latin and Greek were a part of the education, and the school was integrated from the start. For over one hundred years the school operated. Descendants of the original settlers of the community continue to live and farm in the area.

The Communications, Partnerships, and Recruitment Work Groups met on Friday to hear reports from the previous year and to plan for 2026. At our closing service that evening, the Rev. Lynn Allin, a retired United Church of Canada Judicatory leader, preached, led Holy Communion, and assisted in the certification of four new Rural Chaplains -- Doug Locklear (North Carolina), Janice Locklear (North Carolina), Phyllis Lester (Alabama), and Frances Weaver (Alabama). Plans for the 2026 Focus Event are in process to meet in September in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference of the United Methodist Church. Details will be provided as they become available.

Roger Grace
Rural Chaplain



FOR CLERGY:

Please contact Barbara at the district office if you are interested in purchasing tickets for the next Clergy & Spouse event: 12 Days of Christmas dinner on the sternwheeler in Marietta.



NEW COMPASS RETIREMENT PLAN INFORMATION SESSIONS November 4 & 5 - Virtual

This message is intended for **active clergy appointed at 75% or greater, SPRC members, treasurers, payroll managers, superintendents, and district administrators.**

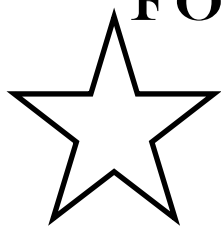
The West Ohio Benefits Office, in collaboration with Wespath Benefits Educators, will host a virtual **COMPASS FAQ Session** on **November 4 and 5.**

To explore more details about COMPASS before the session, please click here to access the information: [WOC COMPASS OVERVIEW & FAQ Sessions](#).

Note: The Zoom links for the FAQ sessions on November 4 and 5 are included in the resource linked above.

Clergy (and Spouse) Retreat at Burr Oak State Park. Music with Two By Two Band





FOR LAITY:

Events specifically designed for leaders of the church who are NOT clergy:

Who are Laity?

The laity are all people in the congregation who are not clergy.

According to the Book of Discipline (2024), Section 2, ¶ 127.

The Ministry of the Laity—The ministry of the laity flows from a commitment to Christ's outreaching love. Lay members of The United Methodist Church are, by history and calling, active advocates of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every layperson is called to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20); every layperson is called to be missional. The witness of the laity, their Christ-like examples of everyday living as well as the sharing of their own faith experiences of the gospel, is the primary evangelistic ministry through which all people will come to know Christ and The United Methodist Church will fulfill its mission.

Laity can contribute in many ways, such as serving as Sunday school teachers, worship leaders, or leading small group Bible studies and ministries. They can also serve their local churches or communities through their professional skills, such as accounting, law, nursing, social work, and more.

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.

Check out the new classes that have been added to the schedule. Most are offered online via Zoom unless indicated. Click each link to learn more and sign up:

Olentangy River District [Called to Preach](#) (In-person November 8 and 15)

Western Lakes District - [Soul Reset](#): January 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, 2026

Hocking River District - [Leading Worship](#): (In-person February 27-28, 2026)

Hocking River District - [Called to Preach](#): (In-person May 15-16, 2026)

Western Lakes District - [Come! I Will Tell You a Story, An Introduction to Biblical Storytelling](#): November 6-7, 2026



Way to go, Hocking River Churches!

Apportionments are the way that congregations are connected to the conference and the world. Apportionments are used to fund the global mission and witness of our church, to help provide the necessary structure to respond in moments of crisis locally, nationally, internationally, and to develop and nurture the leaders we need today and tomorrow. The basic idea behind apportionments is that local congregations send some of the money they collect to accomplish things that are either beyond their ability to do as individual congregations or that can be done more effectively or efficiently together.

Because this connection is so important, we want to highlight the churches in our district who have already paid 100% of their apportionments. As of September 30, these churches are paid in full:

**Amesville Federation
Centenary Gallia UMC
Chester UMC
Connett UMC
Gibsonville-Mt. Olive UMC
Junction City Good Shepherd UMC
McArthur UMC
Poston UMC
Salem Center UMC
Smith Chapel UMC
Tunnel UMC
Union Athens UMC
Zanesville Grace UMC**

**Bates UMC
Centenary Washington UMC
Clark's Chapel UMC
Decatur UMC
Fultonham UMC
Glouster UMC
Mt. Perry UMC
Pleasant Grove UMC
Rockbridge UMC
Shade UMC
South Harvey UMC
Tuppers Plains St. Paul UMC
Warren Chapel UMC**



PHONE NUMBER FOR HOCKING RIVER DISTRICT OFFICE:

(740) 677-0136

Feeding Our Neighbors

As the U.S. government shutdown continues, more than 40 million people are expected to lose food assistance benefits beginning Nov. 1.

To address this growing hunger crisis, Global Ministries has established "Feeding our Neighbors," an emergency food grant program for U.S.-based United Methodist congregations with food ministries, pantries and ministry partners.

Learn more and encourage your church to apply now:

umcmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Feeding-Our-Neighbors-Grant-Application-PDF-VI.pdf

<https://>

<https://www.westohioumc.org/leadership/safe-sanctuaries>



Designing a new Safer Sanctuaries Policy for your church? Information from the WOC website can be obtained by pasting the above link into your browser. Also, reporting for Safe Sanctuaries is now available under MyChurch Annual Reporting.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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

E-Mail: Office - hockingriverdistrict@wocumc.org

Mark Chow, DS - mchow@wocumc.org

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

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

Rev. Webster G. Cox, 88, of Zanesville, passed away on Wednesday, October 1, 2025.

Rev. Cox served the West Ohio Conference and these congregations throughout his ministry: South Webster Christ Parish (P) 1981; Xenia Evangelical (DS) 1985; Rio Grande-Simpson Chapel (A) 1989; Oak Harbor (T) 1991; Maize Manor (CN) 1995; Zanesville Coburn (N) 1998; Dresden (N) 2003; Newark Cox (N) 2004; Philo (N) 2006. He is survived by his wife of thirty-seven years, Sherry (Phipps) Cox whom he married December 26, 1987; five children, Kim Cox, Sue (Gary) Pitzer, Dave Cox, Dana (Jim) Scott, and Carol (Rick) Conner; two step children, Tara (Ryan) Wolf and Lori Wheeler; nineteen grandchildren; eighteen great grandchildren; a sister, Phyllis Vitale; and a brother, Gary (Kathy) Cox.

Reverend Dr. Raymond L. Wiblin, 84, of Belpre, OH went home to his Lord and Savior, Monday, October 20, 2025.

During his ministry career he served these churches: Second Creek 1964; Harrisonburg, Virginia 1966; Camden, West Ohio 1967; Fairborn (DS) 1972; Phillipsburg and Director, Dayton Electimedia Workshop (DN) 1977; Brookshire (CS) 1983; Marietta Gilman Avenue (FTH) 2007.

Left to cherish his memory, Raymond is survived by his devoted wife, Judith A. Wiblin, of Belpre, OH; son, Raymond T. Wiblin (Karen); and daughter, Maria D. Wiblin (Julius).



"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." – Matthew 5:4

WEST OHIO ANNUAL CONFERENCE CURRENT REPORTING SCHEDULE**

December 1

- ◇ **Annual Charge Conference forms** – planning for the next year. Local church teams hold meetings to make these decisions, then provide the forms at regional charge conferences as directed by District Superintendent. Forms are available on the West Ohio Conference website and uploaded to the MyChurch platform. **UMC 2020/2024 Discipline ¶247**

Basic Church Information

Lay Leadership Nominations for the next year

Ministry Recommendations (include Lay Servant Annual Reports)

Membership Report

Safe Sanctuaries Policy Review

Pastor Compensation Report (include Housing Exclusion, ARP, any waivers for pension or insurance)

Breakthrough Goals

Minutes of the meeting

February 1

Annual Year End Statistical Report – The three tables summarize the previous year's membership & participation, assets & expenses and income. Reporting is completed on the GCFA Stats website.

UMC 2020/2024 Discipline 340.2c(2)(f)

June 1

- ◇ **Committee-Driven Reports** – Forms are available on the West Ohio Conference website and uploaded to the MyChurch platform.

○ **TRUSTEES** ▪ Trustee Legal and Property Report **UMC 2020/2024 Discipline ¶2550**

▪ Parsonage Inspection Form, if applicable **UMC 2020/2024 Discipline ¶258.2g(16)**

▪ Accessibility Audit **UMC 2020/2024 Discipline ¶2533.6**

▪ Green Church Audit **UMC 2020/2024 Discipline ¶2533.8**

○ **FINANCE COMMITTEE** ▪ Fund Balance Report Form (audit). Refer to the local church audit guide for assistance.

○ **CHURCH HISTORIAN** ▪ Update the Church History Form. **UMC 2020/2024 Discipline ¶2533.7**

○ **STAFF/PASTOR PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

▪ Clergy Evaluation: **UMC 2020/2024 Discipline ¶349**

▪ Local Church Pastor Self-Assessment

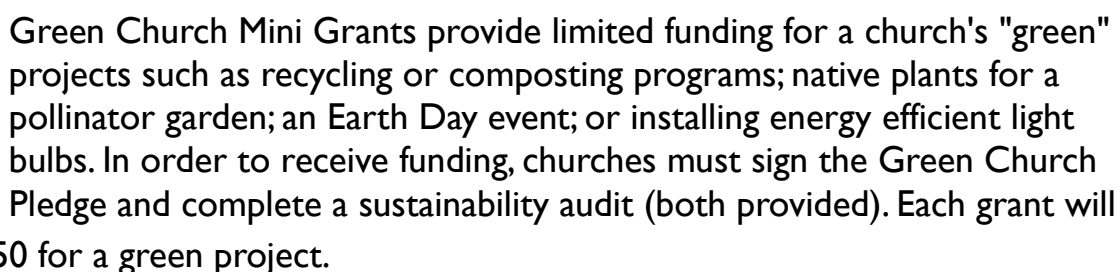
▪ Pastoral SPRC Assessment Form

▪ Smart Goal Formation Plan Guide

UMC 2020/2024 Discipline ¶258.4

****Plans are underway to reduce the reporting deadlines to two times per year. Watch for more information soon.**

Green Church Mini Grants Reopen



After spring storms and summer flooding and tornadoes, Midwest Mission Distribution Center (MMDC) needs our help replenishing their stock of hygiene and home care kits.

From October 13-November 10, these kits - as well as other supplies - can be dropped off at Hocking River District office on The Plains. [Click here](#) for other drop off sites around the conference.

[Click here](#) for instructions on how to make UMCOR Cleaning & Hygiene kits. MMDC also accepts these simpler [Home Care Kits](#). Additionally, the supplies on [this list](#) are needed by MMDC. For more information, contact Mariellyn Grace at mgrace@wocumc.org.



An Early Response Training is taking place on November 8 at North Broadway UMC in Columbus. This 8-hour training will teach you how to assist survivors of natural disasters in their time of need. You will learn how to provide a Christian presence while taking steps to prevent further damage to the family's personal property; this may include tarping, debris removal, cleaning out flooded homes, etc. FEMA recognizes this training to enter a disaster scene.

A recertification class will also be offered that day. This class is for those who have completed the basic course and are within one year of the date their badge expiration. Cost is \$40 for the basic class and \$35 for recertification. The deadline to register for either class is Monday, November 3. [Click here to learn more/register.](#)

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