



Great Miami River District

News and Notes --- January 28, 2026



OHIO EPISCOPAL AREA
East & West Ohio Conferences
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Beloved People of The Ohio Episcopal Area,

I write to you today with a heavy heart and a praying spirit as we witness the recent tragic deaths of two people in Minnesota. These losses are not isolated incidents. They are part of a wider pattern of fear-driven, indiscriminate immigration enforcement that has crossed moral and spiritual boundaries. Nothing can justify violence against human life.

As an immigrant myself, I know in my own body what it means to live under the weight of uncertainty, vulnerability, and being labeled. I also know that many who are called “undocumented” are not criminals. They are workers, parents, and neighbors who crossed borders because economic systems, political violence, and family survival left them no other choice. Today, families, industries, and entire communities in the United States depend on their labor and their lives. This is why we must continue to call for **comprehensive immigration reform** that reflects reality, justice, and mercy.

Scripture is unambiguous about God's heart toward the stranger.

“When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the stranger.

The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself” (Leviticus 19:33–34). [**Continue reading Bishop Jung's letter...**](#)

[**Click here to read a statement condemning the MN violence from Bishop Tracy S. Malone for the Council of Bishops**](#)

SRD/GMD Training Day Recap

What a cold day we had for our 2026 Leadership Training Day on Saturday. But at least we got in and out before the first flakes started falling! We're grateful to all who came out and especially to our presenters, many who had to travel long distances to be with us.



We hope those who attended felt encouraged and supported in your role leading the church, a committee or a special ministry. Please reach out with any suggestions you have or resources you need. Thank you all for making it a great day!

Clergy, Save the Date!

Mark your calendar for a fun event for clergy on Tuesday, February 17 at **Monfort Heights UMC** in Cincinnati for pickleball, prayer and pancakes.



We'll start at 9am teaching pickleball basics to anyone who needs to learn. From 10-11am we'll have a pancake brunch with a short devotional in preparation for the Lenten season. Then from 11am-noon we'll organize a pickleball game rotation for those who know the basics.

Get out your racket and competitive spirit and meet us on Fat Tuesday/Mardi Gras for a special morning of fun, food and fellowship! **[Click here to sign up](#)**

Bishop's Day on the District - March 7, 2026 at Resurrection Mason UMC

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung will spend Saturday, March 7 in our district meeting with clergy and laity from the Great Miami River and Scioto River Districts. Please try to attend this event in another district if you're unavailable on our date.



Clergy Schedule 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Gathering will gather at 9:00 am. Worship will be at 9:30 am, followed by Bible Study. Lunch will be served at noon. From 1:00-3:00 pm, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung will lead a discussion on the Five Strategic Pillars of the Ohio Episcopal Area Missional Direction and closing worship.

Laity Schedule 11:00 am* - 3:00 pm

A special training for laity on leadership skills, with the opportunity to make connections with others, will be held at 11:00 am for those wishing to attend. All laity are encouraged to participate. Laity are then invited for lunch at noon. From 1:00 - 3:00 pm, the bishop will lead a discussion on the Five Strategic Pillars of the Ohio Episcopal Area Missional Direction and closing worship. *Laity traveling with their pastors are invited to attend opening worship at 9:30 am and then be dismissed following worship for a time of fellowship and connecting from 10:30-11:00am, before their training at 11am.

Timeline:

- 9am Clergy arrival, laity welcome if traveling with pastor/s
- 9:30am Worship
- 10:20am Break - laity proceed to the other space for training
- 10:30am Clergy Bible study with Bishop Jung
- 11am Laity training with Julie Carter
- 12pm Catered lunch for all
- 1pm Bishop leads a discussion on the Five Strategic Pillars with laity & clergy
- 2:30pm Closing worship with communion
- 3pm Dismiss

[Learn More and Register](#)

Register today for Summer Wesley Camp and Retreat Center

Wesley Camp and Retreat Center is relaunching this summer, and registration is open now for campers aged 7-17 to attend.



Camp options:

"Adventure Awaits – Finding our Way Together" camp: June 7-12, June 14-19, or June 21-26.

"Taste of Adventure Awaits – Finding Our Way Together" camp: June 28-July 1 or July 5-8.

Summer camp offers participants guidance by trained young adults who create a supportive atmosphere where they can explore, try new things, and experience God's presence in meaningful ways. Each day is intentionally designed to balance recreation, learning, and adventure, with faith formation. Campers will be in a safe environment to discover their God-given gifts, build confidence, and build friendships that extend beyond the week of camp.

Early bird discount on registration ends February 15. To learn more and to register, [click here](#).



FOR THE LOVE OF CAMP CAMPSHIP FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

WESLEY CAMP & RETREAT CENTER

How Many Kids Could You Send to Camp this Summer?

"We want the summer of 2026 to be the beginning of something extraordinary," says Rev. Ann Marie Carley, Director of Engagement with Children, Youth and Young Adults for the Ohio Episcopal Area, "not only for Wesley as it reopens, but for every young person who steps onto this holy ground."

For the Love of Camp campaign encourages donors to consider how many children they can help send to camp. Whether you provide a partial scholarship or sponsor an entire cabin of campers, every gift moves West Ohio closer to the goal of ensuring all kids have access to the transformative power of camp. [Learn more.](#)



Summer Staff Needed

The vision for Wesley Camp and Retreat Center is a safe place to "Unplug, Unwind, and Experience God." In order to create that atmosphere, a dynamic team of 30 faithful young adults is needed to serve as counselors, medical staff, and program and support staff. These leaders must be passionate and energetic and want to spend their summer serving God, building community, and helping campers experience the joy of camp.

Are you that person or do you know someone who would make a great counselor?

[Click here to learn more and apply.](#)

2026 Annual Conference Dates Announced

The 57th session of the West Ohio Conference will be held May 27 through May 30 at Capital University in Bexley. Bishop Hee-Soo Jung will preside. The theme for this year's session is "Abundant Grace," based on the scripture from Matthew 14:13-21. Registration opens March 1.



2026 Intergenerational Lenten Journal

Lent is the 40 days prior to Easter and is a time that helps us remember our humanness and need for Jesus in our lives. This year, the journey begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18 and ends on Easter, April 5, 2026



Emerging Generations has created an intergenerational journal for us to use that is appropriate for all ages and can be used by individuals, families or groups. There are 8 weeks of meditative prayer activities which can be engaged any time during the designated week. **[The journal is free for you to download and print by clicking here.](#)**

Each week includes a passage of scripture to read and a song to listen to while prayerfully creating a collage utilizing the journal entry page. The scriptures follow the lectionary, and the songs can be found on Spotify within the Ohio Episcopal Area Emerging Generations Lenten Playlist 2026.

Questions? Contact Rev. Ann Marie Carley, Director of Engagement with Children, Youth, and Young Adults (amcarley@wocumc.org).

Team-Based Leadership

Lewis Center Director Jonathan Page recently wrote an article outlining **[church leadership trends for 2026](#)**. He categorized the trends into three categories: community-focused, team-based, and transformation-driven. The last two weeks we looked at community-based leadership. This week we'll explore team-based leadership.



Trends 2026: Team-Based Leadership - Five Ministry Game Changers

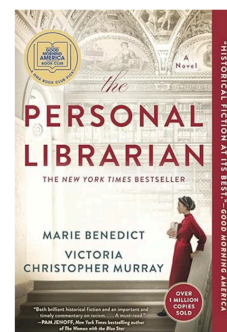
Even the strongest pastor can't do it alone. Moses had Aaron and Hur, Jesus sent disciples in pairs, and Paul never went solo. Yet too many churches still rely on a single leader. Kim Jenne gives us five practical ways to build a culture of shared, team-based ministry—and empower your congregation to step into their God-given calling. **[Click to read more.](#)**

TRAININGS & EVENTS

Expanding Connections Book Club February 17, 7pm on Zoom

Join in the fun and learning from and about diverse characters, both in the discussion group and the book! In February the group will gather on Zoom to discuss *The Personal Librarian* by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray.

The Personal Librarian tells the story of Belle da Costa Greene, an extraordinary woman, famous for her intellect, style, and wit,



and shares the lengths she must go to—for the protection of her family and her legacy—to preserve her carefully crafted white identity in the racist world in which she lives.

Even if you haven't read the book, you'll enjoy the lively conversation! [Click here to learn more and register.](#)

Clergy Taxes: An Overview 2026

For more than a decade, Discipleship Ministries' February tax webinar has helped clergy find clarity and confidence, shaped in meaningful ways by the insight and generosity of Don Joiner, whose legacy we honor following his passing in 2024.



This year, Rev. Dr. Ken Sloane and Janet Jamieson, CPA, continue that trusted tradition with practical guidance for preparing your 2025 federal tax return and exploring potential savings that support long-term financial security.

[Join them for a webinar on Monday, February 9](#) at 12 noon for a timely, informative conversation rooted in experience and care.

Register for GYPC 2026 Hurry! Early bird pricing ends January 31

The Global Young People's Convocation happens every 4 years, and in July, young Methodists from around the world will gather in Dublin for an amazing experience of worship, leadership, and connection within The United Methodist Church.



GYPC 2026 (July 7–11) invites youth, young adults, and leaders to learn together, shape the future of the church, and experience the rich culture of Ireland.

Don't miss your chance to be part of this global movement and be sure to take advantage of early bird pricing. [Click here to learn more and register.](#)

Change the World Conference: The Future Church April 23-24, 2026

Clergy leaders and lay leaders are invited to a two-day conference at [Ginghamsburg Church](#) in Tipp City to envision ministry beyond yesterday's models. Change The World: The Future Church looks ahead with holy imagination, forgetting what is behind and pressing toward what lies ahead. You'll explore innovative mission, digital discipleship, and Spirit-driven strategies to reach a rapidly changing world with the unchanging gospel. The future is not something we fear. It is where God is already leading.



Early Bird Registration is \$149 and ends Friday, February 6. Seminary students can register for just \$119. [Click here for more information.](#)

Registration Open for First Green Church Training of 2026

In November 2024 the first Ohio Episcopal Area Green Church training was held, helping local churches take steps to better care for God's creation in their

congregations and communities. In 2025, three additional Green Church Trainings were held – in Columbus, Ashland, and online. A total of 47 churches attended the trainings from both East and West Ohio – typically with a team of two or three people from each church. During these trainings, churches were encouraged to start or expand a Green Team – a group of church members and staff that work toward green solutions that make sense for their particular congregation. Churches that have attended the trainings have dreamed about adding native pollinator plants, instituting recycling and composting programs, changing out Styrofoam coffee cups for real mugs, and more!



Your church is invited to attend the first Green Church Training of 2026, which will be held online on **Sunday, February 22, from 4-7pm**. For more information or to register, [click here](#).

Great Miami & Scioto River Districts
YOUTH RETREAT
CAMP KERN
MARCH 13-15, 2026

Join us for a weekend of fun, fellowship and learning!

WHAT: A weekend of camp fun, worship and learning about Jesus!
WHERE: YMCA Camp Kern-5291 State Route 350 Oregonia, 45054
COST: \$200/person. Checks to be made out to Shiloh UMC due upon arrival.

RSVP by February 20, 2026
www.gazeboevents.com/forms

Questions?
Contact Sarah Pease
spease@shilohumc.com

[Print the flyer](#)



Register your youth group with the QR code or by [clicking here](#).

Did you know? District scholarships & Youth Trip Grants are available for the retreat. [Click here to get the applications](#).

For more information, contact Sarah Pease at spease@shilohumc.com.

Mission u 2026 - Save the date!

Once again there will be two sessions – In-Person and Virtual.

The in-person training will take place at the [Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning](#) in Dayton from June 12-June 14, 2026.

Virtual Sessions will be via Zoom on Wednesdays: 7/8, 7/15, 7/22, 7/29 from 7-9pm and Thursdays: 7/9, 7/16, 7/23, 7/30 from 10am-noon using the same curriculum.

This year's theme is "Experiencing Emmanuel." Using this theme, we will explore times in the Bible when people experienced "God with us" especially times that involve God "calling" people to a particular action or way of being. Through these



stories we'll learn what these experiences can teach us about God and what God desires for this world and the ways we move through it. [Learn more.](#)

More information and registration will be available soon. Questions? Contact Dean Carolyn Johnson at cjohnson3253@yahoo.com/614-565-4121 or Assistant Dean Kim Hoessly at khoessly@columbus.rr.com/614-537-8596.



The Holy Land, the Holy People Tour - Spring 2026

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung invites you to join The Holy Land, the Holy People Tour to Israel, scheduled for April 6 – 15, 2026. The tour will be led by The Society for Biblical Studies (SBC), an ecumenical, interfaith, and inclusive organization. SBC seeks to renew the mission of the church by making this experience contextual and grounded in biblical faith.

Your participation will reach beyond geographical, religious, ethnic, and cultural boundaries to new horizons of mission. To learn more about The Holy Land, the Holy People Tour and to sign up for your travel package, [click here](#).

Lay Servant Ministries

Did you know? Districts in the West Ohio Conference have opportunities for laity to become more effective leaders, to increase your faith, and to learn something new through the [Lay Servant Ministries](#) program. Many classes are scheduled for next year and many are available via Zoom. Click the underlined title to learn more and register. Or [click here](#) to see a list of all the courses, descriptions and leaders. Make 2026 the year you become the best leader you can be!



February 20-21	February 27-28	March 15 17,29,22,2 4	April 13, 16 20,23,27,3 0	April 24-25	April 24-25
Basic Course	Leading Worship	Basic Course	Ministry with the Forgotten	Spiritual Gifts	Leading Worship

May 15-16	August 21-22	October 30-31	November 1,3,5,8,10	November 6-7
Called to Preach	Basic Course	Leading Group Bible Studies	UM Heritage- Living Beliefs	Intro to Biblical Storytelling



East + West Ohio United Methodist Conferences

present

THE RETREAT FOR CLERGY SPOUSES



COME WITH ME BY YOURSELVES
TO A QUIET PLACE
AND GET SOME...

REST

MARK 6:31



Wanake Camp + Retreat Center

- Moody Lodge

9463 Manchester Ave SW, Beach City, OH

<https://campwanake.org>

5 P.M. FRIDAY MARCH 6 THROUGH SUNDAY 12 P.M. MARCH 8, 2026

\$100/UMC or \$135/Non-UMC

Online registration: Scan the QR code

or visit <https://eastohio-reg.brtapp.com/RetreatforClergySpouses2026>

FIRST TIME ATTENDANCE \$50 DISCOUNT CODE: 1STXER26

Application & Payment Due Date: February 15, 2026

**Please email Jeanette Burkhardt (jburkhardt001@gmail.com)
for additional details or questions**

West Ohio Foundation Offers Two Academies in 2026

Clergy and lay people in East and West Ohio are invited to register for two academies being offered by the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio in 2026.



Church Stewardship Academy

This four-part series is intended for church leaders involved in stewardship activities in the local church. Improve your understanding of stewardship basics and take your efforts to the next level with these engaging educational opportunities. Sessions will be held quarterly via Zoom at noon on January 14, April 8, July 8, and Oct. 14. Sessions will be recorded and registered participants will receive a link to the recordings.

Church Investment and Legacy Academy

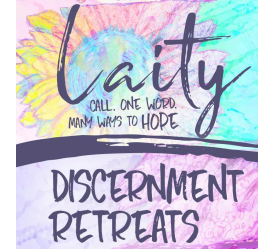
This four-part series is intended for church leaders involved in investment and legacy giving activities in the local church. Improve your understanding of planned giving basics and take your investment knowledge to the next level with these engaging educational opportunities. Sessions will be held quarterly via Zoom at noon on Feb. 25, May 20, Aug. 19, and Nov. 18. Sessions will be recorded and registered participants will receive a link to the recordings.

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

2026 Laity Discernment Virtual Retreat

Do you feel God's call on your life but are uncertain how to discern that call or what to do next? Consider participating in next year's Laity Discernment Retreats. They will help you learn about call, discernment and what it means to be "called by our

baptism." You'll learn ways to intentionally enter into a time of prayer about discernment and discover Spiritual Rhythms that can help guide your journey. You'll also learn the variety of ways you can serve both in your church and community.



Each virtual retreat will consist of two, two-hour ZOOM sessions, followed 6 weeks later by a two-hour ZOOM debriefing. In the 6 weeks between sessions, there will be opportunities for you to read, reflect, and practice Spiritual Rhythms that will lead you to a better understanding of your own call.

Dates (please plan to attend all 3 sessions):

- Monday, February 2, 2026, 6:30-8:30pm
- Monday, February 9, 2026, 6:30-8:30pm
- Monday, March 23, 2026, 6:30-8:30pm

[Learn more/register here.](#)

GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Great Miami River District Youth Trip and Camp Grants Available



Youth leaders, as you make plans for the summer of 2026, please know that Suzanne Allen and the district Grants committee give thanks for your faithfulness to our teens and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We want to encourage you to dream, pray, and think in bold and creative ways about how to engage youth in mission, service, and spiritual growth safely this summer. Maybe it's not taking a long trip overseas or out of state, but instead, going and doing a week of service at one of the church camps in West Ohio. Maybe it's not a week of sleeping on church floors, but it is 5 powerful day trips throughout the summer to help with disaster relief or feeding the homeless or leading VBS in a small rural church where they don't have enough volunteers. Whatever you dream, we are here to support you through our annual Youth Trip/Camp Grants. [Apply by downloading the application here](#) and receive \$1000 towards your bold, God-sized plan. The application can also be found on the GMD website: [District Grants | West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church.](#)

The deadline to apply is Friday, March 6. Questions? Contact committee chair, Rev. Justin Fuhrmann at jfuhrma@hotmail.com.

Cincinnati Area Credit Union Outreach Alliance (CACUOA) Scholarships Available



Scholarships are available to high school seniors planning to enroll in post-secondary education (including vocational, professional, or academic studies -- not limited to colleges or universities) or students currently enrolled in a program pursuing an Associate or Bachelor's degree. At least nine, \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to **primary** members of an Ohio Credit Union that has branches located in Hamilton, Butler, Warren, Clermont, Brown, or Adams counties, including the Christian Family Credit Union. Parents, your membership doesn't make your child eligible so encourage your student to join a credit union before the deadline and apply.

[CACUOA Scholarship Application.](#) Due date: Friday, February 13, 2026.

Student Scholarships Through UMHEF



For many families, affording higher education is the number one factor when deciding which school a student will attend. UMHEF scholarships help make it financially possible for qualifying students to obtain higher education, especially those attending United Methodist-related institutions. In rare cases, awards are also given to students attending other schools. Last year, UMHEF awarded \$2 million to nearly 1,000 students!

Applications opened January 1 for the 2026-2027 school year. [Click here to learn more.](#)

The GBHEM Scholarship Portal Is Now Open



The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) scholarship application portal is open for United Methodist students seeking scholarships for undergraduate and graduate study at colleges, universities, and seminaries.

In 2025, GBHEM awarded more than 2,500 scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students at over 600 schools worldwide. This financial aid helped students pursue their dreams to serve as the next generation of leaders. You may submit one application each year.

The deadline to complete your application is Friday, March 6, 2026. [Click here for more information about how to apply.](#)



Championing Children, Youth and Young Adults Grants

Many churches find their congregations growing older with fewer young families and children attending church on a regular basis. The UMFOW wants to support to support churches and ministries that are working to reverse current trends by creating intergenerational, Christ-centered communities that nurture children (0-12), youth (13-18), college-age (19-23), and young adults (24-29), through a holistic approach. This new program will award grants of \$1000-\$5000 for programs that equip and empower lay and clergy leaders with the resources needed to create new, and/or expand existing programs to achieve a transformative vision for youth. [Click here to learn more about the application process](#), opening February 1.

VBS Mini-Grants

Continuing to support VBS programs in West Ohio, the UMFOW is once again offering mini-grants, courtesy of the Clara's Kiddies/Jesse's Vine Endowment. Grants of \$250-\$1000 will be available for curriculum, supplies, staff costs, or other expenses related to the production of Vacation Bible School programs in West Ohio churches. Special consideration will be given to those serving rural and underserved communities. [Click here](#) to submit an application by March 15.

LOCAL CHURCH EVENTS

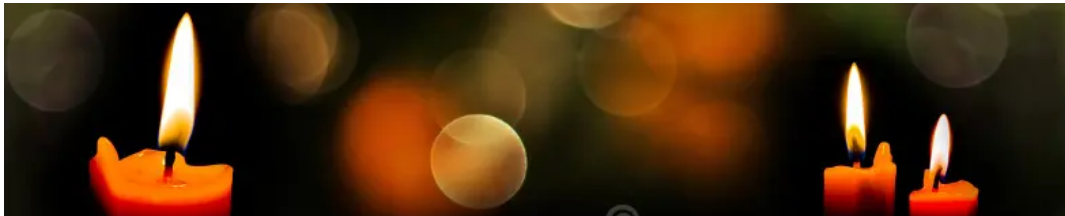


Farmersville UMC
Food Pantry Benefit Concert
February 7
Click [here](#) for more details



Westwood UMC
Safety & Risk Management Training
February 21
Click [here](#) for more details

CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE



Notices of deceased clergy and clergy spouses may be viewed on the West Ohio Conference website by [clicking here](#).

*Let us hold in prayer friends and family grieving the recent loss of **Rev. Katie M. Wilson** and remember in thanksgiving her life and ministry.* A retired Deacon, Rev. Wilson was serving Dixon UMC at the time of her passing on January 23, 2026. Visitation will be this Friday, January 30 at 10am at Dixon United Methodist Church, 1691 Infirmary Rd., Dayton, with the funeral service to follow at 11am. Rev. Dr. Bridget Weatherspoon will officiate. Condolences may be expressed online [here](#), or sent to her family at 451 Tapestry Lane, Trotwood, Ohio 45426.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

Employment

Children's Ministry Directory - *Faith Community UMC*
Youth Director - *Faith Community UMC*
Worship Leader - *New Day UMC*

Items Available

Pulpit - *Oak Hills UMC*
Brass & Aluminum Communion Plates - *Grace UMC*





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