



# Western Lakes District

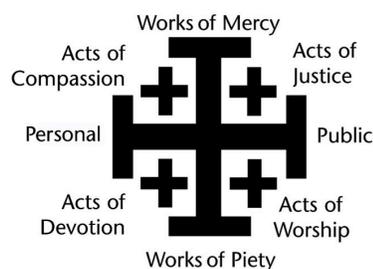
*News from The United Methodist Church*

WLD Office (937) 739-4445 Email: [westernlakes@wocumc.org](mailto:westernlakes@wocumc.org)

## WLD Important Information Volume 67-February 20, 2026

### Lent More than Works of Piety

We have officially begun our Lenten journey, a meaningful period in the Christian calendar marked by forty days of spiritual preparation and reconciliation within the community. Traditionally, these forty days offer a time for reflection, repentance, and spiritual renewal. Lent culminates in Holy Week, ultimately leading to the celebration of Jesus Christ's resurrection.



Lent, as we observe today, was formally recognized at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. The council established Lent as 40 days of preparation leading up to the Holy Sunday of Easter. In 601, Pope Gregory I adjusted the start of Lent to 46 days before Easter, allowing for 40 days of fasting plus six Sundays. Sundays remained traditional feast days when fasting rules did not apply. The Lenten season continues to span 46 days, maintaining this structure. (<https://www.history.com/articles/lent-history>)

Although the tradition has evolved over centuries, the purpose of this period of preparation has remained unchanged. The faith community's lasting memory and connection to the number forty endures. These 40 days are linked to several biblical stories: Noah's flood, which lasted 40 days and 40 nights; Moses spending 40 days on Mt. Sinai; the Israelites' 40-year journey in the wilderness; and Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights.

During this year's forty days of Lent, I encourage congregations to approach the collective responsibilities of piety and mercy with deliberate intention. These forty days should provide meaningful benefits for both our neighbors and us. Frequently, faith communities overlook opportunities to participate in acts of compassion and justice. It is worth considering how a congregation might affect positive change by actively and faithfully engaging in these important areas of discipleship, not neglecting the areas in which we are more proficient, devotion, and worship.

Don

### 2026 Go Grant Awards

The West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church presented its annual Go Awards, honoring nearly 80 Go Grant and Greenhouse Grant recipients and spotlighting congregations and leaders shaping new ministry across the conference. The exciting event took place on Sunday February 1st in Worthington.

Several of the Western Lakes District churches were awarded grants this year. You can read more about these awards along with the full story and pictures [HERE](#).

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## Information Meeting for Wisconsin UMVIM Journey is March 8

An informational meeting on this year's Climate Justice Mission Journey to Wisconsin will be held on Sunday, March 8, at 1pm – both online and in-person (Columbus). The long-term recovery journey will assist in clean-up and rebuilding of homes that were flooded in the Milwaukee area last summer. Dates for the mission journey are July 13-18, 2026, and housing will be provided by a local church. Cost per person is \$200, or \$500 per family. To receive the link for the informational meeting, fill out this form ([Climate Justice Mission Journey Interest Form – Fill out form](#)) or email Mariellyn Grace, Director of Mission Engagement, at [mgrace@wocumc.org](mailto:mgrace@wocumc.org).

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## 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 13:14-21:*



### Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. (NRSVA)

Registration begins March 1.

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## Statistical End of Year Reports

Pastors, Treasurers, Finance Chairs, Office Administrators and Administrative Council/Leadership Team Chairs - you should have received an email today with instructions for completing year end reports.

Some things you'll want to know:

- Reports are due Friday, April 17, 2026.
- Make every effort to complete the information online.
- Have your church's GCFA# ready, which can be found in the attachment sent with the email this afternoon.
- [Use this link](#) and input your GCFA# and this password: Stats2025#
- Once you're in the system, you'll establish new credentials for accessing your church's information. Note that multiple people in the same church can have access, which should make it easier to complete the reports in a timely manner.

## Zoom with Bill Brownson - Finance and Trustee Workshop

Our CFO Bill Brownson will lead a workshop via Zoom to cover basic accounting, clergy payroll and administration, expected reporting and controls to keep your funds safe. Also, assets, property and risk management - church real estate matters, insurance, reporting and officially representing your church in contracts and business matters

Please join us on Wednesday, February 25 at 11:00 AM

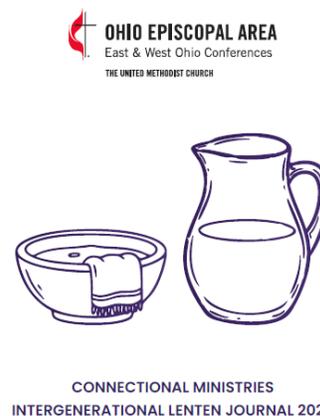
[You may join in here](#)

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## 2026 Intergenerational Lenten Journal

Lent is the 40 days prior to Easter, but counting is tricky because Sundays are not a part of those 40 days. Sundays are considered celebration days. A way to practice worshiping and celebrating all that God has done. The 40 days are to help us remember our humanness and need for Jesus in our lives. The journey begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18th and ends on Easter, April 5th.

The intergenerational journal 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 for all within your local context on the West Ohio Conference [Emerging Generations website](#).



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.

For questions, contact Rev. Ann Marie Carley, Director of Engagement with Children, Youth, and Young Adults ([amcarley@wocumc.org](mailto:amcarley@wocumc.org)).

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## Join the Wesley Camp & Retreat Center Summer Staff

*It's not just a summer job – it's a summer that changes you.*

Wesley Camp & Retreat Center is gearing up for an exciting new chapter, welcoming campers back for a full relaunch in 2026! We are entering a revitalized season and envisioning the camp as a safe place to “Unplug, Unwind, and Experience God.” We are seeking to build a dynamic team of 30 summer staff who are passionate, energetic, and faithful young adults who want to spend their summer serving God, building community, and helping campers experience the joy of camp.

[Read More Here](#)

**Apply now and be part of a summer that will shape you for years to come.**

To apply, [visit the Wesley Camp and Retreat Center Summer Staff Application Page](#):

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## Green Church Training For Churches Offered Feb. 22

Is your church looking for ways to better care for God's creation? Are you thinking about starting a 'Green Team' at your church? Consider attending the Ohio Episcopal Area's Green Church Training on Sunday, February 22, 4-7pm on Zoom! This training will provide scriptures and United Methodist tradition that support caring for God's creation, as well as ideas for how to form a Green Team. You will also have time to dream and plan with your

church team about the next faithful steps your church can take in environmental stewardship! The cost is \$40 per church team (no size limit), and scholarships are available for churches with financial need. Deadline to register is Friday, February 20. Register now: [2026 Green Church Training - Zoom | West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church](#)



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## HOPE Letters Ministry

HOPE Letters Ministry is a signature initiative through All In Community that is endorsed by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) to provide a mentorship through correspondence opportunity for its residents as they prepare to return home after their incarceration experience.

Ministry Mondays are opportunities for learning about specific All In Community ministry pathways both connectionally and within local congregations that radiate out into the community at large. In this session of Ministry Mondays, we will hear from current mentors on how participating in this ministry has had an influence in their lives as much as it has had on the mentees inside state correctional institutions in Ohio. Additionally, pathways for involvement will also be shared.

Monday, February 23, beginning at 7:00pm on ZOOM. [Register Here](#)

Questions and requests for the ZOOM link can be directed to Jami Nathan, AIC Ministries Coordinator, by email ([jami.nathan.22@gmail.com](mailto:jami.nathan.22@gmail.com)) or by phone (419-591-9717).

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## HB 338—Andy's Law

*Frankly Speaking with Four Friends* is a monthly opportunity to engage with formerly incarcerated individuals in conversations that will enlighten people about their lived experiences. These frank and open discussions provide for the reduction of stigma around incarceration.



In our March session, we will hear from Zach Ruppel about the impact Ohio HB 338 could have on the reentry process of incarcerated individuals. Zach is a Policy Analyst at JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA) where he is a passionate advocate at the federal level for restorative reentry practices and ending the permanent punishments of a conviction. Zach leverages his personal journey of incarceration to challenge systems and lead meaningful policy reforms across the country. As an Ohio resident, Zach is a passionate community servant and is eager to discuss the impact HB338, also known as Andy's Law, will have on our state correctional system.

Join us to hear how this legislation could change how currently incarcerated individuals prepare for their return home.

**Tuesday, March 3, beginning at 6:30pm on ZOOM.**

<https://wocumc.zoom.us/j/86240001092>

Questions and requests for the ZOOM link can be directed to Jami Nathan, AIC Ministries Coordinator, by email ([jami.nathan.22@gmail.com](mailto:jami.nathan.22@gmail.com)) or by phone (419-591-9717).

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## UMFWO Launches Competitive Grants Process

The United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio will launch a competitive grants process beginning in January 2026. The new program focuses on providing financial support for established programs and program expansion of local churches, ministries and organizations across West Ohio; and for pastoral scholarships. In 2026, grant funds will support: 1) existing programs and program expansion that benefits children, youth, and young adult ministries; and 2) clergy development and wellness support.

The spring cycle opens on Feb. 1 and will offer mini-grants for VBS programs, as well as grants for transformative church and campus ministries that nurture children, youth, college-age and young adults. [Read more here](#)

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## Join Us for the 2026 Bishop's Laity Leadership Convocation

You are invited to gather with Bishop Hee Soo Jung and laity from across the Ohio Episcopal Area for this year's Bishop's Laity Leadership Convocation, a two-day event designed to inspire, equip, and strengthen lay people for ministry in a rapidly changing world.

Throughout the convocation, Bishop Hee Soo Jung will guide participants in exploring what it means to lead from a posture of *abundant grace*. In a season when many congregations are searching for renewed purpose and connection, Bishop Jung's leadership emphasizes hope, inclusion, and the transformative power of God's grace at work through laypeople.

We are also honored to welcome Dr. Ashley Boggan as our plenary speaker. Dr. Boggan serves as the General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History, where she helps The United Methodist Church understand its past in order to faithfully imagine its future.

[Read More Here](#)

### Event Details

- Dates: March 20–21, 2026 (beginning at 5:30 pm on Friday and concluding at 3:30 pm on Saturday)
- Location: William Street United Methodist Church, 28 W William Street, Delaware, OH and Asbury United Methodist Church, 55 W Lincoln Avenue, Delaware, OH
- Meals Included: Dinner and lunch will be provided and snack boxes will be back
- Lodging: A hotel room block is available at the Sheraton Suites Columbus Worthington for \$99 per night. Use the link to make your own room reservation: ([Book your group rate for Bishop's Laity Leadership Convocation Mar2026](#)) (Booking Deadline March 6, 2026) If you desire a room with more than one bed, please call the hotel directly and they will make those accommodations for you. There are hotels in closer proximity to the churches in Delaware. You may choose to reserve a room there. These hotels would not provide a room block or guarantee a price.

On the registration page - Please be sure to check what day(s) you will be attending below:

- Friday (3/20) ~ OR
- Saturday (3/21) ~ OR
- Both Friday and Saturday (3/20 & 3/21)

Register by: March 06, 2026 [Register Now!](#)

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## Register Your Child for an Unforgettable Summer at Wesley Camp & Retreat Center

Unplug, unwind, and experience God—that's the opportunity for campers ages 7–17 at Wesley Camp & Retreat Center this summer. With our Summer 2026 relaunch, we are

preparing to welcome campers into a safe, engaging environment that is both Christ-centered and inclusive.

Summer camp at Wesley offers an experience immersed in nature and community, far from screens and everyday distractions. Campers are guided by trained young adults who create a supportive atmosphere where they can explore, try new things, and experience God's presence in meaningful ways. Wesley provides a positive, nurturing environment that promotes personal growth, spiritual development, and genuine connection with others. Each day is intentionally designed to balance recreation, learning, and adventure, with faith formation woven throughout. Campers will be in a safe environment where they can discover their God-given gifts, build confidence, and develop friendships that last long after the week of camp ends.



This summer, join us for a phone-free, unforgettable week of adventure, faith, and fun! Each session will offer a mix of worship and devotions and provide opportunities for campers to experience all the creative and outdoor adventures Wesley has to offer. Each day, campers will dive into hands-on activities tailored to their age group—such as hiking, swimming, crafts, and games—alongside cabin time for reflection and connection. Through both worship and play, we journey together to find courage, joy, and God's guidance in today's world. Adventure Awaits! Whether making new friends, creating art under the trees, or singing around the campfire, we want you to join us as we grow in faith and community while having the time of our lives.

Now is the ideal time to secure a spot; the early bird discount ends February 15.

Full Week: Adventure Awaits – Finding Our Way Together June 7–12 | June 14–19 | June 21–26

Taste of Adventure Awaits – Finding Our Way Together June 28–July 1 | July 5–8

To learn more or begin registration, visit the new [Wesley Camp and Retreat Center website](#).

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## Wesley Camp and Retreat Center Launches “For the Love of Camp” - Campaign to Send Kids to Camp in Summer 2026

Wesley Camp and Retreat Center today announced the launch of the For the Love of Camp campaign, a two-month fundraising effort dedicated to providing camperships for children and youth when the center reopens in summer 2026. With a goal of \$10,000, the campaign will help ensure that every child—regardless of financial circumstance—has the opportunity to experience the life-changing impact of camp.



**FOR THE LOVE OF CAMP**  
CAMPERSHIP FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN  
WESLEY CAMP & RETREAT CENTER

After several years of planning, prayer, and construction, Wesley Camp and Retreat Center is preparing to welcome campers back to a campus that has undergone extensive upgrades designed to create a safe, sustainable, and deeply welcoming environment. Improvements include maintenance facility upgrades, safety enhancements, cabin, lodge and dining hall renovations, trail and worship space upgrades and more.

“We’re building something new at Wesley,” said Rev. Ann Marie Carley, Director of Camps, Retreats and Next Gen Engagement for West Ohio. “A place that is safe, sustainable, and Christ-centered—where kids can meet God in nature, grow in faith, and be transformed by community.”

[Read More Here](#)

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## Change The World Conference This Spring

West Ohio Leaders are invited to the Change the World Conference at Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio, April 23-24.

The *Change the World Conference* is a space for pastors, leaders, and everyday disciples to envision ministry beyond yesterday's models through a time of learning from friends and leaders of Ginghamburg Church.



[Read more and register here](#)

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## **West Ohio United Women in Faith Mission U 2026 - June 12-14**

You are invited to participate in the West Ohio United Women in Faith Mission u event, scheduled for Friday, June 12, through Sunday, June 14. This year's theme is "Experiencing Emmanuel."

Mission u is significant in the growth of women's mission organizations and in our own faith journeys. Through worship, in-depth study, music, prayer, sharing, and exploring, we invite you to grow with us.

Once again, Mission u will offer two sessions – In-Person and Virtual. Registration opens Wednesday, April 1.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

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## **Serve at Urban Mission this Summer**

Urban Mission Ministries in Steubenville is excited to invite youth groups to take part in the J.O.S.H.U.A. Program—an opportunity for young people to make a meaningful impact close to home. J.O.S.H.U.A., which stands for Journeys Of Service Helping Upper Appalachia, is designed to bring groups together for hands-on service projects that meet real needs in Eastern Ohio. Work could include neighborhood cleanups, small building/repair, and painting projects where participants experience firsthand how serving others can transform both a community and the hearts of those who serve. Youth groups will grow in teamwork, leadership, compassion, and faith as they work side by side to make a difference. To learn more, contact Cynthia Lytle at 740-282-8010 or [clytle@urbanmission.org](mailto:clytle@urbanmission.org).

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## **VBS Mini-Grants Available through UMFWO 2026 Spring Grant Cycle**

As a part of the Foundation's new grant program, the VBS mini-grant application opened on February 1st, thanks to the generosity of major donor, Ketha Robbins. In 2017, Ketha invested her resources into an endowment with the Foundation, as a way to honor her family's legacy and love of vacation bible school. Since then, over 41 mini-grants have been awarded to churches across West Ohio. The Foundation is honored to continue offering this grant opportunity. Grants of \$250-\$1000 will be available for curriculum materials, 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.

Applications are due by March 15th, with the opportunity to attend a special Zoom seminar on Tuesday, February 24th at 2:00PM, to discuss how to submit a competitive VBS grant application. Contact Maddy DeWitt at 380-223-9229 or [mdewitt@wocumc.org](mailto:mdewitt@wocumc.org) for more information.

To learn more about the VBS mini-grants, including access to the Zoom link and application link, please click here: [2026 VBS Mini-Grants](#).

For more information about the Foundation's new grant program, please click here: [2026 UMFOW Grant Program](#).

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## 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.](#)

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## Join the Climate Justice Journey to Wisconsin this Summer

This year's Ohio Episcopal Area Climate Justice Mission Journey will travel to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to assist in clean-up and rebuilding of homes that were flooded last summer. Dates for the mission journey are July 13-18, 2026, and housing will be provided by a local church. Estimated cost per person is \$200. Please indicate your interest in the mission journey by filling out THIS FORM ([Climate Justice Mission Journey Interest Form – Fill out form](#)) – we will contact you with the formal application process in the coming weeks. Check out THIS VIDEO (<https://youtu.be/arZAlhh8Hds>) of last year's Climate Justice Mission Journey! For more information, contact Mariellyn Grace at [mgrace@wocumc.org](mailto:mgrace@wocumc.org).

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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. William "Bill" Hunter** passed away on Saturday, January 10th, 2026 at the age of 81. His death followed many years of living with the complications of Parkinson's disease. Bill shared the beauty of life together with his wife, Pat, for over 55 years. Love and laughter flowed in their home, as they nurtured their children, Marcy and Brett, into adulthood. That circle of love has grown wider with the marriages of Marcy to Dave, and Brett to Angie; and wider still the circle of love has grown to include precious grandchildren, Carley, Imre, Max, and Nova.

For more than 40 years, Bill served in ministry among the congregations of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. He loved and served four church families in his years of ministry: Wayne UM Church, Oregon Faith UM Church, William Street UM Church in Delaware, Ohio, and Northwest UM Church in Columbus, Ohio. Bill also served at the District and the Conference levels, first as the Findlay District Program Assistant, and later as the Columbus South District Superintendent and member of the Bishop's cabinet (Wayne (F) 1970; Findlay DPA 1974; Oregon Faith (T) 1979; William Street (CN) 1984; Supt Columbus South Dist 1993; Northwest (CN) 1997). Although Bill grew in knowledge and experience in those administrative roles, each time he became "homesick" to return to a church family to be their Pastor. Bill loved, and was

loved, by somany. He is remembered for his creative, caring, and also his sense of humor.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at King Avenue United Methodist Church, 299 King Ave., Columbus, OH 43201, on Saturday, March 21, 2026. Friends may gather for visitation from 1:00pm-2:00pm, with the Celebration of Life beginning at 2:00pm.

In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to NNEMAP Food Pantry, a nonprofit social service agency distributing food and other resources to residents of Columbus, Ohio. Donations can be sent to NNEMAP, Inc. P.O. Box 10614, Columbus, Ohio, 43201. Please include "in memory of Bill Hunter". [Obituary information for William Hunter](#)

## 2025 Appointments

### Appointments

The list of pastoral appointments beginning January 1, 2025, can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

Please refer back to these lists as they are updated frequently.



West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church | 32 Wesley Boulevard | Worthington, OH 43085 US

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