



## Reflections from the Olympics: Gold, Silver, Bronze

Dear Friends and Family of the Hocking River District,

With the conclusion of the 2024 Summer Olympics, (or Paris 2024) only the memories remain. For some reason, these Olympic Games have stirred something within my heart. Seeing the thrill of “*sticking a landing*” or completing a flawless relay brought such joy to the hearts and faces of the competitors, as well as those in the audience.

As a young child I remember watching athletes from around the world competing with others in various events. As the years passed, I began to anticipate the next Olympic Games.

One of my favorite Olympic memories is known as “*Miracle on Ice*.” It was an incredible and unlikely journey of the US men’s hockey team that stole the hearts of the people.

In this year’s quadrennial demonstration of athletic prowess, many stories of inspiration emerged. Team USA led the world with total medals, and they also tied with China with the number of Gold medals. Countless records were broken in various events. Some “*heavy favorites*” (but not all) captured the prized Gold medal, while others were pleased with Silver or Bronze medals.

One commentator, in discussing the US Men’s Basketball team’s appearance in the Gold Medal Final, said that Americans were the only fans who would be disappointed with a Silver Medal. This was probably not the only team (or individual) who was going for the gold and would be disappointed with a Silver medal.

Watching many of the events has led me to wonder, what if “Praying” or “Witnessing” of “Generosity” were Olympic sports? How well would I fare?

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If I could rate my own personal spiritual disciplines with these standards (Gold, Silver and Bronze), would I make it to the podium for the Medal ceremony? For me, too often, I don't see myself striving toward the Gold every day, knowing that Olympic Gold medalists do not get to the podium accidentally. They spend years in intense training and preparation. I sometimes feel more like a "couch potato" Disciple.

Friends, Discipleship, being a follower of Jesus, is not a spectator sport. It is a daily walk. May we all strive to reach the prize. It seems like the Apostle Paul must've enjoyed sports, too! He had some keen insights.

*"Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So, I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NLT)*

*"I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us." (Philippians 3:12-14 NLT)*

Go for the Gold!

**Mark**



## Register today for August *All In Community* Lunch and Learn Event

Worship and music both aid in self-regulation/healing and each holds value individually and collectively. In 2023, the National Institute on Health reported that more than 1 in 5 adults live with mental illness. This is heavily attributed to the variety of traumatic experiences one has endured in a lifetime. However, there is an antidote readily available to assist. Music has been intricately woven into society's fabric, and held individuals, entities, and movements together for more than two centuries. From ancient medical practices to modern day science, music has been consulted for its vast healing properties.

[Read more and register here](#)



## Recent “Starting Well” Event

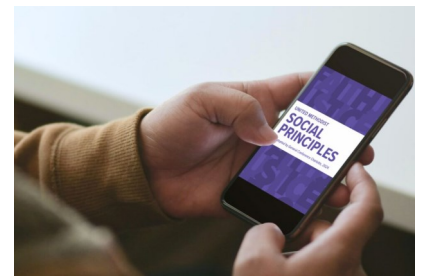
**Many thanks** to Pastor Karen Montgomery for hosting at Grace UMC, Zanesville, **Starting Well** for Pastors and Staff Parish Relations Committees in new appointments. We welcomed two pastors new to the District: Rev. Vera Welker (Zanesville First and Faith) and Rev. Del Bonar (The Plains).

## Updated Social Principles Available Now

The Social Principles as adopted by General Conference this year will officially take effect January 1, 2025. Cokesbury will print the updated, official UMC Social Principles booklet in 2025. However, Church and Society has online content resources for immediate use. In 2025, they will produce more Social Principles resources including social witness video reels from multiple countries, youth curricula, and additional material translations.

Access the Refreshed Social Principles Online Webpage [HERE](#) to view and download:

- Social Principles Background and History Page Summaries
- Social Principles Booklet and Translations
- Social Principles Mission and Ministry Cards



## Workers Comp Deadline Approaching

Any time a pastoral change takes place, the previous church needs to remove them from coverage. In addition, the true-up process needs to be completed where you report your actual payroll for the previous policy year and reconcile any differences in premiums paid. The deadline to do this is August 15, 2024.

## United Methodist Pastor involved in Community Theatre



Rev. Scott Blevins (Pastor, New Beginnings UMC), Steven Figiel (member, Chester UMC) and Olivia Salyer (Barbara Conover's niece) were part of the talent cast of "Our Town."

### 2025 Go Grant Applications go live on September 1

Need help brainstorming your Go Grant ideas? Have questions about your Go Grant ideas? Join us for a WhiteBoard Zoom sessions over your lunch hour at one of the following dates: Wednesdays at noon. Click on the date to register:

[8.14.24](#) | [8.21.24](#) | [8.28.24](#) | [9.4.24](#)

Feel free to check out the [Q&A page](#). We offer answers to our most frequently asked questions about Go Grants.

For a list of the ideas, please click [here](#) to see the 2024 Go Grant recipients.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Installation of Bishop Jung

**Saturday, October 12** - Trinity UMC, Columbus 4:30pm

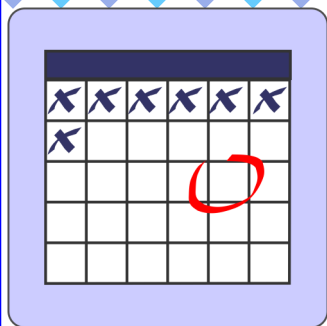
### Healthy Boundaries/Safe Sanctuaries Training

**Saturday, October 19** - Athens First UMC

**Tuesday, October 22** - Chillicothe, Trinity UMC

### Church/Charge Conferences to be determined soon.

Regional church conferences will take place in October and November



## IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2024

### **All In Community - Ministry Monday**

This month at All In Community's *Ministry Monday* information session, Reba Collins will be sharing a SNEAK PEEK of what will be available at this year's Building Bridges of Opportunity *Community Experience: Bridging Pathways to Hope*.

The purpose of the *Community Experience* is to convene Ohio's reentry community to provide high quality reentry education, emerging Ohio reintegration efforts, reintegration best practices, network opportunities, environments for sharing ideas, and advocacy opportunities for systemic reform.

Join Reba and others on **Monday, August 26, beginning at 7:00pm on ZOOM.**

Advanced registration is required at <https://qrco.de/bfF6or>  
[Printable Flyer](#)



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).

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

**PLEASE** contact the Hocking River District Office at the number listed on this page.

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!

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

### LAY SERVANT MINISTRIES COURSES AVAILABLE

(classes are offered in person, via Zoom or a combination of both)

*CLICK ON THE COURSE TITLES BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION*

August 18 (+ 4 more dates) - "Lay Pastoral Care Giving"

September 8 (+ 4 more dates) - "Public Prayer"



Courses are open to anyone and especially for those seeking to assume leadership roles in their congregation and across the conference. More information on Lay Servant Ministries can be found **HERE**

### Engage with UMC Leaders in Upcoming Well-Being Webinars

Wespath and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) are partnering together to engage leaders and changemakers in the UMC to address systemic issues affecting clergy well-being.

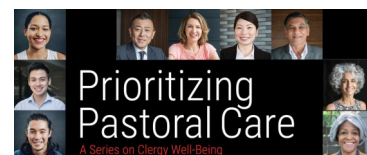
This fall, you are invited to three webinars on clergy well-being. Learn more about each of the five dimensions of well-being, the current state of each dimension based on the 2023 Clergy Well-Being Survey results and various resources available to you.

Clergy input on well-being is essential. Register now for any or all of these sessions:

September 19, 1-2pm Central – Financial Well-Being [Register Now](#)

October 24, 1-2pm Central – Physical and Emotional Well-Being [Register Now](#)

November 7, 1-2pm Central – Spiritual and Social Well-Being [Register Now](#)



### ***Your Feedback is Important***

How does the UMC impact clergy well-being? What steps could we take to create a work environment more conducive to clergy well-being? [Complete this short form](#) to share how the church can be more supportive of clergy well-being.



## The Hocking River District and Scioto River District Welcome Clergy in New Appointments



Pictured above: (Top row) Rev. Vera Welker family, Mark and Nancy Chow

Rev. Jeff Belt, Rev. Dave and Grace Hubbard, Rev. Dan Pelzel (SRD), Rev. David and Julie Yinger (SRD);

Rev. Jim and Denise Holman and family

Barbara and Ethan Conover;



Pictured above: (1st row) Rev. Frances Newman and family (SRD), Rev. Dan Pelzel (SRD), Rev. Jim Holman and family, Rev. Jeff Belt.

(2nd row) Rev. David and Julie Yinger (SRD), Nancy Chow, Ethan Conover, Diana Hall (SRD Admin) Barbara Conover, Rev. Vera Welker and family

## Some Pastors and Board members not being bored while enjoying the musical “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat”



Rev. Rick and Dolores Stuhmer, Rev. Cheryl Arnold and Bob Westbrook, Rev. Carrie Ator-James and Ralph James, Rev. Dave and Grace Hubbard, Rev. Mark and Nancy Chow

## It's Stewardship Season!

With mid-August upon us, many pastors and church leaders are beginning to think about annual stewardship campaigns. Many are finding themselves in the same place they were last year: unsure what to do, unsure what to say, and generally feeling like it's time for the annual doctor's checkup: *everyone knows it's good for them, but no one wants to go!*

Don't be that church!

The United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio is YOUR go-to resource for stewardship education information. If you need help with this year's campaign, give us a call and we will discuss it with you. If you just want to get through this year but know that changes are needed, our program, **Generosity Abounds!** is free to any church to use. It is NOT a plug and play one-size fits all annual campaign package. It's a step-by-step guide to help you increase discipleship and engagement and start on a path to creating a culture of generosity in your church. ***The best time to start this program is about a year in advance of when you want to start seeing results.*** So start now for next year! We can walk you through it or you can do it on your own. Find out more at

<https://umfwestohio.org/services-for-churches/stewardship-education-resources/>

or give us a call.

Here are some other great learning opportunities that have shown up in our in-boxes recently:

**Saving Grace: A Guide to Financial Well-Being** – we're excited that Wespath is providing an online version of this course open to anyone this fall, **starting soon on September 9.** Financial literacy is one of our stewardship standards, so we highly recommend this for any church leader who wants to provide the class in their church next year.

**Financial Leadership for Churches** – this comprehensive course with content similar to our Generosity Abounds program is offered through Garrett Theological Seminary. It is pricey but you can get 2 CEUs and take another person. Call us if you want to attend and we can discuss scholarships. There is also a \$500 incentive program for attendees who qualify.

**Cultivating the Craft of Asking** - develop your skills and confidence in asking donors for financial support. Through the five online sessions, you will learn techniques to help you deepen donor relationships to connect vision to mission while actively making progress on your own ministry goals – from a capital campaign to funding mission work. Provided through Myte Ministries.

The Foundation has lots of other resources we can share with you. Just give us a call to discuss your needs so we can make tailored recommendations.

[sblack@wocumc.org](mailto:sblack@wocumc.org) 380-223-9257

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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

**E-Mails: Office - [hockingriverdistrict@wocumc.org](mailto:hockingriverdistrict@wocumc.org)**

**Mark Chow, DS - [mchow@wocumc.org](mailto:mchow@wocumc.org)**

**Barbara Conover, Office Admin. - [bconover@wocumc.org](mailto:bconover@wocumc.org)**