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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 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. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. (NRSVA)

Registration begins March 1.

## Upcoming Lay Servant Classes

ORD - Feb. 20-21, 2026

Introduction to Lay Ministry: The Basic Course: <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/olentangy-river-district-introduction-lay-ministries-basic-course>

HRD - February 27-28, 2026

Leading Worship (CORE Course): <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/hocking-river-district-leading-worship-core-course>

GMR - March 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 2026

Introduction to Lay Ministry: <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/great-miami-river-district-introduction-lay-ministries-basic-course>

GMR - April 13, 16, 20, 23, 27, 30, 2026

Ministry with the Forgotten: <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/great-miami-river-district-ministry-forgotten-0>

ORD - April 24-25, 2026

Advanced Course: Discover Your Spiritual Gifts: <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/olentangy-river-district-advanced-course-discover-your-spiritual-gifts>

ORD - April 24-25, 2026

Leading Worship: <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/olentangy-river-district-leading-worship-0>

HRD - May 15-16, 2026

Called to Preach (CORE course): <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/hocking-river-district-lay-servant-ministries-course-called-preach-core-course>

HRD - August 21-22, 2026

Introduction to Lay Servant Ministry (The Basic Course): <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/hocking-river-district-intro-lay-servant-ministry-basic-course>

HRD - October 30-31, 2026

Teaching Biblical Faith: Leading Small Group Bible Studies: <https://www.westohioumc.org/event/hocking-river-district-teaching-biblical-faith-leading-small-group-bible-studies>



Remember, even if you have completed the Basic Course and all of the Core Courses, you need to take an Advanced Course every 3 years as part of maintaining your certification as a Lay Speaker. Not sure what you need next? Call the Hocking River District office at (740) 677-0136.

**PHONE NUMBER FOR HOCKING RIVER DISTRICT OFFICE:**

**(740) 677-0136**

## 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](#)



## 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).



## 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 will open 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 UMFWO Grant Program](#).

## 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!

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung will spend Thursday, February 26, 2026 in the Hocking River District with clergy and laity from the Hocking River and South Forest Districts. Clergy are highly encouraged to attend. (Please choose a different meeting if you can't attend the one in your district.) Retired clergy are welcome too! The event will take place at Grace UMC, 516 Shinnick St., Zanesville, Ohio.

**Clergy Schedule 9:00 am - 3:00 pm**

Clergy will begin gathering 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, the bishop will lead a discussion on the Five Strategic Pillars of the Ohio Episcopal Area Missional Direction followed by 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 followed by closing worship.

\*Laity traveling with their pastors are invited to attend opening worship at 9:30 am but will then be dismissed following worship for the laity training.

**REGISTRATION CLOSSES ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20th at 5:00 PM.**

We hope to see you there!

**Date**

Thu, 02/26/2026 - 09:00 AM - Thu, 02/26/2026 - 03:00 PM

**Location Name**

Grace UMC

**Location Address**

516 Shinnick St., Zanesville,

Ohio

**Contact**

Barbara Conover or Joy Snyder

**Email**

bconover@wocumc.org

**Event URL**

[REGISTER HERE](#)



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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 from WOC 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 last week.
- [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.

If you have any questions, contact Jack Frost at [jfrost@wocumc.org](mailto:jfrost@wocumc.org).

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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!](#)

## 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)).



CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES  
INTERGENERATIONAL LENTEN JOURNAL 2026

### 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).



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### **Clergy Executive Session set for May 7**

This year, East and West Ohio Boards of Ministry will hold a coordinated clergy executive session from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 7 at **Lakeside Chautauqua**. The clergy from both conferences will be together for worship and training and will meet separately by Conference for business sessions. Additional information about the session, the working agenda, and a link to register for the session will be included in the letter clergy will receive from Bishop Hee-Soo Jung.

<https://www.westohioumc.org/news/clergy-executive-session-set-may-7>



### **Special Shared Lenten Services at 6pm**

February 22	Coolville UMC	Rev. Michael Shaub, guest pastor
March 1	Canaanville UMC	Rev. Phil Thomas, guest pastor
March 8	Tuppers Plains St. Paul UMC	Rev. Paul McGuire, guest pastor
March 15	Hockingport UMC	Rev. Debbie Brookins, guest pastor
March 22	Decatur UMC	Rev. Carrie Ator-James, guest pastor
March 29	Shade UMC	Rev. Sarah Lowden, guest pastor

Come on out to Coolville UMC on Sunday at 6pm, February 22 to hear Pastor Michael Shaub speak and to share the first Sunday in Lent with fellow Christians!

**25460 Main Street, Coolville, Ohio**



### **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)**