



Western Lakes District

News from The United Methodist Church

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WLD Important Information Volume 83- October 2, 2026

Beyond Favorites: Loving as Christ Calls Us to Love

If I tried to name the person I am most grateful to God for, I would struggle to choose a single favorite. Even a simpler question—whether April or October is my favorite month—would leave me undecided. My deceased father and I celebrate our birthdays in April, while my mother's and grandmother's birthdays are in October.

The word favorite almost always requires an explanation. Choosing one person or season can sound as though others matter less, even when that is not what we intend. Our preferences shift with our memories and circumstances, but the love Christ calls us to is not governed by preference.

Jesus does not ask us to love according to our preferences. In the Great Commandment, he joins love of God with love of neighbor, making both essential to faithful discipleship:

Matthew 22:36-38 (CEB) 36 "Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 He replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. 40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

Jesus carries this command beyond the people we naturally welcome. In Matthew 5:43–48 (CEB), he says, "You have heard that it was said, you must love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who harass you so that you will be acting as children of your father who is in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous. ..."

The story of the Good Samaritan makes this love concrete. Jesus directs our attention to the Samaritan—the person his first hearers might have been quickest to distrust—and shows him acting with mercy. The story challenges every stereotype or boundary that tempts us to decide who deserves care.

As United Methodists, we proclaim that God's grace reaches toward every person before any of us can earn or deserve it. God does not restrict divine love to a preferred group. John 3:16 declares, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life." The reach of God's love shapes the reach of our ministry.

Our response is the United Methodist way of "holiness of heart and life": receiving God's grace and allowing that grace to shape how we worship, serve, seek justice, and care for our neighbors. When our life together reflects Christ's generous love, the church becomes a visible sign of God's kin-dom and invites others into lives that honor God.

During some of the most challenging of times, let us ask where preference may be narrowing our love. May we welcome the overlooked, listen across differences, serve without favoritism, and pray even for those who challenge us. By God's grace, our congregation can become a community in which every neighbor encounters the love of Christ.

Sincerely,

Pastor Don

Regional Charge Conference Dates Have Been Set

Charge conference dates have been sent out to the pastors. It is time to start preparing the paperwork for Annual Charge Conferences.

Begin preparing now for your **Annual Charge Conference** (i.e., local church business meeting, planning for 2027).

- Lay leadership nominations
- Ministry recommendations
- Membership report
- 2027 Pastor compensation
- Review of Trustees report
- Review Safe Sanctuaries policy

Worksheets and Forms can be found [HERE](#)

Financial Wellness & Retirement Readiness

You're Invited: 2026 Financial Wellness & Retirement Readiness Workshop

The Conference Benefits Office, in partnership with **Wespath**, invites active clergy participating in the **COMPASS, CRSP, MPP, or Pre-82 retirement plans** to attend our **2026 Financial Wellness & Retirement Readiness Workshop**.

Whether retirement is a few years away or still well down the road, this workshop offers valuable information to help you better understand your benefits and prepare for the future.

This workshop is ideal for clergy who are:

- Planning to retire within the next 1 to 20 years, or
- Simply interested in learning more about their retirement benefits, financial wellness, and opportunities to plan for the future.
- Clergy in the early and mid-stages of their careers are especially encouraged to attend. Understanding your retirement benefits now can help you make more informed decisions throughout your ministry.

RSVP by October 9, 2026

To receive a **personalized retirement projection**, please register by **October 9, 2026**.

Register Here: [Pre-Retirement Workshop | West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church](#)

Workshop Details

Date: Tuesday, October 20th

Time: 9:30 AM – 4:00 PM

Location: West Ohio Conference, Asbury/Albright Space

Spouses are welcome to attend.

Topics Include

- Retirement plans and income sources
- Personalized pension and retirement benefit projections
- Retiree healthcare options
- Financial wellness and retirement planning considerations

- Wespith tools, resources, and planning support

View the Workshop Agenda: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:3fd22f80-2ff5-4aaa-a2c3-4b1a0c4d02d1>

Morning refreshments and lunch will be provided.

We look forward to spending the day with you as you learn more about your retirement benefits and explore opportunities to strengthen your financial future.

Ready. Set. Ignite.

On October 1, churches across East and West Ohio will have the opportunity to apply for the new Ignite Ohio Grants, a collaborative initiative designed to spark innovation, strengthen communities, develop leaders, and launch new ministries.



We believe God is calling United Methodist churches across Ohio to look beyond their walls, engage their communities, and create new pathways for people to experience Christ's love.

Whether you're exploring a new ministry idea, dreaming about a Fresh Expression, reimagining your church property, investing in emerging leaders, or launching a community-focused initiative, Ignite Ohio is here to help move great ideas into action.

Need help shaping your vision? We've got that too. Join a Whiteboard Session, explore the Dreaming New Possibilities Guide, and start imagining what God might do next through your church.

Dream Bigger. Ignite Innovation. Reach New People.

All Information about the grants (along with a printable handbook) and the Ignite Ohio Grant Application link can be found [here](#).

Exploring the Formation of a New Ohio Conference

In early 2025, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung announced the creation of the Ohio Episcopal Area Task Team to explore a potential new, unified Ohio Conference.

For the past 18 months, 19 work groups within the Task Team have gathered information and engaged in discussions with clergy, staff, and laity, across the East Ohio and West Ohio Conferences.

Throughout the rest of September and during October work group reports will be presented to Conference governing bodies. The Task Team will present its final report to Bishop Hee-Soo Jung in November, and it will then be shared with the laity and clergy of the Ohio Episcopal Area. West Ohio and East Ohio Annual Conferences will vote on becoming one Conference during their respective Annual Conference sessions in 2027.

"No final decision has been made; the Task Team prepares and recommends; the Church listens and discerns; and the 2027 Annual Conferences decide," Bishop Jung said.

Learn more about the Ohio Episcopal Area Task Team [here](#)

Check Out These Resources for the Year Ahead

As a new school year begins, many churches are also stepping into a new season of ministry. It's time to prepare not only calendars and classrooms, but ourselves as leaders.

Faithful leadership requires continual learning. Whether you're preaching each week, leading Bible studies, teaching Sunday school, or guiding your congregation through difficult conversations, investing in your own growth equips you to better serve your community.

The General Commission on Religion and Race has resources to sharpen your skills with to help you lead with wisdom, courage, and intercultural competence. [Click here](#) for resources by topic, [Click here](#) for online training courses, [Click here](#) for Intercultural Competency Sermon Starters.



WESTERN
LAKES DISTRICT

**DAY OF PRAYER AND
SELF-DENIAL**

Join churches across the district for a day of
prayer, worship, communion, and compassionate
giving in support of our Haitian neighbors.

OCTOBER 31, 2026 | 1:30 PM
GRACE UMC
1401 W. MAIN ST. SPRINGFIELD, OH

We invite churches and individuals to bring:
Non-Perishable Food Items
Monetary Contributions
Written Prayers & Encouragement
Amazon Wish List:
[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/F9R2RFIA5YWA?](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/F9R2RFIA5YWA?ref_=wl_share)
[ref_=wl_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/F9R2RFIA5YWA?ref_=wl_share)

Join us as we gather for prayer and worship in support of our Haitian neighbors. If you would like to contribute ahead of time, please follow this link for the [Amazon Wish List For Most Needed Items](#). Monetary gifts can be made to Grace UMC with "Haitian Ministry" in the memo line (address is above on the flyer).



Dear Environmental advocates and enthusiasts of the Ohio Episcopal Area of United Methodist Church,

This is a personal invitation for YOU to gather alongside dozens of climate action champions from across Ohio seeking to gain new insights, connect with networks of support, and sharpen tools for visionary environmental ministries.

From Urban Farms to Using churches for disaster relief hubs, you'll be immersed in workshops and models for initiatives for learning the needs of vulnerable communities and developing shared action for meaningful change!

[Read more and register here](#)

Fall UMCOR Collection Has Local Focus

This year's Fall UMCOR Disaster Supply Collection will focus on local needs, including the August floods that hit Southeast Ohio. UMCOR Cleaning Kits ("flood buckets") and Hygiene Kits will be the main items collected from October 5-November 6, 2026. All items must be transported to the West Ohio Conference office at 32 Wesley Blvd, Worthington, OH 43085. Please ensure that you have a transportation plan in place before collecting and making kits.

This Fall Collection will be unique in that a portion of the items collected will remain at the West Ohio Conference Center. The Conference Center in Worthington is set to become a Midwest Mission Permanent Collection site in October, using part of the basement for storage of kits and other disaster response items. This will allow a faster response when unexpected floods or storms hit a community in West Ohio. Starting in November, churches and individuals can make an appointment to bring disaster response supplies to the Conference Center at any time of year.

Learn how to create UMCOR Cleaning and Hygiene Kits [HERE](#).

If you have questions or would like to drop off kits at the Conference office, please contact Mariellyn Grace, Director of Mission Engagement, at mgrace@wocumc.org.

Do you have a dream? An idea for reaching new people? A new ministry within your church? A new expression of Christian community? Or simply a sense that God may be calling you toward something new?

Maybe you've wondered where to take your next step.

We'd love to hear what's on your heart and share how we can help you discern, develop, and bring that dream to life. Join us for an hour time slot at a location near you.

*Come with a dream.
Leave knowing your next step.*

Register Here:
tinyurl.com/Greenhouse26



WLD Greenhouse Recruitment Tour - Oct 16th at Troy First

Every new thing begins with something small.

A conversation. A dream. A burden. A holy discontent. A sense that God may be urging you toward something new.

If you've been carrying an idea for reaching new people, launching a new ministry, starting a new faith community, or multiplying the impact of your congregation, we'd love to hear it. The Greenhouse Recruitment Tour is a chance to sit down with your District Superintendent and Brad Aycock for a one-hour conversation about what God may be stirring in your heart. No polished proposal is required. You do not need all the answers. Just bring your dream.

We're here to listen, encourage, and help you discern your next faithful step.

Come with a dream. Leave knowing your next step.

Register at: tinyurl.com/greenhouse26



Mini-Mester Leadership Training

As the Ohio Episcopal Area continues to invest in strong, adaptable leadership, the Leadership Development Team is excited to launch a new Fall Mini-mester. This four-week learning experience is designed to strengthen the Ohio Episcopal Area's leadership framework by offering practical, engaging development opportunities for leaders at every stage of their journey.



"This Mini-mester was intentionally designed to equip leaders with the awareness, skills, and perspective needed to lead themselves and others more effectively," said the Leadership Development Team. *"Each session aligns with our leadership framework and provides practical tools that participants can apply immediately."*

These short, practical zoom classes are designed for clergy, laity, staff, and ministry teams who want meaningful learning without a long-term course commitment.

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

Conference Stewardship Resources Now Available

New resources for the local church are now available on the WOC website. ***Seasons of Generosity***, a stewardship resource hub, is designed to help congregations explore what it means to live and give generously.



SEASONS OF GENEROSITY

Presented in four segments for different seasons of the year, the resources include an introductory video, extensive sermon starters and a trove of additional materials for small groups, children's ministry, media arts, and connectional giving.

The goal of the resources is to help churches develop a year-round stewardship strategy that feels fresh, relevant and impactful; and to provide church leaders with information that clarifies the importance of connectional giving.

Churches can adapt and personalize the resources to fit the needs, context, and individual voice of their congregation.

Assistance can be found by contacting the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio at sblack@wocumc.org.

UMFWO Offering Clergy Development Grants This Fall



United Methodist
Foundation *of West Ohio*

Earlier this year, the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio launched a new grant program which included a spring grants cycle that focused on children, youth, and young adults; and an upcoming fall grant cycle focused on clergy development.

The fall grant cycle opened on Sept. 1 and offers three types of individual grants: **1)** individual grants for provisional and ordained clergy seeking funds for travel, personal or renewal leave; **2)** individual grants for LLPs seeking funds for completing Course of Study, continuing education, training or coaching; and **3)** individual grants for provisional or [continue reading](#).

Registration Open For Conference Designed For Young People Discerning Ministry

Exploration 2026, set for November 6 – 8 in Orlando, Florida, creates sacred space for young adults ages 18 and older to gather in meaningful fellowship, passionate worship, theological reflection, and practical workshops. Participants are invited to discern whether God's call on their life is to ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church and what faithful steps they can take in response.

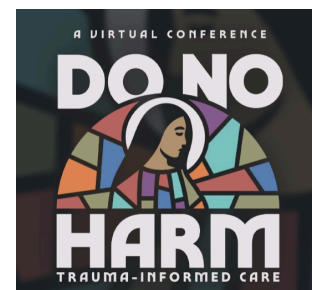
Through worship, workshops, community, and guided reflection, attendees can gain clarity, confidence, and connection as exploring pathways in ministry and service.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION & REGISTRATION](#)

Do No Harm Conference November 12-14

Join the [General Commission on the Status and Role of Women](#) for the Do No Harm virtual conference for the purpose of equipping individuals and the Church to prevent sexual harm and foster trauma-informed care.

This 3-day virtual event offers professional development for leaders from across The United Methodist Church who lead prevention, response, and training. The available workshops



will prepare church leaders for trauma-informed approaches to complaints, boundaries and ethics trainings, developing response and care teams, and fostering a shared understanding of ministry as a sacred trust.

Learn more and register [here](#).

Lay Servant Ministries

One of the most significant lay leadership development programs available within the United Methodist connection, [Lay Servant Ministries](#) equips and empowers lay servants to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ who then go and make other disciples.



Remaining classes for 2026 are listed below. Click each link to learn more or [click here](#) to see a master list of all the courses, descriptions and leaders. Most are offered online via Zoom unless indicated:

- Great Miami River District - [Social Justice in Everyday Life](#) - October 4, 6, 8, 11, 13
- Hocking River District: [Teaching Biblical Faith: Leading Small Group Bible Studies](#) - October 30 & 31
- Olentangy River District: [Living Our United Methodist Beliefs, Heritage](#) - November 1, 3, 5, 8, 10
- Western Lakes District: [Come! I Will Tell You a Story, An Introduction to Biblical Storytelling](#) - November 6-7
- Hocking River District - [Intro to Lay Servant Ministry](#) - Nov 20 - 21

Classifieds

CRIDERSVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
CRIDERSVILLE, OHIO

WE'RE SEEKING A

WORSHIP LEADER

Lead worship.
Grow community.

PART-TIME • SALARIED

Help shape the future of contemporary worship in a growing church.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO

- Loves Jesus and has a heart for leading others in worship.
- Is musically gifted, creative, and collaborative.
- Encourages others to grow in their faith.
- Leads with humility, authenticity, and a servant's heart.

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW MAY BE A GREAT FIT

We'd love to connect.
Call: (419) 645-4421 or
Email: cvumc@bright.net
for more information

Part-Time Treasurer - Northridge UMC

Northridge United Methodist Church in Springfield is seeking a part-time Treasurer to support the financial stewardship of their congregation. The Treasurer will be responsible for bookkeeping, financial reporting, account reconciliation, and other key functions that

NORTHBRIDGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WE ARE

Hiring

a Part Time Treasurer to join our team.

Send your resume to:
NUMC4610@sbcglobal.net

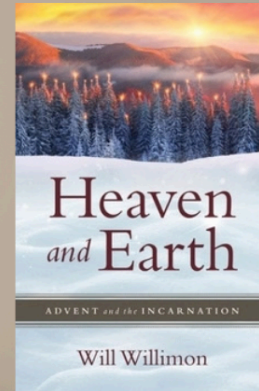
Events Around The District

District wide Advent Book Study via zoom

with

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
REV. DON WILSON LEADING

DECEMBER 2, 9, 16, & 23
AT 6:30PM



BOOK IS AVAILABLE THROUGH AMAZON,
BARNES & NOBLE, AND CHRISTIANBOOK.
OR CHECK YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY.

EMAIL CORTNEY FOR MORE INFORMATION AT CREED@WOCUMC.ORG

United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio

Save the Date Generosity Summit 2027

SEPTEMBER

13-14

2027

Mohican State Park Lodge and Conference Center

Join your clergy colleagues and local UM church leaders from across Ohio and contiguous Conferences for a two-day summit focused on generosity in the local church. Hear from experts in the field and relax in the beautiful environs of Mohican State Park.

Registration will open in April 2027

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

Rev. Dr. Linda Chamberlain Jones passed on August 15, 2026, at the age of 80. Born on October 11, 1945, Linda lived in Knoxville, Tennessee. She is preceded in death by her parents, Bill and Louise Chamberlain. Linda is survived by her husband, Jesse Jones Jr.; son, Heath Frye (Alexandria); daughter, Jody Kirk (Jason); son, Michael Taylor; grandchildren, Brady Kirk, Nikola Frye, Vuk Frye; daughter in law, Aleksandra Frye and special friends, Judy Jones and Billie Lamison.

Linda held a PhD in Latin and Greek from OSU and a Doctorate of Divinity and was a Methodist minister in Ohio where she was very active in her ministry.

During her ministry in the West Ohio Conference she served the following churches: Springfield St Mark (S) 1999; Linden (CN) 2001; Magnetic Springs-Pharisburg Charge (CAN) 2009 She was also Eastern Band Cherokee (Bird Clan) and her Cherokee name was Brown Dove Watching.

The family will hold a memorial service at a later date.

* * *

Reverend Dr. Stephen Gary Price, 85, of Newark, Ohio, died unexpectedly, but peacefully, while sleeping in the quietest hours of Monday morning, September 7, 2026, at his home. Born March 29, 1941, in Zanesville, he was a son of the late Homer Clayton & Beulah "Happy" Story (Brown) Price and a 1959 graduate of Licking Valley High School. Steve spent his early years in retail management, real estate, and teaching for Licking Valley and Coshocton School Districts. He was a past president of the Licking Valley Alumni Association and founded the Hanover-Toboso Scholarship Program. Steve enjoyed farming, restoring classic cars, and missionary work. His love for Christ led him to become a pastor in the Methodist Church.

Steve spent his life learning, teaching, and spreading the good word of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He traveled the world, most notably, Israel, Egypt, and Jordan during his biblical studies. Many of Steve's travels were missionary trips, helping establish churches and parsonages so others could share in his joy of Jesus. His faith was so strong that he made it his life's work to see Christianity spread across the world. So much so that he received his Doctor of Ministry from Asbury Theological Seminary in 1997, though he didn't boast about his accomplishment.

Steve spent his later years living part time in Ohio and the other half of the year in Naples, Florida. No matter where he was living, he enjoyed eating out with his many friends and chatting about the goodness of God. He always enjoyed fellowshiping and a good meal. To no one's surprise, Steve was the ultimate prayer warrior and would pray for others devoutly. Steve's life could be summed up as faithful, loving, and filled with joy. He will be deeply missed.

Reverend Dr. Stephen G. Price is survived by his son, Matthew "Matt" Stephen (Melissa) Price of Utica; two step-sons, Tim (Missy) Link and Terry (Debbie) Link, both of Granville; nine grandchildren, Tyler (Cynthia) Link, Josua Link, Hayes Link, Journy Link, Brandon Fannin, Briana Fannin, Jeremiah Collene, Makayla Stirm, and Keira Stirm; two great grandchildren, Alexis and Maddox Link; brother in-law, Dick Nethers and several nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his first wife, Sherry L. (Nethers) Price, and his second wife, Charlotte Link Price, and his brother and sister in-law, Douglas (Jeane) Price.

Funeral services were held Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at the church with Pastor Josiah Bougher officiating. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Unco Church or the Hanover-Toboso Scholarship Program.

2026 Appointments

Appointments

The list of pastoral appointments beginning January 1, 2026, 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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