



Oak Hills United Methodist Church
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July 2023 The Oak Notes

Pastor's Corner

Later this week, we will celebrate Independence Day. We'll join together with family and friends at picnics, singing patriotic songs, and watching fireworks as we give thanks to God for our freedom.

As we come to this central holiday in American national identity, I'd like to call your attention to our true identity in Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:11 identifies us as resident aliens in the world: "Dear friends, since you are aliens and strangers in the world, I urge that you avoid worldly desires that wage war against your lives." In the Old Testament, God made provisions for the alien and the immigrant (Exodus 22:11). The foreigner was considered part of the Jewish community, but was simply passing through for a season. Now this language is applied to us. We are aliens and immigrants in the world. We are simply passing through for a season. Our true citizenship is not of this world, but in heaven above. We are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and as such we serve as Christ's ambassadors and representatives in this world.

When we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, we declare he is the owner, master, and king of our lives. At the root of this claim is the idea of ownership. Our true allegiance is to Jesus Christ alone. He has laid claim to every single area of our lives. And that means, his way of life and his values must define us.

Yet, I wonder if we can even tell the difference between the values of Jesus and the values of our country. I'm reminded of one 4th of July. My church sang patriotic songs, Dixie, and the military fight

songs in worship. It didn't really hit me until the choir sang out: "At a boy, give 'em the gun." Yet, Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Were the words we were singing the kind of values Jesus would affirm or simply the values of our American national identity? And it hit me like a brick wall: Maybe, we have lost the ability to see the difference!

Jesus calls us to a kingdom where greatness is defined by service (Mark 10:32-45). Jesus calls us to a kingdom where we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31), turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-41), and give expecting nothing in return (Luke 6:32-35). Jesus calls us to a kingdom where we are to forgive without limit (Matthew 18:21-22). Jesus calls us to a kingdom where we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43-47). Jesus calls us to a kingdom where we are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger in, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit those in prison (Matthew 25:35-36). The values of this kingdom are counter-cultural. They call us to a different way of life. And, many times, they challenge the American values we hold so dear.

It is my prayer that Jesus would truly show us where we have compromised our faith with our culture. May we truly learn what it means to be resident aliens in this world! To Jesus Christ be all glory, honor, and allegiance, this Independence Day and always!

Pastor Justin



Administrative Board Topics of Interest



(1) An informational meeting to discuss possible disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church will be held this Tuesday, June 27 at 7 p.m. This discussion will be led by our District Superintendent, the Rev. Jenn Lucas. It is critical everyone attend. The purpose of this discussion will be to keep you informed of what is going on in the UMC, our options, and to discern whether or not we should take steps toward disaffiliating from the UMC at this time. Please bring any questions you may have. A vote will NOT be taken at this meeting. Any potential disaffiliation would require a 2/3 majority vote of all official church members present at a duly called Church Conference. Non-members would have voice, but no vote. If you are not a member and want to become an official member see Pastor Justin about membership.

(2) Our children's Sunday School class is growing. We are actually outgrowing our current space. As a result, we are currently looking at where we should move our kids class to allow for continued growth!

(3) The trustees have awarded contracts to replace the boiler and repair the roof. The work will begin soon. We will use funds from the sale of the Ebenezer parsonage to cover these expenses. However, if you would like to give to these projects, beyond your normal offerings, you are encouraged to do so.

(4) During the month of May, we brought in \$13,358 and spent \$20,059, resulting in a net loss of \$6,701. Year to date, we have a net loss of \$8,476. This is by in large due to a decrease in the number of checks we are receiving each week. We ask you to remain faithful in giving that we might finish the year strong.

(5) The number of people being served at Sissy's pantry continues to grow. We are still in need of donations of non-perishable canned goods.

(6) Festival of sharing is upon us again. Items needed for hygiene kits, flood buckets, and school kits are enclosed in this newsletter. If you would like to help assemble or drop off, please contact Linda Wise.

Bible Studies

Sunday School 9 am

Women's Group: Mon 10 am

John's Study: Thursday, 10:30 am

TOGA: 1st and 3rd Thursday, 7pm @ 5609 Green Acres Ct., Cincy



Online Giving

Do you know you can now give on our church website? Simply go to www.oakhillsumc.org and click give in the bar at the top of the page or scan the QR code below and go directly to our online giving portal.



Festival of Sharing 2023

OHUMC has participated in the Festival of Sharing for over 40 years. We collect kits of various items to assist those in need here in Ohio and around the world. When a need arises it is too late to start collecting needed supplies. Through the Festival of Sharing, Church World Service has been able to store kits and then quickly respond to help. Here are a few examples of how supporting Festival of Sharing Kits have touched the lives of neighbors throughout the state of Ohio... After tornadoes devastated communities in Dayton, your support provided Cleanup Buckets, Hygiene Kits and Blankets. In Franklinton, children received the school supplies they needed to succeed in the classroom, and the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless has been able to provide Hygiene Kits and Blankets at their six warming centers throughout the city.

This year we are being asked to assemble 4 types of kits: school kits, hygiene kits, flood buckets and period packs. You can help by assembling a whole pack, by donating some items for a pack or donating funds to complete partial packs and funds to cover shipping costs.

Your donations will be collected in a box in the narthex. We have some of the book bags and 3 of the buckets for flood buckets, so don't worry if those items are difficult for you to get. There are lists of items needed for kits available in the narthex and online at fosohio.org. Donations will need to be made to OHUMC by **Sunday September 17** so we can get them ready to move on to our collection point at Westwood UMC. If you can help package kits after Worship on that Sunday, your help would be most welcome. See Linda Wise with questions, comments or offers of help. Lpwise@fuse.net or 513-205-8104.

The West Ohio Annual Conference met June 1-3 at the Convention Center in Dayton. Pastor Justin Fuhrmann, Diane Cordell, and Margie Bauer were in attendance. The theme of this year's conference was "Committed, Connected Community" centered around the words of Hebrews 10:23-25: "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as we see the Day approaching."

It was our first time meeting together as an Annual Conference since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. We celebrated being able to be committed, connected community again in person, but the cloud of division in the United Methodist Church hung in the air as we approved the disaffiliation of 172 churches (26% of the total number of churches in our conference) and approved the request of 80 ordained pastors to terminate their conference membership and unite with another denomination. By the end of this year, it's expected that this number could reach as high as 1/3 of all West Ohio churches.

This naturally puts great strain on the conference budget. However, the conference has stressed that apportionments will not be raised on those local churches who remain. Instead, the conference is taking steps to reduce administrative costs at the conference level. As of July 1, we will reduce the number of districts in our conference from 8 to 6, reducing the number of district superintendents and staff. Oak Hills will now be a part of the Great Miami River District which includes all United Methodist Churches in Preble, Montgomery, Green, Butler, Warren, Hamilton and Clermont Counties. When Bishop Palmer retires in 2024, it is expected that we will move to sharing a bishop with East Ohio. In addition, a recommendation was made to reduce camp costs (the largest portion of the conference budget) by selling Camp Otterbein and Camp Widewater and investing those funds in Camp Wesley. But no action was taken; the proposal was withdrawn by the trustees in favor of listening to the people another year. The rules were also suspended to wait and pass the 2024 budget until a special session of the Annual Conference later this fall to give the conference time to see the ongoing impact that disaffiliation has.

This loss in churches is by and large due to our theological differences over the question of ordination and marriage of homosexuals. For the first time in our history, West Ohio passed a recommendation to support the removal of the language around homosexuality that was added to the *Book of Discipline* at the 2019 General Conference and passed a resolution calling for the affirmation and full inclusion of all people in the United Methodist Church. These resolutions, however, were simply aspirational alone. Yet, they are at the heart of the disaffiliation conversation we are having this Tuesday, June 27, at 7 p.m.

The next session of the Annual Conference will be a special session this October to approve the 2024 conference budget, vote on additional delegates for the 2024 General Conference (due to holes that have emerged since they were elected in 2019), and approve additional church and clergy disaffiliations.

If you have any questions, would like more information about anything in this article, or would like to be a lay delegate representing Oak Hills at an Annual Conference in the future, please see Pastor Justin

Israel Trip



Join Oak Hills United Methodist Church and Legacy Christian Church in Harrison as we join together for a fun faith-filled experience of a lifetime. Pastor Justin Fuhrmann and Pastor Mark Garrett will be leading us as we tour the Holy Lands with Medji Tours from October 23-31, 2023. We'll take a boat ride in the Sea of Galilee. You'll have the opportunity to be baptized in the Jordan River, to see the Dead Sea, Masada, and Jerusalem. We'll pray with others at the Western Wall. We'll sing Christmas carols at the place where Jesus was born, and reflect at the place where he was crucified. We'll take communion together, worship in a church in Jerusalem, and eat a Sabbath meal. There will be devotions at the sites along the way. In doing so, the Bible will come to life in a way you've never dreamed. The cost of the trip is \$2,870 (plus airfare) per participant. That covers the tours, guides, hotels, and 2 meals a day. We need at least 12 people to make the trip possible, and if we get 15 to go, the cost of the trip will go down to \$2,600 (plus airfare) per participant. All prices are based on double occupancy rooms.. It is not too late to register. You can still register online at <https://meiditours.com/tour/harrison-legacy-church/>. The deadline to register is July 24, 2023.



Announcements

- 6/27 - Disaffiliation Information Session, 7 pm
- 7/3 - Trustees, 7pm
- 7/4 - Office Closed: Happy Independence Day!
- 7/5 - UMW Luncheon, 12 pm
- 7/9 - Family Board Game Night, 6-9 pm (Bring your favorite game and a snack to share)
- 7/10 - Finance 6:30 pm; Board Meeting, 7 pm
- 7/15 - Block Party, 2-4 p.m. @ Kim Warman Home
- 7/24 - Deadline to Register for Israel Trip
- 7/26 - Community Dinner, 6 pm
- 7/28 - Scrapbooking/Craft Group, 7pm
- 8/5 - Back to School Bash, 5:30-8 pm (NEED TO VERIFY IF THIS IS HAPPENING!!!)



Youth Group has been focusing on the 10 Commandments and learning about God's never-ending love for us. We've also been having fun with various crafts and games. In July, we will make prayer journals, go on a scavenger hunt, and paint the youth room. We are excited about our upcoming trip to the Reds game and concert! If you have paint supplies around your house that you can donate, please consider doing so to help save the budget.

Thank you,

Ali



OHUMC Family Ministries

VBS Report:

From June 19 to June 23, a vibrant and engaging Vacation Bible School (VBS) took place, with 25 enthusiastic children in attendance. Every night, from 6:30 to 8 pm, we gathered together to learn and grow in our faith.

Throughout the week, the children discovered truths about their relationship with God. They delved into the realization that God knows them intimately, using the story of Noah as an example. They discovered the comforting truth that God not only hears their prayers but also responds with love and compassion, as He did to Jonah in the belly of the big fish. Then they learned that God provides the strength they need to navigate life's challenges and overcome obstacles. Peter's story of walking on the water was a fun one that night!

The most special revelation for these children was the understanding that God loves them unconditionally, and He looks at each of them as a wonderful and beautiful creation of His! As the week unfolded, the children were encouraged to embrace their role as messengers of the good news of Jesus Christ. They discovered that God desires to send them out into the world, equipped with the message of hope, love, and redemption. They practiced that as they collected donations of non-perishable items for Sissy's Pantry, filling a table with food, drinks, and diapers!

In addition to the impactful lessons, the children also enjoyed the imaginative crafts provided by Aqua Marina (Kim Warman). Each evening, they were able to express their creativity while reinforcing the lessons they had learned. And the enthusiastic Miss Kathy led them in engaging games, fostering a spirit of camaraderie and joy throughout the week. Please find pictures of VBS on this page and as an insert.

Highlights From VBS

