



# Oak Hills United Methodist Church

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## 2024 The Oak Notes

### Pastor Article

New Year's is a time of new beginnings. It's a time of year that causes us to pause and to reflect, to re-evaluate and reassess our lives. Who are we? Why do we exist? What's really most important in life? What goals and priorities really matter? In other words, it's a time when we seek to define our purpose.

The same is the case in the life of the church. New Year's offers us a really great opportunity to stop and take a really good look at who we are, where we are, why we exist, and where really we're going.

Think of it like this: If you're going on a journey, you can't start driving without knowing where you are and where you're going. You have to know your current location. You have to know your destination, and you have to know how you're going to get there. The same is the case with the church. If we're to make an impact in our world, we have to know who we are, where we are going, and how we're going to get there. Otherwise, we'll be like a hamster exerting a lot of energy but not making any progress.

Over the last several years, the United Methodist Church has gone through a lot of upheaval. Some 348 churches left the UMC in the West Ohio Conference alone. That upheaval can leave us with a lot of uncertainty. Uncertainty about who we are. Uncertainty about what we stand for. Uncertainty about who where we are going and the like. And it's for that reason, that I'd like to begin this New Year by getting back to our United Methodist roots. The roots of the Wesleyan movement on which we were founded.

Think about the image of roots for a moment. In many ways, the roots are the most important part of the plant. They fix the plant firmly in the soil. They provide water and minerals. They are the life-source of the entire plant. Roots are absolutely vital to the overall health of the plant. The fact is what we see on the surface, above the ground, is directly connected to what is beneath the surface—to the roots.

When we neglect our roots, our faith withers and dies. When we tend to our roots we thrive and flourish. This New Year, let's get back to who we are as United Methodists! Let's get back to our roots. Over the next 6 weeks we are going to be exploring 6 essential characteristics that defined the early Methodist movement and ask what it might look like for us to reclaim those principles again today.

The early Methodist Church was a Spirit-driven church. Everything they did was under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit. The early Methodist church was a discipleship-driven church. They took spiritual growth seriously and expected everyone to be in a small groups, class meetings, or bands. They early Methodist Church was a holiness driven church, who believed we could really become all that Jesus died for us to be in this life. The early Methodist church was a justice driven church that changed their world for the better. And they were a lay and mission driven institution. They empowered the people to do what God was calling them to do and put the mission of the church front and center.

I wonder: What would it look like for us to reclaim these principles today? What would it look like for us to truly be Spirit led? To be discipleship driven? To be holiness centered? To be concerned for the least of these? To empower people for ministry? And to make the mission front and center in all that we did?

My prayer and my challenge for this New Year is that we would reclaim our roots. That we would reclaim our identity and we might become the people God has already called us to be in this year.

Have a very blessed and Happy New Year!

Pastor Justin



### Administrative Board Topics of Interest

1) In December, we approved the 2024 budget which is outlined in narrative form in this newsletter. We project an annual income of \$207,900 and expenses of \$223,701 for a net loss of \$15,801. As such, we will be doing a number of fundraisers and pushes to reduce our overall net loss by the end of the year. If you would like to be a part of our fundraising and marketing team, please let Pastor Justin know. We continue to ask for your prayerful and faithful financial support as we seek to impact our world! We believe our best days are ahead of us, but it requires faithfulness and sacrificial generosity from us all.

**2023 Faith Based Financial Plan** (Approved at December 11, 2023 Board Meeting)

I hope you share my excitement about the many worthwhile ministries taking place at Oak Hills UMC. One significant factor behind the fruitfulness of these ministries is your continued faithfulness to fund ministries through your generous financial support. Money itself is a lifeless thing, but when put to use by dedicated disciples who seek to do great things for God, great things can and will happen. As a part of our continued effort to improve communication, you will find here a narrative version of our 2024 faith-based financial plan (budget), which shows how your gifts will go to support the work of God at Oak Hills over the course of the next year. If you would like a line-item version of the budget, it is also available in the church office upon request. I look forward to seeing what God will do through us in the coming year!

**Total Estimated 2024 Operating Expenses: \$223,701** (Reduced by \$6,375 from 2023 Budget).

1) **Team 1: Radical Hospitality: \$6,950** (Increased by \$50 from 2023 Budget)

1 John 4:7-8 says, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." Love is the supreme virtue of the Christian life. We exist to love our neighbors as ourselves. The radical hospitality team focuses on loving the people of our community the way God loves them. This portion of the budget supports both our Sunday morning hospitality (cookies) and the outreach we do into the community whether that be through Sissy's Pantry, our community dinners, advertising, or simply offering gifts of appreciation to show teachers and first responders how much we really care. In addition, this portion of the budget includes our hobby based outreach groups and block parties.

2) **Team 2: Passionate Worship: \$4,806** (Increased by \$844 from 2023 Budget)

Jesus calls us not only to love our neighbor as ourselves, but to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). The primary way we love God is through worship. We were created for worship. Our worship services, both in person and online via Facebook and YouTube, help us to grow in our love for God. This portion of the budget covers our worship service, communion elements, music and licensing, decorations, banners, candles, and technology for media, sound, and streaming online.

3) **Team 3: Faith Forming Relationships: \$17,325** (Reduced by \$2,575 from 2023 Budget)

A disciple of Jesus Christ continually grows in their love for God and God's people. This happens as we spend time in the word of God and in relationship with others. That begins with our children and youth, and continues on into adulthood. In every phase of life, we learn to love more and more like Jesus. This portion of our

faith-based financial plan supports curriculum and supplies for all of our children's, youth, adult Sunday School, and small group ministries. It also supports Jesus and Me (JAM), Vacation Bible School (VBS), our puppet ministry, youth trips and outings, our family outreach events and movie nights. In addition, we are receiving a grant to create a space and launch a youth after school program.

4) **Team 4: Risk Taking Missions: \$1,500** (Reduced by \$500 from 2023 Budget)

From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called his disciples to follow him and to fish for people. As we spend time with Jesus, he sends us back out to be involved in his mission in the world. This happens through our risk taking missions team. While most of our mission endeavors are supported by special donations (Operation Christmas Child, Helping Hands Gifts Cards), we did budget some money to assist with our charitable projects in the schools—to provide for food and other hygiene needs in the schools.

5) **Pastor and Staff Salary and Benefits: \$123,291** (Increased by \$8,158 from 2023 Budget)

We employ a full time pastor, a part time youth pastor, and a part time church secretary. This portion of the faith-based financial plan represents their salaries, reimbursable expenses for ministry, housing allowance, continuing education, pension, health insurance, workers compensation, and taxes. This increase includes a \$2000 raise in salary for Pastor Justin adopted at the 2023 Church Conference.

6) **Property and Utilities: \$50,540** (Reduced by \$14,540 from 2023 Budget)

Oak Hills UMC owns a church and one old parsonage (the Bridgetown house). We are currently in the process of cleaning the Bridgetown house in preparation to rent it out. This portion of the church budget includes our utilities, property taxes, insurance, maintenance, lawn care, landscaping, and snow removal. We budgeted to begin renting out the Bridgetown house in April 2024. Should it take longer, our monthly income will be reduced by \$1000 a month and we will have additional utility expenses. A good chunk of the reduction in costs comes from the sale of the Ebenezer parsonage in 2023. We also still have some reserves available from the sale of the Ebenezer parsonage for unexpected repairs.

7) **Office, Administration, and Finance: \$13,436** (Reduced by \$539 from 2023 Budget)

The church office, administration, and finance teams provide the necessary support for the pastor, the staff, and the ministries of the church to thrive. This portion of the budget includes regular office expenses including supplies, copies, postage, bulletins, newsletters, equipment, our website, background checks, our annual stewardship campaign, giv-



8) **Connectional Giving: \$5,853** (Increased by \$2,300 from 2023 Budget)

As United Methodists, we are part of a larger work of Christ through district, conference, national, and global ministries and missions of the church. Through connectional giving, we support the ministries of local, national, and global missions, United Methodist colleges, universities, seminaries, hospitals, and homes, and provide for new church starts and congregational revitalization, among other things. This portion of our budget includes paying 100% of our district apportionments and \$2000 of our conference apportionments for 2024, as well as hotel expenses for our lay delegate to annual conference. While we desire to pay our apportionments in full, we do not have the funds to do so. But, we did want to show some growth from 2023 due to our ongoing dependence on grants from the district and the conference.

**Total Estimated 2024 Income: \$207,900** (Reduced by \$14,950 from 2023 Budget)

Total anticipated income includes \$152,400 from tithes, offerings, and seasonal offerings, \$40,500 from designated giving, \$23,000 in grants from the Great Miami River District and West Ohio Conference, \$9,000 in rental fees from the Bridgetown house and \$2,000 from room use fees and fundraisers. The \$23,000 in grants, include a grant for youth and family ministry for \$10,000, an outreach grant that includes our panty ministry, our community dinners, and our ministry with the local schools for \$7,000, and a \$5000 grant from the conference to create a space and launch an after school ministry. We are also planning to apply for another \$1000 for a summer youth mission trip or camp later in the year.

This projected budget results in a **net loss of \$15,801**. As such, we will be doing a number of fundraisers and pushes (such as our recent wampum for the website) to reduce our net loss by the end of the year. If you would like to be a part of our fundraising and marketing team, please let Pastor Justin know. We continue to ask for your prayerful and faithful financial support as we seek to impact our world! We believe our best days are ahead of us, but it requires faithfulness and sacrificial generosity from us all.



### Announcements

1/1 – Happy New Years: Office Closed

1/1 – Trustees, 7 pm

1/3 – UMW Luncheon, 12 pm

1/8 – Finance 6:30 pm; Board Meeting 7 pm

1/14– Youth Group Party 9:30-10:30 a.m.

1/14 – Passionate Worship, 12 pm

1/14 – Family Board Game Night, 6-9 pm

1/16 – Adam Hamilton, “Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith,” 6:30-8:30 p.m. Mason UMC

1/19 – Young at Heart, 7 pm

1/21 – Great Miami River District Leadership Training Day, 2-6 p.m. Mason UMC

1/26 – Arts and Crafts, 7 pm

1/31 – Community Dinner, 6 pm

Worship – Sunday, 10:30 am

Sissy’s Pantry – Wed 6:30-8:00 pm

Zoom Prayer – Thursday, 11 am

### Bible Studies

Sunday School 9 am

Women’s Group: Mon 10 am

Gospel of John: Tues 6:30 pm

Pastor’s Study (Mark): Wed 2 pm

John’s Study: Thursday, 10:30 am



### Snow Policy

With winter weather around the corner, we wanted to take time to let you know what to expect. In general, Pastor Justin will do everything possible NOT to cancel worship. If worship must be canceled it will be announced on channel 5, our church Facebook page, and our church website on Sunday morning no later than 8 a.m. Pastor will still stream the sermon live provided he has internet service at home.

In general, you can expect the following:

**(1) Level 3 Snow Emergency** (in Hamilton County): All in person worship services, church activities, and meetings will be canceled and the church office will be closed. Worship online will still proceed as scheduled provided that Pastor Justin has internet service at home.

**(2) Level 2 Snow Emergency** (in Hamilton County): All in person church activities and meetings will be canceled. Pastor Justin and Mary Flannery will determine whether in-person worship services are canceled on a case-by-case basis. If in person worship is canceled, worship online will still proceed as scheduled provided that Pastor Justin has internet service at home. Pastor Justin and Beverly Boone will determine if the church office is closed on a case-by-case basis and may work from home if needed. Each person is encouraged to use their own wisdom and discernment to determine if they will go out.

**(3) Level 1 Snow Emergency** (in Hamilton County): All in-person worship services, church activities, and meetings will proceed as scheduled provided Pastor Justin can get to church. The church office will be open. Each person is encouraged to use their own wisdom and discernment to determine if they go out.

### Online Giving

Do you know you can now give on our church website? Simply go to [www.oakhillsumc.org](http://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.



### Kroger Plus Cards

**The Premise**-There undoubtedly are thousands of people who shop regularly at Kroger and who have the Kroger Plus card.

**The Probability**-We know that not everyone has their Kroger card linked to any charitable organizations.

**The Practice**-Ask your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors a few simple questions. They’re not difficult questions— below is a sneak preview of just how simple that will be and a couple of us will role-play them for you live the next two Sundays.

*“Which charitable organization do you have your Kroger Card linked to?”*

*“The need for our community pantry are growing quickly. Would you help us by allowing us to add our church to your Kroger account as your charitable organization?”*

*“Great, thank you. Here’s the info we need to do that, just the email address used for your Kroger account and the password. How soon should I follow up with you to get that info from you?”*

When you get their info please share that with Sue or Bob and they will take care of adding our church to their Kroger Plus Card account.

**The Pay Off**-Kroger donations to our church will increase, allowing us to expand our outreach activities and support the work of this church.

### Kroger Rewards

Oak Hills United Methodist Church is currently set up as a beneficiary on Kroger Community Rewards. This gives a small percentage of each purchase you make at Kroger back to the church. If you have not already done so, we would encourage you to connect your Kroger card to Oak Hills UMC online. Step 1: Get a Kroger Card. Step 2: Create a digital account at [Kroger.com](http://Kroger.com) and link your Kroger card. Step 3: Go to [www.kroger.com/communityrewards](http://www.kroger.com/communityrewards). And click where it says search for your organization here. Step 4: Search for Oak Hills United Methodist Church. When the church comes up, select it and click save. From now on, when you use your Kroger card a small percent of what you spent is given back to the church.



### Adam Hamilton in Ohio

Rev. Adam Hamilton is touring Ohio with the release of his upcoming book, “Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith.” This is an incredible opportunity to learn from a successful author of church resources and pastor of one of the most influential churches in America, The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City. Each stop will be 90 minutes with a short presentation followed by a Q & A about the book. The event is free, but registration is required. Books will be available to purchase on site.

**About Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith (releases December, 2023)**

**Does your faith make room for questions?**

Everyone has doubts. Where is God when bad things happen? Does God hear our prayers? Is there a heaven? How can we know? Often we treat such questions as the enemy of faith. But uncertainty doesn’t mean our belief is lacking. Doubt can be a path to a deeper, richer encounter with God.

In *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*, join best-selling author and pastor Adam Hamilton as he discusses some of our most significant sources of doubt and shows how a steady trust in God can emerge from them. You will delve into questions like:

“Does God exist? How can I know?”  
“Is the Bible true?”  
“Why do prayers go unanswered?”

Hamilton approaches these sources of doubt with honesty and insight, drawing on the rich wisdom of the Bible, Christian tradition, and his experience walking with thousands of people on their spiritual journey. Whether you’re a longtime Christian or someone brand new to faith, this book will lead you to a trust in God that is unafraid of hard questions. Wrestle with doubt and find faith—belief and trust, not certainty; mystery rather than simple answers. Register for the Adam Hamilton Event Here: [www.westohioumc.org/event/adam-hamilton/ohio-book-tour-cincinnati](http://www.westohioumc.org/event/adam-hamilton/ohio-book-tour-cincinnati)



# OHUMC Family Ministries



Isaiah 60:3 — And Nations shall come to Your light and kings to the brightness of Your Rising



## Upcoming Family Ministries Events:

**Winter Carnival 2023** - February 10th from 1-3 p.m.

What: A joyful time of games and fun for the whole family held in the OHUMC Fellowship Hall. Flyer for the Winter Carnival is on the back of the insert.

## OHUMC Kids & Youth Update:

Sunday school is from 9-10:20 am every Sunday. Join us for a Bible-based lesson with crafts and prizes! Ms. Kathy ensures kids learn about the Bible and have something to take home. Then, enjoy JAM (Jesus and Me) in the Sunday school hall during the main worship service. We have fantastic volunteers like Mrs. Kim, Mr. David and Mrs. Ronda. Puppets also visit the worship service multiple times a month, which is always exciting!

The youth enjoy meeting weekly for group time on Sunday mornings at 9:30 with Ms. Ali for fun and valuable conversation! Please join us if you're a youth aged 12-17! We invite adults and families to join one of our family ministries' events. We'd love to see you there. :)

Thank you,  
Ali



**Church Office Hours** Beginning sometime in January, Beverly is going to start a part-time job working in the lunchroom at Westwood Elementary School. That would mean the hours would change from 9-12p.m. to 1:30-4:30 p.m. We will keep everyone posted on when this change will occur.

Below are some Christmas flag wavers :

