



Oak Hills United Methodist Church

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March 2024 The Oak Notes

Pastor Article

I wanted to take a few moments today to reflect on the Feeding of the Five Thousand. You remember the story. A large crowd of some 5000 men plus women and children have gathered to listen to Jesus teach. The time is growing late and the people are getting hungry, but they are in an arid and desolate place, where food is scarce. The disciples suggest that Jesus send the people away so that they can go and find something to eat, but Jesus tells the disciples you give them something to eat. Immediately, they pull out their calculators and start to do the math. 5000 men plus women and children; about 15,000 people. That would take about 200 denarii (or 8 months wages) to buy even the most basic rations for the people to eat. They go through their wallets and they conclude there isn't enough. They only have 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and that's not enough to go around for that many people.

Even though Jesus tells his disciples that they can do this, they operate from a position of scarcity and lack—a position that says there is NOT ENOUGH. They are controlled by what they think they don't have and what they think they need rather than what they actually do have. No matter how many times Jesus shows himself to be a God of abundance and supply, it is our natural human tendency to drift back to the place of scarcity again and again. To focus on what we don't have rather than what we do. And that scarcity fuels our fear, our worries, and our concerns about the future—even though Jesus is moving.

I saw it this week. I had more than one conversation about the dismal state of our church. Wishing we had more people. Wishing we had more money. Wishing. Wishing. Wishing. Yet, I look around and I see a God of provision, a God of abundance and supply, who says that things are not as bad as you think.

Over the last few weeks, I have been working on our 2023 end-of-year report. While I always dread the added paperwork, it always gives me a chance to pause and reflect on where we are and where we've been over the course of the last year. Every number reveals something about who we are and the work God is currently doing among us in our community. While there are certainly things we can work on and improve, I want to remind you that there is also a lot for us to celebrate and give thanks for right now.

Things are not as bleak as you may think! Over the last year, we have had several new people become a part of our worshipping community including Dan and Beth Basham, Brenda Dennison, Barb McLaughlin, Kurt Philippo, Panji, Liz and Matthew Pope, Ali and Aria Scully, and Carrie Sicking. That's 11 new people in the course of one year; nearly one new person every single month of the year. Given our current size, that's a remarkable achievement. We also baptized or rededicated six people (Susan Burns, Karen Freudemann, Eden Price, LeeLee Kilgore, Axton Laws, and Kaison Wilson), and received three new people into membership of the church (Beverly Boone, Cari Laws, and Heather Wilson). In addition, we expanded our impact in the community through Sissy's pantry and through our work at the local schools. The number of people attending our kids' events and card shows have grown. We launched two new hobby based ministries and increased involvement in small groups through the two new groups we launched just last fall. As a result, the total number involved in small groups has increased 40% this year.

Wow! That is a lot to be thankful for. Yet, we don't often see it in the face of what we wish we had.

Here's the point: We can choose to focus on the negative and be consumed by what we don't have or we can take a lesson from Jesus and focus on what we do. After all, those five loaves and two fish, they were not only enough to feed the entire crowd, they were more than enough. After the people ate and had their fill, the disciples went out and picked up twelve basketfuls of leftovers. I wonder: Will we choose to be paralyzed by what we think we don't have or will we trust that what we have is enough?

Here's the thing: In our hands, it's never going to be enough. It's always going to look lacking. It's always going to seem deficient. But in God's hands even the little we do have is always enough for a miracle!



Administrative Board Topics of Interest

1) The church board has begun a period of assessment. Over the next several months we will be reviewing and assessing our progress toward making disciples of Jesus Christ. We will be asking questions such as: What is a disciple of Jesus Christ? What does a disciple of Jesus Christ look like? What is our vision for developing disciples of Jesus Christ? How do we get there? And how do we effectively communicate that vision and plan to the congregation so that we are all moving in the same direction?

2) We are also starting to explore questions of hospitality, asking what it looks like to truly be a welcoming church. Part of this has included identifying possible projects to spruce up the look of the church. We will be looking to eliminate the clutter in the prayer and the coat rooms in the near future. We are also discussing things such as painting the fellowship hall, creating a youth space in Wilke chapel, and the possibility of tearing down walls and creating a hospitality suite in the place of the current prayer room. At our next meeting, we hope to establish a priority list and timeline for these projects.

3) The Trustees are moving forward with the purchase of two new exterior signs to replace the faded brown signs off of Ebenezer and Bridgetown. We are currently determining what we want on the signs.

4) We are currently in the process of renovating the old Bridgetown parsonage with the hopes to rent it out by the beginning of April. A potential renter is currently lined up when the house is ready to go. This will be an additional source of revenue for the church and will help us move toward a balanced budget.

(5) We closed out the month of January in the black with an income of \$15,646 and expenses totaling \$13,394 for a profit of \$2,252. Expenses this month came in lower than most months last year. We continue to encourage you to name Oak Hills UMC as a char-

itable organization on your Kroger Card. Please ask you friends, family, and relatives to do the same. This is an easy way to increase revenue.

(6) We are in need of substitute teachers for kids and youth Sunday School as well as a few people who would be willing to man the nursery on an as needed basis. If you are interested contact Pastor Justin.

(7) We are in need of candy and plastic eggs for the Easter Party on March 23. Please have all donations in by March 17. Our fundraising team will be piggy-backing on this event to raffle off goodie baskets.

(8) Team 1 (Radical Hospitality) has developed "Blessing Bags." They ask that you take one and keep it in your car. When you find someone in need, please give it to them. Ask Sue Schloss for more information.



Easter Lily Orders

Easter Lily order forms will be in the bulletin March 10, 2024. All orders must be in by Palm Sunday, March 24, 2024. You may leave the forms in the offering plate or in the church office.





OHUMC Family Ministries



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
- TOGA: 1st and 3rd Thursday @ 5609 Green Acres Ct. Cincinnati, Ohio



Worship - Sunday, 10:30 am

Sissy's Pantry - Wed 6:30-8:00 pm

Zoom Prayer - Thursday, 11 am



Announcements

- 3/4 - Trustees, 6:30 pm
- 3/6 - UMW Luncheon, 12 pm at West Shine on Westbourne.
- 3/10 - Family Board Game Night, 6-9 pm
- 3/11 - Finance 6:30 pm; Board Meeting 7 pm
- 3/15 - Young at Heart, 7 pm
- 3/16 - Great Miami River District Super Serve Saturday
- 3/22 - Arts and Crafts, 7 pm
- 3/23 - Easter Party and Egg Hunt, 1-3 pm
- 3/27 - Community Dinner, 6 pm
- 3/28 - Maundy Thursday Worship, 7 pm
- 3/29 - Good Friday Prayer Stations, 12-4 pm
- 3/31 - Easter Worship, 10:30 am



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.



Our special services include:

- (1) Palm/Passion Sunday** (March 24, 10:30 a.m.): We relive the move of Holy Week, from celebration to death. We begin our service with the celebration of Palm Sunday. We worship and praise Jesus to the waving of palm branches. We end our service with the move toward cross and death on Good Friday.
- (2) Maundy Thursday** (March 28, 7 p.m.): Maundy Thursday is the celebration of the final meal that Jesus spends with his disciples before his execution (the Last Supper). During this meal, he institutes the sacrament of Holy Communion. We will take time to pause and reflect on what this meal means.
- (3) Good Friday** (March 29, 12-4 p.m.): Good Friday is the day of the crucifixion, the day on which Jesus dies for the sins of the world. We invite you to take time to reflect on the cross through a series of guided prayer stations as we reflect deeper on Jesus's seven I am statements. Come anytime you want between noon and 4 p.m. Spend as much or as little time as you need working through the stations.
- (4) Easter Celebration** (March 31, 10:30 a.m.): We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Join us as we come together to celebrate the greatest news ever told. Jesus says I am the resurrection and the life. Resurrection is not an event. It is a person. It is in the resurrection that we see who Jesus really is. He is the God who brings us victory over sin and grave as we raise to new life in him.

The Easter Party and Egg hunt will be March 23 from 1-3p.m. We are in desperate need of plastic eggs and non chocolate candy. If you are able to donate any of these items please leave them in the church office for Kathy.

We had a great turn out for our Winter carnival! Below are a few pictures.

