



Oak Hills United Methodist Church
 6069 Bridgetown Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45248
 513-574-1131; oakhillsumc.org
 oakhillsumc@fuse.net



December 2024 The Oak Notes

Pastor Article

I'd like to start today by asking you a simple question: Are you ready for Christmas? Normally, when we think about our readiness for Christmas, we point to a number of different things. Do we have our tree out? Are the decorations and the lights hung? Is our Christmas shopping completed? Have we sent out our cards? Is everything wrapped and under the tree? Is our house ready for the guests to come over?

But that's not the kind of preparation I'm talking about. When I say, "Are you ready for Christmas?," I'm talking about a deeper, more important kind of spiritual preparation: a readiness of the soul. Just as we prepare for Christmas by putting up decorations, listening to Christmas music, hanging stockings, or buying gifts, advent asks us, "How are we preparing our souls to receive Jesus Christ anew this year?"

Literally, the term Advent means "coming" or "appearance." It is a season of spiritual preparation and readiness, not only for the coming of Jesus Christ on Christmas morning, but for his ultimate return. We are reminded of the past each Christmas in order that it orient us to the promise of the future. It symbolizes the present situation of the church as we wait for the return of Jesus Christ in the last days.

In many ways, we are in a similar situation to the people of Israel at the close of the Old Testament.

Israel was looking back to God's gracious action in delivering them from the exile in Egypt, all the while waiting and longing for the coming of the messiah to bring about all that God has promised. In the same way, we look back upon Christ's coming at Christmas, but at the same time, look forward to his return. So, we need to prepare our hearts to receive him anew. We need to be watchful and ready, because we do not know the day or the hour of his return. Jesus himself said it would come like a thief in the night.

Matthew 24:36-44 puts it like this: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in

the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So, you also, must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

So, I ask you again, "Are you ready for the coming of Jesus Christ into the world this Christmas?" And if not, what steps might you need to take this Christmas season to ready your heart to receive him anew?

Come, Lord Jesus, Come.

Pastor Justin

Pastor Vacation

Pastor Justin will be on vacation from Wednesday, December 25 through Saturday, January 3. Amit Dutta will be preaching in pastor's absence on Sunday, December 29. You may also reach out to Amit if you have a pastoral emergency at any time during pastor's vacation. His number is 513-658-2867. For all other church related questions, please contact either the church office (513-574-1131), Administrative Board Chair Mary Flannery (513-378-7085), or Lay Leader Bob Schloss (513-702-7118).

2025 Faith Based Financial Plan (Approved at November 11, 2024 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 2025 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 2025 Operating Expenses: \$241,951 (Increased by \$11,214 from 2024).

1) Team 1: Radical Hospitality: \$5,950 (Decreased by \$100 from 2024 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. A \$6,500 community outreach grant from the district supports this work. We have also applied for an additional \$20,000 grant from Paycor to cover additional expenses for Sissy's pantry, our community dinners, and our blessing bags beyond the budget, should we get it. We find out about that in May 2025.

2) Team 2: Passionate Worship: \$5,762 (Increased by \$956 from 2024 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: \$15,738 (Reduced by \$5,587 from 2024 Budget)

A disciple is an obedient follower of Jesus, who becomes more like Jesus in word and deed. 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 be 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, including our new Greif Support Group. It also supports Jesus and Me (JAM), Vacation Bible School (VBS), our puppet ministry, our youth after-school program, youth trips and outings, and our family outreach events. Three grants support this work: A \$8,000 youth and family grant from the district, 50% of the \$10,000 grant from the Evangelism Foundation (received in July 2024), and a \$5,000 grant from United Methodist Discipleship Ministries.

Team 4: Risk Taking Missions: \$1,500 (Same as in 2024 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), we did budget some money to assist with our charitable projects in the schools and our Helping Hands gift card ministry to the needy in our community. These funds are supported by the remainder of the \$6,500 community outreach grant from the district.

5) Pastor and Staff Salary and Benefits: \$135,559 (Increased by \$15,232 from 2024 Budget)

We employ a full time pastor, a part time youth pastor

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a part time administrative assistant, and a part time custodian. 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. The majority of this increase stems from a move away from a janitorial service in the 2024 budget (which was paid under property below) to a paid staff member for our custodian, and additional hours for Ali for our youth after-school program that is covered as a part of the grant.

6) Property and Utilities: \$63,030 (Increased by \$12,490 from 2024 Budget)

Oak Hills UMC owns a church and one old parsonage (the Bridgetown house). This portion of the church budget includes our utilities, property taxes, insurance, maintenance, lawn care, landscaping, and snow removal. The majority of the increase our utilities, property taxes, insurance, maintenance, lawn care, landscaping, and snow removal. The majority of the increase (\$10,000) comes from the planned renovation of the "prayer room" into a café in early 2025. We have applied for a \$15,000 Go Grant from the conference to cover the café and the replacement of the awnings. We have budgeted to receive \$10,000 for the project.

7) Office, Administration, and Finance: \$8,928 (Reduced by \$4,508 from 2024 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, website, background checks, stewardship campaign, giving envelopes, payroll, banking charges, and funds for the fundraising team. The reduction in costs comes from two factors: (1) the planned move to a smaller copier machine in 2025, and (2) the fact that in 2024 we planned to replace and update multiple church computers.

8) Connectional Giving: \$5,484 (Reduced by \$369 from 2024 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 \$2500 of our conference apportionments for 2025. While we desire to pay our apportionments in full, we do not have the funds to do so yet. While our overall expense in apportionments is decreasing, this represents an increase in the amount of conference apportionments paid. Our district rate of pay is lower than it was in 2024. This means our percent of apportionments paid is actually growing while still budgeting less than in 2024.

Total Estimated 2025 Income: \$229,801 (Increased by \$17,901 from 2024 Budget)

Total anticipated income includes \$163,650 from tithes, offerings, and seasonal offerings, \$11,400 from designated giving, \$35,750 in grants from the Great Miami River District, the West Ohio Conference, United Methodist Discipleship Ministries, and Ministries, and the Evangelism Foundation, \$13,000 in rental fees from the Bridgetown house and \$4,500 from room use fees and fundraisers. There is also a possibility of receiving another \$20,000 grant from Paycor for our pantry, community dinner, and blessing bags. Please note: The funds from the Evangelism Foundation were received in July 2024 for a 12 month grant cycle. They will cover \$5,000 of our expenses in 2025 but will not appear on the income sheet for this year. They are, however, included on the income side of our budget to offset the connected expenses.

This projected budget results in a net loss of \$12,150.

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.



2025 Leadership Slate (Adopted at Church Conference, November 11, 2024)

Administrative Board

Board Chair – Mary Flannery (2025)

Pastor Justin Fuhrmann

Lay Leader/Finance Chair/Radical Hospitality Rep – Bob Schloss (2025)

SPPRC Chair – Kim Warman (2025)

Trustee Rep – Scott Wieman (2026)

Treasurer – David Glassmeyer (2027)

Financial Secretary – Linda Wise (2026)

Lay Delegate/Secretary/Fundraising Rep – Sherilyn Reynolds (2026)

Faith Forming Relations/Family Ministry Rep – Kathy Cramerding (2025)

Passionate Worship Rep – Kris Smith (2027)

At Large – Marjie Bauer (2026), Cari Laws (2027)

Staff-Pastor Parish Relations Committee

Chair – Kim Warman (2025)

Pastor Justin Fuhrmann

Bob Schloss (2025)

Kris Smith (2025)

Marjie Bauer (2026)

Joe Heath (2026)

Alan Cordell (2026)

Karen Freudemann (2027)

Tami Ernst (2027)

Sherilyn Reynolds (2027)



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Board of Trustees

Chair – Anthony Smith (2025)

Tim Janson (2025)

Michael Hirsh (2025)

Stephen Meyer (2026)

Sally Wieman (2026)

Scott Wieman (2026)

Ronda Glassmeyer (2027)

Dave Freudemann (2027)

Sue Schloss (2027)

Nominations

Chair – Pastor Justin Fuhrmann

Karen Freudemann (2025)

Coty Dance (2025)

Bob Schloss (2025)

Diane Cordell (2026)

Ellen Neiheisel (2026)

David Glassmeyer (2026)

Melissa Fuhrmann (2027)

Jennifer Meyer (2027)

Finance Committee

Chair – Bob Schloss (2025)

Pastor Justin Fuhrmann

Sherilyn Reynolds (2026)

Mary Flannery (2025)

Kim Warman (2025)

Anthony Smith (2025)

David Glassmeyer (2027)

Linda Wise (2026)

Ministry Team Leaders

Radical Hospitality – Sue and Bob Schloss

Passionate Worship – Karen Freudemann

Faith Forming Relations and Family Ministries – Kathy Cramerding

Risk Taking Missions – Carol Reitzes and Joan Seurkamp

Fundraising – Sherilyn Reynolds

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Announcements

- 12/3 - Trustees, 6:30 pm
- 12/4 - UMW Luncheon, 12 pm
- 12/7 - Breakfast with Santa and Birthday Party for Jesus, 9am-12pm
- 12/8 - Family Board Game Night, 6-9 pm
- 12/9 - Finance 6:30 pm; Board Meeting 7 pm
- 12/12 - Youth Christmas Party and Service Project, 3 pm
- 12/18 - Grief Relief, 7 pm
- 12/20 - Young at Heart, 7 pm
- 12/24 - Christmas Eve Worship, 5:30 pm
- 12/25-26 - Office Closed: Merry Christmas!
- 12/25-1/3 - Pastor Vacation
- 12/27 - Arts and Crafts, 7 pm
- 1/1 - Office Closed: Happy New Year!

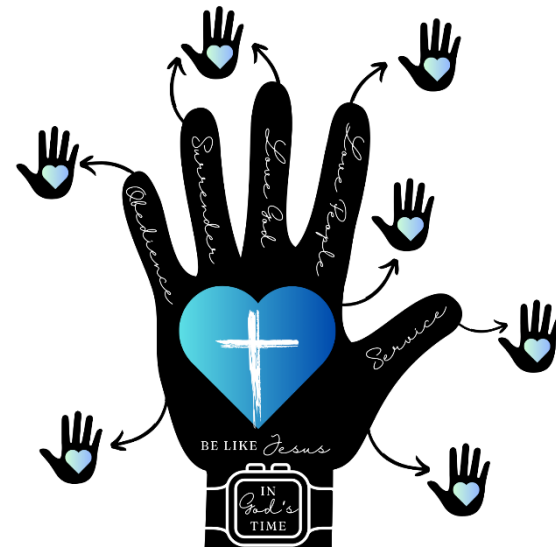
- Worship - Sunday, 10:30 am
- Sissy's Pantry - Wed 6:30-8:00 pm
- Zoom Prayer - Thursday, 11 am

Bible Studies

- Sunday School 9 am
- Women's Group: Mon 10 am
- John's Study: Tuesday, 6 pm
- Pastor's Study (Walking thru the Bible): Wed 2 pm
- John's Study: Thursday, 10:30 am
- Youth After School Program: Thurs, 3-4:30 p.m.

Administrative Board Topics of Interest

1) We continued our discussion of discipleship. We took the four terms we adopted at last month's meeting (Love, Grow, Serve, Show) and sought to flesh them out. We asked the following questions: (1) How would we define it? (2) What is the goal we are trying to accomplish here? (3) What do we hope a disciple of Jesus will do at this point in the process? (4) What current ministries fall under this step of the process? (5) Are there any holes that we need to address in this step? And (6) what are we inviting people into ?

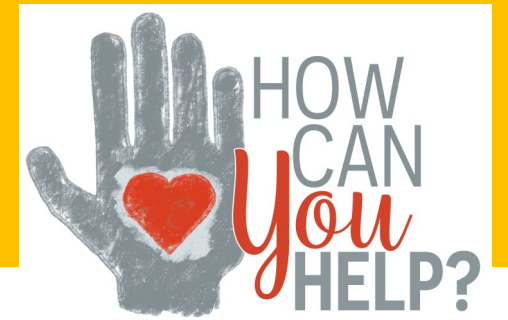


2) The water mitigation project at the old parsonage and the painting of the fellowship hall have been completed. There is still some minor touch-up work to be done to finish up the fellowship hall. The trustees are currently working to either patch or replace siding on the old parsonage after squirrels got inside it and damaged it. In addition, they are working to replace the block windows in the basement.

3) The Great Miami River District has awarded us two additional grants for 2025: (1) A \$6,500 community outreach grant, which covers Sissy's pantry, our community dinners, marketing, and our school food ministry, and (2) a \$8,000 youth and family grant, which covers general programming and curriculum costs for all of our kids and youth ministries. These are in addition to the two \$5,000 grants for 2025 (Evangelism Foundation and UM Discipleship Ministries) for our after-school program.

4) Our fundraising team reports that they expect to generate around \$800 in total income from our recent bake sale, Bob Evans, and Soapy Joe Fundraisers combined. They are planning to do another bake sale at the Card Show on November 23. In addition, there will be a second Bob Evans and Chick-Fil-A fundraiser in January 2025. They are also looking at coupon books for Mike's Car Wash in March 2025.

OHUMC Family Ministries



Breakfast with Santa and Birthday Party for Jesus

On December 7, from 9 a.m.-12 p.m., we will be hosting a Breakfast with Santa and Birthday Party for Jesus. The event is open to all children and families and will include a free breakfast of pancakes and sausage, a reading of the Christmas story, singing Happy Birthday to Jesus and birthday cake, a craft, games, and pictures with Santa. We are asking each family to bring a gift for a baby (food, diapers, wipes, onesies, etc.) or a non-perishable food item. All donations will go to Sissy's pantry. We are in need of donations of candy canes and cupcakes for this event. See Kathy Cramerding for questions.



Looking Ahead:

- Dec 12: Christmas Party & Service Project
- Jan 26: 3pm-4:30pm Bowling with youth group
- Feb 23: Volunteering at Meals on Wheels 12-2pm
- Mar 23: TBD (Activity chosen by youth)
- Apr 10: End of School Year Party

