



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

March 2025 The Oak Notes

Pastor Article

Wednesday, March 5 marks the beginning of the season of Lent. Lent is a season of serious repentance and preparation, as we ready our hearts for the celebration of Easter. The earliest Christians used it as a time to prepare candidates for baptism and a time of repentance for sinners, who had been excluded from communion and were seeking restoration in the church. As a sign of their repentance, they wore sackcloth and ashes, and they engaged in a strict period of fasting, eating only one meal each day. This led, to the modern practice of giving something up in order to ready our hearts and focus on Jesus.

This Lent we are centering on what it means to be true followers of Jesus Christ and not just fans. In his book Not a Fan, Kyle Idleman says this: “Jesus has a lot of fans these days. Fans who cheer for him when things are going well, but who walk away when it’s a difficult season. Fans who sit safely in the stands cheering, but know nothing of the sacrifice of the field. Fans who know all about Jesus, but they don’t really know him. The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ.” But here’s the thing: Jesus was never interested in having fans. Jesus desires followers, who are willing to “deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him” (Mark 8:34). He tells us that “whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Jesus and the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35). As a result, we will exploring what it means to lose our life, not simply by giving up meaningless stuff like chocolate, pop, coffee, or Facebook, but the things that matter most. We’ll learn what it looks like to give up control, to give up our expectations, to give up superiority, to give up our enemies, to give up our very lives, to give up popularity, and even to give up death itself.

Throughout this season, I would challenge you to consciously consider what is Jesus calling you to give up, not just for this one season of the year, but each and every day that you might be more like him. I would also challenge you to read through the Gospel of Matthew by following our daily reading plan and make it a priority to be with us EVERY single Sunday in Lent and at each of our special Lenten services.

Our special services include:

- (1) Ash Wednesday (March 5, 7 p.m.): Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return. Ashes are a sign of our mortality, our sin, and our repentance. We take time to reflect, confess, and repent. We walk with Jesus as he is tempted in the wilderness and we are invited to repent of our sins.
- (2) Palm/Passion Sunday (April 13, 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 to the cross on Good Friday, for Jesus did not come to be the kind of messiah we want; he came to suffer and die for the sin of the world.
- (3) Maundy Thursday (April 17, 7 p.m.): Maundy Thursday is the celebration of the final meal that Jesus spends with his disciples before his execution (the Last Supper). This year we reflect on the final night of Jesus life from the Last Supper to his crucifixion with a Tenebrae service with Holy Communion.
- (4) Good Friday (April 18, 1-4 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 the call to give it up and follow him. Come anytime you want between 1 and 4 p.m. Spend as much or as little time as you need working through the stations.
- (5) Easter Celebration (April 20, 10:30 a.m.): We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Join us as we come together to celebrate the greatest news ever told. We learn to give up death as we stop clinging to the tomb and learn to live into the new life that’s found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

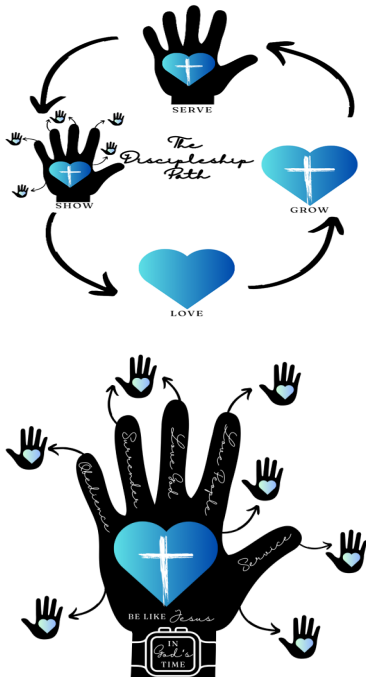
Pastor Justin

MARCH

Administrative Board Topics of Interest

- 1) The church board began brainstorming and is working to develop a comprehensive hospitality and follow-up strategy. Some of the ideas we discussed include: (1) establishing greeters in the parking lot, (2) updating the holes in our greeters are the door, (3) establishing a few hosts who would meet people at the door, introduce them to folks, sit with them through worship, get them their mug, and follow up with them a few days after worship, (4) establishing gift bags for kids in addition to the mugs for adults, (5) establishing bags with activities for kids to use during worship, and (6) a greeting moment in worship. Over the next few months, we will be working to recruit and to establish this hospitality plan. If you would be interested in helping in any way, please contact Pastor Justin in the church office.
- 2) As we have mentioned over the last few months, we will be renovating the current “prayer room” into a café and welcome center as a way to improve hospitality. The trustees have accepted a bid for the project. Demolition will begin in the next few weeks (possibly by the time of the publication of this newsletter!). The work is expected to be completed in time for our Easter Celebration. The \$7,200 cost of this project will be covered by the \$8,000 Go Grant that we received from the West Ohio Conference.
- 3) At the authorization of the church board, the finance committee has invested \$175,000 from our capital proceeds in a 5 month CD with a 4.4% interest rate. This still leaves around \$85,000 in liquid funds in the capital proceeds for the trustees to use for any capital improvement projects.
- 4) It has been reported to us that there have been questions regarding what we are using the recent fundraising money for. These monies are not being used for any special projects, but are being used to help offset the general fund of the church. Over the last few years, we have been running in the red, so we are finding alternative ways to generate additional income. Our goal is to reduce our loss each year.
- 5) The month of January was a good month financially. We closed the month with a net gain of \$2,722.

- 6) Our Risk Taking Missions Team is working to establish a few “Appreciation Days” for groups in our community such as teachers, firefighters, police, and/or other community leaders to show we care. We will seek to identify which groups we would like to bless at the upcoming Ladies Lunch Bunch in March. See Carol Reitzes or Joan Seurkamp for more information.
- 7) Kathy Cramerding and Ali Scully are stressing once again the need for substitutes for Sunday School should they be out for illness or vacation. If you would be willing to help, please see Kathy or Ali. A background check is required in accord with our church Safe Sanctuary and Child Protection policy.
- 8) We updated some of the language in our church Finance Policy, our Employee Handbook, and our Wedding Policy to reflect changes in practice that came as a result of changes in The Book of Discipline, our board’s work on discipleship in 2024, and the creation of our fundraising team in 2024.
- 9) Bishop Hee-Soo Jung has announced that he plans to visit every church in the East and West Ohio Conferences during his first four years as our bishop. More information shall be forthcoming.





Announcements

- 3/3 – Trustees, 6:30 pm
- 3/5 - UMW Luncheon, 12 pm
- 3/5 – Ash Wednesday Worship, 7 pm
- 3/6 - Grief Relief 7-8:30 pm
- 3/7 – World Day of Prayer
- 3/9 – Daylight Savings Time Begins; Spring Forward!
- 3/9 - Family Board Game Night, 6-9 pm
- 3/10 – Finance 6:30 pm; Board Meeting 7 pm
- 3/12 – Dinner and Devotions, 6 pm
- 3/19 – Grief Relief, 7 pm
- 3/21 – Young at Heart, 7pm
- 3/22 – Sports Card Show, 9 am - 3 pm
- 3/24— Fundraising (Team 5) 6 pm
- 3/26 – Community Dinner, 6 pm
- 3/28 – Arts and Crafts, 7 pm

- Worship – Sunday, 10:30 am
- Sissy’s Pantry – Wednesday, 6:30-8:00 pm
- Zoom Prayer – Thursday, 11 am

Weekly Bible Studies

- Sunday School 9 am
- Ways of the Alongsider: Sunday, 12 pm
- Women’s Group: Monday 10 am
- John’s Study: Tuesday, 6 pm
- Pastor’s Study: Wednesday, 2 pm
- John’s Study: Thursday, 10:30 am
- Youth After School Program: Thurs, 3-4:30 p.m.

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 and link your Kroger card. Step 3: Go to 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.

Vanco

Did you know that you can give to the church through your phone? Simply download the free Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement app on your phone, search for Oak Hills United Methodist Church, and then set up an account. Once it’s set up you will be able to give either a one time or reoccurring gift. You can also contact Linda Wise (513-205-8104; lpwise@fuse.net) to set up an automatic payment to the church.

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.



OHUMC Family Ministries



Family Ministries

Winter Carnival – February 8

A big thank you to everyone who helped set up and who helped out at our Winter Carnival on February 8. The day was a great success. We estimate around 100 people were present, slightly lower than in the past due to all the sickness that was going around, but one family came to worship the following day!



Easter Party and Egg Hunt – April 13

Our annual Easter Party and Egg Hunt will be on Saturday, April 12, from 1-3 pm. The event will include the sharing of the Easter story, a craft, a silent auction for adults, and an egg hunt for kids. We are in need of donations of plastic eggs and candy. We are expecting 200 kids so we need roughly 200 eggs and 300 cupcakes (so parents can have some too). This year we will be having the kids turn in eggs for a bag of candy so you can bring any kind of individually wrapped candies, including chocolate. We are also in need to donations baskets and items for the silent auction. Please have all candy and eggs to the church by no later than Sunday March 30. We will also need help putting together bags of candy on Saturday, April 5 at 9 a.m. If you have any questions please contact Kathy Cramerding at 513-348-9555.



Blessings, church friends. We are flourishing in the After School Program with 8 kids now signed up! If you know any 6-12 graders who would like join the ASP, please reach out to Ali.

The focus for Sunday School in the month of March will be: “What’s Your Shamrock?,” and discussing how the shamrock represents the Holy Trinity.



Looking Ahead:

- Mar 23: TBD (Activity chosen by youth)
- Apr 10: End of School Year Party