



**Oak Hills United Methodist Church**  
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**January 2026 The Oak Notes**

### Pastor Article

Take a moment with me and look back at this past year. There is no doubt that 2025 was a year of increased political tension and divisiveness in our country. There were mass layoffs. There were mass arrests of immigrants. There was an eroding of due process. There were political assassinations. The longest government shutdown in history. Gerrymandering for political gain. Rising costs, increased tariffs, inflation, food insecurity and healthcare insecurity, not to mention the wars in Ukraine and Israel.

There are radically different visions of what is good, decent, and moral in our world today. Trust has been eroded. We see the other as a threat, and fear, uncertainty, and chaos remain at an all-time high.

As we move into a New Year once again, there's no doubt that many are glad to leave 2025 behind. As we head into this New Year, I want to challenge you to let go of your fear and to embrace it with hope.

I'm reminded of the words that Paul speaks to his young protégé Timothy as Paul was nearing the end of his ministry: "God did not give you a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."

Again and again, the Bible tells us "Do not fear!" It is the most prominent command in all of Scripture. It appears 365 times in the Bible. One, so it has been said, for every single day of the year. God has to say it over and over and over again, because the truth is, we tend to be a people who are driven by fear.

As we come into this New Year, we need to hear these words again: DO NOT FEAR. DO NOT FEAR. DO NOT FEAR! "God did not give you a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."

Beginning on Sunday January 4, we launch a new series called FEAR NOT! Throughout this series, we will learn what it means to lean on God in times just like this. We will learn with Elisha that things are not always what they seem. Sometimes, we just need to open our eyes and see things from God's point of view. We will learn with the people of Israel, that even in the hard times,

we are not alone; our God is always with us. He is still on the throne. He is still in control and even now there is still a reason to hope.

There are a million reasons to fear. But no matter what life throws at us, the good news is God is still here. Things are not what they seem. Our God is always with us. He never leaves us or abandons us.

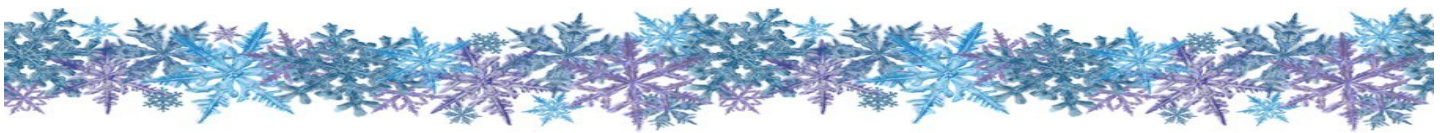
I'm reminded of what God says to the people in exile: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ... Do not be afraid, for I am with you!" (Isaiah 43:1-5).

No matter what this year may bring, approach it with confidence, because our God is still working. Do not fear, because he is with us. Do not fear, because there is still hope. Do not fear, because God is still in control. Do not fear because things are not quite what they seem. God does his best work in times just like this! So, move forward. Step out in faith. Refuse to be a prisoner of fear. Trust God and fear not!

*Pastor Justin*

### **Pastor Vacation**

Pastor Justin will be on vacation from Sunday December 28 through Saturday January 3. If you are in need of emergency pastoral care during this time, please contact Rev. Paul Sittason Stark from Monfort Heights UMC at 513-481-8699 ext. 2007. For all other church related business or questions please contact the church office (513-574-1131), Board Chair Mary Flannery (513-378-7085) or Lay Leader Bob Schloss (513-702-7118).



## Administrative Board Topics of Interest

1) Income for the month of November came in at \$22,992 and expenses at \$21,351 for a net gain of \$1,641. Year to date, total income stands at \$224,770 and expenses at \$213,052 for a gain of \$11,717. About 50% of this was a direct result of not having insurance for about 5 months (July-November).

2) As we reported in our November newsletter, we discovered that our church insurance was not renewed while working on the 2026 budget. The church is now insured again. We selected Brotherhood Mutual as our insurance carrier. Our first quarterly payment was made in early December 2025.

3) We will be receiving a \$4,000 Go Grant from the West Ohio Conference for the pickleball court in Feb 2026. As a result, the trustees are taking quotes to have it professionally painted and stripped. Work will begin once the cold weather passes as the paint does not set well when it is cold outside. We hope to launch the new pickleball ministry in early spring. If you are interested, please see Dave Glassmeyer.

4) The AED machine is finally in and installed. It is located just outside the handicap bathroom off the lobby. The trustees are working with Green Township Fire Department to schedule a training day in the near future for anyone who is interested in learning how it works.

5) We are working to get a suggestion box set up in the lobby. In addition, the trustees will be setting up a form to report any issues that you see that needs to be done. Be on the lookout for more information.

6) Zuber's will be replacing the security key code system in the near future. If you want to have a specific code set up in the system, please see our new Trustee Chair Bob Schloss or Scott Weiman.

7) Sue Schloss will be heading up a periodic church cleaning day to organize some of the closets around the church. If you would like to be a part of the team that helps to organize things, please see Sue. Be on the lookout for more information on specific dates and areas that we will be cleaning up and organizing.

8) Radical hospitality is exploring the possibility of offering some basic classes to help our pantry clients.



## Snow and Inclement Weather 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 our church Facebook page and our church website on Sunday morning no later than 8 a.m. Pastor Justin 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 our Board Chair Sherilyn Reynolds 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 at home. Pastor Justin and Debbie McCane 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 discernment to determine if they will go out or not.

**(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.

# JANUARY

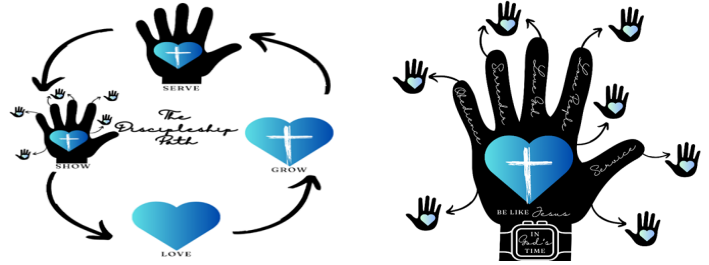
## Announcements

12/28-1/3 – Pastor Vacation  
1/1 – Office Closed: New Year's Day  
1/4 – Tear Down Christmas Décor, after church  
1/5 - Trustees, 6 pm  
1/7 – UMW Lunch, 12 pm  
1/7 – Grief Relief, 6 pm  
1/11 – Passionate Worship, 12 pm  
1/11 – Family Game Night, 6-9 pm  
1/12 – Finance, 6:30 pm; Church Board, 7 pm  
1/14 - Dinner and Devotions, 6 pm  
1/17 – Young at Heart, 7 pm  
1/18 – Disciplemaking Practitioners, 12 pm  
1/21 – Grief Relief, 6 pm  
1/23 – Arts and Crafts, 7 pm 1/24 – Sports Card Show and Bake Sale, 9 am-3pm  
1/24 – Great Miami River District Training Day  
1/25 – SPPRC, 12 pm  
1/28 – Community Dinner, 6 pm  
2/7 – Winter Carnival, 1-3 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  
Women's Group: Monday 10 am  
John's Study: Tuesday, 6 pm  
Pastor's Study (Romans): Wednesday, 2 pm  
John's Study: Thursday, 10:30 am  
Youth After School Program, Thursday, 3-4:30 pm



## 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](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.

## 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](mailto:lpwise@fuse.net)) to set up an automatic payment to the church.

## 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





# OHUMC Family Ministries



## Family Ministries

Birthday Party for Jesus/Breakfast with Santa



## Winter Carnival

Saturday, February 7 1-3 pm

Volunteers are needed to run the games, the craft, book, tattoos, and welcome table. All volunteers to arrive by 12:15 pm. Help is also needed with set up on Friday, Feb. 6, at 4 pm.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



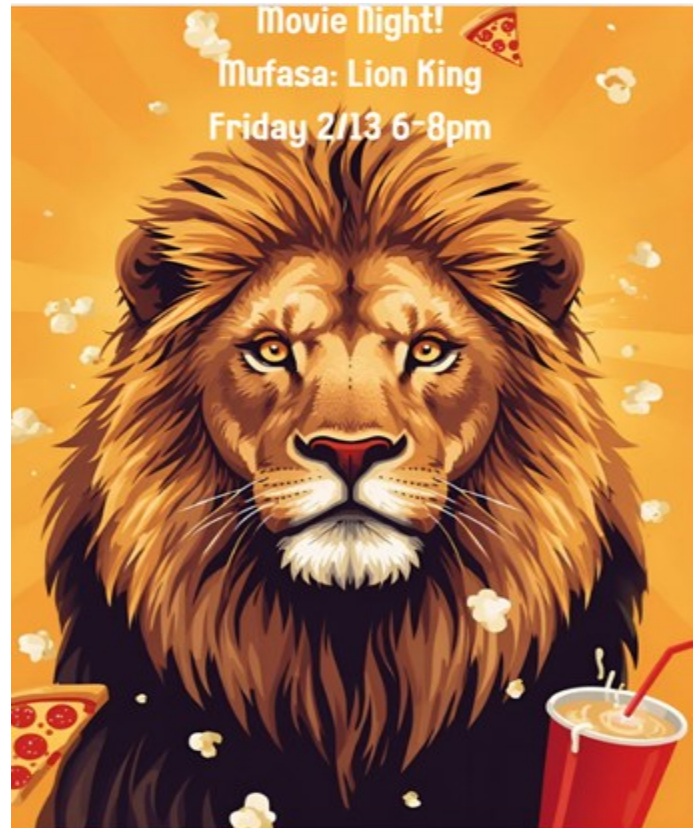
### Looking forward

The youth group will be represented at OHHS twice/month at their FCA (Fellowship for Christian Athletes) with host Pastor Kirk from Revive Church. We look forward to watching God move through the lives of the kids at Oak Hills, and hope to welcome a few new friendly faces at OHUMC.



### Sunday school:

January brings themes of new beginnings, hope, repentance, and reflecting on God's promises. We will be reading from Psalm 51:17, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Psalm 90:12, and incorporating goal-setting discussions to help students leave the past behind and embrace God's new mercies for a purposeful year. God offers new beginnings, removing past sins and failures. He is always working for our good.



**OHUMC Youth Group will be hosting a movie night on Friday, February 13, 6pm – 8 pm for kids in grades 6-12.**

**Mufasa: The Lion King** will be playing in the sanctuary. Pizza, popcorn, and drinks provided.

Basically, Mufasa in *The Lion King* symbolizes a righteous, god-like figure, often compared to God the Father or Jesus, representing divine guidance, sacrificial love, and eternal presence, teaching lessons about responsibility (like Proverbs), the consequences of straying (like Adam/Eve), and that true kingship involves serving others and fulfilling one's destiny.